



## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **COMMITTEE ON OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Date:** October 26, 2016

**Agenda Item #:** 3

**Agenda Item:** Discussion and possible action on the Lamar Beach Park Master Plan as developed in conjunction with Design Workshop, Inc. and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

**Vote** No vote was taken.

**Sponsors/Department:** Parks and Recreation Department

**Presenters:** Ricardo Soliz, Division Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, Charles Mabry, Park Development Coordinator, Parks and Recreation Department, and Rebecca Leonard, Design Workshop

#### **Summary of Discussion**

- Ricardo Soliz, Division Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, gave some background on the park and the planning process. In 2014 City Council passed a resolution to initiate master planning for Lamar Beach Park. The resolution stemmed from organizations revisiting existing agreements, partly in response to the planned Pressler Street extension. Council asked PARD to work on a comprehensive plan to look at the issues of parking, environmental protection, public impacts and benefits of potential traffic changes, and future MoPac toll roads. The plan will be presented to Council for their approval in December.
- Between September and January, PARD and Design Workshop worked closely with the community to develop the recommendations for the plan. The plan has been presented to the Small Area Planning Committee, the Animal Advisory Commission, the Planning Commission, the Downtown Commission, the Design Commission, and the Parks and Recreation Board. All of these groups have endorsed the plan thus far.
- Lamar Beach includes 65.4 acres of parkland within the Lady Bird Lake Metropolitan Park System. It is home to multiple organizations that provide public benefits: Austin Animal Center/Austin Pets Alive!, West Austin Youth Association, the YMCA of Austin, the Texas Rowing Center and Austin Independent School District/Austin High School. The first goal of the plan is to maintain the current uses of these organizations.

- The second goal is to gain support from the affected stakeholders. To this end, there was a concerted effort to solicit and incorporate community input—PARD has received over 8,000 hits to the project website and over 1500 people provided input online. There were also three community workshops that were highly attended, with over 100 people at each workshop. PARD also held stakeholder group meetings, particularly with the groups that utilize the park. There was also a Technical Advisory Committee that incorporated city departments, TxDOT, and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority.
- Through these meetings with stakeholders, a consensus was reached around a preferred alternative. The biggest proposal is the relocation and elevation of Cesar Chavez to the north side of the park. The original Cesar Chavez would be reduced to two lanes, with onstreet parking and a speed limit of 25 miles per hour. This would continue to serve Austin High, but traffic speeds would be greatly reduced.
- One of the benefits of the relocation of Cesar Chavez is the creation of contiguous parkland that is adjacent to the water. Another big advantage is that the park will gain six acres of land that was previously used for right-of-way. Another advantage is there will be an opportunity to have parking underneath the elevated Cesar Chavez—the proposal almost doubles the amount of on-street parking.
- This plan also provides extensive mobility benefits. There will be pedestrian and bicycle access to Old West Austin, and much safer pedestrian access through the park. Pressler Street will connect to the new Cesar Chavez at a signalize intersection and there will be an opportunity to install a left turn lane at Sandra Muraida Way.
- The general park improvements are projected to cost \$20 to \$26 Million, with a potential private dollar contribution of \$7 Million. The Cesar Chavez realignment is projected to cost \$27 to \$37 Million, with a partnership between PARD and Transportation in the future. The animal services facility is estimated to cost from \$18 to \$24 Million, with Animal Services as a partner as well as they raise money for their improvement.
- Vice Chair Garza asked Mr. Soliz to elaborate on the funding, specifically if a bond would be required. Mr. Soliz responded that this something that he could see in the future as a bond where it would be a Transportation and PARD joint initiative.
- Vice Chair Garza asked about Transportation’s involvement and whether traffic would continue to cut through on the park road (formerly Cesar Chavez). Mr. Soliz responded that although nothing would prevent someone that didn't want to proceed on the new Cesar Chavez from cutting through on the park road, the road would be designed to discourage this. There would be pedestrian crossings, parking on both sides, and a low speed limit. Mr. Soliz also stated that they have been working with Transportation. One of the things Transportation sees as an enhancement is the extension of Pressler Street and the installation of turning lanes at B.R. Reynolds and Sandra Muraida. Another potential enhancement is the possibility of moving the hike and bike trail away from Cesar Chavez.

**Speakers**

David King  
Melissa Marrow  
Amy Taylor  
Robert Corbin  
Joanne Norton

**Direction**

None.

**Recommendation**

There was no recommendation to the full Council.