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Dear Client:

What if 11-mile Shoal Creek, that runs south through West Austin before it pours into Lady Bird Lake between Lamar Blvd and Congress Ave, is restored to a “fishable and swimmable treasure?” This is the plan (dream?) launched this week.

The non-profit Shoal Creek Conservancy (SCC) was founded by soft-spoken, longtime environmental activist **Ted Siff**. SCC this week completed raising **\$125,000 from businesses and residents along the creek**, toward its first-year goal of \$150,000. So it is off and running.

In addition to making the creek fishable and swimmable, the goal is to create a **trail alongside the waterway, establish green space and parks, remove and deter graffiti** along the way, etc. It’s a big task and it requires cooperation with the City of Austin that is already implementing improvements along Shoal Creek.

Many may think of Shoal Creek as just a quiet creek winding through central Austin. But longtime Austinites will always remember the **Memorial Day Flood May 24th 1981** when rains up to 11 inches in three hours created 15-to-20 foot walls of water at some locations along the creek. **With \$35 million in damages and 13 fatalities, it was the worst flood to hit Austin in decades.** Since then, the city has made major flood-control improvements.

A lot needs to be done and a lot is being done so far. In addition to city improvements, certain businesses have stepped up. As an example, **Cirrus Logic contributed \$20,000 to SCC**. Other businesses along Shoal Creek have improved their frontage on the waterway. In fact, SCC’s study indicates **more than \$1 billion in private investments have been made in the area**. So they have a dog in this hunt. Private citizens have also donated to SCC.

This is a multi-year project. SCC is developing the first year of its initial 3-year plan. While the first year is aimed and “getting the word out,” SCC is also talking about **making progress on safety lighting along the lower reaches of the creek**.

Step back and take a look at the big picture. **Austin is unique in that the Central Business District is book-ended by two meandering creeks.** Waller Creek, on the eastern edge, is in the midst of a major City of Austin tunneling and improvement project. **Waller Creek and Shoal Creek: major assets for the city, if nothing derails these ambitious plans.**

Another plan, already underway, would complement the Shoal Creek greenbelt at the same time it develops a long-range vision for nearby Pease Park in Central Austin.

A nationally-recognized landscape architectural firm has been retained to “develop a vision for **stabilizing the parkland’s natural environment, improving its recreational use and enhancing its aesthetic appeal.**” The firm’s marching orders include making Pease Park and the Shoal Creek Greenbelt “better public recreational areas, rather than radically remake them into something else.”

This is not a start-from-scratch effort. The Pease Park Conservancy, working with Austin Parks & Recreation, has been busy. Since 2008, **500 new trees have been planted and historic features in the park have been restored** -- the Tudor Cottage and Memorial Entry Gates (constructed in the 1920s) and the picnic tables installed during the Depression by the Works Progress Administration.

The firm is Wallace Roberts & Todd (WRT) with its HQ in Philadelphia. **It is familiar with Austin and its processes, having spearheaded the comprehensive “Imagine Austin” plan for the City in 2012.** WRT has also prepared a master plan for Houston’s Memorial Park and is currently working on the Trinity River Park project in Dallas.

While on the topic of public spaces in Austin, it should be noted that Auditorium Shores, the area that gets as much usage as any park setting, is also in line for a bit of renovation.

The City of Austin is set to spend more than \$2.2 million to add **parking, signage, landscaping and shoreline improvements** to the downtown open space. The money is coming from a Texas Parks & Wildlife grant that is being matched by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department. The project is planned to take 225 days to complete.

This seems to be a good time to remind you streets will be closed and the general downtown area – on either side of Lady Bird Lake – will be packed with pedestrian and vehicular traffic for the next two weekends.

The popular Austin City Limits (ACL) Music Festival will be staged in Zilker Park – and, for the first time, it will span two weekends instead of one. **If previous ACL events are an indication, the crowds will spill out way beyond the boundaries of Zilker.**

Full and partial street closures will take place at all hours to make way for shuttle buses and for “restocking” between shows, etc. Hotels, bars and restaurants will be packed and retailers are looking forward to increased sales. You are hereby advised.

A national magazine writer who specializes in entrepreneurship looked all around the world and decided Austin was #2 in the world as an “up and coming” city for entrepreneurs -- # 2 worldwide. High praise. Impressive.

The writer is **Patrick Hull**, a contributor to *FORBES* magazine who says “I write about entrepreneurship: the good, the bad & everything else.” He further says “**entrepreneurs have a lot of great choices when it comes to deciding where to locate their businesses.** Every city has different benefits and some industries will work better in certain locations than in others.”

Then Hull scratched his head and started **analyzing cities “around the world that are doing big things to inspire and support entrepreneurship.”** Only three cities in the United States made his Top Ten List. Austin was #2. Here’s the paragraph he wrote to describe Austin:

“The capital of Texas has been buzzing for a few years now. **Austin is a great place to start a company and is loaded with an influx of young professionals.** Big events like South by Southwest and the Film + Interactive Festival have fueled creativity and start-up activity.”

The number one slot went to a city that, in many ways, has been an economic development competitor with Austin – **Raleigh/Durham.** “Founded almost five decades ago, **the Research Triangle Park has become one of the biggest success stories for public-private partnerships,**” Hull wrote. For the other US city, he picked as #8, **Richmond,** for its “quality of life and strategic location.”

That’s it. Only three US cities made the Top Ten cut. What other cities around the world followed Raleigh-Durham and Austin? Here’s how he sees it: **#3 Singapore ... #4 Bangalore ... #5 Sao Paulo ... #6 Kiev ... #7 Moscow** (What? Moscow? Here’s what Hull said about the antithesis of capitalism: “The city is often overlooked when thinking about business but the growth of the Russian economy has fueled a boom in technology and Internet-based products and services.”) ... **#9 Santiago** and **#10 Sydney.**

Austin came in #3 on another economic ranking this week. Austin’s growth was the third fastest in the nation from 2011 and 2012 in a study of a *local level* measure similar to the gross domestic product.

In an analysis of 31 US metros with local economies larger than \$100 billion and another 21 areas between \$50 billion and \$99 billion, **Austin’s growth was #3 at 7.9% -- thaaaaat close to #2 New Orleans’ 8.0%.** San Francisco-Oakland topped the list with a increase of 8.9%. If the scope is expanded to metros of all sizes, **the Texas oil town of Odessa emerges as the fastest-growing economy in America, 15.7%, followed by neighboring Midland at 10.5%.**

What sets a high tech workforce apart from run-of-the-mill jobs? Hundreds of IT pros were interviewed and the results produced some *seemingly contradictory* traits.

The Accenture Institute of High Performance Research interviewed high tech workers about the factors that drive innovation. What factors did they find?

Laid-back, yet driven for speed. People are congenial and relaxed, but are willing to work intensely long hours for their companies.

Committed, yet independent. Employees are deeply committed to their work and colleagues, but also consider themselves to be “free agents” with no strong allegiance to one company.

Competitive, yet cooperative. While companies and individuals are ruthlessly competitive, they are also seen cooperating regularly towards common goals.

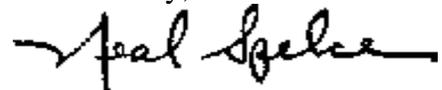
Pragmatic, yet optimistic. Failure is recognized as inevitable, but there is also optimism that any problem can eventually be solved.

Extrinsically motivated, yet intrinsically fulfilled. Money motivates people, but their fulfillment comes from being recognized for their creativity and innovation.

Do these seemingly contradictory qualities describe Austin’s techies? Well, guess what. This is a survey taken in the Silicon Valley and was listed by the *Silicon Valley Business Journal* as reasons “**Silicon Valley’s success won’t be replicated elsewhere.** How people here have resolved these conflicting factors is part of what makes the Valley culture special.” Really? Accenture talked to pros in other cities and reportedly there were **other regions “decidedly more risk averse than the Valley.** There’s a reluctance to embrace failure and try something big that has bad odds.” Wonder how Austin’s techies relate to these findings.

Dr. Louis Overholster believes politics is the quickest way to go from Who’s *Who* to Who’s *That!*

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher