




MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board Members

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

DATE: June 14, 2023

SUBJECT: Implementation of Recycling in Parks: Fourth Update

This memo provides an update regarding the Parks and Recreation Department's (Department) Recycling Implementation Program progress. This Program ensures Austin's parks and facilities are compliant with the [Universal Recycling Ordinance](#) guidelines and support the [City of Austin Zero Waste](#) goals and standards. The Department is now 90% complete with the third and final phase of the program, which focuses primarily on neighborhood-level parks and greenbelt trailheads. Previous recycling implementation updates were provided to the Parks and Recreation Board through memos sent in September 2020, May 2021, and November 2022.

Background

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 No. 20180614-072](#)). Based upon the Task Force recommendations, the subsequent FY19 City budget included more than \$1 million dedicated to expanding recycling in parks citywide. The Recycling Program Manager was hired in June 2019 to implement comprehensive recycling and composting standards at all Department 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 Program – Progress to Date

To date, the Recycling Implementation Program has installed 703 pairs of newly purchased Max-R landfill and recycling receptacles and 68 pairs of existing Pilot Rock receptacles in areas that already had Pilot Rock receptacles in place. Phase I of this program was completed in summer 2021, and prioritized all metropolitan-level parks (the largest parks), athletics sites, aquatic sites, golf facilities, and recently completed Capital Improvement Projects. Phase II was completed in spring 2022, and prioritized district-level parks. In the summer of 2022, the Department began Phase III, which includes neighborhood-level parks, greenbelts, and other park spaces not previously covered. As of June 2023,

the Department is 90% complete with recycling receptacle installations at neighborhood parks, school parks, and greenbelt trailheads and expects to complete this phase by late fall 2023. Where possible “Pack It In, Pack It Out” signage has been added to “back country” areas, smaller trailheads, and pocket parks to encourage park patrons to pack out their trash and recycling.



New Max-R recycled plastic receptacle pairs at Rosewood District Park (left) and at Ortega School Park (right)



New Max-R recycled plastic receptacle pairs at Westenfield Neighborhood Park (left) and new SITESCAPES metal receptacles at Brush Square

Maintenance Phase Beginning

As Phase III of the Recycling Implementation Program’s receptacle installation concludes, the Department will continuously respond to the needs of each park for appropriate recycling and landfill receptacles. Newly constructed parks and new park developments will have new receptacles installed where needed to service park patrons and amenities. Future program emphasis will be on continuing the “Pack It In, Pack It Out” program and add more labels, and signage. Another priority is developing metrics and performing waste audits to adequately measure the impact of adding recycling to parks over the last four years.

Recycling Implementation Challenges

Unfortunately, the new Max-R receptacles have been vandalized in several parks, and occasional theft of liner cans and lids is also a challenge. After repairing or replacing receptacles in a single location twice, if subsequent vandalism occurs, the Department may replace with the original concrete rectangular “trash coffin”-style receptacle. A limited number of concrete receptacles removed from parks are being stored to be used as replacement receptacles or turned upside down for use as barricades where needed.



Vandalized receptacles at multiple park locations

Composting Coming to Recreation Centers and Senior Centers for Events

As the Recycling Implementation Program’s recycling receptacle installation in outdoor park spaces nears completion, the program can begin to focus on organics diversion and adding composting carts and temporary X-frames for events. The Department is partnering with Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) to identify recreation center and senior center locations where green composting carts can be added to ARR routes. Currently some recreation centers are able to divert a small amount of organic waste to composting facilities at onsite community gardens but a larger-scale solution is needed for community-wide events.



Composting X-frame set up for internal Department employee appreciation event

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. For additional information about the Recycling Program, please visit: <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/recycling-program>

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