

THE NORTH GROUNDS

ZILKER PONDS

The Zilker Ponds are a collection of man-made stone ponds arrayed along the base of a rock ridge that separates the Zilker Hillside lawn from an upper parking lot and picnic area. They were built in the 1930s, but public enthusiasm waned and they have been dry since at least the 1960s. Stone walks and four sets of steps link the several ponds in the collection. Even though the features of the site are overgrown and difficult to recognize, they are heavily, though perhaps unintentionally, visited because the steps provide a direct route from the Pool to the picnic and park levels above.

The stonework of the ponds themselves remain in reasonably good repair as is the stonework of the paths. But the four sets of steps are in various states of disintegration.

Returning the Zilker Ponds to their former use does not seem to fit with today's park. Aside from the substantial maintenance, the liability associated with an unsupervised water attraction would be an undue burden. Furthermore, challenges such as West Nile Virus and high water use demands make pond use seem more appropriately a thing of the past.

Recommendations

Drain the ponds permanently

Punch holes in the bottoms of the ponds to prevent standing water from accumulating. Fill the ponds with decorative gravel as a way to interpret the water's surface, but without water. The ponds do not appear to have level bottoms, and water tends to accumulate in the lower corners of the ponds. It is in those areas that holes should be drilled into the concrete bottoms of the ponds to allow water to seep out, rather than stagnate. When the drainage of the ponds has been addressed, gravel that contrasts in color and kind from the surrounding limestone should be installed, such as Texas Black basalt gravel or Fairfield Pink granite. If it is not possible to maintain the pond gravel free of leaves, installing flagstone pavement, perhaps in a sandstone, will contrast with the limestone of the retaining walls and walks, would be an acceptable alternative. The large flagstone patios that would be created would be a lovely overlook for the Pool area.

Rehabilitate the steps and walkways

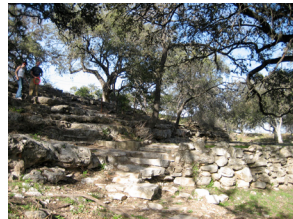
Rehabilitate the steps to make these popular passageways safer, including masonry repair, handrails and lighting in the stair rehabilitation scope. The stairs into the pond area are uneven and unstable and should be rehabilitated for a smoother walking surface. Hand rails will be required and are an opportunity for an art project, perhaps ornamental iron in



Zilker Ponds in use. They were maintained by City maintenance personnel, and they were filled using City drinking water (Source: Jack Robinson, former Director, Parks and Recreation Department). Note the spray fountain in the lower photo. PICA 01001, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, above. PICA 20146, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, below.



The empty vessels as they appear today. With better definition of landscape and paths, plus attention to interpretation, the ponds would be easier to understand and enjoy.



The four sets of steps at the Zilker Ponds are well-used routes from upper parking lots to the pool. With maintenance and new lighting, they would be safer and easier to negotiate.

keeping with both the rustic and the Victorian character of the ponds. The ponds are currently hidden in the midst of the park, and this is part of their charm. Stabilizing the stairs on both the lower and upper sides of the ponds, as well as continuing the path to the east, would integrate the ponds more into the park without losing their ‘secret garden’ character. Small, irregular flagstone landings at the stair entrances into the ponds could help those who are looking to find the stairs and enter the ponds.

Clear overgrown vegetation, and replant

Clear the site of excess vegetation, and selectively plant drought-tolerant native plants along the bluff and in the stone vessels within the site. The ponds have some of the largest and most beautiful persimmons and live oaks in the Pool area. There are some large ligustrum, overgrown ornamentals, and annual weeds that should be removed. On the downhill side, clearing woody non-native shrubs over 2-3’ tall would allow the rockwork and native trees to be better seen and appreciated. On the uphill side, because of the topography, non-native shrubby vegetation should be removed while maintaining a dense barrier of vegetation at the top of the gardens.

Small stone pocket planters are a feature of the Zilker Ponds. Some were built for waterlilies in the center of the pond, while others were built for trailing plants along the retaining walls. Filling these pockets with a good planting mix and adding a single low water use native plant to each would be a lovely addition to the ponds, and an excellent opportunity for an adopted volunteer garden. Good plant choices would be bamboo muhly, Mexican feather grass, red yucca, and zexmenia.

The slopes on the south side of the Zilker Ponds are very steep for, in places, about ten feet from the pond walk south. Most of these areas are shady as well: some with the deep shade of old live oaks. We recommend replacing the sparse, difficult to maintain lawn in that approximately ten foot wide area with a mass of inland sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), perhaps with some interplanting of beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*).

Increase access and interpretation of the ponds

Provide interpretive materials to the site to tell the story of the Zilker Ponds and the times from which they emerged. Extend the stone path to the east to link the Pond site to the Zilker Playscape. Route this extension past the two stone lamp posts flanking Zilker Drive, and add interpretive materials to explain their significance (they were built in the 1920s, and they are made from stones collected from across the State of Texas).

Because much of the foot traffic through the pond areas is from people passing from the parking lots to the Hillside theatre, very selective and subtle lighting is appropriate. Small

‘moonlight’ down lights in a few of the large trees, with a very few low level path lights at changes of level or direction are appropriate.

Enlist Volunteers for Maintenance

Maintaining the Zilker Ponds as they were originally intended is no longer possible or desirable. However, after some repairs and minor redesign, it may be possible to use periodic volunteer maintenance to keep the ponds in a more usable condition than they are at present. The most pressing ongoing maintenance activities are 1) spring and fall removal of invasive tree seedlings, especially hackberry, ligustrum and nandina. 2) winter raking of leaves from pond gravel.

Opportunities

The recommendation for a low-maintenance approach to the Zilker Ponds was influenced by a PARD staff expression of concern about their ability to successfully maintain it if it were intensively landscaped. If, in the future, a garden club or a pond society were to take an interest, then opportunities to develop them differently would certainly be possible.

Another possibility would be to develop the Ponds as a Rain Garden, an attractive storm-water mitigation device, where a landscaped depression catches water from its surrounding area, allowing it to recharge the soil rather than simply run off. This could be a demonstration project for the Watershed Protection and Development Review Department, that is promoting rain gardens along with a number of other stormwater mitigation strategies. This, too, would require an advocate with the willingness and resources to provide consistent maintenance.

SANDBOX GROVE

The Sandbox Grove is a tree-covered lawn located to the west of the existing Bathhouse. Its name is taken from the circa 1920 concrete sandbox in its northeast corner. The Sandbox Grove is often used for quiet pursuits like reading or working on laptops, but on summer weekends, it is a popular picnic area. During dry years, the lawn is patchy, and exhibits significant wear from the picnic traffic. Even during an especially wet year, significant areas of the lawn are threadbare. The grass is not irrigated, and there are no plans to do so. The concrete perimeter of the historic sandbox is in good repair, but the sandbox itself is not used. The sand itself is weed strewn and, presumably, a popular litter box for park animals.

Recommendations

Install a crushed granite picnic area

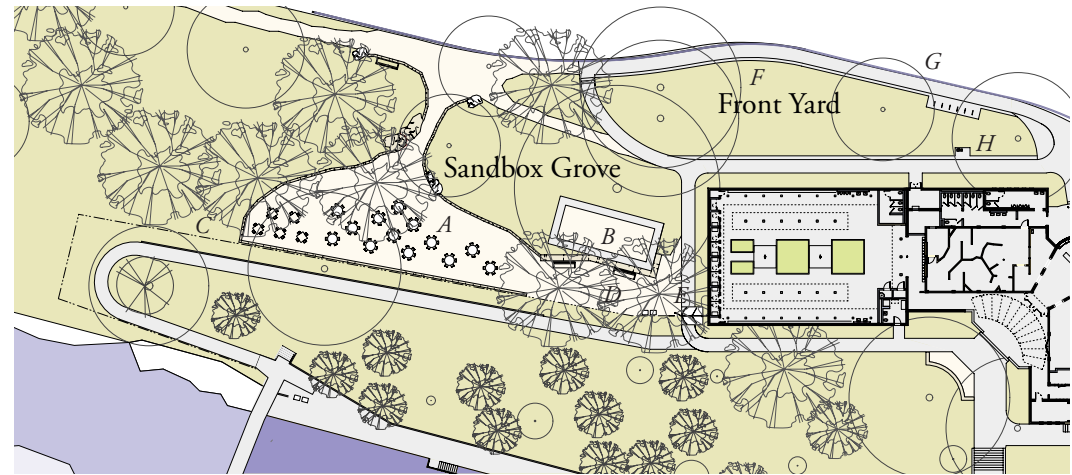
Recognizing the Sandbox Grove as a popular picnic area, and recognizing that grass has not been successful in places, install a crushed granite picnic area. This will serve as a low-key



Two views of the Sandbox Grove. The grass is worn, even during an exceptionally wet season (below). The sandbox itself is unmaintained.

Sandbox Grove and Front Yard

- A. Replace worn dirt with new crushed granite surface, creating new picnic area.
- B. Replace sand with decorative gravel to attractive opportunity for public art installation.
- C. New decorative fence.
- D. Using a low stone retaining wall to define the space, create a new observation area.
- E. New exit turnstile.
- F. Widen sidewalks to reduce foot-traffic wear.
- G. New bike racks.
- H. New drinking fountain.



western counterpart to the Tree Court to the east of the Bathhouse. The areas presently used for picnicking are well-defined at present by the worn grass: people are generally gathering closer to the fence on the flatter areas. These areas would benefit from being made slightly more formal by adding compacted decomposed granite gravel, with some limestone accents.

Redevelop the sandbox itself

Using a low stone retaining wall as separation, add a seating area between the sandbox and the fence line for quiet Pool viewing. Add an accessible turnstile to the fence. Replace the sand in the sandbox with decorative gravel, and through a public process, commission and install permanent sculptures in the gravel. Add interpretive materials, with a potential topic being the rock outcroppings on the south side of the Pool that are part of the Balcones Fault. A limestone flag retaining wall, level with the top of the sandbox should be used to define an overlook area for the Pool. Benches and interpretive materials should be included. Presently there is chainlink fence in this area, topped with 3 strands of barbed wire. Replace this fencing with more ornamental metal grid fencing for a more welcoming overlook to the Pool.

Add trees

Some of the largest and most beautiful pecans in the Pool area are in the Sandbox Grove. Additional planting of native shade trees should be undertaken to maintain and diversify the grove. Almost all of the trees in the Sandbox Grove are pecans. We recommend that

Sandbox, two views.



the canopy be diversified with the addition of cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), Texas Red Oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), River Walnut (*Juglans microcarpa*), and Texas Ash (*Fraxinus texensis*). While ashes may be subject to borer attack, they still merit use in small numbers. There is not a functioning irrigation system in this area, but because the parking lot is adjacent, newly planted trees can be watered for the two years required to establish the trees by water trucks.

Connect to the Barton Creek Greenbelt

The paved walk in front of the Bathhouse presently ends, continuing as a dirt trail to the head of the Barton Creek greenbelt at the end of the parking lot. Adding signage directing newcomers to the entrance to the Bathhouse and to the head of the trail should be considered. The worn dirt trail connecting the Bathhouse to the Barton Creek greenbelt trail should be made slightly more formal, with decomposed granite paving and some limestone accents and edging.

THE FRONT YARD

The Front Yard, to the north of the Men's public restroom and the Men's Dressing area of the existing Bathhouse, is generally characterized by St. Augustine grass under pecan trees. It is bounded by two east-west sidewalks that connect the main activity zones on the north side (the playscape, the concession stand, the main entry to the Pool) to the more subdued areas to the west (the Barton Creek greenbelt, the Sandbox Grove and parking). Due to the heavy foot traffic near the entry to the Sheffield Center, the grass is worn bare in that area. Along the edge of both of the sidewalks the grass is also worn, suggesting that the width of the walks is insufficient for current demands.

Recommendations

Widen sidewalks

The Front Yard should generally remain as it is, a lawn under tree cover. To mitigate the excessive wear, additional width should be added to each of the sidewalks and to the area nearest the Bathhouse rotunda. Widening the walkway adjacent to the parking lot will require some regrading of the parts of this area, because there is a change of grade. With careful grading where the two walks join together at the front of the Bathhouse, a retaining wall should not be necessary. The additional paving should be a pervious paving material that allows rainwater to drain through it.

Add drinking fountain and move bike racks

A drinking fountain should be added and the bike racks in the Tree Court should be relocated here. The space between the existing large trees, along the west front of the Bathhouse, may be the best location for a bank of bike racks.



Front Yard grass worn by heavy foot traffic.



Tree Court with Philosopher's Rock in foreground. For most visitors, this is the place of introduction to the Pool. Note the drifts of crushed granite in the gutter.



Potential for enhancing the overlook thwarted because picnic tables encroach and because the stadium seating is difficult to walk on.

Add trees

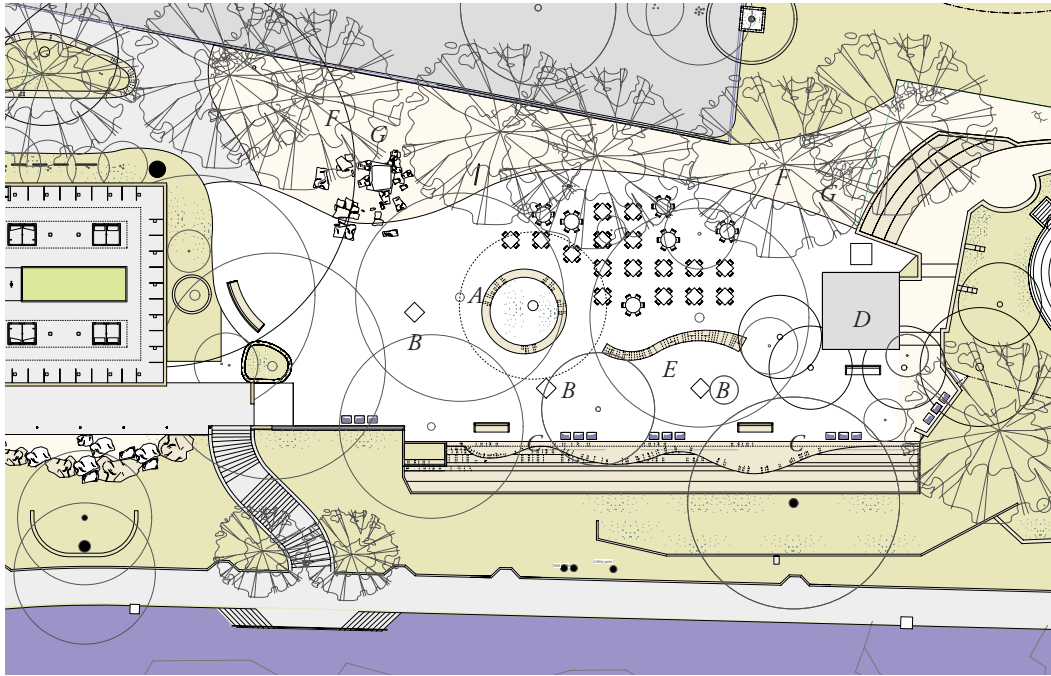
Several large pecans and elms in this area have been lost in the last decade. Replacement planting of large native shade trees is needed. Since there is no irrigation in this area, provision should be made for temporary watering.

Replant Bathhouse perimeter beds

The planting bed along the front of the Bathhouse has become overgrown with non-native English ivy, which is invasive and detracts from the beauty of the Bathhouse. It should be removed, along with the ligustrum by the south entrance into the rotunda. Small trees should be limbed up to at least 6' clearance, so that they are branching close to the roof line of the Bathhouse. Shrub / perennial plantings should be kept to 2' maximum height, so that the Bathhouse walls are largely visible. In places the concrete block planter wall is broken, apparently during utility repairs. To the east of the entrance, the lush nandina hedge, while beautiful, is a noxiously invasive plant that is causing serious damage to the native vegetation upstream in the Barton Creek greenbelt. This problem can be managed by removing the seed heads before they set berries, but this is an ongoing maintenance problem, and cannot help but intermittently fail. In addition, the use of fruiting nandina in such a public place is not a good example for the City of Austin to be setting. Removal of those nandina, and replanting of that bed with low growing native shrubs and perennials is recommended. The nandina hedge could be replaced with a mixed planting of dwarf yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria* var *nana*), river fern (*Thelypteris kunthii*), dwarf ruellia (*Ruellia* hybrids), mountain pea (*Orbexilum nova*) and cedar sage (*Salvia roemeriana*).

Add rainwater harvesting

Rainwater cisterns at the west end of the building could provide drip irrigation water storage for use in these beds. Several small lined galvanized cisterns, shorter than the Bathhouse roofline, could be placed in the bed at the west end, by the Sandbox Grove. The capacity of cisterns of that general size would be sufficient to provide irrigation for the Bathhouse perimeter planting beds.



TREE COURT

The Tree Court is the area between the Bathhouse and the concession stand, and is bounded by a parking lot on the north and a stone “stadium seating” arrangement from the 1930s on the south. The southern edge is also defined by the Pool fence and by three interpretive plaques, each describing aspects of the ecology of the Barton Creek ecosystem. This is a popular vantage point from which to view the Pool. The Tree Court has a crushed granite walking surface, and is situated under a random arrangement of pecan trees. The space is bisected by a stone planter, creating two sub-zones: one, the concession stand zone and the other the entry to the Pool zone.

For most visitors, the Tree Court is the place of introduction to the Pool. Yes, it is literally the place for the main entry to the Pool grounds. But it is also the place for first-time visitors to start to know the place and to get oriented. It is the most popular place for non-swimming visitors (and there are several hundred thousand each year) to actually see the Pool and begin to understand its unique beauty and its importance in the Central Texas geography. Every major park needs a place of introduction. For Barton Springs Pool, this is it.

Tree Court

- A. *Replace the existing stone planter with new round shape to encourage pedestrian flow. As with all planters in the park, it should be designed for comfortable sitting.*
- B. *Include interpretive materials to tell the story of the park*
- C. *Extend the overlook by adding benches and interpretative materials. Modify the stone stadium seating for easier access. Replace the stone fence with new “Art” fence.*
- D. *Design a new concession with a smaller footprint at this location to allow for smoother inclusion of Eliza Spring into the life of the Tree Court.*
- E. *Add new stone bench to foster sense of community and to clearly define overlook space.*
- F. *Plant new trees along northern edge to extend shade canopy.*
- G. *Using flagstones, build a more stable walking surface to connect the zone in front of Bathhouse to Eliza Spring. One benefit would be a reduction in drifting granite gravel washing into storm drains and on into the creek.*
- H. *Designate a zone for eating (as shown). Replace existing picnic tables with new, more attractive furniture.*



The overlook is a valued experience at Barton Springs. It offers the opportunity for the casual visitor to enjoy the waters of the pool and its beautiful surroundings without investing the time or energy in swimming. For many, this is the primary way they know and love Barton Springs.

Curiously, the overlook seems squeezed into one corner of the Tree Court, while over 150 ft. of available edge condition lies underused.

The Tree Court is different from any other place in the park. While other parts revel in their sense of naturalness, the Tree Court is clearly intended for significant human use. It is entirely paved (paved with crushed granite, but paved nonetheless). It has a place to eat. It has places to sit and enjoy the best view of the Pool that does not cost money. It is a great place to people-watch. It is a place to learn about the Pool. It is shady and cool relative to more exposed areas. Because it is flat, it is easily accessible, even for the mobility-impaired.

And all this is as it should be. The park needs a place of introduction, a place of greeting, a place of shared experience. But as the most prominent element in the entry sequence to Austin's most cherished natural amenity, the Tree Court is not what it could be or should be. The Tree Court should be thought of as a central space from which the experience of the entire park can be understood and enjoyed.

Recommendations

Redesign the planters and pavement

Remove the stone planter that bisects the Tree Court into two sub-zones and redefine the Court as more of a large shared space. Add new stone planters, whose low walls are designed for sitting and whose shapes encourage social interaction but do not impede pedestrian flow. The planting bed in the center of the Tree Court does not contribute to the area, and should be removed along with the groundcover and other low plants within it. Clearly, the pecan tree should not be removed.

Minimize planting in new planters, using boulders, gravel, and occasional specimen low water use native plants instead. New planters should serve primarily for seating, with occasional planting for accent. The pavement in front of the Bathhouse and north of Eliza Spring is exposed aggregate concrete. Emphasizing the different character of the Tree Court by using a different, and complementary, paving material such as large size Dryden or other limestone flags is recommended. For ease of maintenance, these flags should be mortared in place with a mortar coordinating in color with the adjacent decomposed granite plaza. The planter walls in the Tree Court are presently in several different materials. The walls by the Bathhouse are concrete paving blocks on end. Others walls are cut limestone, rough limestone retaining wall stone, and irregular limestone boulders.

Using irregular cut limestone blocks, to match that used on the walls of the Bathhouse and the concession stand, would help to identify the Tree Court as a single distinct area. Large irregular limestone boulders, like those around the Philosopher's Rock, can be used to accommodate minor changes of grade and for accent.

Recognizing that its excellent views to the Pool are what makes the Tree Court most special, create a distinct sense of promenade along the entire length of the south edge. To that end, rework some of the stonework of the “stadium seating” to make this element easier to walk on. Replace the chain link fence, and commission a new decorative “art fence” to depict the story of the park and the Pool. Add benches along the promenade and add more interpretive materials to enrich the experience by presenting more of the story of the park.

Reconnect to Eliza Spring

Eliza Spring holds a unique position in both the cultural and the ecological history of the park. It is the home of the most robust population of the endangered Barton Spring Salamander, and its concrete amphitheater construction, is credited to Andrew Zilker himself. It is simply too important to let it remain in such poor condition and in such isolation, marooned as it is behind the concession stand. Eliza should be as much a part of the introductory experience to Barton Springs as the Tree Court itself. Clearly it cannot be moved, but efforts should be made to include Eliza Spring in the life of the Tree Court. To that end, redesign the existing path along the north edge to make the connection between Eliza and the Tree Court more legible and easier to negotiate. To further attract visitors, redesign the concession stand to make it smaller and easier to see around. Model it after Jo’s on South Congress; more of a food kiosk than a full-service food outlet. Position it so that foot traffic at the promenade can extend past it all the way to Eliza. There are concrete sidewalks in front of the entry rotunda to the Bathhouse, and there are stone walks in the vicinity of Eliza Spring. Connect them with a flagstone walk. This will provide sure footing and will cut down on the drifting of crushed granite into the storm drains.

Plant more trees

All the shade trees in the Tree Court now--the large ones and the newly planted ones--are pecans. Some of the oldest and most potentially fragile pecans in the park are in the Tree Court. In addition to the tree repair and tree replacement that may be recommended by a tree inspection, new trees should be planted to extend the tree canopy to the north. Adding a line of 6” caliper minimum native shade trees along the new walk along the parking lot side of the Tree Court would help maintain its shaded character as the pecans age. Live oaks are available and can be successfully transplanted at that size, and occur naturally in the terraces above the springs.

Replacement shade trees should in general be planted in the largest caliper size possible for the Tree Court, because of the prominence and heavy wear to be expected at the site. As



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Notes on the Concession Stand

Food is an important offering for a major public park. The concession stand is a successful vending operation, and provides a valued amenity to the park experience. Reducing the size of the Tree Court concession stand is not an attempt to diminish the food offerings at the park. Instead, it is thought of as part of a larger initiative to add broader offerings. While the Tree Court concession stand should be made smaller, a new concession stand should be added to round out the menu. The open area to the north of the playscape could be a promising location.



Despite its location, tucked behind the concession stand, Eliza Spring is a popular park destination.



Growing conditions for trees in the Tree Court are difficult, because of the compacted soil and heavy traffic.

sunlit spots develop in the interior of the Tree Court, we recommend that Chinquapin oaks (*Quercus muhlenbergii*) and cedar elms (*Ulmus crassifolia*) be added to the existing pecan grove.

While there is not a functioning irrigation system for the Tree Court, this is one area to which irrigation should be extended, to run regularly for the two years required to establish the new trees, and intermittently after establishment to compensate for the heavy wear and compaction of the soil.

This is the most compacted and most visible entry to the Pool. Trees in this area need to be considered ‘street trees’ with the additional care and infrastructure that is provided for street trees. Specifically, Tree Court trees should be provided with 1) drip irrigation to each newly planted tree, to compensate for the compaction of the soil; 2) an assessment of the subsurface drainage of the planting pit of each newly planted tree, to make sure that it drains adequately, and provision for adequate drainage if it does not; and 3) the planting mix used for each tree should be ‘structural’ – able to be compacted enough to support a stable walking surface while still providing enough openness for tree roots to penetrate and find water and oxygen. Suitable structural soil mixes are available from Cornell University (produced locally by JV Dirt and Loam) and TXI in Houston. While invisible to the visitor, this will allow a stable walking surface over the rootballs of new trees, while still allowing oxygen and water to reach tree roots.

Reconfigure the rotunda plaza

When the Bathhouse is rehabilitated, the Pool entry should be relocated to the center of the building, much like it was historically. When the Bathhouse is rehabilitated, part of the Bathhouse should be devoted to Visitor Center and Gallery functions to complement the educational exhibit, “Splash!”. This change will move some of the pedestrian flow toward that location. To facilitate that flow and to reinforce the connection between the Bathhouse and the Tree Court, modest modifications should be undertaken to the planter in the walkway between the wall of the women’s dressing area and the parking lot. The planting in this planter is dedicated to Jimmie Martinez, long-time park maintenance worker, so modifications to the planter should be done in consultation with his family, if possible. The stone planter walls should be replaced with stonework that occupies the same footprint, but is level with the walkway. In this subtle way, the walkway will be gently widened, while the shape and location of the planter is maintained. In conjunction with this work, the small scale trees should be replaced by larger shade trees. Cypress or live oak trees are likely candidates.

The sign that identifies the entrance to Barton Springs is hidden behind an evergreen yaupon holly. A more prominently located sign would let the thousands of newcomers and visitors to Austin in on the secret.

Park Furniture

Remove bike racks from the Tree Court and relocate them to the Front Yard. Consideration should be given to replacing the existing portable wood park furniture with consistent, high quality permanent park furniture, including benches, tables and trash containers, in this area. Specific suggestions for park furniture are made in the ‘Grounds Overview’ part of this document.

NORTH LAWN *WEST END*

Like all of the North Lawn, the western portion is generally characterized by its St. Augustine lawn and its collection of pecan trees. The western portion sweeps down from the Bathhouse to the edge of the Pool and overlooks the shallow end with the rock outcroppings of the South Bluff beyond. An accessible path courses along its northern edge, connecting the Bathhouse to the Pool deck near the upstream dam. The western boundary of this area is defined by the perimeter fence. The eastern boundary is defined by a concrete walk and stair running north-south, connecting the Bathhouse to the Poolside walkway. A spiny Burford Holly hedge parallels this walk.

Due to the geometry of the Bathhouse, the slope of this lawn is shallower than other parts of the North Lawn. This area is popular for sunbathing, and due to its proximity to the shallow end and its proximity to the restrooms, it is especially popular with families with small children.

Recommendations

Plant more trees

This portion of the North Lawn is generally as it should be, a lawn for lounging and sunbathing and enjoying the social life of the Pool. To further beautify the grounds and to preemptively replenish the tree collection, more trees should be planted. Since the west side of the North Lawn is the sunniest lawn within the Pool fence, this will also help to decrease irrigation demands for the lawn. Some small trees have been planted – almost all pecans – but many have been damaged, especially by squirrels. Using trees that are at least 4” caliper may improve the tree’s survival rate. In this area, there is not an established grove, so new trees should be planted in small groves of one variety, with fairly close spacing. An example of this kind of planting in the park now is the grove of soapberry east of



The slopes on the northside accessible route should be measured to verify that they meet the requirements of the ADA.



A sliver of grass atop a low retaining wall that is awkward to mow. It is also used for very visible pool equipment storage.



North Lawn

- A. *Plant more native Texas trees to add shade and to diversify the tree stock at the pool.*
- B. *Replace grass in difficult-to-maintain places with attractive, low-water-use native plants.*
- C. *Widen intersection with a low stone wall, and wider walk.*
- D. *New Boulder Garden.*

the Hillside Theater. Good trees for this kind of planting are big tooth maple, Texas red oak (*Quercus buckleyi*), and cedar elm.

Add a modest stone patio at the Bathhouse corner

At its northeast corner, this portion of the Lawn meets the central part of the Bathhouse where foot traffic from both the men's and the women's dressing areas emerges. The grass in this area is generally threadbare. To acknowledge this activity, a modest stone patio should be added under the large pecan tree to extend the circulation space and to create a flat social space for visiting and enjoying the shade of the large pecan tree.

Anticipating heavy foot traffic on lawn areas nearest the Bathhouse, the most vulnerable areas should be reinforced with an engineered sod solution (such as GrassPave2) that allows the grass to grow, while protecting the underlying ground from compaction.

Replace lawn above accessible walk

The grass between the accessible walk and the Pool fence is currently used to store pool hoses and other equipment. It is recommended that, where decomposed granite or flagstones are being added on the north side of the fence, in the Sandbox Grove, that the grass be removed on the south side of the fence as well, and replaced with native plants no taller than 2' to minimize the maintenance both within the Pool fence and in the Sandbox Grove. The planting bed between the accessible route and the Sandbox Grove requires dense spreading groundcover that can resist invasion by bermuda grass. A bed designed to include Gregg Dalea (*Dalea greggii*), wooly stemodia (*Stemodia lanata*), or big muhly (*Muhlenbergia lindheimeri*), among others, could serve that purpose. A portion of the bed could be left unplanted for the continued storage of pool equipment.

BELOW THE BATHHOUSE

The North Lawn below the Bathhouse is a St. Augustine lawn defined by a concrete walk and stair on its western edge and a picturesque serpentine stair on its eastern edge. It slopes up from the top of the retaining wall at Pool's edge to a "Spectator's Gallery", a shaded patio attached to the Bathhouse.

The most memorable element here is a large old pecan tree that leans out over the Pool walkway. Its root area is captured by a U-shaped concrete retaining wall. This tree is quite old (it can be seen in photos from the 1920s), and it does not appear to be in good health.

Recommendations

Design and install a Boulder Garden on the steep Slope

Design and install a boulder garden along the south edge of the "Spectator's Gallery" composed of naturalistic groupings of limestone boulders arranged to echo the stone outcroppings visible across the Pool. This garden should be planted with native Texas plants, and should have places for people to perch and to enjoy the scenery of the Pool. It should also have flat areas that extend the "spectator's gallery". This boulder garden will accomplish several goals. It will replace lawn areas that are difficult to maintain and to irrigate. It will add a naturalistic element to the grounds that will soften the architectural presence of the Bathhouse as it is viewed from the Pool. And it will enrich the social space of the "Spectator's Gallery", making it more lively and interesting in a "pool-appropriate" way.

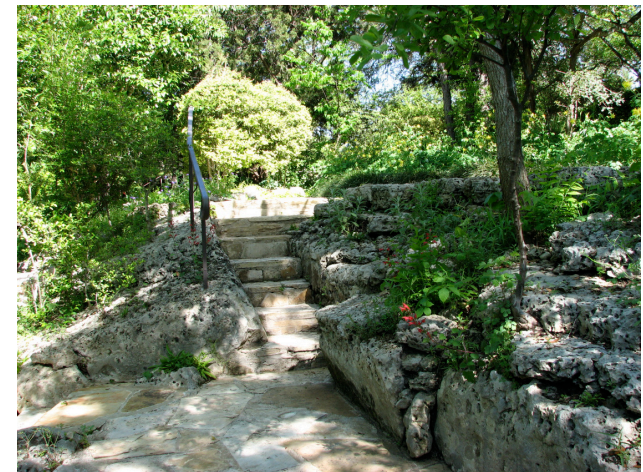
The boulders for the new boulder garden should be individually selected weathered limestone boulders, varying in size. All boulders should be installed flat and level, with the uphill side of the boulder buried in the slope. Low growing, cascading plants like wooly stemodia, silver ponyfoot, nolina, different muhly grasses, lantanas, zexmenia, red yucca, as well as the non-native trailing rosemary and trailing lantana would be lovely among the rocks where there is sufficient sun. A garden of this visibility and complexity would require thorough planting and construction design and documentation.

The North Lawn below the Bathhouse is presently shaded by the leaning ancient pecan and the pecan that was apparently planted many years ago to replace it – now a very large tree in its own right. Shade tree planting in this area should be limited and carefully placed, to minimize blocking the view from the porch. No planting of small trees or shrubs over 3' tall should be done. Individual cedar elms, chinquapin oaks and Texas Ash may be appropriate.

Treatment of the old pecan



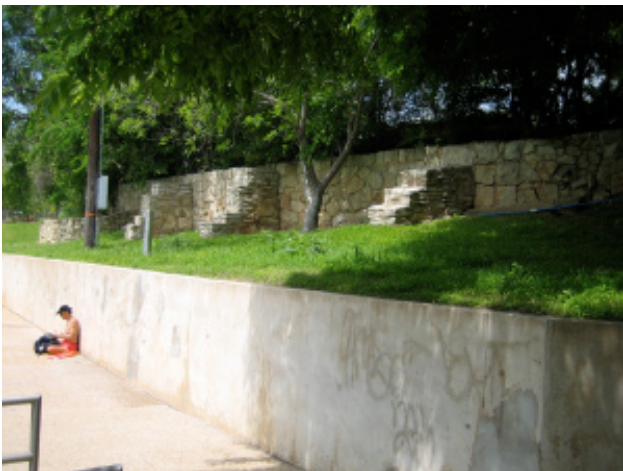
North Lawn below concession stand. Replace grass in area between middle retaining wall and toe of stone stadium seats with attractive, low-water-use native plants.



A shady Hill Country boulder garden, with native limestone boulders added to an existing rock ledge, and planted with flowering and trailing shrubs and perennials. A garden in this style could replace the grassy slope below the Bathhouse



North Lawn below the Bathhouse. Two short term goals are to bury all overhead wiring and to replace site lighting.



North Lawn near the downstream dam. Replace grass in this area with attractive, low-water use native plants.

Develop recommendations for treatment of the old pecan tree. If in the worst-case it does not survive, then it should be removed to allow the nearby pecan to take its place. Should the ancient pecan be removed or die, trailing plantings should be planted on the top of the retaining wall enclosing the ancient pecan; for example, nolina, silver ponyfoot, trailing lantana and rosemary.

EAST END

The eastern portion of the North Lawn extends from the picturesque serpentine stair to the perimeter fence at the downstream dam. This portion of the lawn has a number of noteworthy elements. The stone “stadium seating” of the Tree Court provides a hard edge along the western part of its northern boundary. Further east, the grades flatten, and its lawn extends northward to Eliza Spring. Still further east, between Eliza and the downstream dam, the grounds are punctuated by stone and concrete retaining walls. Some of them date to at least the 1930s, and were part of an earlier concession stand that used to sit where the picnic pavilion sits today. For the most part, the perimeter fence hugs these walls. The fence line is thickly vegetated with nuisance plant materials, some of which is poison ivy.

Recommendations

Replace lawn with native plantings in some areas

One goal of this master plan is to reduce irrigation demands by identifying portions of the St. Augustine lawn that, due to inaccessibility, are not used for sunbathing and are difficult to irrigate and maintain. This portion of the North Lawn holds a number of opportunities in this regard, such as below the “stadium seating” or above certain retaining walls near the downstream dam. The grass should be removed in these areas, and should be replaced with carefully selected, drought-tolerant native Texas plantings. The lawn atop the retaining wall below the playscape fence is one such area: largely inaccessible, separated from the Pool sidewalk by a 4’-5’ retaining wall. We recommend removing the grass from this area and establishing a planting bed that does not require mowing or intensive maintenance. The native shrubs and perennials introduced should be not so tall as to block the view from behind the playscape fence: probably less than 4’ at the Pool edge of the planting bed. The section above the retaining wall, between the Pool and the playscape, could be planted with vegetation no taller than 3’, including some that would cascade over the tall retaining wall. Examples could include coralberry, nolina (away from walkways), cedar sage, and inland sea oats.

Manage vegetation in playscape fence

Between the playscape shelter and the Pool, the fence is thickly overgrown with hackberry, ligustrum and other invasive vegetation, including poison ivy. All such nuisance vegetation should be removed from this fence line, allowing views from the playscape area to the Pool and vice versa.

Reestablish the spring run of Eliza Spring

When the natural course of Eliza Spring is re-established, and a rebuilt spring run is introduced in the hillside between Eliza and Barton Springs, additional creekside planting would be appropriate, with, for example, river ferns, equisetum, inland sea oats, buckthorn and palmetto. Additional discussion of this topic is found in the 'Eliza Spring' part of this document. Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*, from a hill country seed source only), would be a lovely and distinctive shade tree to mark the spring flow. In the strip between the playscape and the Pool, the view through should be preserved, with individual plantings of cedar elm, big tooth maple, and Texas red oak (*Quercus buckleyi*) appropriate on the slope.



Naturalizing planting beds and boulders can help recreate some of the natural environment that would originally have been around Barton Springs.