

AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION AWARDS \$7,500 FOR RIPARIAN RESTORATION IN ZILKER PARK

Austin Parks Foundation recently awarded the Friends of South Zilker Park a 2017 Fall Community Grant of \$7,500 through the Austin City Limits Music Festival Park Grants Program. Funding will be used to improve two small waterways that flow into Barton Creek in the area along Robert E. Lee Road. Informally known as South Zilker Park, the area includes the parking lots for the south gate entrance to Barton Springs Pool. Although Zilker is a metropolitan park, this part of the park also serves as a neighborhood park for residents of Zilker and Barton Hills.

Since 2014 the Friends group has contributed over 750 volunteer hours removing non-native, invasive species; planting well over 1000 native grasses, shrubs, and trees; and removing countless bags of trash. The most recent effort was to mulch two heritage pecan trees near the baseball field and small log cabin as part of Austin Parks Foundation's It's My Park Day.

"I am so grateful to Austin Parks Foundation for this grant because it recognizes and builds on the work already accomplished by volunteers in our neighborhoods and allows us to take on some bigger jobs," said Gail Rothe, who leads the Friends group.



Riparian restoration along Robert E. Lee Road. Long-term goal is to establish a healthy riparian buffer on each side of the creek, with a woody canopy, understory, and diverse and dense ground cover while providing frequent open view corridors between 3 and 7 ft.

Illustration courtesy of City of Austin, Watershed Protection Dept.

These funds will be used for work in the riparian zone (the interface between a stream and the adjacent land) of the two small waterways: Robert E. Lee Tributary and Old Little Zilker Channel. Specifically these funds will help to:

- Minimize the spread of non-native, invasive trees by removing large chinaberry and tallow trees at the upper end of the two watersheds.
- Protect a heritage pecan tree by aerating and mulching the compacted soils under the tree that is often used for parking. The Parks and Recreation Department will extend the nearby spilt-rail fence to prevent future parking on the root zone.
- Plant additional native grasses, shrubs, and trees to diversify riparian vegetation, improve stormwater infiltration and treatment, and increase bank stability.
- Continue to improve the area in and around the detention pond and along the sidewalk.

“With 11 community groups applying for funding this fall, we had one of our most competitive grant cycles to date,” said Ladye Anne Wofford, Austin Park Foundation’s Chief Mission Officer. “We have so many amazing people in Austin, like the Friends of South Zilker Park, working hard to improve their local parks, and we are grateful for the generous contributions of the ACL Music Festival which allows us to support these transformational projects.”

ABOUT THE FRIENDS OF SOUTH ZILKER PARK:

Organized in 2014 with the adoption of Robert E. Lee Tributary, the group consists of volunteers, primarily from the Zilker and Barton Hills neighborhoods. The group continues the work that began in 2012 when the City designated the tributary as a Grow Zone. (See *ZNews*, April 2012, page 10, <http://zilkerneighborhood.org/docs/znews/ZNews-2012April.pdf>.) Prior to that, the tributary was a mowed, trash-filled channel that moved stormwater from our neighborhoods into Barton Creek but provided no real ecological or aesthetic benefits. In 2012 mowing was discontinued, and in 2013 native trees were planted. In 2015 the group also adopted Old Little Zilker channel. The Friends group focuses on removing invasive species that may create an unhealthy monoculture, planting native species, controlling erosion, and improving the look of the detention pond.

Volunteer workdays are held on Saturdays and weekday mornings throughout the year. Tools and gloves are provided. Children 13 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times. To be notified of upcoming events, contact Gail Rothe (grothe@austin.rr.com) or visit <http://zilkerneighborhood.org/friends-of-south-zilker-park.shtml>.

ABOUT AUSTIN PARKS FOUNDATION:

Austin Parks Foundation (APF) is dedicated to partnering with our community to enhance people’s lives by making our public parks, trails and green spaces better through volunteerism, innovative programming, advocacy, and financial support. A nonprofit established in 1992, APF fills the city’s funding and resource gap in order to develop, maintain, and enhance the area’s 300+ parks, trails, and green spaces. APF fosters innovative public/private partnerships and, since 2006, has given over \$2.5 million in community-initiated grants in service to the greater Austin community. APF is known for its annual flagship volunteer event, It’s My Park Day, and is a presenting partner and beneficiary of the popular Austin City Limits Music Festival at Zilker Metropolitan Park. For more information, please visit www.austinparks.org.