

Executive Summary

The Parkland Events Task Force was created by resolution 20150305-025 approved by the Austin City Council on June 5, 2015. The Task Force held its first meeting on August 25, 2015, when all seventeen members were seated.

The Council resolution directed the Task Force to “develop recommendations to ensure that all City parks, but most particularly Auditorium Shores, Zilker Park, and Festival Beach, remain first and foremost assets for the citizens of Austin to enjoy and that the parks are preserved and enhanced for future generations of Austinites and visitors to experience and enjoy.”

This overarching directive guided the Task Force through its deliberations and informed the following key Task Force recommendations:

- The number of events at Auditorium Shores, Zilker Park, and Festival Beach should be reduced through attrition to achieve a better balance between events and public access to these parks.
- Bolm Road Park, Johnny Trevino, Jr. Park, Onion Creek Metropolitan Park, and Walter E. Long Park should be considered as potential sites for events to help ensure that neighborhoods in East Austin have more equitable opportunities for cultural and neighborhood-oriented events and to serve as alternative sites for events at over-utilized urban parks. Affected neighborhoods should have a formal role in the decisions about and planning for events at nearby parks.
- The City should conduct a comprehensive financial analysis of the fees for events to ensure that they are sufficient to cover all of the City’s costs associated with events including but not limited to use of parkland and public right-of-ways; street, road, and trail closures; police, fire, and emergency services; traffic and parking management; and short- and long-term maintenance.
- A pre- and post-event evaluation matrix should be developed and utilized by the parks department to identify the economic and community benefits that events provide and to mitigate the impacts that they have on public access to parks, traffic, neighborhoods, parkland trees, and the environment.
- Policies to protect parkland trees, vegetation, and environmentally sensitive areas should be enhanced and enforced; and “green events” polices to protect air and water quality, promote recyclable materials and reduce landfill waste should be emphasized.

(The complete list of Task Force recommendations and resolutions is located in Appendix ???.)

The Task Force referenced a wide array of public input to produce the recommendations. The input ranged from absolutely no events on parkland to enthusiastically more events. The input included comments that some events

Parkland Events Task Force Final Report

damage parkland or create noise, parking, traffic, and trash issues in adjacent neighborhoods.

Some input suggested that park rental fees for events should be increased and parkland trees should be better protected. Other input expressed preference for more low-cost, non-profit, and cultural events. Some input recommended that events should be held at parks in other areas of the City outside the urban core.

It's worth noting the diversity of the 17-member Task Force, with representatives from neighborhoods, music advocates, event producers and environmental advocates. Through all of our discussions and deliberations, there was one constant theme: *All 17 members are park and community advocates who want collective and responsible success.*

As intended by Council, there were many different viewpoints expressed by Task Force members as represented in the final report. The success of the Task Force has been predicated on a philosophy of inclusion and not from the standpoint of any one person or group. It is a sense of duty that the Task Force exudes from which we are providing pure recommendations for your consideration.

The Task Force members appreciate the opportunity serve our community and produce this report for the Council. We hope these recommendations will accepted and utilized to help ensure that City parks "remain first and foremost assets for the citizens of Austin to enjoy and that the parks are preserved and enhanced for future generations of Austinites and visitors to experience and enjoy."

Introduction

The Task Force held 29 public meetings in various locations in the City to receive input from the public and develop recommendations concerning parkland events. Public input was also received through Speak Up Austin, text messaging, email, and online surveys. A special-called public meeting was held to receive public input on the recommendations. Task Force members were responsible for seeking input from residents in the Council Districts they represent.

The Task Force received information and input from the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), Austin Transportation Department, Law Department, Austin Center For Events, and Austin Police Department.

The Task Force Co-Chairs provided updates to and received feedback from the Open Space, Environment, and Sustainability Committee, Parks and Recreation Board, and Environmental Commission.

The scope of work for the PETF included:

Parkland Events Task Force
Final Report

- 1) An inventory of special events at City parks, including the number of events, number of participants, and number of days each park is unavailable for general park use;
- 2) A review of existing park special events policies as well as existing practices related to events scheduling, coordination, and enforcement of contracts and agreements;
- 3) A comparative analysis of Parks and Recreation Department fees for park use received versus the cost of repair, maintenance, and other costs for each park facility;
- 4) An assessment of the impact that park special events have on surrounding neighborhoods, businesses, and infrastructure, in coordination with the work under way by the City Council's Mobility Committee regarding transportation impacts;
- 5) Identification of opportunities for new public and private venues to accommodate events, including an assessment of their carrying capacities and potential impact on surrounding neighborhoods, businesses, and infrastructure;
- 6) Recommendation of mechanisms that ensure fees collected for special events are sufficient for the maintenance and repairs for any post-event issues;
- 7) Consideration of a policy change to direct fees collected for use of park facilities for a special event be directed to parks maintenance and operations; and
- 8) Determination of whether an adjustment to the number of events held at City parks, most particularly Auditorium Shores, Zilker Park, and Festival Beach, is appropriate.