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SHOAL CREEK CONSERVANCY LAUNCHED

Austin Leaders Welcomed New Nonprofit Dedicated to Improving Greenway and Watershed

AUSTIN, TEXAS – Wednesday marked the beginning of a new era for Austin’s beloved Shoal Creek as nonprofit, community, City of Austin and business leaders joined together at GSD&M to celebrate the launch of the nonprofit organization, the Shoal Creek Conservancy.

The Conservancy’s mission is to restore, protect and enhance the ecological, social and cultural vibrancy of Shoal Creek for the people of Austin by engaging the public and partnering with the community. The organization already has received significant support from partners including Cirrus Logic, Whole Foods, Spring Austin Partners and the Downtown Austin Alliance as well as numerous other local property owners, businesses, neighborhood associations and individuals.

“We are pleased and excited that so many public, private and nonprofit stakeholders have immediately embraced the Conservancy’s mission. We look forward to working together with them to improve Shoal Creek,” said Executive Director Joanna Wolaver.

Once a jewel of the city, Shoal Creek has suffered from underfunding for years. To address the creek’s many needs, the Conservancy knows it cannot do its work alone. “The Conservancy will leverage public, nonprofit and private resources to improve these shared public assets – Shoal Creek’s water, trail, trees, and parks – for the benefit of the entire Austin community,” said Board President Ted Siff. “We can do this, together,” he added.

At the event, the Conservancy thanked City officials and staff for the projects currently underway along the Creek, including the new City of Austin main library; the major creek restoration project between 15th and 28th Streets; the trail gap closure project between West Avenue and 5th Streets, and the Shoal Creek peninsula project. The Conservancy also described how it will focus its attention on six major areas of need: flood risk; water quality; public safety; public order (trash and graffiti); transportation; and parks, trees and open space.

The Conservancy came to be through a very deliberative process, involving a 15-month study with numerous stakeholder meetings. “Before launching the organization, we asked two questions: is a new nonprofit organization necessary to address the needs of Shoal Creek, and, if so, is there sufficient financial and community support to sustain it over the long term? The answer of both these questions was a resounding ‘yes,’” said Joanna.

Shoal Creek is located in the heart of Austin and served as the original western border of the city at its founding in 1839. It is home to the city’s first trail, which extends along the creek for approximately 6.8 miles north from Lady Bird Lake, and includes Indian burial grounds, Civil War encampments and numerous springs. The geographic scope of the Conservancy is the creek’s watershed, a highly urbanized drainage area of approximately 13 square miles.

The event was hosted by GSD&M with food and drink graciously donated by Tapasitas on West 6th Street, Ray Canfield of Shoal Creek Saloon and GSD&M. The Conservancy sold notecards and photographs by Ted Eubanks with printing donated by Dynamic Reprographics to raise funds to support its mission.

The party ended with a call for volunteers. “We are partnering with the City to repair the trail after the October 30th flood. Please join us at Duncan Park at 2 p.m. this Friday for a workday,” Joanna said.

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