



**AUSTIN
PARKS**
FOUNDATION



The Trail
Foundation

**waterloo
greenway**

UMLAUF sculpture
garden & museum

Pease Park CONSERVANCY

**KEEP AUSTIN
BEAUTIFUL**

**Austin Sunshine
Camps**

**MORWOOD PARK
FOUNDATION**

**STRONGER
AUSTIN**

**AUSTIN YOUTH
RIVER WATCH**

BARTON SPRINGS CONSERVANCY

October 23, 2019

The Honorable Mayor Steve Adler and Austin City Council Members
Austin City Hall
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767-1088

Cc: Planning Commissioners Kazi, Kenny, Anderson, Azhar, Flores, Hempel, Howard, Pulido, Schneider, Seeger, Shaw, Shieh, and Thompson

Dear Mayor Steve Adler and Austin City Council Members:

There is perhaps no policy issue more important to the future of the City of Austin than the revision of the Land Development Code. Austin Parks Foundation and our partners are writing to provide our input to you on the issue of parkland dedication, and the critical role it plays in realizing the promise of our parks system.

First and foremost, we are writing to urge you to do no harm. The current parkland dedication ordinance was adopted by City Council in 2016 following two years of stakeholder engagement, and represents the time and insight of both the environmental and development community. The ordinance as currently worded is working as intended, and should not be changed.

Indeed, we believe the current ordinance is critical to achieving the goals of *Imagine Austin* and a significant and important tool at the City's disposal to ensure that the complete, compact, and connected communities envisioned in that plan. Compact, connected, and complete communities can not be achieved without adequate parkland, a key community asset already lacking in too many parts of our city. Parkland and the benefits it provides will only become more critical as Austin grows and becomes more dense and urban.

One piece of mis-information often included in criticisms of the current parkland dedication ordinance is that it creates unpredictability in the development process and significantly impacts the ability to develop new residential units. This is simply not true. Since the enactment of the first PLD ordinance in

Austin in 1985, only 6% of cases have resulted in PARD requiring land dedication as opposed to a fee-in-lieu; 80% of that land has been in the floodplain, where it is otherwise undevelopable. Even with that, over 1,700 acres of new parkland have been added in areas that were otherwise parkland deficient.

Additionally, the 2016 ordinance update actually created more predictability for the development community. PARD works with developers to provide early determination letters (at no cost to the developer) during the pre-submittal stage outlining what PARD would require (land or fee-in-lieu) as part of the development. These early determination letters are good for one year. PARD publishes maps available to the public outlining parks deficient areas where land would be required, so the system is already providing predictability and transparency.

Parkland dedication is essential to improving equitable access to parks in Austin, and is directly responsible for thousands of acres of new parkland and park improvements throughout the city.. Council's direction to staff has been to protect parks and create a parkland dedication development bonus - and additionally ensure that the City's ability to provide parkland where needed is not curtailed. We urge you to hold to your word and maintain the current parkland dedication ordinance as part of adopting a new Land Development Code.

Sincerely,

Austin Parks Foundation
Austin Sunshine Camps
Austin Youth River Watch
Barton Springs Conservancy
Keep Austin Beautiful
Norwood Park Foundation
Pease Park Conservancy
The Trail Foundation
Umlauf Sculpture Garden
Stronger Austin
Waterloo Greenway