



Recycling Program

Parks and Recreation Department

Objective

Develop, fund, and implement comprehensive strategies, policies and procedures to implement recycling at all Austin Parks and Recreation facilities.

Description

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department oversees a park system of more than 300 natural, cultural and recreational sites within the City of Austin. These park facilities have been set aside to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of Austin, share the legacies of our lands, and provide recreational opportunities for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Residents of Austin and visitors from around the world visit Austin's parks to marvel their beauty, recreate and have fun, and bring with them or generate onsite waste, much of which is recyclable.

The City of Austin has set ambitious goals for recycling. The City follows a "Zero Waste" philosophy that goes beyond recycling and focuses first on reducing trash and reusing material, before recycling and composting. In 2009, City Council passed the first *Zero Waste Plan* in Texas, and set a goal to reduce the amount of waste sent to the landfills by 90% by 2040.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) works closely with the Austin Resource Recovery (ARR) Department to ensure compliance with the mandates in ARR's Master Plan. PARD has implemented recycling in building facilities (administrative offices, recreation centers, museums, cultural centers) and has worked in partnership with ARR to offer recycling and composting at all special events hosted in PARD facilities.

In support of the City's Zero Waste goal, PARD marketing and education activities will emphasize the importance of "Reduce – Reuse – Recycle" with campaigns focusing on "Pack it in, Pack it out" and "Leave No Trace," highlighting how these strategies help the community and the environment by saving money, energy, and natural resources.

The intent for a Comprehensive Recycling Program is to extend recycling to parks, swimming pools, golf courses, sports complexes, and other open space venues.

Action Plan

A. Pilot Program – in progress

Pilot Facilities

Select PARD facilities to participate in the Pilot Program, assign personnel resources, and identify funding sources. Prioritize facilities that have high-impact recycling opportunities (i.e. year-round pools, athletic fields, and metropolitan parks)

Conduct Basic Waste Audit	<p>Evaluate current trash collection in pilot park facilities. Identify types of recyclables and waste, and potential cost saving opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas currently used for dumpster collections and examine feasibility of adding recycling dumpsters • Evaluate opportunities for landfill receptacle consolidation
Develop Pilot Plan	<p>Develop preliminary recycling strategies and procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate containers to be used for each type of facility considering durability, cost, capacity, ease of handling and cleaning, and aesthetics • Establish standards for use (Landfill and Recycling) • Identify materials that should be recycled, address logistics, set goals, create educational material for employees and visitors
Collect Data	<p>Identify appropriate metrics, establish schedule for monitoring progress and assess performance</p>
Evaluate Resources	<p>Identify efficiencies, explore funding sources, and quantify impact on budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel – evaluate impact on current personnel levels and determine number of additional FTEs needed to support recycling operations • Equipment – Identify equipment needs to support operational management of material • Contractual and Commodities – evaluate impact of hauling fees on operating budget
B. Comprehensive Recycling Program – to be implemented	
Assemble Recycling Team	<p>Select Recycling Coordinator</p> <p>Responsible for coordinating and implementing the recycling plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize high-impact facilities • Conduct baseline waste audit • Design collection system and select appropriate haulers • Train and educate crewmembers and building managers • Track progress <p>Build a cross-functional team representing key PARD divisions</p> <p>Team members will evaluate alternative options and serve as point of contact and secure decisions are made timely</p>
Conduct Waste Audit	<p>Evaluate current trash collection in all park facilities. Identify types of recyclables and waste, and potential cost saving and revenue opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map on GIS all locations of landfill and recycling containers • Identify areas currently used for dumpster collections and examine feasibility of adding recycling dumpsters • Evaluate opportunities for landfill receptacle consolidation • Calculate / estimate total tons of waste sent to landfill annually

Develop Recycling Plan	<p>Finalize recycling strategies, policies and procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify consistent containers to be used for each type of facility (distinctly different from landfill containers, durable, and labeled with clear and consistent signage) • Establish standards for use and classification of PARD receptacles utilizing Best Management Practices (Landfill, Recycling and Compost) • Identify materials that should be recycled, address and resolve logistics, calibrate goals, create educational material for employees and visitors and implement campaign
Collection System	<p>Design a collection system that is convenient and efficient for visitors, employees, and park maintenance crewmembers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptacles and locations • Transferring to central collection / storage area • Evaluate and reconfigure central collection / storage area
Launch Recycling Program	<p>Organize events and solicit endorsements from City Executives and City Council.</p> <p>Implement phased-in approach:</p> <p>Phase I – high-impact facilities (aquatics, athletic complexes, metropolitan parks, golf courses, etc.)</p> <p>Phase II – district parks</p> <p>Phase III – neighborhood parks and remaining park sites</p>
Promote Participation	<p>Announce recycling program, highlight benefits, outline collection procedures, implement educational campaign, and create brochures about the park's recycling program</p>
Education and Outreach	<p>Create training presentations, handouts, posters, and signage. Coordinate with Austin Resource Recovery and use outreach material already developed to maintain consistent message and branding. Take advantage of Austin Resource Recovery training material.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop training and educational programs for crewmembers b. Develop educational and outreach programs for the public
Measure Performance	<p>Continue to collect data, monitor progress, refine metrics, and implement improvements as necessary.</p>
Refine Recycling Program	<p>Annual review and update of policies, procedures and standards, optimization of practices, and evaluation of budget impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel – evaluate impact on personnel levels • Equipment – evaluate needs to support operational management of material • Contractual and Commodities – evaluate impact on existing operating budgets • Evaluate and report on progress of the phased-in implementation approach • Provide suggestions for improvements that will increase diversion rates system-wide

Team Participants

The Recycling Coordinator, under the direction of the Assistant Director over Operations and Asset Management, will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the recycling program. The Recycling Coordinator will coordinate with Division and Workgroup representatives to conduct waste assessments, set recycling goals, develop recycling activities, create educational programs for employees and park visitors, and monitor progress.

The recycling team will be cross-functional, representing key PARD Divisions and Workgroups. Each Division is critical to the success of the recycling program. Team members will serve as point of contact to secure decisions to proceed.

- Maintenance and Operations
- Park Planning
- Park Development
- Asset Management
- Aquatics
- Golf Operations
- Museums and Cultural Centers
- Community Programs (Recreation Centers and Senior Activity Centers)
- Cemetery Operations
- Environmental Resource Management (Park Rangers, Community Gardens,)
- Special Events
- Financial Services (Office of Performance Management)
- Marketing and Communications

Funding

As part of the FY 2017 budget, PARD requested funding for the pilot phase of the recycling program – recycling receptacles, FTE positions, and resources for training, equipment and supplies. Although funding was not approved, PARD, in collaboration with ARR, put in place the pilot recycling program to evaluate implementation challenges, as well as budget impact, funding opportunities and required resources.

Availability of funding for personnel, receptacles, and operational expenses is critically important for the implementation of a comprehensive recycling program.

Based on preliminary evaluations, PARD will need:

- \$140K for two FTE positions (Program Coordinator and Parks Grounds Specialist)
- \$75K for receptacles and signage
- \$35K for recurring operational expenses (hauling fees, supplies, training, equipment and educational campaign)

The Department will continue to:

- Collaborate with non-profit organizations (Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, The Trail Foundation, etc.) to secure additional funding, and,
- Explore opportunities for grant applications

Resource needs will be re-assessed annually.

Timeline (subject to change)

Tasks / Milestones	Tentative Timeline
Pilot Recycling Program	Oct 2016 – Sep 2018
Progress Evaluation and Plan Refinement	Jun 2018 – Dec 2018
Develop Comprehensive Recycling Plan	Oct 2018 – Dec 2018
Phase I Implementation (pools, metro parks, sport complexes)	Oct 2018 – May 2020
Phase II Implementation (district parks)	Oct 2019 – Dec 2020
Phase III Implementation (neighborhood parks and remaining park sites)	Oct 2020 – Dec 2022
Collect data, evaluate performance, implement improvements	ongoing