

Austin Parks and Recreation
Mabel Davis District Park
Proposed Off-Leash Area Neighborhood Meeting – 4.10.2012
7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Comment from Neighborhood Attendees

(Comments have been summarized, [staff response/answers in blue](#))

- I believe it will have a negative impact on the environment, the landfill and the creek. [PARD has worked with the City of Austin Watershed Dept. from the very beginning of this process to make sure that the proposal would not have any negative impacts on the park, the water quality or the landfill. Watershed will continue to review the plans as they move into and through design. Watershed has stated that there are no water quality concerns with this proposal.](#)
- A dog park will have an impact on nature and the peacefulness of the park. [The proposal is for a 1.6 acre fenced in off leash area within the 50 acre park. Mabel Davis is a district park and although all of our parks promote wildlife because of the open green space and vegetation, the park is not designated or intended to be a preserve. Studies have shown that the presence of dogs has some impact on wildlife but there is no measurable difference between dogs being on leash or off leash. \(Forrest and St. Clair 2006\)](#)
- If 51% of the neighborhood wants it I'm OK with it
- How can you depend on volunteers to keep the park clean? [The Parks Dept. does not depend on volunteers for maintenance, but volunteers often help staff with tasks outside of the normal, everyday maintenance. In many parks we have groups that have "adopted" the park that organize volunteer days or events to do additional maintenance such as invasive species removal, weeding, trash pickup and more that are community sponsored.](#)
- Has the decision been finalized? [City Council will have the final decision. The Parks Board approved staff moving into design on February 28. On April 5 Council passed a resolution requesting the design to be submitted to Council for approval.](#)
- How much will it cost? [Staff will prepare an estimate of probable cost during the design phase of the project.](#)
- How much money have you spent so far on this plan? [There has been no money spent on this project outside of renting the school cafeteria for the first public meeting.](#)
- There is no Restroom outside of the pool. [We have had mixed request on this item. While some have expressed the need for an outside restroom, others feel it will become a nuisance attracting homeless and misuse.](#)
- It will smell. [Fenced in off leash areas have less issues with pet waste pick up and disposal than trails or open areas because of the peer pressure and "eyes on" within the area. Rules posted nearby make enforcement easier for Park police, Park Rangers and/or staff. Mutt Mitt stands close at hand facilitate pet waste pick up.](#)
- I'm on the fence and am waiting for more information
- I have a dog and am in the park everyday and see poop along the trail. [Fenced in off leash areas tend to be cleaner than trails or open areas because of peer pressure within the area.](#)
- Although the dog park is in the neighborhood plan it was low on the list. We want items higher on the list done first. [The following are the park and open space items listed in the neighborhood plan and where staff is on implementation:](#)
 - [Connection to proposed Country Club Creek trail-PARD staff has been working with the Public Works Bike program and the neighborhood planning group on the CCC trail which is partially](#)

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on parkland and partially on sidewalks or the street (for bikes). Some sections of the trail will require public use easements on private property to accomplish. Planning and work is on-going. The trail will eventually connect Mabel Davis to Roy G. Guerrero Park and Lady Bird Lake.

- Enhancement of the remaining natural wooded areas and removal of invasive plant and replacement with native species. PARD has a history of working with Watershed on invasive species control programs and will continue to work on a plan for invasive management.
- Paved/hike/bike/skate loop within neighborhood connections. The park contains a 1 mile loop of both decomposed granite and concrete with connections to the neighborhood.
- Picnic pavilion and restroom facilities. The park has two picnic pavilions side by side. There is a restroom facility within the pool. Neighborhood input on an additional restroom has been mixed. Some are opposed due to possible misuse.
- Benches and seating areas. Benches and seating areas are installed outside of the pool entrance, near the playscape and skatepark and the picnic pavilion.
- Open field for unstructured use such as ultimate Frisbee...– The open space of the park currently offers this amenity.
- Access to the privately owned pond north of the park – The property owner has indicated they are not supportive of public access to their property.
- Skate park with stadium style seating – The skate park was added in 2008. Stadium seating can be added in the future but will require the removal of trees in a park that has limited area available to plant trees. The indication we have received from the neighborhood is that the trees have a higher priority than the seating at this time.
- Disc golf course – A disc golf course is not compatible with the landfill cap restrictions of not having exposed soil.
- Fenced dog park
- Spray park in addition to the swimming pool – Land availability outside of the cap is not large enough to accommodate a spray park. To maintain the integrity of the cap, facilities that would add weight to the cap that could cause fractures or shifting is not allowed. Any water intentionally added to the cap is not allowed and the possible need for trenching for plumbing is not allowed.
- Documentation of the history of the property and remediation in the form of public artwork. – PARD staff will submit the suggestion to the City's Art in Public Places Program managers.
- I don't believe the off leash area will be maintained. During the design phase the Department will be able to include the park in their needs assessment so that when constructed we will have the resources needed for maintenance.
- Prefer the park be left as is
- I never received notice of any of the meetings and never saw any signs. Public notice was sent out to the media (TV stations, radio stations and newspapers) and to all registered associations within the 78741 zip code for the first and second public meetings. Everyone who attended the first public meeting was included on the notice sent out for the second public meeting.
- This is a diverse economic area and people of lower income will be coming to the park which will increase the crime and the neighborhood is the only ones patrolling. Added amenities to parks have proven to reduce crime as there is more activity and more "eyes on" in areas previously undeveloped.
- Dogs will disturb the wildlife. The fenced in area will contain dogs off leash and will sharpen focus on users that are currently not following City leash laws within the park.

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- The existing trail needs to be maintained. The Parks Dept. agrees that on going drainage issues adjacent to the trail erode sections of the trail and need to be addressed. We have made improvements in the past that have not been effective enough and will continue to explore our options.
- Other things in the park need to be maintained, the fence at the basketball court, the water fountain. Planning staff is working with maintenance staff on addressing these issues.
- Where does the 62% in favor of come from? At the beginning of the public process an email address was set up for people who could not attend the public meetings and was included in the media and public notices. Fifty two individuals sent emails to the address. Thirty four were in support of the OLA (65%), eighteen were against.
- If this was chosen just because you need the land what other land is available? Mabel Davis was chosen because it falls within a service gap area. There are 11 off leash amenities in the park system. Using a 2 mile service area, Mabel Davis will help provide this amenity to the southeast area of Austin. The closest off leash area in the southeast area of the City is at Onion Creek Metro Park. This park was also chosen because of the limited amenities that can be provided due to the landfill cap. A fenced OLA is one of the very few amenities that can be added to this park. The park has relatively few amenities for a district park. There are no single family homes along the park boundary edge on which the OLA is proposed.
- When asked by staff what tool such as a survey would the neighborhood accept as a fair evaluation of community approval or disapproval? The neighborhood response was if they could not put together the questions and conduct the survey themselves, they would not accept any results.
- Not personally in support of a survey because it would include more people than those in the immediately adjacent neighborhood.
- Would prefer money be spent to put shade structures at the pool and reduce pool fees and increase hours of operation. Also think it's not fair that UT can reserve the pool so that it is unavailable to the public at certain times. These concerns have been brought to the attention of the Aquatics Division of the department.
- Are there any other dog parks built on landfills? Yes, Pearsall Park San Antonio, Quarry Run Portland Maine, Bark Park Montgomery Co. Ohio, Paseo Vista Chandler Arizona, Cesar Chavez Park Albany CA., Sutter's Park Sacramento CA., Rice Lake Wisconsin.
- Staff asked if there could be a couple of main point of contacts for the neighborhood. Some individuals said "no". Some found it acceptable. The following were put forth as contacts: Helen Varity, Tim Trentham, and Hanah Castillo.