



# Sara Hensley

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February 26, 2024

Mayor and City Council  
City of Austin, Texas

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## Dear Mayor and City Council:

Please accept this letter as interest in the position of City Manager for the City of Austin.

Serving in a variety of capacities, I have had the pleasure of working with some of the most forward thinking, culturally diverse and quality of life focused cities in the United States. Working in the Cities of Virginia Beach, VA, San Jose, CA, Phoenix, AZ, Austin and Denton, TX, I gained valuable experiences in building trust with open communication, internally and externally, as well as creating relationships with many diverse groups, non-profits, community organizations, educational institutions, and businesses. As leader, I worked extremely hard to develop collaborative working relationships, based on trust and communication. The key component is to insure we are connecting to, and, with the communities we serve in a proactive manner regarding the work we do.

My experiences also include partnering with employees and leadership to not only create more efficiencies and effectiveness in our work but to be the “employer of choice”. This means we work on initiatives internally, focusing on employee health and wellness, best practices in compensation and benefits as well as leadership opportunities, (grow your own). I support and encourage a healthy work culture that drives innovation, empowers decision making and creates opportunities for everyone to do their very best.



Denton, Texas





I work collaboratively with the Mayor and Council to achieve the City's Priorities. I meet regularly with them to keep information flowing and to ensure that they are up to speed on major issues and changes.

People who know me and/or those who worked with me, will tell you that I am collaborative, communicative, and community focused. I believe in completed staff work and critical thinking, to provide council with complete information to make an informed decision.

I look forward to visiting with you about the future of Austin.

Sincerely,

Sara Hensley



# Sara Hensley

• Denton, Texas

## Summary

A results-oriented professional with proven leadership skills. Demonstrated commitment to collaboration, communication, and the community. Passionate and creative, with a strong desire to foster and build relationships that are based on mutual respect and trust.

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## Professional Experience

### **City of Denton, Texas (Population 152,000, not including university students)**

#### **City Manager, March 2022 to Present**

#### **Interim City Manager, February 2021 to March 2022**

Responsible for the oversight of a full-service city with a budget of 1.9 billion dollars. The City Manager's Office consists of 3 Assistant City Managers, a Chief of Staff, 2 Senior Executive Assistants, 2 Assistant to the City Manager, a Senior Management Analyst, a Chief Communications Officer, and the Chief Strategy Officer. I also oversee the General Manager of Denton Municipal Electric.

#### **Deputy City Manager, July 2020 to February 2021**

Responsible for the oversight of the Chief of Staff which encompasses the City Secretary's Office, Public Affairs/311/Customer Service, Animal Services, and Community Development. I also oversee the Public Works General Manager which includes, Engineering/CIP, Traffic, Streets and Drainage, Parks and Recreation, and Fleet. In addition, I oversee Development Services, Planning, Municipal Airport, Facilities, Real Estate, and Information Technology.

#### **Assistant City Manager, May 2019 to July 2020**

Responsible for oversight of City Manager's Office, Chief of Staff, City Secretary, Libraries, Parks and Recreation, Facilities and Vertical Capital Improvement Program, Public Affairs, Community Services, Human Resources, Animal Services and Safety. Worked directly with citizen groups as well as Mayor and Council.

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### **City of Austin, Texas (Population 975,000)**

#### **Interim Assistant City Manager, March 2017 to March 2019**

Responsible for oversight of five departments which include: Austin Public Health, Austin Public Library, Austin Parks and Recreation, Austin Animal Services, and the Office of Real Estate. Position required regular interaction with elected officials, community stakeholders, executive leadership, and residents throughout the City of Austin. Led teams in multiple program and service areas and operations encompassing more than 2,000 full-time and more than 1,000 part-time and seasonal employees.

Served as the Executive Lead for city-wide cross departmental efforts:

- “Strategic Direction 2023” Outcome Champion: Health and Environment
- Executive Lead: Homelessness
- City Executive Representative: Joint Subcommittee with the City of Austin, Austin Independent School District and Travis County
- Executive Lead: Graffiti Task Force
- Executive Liaison to the Age Friendly Action Plan and the LGBTQ Commission
- Executive Liaison: City’s Executive Academy
- City Executive Representative: Director, Waller Creek Local Government Corporation

Specific accomplishments include:

Responsible for budgets/projects totaling \$342.6 million, lead capital development projects, as well as grant services, programs and major events focused on tourism efforts. Experienced in joint community facility development: Health and Parks and Recreation Department, Joint City-School playground renovations and development, a public boardwalk development, public boat ramp and commercial development along a major waterway and, housing developments around greenspace.

Led citywide projects of importance in the areas of Homelessness and Graffiti, through a collective impact and inclusionary approach which required leadership over diverse areas not specifically linked to the Community Services Area. This required identifying and coordinating key staff from departments across the City: Police, Emergency Medical Services, Municipal Court, Human Resources, Health, Libraries, Housing, Economic Development, Real Estate, Animal Services, Watershed, and the Office of Innovation to solve the issues in a more collective manner. This assisted in the removal of established barriers of integrated service delivery, developing unique avenues that recognized, supported, and enhanced the city employee teams’ unique skills, abilities, and experiences.

**Director of Parks and Recreation, December 2008 to March 2017**

Completely re-invented the department by taking a more focused business and finance acumen approach that elevated an increase in partnerships with the non-profit community, as well as the development and business community. This ultimately increased the overall visitation and tourism revenue to the City of Austin. In addition, we concentrated on better hiring practices,

better communication, and more community involvement. Led several initiatives that established better “quality of life developments,” which included housing and retail, through an integrated approach with all stakeholders. This included a more focused approach on “what the citizens desired.” Responsible for the overall operation and leadership of more than 600 full-time equivalent personnel, with an \$86 million operating budget and more than \$181 million in capital improvement projects.

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## **City of Phoenix, Arizona (Population 1.4 million)**

### **Director of Parks and Recreation, April 2006 to November 2008**

Responsible for the overall operations and leadership of more than 1,100 full-time equivalent personnel and a \$110 million operating budget. A particular focus was the redevelopment of the downtown Phoenix area where innovative problem-solving ideas/skills were used regarding commercial development that led to more vibrant green spaces. We created a partnership with a developer to improve the downtown area with retail, housing, and better greenspace, while allowing the development to accept responsibility for maintenance and management. In addition, the responsibility of the Park Preserve Initiative was under my purview. Also, we worked with Arizona State University and the Corp of Engineers to completely clean up, reclaim and rehab the Rio Salado area in downtown Phoenix into a wonderful native wetland and riparian habitats.

Responsibilities included the traditional parks and recreation operations, as well as, environmental education, a zoo, museums, spring training facilities for Major League Baseball teams, 880 acres of street maintenance, downtown development projects and events, as well as countless collaborations with non-profits, universities, and businesses.

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## **City of San Jose, California (Population 940,042)**

### **Director of Neighborhood Services, Parks and Recreation, and Animal Services August 2002 to March 2006**

Able to use my knowledge and understanding of issues related to inclusion, race-based disparities, and social justice to bring various groups together to solve city-wide issues, particularly in the allocation of grants and program dollars, working with non-profit community. Responsible for the overall operations and leadership of more than 700 full-time equivalent personnel and a \$45 million operating budget in this large, diverse department. Oversaw a total of 3,512 acres of parks and open space, which includes five regional parks, gardens, and a children's zoo. In addition, I provided oversight for the Animal Services Division, as well as, City-Wide Grants, Healthy Neighborhood Venture Funds, and the Community Development Block Grant Funds.

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## **City of Virginia Beach, Virginia (Population 400,000)**

### **Director of Parks and Recreation, June 1997 to August 2002**

Responsible for the overall operation of the department, which includes the following divisions: administrative services, design and development, parks, golf courses and recreation. The department is comprised of more than 232 full-time employees and more than 400 part-time team members. An operating budget of \$20 million, a \$2 million golf course enterprise fund and an additional \$46 million in Capital Improvement Program dollars. Worked to complete a land swap with a hospital corporation so health care facilities could be in a deficit area of the city. Created a partnership with the United States Field Hockey Association to bring a training facility to Virginia Beach.

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### **Education**

- Executive Development School, Indiana University
- Master of Education, University of Arkansas
- Bachelor of Science, University of Arkansas
- Emergency Management
- Training, Emergency Management Institute, Emmitsburg, Maryland
- Member of International City/County Management Association
- ICMA-CM credentialed

### **Adjunct Professor Positions**

- Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach, Virginia
- Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia
- Arizona State University, Phoenix, Arizona
- Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas

### **Publications, Presentations, and Professional Boards**

- **Leadership/Change Management:** No More Rewards for Predicting the Rain, Only Rewards for Building the Ark!", University of Texas, LBJ School of Public Policy, North Carolina Leadership Conference and Altruism Institute in Salida, Colorado: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019
- **Organizational Structure and Administrative Operations:** Navigating Political Waters: Survival Skills focused around Communication and Relationship Development!", Future University sites: Clemson, Illinois State and Texas State: 2017, 2018
- **Critical Thinking and Emotional Intelligence:** "It's My Job and I can cry if I want to!", University of Texas, LBJ School of Public Policy: 2018
- **Program Planning and Leadership Director:** Oglebay Director's School: 2010-2015, Oglebay, West Virginia
- **Internships:** "The Good, The Bad and The Ugly": National Recreation and Park Association: 2009
- **Vice Chair and Chair:** Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies:

2010-2017

- **Member:** Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions: Colleges and Universities: 1998-2007
- **Member:** American Academy for Park and Recreation Professionals, 1980-2023
- **Board Member:** North Texas Mobility Commission, 2020-2022
- **Board Member:** ICMA Leadership Institute on Race, Equity, and Inclusion, 2021/2022, Program Committee for 2024