




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Kimberly McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director   
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

**DATE:** December 2, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Joint Powers Agreement Direction Regarding Waller Creek Boathouse

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This memorandum serves to provide a progress update related to the November 4, 2021, Council Direction associated with the Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Austin, Capital Metro and the Austin Transit Partnership specific to the Waller Creek Boathouse. As you will recall, the direction specific to the Waller Creek Boathouse is as follows:

- Evaluate and assess suitable and appropriate spaces for the Waller Creek Boathouse's relocation with the aim of resolving this issue.
- Include an analysis of which elements of the existing boathouse could be moved and reconstructed or reused.
- Expand community engagement efforts with impacted stakeholders and interested community members regarding identifying a new and feasible nearby location for a rowing use as well as the potential for replacing the café and including other public amenities.
- Collaborate with the Project Connect team regarding the relocation to ensure that rowing operations are minimally disrupted.

The Parks and Recreation Department (Department) has conducted an internal feasibility study of the Lady Bird Lake shoreline property to identify a suitable relocation option for the Waller Creek Boathouse operations. The study included but was not limited to a review of environmental regulations, probable erosion impacts, expected operational impacts, lake location capacity, construction feasibility and accessibility. This internal study identified the current vacant Hostel Building on Lakeshore Boulevard as the most viable option for relocation.

The Department has hosted preliminary conversations with the Austin Rowing Club leadership (the current boathouse concessionaire) to better understand the operational elements of the existing concession. Through this continued stakeholder engagement, the Department will be able to evaluate the elements to be moved and reconstructed. This comprehensive review will require additional time to ensure all aspects of the existing operation are carefully considered. The team expects to complete this work by February 2022.

The Department is committed to an inclusive community engagement process with both current users, surrounding neighborhoods and the greater community. The Department has engaged the Austin

Transit Partnership and the City of Austin Project Connect team to coordinate resources for an inclusive engagement process related to developing and operating a relocated boathouse at the Hostel location, essential elements to enhance the experience, and anticipated challenges that can be mitigated or resolved as the design and operational plans are completed. It is anticipated that community engagement meetings will begin in January 2022.

The following factors have the potential to disrupt access to programs and services provided at the Waller Creek Boat House:

- The current Project Connect - Blue Line construction schedule has yet to be finalized; the demolition and construction is anticipated to begin in late 2023 or early 2024.
- The Austin Rowing Club concession agreement term for operations of the Waller Creek Boat House ends in March 2023.
- The Hostel Building renovation project, typical for projects of this nature, can take up to two years for engagement, design, permitting and construction.
- Process and amount of mitigation funding provided by Project Connect to the Parks and Recreation Department would need to be determined and timing should be aligned to ensure minimal operational disruption.

In order to mitigate potential Boathouse program and service disruptions, the Department will:

- Work collaboratively with both the City Law Department and the City Purchasing Department to extend the existing concessions contract within an allowable timeframe dictated by purchasing code and determine the best pathway for a future Hostel Building Boat House operational agreement.
- Work diligently with colleagues in the Development Services Department and other departments who have a permit review role to prioritize the development process to the extent possible for efficient processing of development applications and permits.
- Work collaboratively with the Project Connect Office to clarify and determine process and timeline.

It is important to note the above strategies are in addition to the outlined work schedules for operational reviews and engagement. The Department will provide a progress update in early 2022 related to the work completed in response to Council's direction specific to the Waller Creek Boathouse.

If you have any questions, please reach out to my office at (512)974-6717.

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