

PARKS COMMITTEE

November 28, 2007

Attending: *Hayden Brooks, Co-Chair, Eva Munoz, Co-Chair, Tracy Atkins (DAA Board), Dale Glover (DANA), Commissioner Margaret Gomez (Travis County), Larry Graham (Texas Gas Service), Charlie McCabe (Austin Parks Foundation), Ginny Sanders (First Night Austin), Melba Whatley (MDW Interests)*
Staff: Charlie Betts, Julie Fitch

Actions Since Last Committee Meeting

- Julie Fitch and Melba Whatley met with Stuart Strong of PARD. Parkland Dedication fees cannot be used for planning that is not tied immediately to a construction phase. PARD also has issues with using public funds if they are not controlling the process and if a City procurement process/RFP was not followed.
- Charlie McCabe had a follow-up meeting with Stuart Strong. He indicated that a specific park project might qualify for parkland fees if it was a plan/build project.
- Next step: determine whether the committee wants to raise funds for and manage a master plan for the downtown squares.

How to Give Certainty to Potential Donors That the Plans Will Be Implemented

- Draft a memorandum of understanding outlining the roles and responsibilities for the Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Parks Foundation, and Parks & Recreation Department.
- Ask PARD to assign a staff member to the DAA Parks Committee.
- Develop a positive working relationship with the new director of PARD when he or she is hired.

Making the Case for the Downtown Historic Squares

- Trails are getting a lot of attention lately (Town Lake Trail, Waller Creek) because they have advocates and champions. We are the champions for the historic squares, but we need to cultivate a partner on the City Council.
- There was a TIF analysis that proved the value of the Waller Creek Tunnel. Consider creating the economic justification for park redevelopment.

City/State Lease Issues

- The City of Austin's 99-year lease agreement with the State of Texas expires in 2016.
- The State GLO gave notice that they do not view this as an administrative procedure. They believe it will require Legislative action.
- Charlie McCabe reported that at PARD's request, City Legal and the City's legislative liaison are researching how this still may be handled administratively.

Process Issues—Two Options

- A Master Plan would ensure that all three squares are redeveloped. There would be no public funds available for the planning phase. Donors would need assurance that they were contributing to a plan that would be implemented, so the DAA should pursue a memorandum of understanding with the Parks Foundation and PARD.
- Focusing on one specific park and linking plans to construction would open up the possibility of public matching funds and could allow for more immediate improvements. However, choosing a park surrounded by planned or existing developments means a potential loss of focus on Wooldridge Square for the foreseeable future.

Next Steps

- Draft MOU. Committee members should review the outline and provide feedback to Julie.
- Notify EDAW of our delay (Julie Fitch).
- Meet with Council Member Leffingwell's aide Larry Schooler to discuss whether the Council Member would be interested in this as a project and to discuss the process for hiring the new director of the Parks Department (Ginny Sanders to initiate).
- Develop ideas for article to pitch to Katherine Gregor at the *Chronicle* (Julie Fitch, Ginny Sanders, Lacy LaBorde).
- Research economic impact of urban parks (Julie Fitch, Ginny Sanders).