



Memo

To: Members of Boards and Commissions

From: Friends of Barton Springs Pool

Date: February 11, 2013

Subject: Support for Grounds Improvement Project at Barton Springs Pool

Project History

The Grounds Improvement Project is one of several Short-Term Projects funded by the City of Austin as part of a council action in 2007 which approved the use of \$6.5 million to restore failing infrastructure and enhance the water quality and beauty of Barton Springs Pool. This project, a culmination of more than 6 years, over 30 meetings, public input, and discussion, is poised to go before you to gain the necessary approval for the project to become a reality.

Project Description

Below is a summary of each of the projects currently included in the plan.

Sustain the tree canopy

- *Tree Court Improvements and Tree Plantings* – A project to enhance the north side and help guide foot traffic to help protect the tree root zones. The existing hard-packed crushed granite will be removed, paths will be built, and the beautiful heritage trees will be mulched around their root zones. Planters with flowers will be added, new trees will be planted, and a scenic overlook will take advantage of the beautiful panorama of the pool from this area.
- More than 100 native trees and plants will be planted to restore the natural environment to allow for the replacement of the tree canopy as older trees die.

Improve water quality

- Pumps using water from Barton Springs Pool will be installed to allow for more powerful spray cleaning of the pool swimming areas and salamander habitat.
- The same pumps will be connected to the irrigation system to allow for irrigation of the grass and trees on pool grounds with pool water.
- These measures allow reduction or elimination of chlorinated water in the pool area.
- Electrical service at poolside will be upgraded to allow replacement of gas-powered machinery with electric machinery.

Accommodate more users

- *Addition of the South Woods* - A whole new area behind the diving board will be incorporated inside the pool. This neglected area will be restored through invasive species removal and re-planting of native species, and construction of features to capture urban run-off and prevent erosion directly impacting salamander habitat.
- *ADA Path* – The proposed ADA path to the pool through the South Woods is a wonderful way to provide south side access to the pool to elderly and disabled pool patrons, as well as those with strollers and young children, without forcing them to navigate the bumpy, dangerous gully that currently serves as a path down to the pool.
- *South Alignment of Perimeter Fence* – The proposal to move the fence line on the south side to encompass the heritage trees just outside the current fence line. This will generously expand the South Lawn, and take stress off of the root zone of the trees, which currently has a compacted footpath across it.
- *Parking Lot* – the dusty caliche south parking lot will be paved and more spaces will be added. The new concrete parking lot will be graded to drain into the athletic field immediately to the north, which will be maintained as a vegetative filter strip.

Improve security, safety, and beauty

- *Power Line Burial* - the unsightly and dangerous overhead power lines will be buried. Future generations of users will be able to gaze at an unobstructed sky above the pool.
- *Ticket Booth* – The proposed ticket booth promotes staff comfort – it replaces the current cramped, overheated booth with a slightly larger, air conditioned booth. It will repeat the design elements of the existing ticket booth, and will also be better positioned for visual communication with the main bathhouse and pool.
- *New South Fence* – The proposal to replace the uninviting and often-vandalized chain link/barbed wire fence with a combination of wrought iron fencing (in the South Woods) and low visibility green wire mesh fence (around the South Lawn) represents a compromise supported by the Master Plan and approved by both SOS and FBSP.
- *South Entry Gate Design* – The proposed gate design picks up on other features and fences from Zilker Park, including the gate columns at the main entrance, and the gate and perimeter fencing around the Zilker Botanical Garden. The proposed south gate entrance represents a compromise which reduces the visual impact of the entrance.
- *South Lawn Overlook* – This is a proposed decomposed granite path to the monument and seating area in the South Lawn area, and has drawn much public disapproval. Though a well-meaning attempt to provide ADA access to the South Lawn, it does seem to go against the Master Plan's vision to leave the South Lawn as untouched as possible, and FBSP believes it should probably not be approved.

FBSP Recommendation

FBSP believes that these projects will add to the functionality and beauty of Austin's crown jewel, Barton Springs Pool. With the exception of the South Lawn Overlook, we wholeheartedly support all of the proposed Grounds Improvements and urge that they be approved and allowed to move forward for timely completion.