



MEMORANDUM

Battle Bend Park Water Quality Improvements (CIP ID 5282.135)

1st Public Meeting Recap & Summary of Feedback Received

On January 30, 2017, a public meeting was held at South Austin Rec Center to discuss the Battle Bend Water Quality Improvements project. The project is sponsored by the Watershed Protection Department in partnership with the Parks & Recreation Department as the next phase of improvements planned for Battle Bend Park. City staff present included: John McKennis of PARD; and Clayton Ernst, Lee Sherman, Darcy Nuffer, and Joan Esquivel of WPD.

Fourteen citizens and residents of the Battle Bend Springs neighborhood attended the meeting. A presentation describing the proposed improvements was given by Clayton Ernst of the Watershed Protection Department. The project will create a multifunctional water quality pond and playing field in the southwest area of the park, will restore ("daylight") a section of stream currently buried in culvert pipe, will build a concrete ADA-accessible loop path around the new field, and will plant many new trees and generally restore the park landscape with native vegetation. After the presentation was completed, the group moved into a discussion and poster board session (several design boards were set up in the meeting room, each detailing a particular aspect of the proposed work: Landscape Improvements, Water Quality Facility, Previous Work, etc.).

Throughout the presentation, and afterwards in the discussion session, questions from citizens were answered by Clayton and other Staff. Additional feedback was received in the form of submitted comment cards and individual phone conversations. Taken as a whole, the feedback that was received can be grouped into six general categories:

1. Project Design Elements

Two specific suggestions were raised: one to create a no-parking zone near the proposed maintenance access driveway along Suburban Drive, and another to install additional water fountains near the proposed play field/water quality pond. After consulting with WPD maintenance staff, a no-parking zone is not a standard procedure because maintenance is typically performed during weekday mornings when parking/traffic is light. Also, PARD staff have not observed this area being obstructed during weekday hours. If blocked access proves to be an issue, we will create a no parking zone or otherwise resolve the problem at that time. Regarding the request for additional water fountains, these are not planned to be incorporated into the design because the normal level of service for parks is already provided and this would add significant additional construction cost and complexity associated with running new potable water lines into the park.

2. Landscape Management in Battle Bend Park

Many attendees were concerned with how the proposed landscaping will be maintained along the stream corridor and throughout the park. Specifically, a desire to manage ragweed within the proposed Grow Zone was expressed, as well as concerns about the proposed tree planting plan. Attendees requested protection of new and existing trees during construction, diversity in newly-planted tree species, and irrigation to support tree establishment throughout the maintenance period. Ragweed will be removed during the project maintenance phase to allow new plantings to establish, however there is not a great concern about long-term management of ragweed in the park due to the shady environment along the streambank, where ragweed is not currently a problem. Tree protection, selection and maintenance are already a part of the project scope.

3. Landscape Management Issues Outside of Battle Bend Park

In addition to concerns pertaining to the work proposed within Battle Bend Park, many attendees expressed dissatisfaction with the landscape management of the Williamson Creek Central Greenbelt. This is a tract of land along the main branch of Williamson Creek south of the Battle Bend Springs neighborhood that is owned by PARD and identified by WPD to become a Grow Zone. Additional questions were received relating to floodplain buyouts along Williamson Creek, and potential restoration of wetlands along Williamson Creek. As all of these concerns lie beyond the scope of the proposed project in Battle Bend Park, WPD Stream Restoration and Stormwater Treatment Staff cannot address these concerns. For questions relating to floodplain buyouts, please contact Pam Kearfott at the WPD Floodplain Office (Pam.Kearfott@austintexas.gov). To learn more about WPD's ecological restoration and Grow Zone programs, please contact Staryn Wagner of WPD Riparian Zone Restoration (Staryn.Wagner@austintexas.gov).

4. Mosquito Concerns

Several attendees raised concerns about mosquitos. Generally, attendees sought reassurance that the proposed channel restoration work and water quality facility would not exacerbate mosquito problems within the park. There was a discussion of the mosquito breeding & life cycle, and educational handouts were provided (these are posted to the project website). Mosquitos thrive in stagnant water, and need only a teaspoon of water to complete their breeding cycle. The species of concern in Austin can travel only about 50 feet from their place of origin, and the worst sources are often unchecked stagnant water collected in pots, rain gutters, etc. in residential yards. These containers are preferred mosquito breeding places due to a lack of predators. The work proposed in Battle Bend Park will create a healthy, diverse riparian ecosystem where many predators of mosquitos will be able to live and help control populations. Additionally, the proposed water quality facility is designed to only hold water for 48 hours, which is a much shorter time period than the 72 to 120 hours required for mosquito species in Austin to breed.

5. Information/Communication Requests

Attendees requested to see construction drawings, to have the presentation to share with other neighborhood groups, and to be communicated with about design changes and plans for post-construction maintenance. The WPD Project Website (link below) will be updated regularly and will include content satisfying this request. Currently, design renderings based directly on the construction drawings, the public meeting presentation, and additional educational materials can be downloaded from the project web page. All attendees who provided their email addresses will receive updates regarding the project. To have your email added to the list, please contact Clayton Ernst (Clayton.Ernst@austintexas.gov).

6. Issues for which PARD is the responsible department

Feedback was received regarding park safety and illegal/inappropriate activity occurring in the western edge of the park. It was noted at the meeting that the concrete path/trail proposed by this project will increase traffic and public use of this park area, which tends to improve public safety and reduce illegal/inappropriate activities. Some questions/concerns were expressed about previously completed work in the park (playscape renovation, gazebo replacement, water fountain installation). Questions/concerns of this nature may be directed to John McKennis of PARD (John.McKennis@austintexas.gov).

In summary, this public meeting was a successful event in that many concerned citizens attended and provided valuable feedback to Watershed Protection Department staff.

Please visit the official website for more information and updates about the project:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/battlebendwaterquality>