

June 16, 2020

Re: Demand to Close the Hill of Life Trailhead

Dear Director McNeely:

We have not received a response to our letter directed to Director Robert Spillar dated May 20, 2020 (see attached for reference). Since that time, the crowds have grown and matters in the small Woods of Westlake residential neighborhood (the "**Residential Neighborhood**") have worsened. While we appreciate the selective enforcement dedicated to the constant illegal parking, it has become clear that, even if approved, metered parking would not be enough to deter the unsafe and unmanageable traffic trends that we are experiencing on a daily basis.

We have historic evidence showing that the Hill of Life trailhead (the "**City Park**") was always meant to be a temporary access point until the City of Austin (the "**City**") invested in a proper public greenbelt entrance. At some point in the last three decades, plans for the permanent entrance were shelved and the City Park has remained open despite being in the middle of a small residential neighborhood and completely void of the necessary and essential infrastructure that any other city park would require. These glaring omissions include but are not limited to:

- The absence of a parking lot which causes illegal parking in the Residential Neighborhood and prohibits the City from leveraging a controlled access point for health and safety capacity purposes.
- The absence of adequate trash and recycling receptacles which causes polluting of the greenbelt and the Residential Neighborhood. For those City Park visitors who want to avoid throwing trash on the ground, they use residents' personal receptacles which then causes the residents to have to pay extra trash fees to the City (which is somewhat ironic given the cause for the excess trash). Or, when all else fails, the visitors use residents' personal mailboxes to stash their trash.
- The absence of public restrooms which causes City Park visitors to urinate in the springs, use residents' lawns to relieve themselves, or ring residents' doorbells requesting to use the restrooms inside their private homes.

As stated in our May 20th letter, the significant health and safety issues that have impacted the Residential Neighborhood and the City Park have compounded over time. The Residential Neighborhood residents have tried to be patient with the hope that the City would listen and help to create effective solutions. And yet to date we have seen no formal action or support from the City. Instead, we have stood by as other Austin neighborhoods that border parks have charged for greenbelt access, privatized greenbelt access, and successfully enforced capacity limits. These actions taken by similarly situated neighborhoods have forced even more traffic into the small Residential Neighborhood. In fact, the number of people now coming into

the Residential Neighborhood on the weekends has caused traffic to back up in the left-hand lane of South Capital of Texas Highway due to the short length of the dedicated turn lane (which would normally be more than adequate to serve our small community). This has created an incredibly dangerous situation given the speed at which cars drive on South Capital of Texas Highway.

**For all of the above reasons, the Residential Neighborhood is demanding that the City close the City Park.** To enforce the change, the Residential Neighborhood is asking for the following:

- All parking in the Residential Neighborhood shall be designated as resident parking only;
- A sign shall be placed in the front of the Residential Neighborhood stating, “No Public Greenbelt Access. Residential Parking Only”; and
- The City Park entrance shall be gated for use by Residential Neighborhood residents only.

Hosting the City Park in the Residential Neighborhood is no longer a safe situation. Having the Residential Neighborhood serve as the host was never intended to be a permanent solution, and the unintended consequences of keeping it open have spiraled out of control. The City is expecting the Residential Neighborhood to manage the mounting issues, but we will no longer take on that responsibility on the City’s behalf. We see no other option but to close it. We are expecting the City’s full support with this effort, but we are also prepared to engage legal counsel if necessary to ensure that it happens. **If we do not receive a response from the City by next week with a clear and comprehensive action plan, the Residential Neighborhood may be forced to block access to the City Park on its own due to ongoing and unaddressed health and safety concerns.** We once again welcome a meeting to discuss next steps towards completing the permanent closure.

Respectfully,

THE WOODS OF WESTLAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

THE WOODS OF WESTLAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION TRAFFIC TASK FORCE MEMBERS:

<i>Representing Barclay Drive:</i>	Mr. Rob Blohm and Ms. Melanie Mahaffey
<i>Representing Scottish Woods Trail:</i>	Ms. Courtney Dickey esq. and Mr. Dhurvish Shah
<i>Representing Camp Craft Road:</i>	Dr. Sonia Krishna
<i>Representing Surrey Hill Drive:</i>	Ms. Ellen Troxclair, Mr. Anil Mahendra and Mr. Rob Johnson
<i>Representing Shannon Oaks Trail:</i>	Ms. Kate McGrath, Ms. Christie Schultz, Ms. Kazmira Pedonesi, Dr. Judy Leavell and Mr. John Gump
<i>Representing Scottish Woods Cove:</i>	Ms. Sue Morton
<i>Representing Barclay Court:</i>	Ms. Jennifer Ramberg
<i>Representing Wild Briar Pass:</i>	Ms. Gillian Waterston and Ms. Gail Acuna

**Attachment:** Woods of Westlake May 20, 2020 letter

**CC:** Mayor Steve Adler [Steve.adler@austintexas.gov](mailto:Steve.adler@austintexas.gov)  
City Manager Spencer Cronk [Barbara.shack@austintexas.gov](mailto:Barbara.shack@austintexas.gov)  
[spencer.cronk@austintexas.gov](mailto:spencer.cronk@austintexas.gov)  
[rosemarie.martinez@austintexas.gov](mailto:rosemarie.martinez@austintexas.gov)  
Director Robert Spiller [Robert.Spiller@austintexas.gov](mailto:Robert.Spiller@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison [natasha.harper-madison@austintexas.gov](mailto:natasha.harper-madison@austintexas.gov)  
[Elizabeth.mcdonald@austintexas.gov](mailto:Elizabeth.mcdonald@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Delia Garza [Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov](mailto:Delia.Garza@austintexas.gov)  
[Katherine.nicely@austintexas.gov](mailto:Katherine.nicely@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Sabino "Pio" Renteria [sabino.renteria@austintexas.gov](mailto:sabino.renteria@austintexas.gov)  
[David.chincanchan@austintexas.gov](mailto:David.chincanchan@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Greg Casar [greg.casar@austintexas.gov](mailto:greg.casar@austintexas.gov)  
[neesha.dave@austintexas.gov](mailto:neesha.dave@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Ann Kitchen [ann.kitchen@austintexas.gov](mailto:ann.kitchen@austintexas.gov)  
[dora.anguiano@austintexas.gov](mailto:dora.anguiano@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Jimmy Flannigan [jimmy.flannigan@austintexas.gov](mailto:jimmy.flannigan@austintexas.gov)  
[lizzy.carol@austintexas.gov](mailto:lizzy.carol@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Leslie Pool [leslie.pool@austintexas.gov](mailto:leslie.pool@austintexas.gov)  
[suzie.chase@austintexas.gov](mailto:suzie.chase@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Paige Ellis [paige.ellis@austintexas.gov](mailto:paige.ellis@austintexas.gov)  
[deena.estrada@austintexas.gov](mailto:deena.estrada@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Kathie Tovo [Kathie.tovo@austintexas.gov](mailto:Kathie.tovo@austintexas.gov)  
[nici.huff@austintexas.gov](mailto:nici.huff@austintexas.gov)  
Council Member Alison Alter [Alison.alter@austintexas.gov](mailto:Alison.alter@austintexas.gov)  
[mina.shekarchi@austintexas.gov](mailto:mina.shekarchi@austintexas.gov)

Mr. Robert Spiller, P.E., Director  
Austin Transportation Department  
Barton Oaks Plaza V  
Austin, TX 78746

Sent via Email

May 20, 2020

Re: Woods of Westlake Public Health and Safety Concerns

Dear Director Spiller:

We are writing to you today on behalf of the Woods of Westlake Neighborhood Association located at the intersection of Capital of Texas Highway and Scottish Woods Trail (the "**Residential Neighborhood**"). As you may be aware, the City of Austin established a public trailhead entrance at the top of Scottish Woods Trail near the Hill of Life (the "**City Park**"). Unfortunately, the City Park was built by the City of Austin without any public parking options or infrastructure. This has forced City Park visitors to park on the few residential streets located in our Residential Neighborhood which has a single entrance/exit from Capital of Texas Highway. With the popularity of the City Park increasing, the Residential Neighborhood is experiencing the following public health and safety issues on a daily basis:

- Property destruction and theft
- Littering and animal/human waste
- Trespassing
- Illegal and unsafe parking
- Speeding and unsafe driving
- Open containers on residential streets
- Public intoxication leading to visitors driving while under the influence

This list is by no means exhaustive and doesn't take into account visitors' failure to observe COVID health recommendations made by our city officials, state officials and the CDC. In recent years, on any given weekend, our small Residential Neighborhood of only eight streets and cul-de-sacs is overtaken by close to 300 vehicles and thousands of pedestrians. **To be direct, the Residential Neighborhood has taken on the heavy expense of hosting the City of Austin's public park.** This expense includes sacrificing public health and safety, dangerous conditions for our children, repairing damaged property, consequential impact on property value, and the loss of the quiet enjoyment and use of our own homes. **Our small Residential Neighborhood can no longer accommodate this unsafe volume of vehicular, pedestrian and animal traffic.**

While we support public access to the City Park, there has to be some kind of compromise and solution that the Residential Neighborhood can work out with the City of Austin. After all, the aforementioned public health and safety concerns not only affect the neighborhood

residents but the City Park visitors as well. We understand that there are several Austin city parks that have a limit on the number of permitted vehicles and a city official at the park entrance enforcing such limits; we don't even have that safety measure in our own neighborhood. As a first proposal, we are asking the City of Austin to institute the following:

1. Add additional NO PARKING signs to each Residential Neighborhood intersection and within 30 feet of every stop sign to allow for line of sight and visibility when turning;
2. Add additional NO PARKING signs 15 feet on both sides of every fire hydrant within the Residential Neighborhood;
3. **In addition to the NO PARKING signs, paint the curbs or street edges of all no parking zones red** (our hope is that this will re-enforce the message since current signage is being ignored);
4. Add metered parking to Scottish Woods Trail with limited public parking spots. The pay station should be at the front of the City Park and not in residents' yards. The funds from the metered parking should go back to the residents of the Residential Neighborhood for necessary maintenance and repairs;
5. Simultaneously with #4 above, due to their narrow width, all other streets in the Residential Neighborhood should be limited to residential parking with resident-only permit stickers;
6. Add signage to the front of the Residential Neighborhood making clear that this is a residential neighborhood and that there is limited, metered parking available and that towing is enforced;
7. Schedule routine patrolling of the Residential Neighborhood to enforce the no parking zones, metered and residential parking, and all state and local laws; and
8. Assist with the speeding concerns whether through speed radar signage, speed bumps, or road markings.

The public health and safety concerns in our area have been accumulating and compounding over a number of years. And while individual residents have attempted to reach out to the City of Austin (or handle matters on their own) to make the Residential Neighborhood safer, we are now organizing our efforts and coming to you with a united voice. We are hopeful that the City of Austin and the Residential Neighborhood can work together to create an effective solution and avoid any formal legal action or public response. We look forward to hearing from you and welcome a meeting to listen to your ideas.

Respectfully,

THE WOODS OF WESTLAKE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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