




MEMORANDUM

To: Parks and Recreation Board Members

Through: Jesús Aguirre, MBA, CPRE, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation 

From: Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow, Assistant Director
Alyssa Tharrett, RA, NCARB, Project Management Supervisor
Austin Parks and Recreation

Date: April 27, 2026

Subject: **Austin Parks and Recreation 2026 Bond Update**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on Austin Parks and Recreation's 2026 general obligation bond development process since the previous memorandum to the Parks and Recreation Board sent on August 4, 2025 and provide updated staff recommendations.

On July 31, 2025, the City issued a [memorandum](#) with each department's preliminary ranked program / project recommendations for the 2026 Bond. This preliminary list included all city department recommendations totaling \$3.87 billion, which included a \$410 million recommendation for the parks and recreation 2026 bond programs as outlined in the table below.

July 31, 2025 Parks and Recreation Recommendations		
Bond Program	Amount	Description
Building Renovation and Replacement Program	\$85 million	Funding for renovation/rehabilitation or replacement of APR maintenance facilities and assets.
Parkland Acquisition Program	\$100 million	Funding for the acquisition of land, such as destination parks in park-deficient areas, greenways and corridors for increased trail connectivity.
Recreation and Senior Center Improvements Program	\$55 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing APR senior and recreation centers and assets.
Infrastructure	\$40 million	Funding for improvements to playscapes, trails, parking lots, roadways, athletic fields and facilities, and City cemeteries.

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Aquatics	\$60 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing City pools.
Parkland Improvements	\$70 million	Funding for development of existing City parks, greenbelts, or the downtown squares.
	\$410 million	TOTAL

Throughout the fall of 2025, Austin Parks and Recreation presented details, including example projects, for each bond program recommendation to the Bond Election Advisory Task Force (BEATF) Parkland and Open Space Working Group. These included presentations on [parkland improvement and infrastructure programs](#), [building renovation / replacement, recreation and senior center improvements, aquatics programs](#), and [parkland acquisitions](#).

Bond Process Update and Initial Staff (Capital Delivery Services) Recommendations:

On January 21, 2026, a [memorandum](#) to Mayor and Council was issued to provide an initial staff draft recommendation for the 2026 bond. As outlined in the memo, work performed throughout the fall and winter of 2025 included a public input process, Bond Election Advisory Task Force (BEATF) listening sessions, and the development of a quantitative scoring rubric used to objectively score projects through a Project Review Board (PRB). The PRB evaluated and prioritized projects and programs citywide based on readiness, available capacity, equity considerations, and overall bond package constraints. These efforts refined the \$3.9 billion preliminary list into a \$700 million initial list that fits within the funding guidelines developed by Austin Financial Services at the time. Of the \$700 million initial list, \$140 million was identified for parks and recreation programs and projects as shown in the table below.

January 21, 2026, Initial Staff (Capital Delivery Services) Recommendation		
Bond Program	Amount	Description
Building Renovation and Replacement Program	\$55 million	Funding for renovation/rehabilitation or replacement of APR maintenance facilities and assets.
Parkland Acquisition Program	\$40 million	Funding for the acquisition of land, such as destination parks in park-deficient areas, greenways and corridors for increased trail connectivity.
Recreation and Senior Center Improvements Program	\$10 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing APR senior and recreation centers and assets.
Parkland Infrastructure	\$5 million	Funding for improvements to playscapes, trails, parking lots, roadways, athletic fields and facilities, and City cemeteries.
Aquatics	\$15 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing City pools.
Parkland Improvements	\$15 million	Funding for development of existing City parks, greenbelts, or the downtown squares.
	\$140 million	TOTAL

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The \$140 million initial staff recommendation generally aligns funding proportionately with Parks and Recreation priorities by providing the greatest funding for maintenance facilities and parkland acquisition, though lower than the initial request. The remaining programs are also generally aligned proportionally with Parks and Recreation recommendations. All recommendations are anticipated to have a minimal impact on annual operating costs. The \$140 million funding level provides limited capacity to address potential critical failures at existing recreation, senior, and aquatic facilities, as well as aging infrastructure throughout the park system. A \$140 million bond package is unlikely to support the development of new public facilities, newly developed parks, or the replacement of facilities that have reached the end of their useful life. Under this funding scenario, APR would prioritize maintaining existing facilities in operational condition to keep them open to the public; however, some facilities may require closure if system failures exceed available funding.

Austin Financial Services Bond Capacity Update:

On January 14, 2026, Austin Financial Services presented \$750 million as the maximum recommended 2026 bond total to the Audit and Finance committee.

Bond Election Advisory Task Force Updates:

The BEATF Parkland and Open Space working group presented draft recommendations for park programs and projects to BEATF on February 9, 2026, and April 13, 2026. The working groups were tasked with recommending three funding scenarios equivalent to 15%, 20%, and 25% of the total \$750 million bond. The 20% recommendation for \$150 million was shared at the April 13, 2026, BEATF meeting.

April 13, 2026, Initial BEATF Parkland and Open Space Working Group Recommendation		
Bond Program	Amount	Description
Building Renovation and Replacement Program	\$65 million	Funding for renovation/rehabilitation or replacement of APR maintenance facilities and assets, along with restroom renovations.
Parkland Acquisition Program	\$40 million	Funding for the acquisition of land, such as destination parks in park-deficient areas, greenways and corridors for increased trail connectivity.
Recreation and Senior Center Improvements Program	\$10 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing APR senior and recreation centers and assets.
Parkland Infrastructure	\$15 million	Funding for improvements to playscapes, trails, parking lots, roadways, athletic fields and facilities, and City cemeteries.
Aquatics	\$20 million	Funding for renovations and rehabilitations to existing City pools.
Parkland Improvements	\$0 million	Funding for development of existing City parks, greenbelts, or the downtown squares.
	\$150 million	TOTAL

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BEATF’s \$150 million draft working group recommendation proportionally aligns with Austin Parks and Recreation priorities for maintenance facilities and parkland acquisition, at slightly lower total funding amount than APR’s initial recommendation. The \$150 million funding level may not fully accommodate the need to address potential critical failures at existing recreation and senior facilities or parkland assets across the park system unless program descriptions are revised to provide inclusion of other project types. This scenario includes targeted funding for aquatic facilities to address needs at select locations; however, the funding level may not accommodate full replacements at facilities reaching the end of their useful life. The working group also noted that the infrastructure program is intended to support projects such as the new all-abilities playground at Onion Creek, the new Williamson Creek Trail, electrification initiatives, playscape replacement projects, and additional trail development. Under this funding scenario, APR would prioritize maintaining existing facilities to keep them open to the public; however, some facilities may require closure if system failures exceed available funding.

Community Engagement:

Throughout February 2026, the city hosted five community open house events and launched a second [survey](#) to gather community input on the \$700 million initial draft bond package recommendation. More information on the bond process and open houses can be found on the [2026 bond development website](#). A [summary](#) of the community engagement efforts was distributed to Mayor and Council on April 10, 2026. The summary noted feedback suggested prioritization on improving existing infrastructure over building new, that parks, recreation, and cultural facilities have the largest share of feedback and consistent support, and that 60% are willing to pay more taxes for the proposed bond. Specific to the parks and recreation bond programs, survey respondents voted highest for developing and improving existing City parks and lowest for renovating senior and recreation centers.

Austin Parks and Recreation Recommendations:

In consideration of the \$140 and \$187.5 million scenarios presented by Capital Delivery Service staff and the BEATF working group respectively, Austin Parks and Recreation would like to recommend proposed scenarios at these two funding levels.

Austin Parks and Recreation Staff Recommendations \$140M and \$187.5M Scenarios (April 2026)			
Bond Program	\$140M Scenario	\$187.5M Scenario	Description
Building, Recreation, and Senior Center Improvements	\$65 million	\$85 million	Funding for renovations/ rehabilitation, additions or replacements of existing Parks and Recreation facilities, recreation and senior centers, including ADA and safety improvements
Parkland Acquisition Program	\$40 million	\$40 million	Funding for the acquisition of land, such as destination parks in park-deficient areas, greenways and corridors for increased trail connectivity.

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Parkland Infrastructure	\$5 million	\$15 million	Funding for improvements to playscapes, trails, parking lots, roadways, athletic fields and facilities, and City cemeteries.
Aquatics	\$15 million	\$30 million	Funding for renovations or replacements of existing City pools or splashpads.
Parkland Improvements	\$15 million	\$17.5 million	Funding for development of existing City parks, greenbelts, or the downtown squares.

Austin Park and Recreation Recommendations at \$250 million:

On April 20, 2026, Council Member Alter, alongside a sub-quorum that includes MPT Vela, CM Fuentes, CM Velásquez, and CM Siegel, requested a [Supplemental Bond Proposal](#). The request outlined a \$250 million parks scenario that excludes maintenance facilities. Under this scenario, Austin Parks and Recreation (APR) requires confirmation that full funding for maintenance facilities will be provided through alternative funding sources, such as Certificates of Obligation. APR recommends the following options within the \$250 million framework.

Austin Parks and Recreation Staff Recommendations \$250M Scenario (April 2026)		
Bond Program	\$250M Scenario	Description
Building, Recreation, and Senior Center Improvements	\$65 million	Funding for renovations/rehabilitation and additions to existing facilities, recreation and senior centers, such as Gus Garcia Senior Center expansion (D4), Doris Miller Auditorium renovation (D1), and Mayfield Park facility rehabilitation (D10).
Parkland Acquisition	\$50 million	Funding for the acquisition of land, such as infill parks in park-deficient areas, greenbelts and greenways for increased trail connectivity, and destination parks such as land along the Colorado River, or land for a new southeast recreation center.
Parkland Infrastructure	\$25 million	Funding for improvements to playscapes, trails, parking lots, roadways, athletic fields and facilities, golf facilities, and City cemeteries, such as Williamson Creek Trail (D2), Evergreen Cemetery (D1), Electrification infrastructure, Onion Creek all abilities playground (D2), Brentwood Neighborhood Park restroom and playscape replacement (D7), Riata Neighborhood Park playscape replacement (D6), Zilker Metro Park playscape replacement (D8), Commons Ford shoreline improvements (D10).
Aquatics	\$65 million	Funding for major renovations or replacements of existing City pools, such as Garrison Municipal Pool (D5), Big Stacy Neighborhood Pool (D9), Walnut Creek Municipal Pool (D7), Civitan Neighborhood Pool (D3).

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Parkland Improvements	\$45 million	Funding for development of existing City parks, including neighborhood parks, district parks, metro parks, greenbelts, etc., such as Jamestown Neighborhood Park (D4), Bolm District Park (D3), Walter E. Long Metro Park (D1), Lantana Neighborhood Park (D8), Community Gardens, and Old Lampasas Pocket Park (D6), Cooper Neighborhood Park (D5), Wooldridge Square (D9), and Grand Meadow Phase II (D2).
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Next Steps:

BEATF is expected to deliver its final recommendation to Council on May 4, 2026, followed by the staff recommendation on May 8, 2026. Council is expected to make final decisions on the proposed bond at the May 21, 2026, meeting.

Austin Parks and Recreation remains deeply committed to delivering high-quality programs, safe facilities, and welcoming spaces for the community, regardless of funding levels. Through careful planning, creative partnerships, opportunities to leverage funds, and dedicated staff, APR will maximize available resources to ensure residents continue to enjoy meaningful recreational opportunities. This commitment reflects a strong belief that access to parks, programs, and community spaces is essential to quality of life, and that thoughtful stewardship can make a lasting impact even in challenging financial conditions.

Should you have any questions, please contact Alyssa Tharrett, RA, NCARB, Project Management Supervisor, at Alyssa.Tharrett@austintexas.org, or Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, Assistant Director, at Liana.Kallivoka@austintexas.gov.

cc: Adena Long, MBA, CPRP, Deputy Director, Austin Parks and Recreation