

24 requires a low level of services,” but, once improved, meaningfully increases
25 PARD’s maintenance responsibilities; and

26 **WHEREAS**, FSD also reported that this rapid increase in responsibilities
27 and improvements, without an accompanying strategy for increased maintenance,
28 has caused the level of service for grounds maintenance to decline over the past
29 decade, stating that increased maintenance demand was “primarily driven by
30 improvements to existing parkland and new amenities developed or acquired over
31 the FY 2014 – FY 2023 time period”; and

32 **WHEREAS**, the Trust for Public Land annually prepares the ParkScore
33 index to provide a national comparison of park systems across the most populous
34 cities in the United States, and in 2024 Austin ranked 44th with a score of 53.5 out
35 of 100; and

36 **WHEREAS**, the ParkScore methodology includes an evaluation of public
37 and private investment, including non-profit contributions and volunteer service
38 hours; and

39 **WHEREAS**, PARD has reported that the cost of developing or replacing a
40 neighborhood park as of fiscal year 2023 exceeds \$1.4 million per park; and

41 **WHEREAS**, the *Our Parks, Our Future Long-Range Plan* states that “In
42 considering new park development projects, it is essential to include operational
43 costs, including staff, equipment, and materials, as part of the overall ‘total cost of
44 ownership’” and that “Together, capital investment, operations and maintenance,
45 and lifecycle replacement represent the total cost of ownership of a parks system”;
46 and

47 **WHEREAS**, cities like Minneapolis, Minnesota, have had great success in
48 holistically managing their parklands from a regional perspective, creating a taxing
49 authority and governing body responsible for the management, acquisition, and
50 upkeep of its regional park system; and

51 **WHEREAS**, PARD relies on the General Fund to support its vast system of
52 parks, recreation centers, museums, gardens, programming, facilities, and general
53 operating needs; and

54 **WHEREAS**, the General Fund is a limited resource that also supports other
55 critical City services such as police, fire, emergency medical services, public
56 health, libraries, planning, municipal court, and animal services; and

57 **WHEREAS**, Council is committed to overcoming these financial
58 limitations and developing a quality parks system that is equitable, financially
59 sustainable, well-maintained, and accessible to residents of all means and
60 resources; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

61 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF AUSTIN:**

62 Recognizing the competing priorities limiting the General Fund, the City
63 Manager is directed to convene a team of City staff that may include members
64 from PARD, FSD, the Law Department and other departments in the City
65 Manager’s discretion, to explore additional funding sources for parks management,
66 land acquisition, amenities, facilities, and maintenance.

67 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

68 The Council reaffirms the goal of providing equitable access for all residents
69 to parks and open spaces, defined as within one-fourth mile for urban core
70 residents and one-half mile for those outside of the urban core. Council also

71 reaffirms PARD’s long-range plan strategy to “Invest in the acquisition of new
72 parkland that can make parks a part of everyday life in existing and future
73 underserved areas,” as a means of achieving this goal. When making
74 recommendations under this resolution, the City Manager shall consider this goal,
75 identify the funding amounts necessary to achieve it, and recommend which
76 funding option would be best suited to balance parkland acquisition with
77 commensurate funding for the appropriate level of maintenance service to reach
78 this goal.

79 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

80 In addition to the General Fund, the staff team should consider the following
81 funding structures including but not limited to:

- 82 • Park Districts;
- 83 • Tax Increment Financing (TIF);
- 84 • Public Improvement Districts (PIDs);
- 85 • PARD fee setting and cost recovery policies;
- 86 • Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs);
- 87 • Expanding the Community PARKnership Program;
- 88 • Park User Fees;
- 89 • Resources from other departments, including the reassignment of Austin
90 Convention Center employees during the Convention Center construction
91 process; and

- Examine opportunities to reduce internal City charges as a cost saving strategy, including examining fees that PARD pays to other City departments.

The Council recommends enlisting the assistance of external consultants with expertise in park system funding to advise the staff team on funding methods to sustain and expand the available funding for Austin’s parks, as well as establishing a means of comparing funding methods used by other park systems in Texas, and in other states, and providing financial scenarios to compare funding options along with any opportunity costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to hold at least two public input sessions at Parks and Recreation Board meetings to review and gather feedback on the staff team’s draft public recommendations prior to returning to Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager should provide a progress report to Council by March 31, 2025, regarding the status of the staff team’s efforts to identify additional sources and methods of funding to expand the available resources to achieve long-term parkland acquisition goals primarily in park-deficient areas of the City in historically underserved communities, enhance service levels across the City, and sustain Austin parks, and a final report back to Council with recommendations on the funding strategies no later than May 31, 2025.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

114 The City Manager is directed to provide an annual report from FSD and
115 PARD regarding total parkland, preserve, and open space assets and maintenance
116 costs that includes the following:

117 Citywide land assets and amenities report:

- 118 • List the overall land assets managed by PARD citywide as well as by
119 Council district; and
- 120 • Total maintenance costs for these land assets and any amenities installed
121 on site.

122 Parkland Dedication Fund report:

- 123 • Total amount of fees collected that have yet to be appropriated to Capital
124 Improvement Projects (CIP) in the Parkland Dedication Fund;
- 125 • Total appropriation, encumbrances, and expenses to date in the Parkland
126 Dedication CIP;
- 127 • Current project appropriations, encumbrances, and expenses in the
128 Parkland Dedication CIP;
- 129 • Projected annual amount of Parkland Dedication fees for the upcoming
130 year;
- 131 • Total amounts since the adoption of the Parkland Dedication ordinance in
132 2016:
 - 133 ○ Fees-in-lieu of land dedicated;
 - 134 ○ Park Development Fees collected; and
 - 135 ○ Land and amenities dedicated; and

- Amount estimated to maintain the land, amenities, and facilities built with the Parkland Dedication fee funds.

Park Partnerships:

- A list of existing public-private partnership or PARKnership agreements, as well as the status of any partnerships or agreements under negotiation; and
- An annual report on the value created by each partnership, including capital contributions, operating or production expenses assumed, and volunteer service hours provided.

Maintenance and staffing report:

- Reports on the maintenance staffing and service levels for current parkland, building on the model developed by PARD and FSD in the Spring of 2024, and should include metrics that at least measure mowing, restroom maintenance, tree trimming, trash management, preventative maintenance, natural area maintenance, and work orders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to work with Travis County, surrounding counties, and other regional partners to explore the feasibility of creating a regional park management, acquisition, and maintenance strategy and provide an annual progress report and any recommendations to Council.

ADOPTED: _____, 2024 **ATTEST:** _____

Myrna Rios
City Clerk

DRAFT