



## Late Backup

# 113

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August 21, 2013

The Honorable Lee Leffingwell  
Mayor, City of Austin and all Members of the Austin City Council  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767

### Re: Austin Parks Budget - Fill the GAP

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Old Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA) joins a broad and deep coalition of respected park, environmental, neighborhood and political groups (<http://greataustinparks.org/our-community>) in expressing our concern about the condition of Austin's park system. We urge that you begin to address this problem in the FY2014 City operating budget by including the Great Austin Parks requested increases totaling \$4.75 million for trees, trails, pools and general maintenance & programming (<http://greataustinparks.org/>). We request you do this while keeping within the current FY2013 tax rate.

In our neighborhood comprising the western part of downtown, parks represent the first impression many business visitors and tourists have of our city. They are also the only recreational outlets that many new Downtown residents have.

If parks and green spaces are not properly cared for, very real costs are incurred. From positive activities for our youth, to making a great or not so great impression on hundreds of thousands of visitors, great parks make economic sense.

Other great cities across the country have recognized this link and put the necessary resources in their parks systems' operations budget. The Trust for Public Land's 2013 <http://parkscore.tpl.org/> once again reports that Austin is in the bottom third of cities in the amount spent per capita on park operations. We can do better than this. And, if we don't, it is not only bad for business; it's simply not the Austin we claim to be.

We realize your task is not easy, but we urge you and the Council to take the first step in "filling this GAP" by increasing the funding for Parks in the FY2014 budget.

Sincerely,

Ted Siff, President

**OANA Board of Directors:** Ted Siff, President, Albert Stowell, Treasurer, Blake Tollett, Secretary, Ray Canfield, Rick Hardin, Paul Isham, Perry Lorenz, John Horton, Bill Schnell, Tom Borders, Karen Armstrong