



PREPARED BY:
FRIENDS OF BARTON HILLS COMMUNITY PARK

SUBMITTED TO:
CITY OF AUSTIN PARKS AND RECREATION

ADOPTED DECEMBER 2012

BACKGROUND

PARK HISTORY

The Friends of Barton Hills Community Park (FoBHCP) are respectively submitting our Master Plan for the park located at the intersection of Barton Hills, Homedale, and Briarcrest Drives, Austin, TX 78704. As per the April 2012 City resolution, an approved master plan needs to be in place before amenities may be added or improved.

The Barton Hills Neighborhood/School Park is approximately 4.76 Acres of land adjacent to and a part of the Barton Hills Elementary School. The park was formally deeded to the City of Austin in October of 1975. It is one of 23 school parks throughout the city. There are approx. 128 Acres of school parks in the city. Click [here](#) to see (red dot) how the park is situated centrally in the Barton Hills community, as well as its proximity to the Barton Creek Greenbelt and Zilker Park.

Due to the continued interest and support of the entire Barton Hills community, the FoBHCP has recently been established as a formal standing committee of the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association (BHNA). This was the result of planning and outreach work begun and on-going since mid-2011. This group has already established a small foundation, FoBHCP, under the umbrella of the Austin Park's Foundation.

REASON FOR ENGAGING INTO A MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

Our goal is to finalize the master planning process with the City and other stakeholders by early 2013 so we can take advantage of seasonal planting and other construction-related projects. We need this master plan as a short term and long term strategy that ensures proper comprehensive planning and long term viability of the community park as resource. With a solid plan in place, we can more readily seek fundraising – public and private, including matching funds and in-kind services to meet our goals. We are committed to meet city requirements for community engagement and welcome the formal master planning process.

Other drivers:

- Aims to be in sync with the **2010 Parks and Open Space** master planning processes as well as other city park plans;
- Assists in reaching Imagine Austin objective (e.g. having park within 5 walking miles of residences).
- Provides alternative park/recreation access for our neighborhood and adjacent areas to replace the loss of Zilker Park during Austin City Limits Festival (usually 4-6 weeks), Trail of Lights and other major events that close or limit park use (e.g. residents charged \$3-\$5 for parking).
- Supplements baseball and green space practice areas for local sports leagues.
- Creates public meeting place for local community – for recreation purposes.
- Enhances experience for school children who need improved play and learning spaces.

BASE MAP OF PARK



INVENTORY OF PARK AMENITIES

- ADA accessible all-ages playscape (aging; built in 90's?)
- Tot playscape
- Tot Swingset
- ADA accessible standard swing set
- Exercise station equipment (tires, wood benches, steel bars)
- Large Native Trees
- (2) baseball backstops – poor condition
- (2) open play areas (dirt, sparse grass)
- 4 picnic tables
- 2 benches
- Sun shade covered basketball court, (2) goals (fairly new, 2010)
- Ga-Ga pit, approx. 20'x 20' wood hexagonal enclosure (gift from school children/parents in 2009?)
- Gravel Jogging trail (approx. ¼ mile)
- 2 chained trash cans
- Stencil designs that encourage learning and movement (part of AISD grant in early 2012)
- Wildflower grasses on east hill along Barton Hills drive (rain permitting).

- Proximity to school amenities – water fountains, bathrooms (until 4pm on school days), vegetable/flower gardens, tether ball, library access in summer.
- Coming December 2012 – Rain Garden, improved park entrance by removing rip rap and shifting vehicle access to back of property, new fencing,

Despite conditions, these amenities have provided the following community uses over the years:

- Daily Recess for Barton Hills Elementary (BHE) children (8am – 2:30pm)
- Daily outdoor activity for an on-site afterschool care (Extend-A-Care)
- Birthday parties
- Partnering with *Organics by Gosh* for all of our vegetable gardening needs.
- Outdoor movie nights and small acoustic concert events
- BHNA July Fourth Celebrations
- Neighborhood kickball games
- BHE Special Events – field days, kinder rodeos, choir performances, carnival
- BHE Sixth Grade projects -- wildflower seeding, gaga pit
- Stargazing Parties
- Exercise classes
- Summertime Austin Parks & Rec program
- Presentations on native grasses, insects, birds and low-water irrigation
- Community Gardening by school gardens

ISSUES AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

1. Lack of overall maintenance plan
2. No community facilities for gathering (e.g. amphitheatre, seating, etc).
3. Major hillside erosion due to neglect of drainage issues.
4. Ineffective capture of water from excess rain and loss (water is pushed off property rather than retained and re-directed or re-used)
5. No grass on ball field areas and heavy soil compaction
6. Ball fields are improperly sized for games like soccer, baseball, football, kick ball, etc.
7. Exercise equipment failing – splintering, rusted (needs to be removed, danger), poor locations
8. Playscape failing (90's??); recycled rubber surface deteriorated
9. Existing trees on property showing signs of stress; poor compaction around roots due to on-going drought conditions.
10. Poor accessibility due to poor construction practices; no sidewalks; hard for wheel chairs
11. West side trees are not placed properly. Some creating shade others not.
12. While there has been quite a lot of interest and engagement over the years to beautify our park areas, the lack of a unified master planning process has resulted in a disjointed work by city, school district and neighbors.
13. Lack of grounds as formal resource to school – no organized and imaginative play areas
14. Basket ball court – ankle breaker
15. Irrigation in despair, no way to restore plants; hand watering necessary for gardens/grasses/trees
16. We are contemplating a pavilion type structure and retaining walls for erosion control that would add impervious cover (IC). Per the agreement we received from AISD, the school is allowed 25% IC on a net site area. The school is currently at 19.88% IC. That leaves approx. 20,650 SF of

Impervious Cover on the table currently. We intend to use a portion of that, probably no more than 2,500 SF for the improvements we are contemplating.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

BHE COMMUNITY PARK COMMUNITY OUTREACH 2011 - 2012

1. We held a set of 4 community focus groups throughout Oct 2011 and one focus group with the Barton Hills Elementary Staff in Jan 2012. The focus group sessions entailed the attendees brainstorming their desires regarding park improvements and then were ranked by the group using dots. There were 41 community members in attendance at the community meetings and 10 staff members in attendance at the school staff meeting. The output of the meetings was collected on in an access database and the most popular items were moved to an excel database. Notes available, if needed.
2. We submitted the items voted on as most popular to the Barton Hills Elementary Campus Advisory Committee (CAC) which is comprised of principal, school staff, community members and parents (local Barton Hills residents and transfers). All items were discussed over the span of several 2011-2012 CAC meetings and a final list was developed to include in a potential park master plan. Minutes can be sent, if needed.
3. We presented updates and discussions with the Barton Hills Elementary PTA several times throughout the year.
4. We shared the outline and overview of the park improvements in an April 24, 2012 Barton Hills Neighborhood Assoc meeting (BHNA). Attendees were excited about the potential plans. (Minutes here).
5. We held a second smaller neighborhood meeting on June 18, 2012 and had 12 attendees. Plans were made to move forward with neighborhood community outreach.
6. Potential park plans were shared in two BHNA Newsletters. Click on each link to see the referenced issues: April 2012 and July 2012.
7. We shared a large diagram of the potential park plans at the 2012 4th of July Parade with many neighbors in attendance. The response was very enthusiastic. See Kathleen Schneeman discussing plans with neighbors in photo #84 of 91 on this page (click here).
8. We shared the park plans again at a Neighborhood Assoc meeting on July 24th. The BHNA voted to provide our committee a letter of support for the plans which was provided to PARD Sept. 30th. Membership also voted to provide a \$2000 donation to the start fundraising. This is in addition to the \$2000 dedicated in 2011 towards a new water fountain (waiting on master plan to implement). Minutes found here.
9. We've had a Park Improvement Facebook Page since May 2012 and have 160 "likes" from neighborhood supporters.
10. We sent a presentation attachment to our BH neighbors via our BHNA list serve on 3 different occasions between March and June 2012. See this link or go to: <http://bartonhills.org/2012/04/bhe-park-improvement-plan/> for information on the BHNA public website available on-going to the community.

11. Presented another update to BHNA on October 23, 2012. Membership provided additional feedback and also voted to make the FoBHCP efforts a standing BHNA committee. Click [here](#) for permanent link to see where/how neighbors can keep up with activities.

Other concurrent efforts that demonstrate community involvement/engagement in the area's beauty and success include:

1. Our Barton Hills Community has successfully added and maintained the perennial and vegetable gardens on the park grounds and school campus for over 6 years. Our community members and scout troops engage in volunteer efforts throughout the summer to water existing trees and plantings. All maintenance is currently conducted by neighborhood and school volunteers and has been since the gardens were installed.
 - a. The BHE PTA's Greenworks Committee, formerly known as the Landscaping Committee is responsible for spreading and caring for the seeds and caring for the exiting wildflowers. The Committee is super-active. It host two Landscaping Days throughout the year and organizes a watering schedule for newly planted plants and an "Adopt-a-Garden" program. For example, at the 2008 fall landscaping day, 42 people planted native and drought-resistant plants and trees and worked to improve the beds already existing at the school. The 42 people were made up of BHE Staff, parents, grandparents, community volunteers, a Brownie Troop, and several other children who attend the school.
 - b. Volunteers at the school and Greenbelt Guardians (another BHNA committee) work diligently to remove exotic plants, like Japanese Ligustrum, from the school grounds and the Greenbelt.
2. 100 trees have been donated by Treefolks for use in our Master Plan project. Our perennial gardens have all been donated plants from Home Depot and our mulch is provided by the Austin School District.
3. Our current rain garden installation—slated now for December 2012 is the result of a \$2000 grant from USCGB, gained by engineers in the BH community.
4. Over 40 community members painted portables over 3 weekends and an additional 40 community members painted stencils as a part of the AISD/Dairy Max Fuel Up to Play 60 grant.

VISION, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, ACTION ITEMS

VISION

Our vision is to create Austin's first sustainable park where neighbors and school children alike use the space for play, gathering and community building. It will exist in conjunction with the adjacent school park and will complement resources available to the school and local community.

We envision wildflower fields and native grasses that retain rainfall, promote healthy trees and provide a habitat for birds and insects. After the irrigation system is in place, nature will do most of the work.

We imagine a neighborhood meeting place designed for and open to everyone that can be used for kickball and baseball, safe outdoor free play, and community events such as star-gazing parties or exercise classes. The pavilion will be a gathering place where long-time residents can pass on tomato-growing secrets or volunteers can serve slices of watermelon on the Fourth of July.

We imagine an updated playground that incorporates natural materials and state of the art equipment as well as takes advantage of the topography and environmental features of the park.

The Barton Hills Community Park will become an example of ecological and community stewardship that will be a jewel among the gems in the Austin Parks System. Our park will become certified by Wildlife Austin and the National Wildlife Federation. The entrance to the greenbelt will be highlighted and there will be a natural flow between the park, greenbelt and the adjacent school. Our wish is to create an inviting space that draws visitors for decades; a park that remains attractive and useful regardless of fluctuating priorities and funding.

ACTION PLANS AND PRIORITIES

Refer to **Exhibit A**

DRAFT CONCEPTUAL PLAN/ CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN



Sponsored By:
Friends of Barton Hills Playground
 With Input From:
 Barton Hills Elementary PTA

Barton Hills Elementary School Conceptual 5 Year Masterplan



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

See **Exhibit A** for cost estimates, phasing plans and funding strategies.

Note: Other project partners for the ACL grant portion of our park improvements include:

- Donation of mulch for tree protection from AISD
- Donation from Barton Hills Neighborhood Assoc of \$2000
- Donations from Neighborhood Fun Run event of \$3000
- Transplanting of existing trees via neighborhood fundraising effort in Fall 2012

FUTURE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The FoBHCP will serve as stewards of the Barton Hills Park and the master planning process. The committee since 2011 has included:

- Kathleen Schneeman, Community Engagement consultant; Chair of FoBHCP Committee
- Cherylann Occhipinti Campbell, Project Manager/Facilitation; Vice-Chair of FoBHCP Committee
- Glee Ingram, APF Board Member and Natural Landscape business owner and expert
- Stefan Pharis, Community Planner & Landscape Architect
- Stan Ostrum, Rain water harvesting consultant
- Wendy Papasan, Realtor and fund raising expert
- Melissa Hawthorne, Permitting and City grant expertise; BHNA President 2011-2013
- Laura Minnigerode and Meredith Weiss, Grant writing professionals
- Amy Hunt, Environmental science consultant (former member)
- Amy Moore, Barton Hills Elementary PTA President
- Kati Achtermann, Barton Hills Elementary Principal
- Julian Rivera, Lawyer and Community Activist; Foundation Treasurer
- Beatriz Mejia, Vegetable Garden Designer and Mural design lead
- Tina Donahoo, Fundraising Professional
- Melanie Gantt, Public Policy Advocate; Playground/playscape committee lead
- Jeff Embree, Realtor and construction
- Ruth Heinze, Tree expert and coordinator
- Sunny Scott-Luther, BHNA Outreach and event planner
- Tina Gabel Donahoo, special event fundraiser
- Sarah Boyd, sports recreation expert
- Lisa Kerber, former Greenworks Committee chair; helps integrate new/existing efforts

Other Roles that need to be clarified or defined:

- Park Maintenance: FoBHCP expect to maintain our changes or 'new items' to the park as that is part of the City of Austin arrangement for the Partnering Program. Maintenance of pavilion, terracing and any other new items that are out of the scope of repair will be on us and will be a focus for fundraising in the future.

Clarification needed -whether the School District will continue to perform the maintenance that they currently do. While we have been in communications with key district personnel and they have indicated support for these efforts, we hope to get maintenance and other issues defined more clearly by the end of December 2012.