



For Immediate Release

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**ENVIRONMENTAL and NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS CALL FOR VAST REWILDING OF ZILKER PARK, RELEASE REPORT RECOMMENDING MORE THAN 75 ACRES BE RETURNED TO FOREST**

***Call to action for PARD TO MAKE ZILKER PARK A SHOWCASE FOR CLIMATE, WATER, BIODIVERSITY, AND CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE***

Save Our Springs Alliance, and three nearby neighborhood associations (Zilker, Barton Hills, Bouldin Creek) today released a report that offers a new vision for the 350-acre Zilker Park that would provide much more shade, more water protection and more wild nature for Austin residents from around the city to enjoy.

“Much of Zilker Park is being loved to death, while large areas of the park are unusable for several months because of a lack of shade,” said Bill Bunch, Executive Director of SOS Alliance.

The **Rewilding Zilker Park** vision plan was prepared by restoration ecologist, park planner, and owner of [LandSteward.net](http://LandSteward.net) Elizabeth McGreevy. “The vision calls for reforesting more than 75 acres of the park for people, wildlife, water, carbon capture, and reducing the urban heat island effect, among other benefits,” said McGreevy.

“The intent was to present a vision that participants in the City’s ongoing Zilker Park Vision Plan process could get excited about and support,” McGreevy added. “But we want to hear everyone’s thoughts and ideas about the future of Zilker Park and see what the City’s consultants propose at next Tuesday’s meeting.”

Next Tuesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. the City will be hosting the third in a series of community-wide virtual meetings on the Zilker Park Vision. Plan. Anyone interested may sign up to participate at [this link](#) to the ZPVP website.

Rewilding means restoring forests, wetlands and prairies. In the urban context here, it also means improving the connection between nature and people and improving mental and physical health with our ecosystems.

In the report, McGreevy calls for a minimum of 75 acres to be returned to a natural state using the principles of rewilding to increase biodiversity, reduce erosion, and mitigate the urban heat island while improving the experience for park users. The recommendations support the newly adopted *Austin Climate Equity Plan* since rewilded areas help mitigate the negative effects of climate change.

The LandSteward.net Rewilding Zilker Park report also calls for more focus on restoring riparian areas and reducing mowing of critical habitat. The report is available [here](#) and [here](#).

The report and call to action follow on several other studies that recognize the urgency of this moment of environmental crisis and the need for immediate climate action, including:

Zilker Neighborhood Association's "Top Ten Priorities for the Zilker Vision Plan," released in June, 2021 which calls for intensified climate action, greater water protection, fewer cars and less commercialization in Zilker Park.

The City of Austin's recent "Climate and Equity Report" released on October 1, 2021.

### **Links**

City of Austin [Zilker Metropolitan Park Vision Plan page](#)

ZNA Priorities here:

<https://zilkerneighborhood.org/docs/zpmp/ZNA%20top%20ten%20for%20ZPVP%20June%207%202021.pdf>

City of Austin Climate and Equity Report here:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/austin-climate-equity-plan#:~:text=In%20September%202021%2C%20City%20Council,on%20cutting%20emissions%20by%202030>