



MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Alter and Members of the Climate, Water, Environment, and Parks Committee

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Jesús Aguirre, MBA, CRE, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: May 30, 2025

SUBJECT: Staff Update to Park Funding Strategies (Resolution No. 20241121-072)

This memorandum was previously distributed to Mayor and City Council on May 7, 2025. There are no changes to this committee copy.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the implementation of [Resolution No. 20241121-072](#) which directed the City Manager to convene a team of City staff that may include members from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), Financial Services Department (FSD), the Law Department (Law), and assistance from external consultants with expertise in park system funding to explore additional funding sources for parks management, land acquisition, amenities, facilities, and maintenance.

Internal Stakeholders and External Consultants

As of February 2025, PARC has contracted with two consultant organizations experienced in parks funding and operations; [PFM Group Consulting](#) (PFM) and Trust for Public Land (TPL). PFM is an existing public finance consultant for the City's Financial Services Department and has extensive experience in supporting local government leaders and staff in the analysis of budgets, finances, and operations. They specialize in consulting for alternative funding to achieve public benefit. TPL is a trusted national non-profit dedicated to creating parks and protecting land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Their conservation finance program has years of experience advising local governments on how to design, pass, and implement ballot and legislative measures to fund parks. PARC has been meeting weekly over the past two months with PFM and TPL, alongside internal stakeholders from FSD and Law to advance the resolution.

Project Scope

The project scope includes three phases. Phase 1, which kicked off at the end of February, will research comparable parks and recreation departments, both within Texas and nationally, to determine best practices related to Department funding and operations. The following benchmark cities have been selected for research and comparison in Phase 1:

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- Comparator Group: Atlanta, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, San Diego and Seattle
- Best Practice Group: Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco
- Selected Regional Comparator: Travis County

Phase 2 will analyze gaps in funding and the total budget shortfall in PARD, quantify the economic benefits of parks and recreation, and identify funding opportunities. Phase 3 will develop recommendations regarding potential revenue sources for PARD and provide information to City Council through a memorandum and presentation.

Public Input

The Resolution directs the City Manager to hold at least two public input sessions at the Parks and Recreation Board meetings to review and gather feedback. The project team briefed the Parks and Recreation Board on the project's progress and allowed for public input on March 24. PARD staff also launched [a public survey](#) on March 11 to gather input through April 11. Through that public survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to sign up for two small group discussions. The discussions were held virtually on April 22 and April 24. Attendees shared their ideas for park funding with PARD staff members and each other through a guided brainstorming exercise. The survey responses and meeting recordings have been posted on the public project [website](#).

Next Steps

The project team will analyze feedback from the survey, small group discussions, and data collected from the benchmark cities to compose a set of recommendations which incorporates a gap analysis of Austin's park funding. PARD anticipates another progress briefing at the Parks and Recreation Board on May 19, with a memo to Council planned later this summer.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Liana Kallivoka, Assistant Director, Austin Parks and Recreation at Liana.Kallivoka@austintexas.gov or 512-974-9455.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Corrie Stokes, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Department Directors