




MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board Members

FROM: Kimberly McNeeley, CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: September 21, 2020

SUBJECT: Recycling Implementation in Parks and Recent Progress

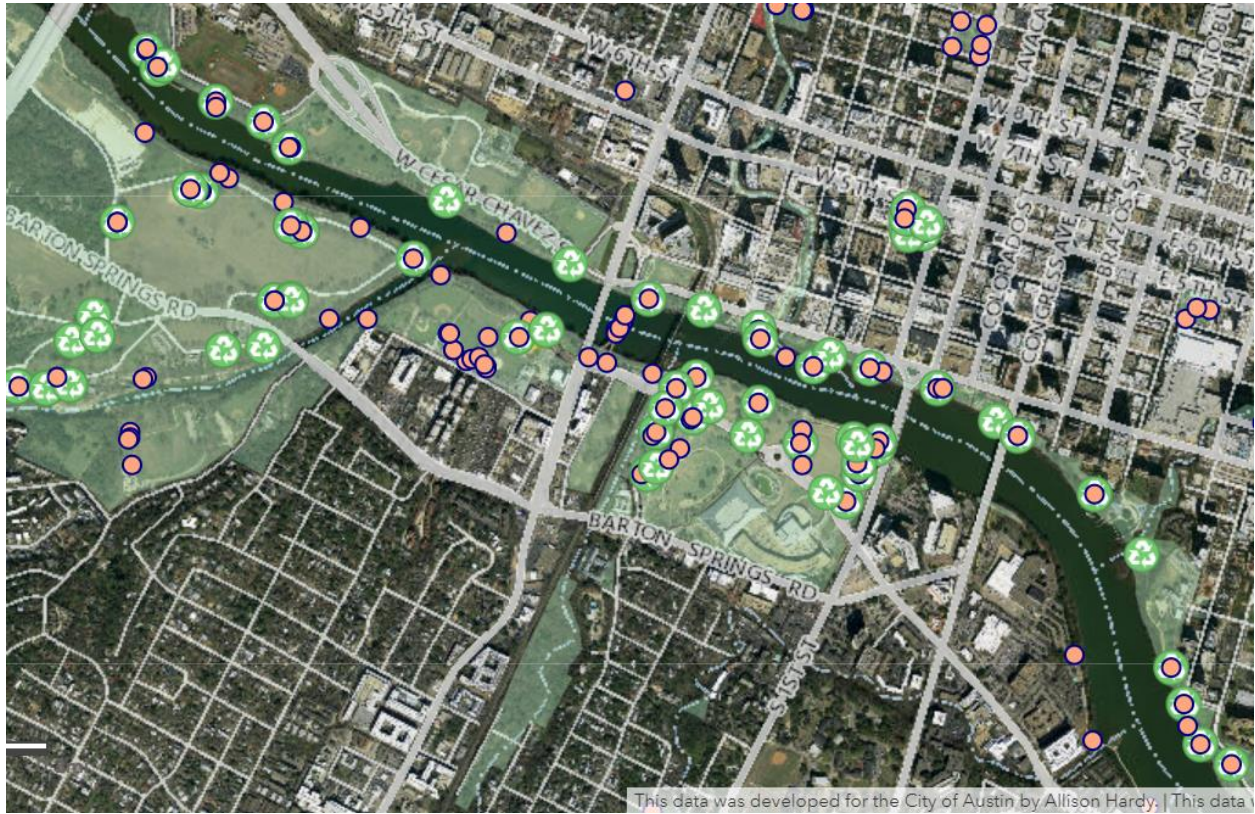
The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) values sustainability and resiliency and works hard to maintain our park spaces clean and inviting for Austinites and our visitors. We aim to minimize waste generation through source reduction, recycling or composting in order to both reduce the amount of waste sent to the landfill, as well as reduce costs for disposal of trash. Our goal is to ensure that our parks and facilities are compliant with [Universal Recycling Ordinance](#) guidelines and our own [City of Austin Zero Waste Goals](#) and standards.

While PAR has had recycling at all indoor facilities and office spaces for several years, incorporating recycling at 300 parks in thousands of outdoor locations, required additional resources, including additional staff and funding for new receptacles. PAR developed a pilot recycling program in 2016 to better understand waste streams and to increase recycling without compromising the level of service provided to the community. In 2018, the Zero Waste Advisory Commission and the Parks and Recreation Board urged City Council to create a Parks and Recreation Recycling Task Force ([Resolution 20180614-072](#)), and based on those recommendations, the subsequent Fiscal Year 2019 City budget included more than \$1 million for expanding recycling to parks citywide. The Recycling Program Manager was hired in June 2019 to implement comprehensive recycling and composting standards at all PAR indoor and outdoor facilities to meet Zero Waste goals. In September 2019, City Council awarded bids for the purchase and installation of updated receptacles at parks.

Recycling Implementation Plan – Phase I Progress

PAR is currently in Phase I of the Recycling Implementation Plan, which prioritizes all metro parks, including the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail, Athletics sites, Aquatics sites, Golf facilities, and recently completed capital improvement park projects. Installation contractor Piatra is installing new Max-R landfill and recycling receptacles as paired units on concrete pads with two-way dome lids and clear labels in English and Spanish to comply with Universal Recycling Ordinance guidelines. New receptacle pairs were installed along the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail throughout spring and summer 2020. PAR partnered with The Trail Foundation and Austin Parks Foundation to fund this

effort and installed receptacles in prioritized locations, concentrating on trailheads and parking lots and removing outdated receptacles. Butler Metropolitan Park and Vic Mathias Shores at Lady Bird Lake Metro Park received new receptacle pairs in spring 2020 and Zilker Metropolitan Park is currently receiving updated receptacle pairs.



Map showing new locations for recycling receptacles on the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail



New Max-R receptacles with bilingual labels and two-way dome lids



Poe Landscape Forms receptacles at Butler Metro Park

Following Zilker Metropolitan Park, the next metro parks for recycling implementation will be Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Metropolitan Park, Circle C Metropolitan Park, Commons Ford Metropolitan Park, and Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park. Recently completed park projects that received new receptacles include Colony Park District Park, Eilers Neighborhood Park, Ricky Guerrero Park, Little Stacy Neighborhood Park, Montopolis Recreation Center, Walsh Boat Landing, Georgian Acres Neighborhood Park, and Veterans Park.

Aquatics, Athletics, and Golf Sites

One hundred percent of Aquatics sites will have recycling when they reopen. Recycling carts from Austin Resource Recovery were ordered for the start of summer 2020, but service was halted when the pools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One hundred percent of PARD outdoor Athletics sites will have recycling before the end of the year. Havins Fields and Krieg Fields have recycling already, and Toomey Ballfields and Central Austin Youth League near Camacho Activity Center will be completed in fall 2020.

Five out of the six (83%) Golf facilities currently have recycling (Grey Rock, Hancock, Jimmy Clay, Morris Williams, Roy Kizer). Lions Municipal Golf Course does not have recycling due to its uncertain leasing status.

Recycling Implementation Plan – Next Steps, Phase II and III

Phase II of the Recycling Implementation Plan focuses on district parks, and the final Phase III will add recycling to neighborhood parks, additional special use parks, and other event sites. Per guidance from Austin Resource Recovery, landfill trash will be removed from pocket parks so the smallest parks will be “Pack It In, Pack It Out” only. The rationale is that pocket park patrons are generally local and often walk to the park, so pocket parks do not need landfill trash receptacles or recycling receptacles. This will also save maintenance staff time to focus on collection from larger parks.

Additional Recycling Program Initiatives and Goals

The Recycling Program Manager is working on a number of initiatives that are drawn directly from recommendations from Austin Resource Recovery, the Zero Waste Advisory Commission, and Parks and Recreation Board, as well as PARD's Long Range Plan for Land Facilities and Programs (2020-2030), [Our Parks, Our Future](#). These accomplishments and priorities are listed below:

- Coordinate annual City of Austin Christmas Tree Recycling effort with Austin Resource Recovery
- Finalized Standards for Recycling and Landfill Trash Receptacles
- Finalized PARD Organics Diversion Guidelines
- Drafted PARD Special Event Recycling Guidelines
- Optimizing recycling and landfill dumpster sizes and locations
- Coordinating with Travis County Parks, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics for consistent messaging regarding "Pack It In, Pack It Out"
- Coordinating with Park Rangers for educational campaign for litter abatement in greenbelts and backcountry spaces
- Coordinating with volunteer groups for litter abatement workdays. There has been considerable interest from volunteer groups and individuals in helping to pick up litter in parks, but due to the pandemic and the uptick in COVID-19 cases, volunteer activities were not allowed in parks, and were only recently allowed to resume (mid-September) with certain constraints
- Established Materials Reuse Group at PARD to re-use office furniture, landscaping material, large appliances, etc., amongst PARD Divisions and other City Departments
- Provide guidance for recycling difficult items from recreation centers and other PARD Divisions (ex. fluorescent light bulbs, expired car seats, large appliances)
- Develop composting training for PARD staff at recreation centers, offices, and event sites in partnership with Austin Resource Recovery

The Recycling Program works collaboratively with other Departments, non-profit organizations, and neighborhood groups to implement recycling, following input from PARD's Operations and Maintenance staff and ensuring that best practices are followed. These initiatives all support the long-term Zero Waste goals of reducing waste sent to the landfill, increasing access to recycling receptacles, increasing organics diversion and food reuse, and providing sustainable public spaces for park patrons to enjoy.

Should you have any questions, please contact Meredith Gauthier, Recycling Program Manager, at (512) 974-9494, or at Meredith.Gauthier@austintexas.gov, or Assistant Director Liana Kallivoka at (512) 974-9455, or at Liana.Kallivoka@austintexas.gov.

cc: Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow, Assistant Director, PARD
Meredith Gauthier, LEED AP, SITES AP, TRUE Advisor, Recycling Program Manager, PARD
Charles Vaclavik, Operations and Maintenance Division Manager, PARD
Lucas Massie, M.Ed., CPRP, Assistant Director, PARD
Anthony Segura, Assistant Director, PARD
Suzanne Piper, DBA, Chief Administrative Officer, PARD