

PARD Community Ambassadors Report

Zilker Park Vision Plan

PARD Ambassadors: Alexandria Anderson and Dexter Bray

Meetings took place between September 5 and September 29, 2021

Do you go to Zilker? Why or why not?

I used to go back in the day when they had free concerts which was every Wednesday, Blues on the Green. I go for the Botanical Garden and for the walking trails. Now I really don't go since the pandemic, actually I haven't been there in about 3 years.

Pre- pandemic I went often. I walked the trails that's mainly the reason for me going after the concerts.

Oh yea I did go quiet a bit pre-covid. My main reason to go to Zilker is the pool. I was a 5am swimmer so going to the pool was my coffee before I went to work. Swimming at Barton Spring Pool at 5am in the morning is heaven on earth.

Some other reasons for going to Zilker includes the Christmas programming like the Trail of lights. We have been involved with the Jingle 5k and we also have volunteered for the Christmas tree set up. I go sometimes to enjoy the theater. I used to hike to the botanical garden.

I don't know much about Zilker Park. I would go occasionally. I would go more if it was culturally diverse.

When I did go to Zilker, I would go to the green space. I love sitting under the trees. Before covid, I like the fact that they had grills that you could cook out on if you wanted to. It was very quiet and very serene. I really like the Zilker Botanical Garden and looking at the flowers and plants.

Since the recent migration of people to Austin, now it's become a nasty doggie park and I have a problem with that. I have a problem that the park being used to potty their dogs. I don't mind the dogs but something should remain sacred. Certain parts of the park should be fenced off for dog usage. For those of us who want to go sit on the grass or under the trees, and you want to put a blanket on the ground and you have dog pee or poop on the ground, it's not very inviting. I think that the park should be totally off limits to dogs but if it can not be off limits then there should be designated areas.

Yes. I like big parks and it's beautiful. My biggest issue is the traffic and getting in and out of Zilker and it's overwhelming.

Yes I go to Zilker but not frequently. I live north central Austin and its a little far for me. Its not a lot of trails at Zilker park and I like the Lady Bird Lake trails. Im also not sure on the park hours. I think accessibility to the park is another reason I don't go. If there is a metro stop near there, then maybe more people from North Austin or North west Austin would go. I sometimes go to the pool. Also traffic congestion and parking.

Hallie: I go to Zilker sometimes but I do love having a park so centrally located just to get some outdoors time and people watching and being in nature

Lynn: I go for Trail of Lights and I love driving by Zilker and seeing everybody enjoying themselves and the facility. Especially since covid I don't even do the hike and bike trail. I haven't been to Zilker since Trail of Lights in December but I drive by it all the time and wave.

Yes but not really. I have a dog which I usually keep on leash and there are a lot dog owners who let their dogs run off leash.

I usually go to Zilker for ACL and if I am riding with a group for a bike social on the bike trail.

I don't attend many events at Zilker park because of the location, its accessibility- I have walk with a cane/walker. Also I would take my kids back in the day to more of the parks located on the East Side.

Yes occasionally.

Because of the upkeep of the park

Xanya doesn't go to Zilker Park

She had an experience there where she felt discriminated against

Occasionally, most times I will travel a little bit further to go to a different park because they are more accessible. During holidays other parks offer more experiences that feel more diverse and inclusive of my culture.

I haven't been to Zilker in about a year. Since COVID-19 started but the last time I did I took my grandchildren to the playground and we also had a family night at the Trail of lights the Christmas of 2020.

Yes. My family and I go to zilker for the open fields areas, we like to ride bikes on the trail, my kids love the train. We love canoeing on the lake I really just love the wide open space and range the park has.

Yes I visit Zilker Park. It's been a place I've gone to on school field trips in grade school and with friends as I've grown up. I often refer to it as Austin's "local watering hole". I haven't been in a few years, admittedly, except for work.

No, too many racist encounters. Especially concerning the pool

I occasionally go to Zilker Park, I would so maybe once or twice a year. Mainly because it is on the other side of town and also it doesn't feel all inclusive to everyone. Every time I go I can count on one hand how many people of color I see.

Yes, I love kayaking at Zilker.

No because it's too far and it's nothing lot to do there.

From time to time. When I went consistently, it was to play soccer leisurely. The last time I went was for a photoshoot.

If additional programming or events were available at Zilker, would you go more? What events or programming would you draw you to Zilker?

With the pandemic right now, I'm not interested in spaces with a lot of people. I used to go to the reggae fest. It's enough programming going on that would interest me but due to the pandemic I just not interested in being around that many people but if the pandemic goes away, I can see myself going back to some of these events. I take my grandkids to the Kite festival and see myself enjoying more of Zilker.

If it was not a pandemic, I would like for Zilker to have more FREE events maybe like a carnival for the kids, maybe a huge farmer's market and maybe even more free concerts. When there are concerts at Zilker, the food is so expensive. I would like if they have events that we can bring our own food, water, alcohol like they used too. It would make it more economical for me.

I have lived in Austin my entire life- born and raised. I think having more mindful income programming and events like that similar to Zilker Gardens which allows families free entry based on their income level (MFI).

I think people would feel more included if you first celebrate their culture like that of Blues on the Green. Having affordable entry levels to events like ACL, Blues on the Green. This will allow them to

participate without having to set them back financially. Having more affordable or Free events, and having more cultural tailored event. Families could be able to access or apply through a QR code to qualify. If Covid has taught us one thing is that people need interaction and not isolation. If a family wants to attend but can't afford it, the City should have many income options for them to be able to access.

I love all the certain programming. There used to be a Renaissance Festival held in Zilker and it would be great if that could be brought back. Any additional programming that has to do with African American art, African American music. I am open to all different types of music if its Brazilian, Classical. Culturally music and theater are a big thing for me but I would like to see more that represents the African American culture. I would like to see more diversity in the programming they have and being included in the whole scenario being a resident of Austin.

I think having more culture programming would be better.

I would go to more events at Zilker if they were free. I wish parking was free and trying to find parking can be hard. I usually park under the Mopac bridge and walk over.

Even if more programs/events were available, it will go back to traffic congestion and parking for me.

Some events or programming that would draw me would be free music, ifood events because I love food and cultural events.

I have always wanted to go to the kite festival but again I haven't gone because I was like do I want to deal with traffic and parking.

Hallie: I can't really imagine what would increase my listing Zilker, I mean maybe more free music would,. I feel like Blues on the Green. I believe that is all great programming. I would definitely go for more FREE music, or if there was more, I mean I love the trail of lights so if there was more of an art sculpture walk that would be cool. I think more dance parties would bring me to Zilker more, if it was Dj events and more dancing. If there was more community workouts.

Lynnie: I think I would go. Ive been in Austin so long, that a lot of the Zilker events I feel like I've been there, done that. I mean iVe done Blues of the Green. I was a regular at ACL expect for the last 4 years. I think Zilker is missing out on art in some way and just something new and different because I think its kinda been there, done that.

I think Zilker should have more events tailored to individuals who are dog owners. Maybe having a pet vendors market would be great. Also having events tailored to specific cultures would be awesome and would be great to celebrate. I think also with traffic and parking being as it is, I usually choose parks closer to where I leave.

I think having more FREE events and events that are specific to the many ethnic groups who are residents in Austin. It is also great to explore, honor and celebrate the many cultures who live here in Austin. I do love nature so the I do like the UMLAUF and Botanical Gardens.

I don't know if I would go, probably not. Maybe if it was more accessible and it had more music events that was close to the style of music I liked I would go.

She said she would absolutely go more.

would like to see a vendor event for small minority businesses.

would consider going if it were things added that she was interested in. She said she would like to see things that brought attention to multicultural spiritualities

Yes, I would like to go more if they offered options to more activities. For instance, music festivals other than ACL. It would be nice to see music festivals dedicated to a multitude of genres (R&B, Hip

Hop, Jazz). Celebrating Chinese new year, Hispanic Heritage Month, Juneteenth events, farmer's markets, and pop up shops that have to include a certain percentage of minority vendors etc., h yes, I would definitely visit the park more if it had more activities/Events. I would love to see move Afrocentric music events or plays. Maybe open Mic events for standup spoken word or comics. More events gear for seniors/ over 40 age group, like walking groups, yoga, Jass music under the stars... Movie nights for families.

Yes I'd go more. I'd like to see more events for the youth, like picnics for different age groups on different days, book clubs, city talent shows, adult book fairs, wine tastings, movie screenings of African American films.

Yes I would probably go more. I want to see more events centered around black, indigenous, and Latinx communities and projects.

I would enjoy black culture center Concerts and plays at the outdoor theater

Yes I would go more if there was more programming or events that invited more people of color in like more selections of musical concerts with different genre or cultural events that say we see you and you're welcome here.

Especially events for children, maybe like a small fair etc

Yes I would go especially since I'm a mother. If there we more activities gear towards our children or being things to town that we don't get to see whether it be cultural or educational

Yes. Non profit community outreach programs for minorities and underprivileged youth tend to get me out and about. Jump On It, perhaps?

Zilker Park officially ended segregation in 1963, but for many it continues to be a place where Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color do not feel fully welcomed. What thoughts do yo...

I think its okay. I think a lot of our black people especially those who have been here for some time, even our younger people, do not know about Zilker Park. Its a nice space but maybe its too far away for them to enjoy so they enjoy the green spaces that are closer to them on the East Side. I don't feel that its segregated like that when I go. I mean I do see more people who don't look like me but that's okay because its an open space. And I am more afraid of a shooter in open spaces like that and it's not going to be a person of color that would be the shooter. I am more afraid of my safety especially since the new gun laws.

For me, its more of a safety concern why I don't go to Zilker along with parking. Parking is ridiculous. Back then you were able to park along the great lawn and you didn't have to pay, so that's another problem. If I go to Zilker I park by the Hillside Theater.

The way to do that is to bring people of color into Zilker through vending. This allows people to see individuals who look like them. People who work at the facilities- the pool, the theater.

Have more cultural events and allow these group of people to have a seat at the table when it comes to programming for Zilker and even all the parks in the city. If they are not at the table, the Black, Latinx, etc will not be able to give you those cultural ideas. Let them have a real voice. One example could be a Salsa Swimming night/competition, having the music playing while everyone is in the pool. Another example could be during the Polar Plunge, wearing a swimsuit that identifies with your culture. The way to break down those barriers is to allow those voices to be at the table if you truly are taking the racism signs down.

It's not much there for Black people. We need to diversify the culture. Incorporate activities that would reflect the African American culture.

As a white woman, the lack of diversity is another reason why I don't go to Zilker. I prefer to go to places where it is more diverse. I like Bartholomew. My kids needs to be around a mix of people.

I think a lot of it is accessibility to transportation, where the park is located. The majority of people who live around there are white-identify folks. People of color typically live on the East side.

Maybe one way to help is making all metro rails and buses on the day of an event free to use.

Also having events that cater to people of color.

Lynnie: Well I really think more cultural based events held at Zilker. Once again I think its gets back to the arts, music and really showcasing that for specific promotion. I think storytelling has totally disappeared. I think someone who has an amazing voice that can tell the Black history in Austin and the strength and not focus on the suppression but the empowerment and having it in spoken word, storytelling and acting it out. Lets make it a visual extravaganza and I think that would be way more interesting. I also think Zilker should have poetry slams and really making it totally inclusive.

Hallie: I agree with all that Lynnie said. That would be cool to have different events at Zilker that highlights specific months such as Black history, Mexican heritage month, etc.

I think having more events tailored towards specific cultures would be inviting.

Having a seat at the table when it comes to the programming not just of Zilker Park but of all the parks in Austin. I believe that expose to the vast cultures who create a social cohesion among the residents. Also I think having more art work expressed in the different mediums who be great.

I think creating a more inclusive space throughout Austin is vital. Austin is a very paternalist town. We need to have more culturally diverse venues and spaces for those who live here. Easier access to these venues could help with individuals feeling welcomed as well.

I think that Zilker Park representatives could promote more in East Austin

Just thinks the lack of diversity in what's offered at the park causes the environment not to seem inclusive

Being a minority in a place where I have lived my entire life I feel it is very important for Zilker park to make spaces and broadcast activities/events for Austinites that are under-represented. There has been so much space created for people who are not even from here. It is the park's duty as a public entity to make every group feel included.

I agree with this statement. I'm almost 60 and I can remember when Zilker wasn't a welcoming place for blacks. As a teenager we started going there on Sundays and had a DJ that played music on the hilltop. They put a stop to that within weeks. Today they have all kind of concerts that are not geared to the African American community. They are packed and everyone is fine with it and the City goes out of their way to fund it and promote it. It gives the impression that we are not wanted/welcome. When the black community tries to have an outdoor venue for events, they fence us in like animals and over police the event

I think there should be more events hosted by the people of these cultures. More events where cultures can be intertwined and emphasized. I think the culture and history is the main thing that be should be highlighted when events take place at Zilker, being that this city is so rich in both.

Yes, I am always open to making most spaces more inclusive.

More outreach with Community arts practitioners who can bring events to the space that will attract their community base.

I would love for Zilker Park to be more inclusive so my child can experience the benefits of Zilker Park as well as anyway else and not feel out of place.

I feel like it's more than overdue. It's 2021 minorities aren't even the "minority" anyone yet still treated as second hand citizens

If you have more activities or events geared towards POC then it would pull more of us down there and make us feel included in living in Austin

Community led cook outs, BBQs and pot lucks might bring out a different crowd. (Not sure how possible this is under Covid restrictions, but it's an idea.)

Additional Comments

The African American culture is beautiful. I don't understand why we won't have a Jazz festival at Zilker Park. I don't understand why we don't have a Tejano or even the entire Latin music culture presence at Zilker. I would love a Bolly music event. We have to get past the fact that we are different cultures and that we are human and celebrate each others differences. Maybe even have a cultural food event at Zilker Park.

Let's include more local talent. Historically Austin refuses to recognize our local talent. There needs to be an aggressive search for our local talent in terms of music, in terms of art, in terms of entertainment, whether than always seeking the entertainment outside our local area. We have some great talent here, who is starving and we need to concentrate more that part and coming up with a viable plan to include a much larger ratio of local talent rather than seeking outside talent.

I think us being here in Austin for so long its like been there, done that so now that we have furthered the discussion of possibilities that it would be cool to have more multi-cultural events.

I did love that the Trail of Lights was totally handicapped-capable friendly. That was huge and it was the first year that my parents were able to go for probably 10 years because they are now in their mid-90s and the chaos of walking through was way more than they could handle. So having more handi-capable events.

Zilker has to make aggressive moves towards changing the way they're looked at.

Austin and its parks need to become more inclusive to all ethnicities. I personally feel that's one of the reason the the African American population in slowly fading away in Austin is that the city is systematically making events, neighborhoods and the economy unavailable/unattainable for people of color. When we want extra-curricular activities we have to leave Austin to find the things we enjoy doing. The Park system is following the trend of gentrifying and segregating itself by race and economic.

I think there should be more armed security around the playground for as long as it is open. The city should pay for them.

You really don't want to know

Looking forward to seeing more people of color at Zilker. Thank you for asking, I appreciate the steps being taken to enact a vision plan for inclusivity.