



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2022 - 2024



'Champions for the Shoal Creek Watershed'

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# I. Champions for the Watershed

Shoal Creek Conservancy (SCC) brings to life Austin's Shoal Creek corridor. We restore fishable, swimmable waters, empower the public to steward Shoal Creek, and spearhead on-the-ground improvements that make Shoal Creek and its Trail safer, more accessible, and more inspiring places to be. We envision a fishable, swimmable creek and a lively trail supported by an engaged community who take an active role in stewarding both public and private lands within the watershed. We aim for the Shoal Creek Trail and Bikeway to become part of a citywide network of urban trails that makes being active a fun, easy, and daily choice for all Austinites.

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

This Strategic Plan details the Shoal Creek Conservancy's commitments and plans to work towards this mission. 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



Shoal Creek Conservancy envisions a continuous network of green spaces stretching throughout the watershed, connected by hike-and-bike trails in a healthy habitat. Restored, enhanced, and celebrated, Shoal Creek will shine even more brightly as a central part of our city's cultural heritage.

Shoal Creek Conservancy has spent years working with our community to develop actionable plans to make the Shoal Creek Trail an all ages and abilities trail with greater connections to Austin's wider trail network and to return Shoal Creek to a fishable and swimmable creek. With these completed plans now in hand, our team is working to implement specific projects and engage our community to begin moving towards our long-term goals.

### **Shoal Creek Trail Plan**

An all ages & abilities trail  
connecting to Austin's trail  
network

### **Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan**

A fishable and swimmable  
creek

## III. Our Unique Opportunity



Shoal Creek Conservancy was organized in 2013 as the culmination of a grassroots effort to secure a long term future for Shoal Creek and the Shoal Creek Trail. Community members, businesses, nonprofits and representatives of the City of Austin came together to identify the issues most pressing to Shoal Creek, such as poor water quality, trail connectivity, and accessibility of public green space in the Shoal Creek corridor. Shoal Creek Conservancy was established with the understanding that a dedicated organization would be the most sustainable and efficient way to tackle Shoal Creek's many challenges. SCC's watershed-wide scope makes us unique among Austin's environmental organizations. Tackling Shoal Creek's water quality issues requires a watershed-wide lens, since all water that falls within the 13 square mile watershed ultimately drains to the creek.

SCC works closely with community members to develop our organization's priorities in line with their diverse wants and needs. SCC has built strong relationships with residents, funders, council offices and city departments to effectively communicate the community's wishes. This has resulted in wins for the Shoal Creek Trail and the surrounding environment that are widely supported, publicly funded and benefiting our entire community.



# Core Values

- 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 in creating opportunities to connect diverse populations to Shoal Creek and Austin's greenspaces to ensure equitable access to public spaces.
- We believe that it is important to understand and commemorate our history, enjoy the present, and plan for the future.
- We believe that an inclusive and welcoming community makes it easy to walk, bike, and roll to where people want to go.
- We believe that being active outdoors should be a fun, easy, and daily choice for people of all ages and abilities.
- We believe that people grow to love the places where they play, gather, and rest, and people protect what they love.
- We believe that recreation and conservation can go hand in hand.
- We believe that Shoal Creek is a community asset and that we must work together to care for it.



## IV. Our Commitment

As we near a decade of work as the Shoal Creek Conservancy, we are able to look to past successes to both demonstrate our capabilities and inspire our future efforts. The following goals summarize the next few years of priorities for The Conservancy.

### **Goal 1. Deliver Programs that strategically move toward our long-term vision.**

We envision a Shoal Creek Trail that is welcoming and accessible for people of all ages and abilities, and that connects to a citywide network of trails and green spaces. We envision a Shoal Creek that is safe for fishing, swimming, and playing. Please see the [Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan](#) and [Shoal Creek Trail Plan](#) for more detail on these community-guided visions and how they were developed.

Our programs will continue to bring unique, educational opportunities to the Austin community to inspire our neighbors to be stewards of Shoal Creek. Volunteer cleanups and restoration workdays will allow the community to be a part of the Watershed Action Plan implementation, while guided, educational tours and events on the creek will invite residents from all over the city with diverse backgrounds to engage with Shoal Creek. With the increased visibility and awareness these programs bring, comes a broader base of support for the protection and enhancement of Shoal Creek and the Shoal Creek Trail.



# Shoal Creek Trail Plan



1.

## NORTHERN TRAIL CONNECTIONS (+ BIG LOOP)

**PRIORITY:** Connect Shoal Creek Trail to the Northern Walnut Creek and Red Line Trails, ultimately connecting it to the planned 30-mile "Big Loop" of trails and bikeways traversing the city.

**GOAL:** Complete Big Loop

2.

## 31st STREET - 38th STREET

**PRIORITY:** Improve trail safety in Seiders Springs Park

**GOAL:** AAAA connection from 31st-38th Street

3.

## 15th STREET - 31st STREET

**PRIORITY:** Plan new urban trail to restore connectivity through landslide site at 24th-29th Streets

**GOAL:** Urban trail from 15th-31st

4.

## CYPRESS & SHOAL CREEK

**PRIORITY:** Create connective route between Pfluger Pedestrian Bridge and Shoal Creek Trail

**GOAL:** Implement C&S capital improvements

5.

## TRAIL-WIDE AMENITIES

**PRIORITY:** Add trash cans, pet waste stations, and bridge lighting trail-wide

**GOAL:** Install basic amenities trail-wide, including bathrooms, water fountains, trash cans, pet waste stations, bridge lighting, shade



## **Goal 2. Cultivate stewards and ambassadors to implement the Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan**

The Shoal Creek Watershed Action Plan cannot be implemented by one group. Instead this vast plan requires a community-wide effort to improve environmental conditions in the Shoal Creek watershed. Shoal Creek Conservancy will facilitate the plan's goals by creating deeper, more meaningful relationships with watershed residents and visitors, developing easily-accessible activities and tools to engage residents in watershed health and consistently offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to engage our diverse community in benefiting Shoal Creek.



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

Shoal Creek Conservancy aims to connect our mission and programs with Austin's culture, natural environment, history, health and growing community. In addition to our in-person engagement opportunities, we are pursuing ways to reach a diverse audience through digital resources, videos, and self-led activities along Shoal Creek. We are expanding our network of media outlets and partners to promote SCC's mission to a wider audience and offer resources, such as the self-led Shoal Creek Audio Walking Tour, in English and Spanish.

## **Goal 4. Ensure the continued capacity of our internal operations to support our expansion, success, and resiliency.**

The Conservancy has grown significantly throughout the first decade of operations. Our increased staff capacity has allowed us to move from the planning stage of the organization to the implementation stage for many trail and watershed projects. Staffing, financial, and leadership resiliency are top priorities to sustain the momentum that's been building within SCC.

## **Goal 5. Strategically expand fundraising and partnership efforts to enhance our ability to deliver our mission.**

Financial resiliency remains a priority to sustain our work during future economic downturns. In times of crisis, our work protecting outdoor spaces becomes more important than ever, especially when public resources are prioritized towards urgent public health and safety needs. Alongside the goal to maintain financial resiliency is a goal to explore larger and more long-term funding sources. The Conservancy has developed strong relationships with many of Texas's top philanthropic foundations and has received substantial federal funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. We aim to build on these relationships to connect with additional government, foundation, corporate and individual funders. Additionally, we will continue to actively pursue partnerships with other environmental and outdoor space nonprofits in Central Texas. Through our deep involvement with the Austin Outside Collation and direct relationships with dozens of non-profit organizations that share our interests, SCC has developed meaningful partnerships already and we will continue to foster them for the betterment of all Austin outdoor places.

## Goal 6. **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. Public volunteers are recognized as crucial contributors to our program goals, and Board Members volunteer their time to ensure our organization is serving our mission and our entire community with integrity. SCC staff and board members will continue to cultivate board and non-board volunteers with diverse cultural and professional backgrounds to create the most well-rounded perspectives and conversations to inform our work. We also commit to recognizing individual's contributions and developing leaders to create a trusting and respectful environment and long-term involvement.





# Staff & Board Members

## Staff

Ivey Kaiser, Executive Director  
Nina Rinaldi, Projects & Policy Manager  
Maria Darr, Programs Manager  
Emily Myers, Office Administrator  
Sierra DaSilva, Watershed Coordinator

## Board Members

Clinton Sayers  
Sara Koeninger  
Ulf Habermann  
Shannon Stagner  
Felicia Pena  
Ted Siff  
Perry Lorenz  
Amy Wanamaker  
Michelle Slattery  
Brian Greig  
Hector Leiva  
Jeffrey Richard  
Catlin Whittington

# Get Involved

Shoal Creek Conservancy is a catalyst, a communicator and a champion. We look forward to working with our community and partners to tackle the community-created goals described in this strategic plan. We welcome your partnership.

To start getting involved today, join us for one of our monthly Trail Tours or regular Volunteer Workdays. Learn more at [www.shoalcreekconservancy.org](http://www.shoalcreekconservancy.org), sign up for our newsletter or contact us at 512-474-2412 or [info@shoalcreekconservancy.org](mailto:info@shoalcreekconservancy.org).

See you on Shoal Creek!

