

Zilker Neighborhood Association

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To: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager, and
Kimberly McNeeley, Acting Director, Parks and Recreation Department
City of Austin

The Executive Committee of the Zilker Neighborhood Association requests that Butler Shores be eliminated from consideration as a possible site for a major league soccer stadium.

The reaction of our members and other neighbors to the stadium proposal has so far been overwhelmingly and vehemently negative. The arguments against the proposal for Butler Shores parkland north of Toomey Road (which is within ZNA's boundaries) center on the principle that the City of Austin should not provide public parkland for private for-profit ventures, especially in an area as environmentally sensitive as the confluence of Barton Creek and Lady Bird Lake. In the case of the proposed soccer stadium, valuable public space would be sacrificed for the profit of an out-of-town business operation. Whether it is publicly or privately financed, damage of the types listed here cannot be tolerated on public spaces surrounding Lady Bird Lake.

The Butler Shores site specifically is inappropriate because:

- This site is city-owned parkland that is needed for the continued use and recreation of our current and growing population in the urban core. Austinites need more parkland in this area, not less. That is why any alienation of Austin's dedicated parkland must be put to a public vote.
- This site is on the shores of Lady Bird Lake, where the water frontage available for community use is already limited. It would be foolish to destroy such a beautiful lakefront vista by building an out-of-scale, limited-use facility. Such a facility contradicts the intent of Lady Bird Johnson's efforts to create the Town Lake Corridor Park.
- The construction as proposed would violate the intent of the Waterfront Overlay Ordinance, which was designed to protect the scenic vistas of the Town Lake Corridor.
- A stadium of this size would significantly disrupt traffic in an already congested area, requiring major road work that would be detrimental to local businesses.
- The area is already saturated with special events. The existing park events require year-round coordination of schedules and negotiation of traffic management and public safety plans, with a significant investment of city staff resources. An additional stadium venue would conflict with and disrupt all the existing events, including the ACL Fest, Trail of Lights, Zilker Kite Festival, Blues on the Green, and other events at Zilker Park, the Zachary Scott and Dougherty theaters, Long Center, Butler Park, Auditorium Shores, and Palmer Event Center.
- The project will not have sufficient onsite parking to accommodate the patrons of this facility. It has been proposed that the project can rely on public and private parking

within a reasonable walking distance of the venue. The ZNA Executive Committee realizes that there is no parking within reasonable walking distance that is not already dedicated. Further, it has been our experience that the owners of such parking will not agree to offsite use on a permanent or continuing basis. We also know that in the end, thousands of eventgoers will clog neighborhood streets searching for free parking, regardless of the event planners' alternative suggestions.

- Experience also tells us that using public transit to connect offsite remote parking to a large venue is problematic from both a financial perspective and from a logistical operational standpoint. It relies on a separate taxing jurisdiction (Capital Metro), which is under no obligation to provide such transit service.
- It has been suggested that remote parking locations will afford an opportunity to create a pedestrian-oriented bar and restaurant district for “on the way and returning” stop-off dining and drinking. Such new entertainment districts would remove local businesses and be a threat to the adjacent residential areas.
- The noise, lights, and traffic congestion will impair the quality of life for an estimated 1800 residents in existing multifamily housing along Toomey Road and limit their use of their homes during stadium events.
- This will encourage further gentrification and displacement of moderate- and lower-income residents as wealthy patrons buy up nearby homes for use during events.
- The plan would eliminate existing ball fields, which have historic value as some of the oldest community ball fields in Texas. Access to amateur team sports is increasingly limited for children and families within the urban core. These historic fields should not be eliminated to accommodate a private venture.

We therefore urge city staff to remove Butler Shores from any list of potential stadium sites and that City Council **STOP** this very bad idea now!

It has been suggested that there are other options with more advantages and less negative impact that would be much better locations for a stadium, such as the Travis County Exposition Center. Proposals of this magnitude, however, require economic, financial, and legal analyses of information that should be provided by the applicant at the applicant's expense. In the midst of the City Manager selection process and the rewrite of the Land Development Code, the Council and staff do not have the time or resources available to gather the information or analyze it within the necessary public process. We therefore request that the item on City Council's current agenda be postponed to next spring, when it can be given the attention that it deserves.

Thank you.

Dave Piper

President, Zilker Neighborhood Association