



Community Projects

Community projects provide an opportunity for neighbors, community groups and partners to raise funds and in-kind contributions to implement park improvement projects that are in alignment with PARD plans and priorities.

Objectives

The objective of the program is to partner with the community to leverage private resources and complete projects that meet neighborhood and community needs and priorities

Roles

Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD)

- Provide oversight and guidance
- Review, approval and oversight for park improvement projects
- Collaborate on projects

Partner (Neighborhood, Community Group, Adopt-a-Park Partner)

- Serve as the community lead for the project
- Conduct outreach and stakeholder input and gain broad community support for projects
- Secure funding and in-kind contribution for project

Third Party Partners

- Provide grants, donations and funding
- Provide tools, materials and supplies
- Provide technical assistance and education

Project Types:

Project Complexity

- ☐ **Low Complexity** – Typical projects may include, picnic tables, benches, trash cans, and kiosks. These are typically small projects with budgets under \$15,000
- ☐ **Medium Complexity** – Typical projects include shade structure install, trails, and picnic pavilions. These are typically medium size projects with budgets under \$50,000
- ☐ **High Complexity** – Includes a wide range of projects from new play equipment to major park renovations. These are typically large projects with substantial budgets .

Project Master Planning

- ☐ **Enhancement Project** – Consistent with and enhances existing park uses or the addition of new uses already included in planning documents for the park. Examples of this type of project include **improving existing** pathways, play equipment, landscaping, and renovating or enhancing existing park features, or implementing portions of a park master plan.
- ☐ **Major Park Development/New or Change of Use*** – Major park development or renovations that are new to the existing park design and not included in planning documents for the park. Also includes removal or displacement of existing use. Examples of this type of project includes a **major renovation of multiple park areas** or features as well as **the addition of new uses** such as a skate or BMX park, community garden, off-leash area, disc-golf course,

*These projects typically require a formal planning process as a first step prior to initiating any park improvement. The planning process will include stakeholder engagement and result in a plan for park improvement(s). If the plan includes major renovation of multiple park areas, the proposed improvements will typically be phased and prioritized.

Project Management

- ☐ **PARD Managed Projects** – projects managed by PARD. May include grants or donations secured by partner and contributed to the project and/or volunteer labor. Group may provide assistance, however, if a professional design consultant or project manager is not hired by the group, the project will be managed by PARD staff. ***(The written agreement will identify the roles of each party.)***
- ☐ **Partner Managed Projects** – projects managed by a partner with a professional design consultant or project manager. PARD only provides guidance and support, design review and project oversight. Typically medium to large projects. ***(These projects will require a “Park Improvement Agreement” including all design standards and liability requirements.)***

Guidelines and Process

Step 1. Contact PARD to discuss your idea!

This is REQUIRED and the best way to get started. This allows the group and PARD to work collaboratively from the very beginning to develop a project proposal that meets the group's goals, is consistent with park plans, is feasible and enhances the park. We will explain the types of projects and process for each, provide support and guidance and we can have early discussions about fundraising opportunities and strategies. PARD staff will provide guidance and assistance at the idea stage and if the proposal develops into an active project, throughout the entire lifecycle of the project.

Step 2. Submit Project Concept Application

Applicant must submit an initial concept in order for PARD to conduct an initial review on concept feasibility and alignment with PARD mission and goals and plans for the park. This step ensures that the project is feasible before the group invests time and resources in developing the full project details.

Application must include:

1. **Written description:** Enough of a description to get a basic understanding of the project. Examples of questions that should be answered are: What is the purpose/public benefit? What would it look like? What size would it be? How would it be used? How would it be built? What materials would be used?
2. **Location map:** Google map or other map identifying the specific park and area in the park where the project is proposed
3. **Sketch Plan:** should be drawn to scale and this can be hand-drawn
OR
Photo: of a similar project or feature that the applicant would like to replicate
4. **Estimated budget:** This is not the final budget at this stage, but the concept should be developed enough to have an estimate of the total budget. A community project budget worksheet must be submitted with your application.
5. **Estimated timeline:** What is the desired timeframe for completion?
6. **Long-term maintenance plan:** How will the project be maintained after it is complete? Will the applicant have an ongoing role in maintenance? What do you envision that role to be?
7. **Funding Plan:** What is your funding plan or proposed source of funding?
8. **Description of Applicant Capacity for Project Design and Management:**
 - Do you have a professional designer or project manager to develop detailed plans and cost estimates for the project or will you be requesting PARD support?
 - Do you have a professional designer or project manager to manage and implement the project or will you be requesting PARD support for project management?

Step 3. PARD Initial Review/Concept Approval

PARD staff conducts initial review for application completeness, concept feasibility and alignment with PARD mission and goals and plans for the park

The staff will evaluate the feasibility of the project and consider criteria including:

- a. Does project serve the general public?
- b. Is the proposal consistent with the Long Range Plan and/or Park Master Plan?
- c. Is the project consistent and compatible with existing or proposed uses for the park?
- d. Does the project meet PARD standards and have a level of quality consistent with standards for similar projects?
- e. Impact on Park Maintenance? Can PARD fund ongoing maintenance or is ongoing funding or a maintenance agreement from the applicant required?
- f. Likelihood of broad Community Support?
- g. Does the applicant have the capacity to develop a detailed design and cost estimate independently or will this require PARD support?
- h. Does the applicant have a professional designer or project manager to manage the project or will PARD project management be required?
- i. Does the project have an identified funding source? Is the applicant requesting PARD funding?

- ❑ **Approved Concept** – If the Project is consistent with the review criteria described above and determined to be feasible by PARD staff, the concept will be approved and the applicant will be invited to continue to the Notification/Public Involvement step. ***(Very small enhancement projects such as a park bench or picnic table installation may receive final approval at this stage.)***

Step 3a – PARD Resource Allocation

For Approved concepts, If PARD funds and/or staff time are required for your project, during the initial review an analysis will be done to determine if the funds and/or staff resources are available and the estimated timeframe for providing those resources.

- Examples of PARD support include:
 - Completion of detailed design cost estimate
 - Project management
- Allocation of PARD resources does not guarantee implementation or a specific timeline, these commitments are made at Step 8, after project requirements and costs have been developed in more detail and the project is fully funded.

Step 3b – Notification/Stakeholder Input Requirements

For Approved Concepts, during the initial review PARD staff will determine the type of notification or stakeholder outreach and input that is required for the project.

- All projects will include notification of any Adopt-a-Park groups. Other options may include posting on PARD website, notice in park kiosk, a temporary sign in the park, notification of neighborhood associations in the area, public meetings, and/or public hearings at the Parks and Recreation Board.
- Projects that include major park improvements and/or add or eliminate uses at the park may require a Park Master Planning Process. The Master Plan Process will require additional staff resources and a **Formal Agreement** between the two parties.

*If the applicant will be seeking a grant from the City Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP) and/or the Austin Parks Foundation Park Grants Program (APF) a preliminary discussion with NPP and/or APF staff is encouraged upon Concept Approval.

☐ **Concept Not Approved** - Project concept is not supported due to the review criteria listed above.

Step 4. Notification/Public Involvement or Master Plan Development

PARD staff will work with the group to design the public engagement strategy, and provide guidance and consultation during implementation. PARD staff may also assist with the public engagement meetings, depending on staff resources and will be agreed to on a case-by-case basis. If a master plan is required, there will be a formal agreement to guide the master plan development.

☐ ***If the project does not have broad community support, PARD staff and the applicant will re-evaluate the project to address concerns and revise the concept if possible. Otherwise the project WILL NOT move forward.***

Step 5. Fundraising

Applicant may begin grant-writing and other fundraising with PARD support and commitment for funding and staff resources that have been committed, and based on estimated timeframes provided by PARD.

Applications to the City's Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP), Austin Parks Foundation grants program and other grant programs are submitted at this step.

****Applicant may fundraise at any time; however, there is no PARD commitment for project implementation until this step. All fundraising prior to this step is at the applicants own risk. PARD requests that fundraising prior to this step include language that clearly states that project implementation has not yet been approved.***

Step 6. Project Charter and Project Agreement

A “Project Charter” and a “Project Agreement” will be completed and signed. A PARD project manager will be assigned and a Project Management Plan (PMP) will be completed.

The agreement will document scope, costs, budget, roles and responsibilities, design standards and liability requirements. Budget considerations include the cost of design, engineering, materials, installation and maintenance as well as PARD staff time and maintenance needs.

If an NPP grant is awarded, any funding and staff time committed from PARD, and both PARD and NPP staff (Public Works) roles and responsibilities for design and implementation will be determined and documented.

Step 7. Detailed Design, Project Specifications, Cost Estimate and Permitting.

Below are the methods used to complete the Detailed Design:

☐ **PARD Responsible for completing the Design and Cost Estimate**

A PARD design professional will work collaboratively with the applicant to complete the detailed design and cost estimate. An estimated timeline for completion will be provided on a case-by-case basis, but a rough estimate is typically:

Low Complexity – 1 -2 months

Medium Complexity – 3-6 months

High Complexity – 6+ months

☐ **Applicant Responsible for completing Design and Cost Estimate**

If the applicant is developing the detailed design and cost estimate, it is the responsibility of the applicant and their design professional to complete and submit the design to PARD. Collaboration with PARD staff is required throughout the design process to ensure the design meets PARD’s standards and maintenance requirements. PARD will review the design to ensure it is consistent with the following criteria

- a. Does the project still meet the community vision?
- b. Does the project meet PARD design criteria? Does the project meet PARD standards and have a level of quality consistent with standards for similar projects?
- c. Is the design complete?
- d. Is the project feasible as designed?
- e. Is the cost estimate accurate?
- f. Is there an agreed upon maintenance plan in place?
- g. Does PARD have staff capacity to support the design and construction? On what timeline?

☐ **Neighborhood Partnering Program Responsible for completing Design and Cost Estimate**

If project is accepted by the City’s Neighborhood Partnering Program the detailed design and cost estimate may be completed by the NPP staff (Public Works). An estimated timeline for completion will be provided by NPP staff. For NPP supported proposals PARD and NPP staff will work collaboratively on Step 7.

Step 8. Project Installation/Construction

The methods for project management are:

- ☐ **PARD Managed** – all project scheduling, contractor oversight, and work in the field will be overseen by the PARD Project Manager. Applicant assistance and participation is welcomed and encouraged, but the applicant will not serve in a project management role on the project.
- ☐ **Partner Managed** – a professional design consultant or project manager will manage the project and the assigned PARD project manager will provide guidance and support, design review and project oversight. Typically medium to large projects. ***(These projects will require a formal “Park Improvement Agreement” including all design standards and liability requirements.)***
- ☐ **NPP Managed** – If the project is awarded an NPP grant, some components of the project scheduling, contractor oversight, and work in the field may be overseen by the NPP Project Manager.

Step 9. Celebrate

Upon completion PARD will document and track the project outcome and value. PARD will coordinate any project openings or ribbon cuttings with the partner. PARD will conduct a survey to find out what went well, what could be improved and work towards continuous improvement.