



**SHOAL
CREEK**
CONSERVANCY

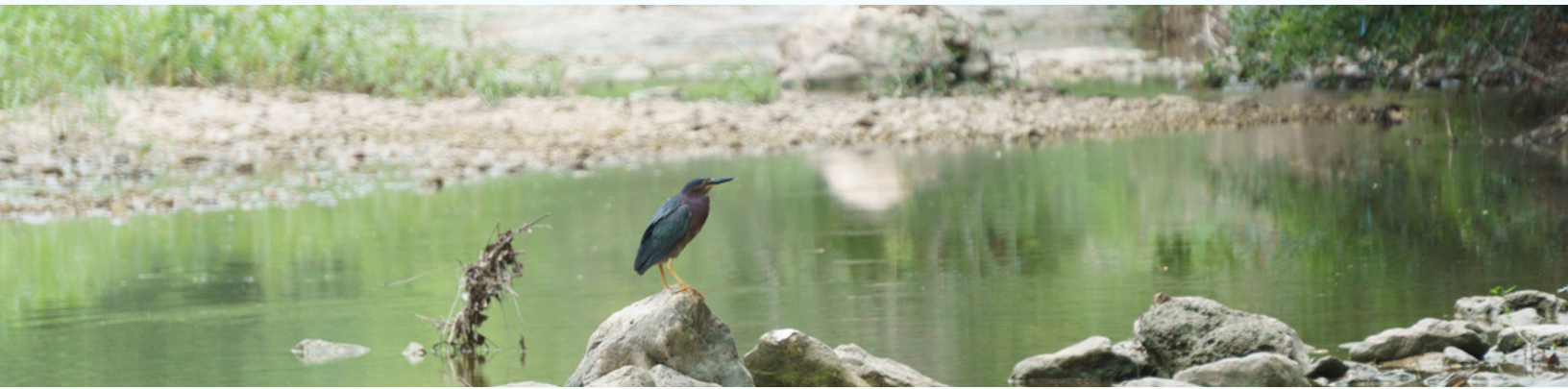
STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 - 2021

CHAMPIONS FOR THE SHOAL CREEK WATERSHED



Table of Contents

Section I. Champions for the Watershed.....	Page 1
Section II. Our Vision.....	Page 2 - 3
Section III. Our Unique Opportunity.....	Page 4 - 6
Section IV. Our Commitment.....	Page 7 - 12



Appendix A. Project Evaluation Tool
Appendix B. Project Plan Template
Appendix C. Unique Value Propositions
Appendix D. Goals, Strategies, & Tactics Worksheet



I. Champions for the Watershed

The Shoal Creek Conservancy (SCC) is a proud steward of the 13 square miles of the Shoal Creek watershed, the creek and trail running through it, and our community as a whole. We believe that partnerships, programming, and restoration of the watershed will nurture the lives of people, plants, animals, and the environment. With this strategic plan, we embrace our new mission statement:

We champion the Shoal Creek watershed in order to create a healthy and vibrant community.

The Shoal Creek watershed provides an oasis in a rapidly growing urban area, and we believe that with thoughtful investment, this natural treasure can better benefit our ecology, economy, and enjoyment.

wa·ter·shed (noun)

- an area or region drained by a river, river system, or other body of water
- an event or period marking a turning point in a course of action or state of affairs

con·ser·van·cy (noun)

- a body concerned with the preservation of nature, specific species, or natural resources
- the conservation of something, especially wildlife and the environment



II. Our Vision

The Shoal Creek watershed has played a critical role as a natural feature of the landscape for hundreds of years and in our city's development for more than a century. U.S. Geological Survey reports show that as late as 1896, more than sixty years after white settlers founded the village of Waterloo, the area west of Shoal Creek was considered the domain of the Comanches. What will it be like in another hundred years?

We envision a continuous network of green spaces stretching throughout the watershed, connected by hike-and-bike trails in a healthy habitat. With more green space and a greener built environment, native plants and animals will flourish. Restored, enhanced, and celebrated, Shoal Creek will shine even more brightly as a central part of our city's cultural heritage. The watershed will become a dynamic, safe, well-cared-for geographical area that improves the lives of residents and visitors.

This is a big vision, and it will take time to achieve. We are dedicated to investing the necessary time over the long term. The strategic plan presented here details the Shoal Creek Conservancy's goals for 2018-2021, guided by our new mission statement and shaped by stakeholders and thought leaders in our community.



Moving forward, we will evaluate opportunities and activities through this lens:

How does it position us as a CHAMPION for the watershed?

SCC will be the foremost advocate, voice, and leader for the watershed. As we work, we will seek to speak for the watershed.

How does it build a HEALTHY and resilient community?

The Conservancy believes that funding, people, a healthy environment, and great places are key ingredients in preparing our watershed to thrive as our city grows. We will take the long view to prepare for the future we want, prioritizing readiness and sustainability of resources in shaping a safe and healthy city.

How does it create a VIBRANT community?

The Conservancy seeks a diversity of habitats for people, plants, and animals throughout the watershed. We will support a watershed with a variety of users and uses, one that is filled with energy, interaction, and life. We believe that encouraging recreation, supporting multiple modes of transportation, and enriching our natural resources are essential for our community's viability. We plan to accomplish these goals with a range of activities communicating that the area is alive, safe, and cared for.

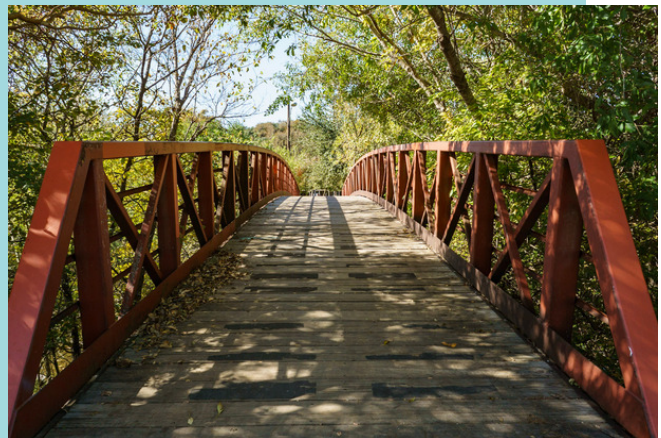
Austin's gradual growth and development over more than a hundred years included the Shoal Creek watershed, and SCC embraces the stewardship of this community resource to ensure that it becomes and remains a healthy network of world-class green spaces for the city of today and tomorrow.



III. Our Unique Opportunity

The Conservancy was established as the culmination of a grassroots stakeholder movement. During 2012–2013, community members, businesses, and nonprofits united for a series of discussions about the best way to tackle Shoal Creek’s myriad challenges. The list was long: Flooding. Poor water quality. Graffiti. A much-used and much-loved trail in need of maintenance. The creek’s energized and organized supporters kept their focus on solutions and remained flexible about methods, settling on the establishment of a new conservancy only after determining that it would be the most efficient, effective way to deliver meaningful change in the watershed.

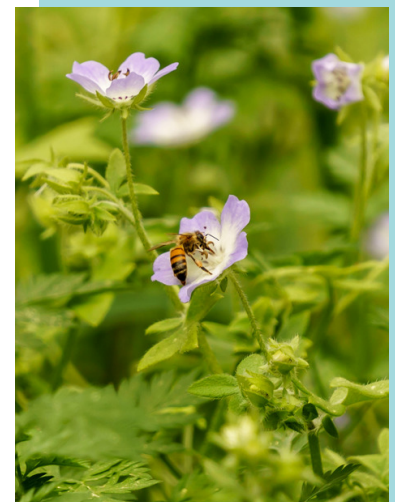
The stakeholders guided their group through a 15-month feasibility study that sought to define the role of a conservancy in the ecosystem of local nonprofit organizations, and to determine whether sufficient resources and community interest existed to sustain a conservancy dedicated to Shoal Creek.





The Conservancy, initially funded by three-year pledges from local businesses and individuals, has built upon this support to grow the organization responsibly. Since the beginning, the Conservancy has developed a track record of efficiently utilizing resources and building community relationships to make an outsized impact. In 2016 the Conservancy hired a Development Coordinator to create and implement a comprehensive fund-raising plan, and in 2018 a third staff member, an Outreach Coordinator, joined the team, with the mandate to support volunteers, coordinate public programs, and manage communications.

Over the past four years, the Conservancy has aggressively pursued partnerships and projects, welcoming opportunities that crossed our path. We have conducted environmental assessments, engaged our community, and piloted new programs and initiatives. Through this work, we affirm that the Conservancy is uniquely able and uniquely positioned to undertake stewardship of the watershed on behalf of our community. The three years covered by this strategic plan represent the launch of a new phase of growth for the Conservancy, characterized by thoughtful, deliberate expansion of programs, intentional scaling-up of operations, and diversification of funding streams.



Through our work thus far, we have identified core values upon which we will build:

- We believe that accessible, healthy, well-maintained green spaces in urban areas are intrinsically part of our community's identity.
- We believe that a network of welcoming green spaces will improve the mental and physical health of all Austinites.
- We believe that having green space within walking distance of home and work enables people to be happier and healthier.
- We believe that restoring and caring for the diverse flora and fauna in our watershed are keys to the well-being of our natural and built community.
- We believe that serving as stewards of the environment is a community responsibility and privilege.
- We believe that working side by side with our neighbors—in the dirt and at city hall—builds community resilience.
- We believe that community-based activities engage and unite people throughout our city, developing connectivity and trust.
- We believe that the natural environment is embedded in our cultural heritage and our community's values.
- We believe that it is important to understand and commemorate our history, enjoy the present, and plan for the future.
- We believe that our community is forward-looking, seeking to learn from our shared history, and openly embracing new ideas as we progress.
- We believe that an inclusive and welcoming community encourages a variety of forms of transportation.
- We believe that Shoal Creek is a community asset and that we must work together to care for it.



IV. Our Commitment

We are already hard at work on implementation of our grand vision, and with this strategic plan we recommit to our mission. To launch this phase of work and growth, SCC exuberantly and earnestly endorses the following goals as elements of a successful strategy.

1. Deliver programs that strategically move toward our long-term vision.

At Cypress and Shoal Creek, we envision a vibrant public plaza and transit hub that celebrates our cultural heritage and natural environment. The Shoal Creek Conservancy will cultivate vibrant destinations and activities within the watershed through space-based place-making. Prioritizing safe passage, cultural heritage, and community enrichment, we will create public plazas and trailheads, restore native habitats, and install wayfinding and interpretive signage.

We will engage people in the uniqueness of the watershed through education and involvement. By bringing people together to identify and solve problems within the watershed, we aim to build community, inspire stewardship, and encourage play. We believe in the power of connecting stakeholders to work together, and we will advocate for funding and policies that are critical for the realization of our goals.



At Cypress and Shoal Creek, we envision a vibrant public plaza and transit hub that celebrates our cultural heritage and natural environment.



2. Develop our volunteer leadership deliberately, building a robust, diverse, and prepared team.

Our volunteers amplify our voice, vision, and impact, and we deeply appreciate their commitment. In recognition of their contributions, we commit to improving opportunities for them to develop leadership skills, engage in strategic decision-making, and showcase their talents. As we build our base of engaged volunteers, we will cultivate new board leaders through an intentional, well-paced recruitment effort, and we will undertake a succession-planning process. This deliberate strategy will lead to greater engagement, partnership, and commitment, establishing a foundation for next-level board leadership.

3. Refine our marketing and public engagement strategies to better deliver our mission.

By connecting the “story” of the Conservancy’s mission and programs with Austin’s goals, cultural heritage, and health, and refocusing our programs for diverse audiences, we will engage a greater number of Austinites and visitors.

Through our planning process, we identified key audiences, and we are looking forward to sharing the unique aspects of the watershed strategically. To facilitate this work, we will create new media and collateral materials to share our vision in a way that engages the community and invites partnership.



With year-round Volunteer Days, neighbors work side by side, getting their hands dirty as they experience the creek.



4. Grow our internal operations to support the expansion and success of our activities and programming.

Our volunteers amplify our voice, vision, and impact, and we deeply appreciate their commitment. In recognition of their contributions, we commit to improving opportunities for them to develop leadership skills, engage in strategic decision-making, and showcase their talents. As we build our base of engaged volunteers, we will cultivate new board leaders through an intentional, well-paced recruitment effort, and we will undertake a succession-planning process. This deliberate strategy will lead to greater engagement, partnership, and commitment, establishing a foundation for next-level board leadership.



Our Shoal Creek Watershed Stakeholder Meetings bring residents, businesses, and professionals together to dream, plan, and prioritize strategic investment for the watershed.

5. Strategically expand fund-raising and partnership efforts to enhance our ability to deliver our mission.

As stewards of the watershed, we are dedicated stewards of the Conservancy. Accordingly, we seek to build our financial capacity toward our vision. We will leverage our small team size by cultivating large gifts, generating multiple donor entry points, and incorporating additional methods to facilitate giving at our year-round events.



In addition, since partnership is a core principle for SCC, we will strengthen and honor our relationships by creating collaboration agreements that outline mutually reinforcing activities, mutual benefits, and mutual expectations. Buoyed by our role as champions, we will deepen mission and program connections in our fund-development efforts by engaging current and potential supporters in activities and places that are relevant and meaningful to them. Furthermore, we will celebrate commitment and innovation to recognize contributions and inspire others to join.

We have developed work plans with time lines, measurable outcomes, and resource requirements to deliver on these goals. Together with our updated mission statement, they reflect our organizational alignment, our renewed sense of purpose, and our promise to our community. As we navigate the coming years, we will remain open to new ideas to advance our mission.





Thank You

We are grateful for the support of our partners who have invested in the strategic planning process. Thanks especially to the Shield-Ayres Foundation for its investment in our organization and community through a capacity-building grant to support this work.

As part of the process, a number of community partners and thought leaders participated in sharing and vetting ideas. Our board and staff have worked side by side to develop this shared vision for our community. Thanks to the leadership of these champions of the Shoal Creek watershed, we are well prepared to launch the next phase of work.

Join Us!

We are community-started, community-fueled, and community-focused.

We are excited about our community's future and about championing the watershed. This strategic plan outlines a set of activities and milestones for the next three years, and we are always open to new ideas.

We welcome your partnership and look forward to working with you on behalf of the Shoal Creek watershed and our city.

Learn more at www.shoalcreekconservancy.org or contact us at 512-474-2412 or info@shoalcreekconservancy.org.



**This Strategic Plan was prepared by the Shoal Creek Conservancy
Board of Directors, Staff and Tara Levy of Nonprofit Elements in 2018.**

Board of Directors

Ted Siff, President

Perry Lorenz, Vice President

Jonanna Mikulenska, Treasurer

Kristin Chiles, Secretary

Members:

Sara Koeninger

Susan Rieff

Clinton Sayers

Shannon Stagner

Amy Wanamaker

Catlin Whittington

Staff

Joanna Wolaver, Executive Director

Nina Rinaldi, Development Coordinator

Sarah Faulkner, Outreach Coordinator

Learn More

Visit: www.shoalcreekconservancy.org

Call: 512-474-2412

Email: info@shoalcreekconservancy.org

Write: P.O. Box 11520, Austin, Texas 78711



**SHOAL
CREEK**
CONSERVANCY