

Organization Logos

June XX, 2018

The Honorable Mayor Steve Adler, Austin City Council Members, and City Manager Cronk
Austin City Hall
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767-1088

Dear Mayor Steve Adler, Austin City Council Members, and City Manager Cronk:

We are a broad alliance of organizations from all across Austin that are united and speaking with one voice about the importance of investing in parks, trails, open spaces and recreational opportunities in the City of Austin's FY19 budget.

Our organizations are committed to improving Austin's amazing parks, trails and open spaces for all residents through philanthropic support, volunteer engagement and capital improvement projects. We have been at the center of promoting park, trail and open space development, maintenance, accessibility and improvements in Austin and Travis County for many years.

Unfortunately, annual municipal investments in these important assets are not keeping pace with the needs of a growing city. While Austin is typically at the top of many "best of" lists, our city ranks 42 out of the 100 largest US cities on the Trust for Public Land's Parkscore Index, which is the gold standard for assessing urban parks. According to the report, Austin currently spends \$108 per resident on enhancing and maintaining its parks, while the top ten ranked Parkscore cities spend an average of \$232 per resident.

Adopted on March 8, 2018, Austin Strategic Direction 2023 outlines six key outcomes for the Austin community and provides a framework for the city council while making decisions about resource allocation during the city's annual budget process.

While we believe Austin's parks impact all six strategic outcomes, city staff has identified three outcomes in particular that have a significant impact:

- *Health & Environment* -- Equitable access to quality parks, trails, open space and recreational opportunities
- *Culture & Lifelong Learning* -- Quality, accessibility and diversity of civic and cultural venues, events, programs and resources
- *Safety* -- Ensuring safety in the city's parks, trails and recreation centers

We believe Austin has a significant opportunity to make progress on the Strategic Direction 2023 plan by making **\$5.1 million** in critical investments during the FY19 budget process for the following Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) priorities:

Project	Requested Amount	Description	City Council Indicator
Health & Environment			
Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance	\$615,000 one-time funding \$385,000 ongoing funding	PARD hired a contractor to independently complete an ADA assessment of the Austin park system. The ADA Transition Plan includes \$140 million in built environment and programmatic recommendations that will allow PARD to employ current best practices with regards to program and service delivery and allow appropriate access for all individuals. \$1 million would allow PARD to begin addressing ADA issues at approximately ten parks to ensure Austin is moving towards compliance with federal law.	Accessibility to quality parks, trails and recreational opportunities Infrastructure and technology
Maintenance Backlog	\$500,000 one-time funding \$1 million ongoing funding	PARD's current needs assessment indicates a gap of approximately \$700 million for repairs and renovations to the city's aging parks infrastructure. Additional resources will allow PARD to begin addressing the highest priority maintenance projects at parks, pools and recreation centers, including playground safety repairs.	Accessibility to quality parks, trails and recreational opportunities Infrastructure and technology
Aquatics Maintenance	\$460,000 ongoing	Deteriorating and failing infrastructure and mechanical systems severely impact the stability of PARD aquatics operations and the safety of aquatics facilities. Currently, aquatic repairs are done reactively instead of proactively just to make it through each swim season. PARD expects it will exceed its allocated maintenance funding by \$460,000 next year, based on historical trends.	Accessibility to quality parks, trails and recreational opportunities Infrastructure and technology
Park Recycling Program	\$250,000 ongoing	Additional investments will allow PARD to increase recycling within the park system and comply with the city's Zero Waste goal by funding staff, equipment and supplies.	Environmental Quality
Forestry Program	\$365,000 one-time funding \$135,000 ongoing funding	In order to help PARD implement the Urban Forest Plan and meet canopy coverage goals, additional resources would be utilized for forestry staff, equipment and supplies to care for and maintain trees on parkland.	Accessibility to quality parks, trails and recreational opportunities

Culture & Lifelong Learning			
Youth Services and Programming at Eastern Crescent Recreation Centers	\$320,000 one-time funding \$430,000 ongoing funding	PARD's recreation centers in the eastern crescent experience unprecedented demand for facility-based child and youth services throughout the year. These programs are extremely popular and desperately needed in areas that have been historically underserved, including Colony District Park/Turner Roberts, Gus Garcia and Dove Springs recreation centers.	Quality, accessibility and diversity of civic and cultural venues, events, programs and resources Lifelong learning opportunities
Safety			
Park Rangers	\$80,000 one-time funding \$120,000 ongoing funding	Additional resources for the Park Ranger program will allow PARD to expand interpretive outreach programming and voluntary compliance with park rules including staff, equipment and supplies.	Community compliance with laws and regulations
Lighting	\$150,000 one-time funding \$350,000 ongoing funding	Funding for additional lighting in Austin's parks has the potential to improve safety, deter crime and allow greater utilization of parks facilities after dark, particularly in the winter and fall.	Community compliance with laws and regulations
Total	\$5,160,000		

We recognize that the city council is faced with difficult choices as you work to make critical funding decisions during the FY19 budget process. Increasing investments in Austin's parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities will represent a significant step towards narrowing the funding gap for these amazing assets and help the city realize the bold vision outlined in the Strategic Direction 2023 plan.

Sincerely,

List of Organization Names