

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project began in October, 2006 with a City Council resolution that recognized an immediate need for improvements at Austin's most famous swimming pool. It called for consideration of water quality and salamander habitat improvements, grounds improvements, infrastructure improvements and facilities improvements. Working from this resolution, City staff worked internally and with stakeholders for input, and they consulted previously commissioned studies and analyses to develop a task list. This consultant team was given that list when brought into the process in early 2007, and the list was used to develop a project scope. The team also received previous studies, information on earlier construction efforts and historical data on the pool, grounds and buildings at the site.

The planning team was led by Limbacher & Godfrey Architects and is composed of mechanical, electrical and plumbing engineers, structural engineers, civil engineers, dam engineers and a landscape architect, a permitting consultant, a cost management consultant and a sustainability consultant. By agreement with City staff, no biologists, ecologists or any other environmental consultants were included on the team. The decision was made to work with existing staff expertise, and to recognize that these kinds of consultants would be required for future work.

The planning process included a substantial public participation component, which, early on, yielded a goals statement that served as a guiding principle throughout. The Goals Statement reads:

Return the site to its rightful glory where the water was cleaner and the experience of the pool was more enjoyable. Propose appropriate additions and renovations to the swimming pool, its buildings and its grounds that respect the fragility of this unique natural and historical setting, and also accommodate the significant user demands on Austin's most popular park amenity.

The public participation process also resulted in a number of course corrections where the priorities for water quality and interpretive planing were elevated and the priority for building improvements was de-emphasized.

*City Council of Austin
Resolution No. 20061019-035*

WHEREAS, Barton Springs Pool, a historical landmark, is considered to be one of the crown jewels of Austin, covering three acres in size and fed by underground springs from the Edwards Aquifer, and

WHEREAS, over 409,000 people annually enjoy this spring-fed swimming pool, and

*WHEREAS, the only known surface habitats of the Barton Springs Salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*) are located in Barton Springs Pool, Eliza Springs, Old Mill Springs (Sunken Garden) and Upper Barton Springs, and*

WHEREAS, Barton Springs Pool is in immediate need of improvements to facilities, water quality and salamander habitat conditions, and

WHEREAS, the removal of the gravel bar from the deep end of the pool is scheduled for this fall to improve conditions at the pool for swimmers, salamanders and water quality, and

WHEREAS, City Council has unanimously supported the improvement of Barton Springs Pool by allocating \$500,000 annually in capital improvement funds until all items of the master plan are completed, NOW, THEREFORE,

*BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:
That the services of a professional consultant be obtained this fall to work on a comprehensive master plan for Barton Springs Pool that will address improvements to facilities, the grounds, infrastructure, water quality and salamander habitat conditions*

That the comprehensive master plan be established through a public process that includes participation and contributions of Friends of Barton Springs Pool and other interested stakeholders

That the City Council be informed quarterly of the progress of the plan and improvements to Barton Springs Pool

ADOPTED: October 19, 2006

The plan begins with a discussion of the regulatory requirements within which the pool and any improvements to it must exist. Next, it looks at the history of the site and how it has changed over time. Then the plan is described in detail where elements of the pool and park are described, needs are identified and recommendations are made.

Following a description of the plan, a number of special considerations are given attention, including interpretive planning, sustainability, art in the park and a proposal to enlarge the pool.

The plan concludes with an implementation discussion where short term project and long term project strategies are described.

Recommendations fall into three general categories: the pool, which includes water quality improvements, water quality studies and pool cleaning improvements; the grounds, which includes landscape and landscape infrastructure improvements and building improvements, where an enlarged role is proposed for the Beverly S. Sheffield Education Center.

The designs presented in this master plan are conceptual in nature, and should be expected to evolve as they are further developed, with the final designs, perhaps differing in detail, yet honoring the spirit of the recommendations contained in this report. In the end, the key to successfully addressing the needs of Barton Springs Pool will involve meeting contemporary functional requirements in ways that extend the ability of this place to tell its story and to continue to serve as one of the crown jewels of Austin.

The recommendations are separated into short-term and long-term recommendations.

Short-term recommendations were funded by the City Council in September, 2007, and included items in five categories:

Water Quality Improvements

- Remove gravel bar
- Replace bypass tunnel inlet grate
- Repair bypass tunnel joints
- Renovate Sunken Garden (part 1)

Water Quality Studies

- Topographic survey
- Hydrodynamic modeling
- Structural testing of dams
- Pilot study for water recirculation at beach
- Pilot study to determine effects of creek flows on pool water quality
- Pilot study for ultrasonic algae control

Pool Cleaning Improvements

- Additional electrical power at pool side
- New pump to increase water pressure and facilitate cleaning
- New algae skimmer
- Disposal for silt and nuisance algae

Grounds Improvements

- Tree assessment and treatment
- General grounds improvements
- New accessible route on south side and evaluation of existing accessibility improvements on north side
- Interpretive plan

Building Improvements

- Rehabilitate existing bathhouse (part 1)

Long-term recommendations are not currently funded, and include items in three categories:

Water Quality Improvements

- Flow Regime Improvements
- Renovate Eliza Spring
- Renovate Sunken Garden (part 2)

Grounds Improvements

- Rehabilitate Zilker Ponds
- “Dog Park” Improvements
- Further downstream improvements
- General grounds improvements, north side
- General grounds improvements, south side

Buildings

- Rehabilitate the existing bathhouse (part 2)
- Build a new south bathhouse