

Keep entries to greenbelt open

From one end to the other, the Barton Creek Greenbelt is a public facility, funded by the public, and the city Parks and Recreation Department should ensure that all areas of public access, from one end to the other, are open.

In 1985, Parks Director Charles Jordan responded to complaints of neighbors who reside near an access point in the Woods of Westlake subdivision by closing the access point. The neighbors had complained about noise, litter and unlawfully parked vehicles.

A lot of people have been and continue to be upset about the decision. They point out that other Austin neighborhoods have access points and do not seem to have developed more than minor inconveniences. Besides, the Woods of Westlake entry was planned before the neighborhood developed, and clearly such access is needed in the far reaches of the greenbelt, or those areas will be made most inconvenient to the public that paid for the greenbelt.

It was never intended to keep the general public out of the greenbelt

and thus relegate some of the most beautiful areas of the greenbelt to use as a sort of private park for residents who live near the westernmost reaches.

With the Woods of Westlake entry closed, the nearest legal access point is at the Loop 360 bridge, a six-mile round trip from the western end of the greenbelt. The city says it hopes to obtain three new public access points, one near the Twin Falls swimming area, to the upper greenbelt through the parkland dedication ordinance. Then the Woods of Westlake entry might be unnecessary, Jordan told the *American-Statesman*.

But it may be some time before the planned areas are developed and parkland dedicated for the purpose of public access to the greenbelt.

Jordan said a public hearing on the greenbelt issue will be scheduled before the parks board, and he believes it is time to look at the Woods of Westlake greenbelt access point again. It certainly is. The public paid for the greenbelt, and the public ought to have full and convenient access.