

A photograph of a prairie field filled with numerous yellow and white flowers, likely Black-eyed Susans, in the foreground. The background is a dense forest of tall, green trees under a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

# Austin Memorial Park Prairie Project

Friends of Austin Memorial Park Prairie (FAMPP)

# Meeting Overview

- Introductions and Zoom Housekeeping
- Austin Memorial Park Updates
- Project Purpose and Alignment with Cemetery Purpose
- Background and Collaboration/Support
- Interest Assessment Results (PARD Survey)
- Historical Cemeteries and AMP
- Proposed Area & Benefits
- Projected Timeline and Activities
- Potential Next Steps (CAPP form)

# Introductions and Zoom Housekeeping

# Zoom Housekeeping



Participants can join by computer and/or phone



This session is being recorded and will be posted at the conclusion.



Participants will stay muted through presentation.



Comments and questions can be shared throughout the meeting in the chat.



We will have open Q&A time at the end.



“Raise hand” for sharing comments during open session

# Introductions

**Carolyn Mixon**- Certified Texas Master Naturalist, CAMN, Audubon, Commons Ford Prairie, Texas Butterfly Monitoring Network, Retired SLP/dyslexia therapist

**Ranleigh Hirsh** - 8 year Certified Texas Master Naturalist with over 1200 volunteer hours, 14 year manager of a 96 acre wildlife preserve in Hays County managed for neotropical migrant songbirds, 9 family members and numerous friends interred at Austin Memorial Park

**Stephen Scace** -Trip leader & interpretive guide-REI Adventures; docent in LBJ Wildflower research gardens; field chief for scientific expeditions for the NPS; advisor to HOA's and others in the Hill Country on native plant communities and firewise practices

**Justin Schneider**, PARD Community Engagement Specialist

**Caitlen Hill**, PARD Cemeteries Program Manager

# Austin Memorial Park Updates



# AMP Updates

- Cemeteries Vision Plan Updates
  - Remodeling of Tower restrooms in progress
  - Repaved roads (completed 2021)
- Exploring moving Maintenance Yard
  - Future capital improvement identified in Vision Plan
  - Maintenance yard may affect portions of prairie area, and this is being considered in the Prairie Project planning

# Prairie Project Purpose

This is a *community-driven* project which aims to fulfill the purposes of the Austin Memorial Park cemetery by improving and preserving the property by allowing a natural respite to pray, meditate, or reflect in ways that honor those who are interred here while also contributing ecological benefit to the cemetery property.

The prairie project also supports the cemetery vision and sustainability by expanding its relationship with the community through everyday use thereby leading to increased awareness and support for the cemetery.

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<https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.711.htm> (THSC 711.001(8) Cemetery Purpose)

<https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Cemeteries/Cemeteries%20Master%20Plan/Austin%20Cemeteries%20Master%20Plan-Book%2010.06.2015.pdf> (p. 443, 477-481)



A photograph of a field of yellow flowers and tall grasses. The text "Background & Consulting Organizations" is overlaid in white. The background shows a dense field of yellow flowers, likely Black-eyed Susans, and tall, thin grasses. The scene is set outdoors with trees in the distance under a bright sky.

Background  
&  
Consulting Organizations

# Background

- 2015 Cemeteries Master/Vision Plan

- *p.443-“It is possible and desirable to have respectful and appropriate programming in historic cemeteries...”*
- *p.477- “Passive activities such as walking tours and interpretive signage could be provided for Evergreen Cemetery and Austin Memorial Park Cemetery.”*
- *p.481-“Programs/events should highlight or draw attention to a particular aspect of the cemetery (such as history, art, culture, or nature).*

- Community interest and Consultation with PARD

July, 2021: Contacted Director McNeeley & CM Pool; Enlisted Ranleigh & Stephen

July, 2021 to present: Met with PARD/Cemetery staff, consulted with nature-related organizations,  
conducted plant and pollinator surveys

October 2021: PARD Survey and newsletter article

- Community Activated Park Plan (CAPP) October, 2021

# Consulting Organizations

- Austin Parks Foundation
- Native Prairie Association of Texas
- Native Plant Society of Texas/Adopt-a-Cemetery Project
- Travis Audubon
- National Wildlife Federation-Austin office
- Capital Area Master Naturalists
- Austin Butterfly Forum
- Save Austin Cemeteries

# Interest Assessment Results

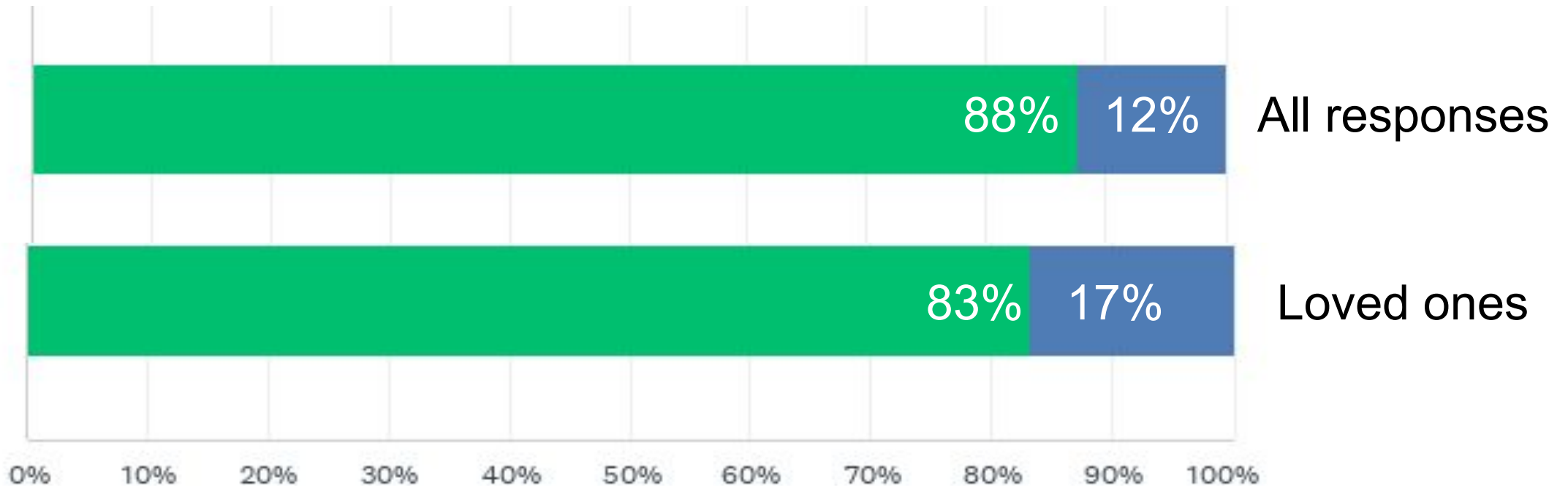
# Prairie Restoration Interest Assessment

Open September 30, 2021 to  
January 18, 2022

- 271 participants
- 164 with loved one currently interred at AMP



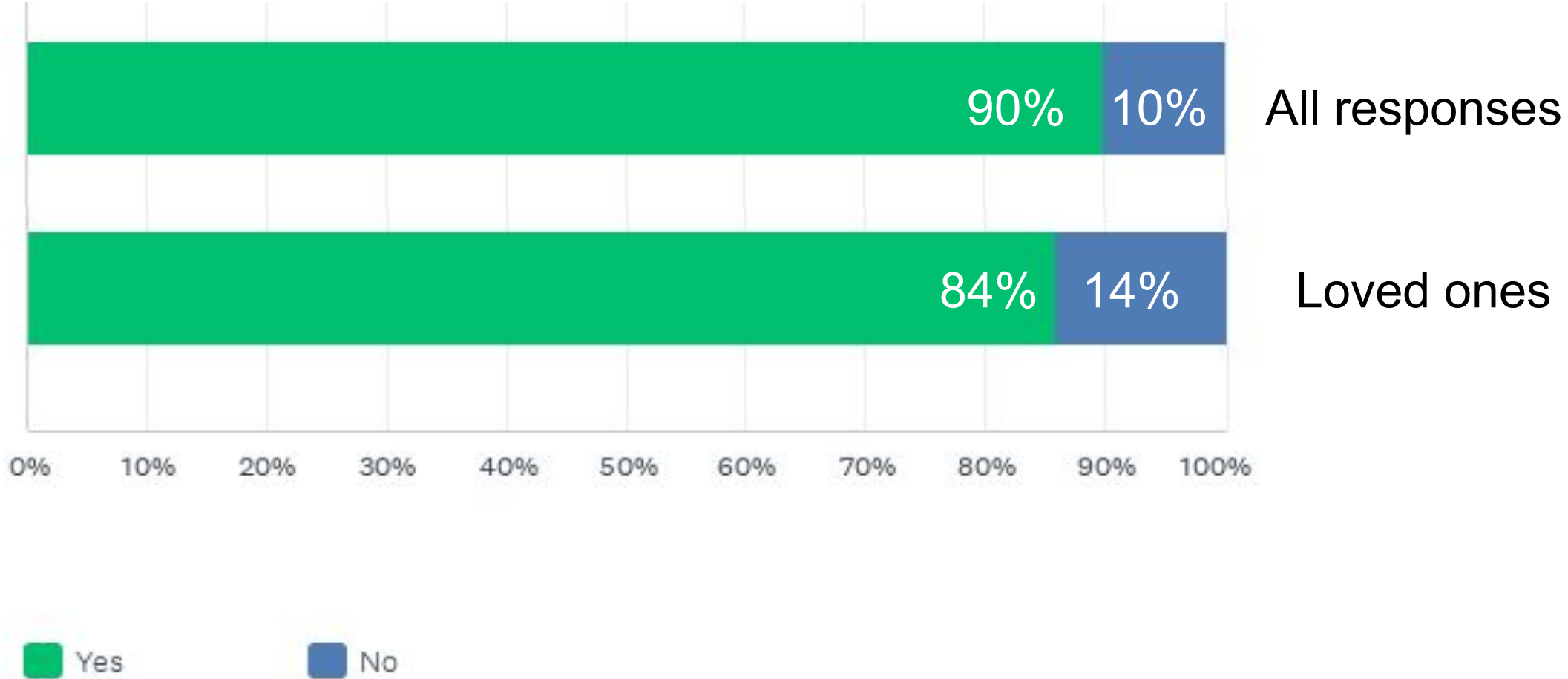
Would you like to see the as-of-yet unplatted / unutilized space in Austin Memorial Park converted into a walkable and managed native prairie space until the area is needed for burials?



Yes

No

Would you like to see the City of Austin create more spaces like this to cultivate native plant populations within the city?



# Decision-Making Process

The recommendations of the prairie project community engagement will be reported to and approved by the PARD Executive Team.

Community feedback will inform the final recommendations to the Executive Team.





# Historic Cemeteries & AMP

# Cemeteries Supporting Natural Areas & Everyday Use

Rural Cemetery Movement occurred in the 1830's and 1840's

## Current-day cemeteries:

- Mount Auburn Cemetery (1831) - Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Green-Wood Cemetery (1838) - New York City, NY
- Calvary Cemetery(1854) - St. Louis, MO

# Mount Auburn Cemetery Cambridge, MA



# Mount Auburn Cemetery

## Cambridge, MA

- Established in 1831
- National Historic Landmark

“...Continues its historic dual role as a sacred site and pleasure ground, serving as both an active cemetery and a ‘museum’ preserving nearly two centuries of changing attitudes about death and commemoration and changing tastes in architecture and landscape design.”

<https://mountauburn.org/about/>

# Green-Wood Cemetery New York City



# Green-Wood Cemetery

## New York City

- Established in 1838
- National Historic Landmark
- Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System

A living cemetery bringing people closer to the world as it is and was, by memorializing the dead and bringing to life; the art, history, and natural beauty of New York City with nature-related projects and activities including: arboretum, urban grassland project, fungi investigations, seasonal tracking and birding activities. It has become a magnet for history buffs and bird watchers.

<https://www.green-wood.com/about-history/>

# Calvary Cemetery St. Louis, MO



# Calvary Cemetery St. Louis, Mo

- Established in 1854
- Restoring a 24 acre prairie remnant



<https://www.archstl.org/pristine-prairie-at-calvary-cemetery-thrives-amid-urban-landscape-4227>



# Texas Historic Cemeteries with Wildflowers



Rockport



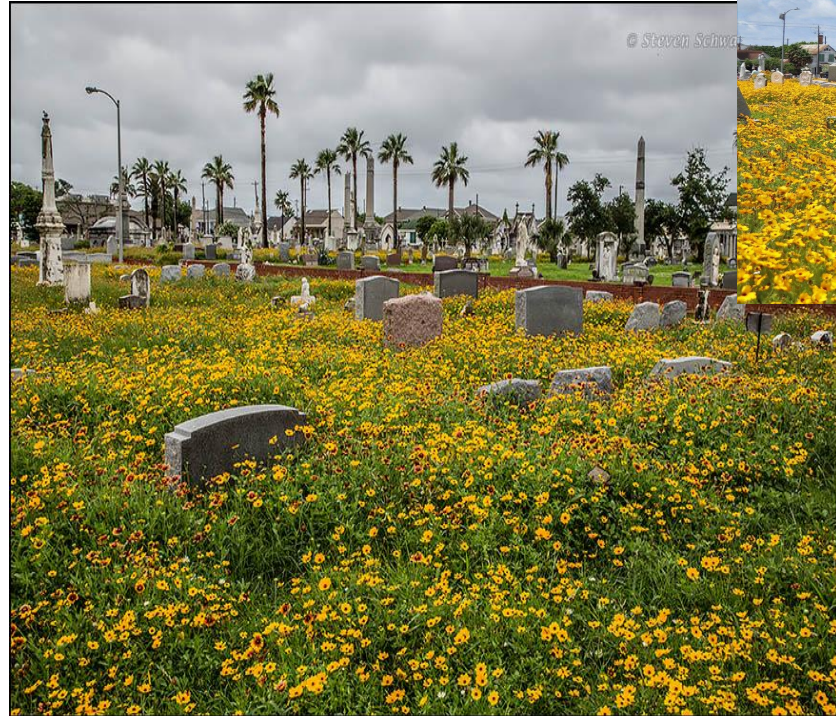
Goliad



© 2019 Pam Penick

Sutherland  
Springs

# Galveston's Broadway Cemetery



# Oakwood Cemetery



A lush garden scene featuring a stone-lined stream that flows from the background towards the foreground. To the left of the stream is a wide, light-brown dirt path. The garden is filled with various green plants, including a large, fan-shaped plant in the center and several trees with dense foliage. The overall atmosphere is natural and serene.

# Examples of Natural Areas in Austin

# Mueller Greenways

- Redevelopment of industrial site into mixed use community
- Greenways surround the development connecting neighborhood elements and nearby parks



# Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

- Botanic Garden and Arboretum of Texas
- Mission to inspire conservation of native plants through gardens, research, education, and outreach programs
- Thereby improving water quality, providing habitat for wildlife, and enhancing human health and happiness



# Seasonal Changes Provide Interest

Fall/Winter



Spring/Summer



# Proposed Prairie Project Area



Austin Memorial  
Park Cemetery

2800 Hancock Dr.





Proposed Prairie Area

Maintenance  
Yard

Entrance



A photograph of a managed prairie space. The foreground is filled with tall, vibrant green grasses. In the middle ground, a dense line of various trees and shrubs forms a natural boundary. The background shows more trees under a bright sky. The overall scene is a healthy, well-maintained natural area.

# Benefits of a Managed Prairie Space to AMP Visitors and the Environment

# Benefits to AMP Visitors

- Provide an attractive space for meditative and remembrance activities (NWF Sacred Grounds certification)
- Potentially create a space for integrating both a naturalized and landscaped native-plant scatter garden
- Improve the viewshed for visitors to established grave sites
- Provide opportunities for quiet nature walks with associated health benefits
- Provide opportunities to observe, learn, and appreciate nature in the urban environment
- Reduce resource use and noise levels associated with maintenance

# Benefits to the Environment

- Improve the urban ecosystem by providing space for native plants, pollinators, birds, and wildlife
- Offset the destruction of urban green spaces by development
- Offset heat island effects of pavement
- Decrease water run-off
- Serve as a waystation for migrating butterflies and birds

A photograph of a wooden bench in a field of white flowers. The bench is positioned in the middle ground, facing away from the camera. The field is filled with numerous small white flowers, possibly daisies, scattered across a green lawn. In the background, there are several trees, including a prominent one in the center and another on the right. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

# Timeline & Activities

# Year One

- Experimental mowed paths
- Expanded surveys (plants, birds, butterflies, dragonflies, etc)
- Begin removal of invasives
- Initial signage and website information for area
- Fundraising (grant applications, donations)
- Discussion with PARD about integration with COA plans for a columbarium and scatter garden

# Year Two and Beyond

- On-going maintenance program, including removal of invasives
- Selective seeding in late Fall to promote native grasses and flowers
- On-going flora and fauna surveys
- Partner with National Wildlife Federation for Monarch Watch and Sacred Grounds <https://www.nwf.org/sacredgrounds> recognition
- On-going fundraising for maintenance and possible projects (Chimney Swift tower, bluebird and owl boxes, etc.)
- Website updates
- On-going discussion with PARD regarding coordination with COA future construction plans



# Questions for Community

## Questions for attendees

- Initial response to what you have seen (put 1 or 2 words in the chat)
- Polling questions:
  - Did this presentation help you understand what is being proposed FAMPP?
  - Rate these photos (A-D) from the presentation as you feel they might relate to AMP: 1=dislike 2=unsure 3=like (Ex: A-3)

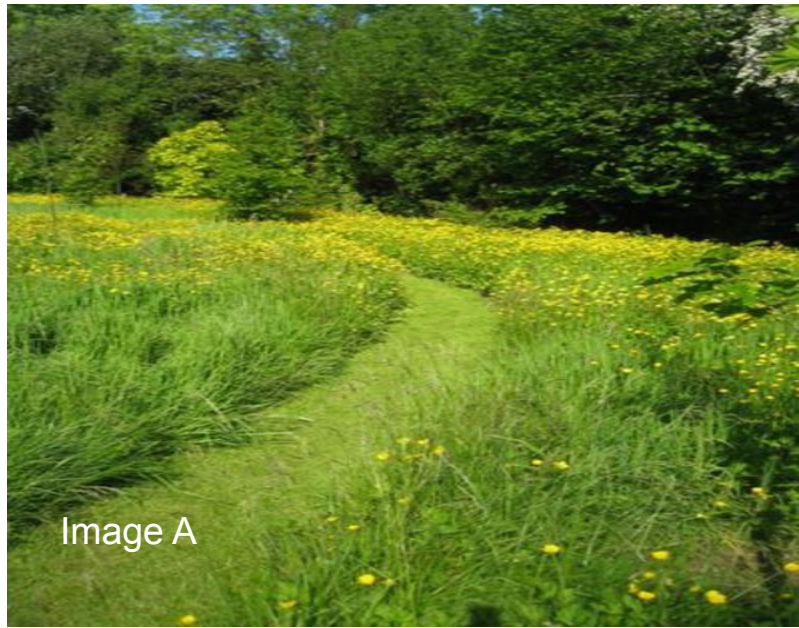


Image A



Image B



Image C



Image D

# Next Steps

- Follow-up Questionnaire (open March 11 through March 27)
- CAPP Process
- Information Updates to community
- Beginning implementation in Spring

# Questions from Attendees

# Future Participation Contact Information

Caitlen Hill

Sign up for email news

Friends of Austin Memorial Park Prairie

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*Thank You!*