

RESOLUTION OF THE AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOODS COUNCIL REGARDING the Rewilding of Zilker Park

WHEREAS, On August 27, 2020, the Austin City Council authorized the Parks and Recreation Department to contract with consulting firm Design Workshop for the Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan, which planning process started in November 2020 with completion scheduled for April 2022; and

WHEREAS, A 2020-2021 city-wide survey revealed 82% of Zilker Park survey respondents supported expanding natural areas in the park; and

WHEREAS, The Austin City Council adopted a Climate Equity Plan in September 2021, adding climate mitigation and post-Covid public health to water issues as urgent priorities in Austin; and

WHEREAS, The Barton Springs Conservancy commissioned the Siglo Group to “look at opportunities and issues to improve the natural areas of Zilker Park over the next four years . . . and to ensure the Zilker Vision Plan process has the needed information to embed ecological health into the planning process,” and the Siglo Group completed a natural resource inventory of Zilker Park in May 2021; and

WHEREAS, To address these needs and further the goals of the City’s Zilker Park Vision Planning process, the Save Our Springs Alliance, with support from the Barton Hills, Bouldin Creek, and Zilker neighborhood associations, sponsored a report prepared by Elizabeth McGreevy to assess the application of rewilding principles to the features identified in the Siglo inventory; and

WHEREAS, The final opportunities for community engagement in the planning process are scheduled for February 15, 2022*; and

WHEREAS, The South Central Coalition (ANC sector 7, including Barton Hills, Bouldin Creek, Dawson, Galindo Elementary, South Lamar, and Zilker) has endorsed the Rewilding Zilker Park Report**.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT The Austin Neighborhoods Council endorses the Rewilding Zilker Park Report and will request that its recommendations be included in the final draft of the Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan that is submitted to the public in March 2022.

Presented to ANC Membership: [date]

Membership Approved: [date]

Sponsor Contact: Julie Woods, Sector 7 Representative: jwoods78704@gmail.com

* From the City website: “Community Meeting #4 – Draft Plan: Conduct a community meeting to present the draft Vision Plan to the community. The meeting will be designed to solicit feedback, generate alternate ideas, recommendations, and solutions to draft proposals. An emphasis will be placed on soliciting feedback and generating alternate recommendations on proposals that are controversial or that lack consensus. Following this meeting, the project team will report back to the community, respond to comment themes, and present the refined concepts”

**** Summary of Recommendations from REWILDING ZILKER PARK**

A dialogue brought to you by your friends at Save Our Springs Alliance, Zilker NA, Barton Hills NA, and Bouldin Creek NA

Based on a Report Prepared by Elizabeth McGreevy (<https://www.landsteward.net/>)

Full Report available at:

<https://zilkerneighborhood.org/zilkerpark-mp.shtml>

Rewilding Defined

Rewilding is a process in which nature takes the lead but is guided by adaptive vegetation management.

Any plantings or seedlings will be determined by what naturally develops instead of being pre-determined on paper. The process can be slower than reforestation or restoring, but is ecologically and economically more sustainable.

The Intent for Zilker Park

Allow at least 21% of Zilker Park to rewild to enhance park visitor use and mental well-being, enhance wildlife habitat, and mitigate the urban heat-island effect. This equates to about 75 acres of the 350-acre park.

Widen the riparian buffer to help reduce severe downslope erosion and protect water quality. Allow areas with thin, rocky soils to rewild to further reduce erosion. In this way, woodlands and forests will be used as green infrastructure, since mowed grass cannot.

Reduce overflow grass parking by at least 75%. Potentially remove 80-car parking lot east of the playground adjacent to Barton Springs Road to allow for a wider riparian buffer.

Increase tree canopy throughout the park to provide shade and enhance wildlife habitat connectivity.

Strategically use native trees and soil microbes to reclaim the Butler Landfill (a process called phytoremediation).

Use adaptive vegetation management to guide the rewilding process.

Manage for a variety of mostly tree-covered areas to accommodate different park visitor uses.