



# AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION

—  
25 YEARS OF PEOPLE + PARKS

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 – 2020

**Prepared By:**

APF Board and Staff

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## OVERVIEW

Founded in 1992, **Austin Parks Foundation (APF)** has been committed to ensuring the future of Austin's parks, trails and green spaces, while providing resources, programming and funding to ensure access to parks for all.

In 2005, APF became the beneficiary of significant funding raised from the Austin City Limits Music Festival to be used for the development and maintenance of parks, trails and green spaces for the use and enjoyment of the Austin community. Since then its focus has been on supporting the Austin Parks Department's endeavors and enabling the development of parks in underserved communities.

In 2015, a strategic planning process was undertaken by Greenlights (now Mission Capital) to assist the newly hired CEO, Colin Wallis to prepare strategic goals for the organization for his first three years.

In 2016, a full programs audit was conducted by an outside consultant and, based on the feedback received, some programs/offerings were cut and changes made to others to ensure funding and resources were being applied where needs existed.

With the strategic plan period coming to an end in Dec. 2017, APF hired JBL Strategies to work with the organization to review the current situation and to develop a plan for the next three years (2018-2020). The intention was to ensure that APF's role in the community was clear and to focus its efforts.

## KEY PRIORITIES 2017/18

The following top three priorities, which were identified by the BOD and staff at the Strategy kick-off session and arising out of stakeholder interviews, are addressed in the plan:

1. Clearly define what APF does
2. Diversify funding sources
3. Generate greater awareness and increased outreach to engage the community and decision makers

## PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The purpose of this strategic plan is to better define areas of focus, enable increased and sustainable funding sources, and to assure accountability for the BOD and staff. The goal for the plan is to achieve sustainability, stability and ongoing strategic thinking, as well to enable a more focused approach to APF's role in the community.

### Desired outcomes:

1. To establish a clearly defined strategic direction, which the BOD and professional staff are committed to implementing over the next three years and beyond.
2. To ensure APF has an effective action plan for 2017/2018.

**Note:** This strategic plan is a guidance map that, when followed, will ensure APF effectively executes its Mission. The BOD recognizes that this "map" will need updating regularly in order to accurately represent the changing landscape and needs of the community as they relate to parks, trails and green spaces in the Greater Austin area.

**BOD/Staff Leadership Priority Area task groups, which worked to develop the plan:**

Priority Area	BOD	Staff
Organizational Excellence	Anna Stepan, Ryan Gravelle, Tim Hendricks	Jayna Burgdorf
Communications	Jen Ohlson, Laura Cortez, Sara Marler	Allison Watkins
Advocacy	Max Rutherford, Michael McGill, Margaret Menicucci	Colin Wallis
Programs & Projects	Jim Alsup, Rich Garza, Ralph Webster	Ladye Anne Wofford
Fund Development	Ford Alexander, Greg Weaver, Monica Fernandes, Stuart Laves	Shelley Hardeman

NOTE: In addition to the full strategic plan, there will be a one page plan (see incomplete example below) that can be used for reference by the BOD and Staff, as well as when approaching funders, potential partners and the media. It can also be on APF's web page in accordance with 501c3 transparency.

# Strategic Plan 2018-2020



**OUR VISION:** Austin Parks Foundation envisions a community in which the lives of all people are enriched through access to Austin's well-maintained public parks, trails and green spaces.

**OUR MISSION:** Austin Parks Foundation partners with our community to enhance people's lives by making our public parks, trails and green spaces better through volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy and financial support.

## OVERARCHING GOALS

1. Elevate APF's profile as Austin's recognized leader and partner related to improving parks, trails and green spaces.
2. Improve the national ranking of Austin's park system by 10% in the next 5 years.
3. Support parks in historically underserved neighborhoods by working with communities to address their needs and investing appropriate resources.
4. Assure diversified funding streams to further expand APF's contribution to Austin's parks, trails and green spaces.

Priority Areas	Organizational Excellence	Communications	Advocacy	Programs & Projects	Fund Development
	3-5 Year Goals	3-5 Year Goals	3-5 Year Goals	3-5 Year Goals	3-5 Year Goals
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be well-governed by a passionate, philanthropic, informed and committed BOD.</li> <li>2. Ensure that APF is financially sound.</li> <li>3. Build and maintain effective engaged and empowered leadership</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Measure APF's brand awareness and constituent satisfaction.</li> <li>2. Clearly define APF's messaging and branding to improve consistency.</li> <li>3. Generate greater awareness of APF to drive participation in programmatic and fundraising activities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a comprehensive advocacy program and strategy to lobby for increased park funding.</li> <li>2. Build relationships with elected officials, Parks &amp; Recreation BOD and city staff to advance APF's policy priorities.</li> <li>3. Organize grassroots advocacy program across all council districts</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Engage and build our community of park stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Invest funding and resources to address priority park needs.</li> <li>3. Build relationships &amp; increase investment in Austin's historically underserved communities.</li> <li>4. Support and fund development and promotion of active &amp; healthy lifestyles.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch &amp; test new revenue streams, integrating recurring solicitations across channels.</li> <li>2. Grow existing revenue streams by renewing, recurring &amp; upgrading existing donors.</li> <li>3. Connect people to Austin's parks in ways that show the park's impact on donors' lives, and the parks potential to transform the lives of others.</li> </ol>

## Austin Parks Foundation Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020

### VISION

Austin Parks Foundation envisions a community in which the lives of all people are enriched through access to well-maintained public parks, trails and green spaces.

### MISSION

Austin Parks Foundation partners with our community to enhance people's lives by making our public parks, trails and green spaces better through volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy and financial support.

### CORE VALUES

Guiding principles by which APF will make decisions; they define the internal culture, what matters to us and how we're going to do our work in the community:

#### **Collaborative**

We accomplish more when we work together, so we seek out different perspectives, skillsets and expertise to meet the needs of our community.

#### **Dependable**

We are built on 25 years of committed service, fueled by passion for people + parks and we can be trusted to follow through.

#### **Inclusive**

We intentionally work to engage all Austinites because we recognize the power of diversity in our neighborhoods and parks.

#### **Innovative**

We embrace new ideas, challenge conventional thinking and pursue creative solutions.

#### **Nimble**

We work in an ever-changing landscape so, like the hummingbird we've taken as our symbol, we strategically take advantage of opportunities, change directions when needed and adapt quickly.

#### **Positive**

We love what we do and bring enthusiasm and joy to our work, inspiring others to share in our passion.

## **OVERARCHING STRATEGY (2018 – 2020)**

Innovatively connect people, parks and resources through partnerships, volunteerism, communications and advocacy to better meet the needs of the Austin community.

## **OVERARCHING GOALS (2018 – 2020)**

1. To elevate the profile of APF as the recognized leader and partner in Austin, related to improving parks, trails and green spaces.
2. To improve the national ranking of Austin's park system by 10% in the next 5 years.\*
3. To support parks in historically underserved neighborhoods by working with communities to address their needs and investing appropriate resources.
4. To assure diversified funding streams to further expand APF's contribution to Austin's parks, trails and green spaces.

\* Based on the Trust for Public Lands' ParkScore® index, the only ranking system of city parks in the U.S. Serves as a good measure on how APF is doing in terms of advocacy, programs, projects, communications and partnerships.

## WHERE WE SERVE (Geographic area)

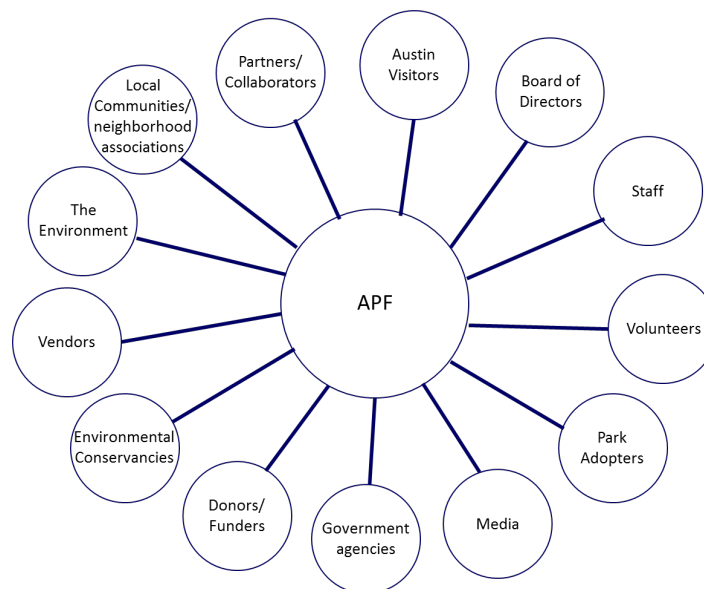
- Austin's ten City Council Districts
- Rest of Travis County

*Broadly defined as Greater Austin, which implies more than downtown Austin but maintains the Austin focus in APF's strategy. This does not prevent APF from serving other areas of Travis County where and when appropriate – for example: Rollingwood Sunset Valley.*

## WHO WE WILL SERVE

APF will continue to serve residents and visitors to parks, trails and green spaces in the Greater Austin area, with the emphasis on working with local communities and other related organizations to provide funding and resource support with an emphasis on Austin's underserved communities.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS



APF recognizes that its primary stakeholders are the BOD and staff of the organization, without whom it could not achieve its mission.

In addition, APF has identified target groups which are important existing or potential participants in APF's activities. Priority needs to be based on whether they are key, influential, or someday useful:

**Key** – has the authority to make decisions or is a primary market

**Beneficial** – could help or block our decisions or is a secondary market

**Someday** – people potentially affected by the decisions we make but not key to achieving our mission or markets into which APF would like to go

See 2017/18 stakeholder details below

**2017/18 APF - KEY STAKEHOLDER DETAILS**
**WHO WE SERVE**

KEY	BENEFICIAL	SOMEDAY
Current & Future Austin Residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Park &amp; Recreation Users - all kinds</li> <li>• Park Adopters</li> <li>• APF Volunteers</li> <li>• APF Donors</li> <li>• Austin Environmental Conservancies &amp; Foundations</li> <li>• City of Austin &amp; Gov't Agencies - PARD, AISD, Watershed Protection</li> </ul>		Travis County residents
Current & Future Austin Visitors & Tourists		
The Environment - Wildlife, Trees, etc.		

**PARTNERS**

KEY	BENEFICIAL	SOMEDAY
C3 & ACL Fest	Economic Development – Downtown Austin Alliance, Greater Austin Chamber, Austin Young Chamber	Travis County State Government
APF Donors	Great Austin Parks (GAP) & Other Coalitions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One Voice</li> <li>• Zilker 100</li> </ul>	Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau
Park Adopters	Neighborhood Associations	
Funding Foundations (Dell, St. David's)	Other Austin Environmental Conservancies & Foundations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austin Ridge Riders</li> <li>• Barton Springs Conservancy</li> <li>• Hill Country Conservancy</li> <li>• Keep Austin Beautiful</li> <li>• Pease Park Conservancy</li> <li>• Shoal Creek Conservancy</li> <li>• The Trail Foundation</li> <li>• TreeFolks</li> <li>• Umlauf Sculpture Garden</li> <li>• Waller Creek Conservancy</li> <li>• WeViva</li> <li>• Zilker Botanical Garden Conservancy</li> </ul>	
Go Austin! Vamos Austin! (GAVA)	Alamo Drafthouse	
Media – online and off-line	We Viva	
City of Austin, Parks & Recreation (PARD) & Other Local Government Agencies		

**PRIORITY AREAS** - Five priority areas for focusing activities:



**ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Ensure success by being a well-governed and fiscally sound organization with effective, engaged and empowered leadership, capable and motivated staff, and sufficient resources and systems to support and streamline APF's work.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Expand impact by creating clear and consistent communications and implementing strategies to raise greater awareness of APF's mission and engagement in our organization.

**ADVOCACY**

Influence the long term sustainability of parks, trails and green spaces by increasing awareness and understanding among local decision makers of the importance of providing appropriate funding, legislation and resources.

**PROGRAMS & PROJECTS**

Ensure program excellence by aligning programs and projects to address community needs and assure the long term health of our parks, trails and green spaces.

**FUND DEVELOPMENT**

Secure and diversify funding streams to achieve long term sustainability of APF.

**GOALS, STRATEGIES AND 2017/18 OBJECTIVES**

See following pages 11-18

## **PRIORITY AREA: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

**Description:** Ensure success by being a well-governed and fiscally sound organization with effective, engaged and empowered leadership; capable, motivated staff, and sufficient resources & systems to support and streamline APF's work.

**Overarching goal:** Creatively grow and nurture APF so it is regarded as a nonprofit leader with an excellent reputation for quality, timely and collaborative work. Ensure effective alignment of the organization with APF's Mission to achieve clear strategic direction, sound fiscal controls, administrative efficiencies and appropriate infrastructure and resources.

### **Goal 1: Be well-governed by a passionate, informed and committed BOD**

#### **Strategies:**

1. Ensure the BOD is well-informed, trained and equipped with clear roles and responsibilities.
2. Ensure the BOD maintains an ongoing strategic focus.
3. Maintain transparency, communication and accountability at all levels.

#### **Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Create a BOD member welcome package to ensure proper onboarding of new members.
- b. Develop a tool such as Dashboard Board and Management reports for other key aspects of APF's governance (such as financial information and projects/funding in the community).
- c. Implement a shareable BOD google drive or other technology tool with access to all information needed by the BOD.
- d. Develop and implement measurement tools for key aspects of the strategic plan and report metrics at BOD meetings.
- e. Prepare and update a project database so that BOD members understand and communicate the work of APF (in conjunction with the Programs and Communications Priority Area teams).

### **Goal 2: Ensure that APF is financially sound**

#### **Strategies:**

1. Manage financial resources prudently and effectively.
2. Effectively utilize existing and new resources by ensuring that best practices are in place, including policies and procedures.
3. Review and approve an annual budget that aligns with the strategic plan.
4. Monitor the budget, actual expenses and cash flow to maximize financial opportunities and strategic plan implementation.

#### **Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Ensure that policies and procedures are in place which would support an unqualified audit opinion (such as payment approval and review of contracts and contract amendments).
- b. Plan for and implement a documented operating reserve and endowment policy by Q4, 2017.
- c. Provide a snapshot of what's new, what's changed and what needs to be addressed at each BOD meeting.
- d. Stay within the 2017 budget while maintaining effective and efficient operations.

**Goal 3. Build and maintain effective engaged and empowered leadership**

**Strategies:**

1. Empower CEO to lead the organization and implement the organization's vision and mission.
2. Build and maintain strong staff leadership in key functional areas.
3. Develop a strategic BOD based on identified needs.

- a. Develop specific goals for CEO with incentives and conduct an annual review
- b. Research standards for "Best Places to Work in Central Texas" and implement where feasible
- c. Develop a career plan with training and milestones for key managers.
- d. Build training and advancement opportunities into the annual budget.
- e. Identify gaps in BOD composition and recruit intentionally.
- f. Ensure that all BOD members engage in at least one key role on the BOD
- g. Complete a self-evaluation for individual BOD members and the BOD as a whole (Q3)
- h. Create and implement a plan to address any enhancements identified by the self-evaluation (Q4)
- i. Develop a mindful succession plan for Executive leadership and BOD members
- j. Investigate the benefit of having an advisory group for APF and, if deemed useful, create an implementation plan.

**PRIORITY AREA: COMMUNICATIONS**

**Description:** Expand impact by creating clear and consistent communications and implementing strategies to raise greater awareness of APF's mission and engagement in our organization.

**Overarching goal:** Understand current awareness of APF in the Austin community and from these learnings, develop and execute a cohesive communications and marketing plan (for both internal and external audiences) that positions APF as the go-to organization for improving Austin's parks, trails and green spaces.

**Goal 1: Measure APF's brand awareness and constituent satisfaction.**
**Strategies:**

1. Launch tools to determine the public's awareness of APF (ex: surveys, site traffic, social listening, search volume)
2. Launch Net Promoter Score to understand constituent satisfaction and if people would recommend us/our services to friends and family.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Determine measurement tools by EOY 2017.
- b. In January 2018, launch measurement tools and Net Promoter Score.
- c. Coordinate data collection, analysis and dissemination to staff and BOD once tools are launched.
- d. Use data to drive decision making throughout 2018

**Goal 2: Clearly define APF's messaging and branding and improve both internal and external consistency.**
**Strategies:**

1. Design tools and resources to better support staff and BOD in building consistent messaging and brand usage.
2. Increase and facilitate the sharing of information externally, to effectively communicate our mission, brand, goals and priorities, with park adopters, our key partners and the public.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. By EOY 2017, create and disseminate messaging document for staff, BOD and key volunteers and partners.
- b. By end of Q1 2018, create and disseminate expanded brand guidelines for staff, BOD and key volunteers and partners.
- c. By end of Q1 2018, create and implement messaging and brand training for all staff, BOD and key volunteers and partners (ex: park adopters, project supervisors).

**Goal 3: Generate greater awareness of APF and drive participation in our programmatic and fundraising activities.**

**Strategies:**

1. Increase and diversify media outreach to strategically share APF's mission and key organizational priorities.
2. Create community engagement plan and calendar to strategically share APF's mission and key organizational priorities.
3. Develop brand partnerships to leverage corporate marketing and communications channels to help share our mission.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. By EOY 2017, develop a 2018 marketing and communications plan to raise awareness of APF and extend our reach while clearly identifying resources to achieve results.
- b. Increase new users to our social media channels and website properties by 15% over 2016.
- c. By end of January 2018, implement marketing and communications plan.
- d. In Q1 2018, work with development team to identify potential corporate partners that would help APF amplify our messaging and brand.

**PRIORITY AREA: ADVOCACY**

**Description:** Influence the long term sustainability of parks, trails and green spaces by increasing awareness and understanding among local decision makers of the importance of providing appropriate funding, legislation and resources.

**Overarching goal:** Identify and develop relationships with key decision makers to define and influence the appropriate allocation of funds and support for the protection, development, maintenance and use of Austin's parks, trails and green spaces.

**Goal 1: Establish comprehensive advocacy program and strategy for the organization, to lobby for increased funding for parks.**
**Strategies:**

1. Engage consultant to conduct stakeholder interviews, provide landscape analysis and clearly define priority areas.
2. Engage consultant to work with leadership to provide long-term advocacy strategy recommendations based on overall strategic plan.
3. Staff to work directly with consultant to create implementation plan.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Complete stakeholder interviews, landscape analysis and priority areas for Advocacy by April 2017.
- b. Finalize advocacy strategy recommendations by May 2017.
- c. Finalize implementation plan by July 2017.
- d. Establish and implement an advocacy strategy for the 2018 parks bond.

**Goal 2: Build relationships with elected officials, Parks and Recreation BOD members, and city staff to advance APF's policy priorities. (Direct lobbying/ advocacy)**
**Strategies:**

1. Conduct regular high-level meetings with PARD leadership to identify priorities and support for long range plan
2. Regular and sustained contact with Mayor and council offices
3. Identify and develop champions at city hall
4. Monitor and educate Parks and Recreation BOD and engage on an as-needed basis

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Liaise with PARD Director and senior leadership on priorities and needs.
- b. Organize minimum quarterly touches with each council office.
- c. Conduct at least 2 meetings with each council office during budget season to discuss parks funding priorities.
- d. Identify and educate 2-3 council members who will advance and prioritize parks issues.
- e. Conduct meetings with each Parks BOD member minimum twice annually.

<p><b>Goal 3: Organize grassroots advocacy program across all 10 council districts (Grassroots lobbying/advocacy)</b></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a structure and branding for the program.</li> <li>2. Develop and execute an advocacy recruitment plan and communications strategy to engage and motivate grassroots advocates.</li> <li>3. Build partnerships with other related nonprofits in order to secure their support for APF policy priorities.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Objectives 2017/18:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. By Aug. 2017, identify appropriate database plan for potential advocates to use when sending target communications around advocacy for parks.</li> <li>b. Work with marketing team and public relations firm to create advocacy communications plan that includes recruitment, engagement opportunities and PR, to be completed in July 2017 and done annually in the Fall.</li> <li>c. Define levels of engagement and associated activities by Jan. 2018.</li> <li>d. Determine brand of program, based on the APF branding guidelines, and how participants will identify by Spring 2018.</li> </ol>
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*Note: The Advocacy plan being developed by David Lofye must be aligned with the overall strategic plan*

## PRIORITY AREA – PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

**Description:** Ensure programmatic excellence by aligning programs and projects to address community needs and assure the long term health of our parks, trails and green spaces.

**Overarching goal:** Execute programs and projects in alignment with APF’s mission that develop, maintain and preserve all our parks; build community engagement; support active, healthy communities, and clearly meet needs in underserved communities.

### Goal 1: Engage and build our community of park stakeholders

#### Strategies:

1. Promote ownership and leadership of parks by developing and growing newly revamped Adopt-A-Park program
2. Grow volunteerism by expanding corporate partnerships and volunteer opportunities
3. Activate park spaces and use of them through programming

### Objectives 2017/18:

- a. Grow participation in Adopt-A-Park program to 100 park adopters
- b. Develop and implement corporate volunteer engagement strategy by Fall 2017
- c. Grow Movies in the Parks program into 2 new neighborhoods
- d. Implement monthly volunteer workdays (engagement)
- e. Conduct evaluation of Adopt-A-Park program in Q4 2017 and identify areas for further development in 2018

### Goal 2: Invest funding and resources to address priority park needs

#### Strategies:

1. Identify priority needs for park improvements and programming.
2. Utilize volunteer labor to address priority park maintenance needs and protect Austin’s unique ecosystem.
3. Expedite planning and completion of projects by Park Developer leading the process.
4. Enhance grants program to more efficiently address community needs.

### Objectives 2017/18:

- a. Work with community and city departments to identify a list of high priority projects for funding.
- b. Continue working with PARD to identify and implement all possibilities for streamlining processes or creating efficiencies that would expedite project completion.
- c. Develop process to identify park maintenance needs for volunteer projects.
- d. Identify and assign/reassign projects from PARD to APF Park Developer.
- e. Increase the dollar amount of volunteer labor hours provided to the City parks to \$750K by organizing monthly volunteer workdays.
- f. Conduct grants program evaluation and implement any needed changes by January 2018.
- g. Ensure all grant-funded projects are completed within 24 months.

<p><b>Goal 3: Build relationships and increase investment in Austin’s historically underserved communities.</b></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify underserved communities and develop targeted outreach efforts to engage them.</li> <li>2. Identify and work to remove any perceived barriers to accessing parks and/or utilizing APF’s resources.</li> <li>3. Develop strategy to build grant application pipeline within districts D1, D2, D3, D4.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Objectives 2017/18:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Revisit and update on a quarterly basis the current list of priority neighborhoods to target with outreach efforts in 2018.</li> <li>b. Support four (4) applications and increase funding by 10%.</li> <li>c. Develop a work plan to address perceived barriers by January 2018</li> <li>d. Offer park planning/design services by Jan. 2018.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Goal 4: Support and fund the development and promotion of active and healthy lifestyles.</b></p> <p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify community priority projects related to pools, trails, playscapes, fitness equipment, sports fields, and other park amenities that provide opportunity for physical activity.</li> <li>2. Plan and execute multiple opportunities for physical activity based on or aligned with best practices.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Objectives 2017/18:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with PARD’s recreation division to identify priority needs for project funding.</li> <li>b. Identify community stakeholders and conduct targeted outreach to identify potential grant-funded projects.</li> <li>c. Provide professional development opportunities to ensure staff is informed on best practices.</li> <li>d. Evaluate Fitness in the Park program and determine any needed changes to the program for 2018.</li> </ol>

**PRIORITY AREA: FUND DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Secure and diversify funding streams to achieve long term sustainability of APF.

**Overarching goal:**

Grow and diversify APF funding sources.

**Overarching Strategies:**

1. Launch and test new revenue streams
2. Grow existing revenue streams
3. Leverage the parks themselves, as well as APF's strengths, program engagement opportunities and existing networks to personally connect people to opportunities to improve Austin's parks, trails and green spaces.

**Goal 1: Launch and test new revenue streams, integrating recurring solicitations across channels**

**Strategies:**

1. Build base for a major gifts program. Begin with a step-up initiative for mid-level gifts from individual donors with the capacity to give \$1k+.
2. Grow APF's relationships with grant makers and corporations interested in the health impacts of parks on people and communities.
3. Solicit Corporate groups seeking volunteer projects (in partnership with Programs team).
4. Continue to develop relationships with community and business leaders so as to best position APF for symbiotic partnership opportunities like MatchPlay, ACL, etc.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Launch a mid-level giving club. Recruit Chairs by Q3 2017 and 25 founding members to give \$1200 for 3 years (= \$90,000) by Q2 – 2018. Recruit Founding Members to solicit peers.
- b. Identify and have 12 cultivation/qualification visits with grant makers connected to APF and interested in the community health and equity impacts of parks (1 per month by Q2 2018)
- e. Work with programs team to develop a plan and supporting materials for soliciting inquiring corporate volunteer groups. (Launch Q3 2017). Ask for 3-year recurring commitments.

**Beyond 2018:**

- a. Higher level major gifts cultivation
- b. Explore feasibility/opportunity for In-house grants management. Meanwhile, contract.
- c. Explore need for more robust annual/individual giving services
- d. Planned Giving

**Goal 2: Grow existing revenue streams by renewing, recurring and upgrading existing donors**

**Strategies:**

1. Improve donor stewardship, service and meaningful touch-points to increase retention.
2. Assure ongoing ACL contract by actively building relationships with both C3 Presents and Live Nation leadership.
3. Promote recurring credit card gifts and multi-year pledges among existing donors.
4. Position APF as the preferred Corporate partner in our space among community relations professionals. Refine the Corporate Sponsorship Program, moving towards a Business Circle with an exec leadership committee securing 3 year (non-binding) commitments. Improve stewardship and engagement.
5. Work with marketing and programs to maximize donor acquisition through P4P, IMPD, volunteerism, Amplify Austin, Marathon etc.
6. Work with Board and Committee Members to identify and recruit new donors.
7. Continue: Amplify Austin (with Sponsored Fund Accounts), Austin Marathon (peer-to-Peer), Knock Out Night, Cap10k, Party for the Parks – marketing and donor acquisition opportunities.
8. Improve donor data and reporting to make more data-driven decisions when evaluating strategies and to better communicate with donors.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Develop donor touchpoint calendar with year-round stewardship. Staff to support. (Q4 2017).
- b. Increase year-over-year Donor Retention Rate from 35% to 40% (January 2018)
- c. Integrate recurring gift options into annual campaign appeals and online giving. Work with marketing to better promote.
- d. Increase annual appeal to 2x per year (add summer) (Q2 2017 or 2018, depending on staffing decisions)
- e. Create enticing landing webpage for corporate partners, leveraging marketing benefits, recognition, events, volunteerism/team-building, and encouraging recurring gifts/budgeting (Q4 2018). Includes entry level to major gifts. Can easily be sent by staff and Board members to corporate contacts.
- f. Audit materials with Marketing to find opportunities to promote recurring giving across channels.
- g. Work with Marketing to implement and enhance pre- and post-event communication protocols and content aimed at converting volunteers and event participants into donors (for P4P, IMPD, races and volunteer days). May include social marketing, advertising and email solicitations. Establish/refine protocol to implement for IMPD Spring 2018, and apply to/test at least one additional event per year.

**Beyond 2018:**

- a. Move to 3-yr commitments among corporate partners
- b. Streamline recurring, invoicing and collections/pledge payment procedures
- c. Develop a CEO/Exec Advisory Council for promoting corporate program mentioned in 'e' above

**Goal 3: Connect people to Austin’s parks in ways that illuminate the impact of parks on donors’ lives, and the potential parks have to transform lives of others.**

1. Work with Marketing to develop clear and relevant messaging and to disseminate it through appropriate channels.
2. Introduce key stakeholders to APF’s work in the parks by onsite activities.

**Objectives 2017/18:**

- a. Increase 1:1 visits, group tours for key donors in the parks. Minimum one in-park visit per month. Staff to articulate research illustrating community, environmental and personal health connections.
- b. Work with Marketing to develop materials that make a case for the community, workforce and individual health benefits of parks.

## ASSESSMENT

### WHAT IS APF?

A 501c3 Foundation dedicated to people and parks:

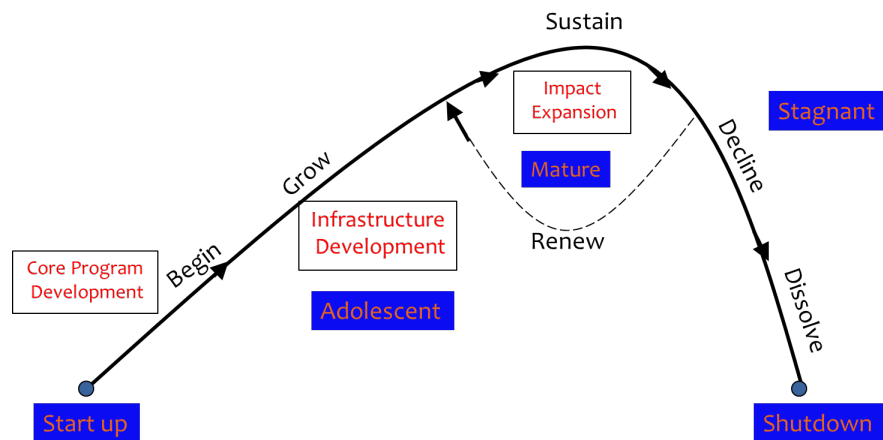
- **People** – enhancing quality of life for individuals by providing venues for healthy activities, community building and social equity
- **Parks** – advocating for the importance of parks, trails and green spaces for the health of the Greater Austin community and providing funding and resources to develop, maintain and protect the City's natural environment.

The organization is directed by a volunteer BOD of 15-20 people, from a variety of sectors and businesses.

Lead by CEO Colin Wallis since 2015, there is currently (2017) a staff of 14.

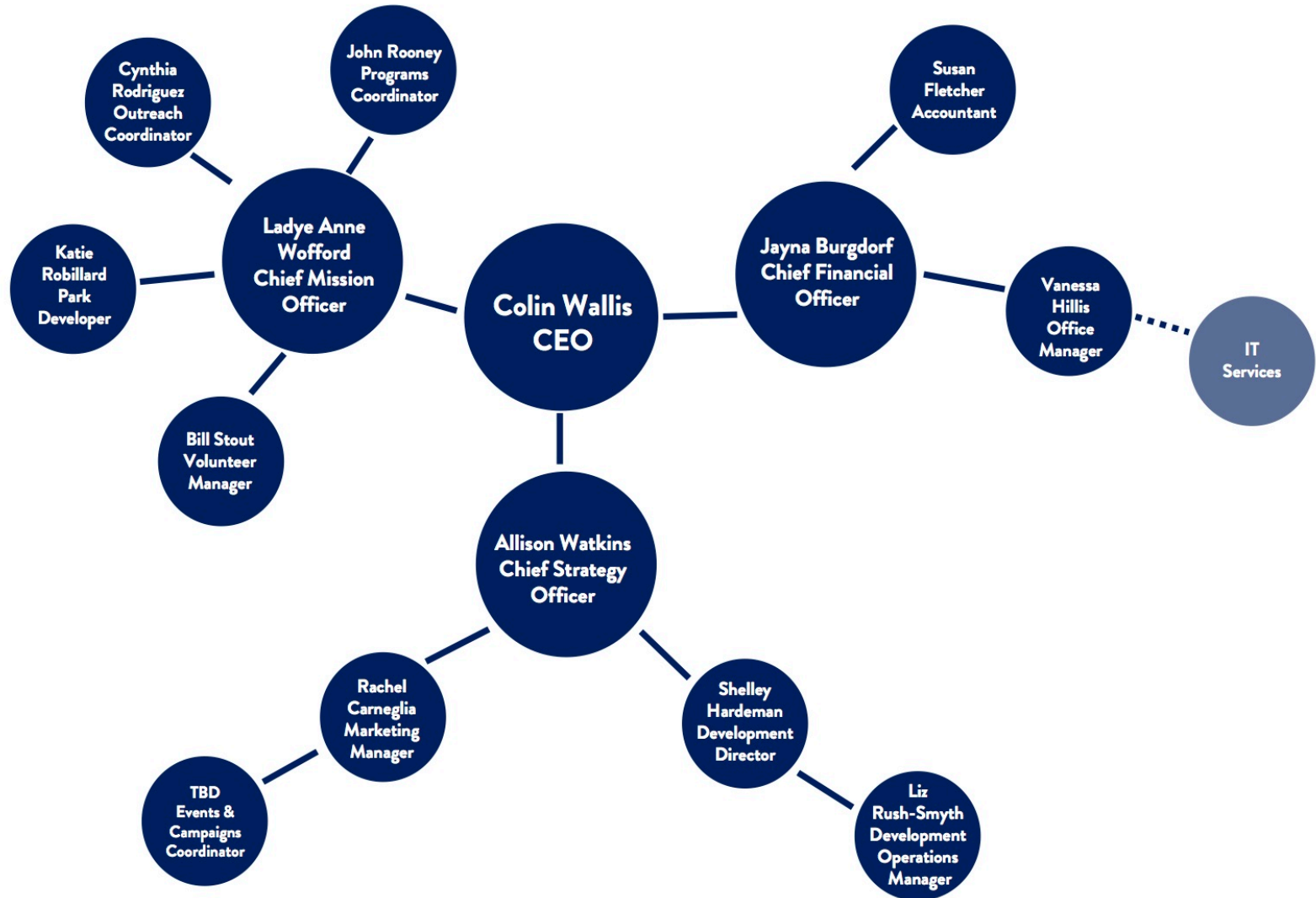
### ORGANIZATIONAL LIFECYCLE

In the organizational lifecycle everyone concurred that APF is in the Grow/Infrastructure development space, moving toward Sustain, primarily since 2013 with the development of a strategic direction and top line goals.



Adapted from S. Steven's Nonprofit Lifecycles: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity, 2002

## 2017 ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## **2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

### **BOD Executive Committee**

- Sara Marler - Chair
- Anna Stepan
- Margaret Menicucci – Chair elect
- Michael McGill
- Ryan Gravelle

### **BOD members at large**

- Chip Pate
- Ford Alexander
- Gregory Weaver
- Jen Ohlson
- Jim Alsup
- Laura J. Cortez
- Max Rutherford
- Monica Fernandes
- Ralph Webster
- Rich Garza
- Ryan Gravelle
- Stuart C. Laves
- Tim Hendricks

### **Governance Committee**

- Michael McGill - Chair
- Ford Alexander
- Greg Weaver
- Jen Ohlson
- Ryan Gravelle
- Sara Marler

### **Finance Committee**

- Anna Stephan - Chair
- Chip Pate
- Jim Alsup
- Margaret Menicucci
- Monica Fernandes
- Sara Marler
- Tim Hendricks

### **Development Committee**

- Stuart Laves - Chair
- Bill Talbot
- Ford Alexander
- Greg Weaver
- Max Rutherford
- Rich Garza

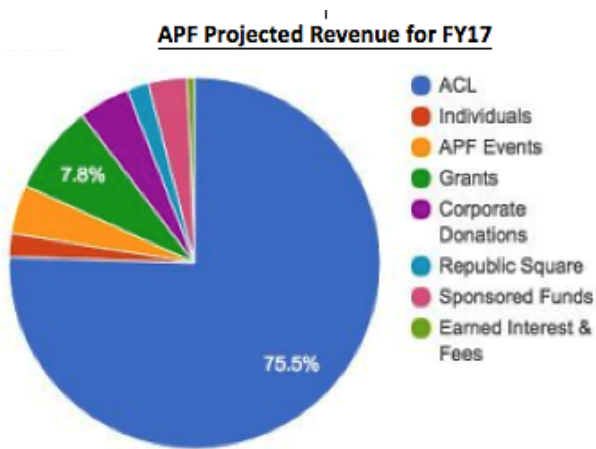
### **Programs Committee**

- Ralph Webster - Chair
- Jen Ohlson
- Laura Cortez
- Sara Marler

In addition to all of the above, the following BOD members participate in the Grants Subcommittee of the Programs Committee:

- Bill Talbot
- Max Rutherford
- Monica Fernandes

## APF'S CURRENT FUNDING SOURCES



## APF's CURRENT PROGRAMMING

Current mix includes the following:

Movies in the Park

Fitness in the Park

ACL Music Festival Grants Program

- Neighborhood Grants
- Community Grants
- Impact Grants

Adopt-A-Park

- Adopt-a-Park Summit
- Tool Warehouse

Vendor Program

- Old Bakery Emporium/My Thai Mom

Also included in the scope of Programs/Projects are:

Volunteer Events

- It's My Park Day (Fall & Spring)
- Corporate Workdays (year round)
- National Service Days (MLK Day, National Public Lands Day, National Trails Day, Earth Day)
- Monthly workdays (coming soon)

Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) Coalition participation

Advocacy efforts (previously GAP)

## SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting programs to fit needs or organization and constituents</li> <li>• Credibility within the related communities</li> <li>• Exceptional programs organizationally</li> <li>• Focus on people</li> <li>• Footprint in all Districts</li> <li>• Goal setting for organization/departments</li> <li>• Good funding source through ACL/C3</li> <li>• Great partnerships with marquee events</li> <li>• Inclusive, multiple opportunities for engagement</li> <li>• Intentional flexibility</li> <li>• Mission in line with City values</li> <li>• Move quickly when presented with new opportunities</li> <li>• No other organization has such a broad focus</li> <li>• Relationship with PARD</li> <li>• Solid foundation</li> <li>• Track record/credibility – 25 years</li> <li>• Transparency and sensitivity</li> <li>• Well managed with strong leadership and staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing growth with capacity</li> <li>• Inter-departmental communications and meetings (possibly too many)</li> <li>• Lack of documentation of processes – organizational how-tos – universal way of doing this across departments</li> <li>• Lack one thing we are known for</li> <li>• Lack the ability to prioritize things</li> <li>• Large cash reserve which needs to be used more effectively/quickly – designated funding</li> <li>• Limited diversity in staff/outreach (although making good strides in area – ex: GAVA)</li> <li>• Low visibility in terms of awareness of APF, its story, programs, partners, donors, grants and impact</li> <li>• No heart string appeal – need more human connection</li> <li>• Not having single focus or goal</li> <li>• Office accommodation limits growth/productivity (internet)</li> <li>• Reliance on one major source of funding</li> <li>• Sharing volunteers with other orgs rather than having own</li> <li>• Tool storage isn't onsite – time waste and park adopters not able to engage with staff</li> <li>• We don't take credit for all we've done</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Ideas – ex: pop-up pools</li> <li>• Broader exposure</li> <li>• Community activation/engagement</li> <li>• Connecting with other “healthy” organizations for partnerships – ex: Sustainable Food Center</li> <li>• Diversification of our funding resources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ HOT (hotel occupancy tax) funding</li> <li>◦ Grants (health, environment, physical activity, big projects)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Food trailer replication as funding source</li> <li>• Greater alignment of organizations with city brand – civic pride/CVB</li> <li>• Growing number of project-specific orgs which frees up APF to focus on underserved areas and serve as umbrella organization, bringing everyone together to capitalize on synergies rather than competing for limited resources</li> <li>• Growing quality of life awareness</li> <li>• School parks</li> <li>• Strength of major players in our area to collaborate on awareness and education</li> <li>• Tell more stories – relate mission to helping people</li> <li>• Tracking of individuals we serve – showing impact over time – our long term benefit</li> <li>• Travis County resources untapped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACL funding could go away/be diminished</li> <li>• Competition from project/area specific organizations for volunteers, funds, and awareness</li> <li>• Development vs. impact of population</li> <li>• Lack of consensus (negative brand impact)</li> <li>• Low brand awareness</li> <li>• More visibility = more risk</li> <li>• Other causes with renewed resources</li> <li>• People don't know how big problem is</li> <li>• Potential of political/PARD change</li> </ul>

### Connection Points identified in the SWOT

- We have trust with PARD – this could allow us to help them with better process to get money into parks faster
- Connections with Chamber/CVB for new businesses and individuals moving to town
- Continued focus on PR/legal for risk mitigation when doing big projects
- Focusing on projects making an impact on kids health for grant funding
- GAP – continue to present ourselves to city council/PARD and show we are a leader in the space. Constantly update them with information on work we’re doing in their districts. We need to build more relationships and have more touches.
- Hiring to address threats – ex: advocacy
- Key Austin businesses who we could partner with in a big way
- More connection points to other cities for best practices exchange – learning about creative ideas and things that are working in their towns – ex: NYC pop-up pools
- More partners to elevate the brand – cause marketing or other brand partners
- Need to hit home “people” in all marketing – we are making a difference in people’s lives
- Our office move is an opportunity to fix office issues
- Using tools to say no when needed – staying true to mission

### Why Parks, Trails and Green Spaces? What value?

- **Community** – Neighborhood projects encourage social activities outdoors, increase civic participation, and enable greater communication among neighborhood residents resulting in safer communities.
- **Health** – Increased access to park amenities increases physical activity resulting in improved health of our community
- **Environmental** – Restoration and conservation projects increase the understory and forest canopy, benefiting wildlife and improves water quality
- **Economic** – well-maintained park amenities and beautification increase property values and increase positive experiences for visitors spending money in the community

## SYNOPSIS OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

1. BOD survey
2. All APF staff survey
3. External stakeholder interviews

### 1. Board of Directors (BOD) Strategy Survey

Purpose: As part of APF's strategy kick-off session, all BOD members were asked to complete a survey to help identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and priorities for the organization

Number of participants: 19

Overview: It appears that the majority believe that there is a need for a clear strategic direction addressing clarity on what APF does and why, awareness, and diversity of funding sources.

Key points arising:

1. Majority involved with APF because of a passion for the cause and to give back to the community.
2. They all had similar aspirations for APF, like having a lasting impact on Austin, to be recognized for bringing communities together, and becoming a national example of parks support.
3. The majority agreed that APF is different from other organizations. However, because clarity on what APF does is low, there is confusion about the difference between it and other similar organizations.
4. When talking about what's working for APF internally, they all agreed the CEO is a major key to APF's success. They also feel that the staff/team is doing well, which adds to APF's success.
5. Some agreed that APF needs to work on diversifying its financial position and adding a new work space to accommodate the growth in staff.
6. The majority thinks external awareness is good, particularly in relation to APF's partnership with marquee events.
7. However, under what doesn't appear to be working externally, they responded that awareness of APF generally is low. They also think APF's marketing is weak.
8. They think some of APF's greatest challenges moving forward are diversifying funding and building awareness, maintaining the C3 relationship, and growing and sustaining resources to fund their Mission, objectives and projects.
9. They all agree that success in the future would be having a clear, succinct Vision and Mission; having a clear strategy that is actionable, and having improved communication between staff and the BOD, which will lead to everyone understanding what their roles are.

## **2. All APF Staff Survey**

Purpose: As part of APF's strategy review, all staff members were asked to complete a survey to help identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and priorities for the organization, as well as any important staffing issues facing the organization.

Number of participants: 12

Overview: It appears that the main drivers for the staff are APF's Mission and sense of contributing to our community. Communications and funding sources appear to be the biggest challenges.

Key findings:

1. Most of the staff joined APF because they are passionate about its Mission and they thought they fitted well with the organization.
2. They see APF as an organization that helps to improve the quality of life for the people of our community by investing in our parks, trails, and green spaces.
3. They are very proud that they can engage volunteers and inspire community members to take a more active role in improving their parks.
4. One of the things they love most about working at APF is the people they work with, the great leadership from their supervisors, and being able to see their Mission at work in the community.
5. However, some said they feel that communication within departments can be improved and that sometimes they feel disconnected with their superiors. They also agreed that a lot of the staff meetings aren't productive and too many.
6. When talking about internal challenges, most said that communication and having a clear Mission and focus about what their tasks are could be improved.
7. They think that low awareness is one of APF's biggest external challenges, as well as a lack of diversified funding.
8. They all agreed that the solution to the previous stated challenge is to grow and invest in APF's marketing and social media to increase awareness.

### 3. Key stakeholder interviews

Purpose: As part of APF's strategy kick-off session, one-on-one interviews were held with key stakeholders to discuss where they saw APF today and how APF could enhance its offering in the future. People interviewed included past BOD members, leaders in other related organizations and city government, project and program partners, and donors.

Number of participants: 12

Overview: There was no doubt among the interviewees that APF has a very important role to play in the long term sustainability of the city's parks, trails and green spaces. The need for greater diversity both within the organization and through its projects and programs, as well as the importance on focusing efforts on equity was unanimous.

Stakeholders suggested that APF's role is to:

1. Support PARD's work as APF has greater flexibility, able to address gaps, raise funds, be advocates and augment PARD activities.
2. Advocate on behalf of the parks, trails and green spaces to prove why conservation and parks etc. are important to ensure sufficient and long term funding and resources.
3. Working with PARD, conservancies, foundations and other related organizations, coordinate a cohesive vision and effort for the City's parks, trails and green spaces to speak with one voice and avoid duplication of efforts and dilution of funding.
4. Organize grassroots activities through communities and volunteers.
5. Work with communities to realize their visions and provide funding and resources for parks and activities in underserved communities.
6. Raise awareness of the environmental, social and economic benefits of green spaces.
7. Educate users of parks and recreational facilities on responsible use.

Key challenges facing the parks and APF:

1. Insufficient funds allocated to development, operation and maintenance of the City's parks, leaving a huge shortfall to be filled by APF and other entities.
2. Exponential growth resulting in overuse but the necessary funds for maintenance, development and preservation are not forthcoming ex: population growing but tax base is not keeping up so funding tends to be funded by the few.
3. Issues of gentrification and equity.
4. Lack of diversity in this space.
5. Varying speeds at which partners in the public/private partnerships work on projects result in too much time taken to get things done.
6. Growth in the number of conservancies and one-off/independent projects is challenging the available funding sources.
7. Shift from old city council to 10:1 Council provides a need to educate the new council on purpose and value of parks, trails and green spaces.

## Stakeholder interviews cont./2

8. No sense of urgency/emergency at a time when significant issues are facing our population, competing for awareness and funding in a more short term fashion, ex: ACLU, which raised \$48m in 48 hours.
9. Lack of clarity and awareness about APF's role, often times resulting in a low profile and confusion in terms of its relationship to PARD and other conservation organizations.

## Possible solutions:

1. Develop clear and consistent messaging addressing the benefits for long term health and welfare of the community, not just for certain groups.
2. Enhance communications efforts around success stories to get people involved, particularly millennials who want to know how their dollars are being committed and why.
3. Include the public more by expanding the park adopter program.
4. Expand reach in underserved communities, working with them to have a key stake in the facility. Talk to neighborhoods about priorities and focus on those.
5. Raise credibility by involving equity in APF's decision making and practicing diversity within the organization, as well as through programs and projects.
6. Get involved in city-wide initiatives such as Imagine Austin and CodeNext to ensure a collaborative voice for the parks.
7. Advocate for a special assessment for parks and leverage city funding for public/private partnerships.
8. Clearly define APF's role and actively seek to raise awareness of the organization's Vision and purpose.
9. Develop a sophisticated and sustainable fund development plan to ensure higher profile than others competing for funding in this space. Could include: major gifts (10 x \$25,000); bequests, planned giving (Molly Butler offered to spearhead this), events for older money, as well as focusing on young, new money.
10. Define policy on APF's role in projects.
11. Improve communications with key stakeholders on achievement of goals ex: Republic Square and raising awareness of APF's involvement in projects and programs; sharing outcomes of activities like the establishment of the Greater Austin Parks Coalition (GAP); strategic process and so on.
12. Leverage Board and volunteers more to go out into the community and engage the public in APF's Mission. Give APF a public face.
13. Identify ways of addressing responsible behavior in parks, ex: the issue of bad behavior in dog parks can be addressed by working with a local dog trainer to provide free training in the parks.

## POSITIONING STATEMENT - What APF does. How are we different?

<b>To</b>	Residents and visitors to parks, trails and green spaces in the Greater Austin area
<b>We are the brand of</b>	Public park, trail and green space preservation and transformation
<b>That provides</b>	Volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy and financial support
<b>So that you feel</b>	Included and empowered
<b>And unlike</b>	Other local park-specific conservancies
<b>Austin Parks Foundation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboratively and creatively connects all people, parks and stakeholders</li> <li>• Implements projects in all ten Austin City Council districts</li> <li>• Works as a community foundation for 90+ groups</li> <li>• Focuses on community-initiated projects</li> <li>• Enables and empowers individuals to take ownership of their parks</li> <li>• Concentrates our work in underserved areas of the city</li> <li>• Identifies and works quickly to fill gaps</li> </ul>

## APF BRAND

**Name:** Austin Parks Foundation

**Logos:**



**Tag line:** People plus Parks

**Brand Guidelines:** see Appendix section for copy of document

**Marketing materials:**

- **On-line:**
  - Website – [www.austinparks.org/](http://www.austinparks.org/)
  - Facebook – [www.facebook.com/austinparksfoundation](http://www.facebook.com/austinparksfoundation)
  - Twitter – <https://twitter.com/austinparksfdn>
  - Instagram – <https://www.instagram.com/austinparksfdn/>
  - LinkedIn – <https://www.linkedin.com/company/austin-parks-foundation>
- **Off-line:**
  - Examples: Brochure, letterheads, business cards, signage, grant submissions
- **Promotional goods:**
  - T-shirts
  - Caps

## DECISION MAKING STRATEGY SCREEN

Strategy Screen	Not at all	Somewhat	Absolutely
<b>This strategy, program, opportunity...</b>			
Aligns with our mission.			
Improves our long term sustainability.			
Is consistent with our cash and budgetary constraints.			
Leverages our strengths or mitigates weaknesses.			
Has measurable outcomes and impact.			
Increases our organization's visibility.			
Supports collaborative efforts with others.			
Utilizes our core competencies and current capacity.			
Strengthens our value proposition with funders.			