

Pedestrian Advisory Council Recommendation:

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) Long Range Plan

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) is to advise the City of Austin on pedestrian planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement regarding creating, maintaining, and operating pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, Austin's parks are equally crucial as civic and social spaces as they are for recreation;

WHEREAS, because many parks are poorly integrated into their surroundings and often surrounded by wide roads and physical barriers with park facilities frequently located far and out of sight from the closest streets, many Austinites do not currently live within pleasant and safe walking distance of a park and its facilities;

WHEREAS, large parks often excel as places to walk, become immersed in nature, and as places offering a range of space-consuming activities and small parks often function as more accessible and socially-oriented spaces and all communities should be within a short walk of both types of park;

WHEREAS, parks can serve as nearby community centers with amenities that help facilitate a car-lite or car-free lifestyle;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the PAC recommends that the following proposals be integrated into the PAR 2019 Long Range Plan:

- Options for increasing use of current parks be given equal weight alongside creating new parks
- All parks and park entrances must be accessible through high-quality pedestrian infrastructure, including well-maintained, shaded, and lit sidewalks; frequently spaced crossing lights with reasonable, prioritized timing; and shortened crossing distance through street narrowing, road diets, and other traffic calming measures and speed management strategies to ensure a safe and comfortable park environment for all users
- Parks, including cemeteries and golf courses, be used to augment and enhance the connectivity of the existing pedestrian network
- Pedestrian comfort be prioritized in parks through features such as pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage; trails that are curved, shaded, and well-defined by trees; drinking fountains
- Sittability, lingerability, and sociability be considered key qualities of any park through facilities such as the regular presence of covered picnic tables, benches with backs, and focal points such as gazebos and plazas
- Wherever possible, park facilities abut, or be located close to and within visual distance of, sidewalks/streets
- Increase the number of residents a short walk from parks, increase park safety through the "eyes on the street" effect, and maximize park access for low income households by encouraging existing, new, and affordable housing to be closely integrated into parks, including by allowing housing to directly border and building entrances open into parks

- The number of pocket parks that provide a range of things to do be greatly increased so that they are accessible by a five minute or less walk for all Austinites, and where appropriate space for new such parks be opened up through a range of creative approaches, including road diets, converting entire or parts of parking lots, rooftop installations, and supporting other City departments in converting streets into “Woonerven” (shared streets) that feature park elements
- PARD encourage and support communities in the creation of parklike amenities and shared spaces such as parklets and pocket patios on residential streets as an important element of the public realm
- Communities be invited to adopt and integrate local ideas, culture, and features into parks
- Regulations be relaxed to make it as easy as possible for communities to hold events and create programming in their local parks
- Parks be considered as sites for a wider range of community services than are often offered, such as tool lending libraries, bookable event rooms, gathering spaces/structures such as gazebos and outdoor movie screens, and storage spaces for commonly-needed community equipment such as folding chairs and tables and sporting equipment; making sure that such facilities be well integrated into parks

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends that metrics and year by year implementation goals be created for the above aims, especially increasing the percentage of parks that are considered “connected” to their surroundings by high-quality pedestrian infrastructure

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the PAC recommends the Austin City Council consider how to forward the following recommendations in parallel with updating the PARD Long Range Plan:

- Maximize on-street parking by minimizing parking inside parks and removing Residential Parking Permits near parks
- The City of Austin create an inventory of potential creative ways to open up spaces - including hotels, vacant land and buildings, under-utilized parking lots, and parks - as sites of short term emergency housing for people currently without access to housing

AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, the PAC supports passage of the PARD Long Range Plan with the above conditions.

Date: October 7, 2019

Vote: 9 – 0

Attest:



Jay Crossley, PAC Chair