



Town Lake Trail Foundation

The Town Lake Trail Foundation

The Town Lake Trail is much more than a tourist attraction. It is Central Texas' link between north and south and east and west. The Trail is the central meeting point for recreation, concerts, fairs, the arts, and family gatherings. In this role, the park is a critical ingredient to what makes Austin a "livable" city and is a key element of what makes Austinites proud to call this city home.

To that end, in 2002 runners and friends of the Trail formed the Town Lake Trail Foundation (TLTF) as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization to be used as a vehicle to expand, improve, beautify and maintain the scenic network of hike and bike trails that shadow the lush Colorado River that flows through Austin, Texas. Thanks to a generous endowment and significant contributions from concerned individuals, organizations and corporations, we work to assure the Town Lake Trail remains one of the most beautiful, natural hike and bike paths in the United States.

We believe that private individuals and companies who use and benefit from the trail, particularly runners, walkers and bikers, have a strong sense of responsibility for assuring it remains a public treasure. We know these individuals and groups are willing to assist the city with funding for trail upkeep and beautification.

We are fortunate to work with design, engineering, architecture, legal and landscaping firms who willingly donate their services. As a result, we can promise stakeholders that every cent contributed to the Town Lake Trail Foundation is put to use maintaining, improving, beautifying or expanding it.

Activities

We raise funds for and lobby for Town Lake Trail improvements, which include:

- Expansion
- Beautification
- Superior construction
- Erosion prevention

History of Austin's Town Lake Trail

In 1918, A.J. Zilker donated the 35 acres surrounding Barton Springs to the City of Austin. Later, for just \$200,000 he deeded an additional 330 acres in 1923. This action was approved in a bond election and despite the economic depression of the 1930s, the land was developed into Zilker Park. The National Park Service assisted with the planning of Zilker. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation's relief program, the Citizens Works Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps performed Park construction.

The central lifeline that flows through Zilker Park is the Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, formed in 1928, continued to expand the trail through land acquisition and volunteer labor from the Austin Parks Foundation.

Today, the trail forms a wide oval circling the Colorado River beginning in east Austin at the Colorado River Park and extending westward for more than 13 miles to Red Bud Isle near Lake Austin and Tom Miller Dam. Three sections of the Town Lake Trail loop are incomplete: the Brackenridge gap along the northwest edge of the river (owned by the University of Texas); the Riverside Drive gap, between the Austin American-Statesman building and I-35; and the Stratford Drive gap on the south of Town Lake. There are initiatives underway to close the Brackenridge gap and the Riverside Drive gap. The already-developed Stratford Drive gap is considered to steep for a hike and bike trail anyway.

Like Barton Springs on the park's south side, the Town Lake Trail is one of the most memorable attractions the city has for visitors. Among athletes -- runners, walkers and bikers, especially -- the trail is considered one of the foremost exercise and physical fitness trails in the country. The Town Lake Hike and Bike Trail, the Colorado River, and the park that surrounds it -- both to the east and west of downtown Austin -- is one of the most beautiful and special places in the United States.

Recent Challenges

Between 1985 and 2003, Austin was transformed from a sleepy college town to a vibrant technopolis of commerce, people and ideas. The city's population swelled, straining the city's infrastructure, use of shared public spaces and the environment. During this time, the City of Austin began to accumulate hundreds of acres of parkland throughout the city limits through acquisition and private donations. In fact, a study by the Trust for Public Land and the Urban Land Institute showed that Austin has the most parkland per person of the 25 largest cities in the United States, yet it spends the least per person for parks maintenance.

Austin's reputation as a physically fit, athletic city continues to grow, largely as a result of its numerous recreational trails and running and walking events. In 2002, Austin was recognized by Men's Health magazine as one of the most physically fit cities in the country, far outpacing other major Texas cities. More and more runners and bikers, including many guests from other cities, have begun using the Town Lake Trail at all times of the day.

The spread-too-thin Austin Parks and Recreation Department has always done an admirable job of maintaining the city's open spaces, but with responsibility for more land, a user population that has more than doubled, and declining tax revenues, it is simply no longer possible for the city to adequately maintain its green spaces.

Today, the Town Lake Trail is overtaxed with pedestrian traffic. The City's maintenance budget is insufficient. Unfortunately, the natural beauty and the usability of the trail have begun to deteriorate. The Town Lake Trail has become a victim of its own popularity.

How You Can Improve the Town Lake Trail

1. Donate. If you can support our efforts financially, please make a pledge to the "Town Lake Trail Foundation" by emailing us or calling us with your pledge amount and your contact information (name, address, telephone number, and if available, email address). Once we receive official IRS confirmation of our nonprofit status (in 2 or 3 months), we'll contact you and ask you to send us your check. (Anyone who donates \$100 or more now will receive an invitation to participate in the first ever Invitation-Only Town Lake Trail Run. Participation in this run will be limited. More information on this race to come later.)

2. Recruit. If you know runners, walkers, hikers, or bikers who love the Town Lake Trail, please ask them to send us their contact information. Soon, we will begin fundraising efforts in earnest with a newsletter, special races, runners events, a fundraising party, concerts, and honor donation boxes placed with local merchants.

3. Volunteer Yourself, Your Ideas and Your Advice. If you have ideas for how we can raise more money to use for the trail, or how the trail can be improved, we would love to hear them, especially if you're willing to take on responsibility for coordinating the effort.



Town Lake Trail Foundation

The Town Lake Trail Foundation

PO Box 5195

Austin, Texas 78763

512/302-0608

dan@townlaketrail.org

<http://www.townlaketrail.org>

