




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

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

DATE: November 3, 2021

SUBJECT: Resolution No. 20210520-062 – City Cultural and Climate Innovation District

This memo serves as an update related to [Resolution No. 20210520-062](#) directing the Parks and Recreation Department (Department) to work with appropriate City Departments to explore the creation of a City Cultural and Climate Innovation District for the South Shore/Barton Springs area including Butler Shores and surrounding South Austin cultural assets, by creating a plan and timeline inclusive of the following:

- inventory of assets and strategies to protect and enhance assets;
- diagnostic analysis;
- traffic impact analysis;
- bicycle/multimodal transportation strategies; and
- outline of the community engagement process to support its creation.

Subsequent conversations related to the goals of this resolution provided the Department additional clarity as it relates to intent and anticipated deliverables. The goal for the proposed framework is to leverage the cultural and park/ecological assets to coordinate activities, educate and entertain visitors, advance climate change resilience, and protect and preserve the district's assets.

Exploration

In collaboration with the Economic Development Department and the Office of Sustainability, the Department conducted research to characterize the distinctive nature associated with a proposed City Cultural and Climate Innovation District. The separate summary definitions are as follows:

- **Climate Innovation District-** Co-location of academic, business, technology and civic innovators within a special zone where collaboration creates, refines and validates disruptive ideas to produce community benefits associated with climate resilience and environmental sustainability.
- **Cultural District-** Special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate community revitalization. These districts could become focal points for attracting tourists, stimulating cultural development and fostering civic pride.

In combination, a **City Cultural and Climate Innovation District** is defined as a *distinct zone inclusive of cultural resources that promotes equity, innovative environmental practices and climate resilience principles.*

This definition will be used as the starting point to engage stakeholders in a robust community engagement process.

The process is envisioned to include but not be limited to subject matter related to defining cultural identity, strategies to foster the co-existence of cultural programming and environmental sensitivity, strategies to enhance and protect both built and environmental assets, mobility and access innovations, and opportunities for cross-disciplinary interpretation. Such an extensive engagement process typically requires a minimum of one year, inclusive of presenting to Boards and Commissions and concluding with a final report to Council.

Property Asset Inventory, Mapping and Diagnostic Analysis

It is appropriate to conduct community engagement prior to formally defining the district boundaries. The district boundaries will clarify the property assets. Exhibit A is a map of a loosely defined area that may potentially be included in a City Cultural and Climate Innovation District. The City owned assets include:

- Zilker Metropolitan Park
 - Zilker Botanical Garden
 - Austin Nature and Science Center
 - McBeth Recreation Center
 - Barton Springs Pool and Bathhouse
 - Beverly S. Sheffield Education Center
 - Sunshine Camp
 - Girls Scout Cabin
 - Hillside Theater
 - Historic Pistol Range
 - Sunken Gardens
 - Zilker Nature Preserve
 - Zilker Caretaker's Cottage
 - Zilker Clubhouse
 - Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum
- Butler Shores (West of Lamar)
 - Butler Shores Ballfields
 - Parks and Recreation Department Administration Building
 - ZACH Theatre
 - Future Dougherty Arts Center
- Butler Pitch and Putt
- Butler Park (East of Lamar)
 - Liz Carpenter Fountain
 - Alliance Children's Garden
 - Dough Sahm Hill
 - Remediated Dougherty Arts Center space
- Auditorium Shores and Vic Mathias Shores
- Palmer Events Center
- Long Center for the Performing Arts
- Town Lake Center (AE property)

Traffic Analysis

The Zilker Vision Planning process will conduct a high-level review and analysis of adjacent existing transportation roadways such as Barton Springs Rd, Toomey Rd, Azie Morton Rd, Stratford Dr and MoPac. The analysis will also include public transit (CapMetro), trails and parking within the park and

other adjacent city parks such as Butler Shores, with an emphasis on the internal effects on circulation and parking from existing and proposed uses throughout Zilker Park. The Vision Plan will focus on resolving known mobility challenges and anticipating future opportunities. The project will consider access for all modes of transportation.

A district-wide Traffic Impact Analysis is beyond the scope of the Zilker Vision Plan and is outside of Austin Transportation Department's ability to complete internally. ATD suggests this undertaking would require a consultant-led effort.

Next Steps

While the Parks and Recreation Department may be able to absorb some components to assist in operationalizing the directive, it does not have sufficient resources or capacity to complete the plan for a City Cultural and Climate Innovation District. As a first step, the Department proposes to hire a consultant to convene a group of essential stakeholders to establish the organizational framework for the District. This initial step would provide the stakeholders the opportunity to discuss and establish a framework they can lead, participate in, and contribute to. This will provide a strong foundation that will establish how the District could best leverage the value of these assets in supportive ways to the benefit of the broader community, and environment. A larger group of stakeholders and the community will be engaged in subsequent steps.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 512-974-6717 or kimberly.mcneeley@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Anne Morgan, Interim Deputy City Manager
Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager
Gina Fiandaca, Assistant City Manager
Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager
Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer, Office of Sustainability
Sylvia Holt-Rabb, Deputy Director, Economic Development Department
Rob Spillar, Director, Austin Transportation



- Climate and Cultural Innovation District Boundary
- Additional Properties That May be Considered
- District Boundary, Private Commercial Properties
- City of Austin Parks (District)
- City of Austin Parks (Other)
- Land Base
- COA Parcel

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. This product has been produced by the Parks and Recreation Department for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

Climate and Cultural Innovation District BASE MAP

