



# JUNIE MARIE PLUMMER

City of Austin Parkland Acquisition Negotiator

1980s-2000s

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I was hired by the City of Austin (COA) during the real estate bust in the late 1980s. The COA was contemplating relocating its airport to Manor, Texas. I was brought on to be a right-of-way agent for the proposed new airport. When I reported in for my first day on the job, I was informed by a city staff member that I had been promoted and that my job would be purchasing parkland. I knew nothing about parkland but was hungry and eager to tackle the new assignment. I also really knew nothing about the environment, except, don't throw your trash out the car window. The job to negotiate the acquisition of land for the Parks and Recreation Department eventually expanded to other land acquisition projects. I ended up enjoying a thirty-year career of land acquisitions on behalf of the COA. The acquisition of parkland, endangered species habitat, water quality and quantity lands are three projects that I remain most proud of today. These projects resulted directly and/or indirectly in the preservation of Barton Creek as it is today.

As a real estate negotiator, I took a land transaction from conception to completion. These real estate transactions required a willing seller, and both seller and the COA in complete agreement along with a dedicated city staff team. Several of the land purchases took years to accomplish. I also think it is important to remember that in November 1992, the voters approved two propositions that forever changed Austin's landscape. Proposition 10 (\$22M) was for land acquisition of the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) and Proposition 11 (\$20M) was for the Barton Creek Wilderness Park. These two bond propositions funded what are now irreplaceable green space and creek preservation.

The Barton Creek Wilderness Park did meet the goal of 1,000 acres. In addition, two large tracts along Barton Creek known as the Uplands and Sweetwater tracts were protected through endangered species mitigation.

However, there was one specific tract that wasn't funded. What I call the Friesenhahn tract is the hilltop located at Loop 360 and Mopac on the north side of Barton Creek and is approximately 60 acres. The tract had a 1984 development site plan for four restaurant pads, a four-story office building, six story parking garage, and surface parking. Through a complicated real estate negotiation, which utilized several funding sources resulted in a win-win for the sellers, and the COA, and was a game changer for Barton Creek Wilderness Park.

The value of Barton Creek to the community is that the creek is not only visited by many, but also has a long history of representing what "belongs to the people" and referred to as "Austin's Eden." I often think as I drive along Loop 360 what would the view be like today without the COA's vision to protect the additional 1,000 acres along Barton Creek fronting on the south side of Loop 360 over 20 years ago.

# JUNIE MARIE PLUMMER CONT'D



*Mary Moore Searight and Junie Marie Plummer at the dedication of Mary Moore Searight's property, now Mary Moore Searight Metro Park*

It is my belief, the COA has approached preservation of land as a specific quality of life goal for all of Austin. There wasn't a bond proposition presented to the voters during my 30-year career that didn't include a green choice. The community has embraced for many decades the belief that a healthy community showcases its natural assets, such as Barton Creek. However, this unique vision requires constant funding.

The long-range planning and funding for Austin's open space is necessary for a livable community and to remain "a city within a park." I have read that "the most successful cities are those that place a high value on the public lands and making the most of the city's natural landscape" which requires constant community input.

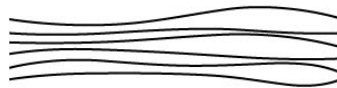
As development growth continues, my desire is that Austin as a community doesn't lose sight of future funding needs for its parkland, open spaces and yes, always Barton Creek. I also believe the COA's land acquisition projects should never be considered a completed project.

In 1988 Mary Moore Searight gave me a handwritten note that I pull out and read from time to time, with the quote as follows:

"If future generations are to remember us more with gratitude than with sorrow, we must achieve more than the miracles of technology. We must also leave them a glimpse of the world as it was created, not just as it looked when we got through with it."

*-Lyndon B. Johnson, from a letter sent by the Texas Nature Conservancy to its members, May 9, 1988*

**BARTON CREEK**



**TIME STREAM**