OUR PARKS, OUR FUTURE
LONG RANGE PLAN
PRESENTATION TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND CITY COUNCIL
A REVIEW OF THE
LONG RANGE PLAN

PROJECT BACKGROUND & SCHEDULE

MAJOR PHASES OF WORK

DRAFT PLAN
RECOMMENDATIONS OVERVIEW
PURPOSE AND GOALS

ASSESS STATE OF CURRENT PARK SYSTEM

Conduct a thorough assessment of the condition and quality of the current park system to provide a strong data-driven baseline to inform prioritization and track implementation progress over time.

VISION FOR AUSTIN’S PARK SYSTEM IN 2028

PARD will reach its centennial in 2028 and the planning process should focus on engaging the community and city staff to define a new vision that is both inspirational and achievable.

GUIDE FUTURE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

As Austin continues to grow and change, the Long Range Plan provide a careful analysis and guidebook for how and where to invest to ensure a stronger park system.

PARK SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS & PRIORITIZATION

Include both citywide strategies and planning area priorities to inform the Capital Improvement Plan and development of Park Master Plans.
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER

CITYWIDE PLANS

Imagine Austin Vision

Austin is:
Livable / Natural and Sustainable
Prosperous / Mobile and Interconnected
Values and Respects its People
Creative / Educated

PARD Long Range Plan
Strategic Mobility Plan
Strategic Housing Blueprint
Integrated Water Resource Plan

+ Other Citywide & Area Plans
LONG RANGE PLAN

SCHEDULE

AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION

LONG RANGE PLAN

OUR PARKS
OUR FUTURE

2018 - 2028

BOARDS,
COMMISSIONS,
& CITY COUNCIL
REVIEW

WE ARE HERE

2018

2019

KICK OFF
MEETINGS

PLANNING
SUMMIT #1

PLANNING
SUMMIT #2

PLANNING
SUMMIT #3

Outreach to Existing
Departments, Advisory Groups,
Media, Park Users, Friends of Groups

Community Engagement
Advisory Committee
(CEAC)

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

POP-UP EVENTS

FOCUS GROUPS

ONLINE SURVEY
(WINTER 2018-2019)

CEAC Meeting #2

CEAC Meeting #3

Plan Adoption
Meetings
(Fall 2019)

Engagement Summary & Plan Revisions

Our Parks,
Our Future Website Launch

Begin Cultural Center Engagement

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

Stakeholder Interviews

Ongoing Engagement Activities

Statistically Valid Survey Begins

Community Engagement Summary

Community Engagement Summary

TAG MEETING #2

POP-UP EVENTS

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

SPEAK UP AUSTIN
DISCUSSION

PHASE I:

PROJECT LAUNCH

PHASE 2:

ACTIVE COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

PHASE 3:

PLAN DEVELOPMENT / PRIORITIES
A LOOK AT THE PARK SYSTEM TODAY

JUST SOME OF THE FACILITIES

- 291 Parks
- 6 Golf Courses
- 15+ Public/Private Partnerships
- 47 Volleyball Courts

- 40 Pools
- 26 Recreation/Senior Gardens
- 124 Tennis Courts
- 24 Historic Buildings

- 227 Trail Miles
- 147 Playgrounds
- 13 Off-Leash Dog Areas
- 5 Cemeteries

- 20 Rec Centers
- 11 Museums, Arts & Cultural Centers
- 10 Stages/Amphitheaters
- 78 Mixed-Use Fields

100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PARD (2028)

19,000+ Acres of Managed Parkland

967K Population in 2018*

1,143M Projected Population in 2030*

700+ FT Employees

1,000+ PT & Seasonal

Source: Austin Parks and Recreation Department FY18 Annual Report and Strategic Plan 2017-2021; *From Austin Area Population Histories and Forecasts
REACHING OUT & ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

OPEN HOUSES
400+ PARTICIPANTS

SURVEYS, WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA
925 STATISTICALLY VALID SURVEY RESPONSES
4,400+ COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONSES
9,000+ COMMUNITY SURVEY COMMENTS

FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

ENGAGING KIDS THROUGH ART

POP-UP EVENTS
21 EVENTS ATTENDED
297+ VISITORS ENGAGED

SHARE YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF AUSTIN’S PARKS
POST “SURVEY” TO (512) 580-8850
VISIT AUSTINFUTUREPARKS.ORG/SURVEY

VISIT AUSTINFUTUREPARKS.ORG/SURVEY
TEXT “SURVEY” TO (512) 580-8850

ENGAGING KIDS THROUGH ART

FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

OPEN HOUSE SERIES #1
1 George Washington Carver Museum
2 Northwest Recreation Center
3 Gustavo “Gus” L. García Recreation Center
4 Downtown Recreation Center
5 Forte Gardens Building

OPEN HOUSE SERIES #2
6 South Austin Senior Activity Center
7 Anderson Mill Limited District Community Center
8 Circle C Community Center
9 IBFS Buddhist Temple/FGS Xiang Yun Temple
10 Austin Recreation Center

OPEN HOUSE SERIES #3
11 Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex
12 Zilker Botanical Garden

FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION
OUR PARKS
OUR FUTURE
LONG RANGE PLAN
2018 - 2028
The park score cards are a pilot tool to assess the city’s parks and determine areas where parks are performing well and areas where we need improvement. Criteria include park access, key features, supportive facilities, safety & maintenance concerns, aesthetics, and health.

HOW WILL THE SCORE CARDS BE USED?

These draft score cards will be both a snapshot and a living database PARD can utilize to make data-driven, priority-based decisions for investment. The score cards will be employed to increase accountability, transparency, and equity in park level of service across the city. The draft score cards will first focus on neighborhood/pocket parks and will be employed along with a pilot community assessment tool to increase accountability, transparency, and equity in park level of service across the city.
OUR PARKS, OUR FUTURE

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

▲ AUSTIN’S PROPOSED URBAN TRAIL NETWORK
BASED ON STRATEGIC MOBILITY PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

▲ MAPPING OF EXISTING DENSITY, DISPLACEMENT RISK, FUTURE GROWTH

▲ MAPPING OF PARK ACCESS BY FOOT
OUR PARKS, OUR FUTURE

GROWTH & PARK NEED ANALYSIS

EXISTING HIGH-DENSITY AREAS

Areas in need of parkland are highlighted in orange in the map above, the creek buffer is shown in dark blue.

The distance is based on the transportation network (sidewalks, trails, etc.), and the PARD measures areas of the city that are not within walking distance (1/4 mile outside and 1/2 mile outside the urban core).

CREATIVE STRATEGIES ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS PARK NEEDS IN EXISTING HIGH-DENSITY AREAS

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan defines growth centers that will help to create a more compact and connected city.

The Parkland Dedication Ordinance is helping the city provide new parkland in areas where private development is occurring now and in the future, especially in high-growth areas.

Areas of the city where high growth is anticipated and where the need for parkland is high will benefit from proactive park planning to meet future needs.

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan defines growth centers that will help to create a more compact and connected city.

Areas in need of parkland are highlighted in orange in the map above, the creek buffer is shown in dark blue.

PROACTIVE PARK PLANNING IN HIGH GROWTH AREAS

Areas of the city where high growth is anticipated and where the need for parkland is high will benefit from proactive park planning to meet future needs.

AREAS AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT

This mapping identifies areas where the need for parkland is high and where communities are at risk for displacement.

IDENTIFYING AREAS THAT LACK PARKLAND

This means ensuring that residents within the urban core can choose to stay in their homes and neighborhoods.
IDENTIFYING PRIORITIZATION

COMPARE AREAS OF HIGH PARK NEED WITH PARK AMENITIES BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The LRP process includes detailed study of areas that are park deficient, as well as areas that have a high or low level of parks / programs compared to the city’s average.

PRIORITIZATION METHODOLOGY

Developed for prioritization of PARD LRP investments.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK LOOP

Continual feedback through ongoing meetings and activities with staff, stakeholders and the public combined with these analytical tools lead to prioritization and refinement of goals and strategies.
Ten themes emerged from the numerous community engagement events and surveys completed as part of this planning process. Those themes along with the priority needs and citywide analysis form the basis of the system-wide recommendations to follow.

**NATURAL EXPERIENCES**
People express a desire for parks that feel more natural. This includes undeveloped, wild natural spaces, rustic finishes instead of paved areas and more native plants.

**UNSTRUCTURED SPACES**
In general, people care less about spaces for specific programming, opting for more multi-use spaces and preserving green, natural and open spaces.

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**
Proactively use green infrastructure in parks to build a more resilient city. This includes stormwater management, flood protection, heat island effect mitigation, drought tolerance, and native planting/habitat areas.

**LINEAR PARKS & TRAILS**
People are more interested in parks that allow them to move (walk/run/bike) as opposed to staying in one place. There is an interest in nature and multipurpose trails within PARD parks as well as connectivity between parks along urban trails.

**PROXIMITY & ACCESS**
People are concerned about both the lack of parks near them and/or their ability to get to parks. This includes walkability issues, lack of adequate parking and the lack of public transit access.

**URBAN SPACES**
People express a concern that existing parkland in high-density urban areas exists already at critical locations, but are underutilized. The desire is for a renewed commitment to well-maintained green spaces and enhanced programming in urban parks in high-density areas.

**PARKS & ARTS/CULTURE**
People express a desire for increased arts/culture programming in parks. This includes increased community-focused programming and more cultural centers that could host these kinds of programs.

**EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**
People are interested in more hands-on educational opportunities. This includes youth education, art-based education and summer camps.

**INCLUSIVITY**
People express a desire for parks and programming to be more inclusive. This includes more publicity about activities, providing free parking, reducing fees that prevent low-income residents from participating, and increasing multi-generational programs and spaces.

**CLEANLINESS & SAFETY**
People are concerned that parks are not being adequately taken care of. This includes issues around lighting, shade, maintenance, recycling, bathrooms, off-leash dog areas and dog waste disposal. People also expressed concern about the issue of homelessness on many dimensions – safety, park cleanliness, humanitarian - and saw an opportunity to work with homeless population to improve park cleanliness & safety.
OUR PARKS, OUR FUTURE

CITYWIDE STRATEGIES

A. Ensure parks act as a RELIEF FROM URBAN LIFE

B. Expand and improve PARK ACCESS for all

C. Activate and enhance URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

D. Align programs with community interest

E. Optimize and improve EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS
The impact of Austin’s rapid growth is becoming apparent as Austinites increasingly confront the loss of natural areas and increased development. PARD has to guard the park system’s role as a relief from and counterpoint to Austin’s increasingly urban context. Likewise, the parks must become more flexible and multi-purpose to support a higher intensity and wider variety of park users.

### Community Engagement Themes

- **Natural Experiences**
- **Unstructured Spaces**
- **Green Infrastructure**
- **Linear Parks & Trails**
- **Proximity & Access**
- **Urban Spaces**
- **Parks & Arts/Culture**
- **Educational Opportunities**
- **Inclusivity**
- **Cleanliness & Safety**

| 1. | Add between 4,000 and 8,000 acres of new parkland over the next 10 years, maintaining the current park acres standard of 20 acres/1,000 residents while striving to achieve 24 acres/1,000 residents. |
| 2. | Protect and increase natural areas that support immersive nature experiences and provide space for environmental stormwater benefits. |
| 3. | Make it easier for Austinites to spend time interacting with water (e.g. recreational facilities like outdoor pools and access to natural water bodies like lakes and creeks). |
| 4. | Increase the number of PARD community gardens. |
| 5. | Invest in multi-purpose, unstructured spaces capable of supporting flexible uses. Park elements like small plazas or pavilions with electrical/water hookups, moveable furniture, and multi-purpose athletic fields allow for informal use of space while maintaining a natural, open feel. |
| 6. | Provide dedicated off-leash dog areas in appropriate locations to ensure both dog-owners and non-dog-owners can enjoy parks. |
| 7. | Protect and manage natural areas to intentionally balance recreational use with environmental protection. |
Prior to any significant master plan or development, work with partner organizations and current and long-time residents to ensure community involvement in the process.

Invest in the acquisition of new parkland that can make parks a part of everyday life in existing and future underserved areas.

Increase the number of entrances and access points to existing parks in order to expand the number of residents within walking distance of a park.

Increase multi-use and nature trails within the existing PARD park system and continue to acquire land for linear parks and greenbelts that can accommodate larger trail systems.

Support the efforts of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, city departments, and partners in advancing the mobility network beyond the PARD park system.

Achieve a more even geographic distribution of facilities that have a strong citywide interest.

Aspire to provide universal access (e.g. all ages, all abilities). Park spaces should be accessible, to the greatest extent feasible, by everyone regardless of age, ability, or language. Strive to create equal access for all Austinites by reducing barriers to use.

Improve signage and wayfinding markers at entrances and along trails to help park users navigate with confidence.

Improve the web-based information describing the park system to help people quickly find the amenities and experiences they are seeking.

Work with Austin Transportation Department to evaluate the need and appropriate fee structure for private car parking areas.
The strength of Austin’s park system has historically revolved around the iconic natural features and large parks; however, its downtown squares and urban parks have been overlooked and underestimated. These spaces can be activated to extend the benefits of parks to more people through a flexible, partnership-centric approach that expands and enhances use of our public spaces.

1. Build on the Downtown Austin Alliance’s Downtown Parks Vision to holistically elevate the quality of the urban public realm.

2. Invest in more lighting and increased staff and volunteer presence, especially along trails and pathways to ensure parks feel safe after dark.

3. Support more dense, flexible, and diverse programming and amenities (e.g. temporary seating or play equipment) in urban public spaces within and beyond PARD parkland.

4. Continuously monitor and provide a clear picture of cost and revenue information to the community, including community and economic impacts associated with large events.

5. Increase the number of Farmers Markets associated with parks and open spaces.

6. Expand PARD’s Historic Preservation and Heritage Tourism Program to protect, restore, and promote the cultural and historic resources of the park system.
While there is a high demand for more programs at parks, there is also a strong interest in Austin for natural experience and unprogrammed spaces and activities. As the needs and interests of residents change, program offerings should be evaluated and adjusted to reflect the most relevant programs as needed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THEMES

- Natural Experiences
- Unstructured Spaces
- Green Infrastructure
- Linear Parks & Trails
- Proximity & Access
- Urban Spaces
- Parks & Arts/Culture
- Educational Opportunities
- Inclusivity
- Cleanliness & Safety

1. Provide more nature-based programs.

2. Increase Adult and Senior programming across multiple categories – active recreation, nature-based and arts & culture.

3. Increase the number, diversity, and equitable distribution of arts and culture programs being offered through PARD.

4. Explore partnership strategies to increase low-income access to PARD programming.

5. Leverage “pop-up” programming and temporary uses (e.g. beer gardens, seasonal markets, parklets, exercise classes, etc.) to activate public spaces and expand access to programs typically held in recreation and cultural centers.

6. Continually assess community needs and proactively plan for recreation programming that aligns to these needs and trends.
Leverage partnerships and revenue opportunities to elevate the quality of PARD operations and maintenance while upholding equitable park access and ensuring a sustainable and well-balanced PARD budget.

1. **Consolidate and improve efficiency** of maintenance operations, administrative and program management functions to a central location with appropriate level of office space and facilities.

2. **Engage with and provide work opportunities** in parks to help people experiencing homelessness (e.g. the Workforce First program that pays individuals experiencing homelessness to help remove trash in public parks).

3. **Improve the value and awareness** of the parks and recreation system offerings to the community.

4. **Develop a clear organizational framework** for PARD partnerships that is equitable, supportive of PARD’s mission and goals, and is regularly evaluated to track and monitor impacts and outcomes.

5. **Work with partners to improve existing parks, trails, and facilities by creating and implementing master plans.**

6. **Pursue sustainability and resiliency goals** in all PARD facilities.
Planning area specific recommendations are included based on the five city-wide strategies and the specific needs and priorities of each combined planning area.
AT A GLANCE  

40% OF RESIDENTS LIVE IN PARK DEFICIENT AREAS  

$58,474 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (2017)  

15.8% RESIDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY (2017)  

19% HISPANIC  

222,537 JOBS  

203,740 RESIDENTS  

7.8 PEOPLE PER RESIDENT  

+50% POP. GROWTH BY 2040*  

+77% JOB GROWTH BY 2040**

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS  

RECOMENDACIONES PRELIMINARES

PARK DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION  

- ADAMS HEMPHILL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - develop and implement visionary plan, improve accessibility and key amenities  
- BARTON CREEK GREENBELT - improve access points, signage and wayfinding  
- MILLER CREEK PRESERVES - improve access, trailhead, and nature play  
- BRUSH SQUARE - master plan implementation  
- COVERT PARK AT MT. BONNELL - design and construction  
- DOUGHERTY ART CENTER AT BUTLER SHORES - complete design and implementation  
- ELSAEBET NAY MUSEUM - development of visitors center on north side of Waller Creek  
- GROVE AT SHAL CREEK - park system master plan implementation, includes dog park  
- LAMAR BEACH - master plan implementation  
- MAYFIELD PARK - rehabilitate buildings, grounds, and ponds  
- OLD BAKERY EMPORIUM & VISITORS CENTER - rehab and plan renovation  
- PERRY NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - work with AISD to improve neighborhood access  
- SEAHOLM WATERFRONT - master plan implementation  
- SOUTH AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - master plan implementation, includes trail & multiuse field improvements  
- STECK VALLEY GREENBELT - improvements and pocket park development  
- WADDELL NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - continue renovations  
- WASHBOAT LANDING - implement improvements  
- WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - master plan implementation, includes addressing failing retaining walls  
- WALLER CREEK - continue to collaborate with Waller Creek Conservancy improvements  
- WOODRIDGE SQUARE - master plan implementation  

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS  

- SHAL CREEK - reestablish the trail connection in landslide area  

PARTNERSHIPS  

- BRACKENRIDGE TRACT - work with UT to retain golf and/or recreational opportunities  
- NORWOOD HOUSE - continue to collaborate with the Norwood Foundation to rehab the house and implement the master plan  
- PEASE DISTRICT PARK - continue to collaborate with Pease Park Conservancy on improvements  
- SHAL CREEK CORRIDOR - continue to collaborate with Shal Creek Conservancy on improvements  
- TOWN LAKE HIKE AND BIKE TRAIL - work with UT to promote park trail connectivity to Red Bud Isle

ACQUISITIONS  

- BLANK CREEK TRAIL - extension to Lady Bird Lake Boardwalk Trail  
- WEST AND EAST BOULDIN CREEK GREENBELT - acquisition and trail development  

New parkland within park deficient areas

MASTER PLANNING  

- BEVERLY S SHEFFIELD NORTHWEST DISTRICT PARK - including trail connectivity to Red Bud Isle

FEASIBILITY STUDIES  

- HAMMOCK GOLF COURSE - study feasibility of golf and other recreational opportunities that can enhance sustainability of course

WHAT DID WE MISS?
DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

View the Draft Plan

www.austinfutureparks.org

STAY CONNECTED

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