



City of Austin

Sabino “Pio” Renteria, Council Member District 3

301 W. 2nd St., Austin, TX 78701
(512) 978-2103, Fax (512) 978-2113
sabino.renteria@austintexas.gov

Dear Mr. Moore,

I am writing to express my support for the City of Austin’s Cities Connecting Children to Nature Implementation Plan. The extensive research and highly collaborative strategic planning process conducted over the last six months ensures that children’s equitable access to nature will be a top priority for the City of Austin and our partners.

Enthusiasm and commitment to this mission was readily apparent throughout the planning process. With representatives from the Mayor’s Office, City Council, ten city departments, two school districts, the University of Texas, Dell Children’s Medical School, and dozens of nonprofits, this initiative helped build and strengthen relationships across departments and sectors that had not existed previously.

I firmly believe that these partnerships and the collaborative efforts of the plan will help Austin achieve these long-term outcomes:

1. Every child has abundant & equitable access to nature at their home, neighborhood & school.
2. Every parent, health professional & teacher knows & understands the importance of access to nature for a child’s healthy development. And every child considers outdoor play a top option for free time.
3. City codes & school curriculum are designed to allow & encourage kids to play outside in nature more frequently.
4. Austin is seen as an innovator & leader in the Children in Nature Movement.
5. Kids Choose nature

Focusing on greening school yards and creating a new network of school parks will help Austin provide daily access to rich nature environments for tens of thousands of students across the city and strengthen communities with access to new park space. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to this burgeoning national movement and continue to strengthen relationships with the schools in my district.

Furthermore participation in the CodeNEXT process and dedication to prioritizing nature access across department master plans bolsters key policy goals of my office:

1. *Mobility – providing a multi-modal transportation network for families and children to get to their neighborhood school parks is a part of the proposed 2016 Bond election*
2. *Sustainability and climate resiliency – opportunity to build the environmental stewards of the future through “early and often” childhood connections.*
3. *Early childhood education - outdoor play builds strong bodies and imaginations and fits well with and reinforces preparation for academics, and*
4. *Equity and affordability - as Austin seeks to reduce residential segregation, ensuring access to nature for all children can serve as an effective indicator of what we want in every neighborhood.*

*The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request.*



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My office also endorses the Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights resolution which will be brought before City Council in November. We will also help support the subsequent public awareness campaign surrounding issues of children's healthy development as it relates to nature connection.

My office looks forward to the implementation process and continued collaboration and information sharing with National League of Cities, the Children & Nature Network, and the six cohort cities as we discover new and better ways for city leadership to institutionalize equitable nature access. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this planning initiative and look forward making our plan a reality for all children in Austin.

Sincerely,

Council Member Sabino "Pio" Renteria