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AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION

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CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF PEOPLE + PARKS

FY27 PARKS BUDGET PRIORITIES

Austin's park system is growing faster than the infrastructure that supports it — FY27 funding priorities close that gap where it matters most: safety, sustainability, and staff capacity.

1. Security Audit: Wayfinding, Security System Upgrades & Temporary Safety Staff — \$910,000

Why This Matters: PARD currently has no department-wide security strategy, standards, or dedicated leadership overseeing security across the park system. Poor visibility is one of the biggest security issues parkgoers face — dense vegetation blocking sightlines, inadequate lighting, and passive spaces that discourage active use.

Parks Require:

- Clear, designated entrances with wayfinding — signage, fencing, and pedestrian light poles – \$110,000
- Temporary employees with a dedicated security focus – \$250,000
- Building and site security system updates – \$550,000
 - o Replace visibly weathered fences and gates to project active enforcement
 - o Install vehicle access controls (gates/chains), locked overnight by PARD staff

2. Horizontal Horticulture Grinder – In-House Mulch Production with Forestry — \$150,000-\$250,000

Why This Matters: Acquiring a dedicated horizontal grinder would allow Austin Forestry to process green waste into mulch in-house, offsetting the department's current \$100,000 annual expenditure on outside processing and disposal. If the equipment is acquired, it is expected to pay for itself within just two years. Beyond that point, it will continue to generate long-term savings by reducing hauling costs while providing a reliable, sustainable source of mulch for park beds, trails, and erosion control.

3. Landscape & Lawn Equipment Electrification — \$200,000

Why This Matters: Electrifying landscape and lawn equipment lowers long-term fuel and maintenance costs, reduces harmful emissions, and supports Austin's climate and air quality goals. APR currently lacks the charging infrastructure needed to support electrified equipment fleet-wide and requires a study/pilot phase before broader rollout.

Parks Require: A temporary Program Manager II to lead the Landscape and Lawn Equipment Electrification initiative, tasked with equipment research, procurement revisions, and creation of a pilot program.

WHAT REMAINS A PRIORITY WITHIN AUSTIN PARKS

In 2023, Oracle Inc. pledged to help fund a new central maintenance facility for the City in exchange for 9 acres of parkland. **Three years later, no investment has been made in the property, and APR now has only 18 months left to vacate the current site.** To keep pace with an expanding park system, a growing population, and a healthy work environment for staff, **a new maintenance complex must remain a top priority.**