




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: January 25, 2024

SUBJECT: **Norwood House Update**

The 1922 Norwood House sits on Town Lake Metropolitan Park atop a bluff on the southern side of Lady Bird Lake, west of I-35. Community and City efforts to reconstruct the house and estate now span more than 40 years. Information about the Norwood House's history is [available online](#). We want to provide you with an update regarding the Parks and Recreation Department's (PARD) next steps for the site's future following the termination of the agreement with Norwood Park Foundation (NPF) effective in December 2022.

Over the past several months, following NPF's termination of the agreement, PARD engaged with nonprofit partners regarding the project but has been unsuccessful in identifying an interested party. Without a nonprofit partner, PARD will convene a review of the project and explore the following issues:

- **Condition:** The Norwood House is in extremely poor condition and continues to deteriorate. The building has lost nearly all its original material, and it stands as a wood frame shell with no windows, doors, exterior brick cladding, or interior finishes. PARD recently made emergency repairs. Future viability is a concern and next steps are being determined.
- **Site Changes:** The I-35 Capital Express Central project and Project Connect light rail line are immediately adjacent to the site, and the area will experience intense construction for many years. These projects will greatly change the context and setting of the Norwood House.

Options for the future of the house and site include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) PARD assumes funding responsibility and management of the project and operates the Norwood House as an event facility as envisioned in the 2011 feasibility study. As there is currently no identified budget source, funding needs and adjacent construction would delay this process. Structure protection would require initial financial investment and ongoing maintenance costs.
- 2) PARD explores an alternative improvement at the site, such as an overlook feature that interprets the story of the Norwood House. This option requires planning, design, and funding to implement, as well as the removal of the City of Austin Historic Landmark designation and demolition of what remains of the Norwood House. To date there is no funding source.

As part of this review, PARD will inform the former members of the NPF, the adjacent neighborhood association, historic preservation advocacy groups, and other interested organizations about current conditions, alternatives, opportunities and/or proposed solutions. Additionally, PARD will offer briefings to the Historic Landmark Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board.

PARD recognizes and appreciates that 40 years of community and City efforts have been invested into the Norwood House and grounds. The timeline for a review of the Norwood House is expected to take 6-9 months. PARD anticipates providing a report to the City Council in Summer/Fall 2024.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager