



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
Planning Commission

**FROM:** Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department

**DATE:** April 09, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Barton Springs Pool Tree Assessment Report

In response to master planning at Barton Springs Pool, a tree inventory and assessment of the trees in the area of Barton Springs Pool was conducted in the fall of 2008 by Davey Resource Group. The results and recommendations have been received and interpreted. The Urban Forestry Program has reviewed the guidelines and recommendations in the Davey Resource Group's assessment report in depth and concur with the findings.

The report indicates that twenty-three (23) trees are recommended for removal and corrective work on others. Forestry Program staff have identified an additional seven (7) trees that will require removal. We will facilitate reducing identified risks associated with the trees assessed in a timely fashion based on priorities related to public safety and severity of tree defects. Initially, twenty-eight (28) trees will be removed, and two (2) trees - around which park patron access can be minimized - will be removed at a later date.

The upcoming planting season begins in October. It is the goal of the Urban Forestry program to work in conjunction with the Barton Springs Pool Master Plan recommendations to prioritize replanting in this area at the beginning of the planting season. Number of trees and species recommendations will be crafted based on a comprehensive planning effort. Potential sites will be evaluated to accomplish planting the right tree in the right place.

Cc: Marc A Ott, City Manager  
H. G. Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager  
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager  
Greg Guernsey, Director, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning  
Deborah Thomas, Assistant City Attorney  
Holly Noelke, Assistant City Attorney

# **Barton Springs Tree Assessment Action Plan**

April 2009

## **BACKGROUND:**

In the course of developing the Barton Springs Pool Master Plan, a number of trees around the pool vicinity were identified as being potential safety risks due to their maturity and declining health. Along with other issues which were deemed critical, the tree assessment was included in a briefing to the City Manager and Council. In September 2007, Council approved \$6.2 million in funding to address the critical issues, including \$250,000 for assessment and treatment of trees.

Considering the value and ages of the trees, it was determined that the most advanced assessment available would be required. Despite already having a highly-qualified and experienced Urban Forestry program, the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) opted to seek the recommendations of an objective third party. An Invitation for Bids was conducted and a contract was subsequently signed with Davey Resource Group (DRG) to do a thorough and technically advanced assessment of forty-six (46) trees. This assessment was to include foliar analysis, soil analysis, root condition analysis, radar images of internal wood structure for each tree, and other analyses. The trees assessed by DRG were selected by PARD's Urban Forestry Program staff. These trees were selected based on proximity to the pool, proximity to pedestrian traffic, maturity of the trees, and apparent health of the trees. Additional trees in lower-use areas and/or with more definitive health and physical conditions were assessed by Forestry staff and treatment recommendations created. Since the conditions of these trees were definitive, they were not included in the DRG assessment.

Field work by DRG began in November 2008 and concluded in January 2009. In March 2009, DRG submitted the Tree Assessment Report with their findings and recommendations.

## **REVIEW:**

Upon receipt of the Tree Assessment Report, the PARD Urban Forestry Program staff reviewed the information and recommendations within the report. The report validated previous assessments of the trees done by Forestry staff and other highly-qualified tree professionals. The report also aided Forestry staff in developing a plan for treatment of the trees.

## **PLAN:**

In the Tree Assessment Report, DRG rated each tree assessed with a Risk Rating. The trees are rated from 3 to 12, with 12 being the highest risk. Twenty-three (23) of the trees assessed by DRG will be treated with pruning and tree health practices to lessen risks and improve longevity. However, DRG recommended removal or severe pruning of high-risk trees. Per nationally recognized professional forestry standards, PARD Forestry staff have determined that trees with a high risk rating and factors that cannot be reduced through treatment will require one of two actions: 1) immediate removal of the tree, or 2)

temporarily denying access within up to a sixty (60) foot radius and eventual removal of the tree.

Public access can feasibly be denied within the immediate vicinity of two (2) of the trees within the fence perimeter of Sunken Gardens, so the removal of these trees will not be immediate. However, denying access to the majority of the trees is not feasible because the no-access zones would prohibit use of popular and essential park activity areas, including the children's playscape, the south lawn of the pool, and the bathhouse. Therefore, twenty-eight (28) high-risk trees will require immediate removal. This number includes seven (7) trees that were not assessed by DRG, but that PARD Forestry Program staff determined should be removed. In removing the trees, the ones in the areas of highest patron use will receive the highest priority.

Replacement trees for those removed will be as large and mature as feasible. These trees will be planted in the fall of 2009. Planting new trees in warm weather is not advised due to the stress and low survival rate during hot summers. Locations and species of the replacement trees will be determined with input from stakeholders, the Joint Subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Board and Environmental Board, and pool users.