

Old West Austin Neighborhood Association
P.O. Box 2724
Austin, TX 78768

August 8, 2017

To: Mayor Adler and Council Members

RE: Aquatics Master Plan

Dear Mayor Adler and Councilmembers,

As President of the Old West Austin Neighborhood Association, I am writing to discuss our concerns about the Aquatics Master Plan. Our concerns include a bias in the methodology against historic pools, the failure by the consultants to engage our neighborhood, the city's recent significant investment in our 1930 pool from a fill-and-drain to a pump system and the apparent disregard by the consultants of this recent investment, and the City's refusal to partner with the neighborhood to extend hours of the pool or provide improvements such as shade that would enhance the popularity of the pool.

The pool at West Austin Park is the oldest neighborhood pool in Austin. Our neighborhood plan adopted by City Council in 2000 calls for recognition of the historic bathhouse and pool with a commemorative plaque explaining the story of the significant architecture, events, and people who have enjoyed this pool and park since 1930. It would be quite ironic and sad for the city to ignore the neighborhood plan and go with an out-of-town consultant's recommendations to close or disinvest from the oldest neighborhood pool, apparently for reasons of efficiency.

The report also does not appear to take into consideration that the city made a decision only a few years ago (June 2011) to invest in the future of our town's oldest neighborhood pool by converting the pool from a fill-and-drain system, which required daily draining and refilling of the pool, to a recirculating system at an expense of approximately \$410,000. Again, it would be ironic for the city to have made this investment only six years ago, and then now to make a decision that the pool is less efficient than others around town so it will be closed or not prioritized for maintenance.

Finally, we have contacted Aquatics repeatedly over the years and requested a partnership between OWANA and Aquatics so that we can extend the hours, allow the pool to be open more than two months in a warm climate such as Austin. We have been told no repeatedly by the Aquatics Department, and essentially told there is no path to a partnership between the city and our neighborhood. We are frustrated by this response, in

part because we know other neighborhoods and pools such as Mueller and Shipe have been allowed to partner with the city to extend hours of pools. Most recently, the Friends of West Austin Park submitted an application to the Austin Parks Foundation for a shade structure at the pool, and OWANA offered to provide matching funds, and we have been told that our application was rejected because Aquatics did not support it. The reason for the Aquatics Department was the Aquatics Master Plan.

For these reasons, we are asking the City Council to follow the lead of the Parks Commission and reject the recommendations of the out-of-town consultants. Austin has a unique history, and we are justifiably proud of our oldest pools and parks. We urge the City Council to continue to invest in historic pools such as the one at West Austin Park.

Thank you,



Scott Marks
President of OWANA