



## PARD / AUDITORIUM SHORES - MISLEADING INFORMATION VS. FACTS

The input (below) is distilled from weeks of research. We have scoured parks' websites across the nation. We have talked to PARD management in 13 major cities (Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego, Colorado Springs, Denver, Boulder, Nashville, Raleigh, St. Louis, Boston, Washington D.C., Chicago). We have spoken with several national animal associations (ASPCA, Humane Society, N.D.T.A., etc.). On the whole, they were adamant that trying to fit 200-250 dogs with their owners into such small acreage was indicative of extremely poor planning and design.

**Page 4      Trail Conflict      FALSE / MISLEADING**

PARD's stance from the beginning has been about trail conflict between the water and the event lawn. They have stated numerous times that their solution to issues of trail conflict in that area is to "move" the leash-free area to the west side.

As daily users of Auditorium Shores we are very aware of use and flow patterns i.e., a valuable resource, for PARD to utilize.

**We have never been asked for input by PARD for possible solutions, and the attempts to present/provide this input have been discouraged and negated.**

**In the current proposal by PARD, they have actually now created THREE areas of trail conflict, versus the original one area of trail conflict (please note highlighted areas above: orange > new areas of trail conflict in PARD proposal.)**

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There are options for trail flow that PARD appears not to have considered:

**Auditorium Shores "Express" Trail**

An "express" trail (with signage) for runners, walkers, cyclists, etc., that wish maintain their speeds and bypass user traffic on the riverside length of the park. This "express" trail would go from the west side trail head along the southern edge of the park in its entirety, come down by the parking lot and rejoining the main trail. This trail would go through the event lawn but would not interfere with large events in any way physically or esthetically (consistently level ground), and would eliminate trail conflict throughout the park.. (Please note green highlight line above). It is a simple and elegant solution.

**Trail Safety - Leash vs Leash-Free**

PARD keeps emphasizing trail safety. We have been asking runners and cyclists for three months now for input about their experiences in Auditorium Shores. The overwhelming majority have said that they have no issue about leash-free dogs, in fact they enjoy seeing them.

An unanticipated input was this: most runners and cyclists actually have more conflicts with the leashed dogs on the rest of the trails - being tripped or toppled because of the leashes. They have stated repeatedly that they actually feel safer in the leash-free area.

**"365 access"** - An interesting statement for both park users AND park users with dogs. Because of traffic and pedestrian congestion caused by large events, there is limited access and use during events regardless of PARD's "not only that but you also get" statement about 365 access. PARD makes this sound like it's a bonus, something more than park users had before. It is not.

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At this time, we are unclear about the due process requirements of changing Auditorium Shores 35 year leash-free ordinance code.

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Note: PARD references "dog community" as if they were something separate from park users. Many dog owners are multi-users of Auditorium Shores - they are runners, cyclists, walkers, picnickers, bring their families for outings. They are PARK USERS, with dogs.

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**“\$1.1 million state of the art Premier Dog Park”**

Sounds good . . . except it's not true. This whole proposal has been under-researched and poorly designed on all levels from trail design to leash-free design.

I.e., it's a lot of expensive stuff that doesn't work.

Two examples of costly poor design elements:

**Cable Fencing on borders/shoreline borders -**

Cable fencing is a distinctly poor choice for a dog park. Dogs can go over, under, and through cable fencing; they can also be injured by cable fencing, as can children.

In addition, cable fencing, albeit attractive, is a very expensive choice for fencing. A lot of money spent for ineffective barrier control.

**“Movable” Fencing**

These two “movable” fences are composed of large concrete planters arrayed in staggered lines on each segment of the proposed leash-free area.

The “plan” for these large concrete planters is that when large events are scheduled, PARD will bring in front-end loaders to move the barriers to delineate or change the space.

This seems like a particularly costly and labor-intensive part of this design, particularly in light of the fact that barrier fencing is put up surrounding large events.

**Long-Term Maintenance Monies/Plans**

Renovations cost monies not only to create, but also to maintain. When asked if funding had been set aside to pay for ongoing maintenance through the years, PARD's reply was that they had made arrangements for a part-time maintenance worker for 2014-15.

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**“Research”**

FALSE/MISLEADING

Most of the information on this page is blatantly untrue.

**“Boston, Minneapolis, Portland - most dog parks 1 acre or less”.**

Essential in good research is matching your data - city population size, dog population size, weather similarities, etc. Comparing Boston or Minneapolis to Austin is not matching data.

Page 9 cont. Portland is a better match, albeits human population size is 200,000 smaller, dog population size is approximately 110,000 dogs less than Austin.

Austin current statistics:      880,000 people  
   277,000 dogs  
   187,000 children under 18

A good statistical match to Austin is San Francisco, for several reasons:  
we are a close match in numbers for people, dogs and children; we also have  
four season usage patterns.

San Francisco has 18 dog parks,  
                                 9 of which are over 35 acres.

Portland has 33 dog parks  
                                 with sizes ranging from 1 to 35+ acres.  
                                 One of their mandates is "must be distributed throughout the city".

**"Dog hours" or "shared hours"**                      MISLEADING

Parks with designated dog hours are specifically parks that share usage  
with adjoining schools or sports field.

Of the 33 dog access parks in Portland,  
                                 27 are considered "shared hours".

Of the 27 "shared hours" dog access parks,  
                                 15 are accessible to dogs at all times  
                                 12 are mixed use hours -

                                 a.m./p.m./weekends open - seasonal closures, etc.

                                 These adjoin schools or sports fields.

Auditorium Shores does not adjoin schools or sports fields.

**"Most cities with downtown dog parks . . . charge usage fees"**                      FALSE

We can't find this data.

Where's PARD's data to show this?

**"Successful dog parks are 1-4 acres"**                      FALSE

There is no research out there that shows this. Cities deal with what they have  
available - it has nothing to do with "successful". In fact, national organizations  
for the ASPCA, Humane Society, Dog Trainers, etc., all say emphatically that in  
dense urban downtown dog populations it is crucial to get as much acreage as  
you can, with a minimum of ten acres - crucial to prevent overcrowding with its  
potential for territorial dog fights, ground contamination (from urine, not poop)  
and the spread of disease.

Page 9 cont. Additionally, in terms of ground contamination: putting a large population of dogs in too small of an area means there's a huge urine ground saturation. What does that mean? It stinks. If you approve of this current design, within a very short time, both park users and event users will complain about the smell. This is one of the most commonly heard complaints of Norwood and other small acreage / large population dog parks in Austin.

There are an average of 200-250 dogs with their owners at Auditorium Shores during evening happy hour. Auditorium Shores is considered a very safe dog park BECAUSE of its 18 acres (in alignment with national recommendations). How are you going to fit 200-250 dogs and their owners into PARD's proposed leash-free area.

They haven't done essential research. In fact, they have never actually done counts of the dogs at Auditorium Shores.

**"... parks are better maintained with a park fee"** FALSE / MISLEADING  
Again, we can't find this documentation.  
Where is PARD's research and documentation?

Page 12 **Proposed Leash-Free Area Acreage Size** FALSE / MISLEADING  
Please understand first that this is not a "move" of leash-free area. It is a REDUCTION of 18 acres to the currently proposed 4.7 acres. We will address more regarding acreage in the segment described as Page 12.  
As park users with dogs, we experience daily use patterns.  
Again, there are 200-250 dogs and their owners at Auditorium Shores at evening happy hour.  
The only acreage that truly counts is the actual accessible ground that dogs and their owners can actually stand or walk on (referred to as "real access" below).  
Dogs and their owners can't perch on the tops of trees, or fenced off borders, or landscaped edging, on top of the pumphouse, on top of the "movable fences or on top of bike racks, etc.  
In the original 3.25 acre PARD proposal, 2.2 acres were "real access"  
In the new 4.7 acre PARD proposal, 3.4 acres are "real access"

Page 13 **"Shared lawn use"** MISLEADING  
PARD has consistently stated that the dog usage at Auditorium Shores inhibits multi-use. Yet as daily users of Auditorium Shores we see picnickers, children. One of the major influencers of park usage is the surrounding demographics. The areas surrounding Auditorium Shores is in the

Page 13 cont. Austin demographic indicating 10% or less children. With that, there are no amenities there to further enhance children (play areas, trains, snow cones, etc.) or enhancements for picnickers (picnic tables, etc.)  
In terms of PARD's statements regarding kite-flyers, the bulk of Auditorium Shores does not have the extensive wide open areas that draw kite-flyers. Zilker does, so kite-flyers and kite-flying events are in Zilker.

**SUMMATION:**

We are Austinites. We love this beloved, iconic park named Auditorium Shores. We care about our parks and support our various parks organizations. Many of us have invested significant volunteer hours to supply aid to parks in need.

Yes, Auditorium Shores needs help, and as the most long-term and consistent users of the park, we have witnessed this first hand.

Erosion control, trail repair, ground revitalization, fresh turf for dust control - these are crucial issues.

But just because there are crucial issues pending doesn't mean we should jump the gun and greenlight the portion of this proposal that, indeed, has;

- no appropriate and applicable research
- no public surveys for impact viability
- no collaboration with communities involved.
- has costly and impractical design elements
- has no funding in place for long-term maintenance.

We implore you - reject this costly and ineffective plan.

Invest this money into a well-designed plan that actually works.

If you are not willing to do that,  
then at least delay approval  
until you can review ALL the FACTS,  
not just the ones PARD wants you to see.

Thank you for your consideration.