

The Butler Trail Austin, Texas

A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

August 25–30, 2019



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Forming a Partnership for Enhancement of
the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake

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About the Urban Land Institute

THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of providing leadership in the responsible use of land and creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific regions, with members in 80 countries.

The extraordinary impact that ULI makes on land use decision-making is based on its members sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns.

Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. In 2018 alone, more than 2,200 events were held in about 330 cities around the world.

Drawing on the work of its members, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

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ULI Advisory Services

THE GOAL OF THE ULI ADVISORY SERVICES program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and are screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives, a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 100 key community representatives, and two days of formulating recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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On behalf of the Urban Land Institute, the panel would like to thank the sponsors of this panel, Austin's Park and Recreation Department (PARC) and The Trail Foundation (TTF). Both entities have been tremendous to work with and are enthusiastic, open, and willing to move forward. This panel would not have been possible without the extensive work of TTF, including by the key team of Heidi Anderson, Leslie Lilly, and Cheryl Ridall as well as by April Thedford from the city of Austin.

Thank you to ULI Austin and for the leadership provided by Paulette Gibbins. This panel would not have happened without connecting the Butler Trail to 10 Minute Walk.

In addition, thank you to Mayor Steve Adler for hosting the panel for the Tuesday interviews in your remarkable city hall. And thank you to the Central Library for hosting the panel's final presentation. Finally, the panel would like to thank the more than 100 residents, business and community leaders, and representatives who shared their perspectives, experiences, and insights with the panel over the week.



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About the Panel

About 10 Minute Walk

PARKS ARE ESSENTIAL to the physical, social, environmental, and economic health of people and communities. Parks help expand the economy by attracting homebuyers, tourists, and highly talented workers. They protect the environment, provide space for the enjoyment of arts and nature, and make people healthier, happier, and more connected.

Despite these known benefits, research shows that one in three Americans—more than 100 million people—do not have a park within a 10-minute walk of their home. 10 Minute Walk is a movement dedicated to improving access to safe, high-quality parks and green spaces in cities—large and small—throughout the United States. Led by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the Urban Land Institute and with support from The JPB Foundation, 10 Minute Walk is working to create a world in which, by 2050, all people in U.S. cities live within a 10-minute walk of a park or green space. This partnership drives commitments from city leaders working to achieve this vision and transform their communities.

The 10 Minute Walk mission has been endorsed by nearly 300 U.S. mayors so far. ULI, TPL, and NRPA are working with partners in select cities on measurable policies and strategies

to advance the 10 Minute Walk vision. Success in this work will require the expertise, creativity, and close collaboration of public- and private-sector leaders. ULI has a powerful role to play in catalyzing its members, networks, and partners around a vision of a green, sustainable, connected, and resilient future for all people.

Learn more and connect with 10 Minute Walk at 10minutewalk.org and uli.org/parks.



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Background and Key Observations

“I know that the nature we are concerned with ultimately is human nature. That is the point of the beautification movement, and that finally is the point of architecture. Winston Churchill said, ‘First we shape our buildings, and then they shape us.’ The same is true of our highways, our parks, our public buildings, the environment we create. They shape us.”

— Lady Bird Johnson at the B.Y. Morrison lecture at the American Institute of Architects annual convention in Portland, Oregon, June 26, 1968

Located in the urban core of downtown Austin, the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail is a 10-mile loop that serves as a transportation and recreation corridor along the shores of Lady Bird Lake—a dammed section of the Lower Colorado River.

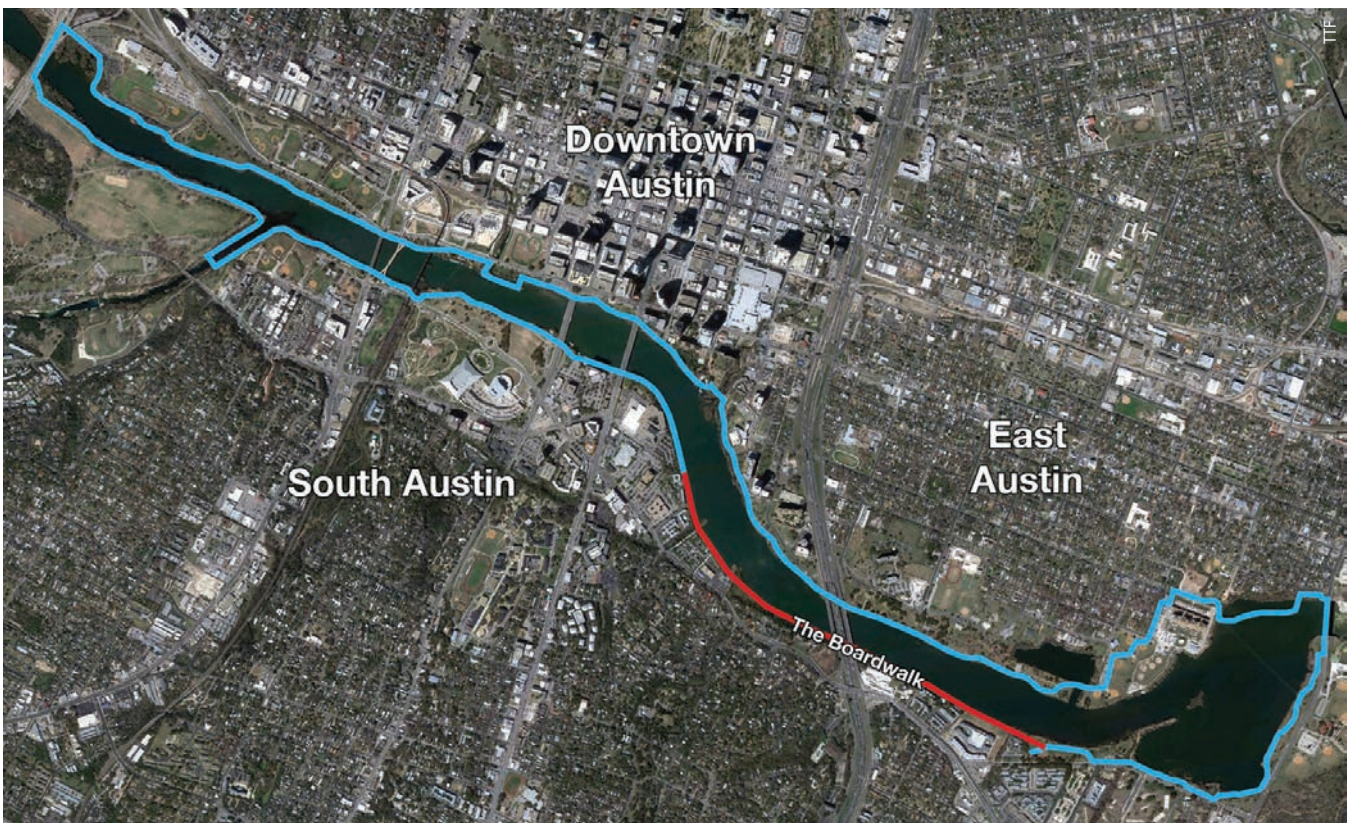
The Butler Trail was established in the 1970s by Ann Butler and Lady Bird Johnson to be modeled after the Thames Path—a 184-mile trail that runs from Kemble, Gloucestershire, to the Thames Barrier at Charlton, South East London. The Butler Trail was intended to be a scenic corridor of hiking trails and landscaping that would offer residents and visitors the opportunity for a rural escape in an urban setting.



Aerial view of the Colorado River in 1951 before it was dammed, forming Lady Bird Lake.

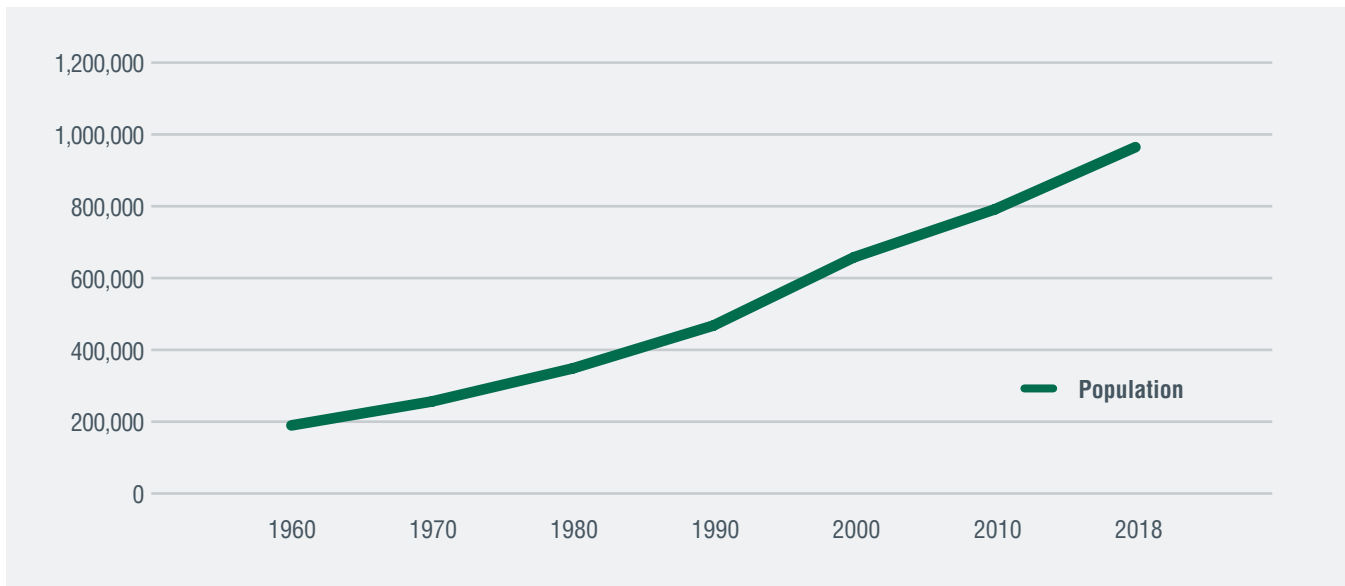


Aerial view of Lady Bird Lake in 1969.



Map of the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake, which includes the trail built on primarily city-owned land (blue) and the boardwalk that bypasses privately held land (red).

Austin Population Growth, 1960–2018



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

To accomplish this goal, Ann Butler enlisted the services of Austin's garden clubs to help with the maintenance of the beautification project, encouraging them to adopt portions of the trail, grow seasonal plants, and maintain sprinklers, among other efforts. Lady Bird Johnson hosted fundraisers at the LBJ Ranch. As Austinites worked together, the improvements continued over the decades. Austin's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) took responsibility to operate and maintain the Butler Trail after it was established. The Butler Trail has grown and changed as the city has grown and changed. This is most evident in the city's population growth. By the 2000s, Austin's population had grown to more than 675,000 residents from approximately 180,000 in 1960.

This population growth meant that the Butler Trail was more heavily loved but needed more help than just PARD could provide. So, as before, a group of dedicated trail users and Austinites organized themselves to offer assistance to maintain the trail by forming a nonprofit group eventually named The Trail Foundation (TTF). Today, there are more than 4 million users of the Butler Trail and the city has grown to more than 960,000 residents. Despite this enormous change and growth, Austinites still care about the same things as 50 years ago, and nature remains central to why the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake is considered the crown jewel of Austin.



A 1986 family photo at Auditorium Shores: a baby and his parents. The baby is Alejandro Delgado, who would grow up to be the board chair of TTF.

Panel Assignment

TTF and PARD are giving serious consideration to a detailed license agreement that would transition some of the operations and maintenance responsibility from PARD to TTF. This transition would likely be phased over many years to accommodate organizational growth within TTF. In exchange for absorbing more of the financial and operational burden, TTF would need to be given authority to operate and maintain the area with more efficiency, while PARD would remain the primary liable party for the public parkland. In the development of such an agreement, a number of issues need to be addressed.



A word cloud compiled from the top three words mentioned by each of more than 100 stakeholders interviewed.

The following questions were provided by TTF and PARD for consideration of this potential partnership:

- How is **authority** best delineated and defined?
- How can **governance** of this new potential partnership be structured?
- How is **liability** best delineated and defined?
- How can transition be **communicated**?
- What are **sustainable funding** sources?
- How can operations and maintenance be **responsibly and realistically** transferred?
- How does a **partnership** connect to broader citywide goals?

Key Opportunities and Challenges

The panel was fortunate to get honest feedback about the Butler Trail from so many members of the community. The panel interviewed over 100 Austin stakeholders about the Butler Trail. Their comments were insightful and valuable.

The panel learned that

- The Butler Trail has long been a cherished asset in the community. Interviewees want to make sure that it is here for generations to come and that it is not only well loved but also well maintained.
- There is concern about access to the Butler Trail, conflicts among user groups, and the trail's availability to all members of the community and to all visitors.
- Interviewees want to overcome a history of systematic and institutional racism in the city of Austin that is reflected in the history and perceptions of the Butler Trail and new urban development surrounding the trail.
- Interviewees love the connection to nature that the trail provides. They want it to be preserved and protected.
- There is an interest in capturing the benefits of new development while not allowing encroachment or a dilution of resources that take away from the Butler Trail.

Opportunities

Already a beloved feature of the city

Existing positive relationship
between TTF and PARD

Heavy use

Innovative public engagement

Coordinate larger city efforts

Challenges

Scalability

Texas small government paired
with rapid growth

Heavy use

Sustainable funding

KELSEY JAMES-KAVANAUGH/ULI

Opportunities and challenges identified by the panel for the Butler Trail.

The panel also heard and learned during the panel week about the city's ongoing (and growing) public budget constraints—including the financial implications and impact of recent legislation that will cap property taxes—and how the constraints ultimately affect PARD's capacity and increase the urgency for strong partnerships with champions like TTF. Austin is not alone in needing to cope with this issue, which still lingers from the Great Recession despite the city's rapid growth. Austin will face a long road to recovery, and decisions are being made now that still result from the recession. The current approach of doing more with less works well for a near-term strategy, but it limits longer-term strategic thinking.

Key Recommendations

Parks and trails that build meaningful physical, social, and cultural connections often require intentional and innovative partnership structures, changes to public policies, creative financing models, innovations in capturing the value of adjacent development, or a combination of these. Those

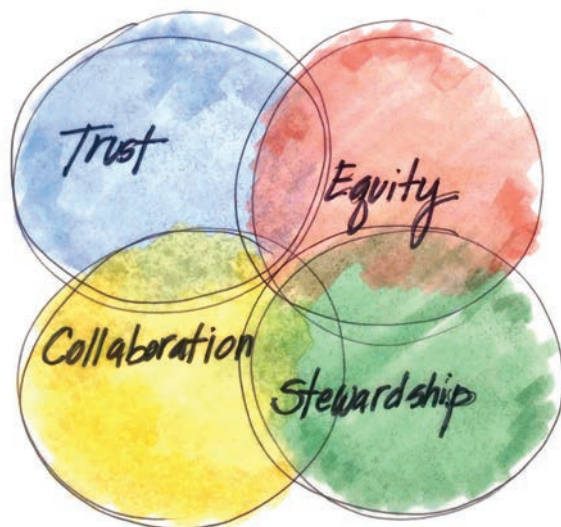
themes are addressed throughout this report. Thus, the panel made the following key recommendations:

- Formalize the public/private partnership between TTF and the city of Austin, using the respective strengths of each organizational partner.
- Develop a strategic plan that includes a communications strategy.
- Launch initiatives to fully fund implementation of the strategic plan that connect to the vision identified.
- Build upon past successes and explore new, better ways to maintain and improve the Butler Trail.
- Involve, engage, and reach out to the community to build support and trust.
- Plan for future growth and expansion of the Butler Trail improvements and connections.

These challenges and opportunities should not limit the ability of both the city of Austin and TTF to be more creative and test out new ideas while learning from successes and failures. Later, PARD will be able to use this new knowledge and experience to pilot other agreements that enhance some of the more than 300 other parks across the city of Austin.

Guiding Principles

FOUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES thread through the report's recommendations for the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake. The panel members think these guiding principles are critical to building nimble, efficient, and effective partnerships and are a framework for the next steps.



AMIE MACPHEE/ULI

The four principles developed by the panel.

Trust

Sometimes the simplest things are the hardest to achieve. A strong working relationship and trust already exist between PARD and TTF. The task is determining how to build on this more broadly with additional community partners and the citizens of Austin.

Equity

“Parks are for people” is a phrase the panel heard over and over. The Butler Trail makes Austin a place where everyone feels welcome and connected socially, culturally, and physically. The panel believes that focusing on ways to engage the city's youth in bold and inventive activities is a big opportunity.



During the Monday tour by TTF and PARD, the panelists threw seed balls made by TTF that contained native plants to improve the Butler Trail and prevent invasive species.

Collaboration

The panel found that Austin has extraordinary assets that could be leveraged for collaboration. From tech to health care to outdoor enthusiasts to school kids to the arts, all the richness of that Austin talent—groups that share the TTF and PARD goals—can partner around a common vision. This collaboration should be less improvisational and more intentional to take advantage of the city's assets.

Stewardship

The panel had some exciting discoveries of unsung heroes—people who take care of the Butler Trail and Lady Bird Lake every day. Those heroes should be celebrated and learned from to raise the awareness and opportunities

for all to take part in stewarding this unique ecosystem. At the core of the panel's thinking is a massive mind shift toward cultivating stewards so that all Austinites regard themselves as *owners* of the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake.

Be Bold

An overarching principle is to be bold. There is significant momentum from past successes. Now is the time to build a framework for bolder action. Some tasks can be done next week for immediate visibility and excitement. Other projects will take time and will require a more deliberate strategy and implementation approach.

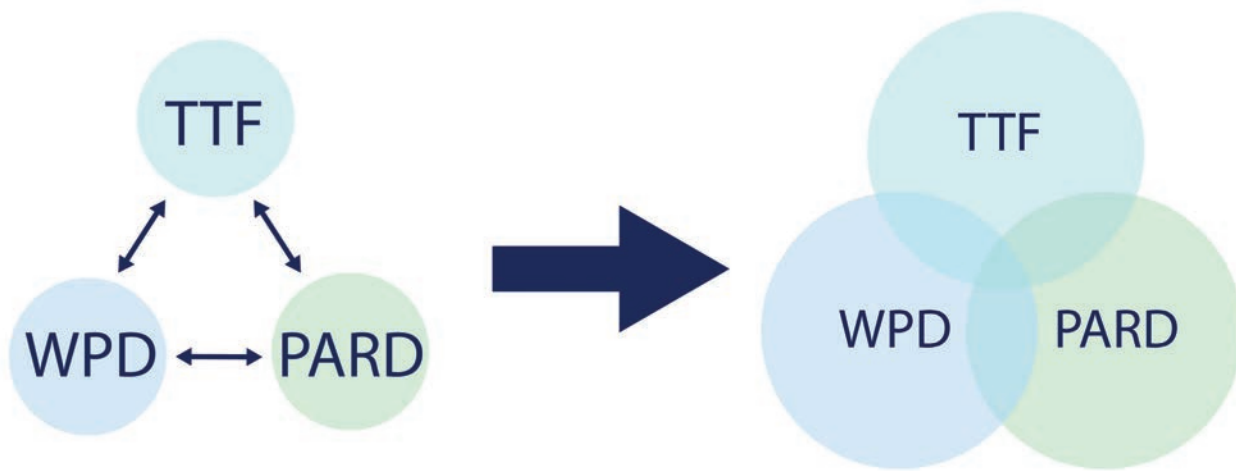


Enabling Stewardship

THE PANEL RECOMMENDS that a more formal partnership be formed between the city of Austin and TTF. Such a partnership would enhance the Butler Trail because, although PARD is charged with operating and maintaining more than 300 parks, TTF would focus exclusively on its mission to “protect, enhance, and connect the Butler Trail at Lady Bird Lake for the benefit of all.”

The partnership would build on existing success stories of the collaboration between the city of Austin and TTF and would ensure proper stewardship of the Butler Trail. Some examples of potential accomplishments include

- Completion of the 10-mile loop through privately owned land;
- Effective and efficient response and repair to regular Butler Trail damage caused by such conditions as rain and flooding;
- Increase of and efficiency in delivering capital projects; and
- Effective collaboration to promote responsible Butler Trail use and stewardship.



The partnership agreement should be between the city of Austin (PARD and WPD) and TTF.

As this partnership continues to strengthen, so too will the successes. Now is the time to focus on the responsibilities of TTF to further grow into the stewardship organization that the Butler Trail deserves.

Partnership Agreements

Interviewees told the panel about discussions to develop various templates, pursue roundtables, draft model agreements, and otherwise test approaches that would establish a replicable process for forming a functional public/private partnership.

As a first step, TTF should develop a strategic plan that articulates its vision for the overall organization and that sets the context for negotiating any partnership agreement with the city of Austin. This plan should explain the TTF board's rationale for wanting to take on a greater quasi-public role and should outline the added costs and efforts that would be required by the organization, including greater communication, outreach, and commitment to community engagement and representation. The strategic plan process should take into account the organization's future endeavors—and should include community input to build understanding and trust as well as to more equitably distribute resources on the east side of the Butler Trail. This process should include diversifying TTF's staff and board so that it better reflects the diversity of Austin.

The panel believes TTF's bylaws, as they exist today, work well but should be reevaluated following the strategic plan process to set the stage for success.



The High Line Canal Conservancy, formed in 2014 to preserve, protect, and enhance the Denver metropolitan region's 71-mile historic High Line Canal, created a five-year strategic plan that can serve as an example. This strategic plan clearly outlines intended impacts, goals, and objectives, while guiding growth and partnerships through a phased approach. The High Line Canal Conservancy's strategic plan can be found at highlinecanal.org/strategic-plan.

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TTF should be proactive in providing contracting and procurement opportunities for minority and small and local businesses.

Without venturing into the realm of specific legal advice or the format and memorialization of the agreements, the panel suggests that PARD, the Watershed Protection Department (WPD), and TTF consider a formal partnership to comprise at least five key separate agreements—each of which requires a level of thoughtfulness and reflection on the goals and values of each party. No timeline is associated with these agreements because they should not be considered “checklist” items to be completed as steps toward a goal. Rather, each agreement requires the parties to seriously reflect on their roles, missions, and expectations for the public good, the shared project, and the capacity of each organization to contribute by partnering. This consideration will help identify all expectations by both the city of Austin and TTF.

The five key agreements are the following:

- I. Parties, Vision, and Public Purpose:** Consider who is doing a task and why. Determine if there is a shared vision for the outcome of the partnership.
- II. Understanding of Baseline Roles:** The role of government versus the role of a private-sector/nonprofit partner sets certain expectations and limits on the transfer of authority that should be jointly understood. In addition, this step will entail the articulation of public baseline expectations and standards for public access, operations, and maintenance to maintain health, safety, and usability (i.e., PARD’s standard of care).

III. Qualified Partner Status and Criteria: Determine what capacity or eligibility requirements the partners must meet to gain the added powers, authorities, and benefits. Examples could be financial, staffing, equipment, longevity, experience, and so on.

IV. Specific Benefits for Qualified Partners: Time-limited activities should be considered to be undertaken beyond baseline activities:

- a. TTF will undertake certain additional programming, outreach, and maintenance.
- b. PARD and WPD will provide additional administrative flexibility to help TTF, such as offering blanket permitting rather than per-instance permitting, possibly being flexible about events rather than grandfathering existing events, etc.
- c. Liability will be allocated so that the government is ultimately accountable and TTF is liable for breach of duties related to its actions.

V. Ongoing Monitoring, Evaluation, Communication, and Accountability Expectations: Decide details of scheduling deliverables and setting expectations, holding ongoing conversations and meetings, scheduling renewal deadlines and cycles to avoid timing gaps, and evaluating results and effectiveness.



PAUL ANGELONE/ULI

The boardwalk is a resounding success story of collaboration between the city of Austin and TTF to enhance the Butler Trail. This boardwalk could serve as a pilot for TTF to operate and maintain an improvement.

Generally speaking, the agreements trend from the most expansive to the most specific, from the development of a shared vision to the details of accountability metrics for overseeing the day-to-day tasks that will achieve that vision. Mechanically, each agreement can be memorialized in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or similar document, and the collection of memoranda detailing the parties' agreements ranging from shared vision to shared tasks and accountability can collectively form a full project agreement.

Governance

The city of Austin and TTF have a great deal of flexibility to define the nature and scope of their partnership, and to adjust their goals and tasks over time. But a strong partnership depends on the independent strength of each partner. Each partner must protect its own integrity as an institution and the underlying governance principles that come with its own institutional form.

- PARD and WPD are government agencies accountable to democratically elected leaders and ultimately the public, advised by a board with specific interest in parks, recreation, and watershed management.
- TTF is a nonprofit accountable to and governed by a board of directors, accountable to the mission and bylaws.

TTF wants to take on additional activities that affect the general public's use and enjoyment of a public asset. Therefore, the organization must become more accountable to the public beyond its board of directors and membership. The levels of authority to manage, operate, and program within the park derive from core good governance principles.

- When TTF's proposed activity falls within the normal function of the Butler Trail or change to the resource—such as a trail ranger program in which TTF members or staff riding in T-shirts talk to people along the trail and do minor sweeping or cleaning that does not require more than hand-held equipment—that activity should be allowed generally after one-time approval.
- When TTF's proposed activity would depart from normal trail activity and bring change to the resource but would be beneficial and not significantly exclude use by others (e.g., invasive plant removal), it should be allowed subject to a blanket, time-limited permit.
- When TTF's proposed activity would exclude other users (e.g., a ticketed concert), that activity is fundamentally only a governmental role that should not be transferred. Each instance would require a separate governmental approval or permit.

Some accountability and functionality would be governmentally inappropriate to shift from the city of Austin to TTF (public to private). Examples would include ownership of a public asset, the right to significantly exclude members of the public, and the maintenance of a basic standard of health, safety, sustainability, and usability.

Roles and Responsibilities

When a government agency and nonprofit organization with a public mission agree on shared values and goals, a partnership for public service delivery and programming can benefit from each entity's structural advantages. However, it is crucial to ensure that each entity has clear expectations, that agreements and terms are explicit, and that ultimate accountability to the public at large is maintained. Good governance requires that some fundamental functions and baseline services be retained by the governmental entity, with its accountability to all, rather

than a nonprofit board—no matter how well intended its members or capable its staff.

The following figure details a sampling of various roles and responsibilities that might be part of a public/private partnership between a governmental entity like PARD and a nonprofit like TTF. The vast majority of tasks can be undertaken jointly, allowing the public to benefit from collaboration. Yet some tasks are “fundamentally governmental” or “fundamentally private” such that each entity should maintain its own full authority and accountability.

City/Nonprofit Roles and Responsibilities

Lead	Activity	Project scale	City	501(c)(3)
City	Legal and asset protection		Lead	
	Public safety		Lead	Assist
Joint/collaborative	Capital projects	Larger/complex	Lead	Assist
		Smaller/underprioritized	Assist	Lead
	Community engagement/outreach	Citywide	Lead	Assist
		Park/project specific	Assist	Lead
	Operations	Essential	Lead	Assist
		Value-add	Joint	Joint
	Programming	Essential	Lead	Assist
		Important	Lead	Lead
		Value-add	Assist	Joint
	Maintenance and repairs	Significant	Lead	Assist
		Minor	Joint	Joint
	Planning/visioning	Citywide	Lead	Assist
		Park/project specific	Joint	Joint
	Environmental conservation	Citywide	Lead	Assist
		Park/project specific	Joint	Joint
	Special events	Larger/complex	Lead	Assist
		Smaller/intimate	Joint	Joint
501(c)(3)	Advocacy			Lead
	Fundraising		Assist	Lead
	Volunteer recruitment/management		Assist	Lead

Source: ULI.



Portion of the Butler Trail that had washed out in a recent storm.

Liability

Liability in a complex, popular public space is ultimately going to fall to the government. Criminal acts will need law enforcement response; disasters will need Federal Emergency Management Agency response. The private entity can be held liable for breaches of its duties, but it should not be liable for the general obligation to public health and safety. Such an obligation would be impossible for it to meet, either through action or insurance.

- The city of Austin retains responsibility for the overall health and safety and basic level of maintenance usability. TTF is liable for avoiding a breach of its

duties, which include enhanced activities, reasonable person/negligence standards, and other normal nonprofit liability/insurance/accountability issues.

- Emergency response and enforcement are fundamentally governmental roles. Outsourcing would entail either complexities or scalability and legal challenges beyond the capacity of TTF.
- There may be “contractual” sorts of rules that TTF could enforce related to its activities, much like a homeowners association can enforce its contract involving members. These could include park rules that are noncriminal; compliance could be subcontracted or not.

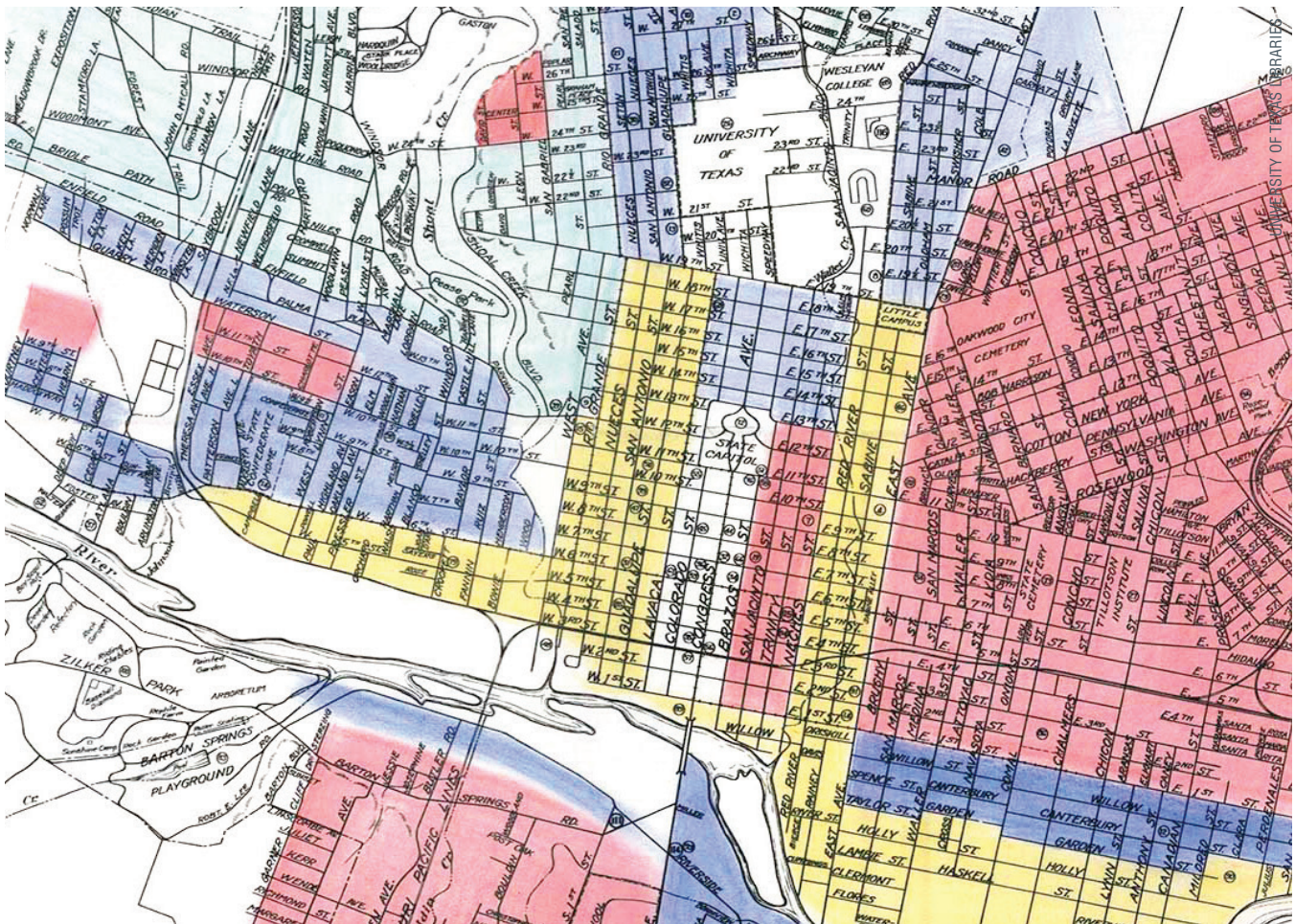


Creating Connectivity

THE BUTLER TRAIL forms essential and meaningful physical, social, and cultural connections for many residents and visitors to Austin. The trail provides the only connection to nature that many people have in their daily lives—including to truly unique destinations like Barton Springs. The trail forms a *physical* connection between transportation corridors and diverse neighborhoods on both sides of Interstate 35—a clear dividing line in the city. Now the 11th-most-populous city in the United States, Austin continues to see rapid change and development. Yet the trail for many represents a connection to part of the city's history, including the original vision of Lady Bird Johnson, Ann and Roy Butler, and other trail founders and stewards.

While these and other connections rightfully explain why the Butler Trail is so beloved, not all residents have shared in its story, and some do not feel the same sense of connection to it, partly because of a lack of meaningful, creative community engagement. Other residents hold a mistrust of city agencies based on past wrongs—including the original siting of the now-decommissioned Holly Power Plant—that have damaged neighborhoods on the east side of I-35.

The recent addition of the word “connect” to TTF’s mission statement demonstrates a commitment—and obligation—to work closely with PARD, other city departments, parks, conservancies, community and neighborhood groups, and residents to do the hard, urgent work of fostering further physical, social, and cultural connections across the city of Austin through a focus on the Butler Trail. As TTF continues to develop its mission, it has an opportunity to do so in an inclusive way.



In the late 1930s, the U.S. government, through the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, evaluated the riskiness of mortgages and classified them in four categories: Type A or Best (green), Type B or Still Desirable (blue), Type C or Definitely Declining (yellow), and Type D or Hazardous (red). White denotes business, industrial, institutional, or undeveloped properties. Often, those areas deemed most risky were predominantly African American, occupied by other communities of color, or ethnic neighborhoods. Less risky areas were typically more affluent white neighborhoods.

Nighborhood and Cultural Connections

The panel heard in interviews that for many Austin residents, the Butler Trail is a place for connections. It is a meeting place for friends, some of whom have been jogging together on the trail for over 30 years. Having such a unique, natural space for interactions can help shape not only the physical, but also the social character of a place.

By shaping community identity and serving as the backdrop to social interactions among different groups, parks and playgrounds *can* help strengthen social cohesion in historically

segregated places—but their mere presence, even when they physically connect various neighborhoods, does not guarantee that this will happen. As noted by the Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative, investments of time, capital, and other resources can “connect people of all backgrounds, cultivate trust, and counter the trends of social and economic fragmentation in cities and neighborhoods.” Further TTF/PARD support for programs and infrastructure investments developed *in and by* neighborhood residents, in collaboration with other community partners, could strengthen connections to the Butler Trail.

Research Brief

HOW OPEN SPACES CAN PROMOTE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

CASE
1

Over one-third of Americans (38 percent) say that their neighborhood lacks outdoor spaces to exercise—a barrier that disproportionately affects low-income African American and Latino communities.¹⁴ When done right, such spaces can provide myriad benefits, including reducing rates of depression and increasing opportunities for people to engage in physical activity, especially within low-income communities.

► **Workforce development**

Through public/private initiatives that target workforce development and business attraction, parks and open spaces can generate thousands of new jobs to previously disinvested areas.¹⁵

► **Environmental equity**

When planned with intention, green spaces in urban areas can help counter higher temperatures¹⁹ and improve air quality in vulnerable communities that suffer from high rates of air pollution.

► **Social cohesion**

By shaping community identity and serving as the backdrop to social interactions among different groups,²¹ parks and playgrounds can help strengthen cohesion in historically segregated neighborhoods.

► **Health equity**

Parks can save people and communities money by helping prevent chronic illnesses and promoting health.¹⁶ The positive effects of exposure to urban green spaces are often amplified in lower-income communities.¹⁷

► **People who live within a half-mile of a park tend to exercise more** than people who lack park access.¹⁸

► **Having access to even small green spaces can reduce symptoms of depression** for people who live near them, especially in low-income neighborhoods.²⁰



ULI

Strategies to enhance health and equitable outcomes can be found in ULI's publication *The Case for Open Space*.



Grand Park in Los Angeles.

Grand Park

Grand Park is a 12-acre park in downtown Los Angeles that was renovated in 2012 after 12 community meetings to determine the park's design. The overall vision for the park was for it to be "the park for everyone" that serves people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds and income levels.

Community meetings were conducted in Korean, Spanish, Japanese, Armenian, and English to ensure that the diverse voices of Los Angeles residents were reflected in the park's design and programming. The park includes plants and other features that directly relate to the different people and cultures of Los Angeles. The park also includes the "Grand Park Rangers Program," which brings children to the park to become rangers and participate in events to connect them with healthy eating, exercise, and the natural environment.



The Austin American-Statesman newspaper is relocating its offices and printing facilities. The move creates an opportunity for redevelopment of this strategic parcel that could enhance and potentially financially support the Butler Trail.

Parks can save people and communities money by helping prevent chronic illnesses and promoting health. The positive effects of exposure to urban green spaces are often amplified in lower-income communities, and people who live within a half-mile of a park tend to exercise more than people who lack park access.

Connections through Privately Owned Space

Another key feature of the Butler Trail is that it allows for physical connections through privately owned spaces via easements on private property. Past and current residential, hotel, and mixed-use developments—such as the Hyatt Hotel and the planned redevelopment of the 19-acre Stateman site just south of Lady Bird Lake by Austin-based Endeavor Real Estate Group—could have cut residents of Austin off from the water, but instead, access was preserved via the Butler Trail.

Economic and Wellness Benefits

A 2016 Economic Impact Analysis for the Butler Trail found that for every \$1 invested in it, \$2.05 is generated, with a total annual economic impact of \$8.8 million. The Butler Trail also leads to \$4.3 million in annual medical cost savings and a corporate real estate premium of \$0.28 per square foot for every quarter mile closer to the trail.

With the rapid development and influx of population that is occurring in Austin, leveraging private-sector real estate development for community benefits—such as trail and park improvements—is an important strategy. It is essential not only to maintain physical connections through privately owned land, but also to work with developers and owners to improve these connections. TTF's vision and focus on the Butler Trail makes it uniquely positioned to work alongside other groups to form additional partnerships with the development community and further enhance the trail—creating benefits for all parties.

The master plan for the Statesman site redevelopment calls for up to seven new buildings on roughly six acres, but it also calls for 12.5 acres for public uses, including a 7.5-acre waterfront park and more connections to and along the Butler Trail, potentially including a boardwalk and pier. Working alongside the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board, PARD, and other community partners, TTF has the opportunity to be at the forefront of planning and development efforts that affect the trail.

It is clear that the Butler Trail offers economic benefits for the private sector. Recognizing and leveraging the development that is already happening to further improve the trail is essential.

Transportation Connections

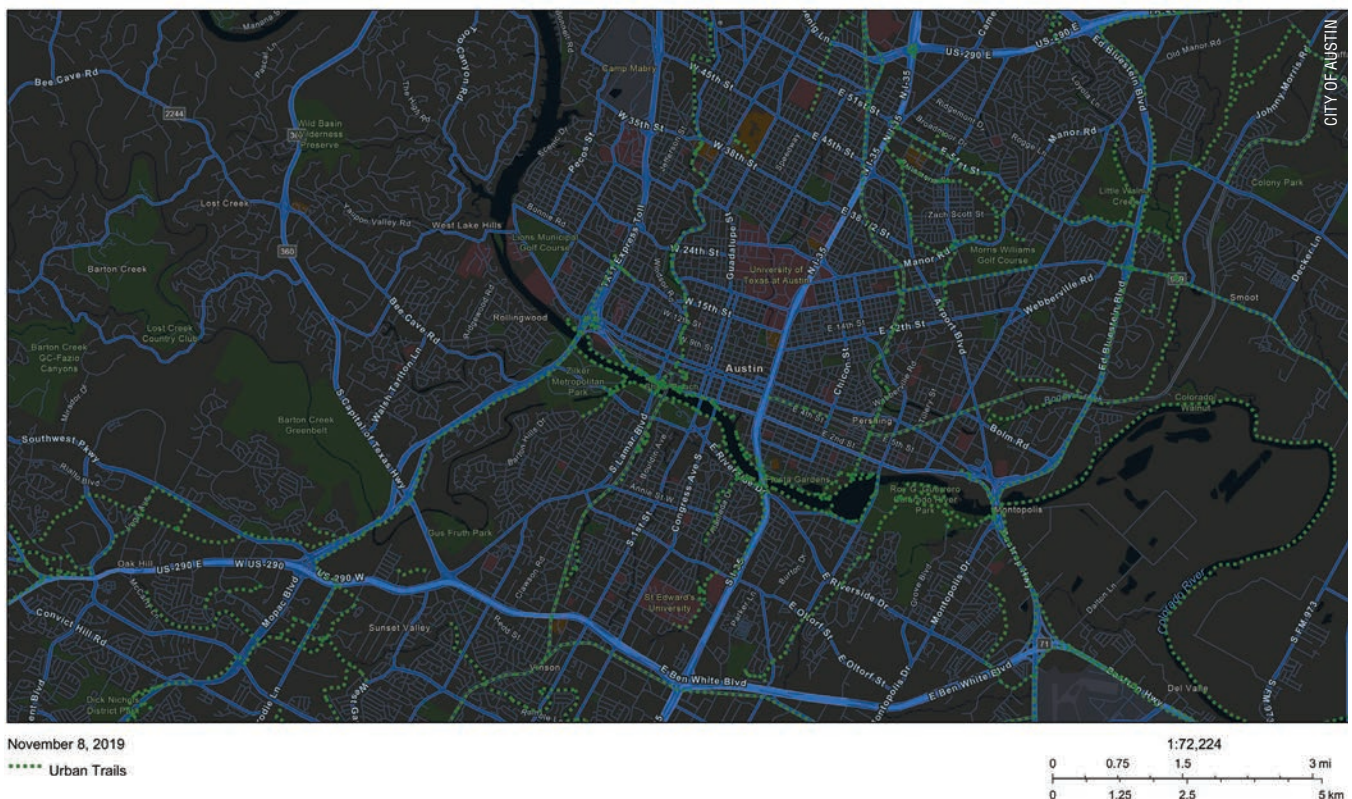
Trails can have local and regional benefits beyond recreation and exercise. Residents can use trails to get to work and to reach public transportation and other key destinations. According to a survey of users of the Butler Trail, 4.58 percent of trail users commute to work via the trail—eliminating an average of 124,000 annual private vehicle commutes. Austin’s adopted Parks Master Plan includes the goal of providing “safe and accessible parks and facilities to all citizens,” which includes promoting “connectivity of parks and trails from existing neighborhoods” and areas with increasing development.

Austin’s Bicycle Master Plan calls for shifting short motor vehicle trips to bicycle trips and connecting central Austin to neighborhood destinations, such as schools, parks, businesses, and shopping districts via nonmotorized transportation routes. While the Butler Trail is at times at capacity or over capacity in terms of use, leadership by TTF to maintain and further enhance the trail could help Austin achieve its

goal of creating a bicycle network to serve “people of all ages and abilities” by providing “direct and comfortable connections to where people live, work and play.”

Economic considerations, such as the high cost of owning, operating, and insuring a car—which averaged nearly \$8,700 in annual costs in the United States in 2015, according to AAA—mean that trails as transportation corridors that connect various neighborhoods and destinations can potentially benefit all income brackets because they provide less expensive alternatives to automobile ownership. Whereas the Butler Trail’s west side has regular north–south crossings across Lady Bird Lake, the four miles on the east side lack such crossings. TTF’s collaboration with PARD and other city departments and community partners on planning for a new north–south connection from the planned new Butler Trail alignment at Holly Shores to the peninsula off Lakeshore Boulevard would improve connectivity on the east side of I-35 near Longhorn Dam. TTF’s leadership and expertise throughout this process will continue to be crucial in moving the project forward.

Austin Urban Trail Network



Connections and Access to Nature

The city of Austin's Parks Master Plan includes the goal of providing recreation activities that are “responsive to the needs of different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and economic strata.” The opening of a new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible dock at Fiesta Gardens, spearheaded by the Camacho Activity Center and PARD's Inclusion Unit, is a great example of local improvements that vastly expand connections to nature—in this case, granting people with physical limitations the all-too-rare opportunity to get out on the water.

Outdoor Youth Engagement

Examples of organizations and initiatives that TTF can take inspiration from include the following:

- The Natural Leaders Network, an initiative of the Children and Nature Network, develops young leaders ages 18–30 by training them to advance outdoor equity in locations across the United States. Examples of programs created by the Natural Leaders include leading expeditions to national parks—such as Grand Tetons National Park in Wyoming—for children who have never experienced them to expanding adventure recreation options at historically black colleges and universities.
- One Common Unity, an organization in Washington, D.C., has a mission to break cycles of violence and build healthier communities through youth programs, in part through increasing connections with nature.
- One Tam is a partnership among five groups to support work that is vital to the health of Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California. One of the group's many offerings is an internship program that expands the capacity of existing stewardship operations and provides local youth and young adults with career pathways and job skills training focused on the outdoors.

For the Butler Trail to live up to its potential, access for all must be expanded and enhanced in several ways. TTF has an opportunity to work with other local and national partners to enhance this access. Using the Butler Trail to connect youth to the outdoors is particularly essential. Conducting programs that meaningfully engage youth—particularly

those youth who may not always have had the opportunity to gain access to nature—will help develop the stewards of the future—from “backyard to back country.”

Facilitating youth engagement with nature is a clear equity issue. According to Youth Outside, an organization working to promote healthy lives and inspire future champions of the planet, underserved youth experience a range of barriers to accessing outdoor programs, including distance and lack of transportation, cost of programs, safety concerns, lack of relevant programs, and feeling unwelcome or experiencing discrimination.

The city of Austin recently developed the “Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights” through the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative managed by the National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network, with funding from the JPB Foundation. The document states that every child in Austin has the right to “climb a tree, picnic in a park, hike a trail, ride a bike, and discover plants and wildlife,” among other rights. TTF can play a lead role advancing access to nature for Austin youth—ultimately building a culture of stewardship for the trail and other natural resources with the potential to pay dividends for both children and the trail for generations to come. TTF has an opportunity to learn from organizations focused on increasing access to nature for youth and college-aged residents, and to work to build programs or partner with other area organizations to advance such efforts.

Connections among Community Partners

One of TTF's strengths as an organization is its singular focus on the Butler Trail. By taking on additional responsibility for such an iconic asset in the heart of Austin, TTF has an opportunity to formally serve as a convener of community partners, such as the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy and the Shoal Creek Conservancy, to create “one system” in which each park or trail retains its unique identity but forms a stronger whole.

An example is Circuit Trails, Greater Philadelphia's regional trail network, which has a goal to connect towns and cities across the region and provide pedestrians and bicyclists with car-free routes among diverse destinations, including downtown Philadelphia; Camden, New Jersey; and the



Engaging the Community

JUST A FEW PEOPLE came together in the 1960s to reinvent Town Lake and preserve this incredible piece of land for public enjoyment, well-being, and environmental health. Today, anyone can look around and see PARD, TTF, and engaged citizens who are the present-day stewards and heroes of Austin's primary environmental and recreational jewel. These are also the storytellers. TTF and PARD have proven success in communicating and engaging with the community.

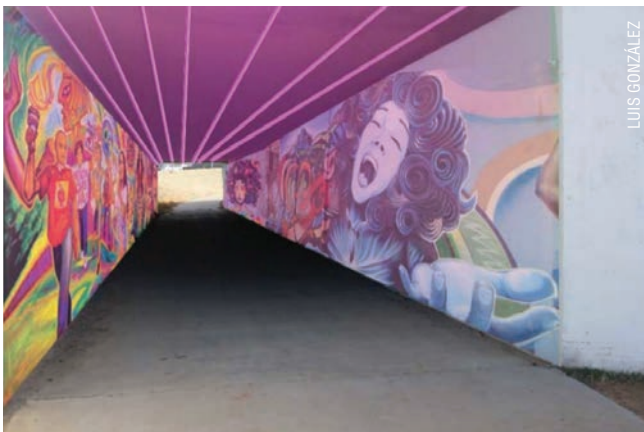
Today, the Butler Trail and Austin as a whole face different challenges that require different ways of thinking, engaging, and stewarding. As the partnership between TTF and the city of Austin is formalized and grows, it is critical to lay out a strategic plan that outlines staff growth for TTF and a clear communications plan for the partnership. The city of Austin and TTF already recognize the need to invest in a

more dynamic communications and engagement strategy. TTF has recently expanded its engagement by hiring a communications and events management staff member and has contracted with local groups such as Cultural Strategies to enhance outreach efforts on the east side and in Austin's Latinx community.



PAUL-ANGELONE/ULI

An existing tunnel on the east side of the Butler Trail.



LUIS GONZALEZ

A ULI panel proposed improvement for a pedestrian pathway in Commerce City, Colorado. Something similar could be done along the Butler Trail.

Building from those actions, the panel recommends that TTF lead the process to develop and implement a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy. This strategy should be centered on the Butler Trail's complex history. TTF should embrace the complexity and explicitly acknowledge the painful history that includes redlining, choices on which neighborhoods were flooded to construct Lady Bird Lake, and the construction of I-35 as well as current concerns about displacement from new development. Acknowledging past wrongs and honoring the history of those affected by these decisions will help build trust between the community and TTF.

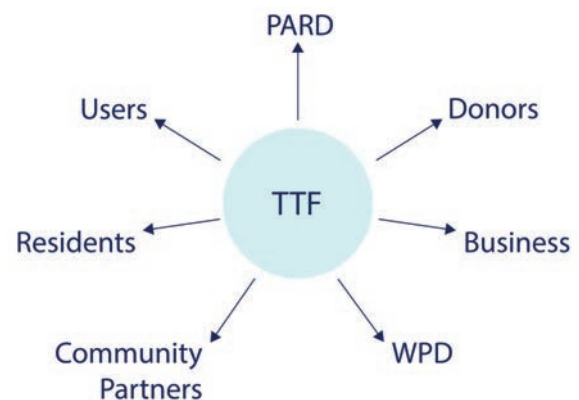
A comprehensive communications and engagement strategy would increase awareness of TTF and PARD, increase transparency for roles and responsibilities, and lead to more heroes and stewards of the trail, with the outcome of building trust among communities of color. With a thoughtful action plan, the partners could cultivate more stewards and even a new generation of stewards, enhance collaboration among the partners, bring more equity to the trail, and build trust to ensure a sustainable future for the trail.

Communications Strategy

With a phased approach, TTF will become the center for all communications related to the trail. TTF and the city of Austin have a real opportunity to be more proactive about how they communicate, whom they communicate with, and ultimately in what way they present a more robust and inclusive narrative about the Butler Trail. Some of this work is already happening because the partners are already doing the following:

- Listening, by gathering stories based on personal narratives;
- Honoring, as with Grandma Comancho's recreation center; and
- Sharing, as on the TTF website and along the trail.

Even more could be done in a more coordinated effort. The story could be woven throughout all communications, with TTF leading in centralizing the message.



KELSEY JAMES-KAVANAUGH/ULI

TTF is well equipped and the appropriate entity to lead communications, both internal and public facing.



The Grandma Comanche Recreation facility serves as a hub of activity for youth and outdoor programming.

Internal Communications

TTF could provide leadership to the partnership through communications and with transparency. This “internal” communications would be the backbone of a successful partnership that is based on trust, equity, and collaboration. This task could be done by developing a communications process between the key partnership (city of Austin and TTF) that enables the partners to regularly sit at the same table and communicate easily and honestly.

Next, the partners should develop a communications plan that facilitates regular communications with key stakeholders, including but not limited to the TTF board, PARD, the PARD board, the WPD, public officials, residents, and neighborhood partners. The plan would create a system that provides responsible and timely reporting that can be adapted as needed.

Build Awareness and Education

TTF should lead in telling the story of the Butler Trail to the broader public and keeping the public informed, adapting the form of communication appropriately for different audiences. A first step would be making communications available in Spanish and then diversifying the communications with

multiple lenses in mind. Some examples of a broader communications network might include

- Tabling on the Butler Trail and at community events;
- Signs on the Butler Trail;
- Direct mail appeals;
- Surveys;
- Flyers at nearby retail outlets, recreation centers, and libraries;
- Targeted advertising (through social media, Google ads, and local publications);
- NextDoor promotions (distributed by neighbors and by PARD);
- Press releases;
- Local newsletters (neighborhood associations, municipalities, and elected officials);
- Elementary and middle schools, through fundraising, educational programs, or both; and
- Neighborhood ambassadors recruited to help spread the word (provide them with a toolkit).



St. Charles Place Park, located in Denver, was re-envisioned by a team of park ambassadors who use the facility. More information about the project can be found at <http://valerianllc.com/portfolio/st-charles-recreation-center/>.

Conversations with the community should occur in person off the Butler Trail at nearby events as well as throughout the city of Austin. TTF should continue giving presentations and appearing at neighborhood association meetings as well as hosting lunch-and-learns. Interns and volunteers are excellent ambassadors for the Butler Trail, and as the message grows local partners will share the story as well. TTF should continue to expand digital communications to increase the number of followers and should inform community members of Butler Trail-related updates. For example, a dedicated platform (social media and/or web) could be created for trail closures and updates.

Informational toolkits should be developed for each communications effort to give the team, the public, and partners the agreed-upon messages in both Spanish and English. A typical toolkit could include

- Press release,
- Short newsletter blurb,
- Social media posts (links, suggested language, images),
- Flyers,
- Signs,
- Video links, and
- Frequently asked questions.

Finally, TTF should take the lead to standardize communications on the trail in partnership with PARD. Standardization should include permanent and temporary signs and improvement project information. The varied signage should be reduced, and concentrated and focused on places like high-traffic areas. An interpretive plan for educating users and the public on the environment, art, and the Butler's Trail story should be developed. This effort should be a creative and comprehensive plan that addresses on-trail signage as well as digital and program content.



The Indianapolis Cultural Trail uses art as a place to include branding. Here, the light pole features as art with a traffic signal that flashes “care” or “don’t care”!

Stay Connected

Building relationships and awareness about the partnership's activities is effective only if the partnership continues to stay connected. A system around community inquiries and issues should be created that starts with TTF. The effort could start simply with an internal frequently asked questions list that enables staff and partners to clearly communicate responsibilities and direct inquiries to the appropriate entity to get answers. In addition, a platform for participation and meaningful neighbor and visitor input conversations should be created beyond just informing trail users of updates. Community leaders should be able to participate in the process of activities along the trail, from partnership forming to project development and ongoing maintenance. As an example, TTF can learn from New York's Park Conservancy model how to communicate without borders and seamlessly between government employees and nonprofit employees.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is a relatively new area for TTF. Authentic community engagement is vital to building trust, and the panel recommends a co-creation model that involves members of the community having a seat at the table. This means that TTF should be open to changing processes and designs to reflect what is heard from community conversations. The model could build on the excellent work that TTF is already doing by partnering with Cultural Strategies. The work will lead to greater community empowerment and a broader sense of ownership of the Butler Trail.



TTF has begun an engagement strategy.

In addition, the following principles will advance a more diverse and inclusive engagement program:

- **Ongoing and consistent.** Engagement should just occur around projects. Rather, TTF should have a consistent presence at neighborhood association meetings, recreation centers, and schools, especially on the east side. TTF should actively participate in community events taking place on the east side.
- **“Meeting where they are.”** Literally, TTF should get off the trail and meet residents and potential users of the trail where they live and work.
- **Creative and innovative.** Engagement strategies should be tactical and fun.



The West Vernor Corridor Neighborhood Framework initiative was conducted in Detroit as an extensive engagement to plan and design new spaces like the one shown in this picture in Clark Park. More information can be found at <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/central-design-region/west-vernor>.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an ageless, ancient art form and a valuable form of human expression. Specifically, storytelling can help communicate *who we are, what we do, why we do it, and where we're going*. TTF has already starting a storytelling campaign on its website. But this project should be expanded and used as an opportunity for TTF to tell the stories of residents and user experiences and then incorporate them into planning for the trail in forms such as art, trail enhancement, or other capital projects. The videos should be made available beyond the TTF website and shared at libraries, schools, and other neighborhood centers. This work would help tell the oral histories of the city of Austin and show that the Butler Trail is more than just a trail along the dividing line in the city but



LAURA LEE AND CLAY DAIGLE

Contest Winners, Humans of Butler Trail



AMBER WADEY

Contest Winner, Humans of Butler Trail



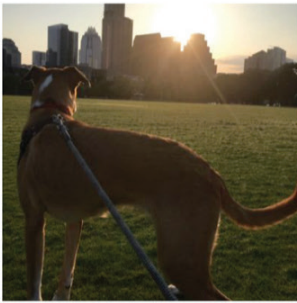
JORDAN COOPER

Humans of Butler Trail



THE CHAVEZ FAMILY

Humans of Butler Trail



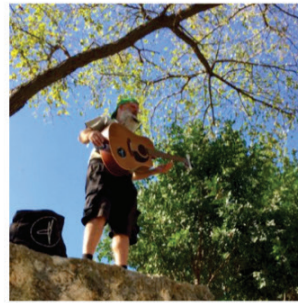
LULA

Dogs of Butler Trail



WILLARD DAVIS

Humans of Butler Trail



WOODE WOOD

Humans of Butler Trail



LUCY

Dogs of Butler Trail

Storytelling work by TTF has started.

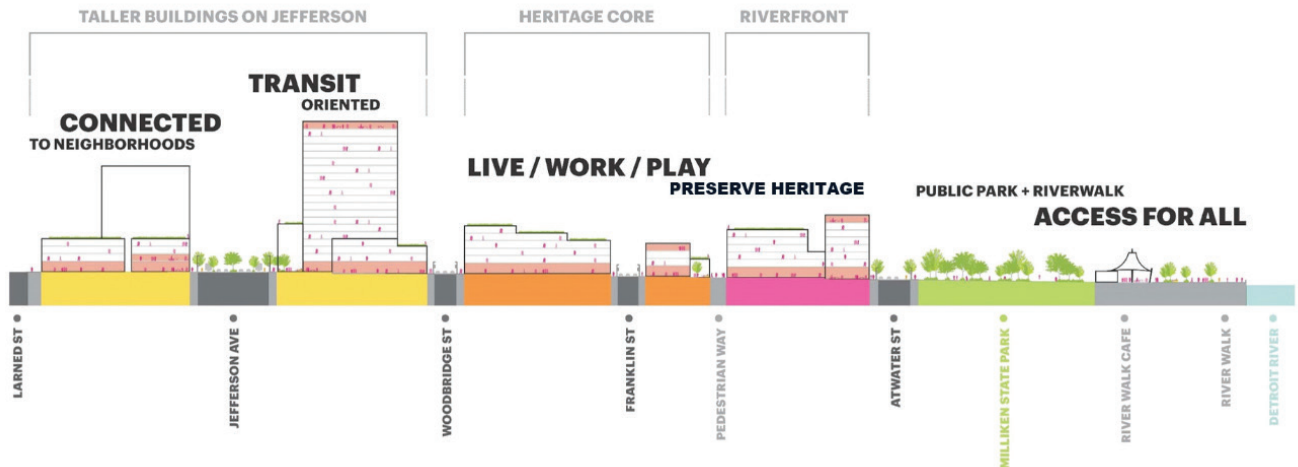
also a place where everyone can come together. Storytelling could also help present and frame the economic and real estate cases for value creation from open space and parks and engage new Butler Trail champions.

Arts Master Plan

An arts master plan should be created. Doing so would present an opportunity for TTF to think about programming and engagement differently. The many benefits of having art on the Butler Trail include beautifying and uplifting neighborhood identity and culture, highlighting neighborhood history and creating a stronger sense of place, and creating pride and connections. An art advisory council should be established with representation from PARD, the PARD board, TTF staff, community representatives, and other key stakeholders included. The plan would help create a standard process for artwork to be approved and displayed along the trail.



Stevie Ray Vaughan statue along the Butler Trail.



Detroit hosted a consultant pitch night as part of an RFQ process for the East Riverfront District. Attendees were allowed to vote for the final selection. More information can be found at <https://detroitmi.gov/departments/planning-and-development-department/central-design-region/east-riverfront>.

Principles to Advance Equity in Arts and Culture

In October 2015, PolicyLink—a national nonprofit focused on advancing racial and economic equity—developed *Creating Change Through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: A Policy and Practice Primer*. This publication had several key principles to advance equity in arts and culture through change. They include the following:

- Engage communities of color, artists, and their cultural institutions in governance and planning for communities of opportunity.
- Target capital investments in cultural amenities in communities of color.
- Ensure work, commissions, contracts, and economic activities include artists and cultural institutions of color in design, creation, and implementation of cultural efforts.
- Improve health and quality-of-life outcomes for underserved communities of color by embedding relevant arts and cultural strategies to achieve health and well-being, and include efforts to mitigate trauma.

Additional resources can be found at www.policylink.org/.

Some examples of creative engagement for the plan (and other projects beyond the arts master plan) include having design competitions for public art in a much more public process. The partners could hold a consultant pitch night in which consultants present their proposals to the public before a consultant is selected for a project. Also, residents could sit on the evaluation committee. In addition, engagement could be led by an artist. These options would enable artists to be incorporated into the design and engagement process, not just receive a commission to create a specific work of public art.



Funding Opportunities

FINDING MORE MONEY for worthy park projects is often a challenge—whether or not the project includes badly needed park improvements such as restrooms, drinking fountains, ADA-accessible trails and facilities, playgrounds, splashpads, and even trees. But even more important is the need for operation and maintenance dollars to care for existing as well as new facilities and keep trees trimmed, plants watered, and lawns mown.

The panel believes that nonprofits, such as TTF, serve a critical role in acquiring funds from a variety of grant-making foundations; national, state, and local public agencies; individual donors; and sources of community support. Foundations can pursue philanthropic gifts from many sources that public parks agencies cannot. Often, working in partnership public agencies and parks nonprofits can secure a greater amount of funding for worthy projects that they could not obtain working separately.

Some organizations specialize in raising funds and investing in programming, operations, maintenance, and capital improvements in given parks, often pairing funding from

public agencies. Usually, such organizations have one or more agreements with the public parks agency that owns the public parks and can share in revenues from concessions, events, and programming if fees are collected. Agreements vary widely from city to city and even park to park, but they are becoming more collaborative and longer term. In 2019, the Trust for Public Land reported 181 nonprofit parks organizations operating in the 100 largest U.S. cities and spending \$597 million in programming, improvements, operation, and maintenance, complementing \$7.1 billion in public agency spending.

Because the Butler Trail and surrounding parklands intersect with a wide variety of populations of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, income levels, neighborhoods susceptible to flooding, and storm damage, TTF should work with the city of Austin to pursue funding opportunities for the following:

- Improvements (especially focused on implementing the Holly Shores master plan to extend the trail and park through the old Holly Power Plant site);
- Expanded programming at the Lorraine “Grandma” Camacho Center (bicycling, film, audio-video production, etc.);
- ADA-accessible boat docks;
- Tree planting to replace and supplement the older canopy in the park areas along the Butler Trail; and

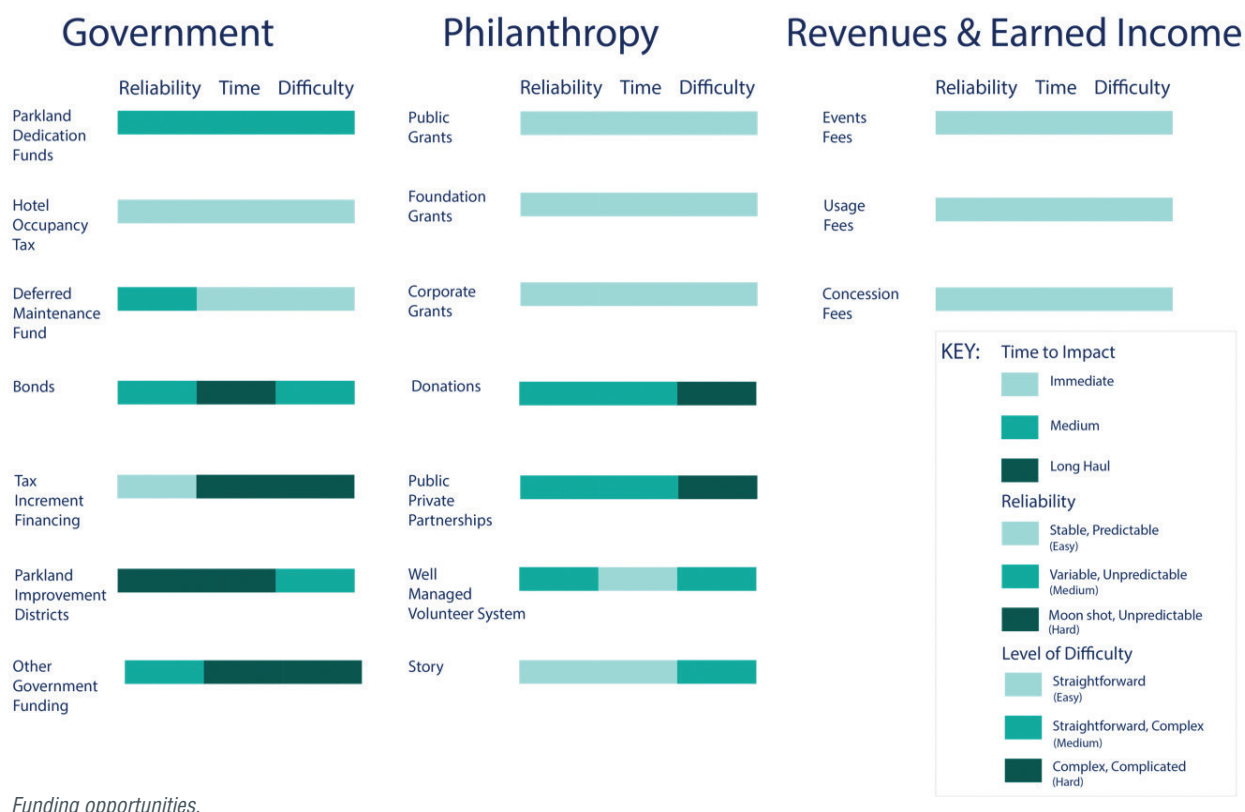
- Flood mitigation, protection, and repair (unstable slopes along the water’s edge, areas of the trail prone to frequent flooding, rain gardens, areas for water capture, etc.).

The panel believes it would be helpful to first summarize and organize the spectrum of tools the city of Austin and TTF currently have today. While each tool varies in potential impact, effort, and time in which it could be put into action, the partners must examine what tools exist today to understand what approaches can complement existing tools, create new opportunities, and help raise the bar for the city of Austin, PARD, and TTF.



ANGELA N/F/FLICKR

A former gas works in Seattle was converted into park and open space. Some areas are closed to the public for safety reasons while in other areas visitors are able to interact with the former industrial infrastructure.



Funding opportunities.

Funding Toolkit: A Starter Kit

The following tools are currently available to the city of Austin and TTF.

Parkland Dedication Funds

An application of a developer impact fee concept to direct funding toward parks and open space. Usually a fee per housing or hotel unit is paid into a fund that must be spent on parkland acquisition or capital improvements for existing or new parks within a specific radius. Austin collected \$6.95 million in Parkland Dedication Fees from October 2017 to September 2018.

Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) or Hotel-Motel Taxes

Increasingly, cities are allocating a portion of fees collected through hotel room taxes to parks and recreation departments. Usually, the funds are restricted to projects that tourists and visitors to a community will visit or benefit from. Austin allocates funds for specific historic preservation sites in parks. From October 2017 to September 2018, over \$1 million was spent on historic restoration projects. Hotel occupancy tax usage

regulations and guidelines are approved by state legislatures and governors and are subject to conditions and regulations placed on them by state authorities and subject to local approval by city and county governments.

Deferred Maintenance Fund

Approved by Austin City Council, funding is typically generated from a special allotment often from excess or unspent surplus funds to provide financial resources to address deferred maintenance needs.

Bond

There are two primary bonding mechanisms: general obligation (GO) bonds and general revenue (GR) bonds.

The GO bonds are usually the result of a public election organized and managed by the city, county, or state for specific park and recreation improvements. GO bonds are sources of funds for many cities and counties for parkland acquisition, capital improvements, and capital replacement of amenities. Often bonds can be passed and used for multiple projects that

serve multiple needs. For example, transportation bonds may be used to build or improve trails, paths, or sidewalks, among other “alternative” transportation improvements.

GR bonds are uncommon but are usually from an income-based utility entity, including electric or other power, water, or others. Funds may be spent by other agencies on parkland to provide amenities or improvements central to their own missions and ensuring that they honor the GR bond backers, which are usually the rate payers for power, water, and other services. For example, a local water utility could restore a stream or riverbed and banks in a park if the river or stream contributes to the water supply. Transportation or public works agencies could provide a path through a linear park if that route is used by pedestrians and cyclists commuting to and from business centers.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

One or more government entities allocate a portion of present and future property taxes to be dedicated and invested in paying for public realm improvements in a specific area, often called a TIF district. Improvements can range from flood control, streets and streetscapes, parks, and public transportation to smaller incremental services. Usually the improvements are funded through GR bonds and paid back through TIF allocations over a period of 10, 25, or 50 or more years.

Public Improvement Districts (PID)

A public improvement district is a defined geographical area established to provide specific types of improvements or maintenance, which are financed by assessments against the property owners within the area. Other cities call these areas business improvement districts (BIDs).



MICHAEL MIZZI

Portions of the revenue from the Lollapalooza concert in Chicago support the city's park system.

Revenues and Earned Income

There are a variety of revenues and earned income opportunities. Event and usage fees can be collected for use of specific facilities (recreation centers, exercise classes, picnic shelters, or other reservable facilities such as barbecue/grilling areas, portions of picnic areas, camping spots, and others). Generally, all revenues from usage fees go back into the city’s general fund, which pays for a majority of a city parks and recreation department’s budget, among other things like public safety, public health, and libraries. In some cases, usage fees can be restricted for use in a specific park or for the parks system as a whole, but this restriction is still uncommon. Some fees in some parks are waived if the neighborhood is poorer or otherwise underserved.

Fees generated from concessions including, but not limited to, food trucks, ticketed events, and craft fairs for locally made items are considered earned revenue. Food trucks and other mobile concessions have greatly changed how

contracts and agreements are created, how fees are collected, and how long a given vendor is permitted to stand in a specific location. Traditional approaches for concessions in parks were often multiyear contracts for limited seasons and usually were a percentage of total sales and subject to government agencies reviewing and approving the concession vendors’ books.

Philanthropy

Federal, national, and local grant opportunities exist from foundations, corporations, banks (e.g., community development arms), and health care and hospital systems.

Philanthropic organizations provide gifts according to their missions, and generally alignment must exist between the funder and the receiving organization. A number of national foundations are funding projects that involve parks and open space and that also meet other criteria, including equitable access, healthy living, and resilience factors. Different types of funding require different strategies. Some organizations might fund capital projects as well as build a maintenance endowment. Some funding is designated through boards and others are donations such as from a corporation or individual.

Example Grant Opportunities

Organization	Type
Kresge Foundation	National
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	National
HUD Section 4 grants*	National
Blue Cross/Blue Shield	National/local
St. David’s Medical Foundation	Local
Seton Health	Local
Banks	Local

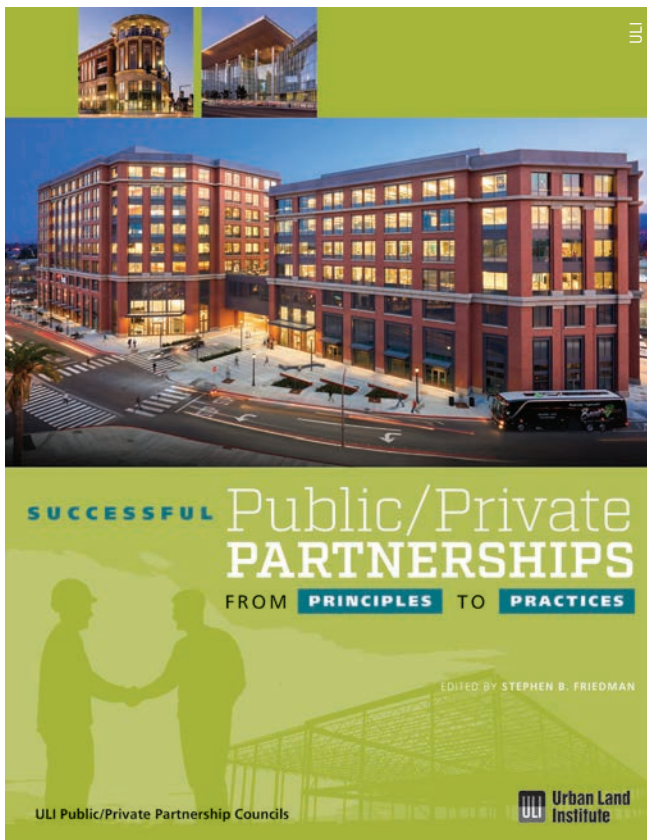
Source: ULI.

*Grants are typically administered through nonprofit organizations such as Enterprise Community Partnerships, Local Initiatives Support Corporations (LISCs), and Habitat for Humanity.

Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Simply stated, PPPs are creative alliances formed between a government entity and private developers to achieve a common purpose. Other actors have joined such partnerships—including nongovernmental institutions, such as health care providers, and educational institutions; nonprofit associations, such as community-based organizations; and intermediary groups, such as business improvement districts. Citizens and neighborhood groups also have a stake in the process.

Successful PPPs require building trust between the public and private sectors and changing the participants’ mind-sets. The public sector must change from development regulator to facilitator of economically feasible projects that provide public benefits. The private sector must change from an adversarial private actor as an applicant for development permits to a collaborative, open, and transparent participant in negotiating profitable projects with public benefits. Creating effective PPPs is more necessary today than ever, given public-sector needs and fiscal constraints in the face of challenging urban issues.



ULI's 10 Principles for Successful Public/Private Partnership are expanded upon in the 2016 publication *Successful Public/Private Partnerships: From Principles to Practice*, which can be found at <https://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Successful-Public-Private-Partnerships.pdf>.

Other Government Spending

Opportunities arise where there is overlap in common goals and challenges and concerns and where joint funding could yield the greatest impacts. Some of the areas that the panel has identified that are applicable to the city of Austin include

- Watershed,
- Forestry,
- Climate mitigation, and
- Transportation.

A Well-Managed Volunteer System

Volunteers in parks (citizens and neighborhood groups organized by public park agencies and nonprofit parks agencies) are increasingly undertaking a wide variety of programming and capital project work as well as ongoing maintenance and operations. In the 100 largest U.S. cities, over 17.6 million hours worth \$503 million were reported by the Trust for Public Land in 2019 as part of the ParkScore/City Park Facts

release. Volunteers serve in a wide variety of roles from offering professional services (planning, design, construction, horticulture) to “day-of” programming volunteers and leaders to ongoing operation and maintenance activities.

Funding Toolkit: Expanded Kit

Moving beyond the starter kit to an expanded kit, the panel believes there are new opportunities to leverage existing tools to raise funds to enhance the Butler Trail. These are organized at the national, state, and local levels. The examples provide insight into ways in which TTF and the city of Austin could focus on identifying new funding strategies and options. This section primarily focuses on new state-level funding opportunities.

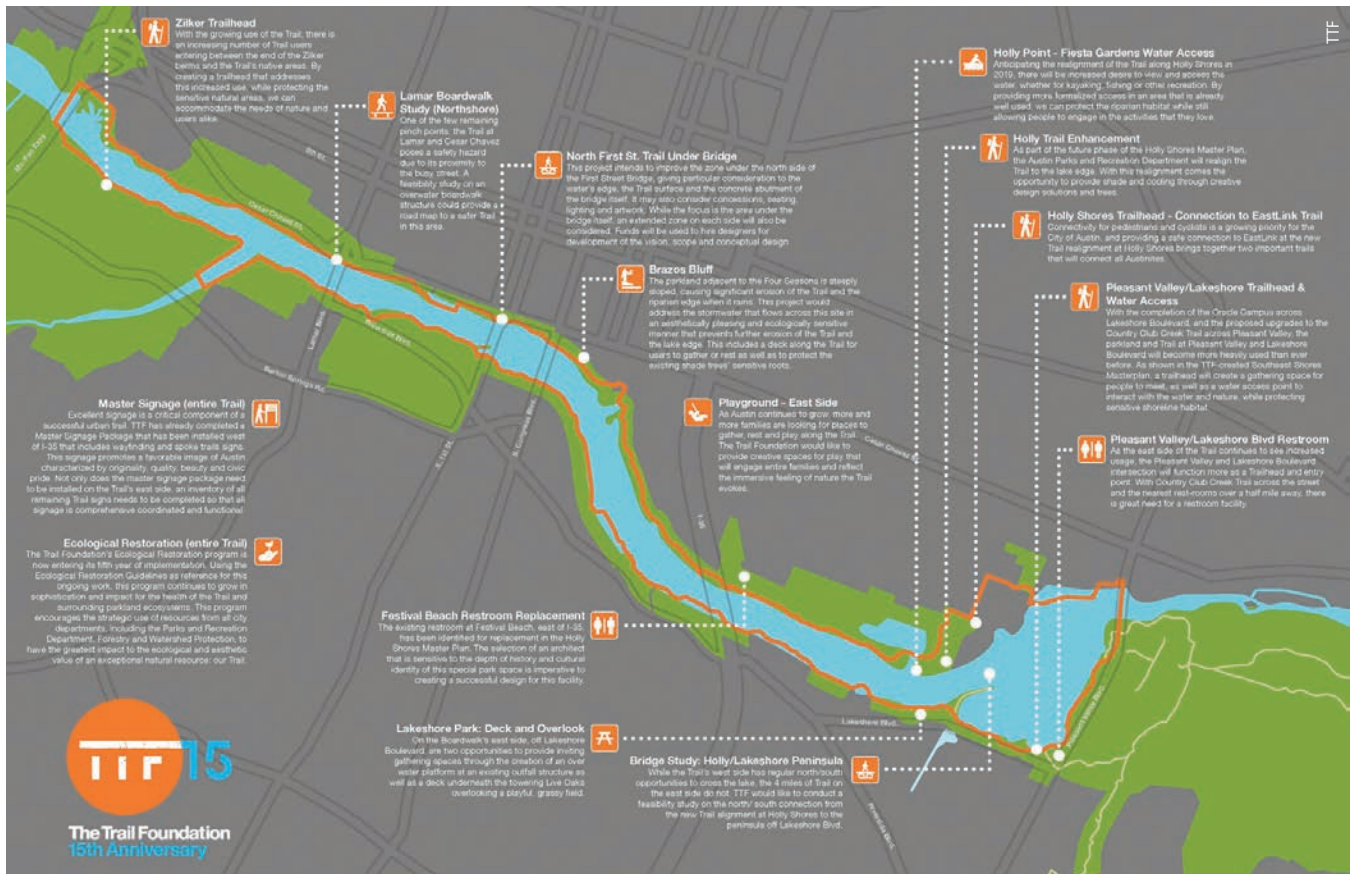
National Funding Opportunities

The panel suggests exploring opportunities through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was recently reauthorized by Congress. A portion of the funding was earmarked for urban parks projects, including land acquisition. TTF and the city of Austin should consider pursuing funds for the expansion of the Butler Trail, both west and east to expand the footprint and connectivity of the trail and surrounding parklands. Additional resources can be found through national entities identified within the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit (<https://toolkit.climate.gov/content/funding-opportunities>).

State Funding Opportunities

Seeking funding at the state level should be a primary focus. Texas has significant public grant opportunities through the state, individuals, and foundations. In addition, there are opportunities for TTF and the city of Austin to collaborate with other urban areas to enable new authorities from the state government.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). TPWD administers a full range of park and recreation grants available for to city and county park agencies that apply for them. The funds range from programming to recreation trails grants. Given that TTF has been successful in funding and implementing a growing number of capital improvement projects and has expertise in grant writing, it should join forces with city staff to identify opportunities, work on developing core language and descriptive text, and offer letters of support and assistance to each other to ensure that no opportunities are missed.



All 15 projects TTF prioritized will help advance connections and build shared resources.

Philanthropic. A number of Texas family and grant-making foundations operate in cities across Texas. Although many operate in cities other than Austin, TTF should consider applications to foundations that are willing to fund parks and recreation as well as environmental and restoration projects on parkland. Among the many to consider are the Brown Family Foundation, the Stillwater Foundation, Lyda Hill Philanthropies, the Moody Foundation, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, and the family foundations operating in the greater Austin area.

Parks District Authority creation—Texas Legislature. With the coming property tax cap being levied by the Texas Legislature in the 2019 session, a number of home-rule Texas cities are looking to see what impacts the cap will have on funding for parks and recreation departments. Given that the recovery has been slow from the steep cutbacks in funding following the Great Recession, and that needs for parks and recreation are growing with the populations of Texas cities, Austin park advocates should begin working with city staff, as well as looking for allies

in other Texas cities (Dallas, Houston, Fort Worth, El Paso, San Antonio, and others) to begin the process of proposing legislation to allow cities to create parks districts or parks authorities.

Park districts, active in a number of states, allow cities (via city council legislation or popular vote) to create a taxing authority for the purpose of providing dedicated funding for parks. A small percentage of property tax (often called millage) is collected by the local or regional tax authority and spent as directed by the parks and recreation district, usually represented by an appointed or elected board of directors. Park districts are found in Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Washington state. Cities include Seattle, Minneapolis, and Chicago. Boards can be city councils (Seattle), separately elected boards (Minneapolis), or bodies appointed by a local mayor or city council (Chicago). Given that it will likely take a number of legislative sessions to consider and hopefully pass such legislation, parks departments and parks foundations in Austin and other Texas cities should start working now to build political will.

State enabled local opt-in legislation. Another option for consideration is a program that has been law in the commonwealth of Massachusetts for about 19 years: the Community Preservation Act. The act allows cities and towns, via public election, to opt-in to taxing themselves at a slightly higher property tax rate. Those taxes, matched with state funds and collected from residential property sales, can be allocated and spent on parks and open space, historic preservation, or public housing in a given city or town. Each city or town must have a public process for applying for and considering proposals annually, and the proposals must be approved by city council or town meeting (depending on the form of government). Each category must receive 10 percent of the funds for spending annually. See <https://www.communitypreservation.org> for more information.

Other Local Funding Opportunities

The city of Austin and TTF should, with key partners, explore and pursue designating a PID for the Butler Trail, Lady Bird Lake, and adjacent areas. This designation would require political, social, and community capital and would not be easy, but if successful it could help provide a reliable source of funds for the Butler Trail and adjacent communities and could help offset the financial burdens currently felt by PARD and TTF.

Some key things to consider to build this partnership include the following:

- Consult with Downtown Austin Alliance and key councilmembers and staff that represent the adjacent council districts.
- Connect with and create strategic partnerships with key property owners and business owners.
- Leverage the skills, connections, technical assistance, and other strengths of local professional organizations such as ULI Austin, the local chamber of commerce, and Real Estate Council of Austin.

In addition, as discussed in the Connectivity section, billions of dollars in proposed spending related to transportation within the city of Austin could be leveraged for the trail. These proposals include building a more robust micro-mobility (bikes, scooters, skateboards, etc.) and public transportation network. In addition, there is a proposed expansion of I-35 under discussion. The Butler Trail is a part of this overall transportation network and should receive some funding from these initiatives.



Telling Your Story: Fundraising

AS MENTIONED in the Engaging the Community section, a key part of growing funding is establishing a broader, more visible presence on the trail and in the surrounding communities. This, of course, involves having representatives go to meetings, events, and other programs that are taking place in the surrounding communities, but also looking for potential collaborations for programming, events, art installations, or improvements along the trail and surrounding parkland. One such example would be working with the council member for District 3, Pio Renteria, who is a strong advocate for expanding park improvements (a bridge replacing the Longhorn Dam crossing) and engaging with the local community. He is also a strong advocate for increasing the number of low- and moderate-income housing units in his district. TTF should ensure that it maintains a presence at meetings and events, and in other efforts to support, improve, and expand affordable housing in the area.

The panel recommends three core fundraising strategies:

- **Tackle the traditional.** Many of these recommendations will not be new ideas, and both PARD and TTF are well positioned to start pursuing the funding approaches.
- **Be whimsical.** The panel recommends building on the recommendations within this report.
- **Pursue what you need now.** Acknowledging that both PARD and TTF have far more projects than time, money, and staff, and even volunteers, can handle, the panel suggests straightforward ideas to help get more of what is needed right away.

Tackle the Traditional

The panel believes the time is right to begin working on more traditional approaches even though they likely have already begun.

Build a legacy gift program. The panel has no doubt that TTF has examined this option before, but it recommends that TTF take steps today to outline, plan, and strategize how to build a legacy donor program. Although great effort is required and payoff is not immediately realized, ultimately this type of return is important for the health and longevity of TTF, the trail, and Austinites. The panel recognizes that additional staff and board resources will be critical to making this successful.

Get swag. People love stuff. Maximize brand recognition for TTF, address current advertisement prohibitions on the trail, and over time make a little bit of cash. The following examples could be sold at the Nash Hernandez Building’s new information center (see later in the report) and online:

- T-shirts. Several members of the ULI panel visiting Marfa before the advisory panel began met and chatted with a TTF supporter who wore a TTF T-shirt at a local coffee shop. This engagement would never have happened without the TTF’s T-shirt, which is no longer available for sale.
- Towels to use at local adjacent swimming pools (Barton Springs Pool, Deep Eddy Pool).
- Hats, gloves, and other weather-related items. Trail-use-specific gloves would include those for running, cycling, and gardening.
- Glow-in-the-dark clothing elements for early-morning/evening runs, walks, and rides.
- Blinky lights for early-morning/late-evening runs, walks, and rides.
- Burma Shave–type sequential signs or campaigns that can be assembled to tell a story, show change, etc.
- Postcards, including those that could be designed and fabricated with local youth community organizations. Not only would the postcards make a great way to thank donors at all levels, this type of design collaboration could help TTF strengthen connections with future partners and trail champions. Postcards could include a message as simple as “Greetings from the Butler Trail” with a link to TTF’s website.

Be Whimsical

The panel believes unusual ideas could help shake things up, attract new champions, and find support for the very critical and hard work of engagement, communication, and equitable outcomes:

Park exchange program. Partners could show off all their hard work by searching out professional-level connections with peer cities and could also learn more about successes, failures, and fundraising strategies. Organizations such as the National Parks and Recreation Association, Trust for



Swag should be sold on the TTF website.

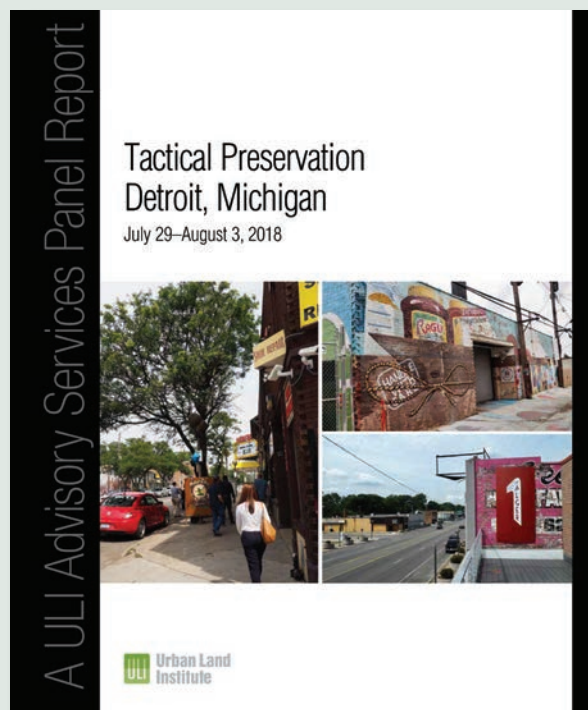
Public Land, ULI, and the City Parks Alliance host convenings, forums, conferences, and sometimes even fellowship programs for cities. On a more grassroots level, this type of program could help partners connect with other local organizations doing work around youth engagement and equity.

Pilot a temporary partnership agreement for the Nash Hernandez Building. The panel recommends that PARD and TTF negotiate a temporary agreement for use. As part of this agreement, certain built-in flexibility should include options that permit TTF to use space for programming, donor and engagement events, fundraising events, and simply bringing the building to life as a temporary information platform. Creative elements could include a chalkboard-painted wall (with chalk) for visitors to share what they love about the trail and where they are from, informational materials (and possibly a staffed information) station, a TTF local marketplace (swag shop), and a home for many of the suggestions in the Communications and Engagement section. The panel thinks it is critical for the PARD and TTF to test out new ideas, learn from both the missteps and wins, and try again.

Tactical Preservation

Tactical preservation is an innovative historic preservation initiative launched by Detroit's planning and development department that focuses on adapting a single specific space within a large building for new uses. In addition, the initiative looks to streamline processes that can more efficiently move parts of buildings into new use while securing the remainder of the building envelope for future use, thus adaptively using specific space within a building. Along the Butler Trail, the panel identified the Nash Hernandez Building, the Seaholm Power Plant water intake building, and potentially portions of the Holly Power Plant as possible locations for this approach.

The tactical preservation approach attempts to reduce costs and amplify efficiency by being more targeted. It focuses on specific typologies—those recognizable iconic buildings such as schools, banks, libraries, recreation centers, theaters, and churches that contribute to the character of place while fulfilling critical social, cultural, religious, and commercial functions of urban life. Power plants are also a significant typology that provides an excellent opportunity to rethink incremental adaptive use of large-scale buildings that have outlived their original use yet retain physical value in the bones of their structures and symbolic worth in their iconic identity within the urban skyline.



ULI's Tactical Preservation report can be found at: www.uli.org/advisoryservices.

Rethink philanthropy. Austin is a particularly creative place, and some of TTF's philanthropic efforts should match that ingenuity. TTF should come up with creative and new ideas for donor recognition that set it apart from other organizations that are often competing for similar funding. Some examples include

- Partner with the local library to create unique bookmarks that recognize book-loving donors and honor the vision of TTF.
- For funders that enable the vision for the Nash Hernandez Building Information Center, have a session that highlights the donors that make it a reality.
- Offer an adopt-a-plant program with a twist. Recognize the primary funder for a TTF pilot for plant and other trail material expenses by creating a gardening tote that all funders receive. TTF could then sell the tote to other supporters on its online store.
- Sponsor a youth bike team, with a donor's help. While this will not necessarily make TTF money, it would build community capital and put TTF's name into the community in a new ways and encourage support from future stewards of the trail.

Pursue What You Need Now

A key part in the creation of a successful and robust fundraising effort would be to fully tell the story of the Butler Trail and the surrounding parklands. The partners should tell the story of how the lake, park, and trail were developed, who helped acquire the funds and land, what infrastructure was placed where and why, how the park improvements were made, and also how the park was used for programs and events and how those shaped the neighborhoods and their relationship with the park, the city, and the surrounding neighborhood uses.

This is a great opportunity to use collaborative and creative ways of story gathering. Include all positive and negative changes and experiences through the history of the development of the park and the trail, because it allows for an honest discussion of the challenges and issues that TTF and PARD face in providing ongoing stewardship and funding programming, operations, and maintenance as well as improvements throughout the trail corridor. Examples of stories include the building of Longhorn Dam, the construction of the Holly Street Power Plant, and the long period of operation that stymied both the development of the surrounding neighborhoods

and forced the residents to put up with the resulting noise, traffic, pollution, and more. Further, the city allowed additional commercial and industrial uses that were not allowed in other neighborhoods west of I-35.

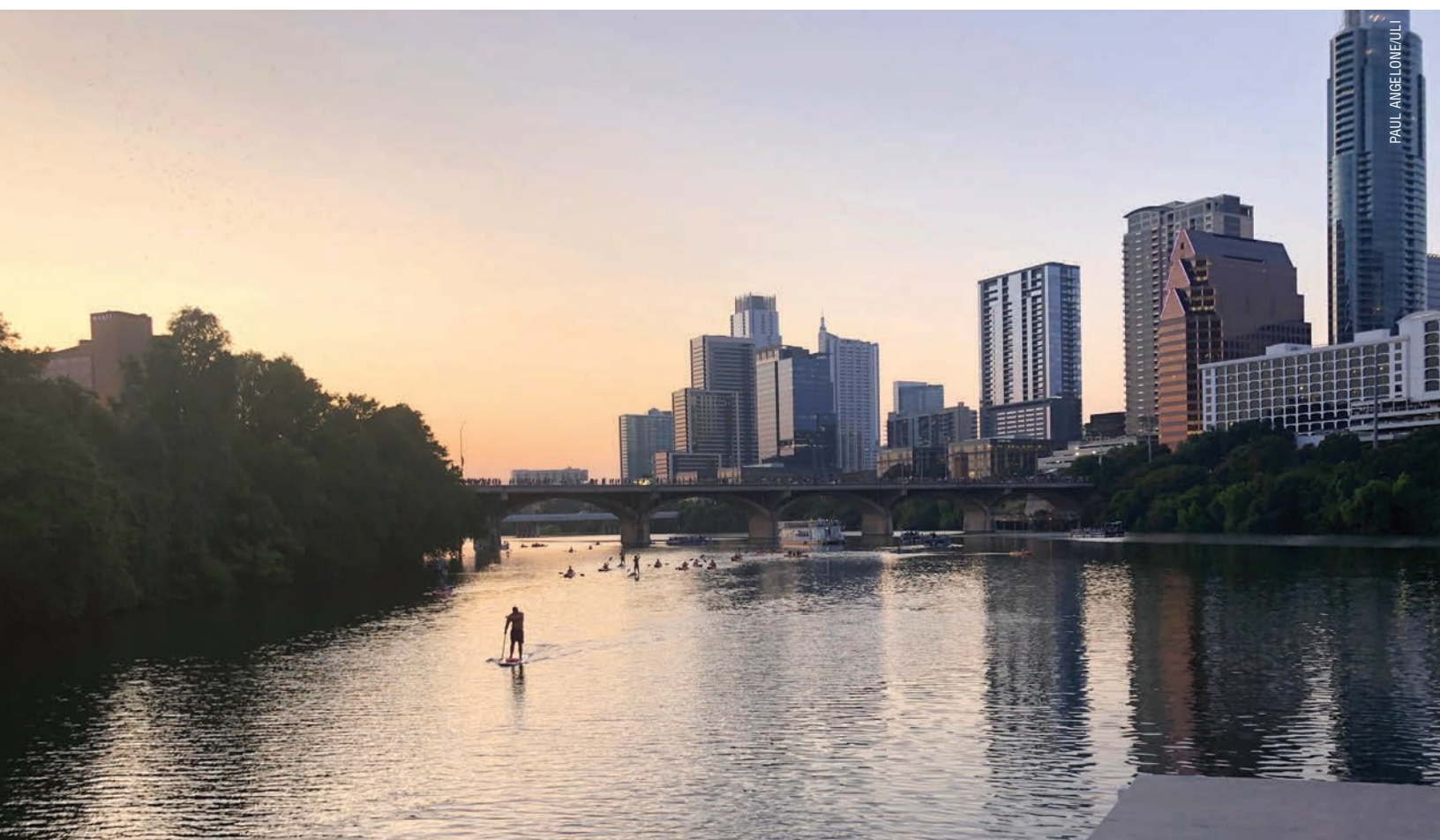
The partners could also tell the story of the rise of the annual AquaFest festival and specifically the powerboat races held on the lake east of I-35 that resulted in the creation of a neighborhood-led environmental justice movement to move the races out of town to a much less populated area (Lake Marble Falls in the Hill Country).

Tasks to start include the following:

- Hire a grant writer. The addition of a grant writer is a key near-term recommendation. A grant writer could help organize the story of the trail, as mentioned, and also could help develop the segmentation and variations needed to apply for the grants and funds from national, regional, state, and local government agencies, foundations, businesses, and associations. The role could be contracted and scaled up or down depending on the need and on grant cycles. Subject matter experts from local professional organizations, such as ULI Austin, the American Planning Association, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the Congress for New Urbanism, should also be consulted to both help document and refine the story and advise how to pursue potential funding opportunities at the local and regional levels.
- Tap into the community's banks. Approaching local businesses, especially banks and financial institutions, is a key strategy here. Nearly all banking and other financial institutions have a community investment and engagement officer or contact that is looking for ways to engage with community investment and improvement opportunities. Boards of directors as well as professional associations and foundation volunteers could be asked to suggest connections and make introductions.

- Connect with Austin's hospitals. Hospitals and health organizations are another group that should be consulted. Nearly all health organizations are increasingly focused on the social determinants of health in communities that surround their coverage and practice areas. They are looking for opportunities to invest in local parks, trails, and other public improvements to provide more opportunities for moderate to vigorous exercise, community interaction, and socialization. As part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, hospitals are required to spend funds to create healthier communities. The Butler Trail should receive some of those funds.

Building on the current TTF strategy of "walks on the trail" with potential funders such as banks, health organizations, and other professional organizations would enhance fund-raising by offering opportunities to impress potential funders with the trail's possibilities face to face. One message would be to show that simple investments in park amenities can yield large increases in physical activity. The National Study of Neighborhood Parks in 2014–2016 (Rand Heath, City Parks Alliance, Trust for Public Land), for example, reported that seniors represent only 4 percent of park users but are 20 percent of the population. Adding walking loop trails in parks results in 80 percent more users, doubling the number of seniors and increasing physical activity by 90 percent.



PAUL ANGELONE/ULI

Conclusion

“The environment is where we all meet, where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share. It is not only a mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens on what we can become.”

— Lady Bird Johnson speech at Yale University, October 9, 1967

The panel learned that the Butler Trail is so much more than just a “trail.” It reminds Austinites why they moved to Austin or why they stayed. When Austinites visit the trail, life can seem simpler, slower, and better.

With all the love for the Butler Trail, it is sometimes difficult to realize that the trail needs more than love. What was good enough yesterday no longer meets the growing demands. Meeting increasing demands will not be quick, easy, or without

cost, but the panel believes that there is no shortage of energy and enthusiasm on the part of TTF, PARD, other city agencies, and other stakeholders to meet this challenge.

TTF and PARD have impressive levels of accomplishment and have made clear to the panel that they are ready to step up their leadership and collaboration. The panel is excited to see the partnership between TTF and the city of Austin bloom and grow for many years to come.

Appendix A: Implementation Steps

The following table illustrates suggested next steps and an associated timeline for those actions. “Immediate” actions should be taken in the first three months; “near term” actions, between three months and a year; “medium term,” between a year and five years; and “longer term,” in more than five years.

Implementation Steps

Linkage	Action	Responsibility	Term
Connectivity	Connect with community partners. Set up a meeting with PARD and city of Austin, open space conservancies, neighborhood groups, and other community partners to discuss how to move forward together.	TTF, city, and partners	Immediate
Engagement	Identify PARD and other community events that TTF should take part in to increase presence on the east side.	TTF	Immediate
Communications	Develop partner communications plan and adapt with formal partner agreements.	TTF and city	Immediate
Communications	Roles and responsibilities campaign, including existing ecological resource management by TTF.	TTF and city	Immediate
Funding	Acknowledge that both PARD and TTF have far more projects than time, money, and staff, and even volunteers.	TTF and PARD	Immediate
Stewardship	Establish partnership working group and work on the first and second memorandum of agreement (MOA)/memorandum of understanding (MOU).	TTF and city	Immediate
Engagement	Enhanced community engagement.	TTF	Near
Funding	Hire a grant writer.	TTF	Near
Funding	Be whimsical and creative with nontraditional fundraising strategies.	TTF	Near
Stewardship	Raise funds and develop the scope for Strategic Plan.	TTF	Near
Stewardship	Define PARD’s baseline (i.e., standard of care).	PARD	Near
Connectivity	Connect with PARD and other community partners to explore public outreach strategies to further advance TTF’s mission and to allay any public fears of the privatization of public land.	City	Near
Connectivity	Connect with all private-sector and/or real estate partners that own land that the trail runs through. Discuss the economic impact of the trail and opportunities to collaborate to further enhance it.	TTF	Near
Engagement	Develop an RFP for an art master plan consultant in consultation with the city of Austin.	TTF and city	Near

Implementation Steps (cont.)

Linkage	Action	Responsibility	Term
Communications	Tell story of the Butler Trail: gather/write full story; get on same page of what the trail was, is, and means to the community.	TTF	Near
Communications	Adapt the communications structure with formal partner agreements.	TTF	Near
Communications	Agree upon on-trail standards for signage and tabling.	TTF and PARD	Near
Communications	Develop public platform for input and engagement platform for participation.	TTF	Near
Funding	Explore the creation of a PID.	TTF and city	Near
Stewardship	Strategic plan is underway.	TTF	Near
Stewardship	License agreement for Nash Hernandez Building.	TTF and PARD	Near
Connectivity	Connect Holly Shores to the peninsula off Lakeshore Boulevard with a new bridge.	TTF	Medium
Communications	Develop education campaign.	TTF	Medium
Communications	Pilot on-trail and off-trail tabling and engagement.	TTF	Medium
Communications	Adjust/augment TTF communications and outreach staff to support strategic plan.	TTF	Medium
Stewardship	All MOAs/MOUs completed and/or in final draft.	TTF and city	Medium
Stewardship	Pilot TTF operating and maintaining the boardwalk for PARD.	TTF	Medium
Funding	Build a legacy gift program.	TTF	Medium
Connectivity	Connect people and places and additional neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the region via collaboration with other trail and transportation organizations, with the Butler Trail at the core of a regional network.	TTF, city, and partners	Longer
Funding	Enact state legislation for a Parks District Authority and establish one for the city of Austin.	Coalition of Texas cities	Longer

Source: ULI.

Appendix B: Case Studies from Other Cities

Atlanta, Georgia

Rapid growth is occurring in the city with over a third of its population outside a 10-minute walk to a park. Further, Atlanta has a growing amount of undeveloped parkland, including portions of the Beltline corridor as well as Westside Quarry Park. Although the city is securing funds for capital construction, operations and maintenance funds are harder to come by. Atlanta has a city council with a strong mayor form of government.

Atlanta has strong public/private partnerships in the city for specific parks as well as for the city as a whole. There many nonprofit park partnerships include ParkPride, the citywide park advocacy organization; the Georgia state office of the Trust for Public Land, which has acquired parkland and constructed parks (Historic Fourth Ward Park, Cook Park in Vine City); Piedmont Park Conservancy; the Atlanta Beltline Partnership; Grant Park Conservancy; and Chastain Park Conservancy. There are also nonprofits for the Botanical Gardens and the Atlanta Zoo, both of which operate in Atlanta parks. A combination of public and private dollars is funding parks and park improvements, and several large local foundations are big funders of parks, including the Arthur M. Blank Foundation and the Robert Woodruff Foundation.

The Atlanta Beltline Partnership is using a combination of public dollars, developer impact fees, and private dollars to fund a 22-mile circle-the-city hike and bike trail that interconnects with parks. Housing prices and property values have risen dramatically along portions of the trail in the east and southeast portions of Atlanta, and the effort has provoked intense debate on gentrification and displacement. Current efforts in southeast Atlanta are working to address those issues, and in Vine City several nonprofits are working to address housing issues associated with the pending completion of Cook Park by the Trust for Public Land.

The city of Atlanta, the Atlanta School District, and nonprofit partners ParkPride and the Trust for Public Land are working on pilot projects to demonstrate the application of joint use agreements that allow school grounds to be used as public parks after hours and on weekends. Greening efforts also are being pursued (with funding from several foundations) to cool and green the schoolyards, with design and community input a key part of the efforts.

Denver, Colorado

Like Austin, Denver is seeing a continued high rate of growth. Denver has a strong city mayor/weak city council form of government. Denver prides itself on its connections to the outdoors and has a strong park and trail system, including the trails along the North Platte River and Cherry Creek that meet in the heart of downtown Denver.

Denver has a variety of funding sources from the public sector, including recently passed bond funds that provide for a portion of capital projects currently underway. More important, Denver residents passed a dedicated sales tax in November 2018 to be applied to parkland acquisition, operation, and maintenance efforts, and a focus on trails, trees, and neighborhood parks. In 2019, the tax is estimated to generate more than \$37 million in additional funding for the parks and recreation system in Denver. Denver also has access to GOCO proceeds (lottery) for parks and trails, which are matching funds for cities and towns across Colorado.

The Denver area has a growing number of park-related nonprofits that raise funds and work across cities, including the High Line Canal Conservancy, as well as national organizations, such as the Trust for Public Land, among others.



CITY OF DETROIT

The 2017 Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan and the 2018 Equity and the Detroit Parks and Recreation Improvement Plan are guiding the city's, private, and philanthropic investment in parks and open space.

Detroit, Michigan

Detroit's population is slowly stabilizing after years of decline and poor fiscal management. The city has a strong mayor form of government with a city council. Since the city has emerged from bankruptcy, leaders in Detroit have made significant investments in visioning, doing planning analysis, weighing assets, and developing capacity to improve the quality of and access to parks and public spaces. In particular, city leaders have leveraged limited city funding to the maximum extent and have ensured inclusive outcomes.

A significant project example is the Joe Lewis Park/Greenway, a 31.5-mile greenway that encircles the city. Of the \$70 million total budget for building out the approved design, \$34 million has been raised by nonprofit and governmental agencies. Portions of the greenway have been constructed, including the Detroit River Greenway and the Dequindre Cut, a former rail corridor transformed into a hike/bike trail connecting the waterfront and downtown with the Eastern Market District. In addition, the city is leveraging capital dollars by focusing investment on 10 key Strategic Neighborhood Fund project areas, including housing, streetscapes, parks and open space, and entrepreneur and small businesses.

A number of nonprofits, including the Downtown Detroit Partnership, Midtown Detroit Inc., and the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, have taken on the programming, operation,

and maintenance work as well as capital improvements of parks in their specific areas of the city, raising funds through a variety of public and private funders and partners. The Riverfront Conservancy has initiated a \$40 million expansion of the riverfront park thanks to a large donation from the Ralph C. Wilson Family Foundation, with 20 percent of all funding going toward establishing a maintenance endowment. A large number of philanthropic organizations are helping to fund plans, projects, and improvements in parks across Detroit.

Nashville, Tennessee

Rapid growth is occurring in Nashville, but a large amount of park acreage has not improved. The city and county is a combined government with a strong mayor. Nashville has developed a comprehensive park plan—the *Plan to Play*—that involved a variety of organizations, including the Trust for Public Land and Pillars Development LLC, as well as city officials and citizens. The plan was funded through a combination of public and private dollars as well as grants.

The Nashville Parks Foundation has been established through this process and is working to focus on initial projects identified within the plan. In addition, a regional greenways plan was created and is being implemented in phases through nonprofit and public agencies.



CITY OF NASHVILLE, PLAN TO PLAY: METRO PARKS MASTER PLAN

Nashville has a large park system.



Students in Washington, D.C., participating in the National Park Conservation Association's "Schools in Schools" program. They raised shad in their classroom and released the fry into the Anacostia River.

Washington, D.C.

Rapid growth is occurring in the District, which is returning to its historic high population size, much like Boston and New York City. Parks have seen dramatic improvements over the past decade thanks to investments from public, private, and nonprofit organizations. The District was ranked number one in the 2019 edition of ParkScore from the Trust for Public Land, taking over from Minneapolis, which had held the spot for six years. Washington, D.C., has a strong mayor form of government with a district council. It has no direct representation at higher levels (only an advisory representative in Congress), and Congress has oversight over its government.

There has been dramatic investment from the public sector—District government—(capital investment) in neighborhood park improvements, including recreation centers, playgrounds, splashpads, and other facilities over the past eight to 10 years. Parks benefit from strong public and private collaborations (BIDs), National Park Service investment, and land development code requirements for existing parks and newly developed parks through the

District. Funds come from a variety of sources, including BID funding, impact fees, bonds, and other private sources of income.

One of the District's many examples is the Anacostia Waterfront Development Corporation, which has developed parks and public spaces and has triggered additional residential and commercial development. One of its projects is the 11th Street Bridge project, which involves rebuilding a publicly accessible park that connects the east and west sides of the Anacostia River and works to address equity issues by helping fund programming for all residents. The goal is to spur economic (small-business) growth, a community-oriented design process for the bridge park, and the establishment of the Douglass Community Land Trust to secure housing for existing and future low- and moderate-income households.

The 11th Street Bridge project is using a combination of private philanthropy and public funds to make this happen. The development and construction of the project also is working to ensure that minority and historically underutilized businesses are prioritized for design, construction, and ongoing operations.

About the Panel

Julie Underdahl

Panel Chair

Denver, Colorado

Underdahl is a community/economic development and district management consultant advising cities, districts, and real estate firms. From 2007 to 2019 she was president and chief executive officer of the Cherry Creek North Business Improvement District (BID) in Denver.

Under Underdahl's leadership, Cherry Creek North evolved into a highly successful mixed-use district that achieved record business growth. The BID became a live/work/play/stay regional center and the top visitor destination in Colorado. With major residential, office, retail, and hotel projects revitalizing the area, the BID's commercial assessed valuation tripled in less than 10 years. Underdahl oversaw the marketing and branding of the district; managed the financing, design, and construction of an \$18 million streetscape project; and led the adoption of a new city area plan and district-wide rezoning for Cherry Creek North. She was responsible for an operating budget of \$5 million a year and all of the district's operations and services.

Before joining the BID, Underdahl led public/private economic development organizations in Colorado as their CEO. She was founding CEO of the Denver International Airport Partnership Inc. and the Aurora Economic Development Council Inc. She served as the chair of the Denver Planning Board from 2013 to 2018 and on the boards of the International Downtown Association, the Denver Sports Commission, and the Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau. She was appointed to the Blueprint Denver comprehensive land use and transportation plan task force for the city and county of Denver.

She is a founding past chair of ULI Colorado and past vice chair of ULI's national Public/Private Partnership Council. Underdahl has served on five national ULI Advisory Services panels across the United States and currently serves on the

resort council of ULI Colorado. She has held a variety of leadership positions with other business, civic, and university organizations. Underdahl graduated magna cum laude from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and holds a master's degree in urban and regional planning from Eastern Washington University.

Kimberly C. Driggins

Detroit, Michigan

Driggins is the director of strategic planning in the city of Detroit's planning and development department. In this capacity, she is responsible for developing several citywide planning initiatives, including an updated comprehensive plan, open space plan, historic preservation plan, and an arts and culture plan.

Before joining the city of Detroit, Driggins worked for the District of Columbia's office of planning for seven years as the associate director for citywide planning. She was responsible for managing planning studies in several areas, including housing, economic development, transportation, facilities, and capital improvement planning. In addition, Driggins served as the project manager for several creative placemaking initiatives including the Temporary Urbanism program, Kresge Foundation and ArtPlace grants, and the Third Place initiative.

Driggins began her career as a consultant working on real estate, affordable housing, and neighborhood revitalization projects in the private and nonprofit sectors. She received a master of public policy degree from the University of Chicago and a bachelor of arts degree, with highest honors, in political science, from Hampton University.

Most recently, Driggins was a Loeb Fellow (2016) at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, where she explored the intersection of design, civic engagement, and creative placemaking through the lens of equity and inclusion.

Shane Farthing

Martinsburg, West Virginia

Farthing is an economic development professional, attorney, and planner who works to build vibrant cities and towns that build upon their history, culture, and natural assets. He currently serves as director of economic and community development for the city of Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Previously, Farthing led the research-into-practice team at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, taught graduate coursework in public policy at George Washington University, led and advised community organizations focused on community advocacy, safety, and programs, and served in economic development and planning roles in Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Edward Henley III

Nashville, Tennessee

Henley is the principal and project executive at Pillars Development LLC. Henley excels in the management of financial, budgetary, and organizational aspects of large capital projects. In the project setting, he acts as financial and administrative manager, providing timely and accurate management of often complex and complicated budget expenditures and reporting. He is adept with coordinating numerous government agencies, project personnel, and project architectural, engineering, and construction firms. Henley also holds expertise and experience in community engagement, diversity program monitoring, master plan and market assessment reporting, and overall project management consulting.

As the firm begins to engage in infill development, Henley serves as the lead for the company's efforts in small-scale development. He lends his unique and valuable experience to Nashville's land use community through his involvement

as a member of ULI Nashville and service on ULI's National Product Council for Public Development and Infrastructure. He also serves as a board member for several organizations committed to improving economic and environmental causes, one of which is Rebuilding Together Nashville, for which he is acting president.

Henley is a Nashville native, born and raised. He attended University of Tennessee–Knoxville, where he earned a degree in finance and enterprise management. Henley returned to Nashville in 2011 and founded Pillars Development in 2013.

Suzanna Fry Jones

Denver, Colorado

With a background in architecture, design, and marketing and communications, Jones's keen aesthetic eye for details plays a pivotal role in shaping the vision of the High Line Canal Conservancy. The High Line Canal Conservancy is a nonprofit organization representing the hundreds of thousands of citizens in the Denver metropolitan area dedicated to the High Line Canal, a 71-mile historic irrigation channel that is evolving into one of Denver's primary recreational and ecological open spaces. Since 2015, Jones has been part of the Conservancy, engaging over 5,000 community members to reimagine the High Line Canal as a 71-mile linear park to be preserved and enhanced for future generations.

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., she earned a BA from Duke University. Her architecture-focused education led her to work in the community design and placemaking fields in San Francisco, Brazil, and now, Denver. As director of marketing and community outreach at the High Line Canal Conservancy, Jones combines her dedication to enhancing urban environments with her passion for creating authentic community-driven placemaking.

Sandra Kulli

Los Angeles, California

Kulli consults with builders, master-planned communities, mixed-use developers, and cities on marketing strategy, working with over 100 companies on 183 communities with a sales volume exceeding \$5 billion throughout the United States and in Japan, Dubai, New Zealand, Sweden, England, and Mexico. She is passionate about collaboration with great teams and loves her native city of Los Angeles as well as her exploration across California, the United States, and the world with fellow placemakers and visionaries.

Kulli has served on ULI national advisory panels including the Memphis Riverfront Development, Philadelphia Main Street in Ardmore, and Malden/Everett Revitalization in Boston. She chaired the Sears/Boyle Heights technical assistance panel. She was on the ULI teams that wrote *Ten Principles for Successful Development around Transit*, *Ten Principles for Rethinking the Mall*, and *Ten Principles for Building Healthy Places*. And Kulli contributed to ULI's 2016 *Cultivating Development: Trends and Opportunities at the Intersection of Food and Real Estate*.

With an office in the Arts District at the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator, Kulli is surrounded by entrepreneurs, inventors, scientists, and policymakers working on the future of the green economy. She is also surrounded by dozens of great places to eat, just a walk or a bike ride away.

Kulli is a graduate of Wellesley College and holds a master's degree from Boston University. She has served on the boards of KCRW, the Vine, ULI Los Angeles, Abode Communities, and CicLAvia. An ardent city bike rider and traveler, she remains endlessly curious about how we can create ever-better communities.

Amie MacPhee

San Francisco, California

MacPhee's long and varied career spans 35 years of helping clients deliver notable places in unique natural, working, and urban environments. Her background in planning, conservation, agriculture, and landscape architecture has given her a wide range of project experience in community, urban-infill, and site and landscape design. MacPhee is a leader and team builder of community planning and design teams that address highly complex environmental planning, conservation, and entitlement processes.

She is LEED accredited and her training, in landscape architecture and environmental planning, has given her a broad understanding of how to think through the process of creating places that have lasting value. She has led the industry in crafting comprehensive agricultural and open space preservation strategies, master plans, and design guidelines that are integral in reinforcing and defining the overall vision of the communities and urban environments she works in.

MacPhee is a founder of Cultivate Studio (www.cultivate-ca.com), a full-service community design, landscape architecture and land planning practice that focuses on working lands and conservation planning to cultivate places of lasting value.

Charlie McCabe

Boston, Massachusetts

McCabe is the director of the Center for City Park Excellence based in Boston. McCabe has been working in parks for the past 11 years. He was executive director of the Austin Parks Foundation from 2005 to 2012 and then director of public programs for the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in Boston from 2012 to 2015. From August 2015 to December 2016, he pursued a master's degree at Pratt Institute in urban placemaking and management.

Between classes and thesis research, he worked at the Municipal Art Society of New York, at New Yorkers for Parks, and as a seasonal horticulturist at the Rose Kennedy Greenway. In the past few years, McCabe has volunteered at Prospect Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Fort Greene Park, and the Rose Kennedy Greenway, among others. He is also a board member for the City Parks Alliance.

Beth Silverman

Washington, D.C.

Silverman is a Washington, D.C.-based urban planner and economic development practitioner and is the co-founder and vice president of operations for the Lotus Campaign. Before joining the Lotus Campaign, Silverman was the vice president of Advisory Services for ULI, working with global communities to think through complex urban challenges and develop unique programs to help places address everything from housing affordability to community resilience.

During her time at ULI, Silverman also helped create and staff the Equitable Economic Development Fellowship, a partnership between the National League of Cities, ULI, and PolicyLink that provides one year of technical assistance to an annual class of six cities to help them pursue more equitable and inclusive economic development policies, programs, and funding.

Before working at ULI, Silverman was assistant vice president/chief of staff with the New York City Economic Development Corporation, balancing program management with a portfolio of economic development, real estate, cultural heritage, and policy projects. Silverman holds a master's degree in city planning from the University of Pennsylvania and a bachelor's degree in urban landscape studies from the University of Maryland. When not working, Silverman can usually be found outside—running, biking, surfing, hiking, and generally encouraging friends and family to enjoy the outdoors with as much unabashed enthusiasm as she does.



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