



## PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD RECOMMENDATION YYYYMMDD-XXX

Date:

Subject: Zilker Park Polo Field Parking

Motioned By:

Seconded By:

### **Recommendation to Eliminate Parking on the Zilker Park Polo Field**

Whereas the Austin City Council, on June 28, 2018, directed the City Manager to form the Zilker Park Working Group to, inter alia, **“Make recommendations to establish a plan to permanently remove parking on the Polo Fields, taking into consideration possible strategies to reduce parking demand and utilization of transportation demand management strategies.”**<sup>1</sup>;

Whereas the Zilker Park Working Group, in their final report of June 2019, recommended a timeline for closing the Zilker Park Polo Field as an overflow parking area by May 1, 2022 after securing an equivalent number of viable, preferably offsite parking alternatives to the reduced parking that will accommodate the displaced parking, and that are similar to the displaced parking in affordability, convenience, and usability<sup>2</sup>;

Whereas the Parks and Recreation Department (“PARD”) prohibits parking on the Zilker Polo Field from Sept. 4 until May 31, and prohibits parking on the Polo Field during weekdays year round, except for overflow parking for special events in Zilker, which may include Zilker Holiday Tree Lighting, Trail of Lights, Zilker Kite Festival, Zilker Botanical Gardens Event, Austin YMBL Sunshine Camps Events, Zilker Hillside Theater, and Blues on the Green;

Whereas PARD is committed to eliminating parking on the Zilker Polo Field and is in their second year utilizing a free external shuttle to and from One Texas Center, which has 750 parking spaces, as a first step in PARD’s effort to ensure that parking alternatives (internal shuttle, public transportation, dockless mobility strategies, e-bikes and e-scooters) are available and convenient to use<sup>3</sup>;

Whereas PARD’s response to Council’s directive to end parking on the Polo Field is by phasing out parking, with the intention of completion by May, 2022;

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution number [20180628-072](#). (Zilker Park Working Group Final Report, June 2019; page 8) [[https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Projects/ZPWG-Summary and Personal Statements Final Revised.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Parks/Projects/ZPWG-Summary%20and%20Personal%20Statements%20Final%20Revised.pdf)]

<sup>2</sup> (ZPWG Final Report June 2019, page 13.)

<sup>3</sup> (see Exhibit A, & ZPWG Final Report p.5)

Whereas PARD's current stage of phasing out overflow parking on the Polo Field during summer weekends is at 50%;

Whereas the Polo Field is heavily compacted from substantial vehicle parking use which has resulted in extensive environmental degradation;

Whereas the Polo Field area is located partly in the Barton Creek Watershed, partly in the Lady Bird Lake Watershed, and partly in the Eanes Watershed;

Whereas the Butler Gravel Lot has been remediated per the approved Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) maintenance plans and has 750 available public parking spaces<sup>4</sup>;

Whereas the Butler Gravel Lot has more available parking spaces than are currently permitted at the Zilker Polo Field;

Whereas the Butler Gravel Lot has an "equivalent number of viable alternatives" to parking on the Polo Field<sup>5</sup>;

Whereas a capacity of 750 spaces at Butler Gravel Lot with a free shuttle bus service of at least two to four (2-4) vehicles operating continuously from the Butler Gravel Lot to a designated drop off point near Barton Springs Pool is similar to parking on the Polo Field in affordability, convenience and usability;

Whereas the Barton Springs Pool parking lot will be temporarily closed for the Bathhouse Rehabilitation project from January 2024 until March 2025; and

Whereas it is in the interest of all residents of Austin to create an internal transit solution for Zilker Metropolitan Park to address a growing population;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Board:

1. Recommends the Austin City Council approve funding in the City's 2023-2024 Budget for PARD to lease or purchase internal shuttles for use in Zilker Park.
2. Recommends that the Austin City Council direct the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to eliminate parking on the Polo Field permanently starting on September 4, 2023 except for use as an overflow parking area during advance-scheduled special events (including Zilker Hillside Theater, Blues on the Green, Zilker Tree Lighting, Trail of Lights, Zilker Kite Festival, Zilker Botanical Gardens Spring Event, and Austin YMBL Sunshine Camps events).
3. Recommends Austin City Council fund at least 2-4 free shuttle busses, to be managed by PARD, to operate continuously between the Butler Gravel Lot and the south side of Zilker Park near Barton Springs Pool during peak use weekends, including Fridays (May through September 4).
4. Recommends Austin City Council fund marketing efforts, to be managed by PARD, for the City's other metropolitan parks in order to reduce demand on Zilker Metropolitan Park.
5. Recommends that Austin City Council fund amenities at other district and metropolitan parks, with an emphasis on district and metropolitan parks in underserved communities

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<sup>4</sup> (see Exhibit A)

<sup>5</sup> (see Exhibit A)

6. Recommends Austin City Council fund a high-profile outreach campaign, to be managed by PARD, to city residents and visitors on various methods of transportation to Zilker Park including all changes and new opportunities.
7. Recommends that PARD direct Zilker Park visitors to park at the Butler Gravel Lot, instead of parking at the Polo Field on weekends, beginning May of 2024.
8. Recommends PARD designate at least 22 staff parking places near Barton Springs Pool for lifeguards.
9. Recommends appropriate restoration of the Polo Field be performed as needed by PARD's routine maintenance after special events are concluded.
10. Recommends PARD collaborate with Austin Transportation and Public Works Dept. if transportation management such as establishing loading and unloading zones for shuttles, is required.
11. Recommends that PARD implement a tiered parking payment structure in which payment for parking closer to Barton Springs is the highest and payment for parking at the Butler Gravel Lot is the lowest.
12. Recommends that PARD encourage various forms of transportation (including but not limited to, walking, biking, scooters) to access Zilker Park.
13. Recommends that upon closure of the Polo Field, environmentally suitable parking barriers and a semi-permanent parking enforcement mechanism be positioned around the Polo Fields by PARD to prevent vehicle access to the Polo Field.

**Vote**

For:

Against:

Abstain:

Absent:

Attest: *[Staff or board member can sign]*

From: "Kallivoka, Liana [PARD]" <Liana.Kallivoka@austintexas.gov>  
Subject: Re: Questions about Parking in Zilker Park  
Date: June 11, 2023 at 10:14:51 AM CDT  
To: "Reed, Holly - BC" <BC-Holly.Reed@austintexas.gov>  
Cc: "Montes, Gregory" <Gregory.Montes@austintexas.gov>, "Lyons, Kanya" <Kanya.Lyons@austintexas.gov>, "Nixon, John" <John.Nixon@austintexas.gov>, "Dombeck, Tim" <Tim.Dombeck@austintexas.gov>, "McNeeley, Kimberly" <Kimberly.McNeeley@austintexas.gov>, "Soliz, Ricardo" <Ricardo.Soliz@austintexas.gov>, "Maurer, Jason" <Jason.Maurer@austintexas.gov>, "Vaclavik, Charles" <Charles.Vaclavik@austintexas.gov>

Greetings Board Member Reed,

Thank you for reaching out.

Please see responses below in [blue](#) to the questions regarding parking at Polo Field and the Butler Landfill at Zilker Park. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Regards,  
Liana

**Liana Kallivoka**, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow  
Assistant Director | Austin Parks and Recreation Department

*My work hours may look different than yours.  
Please do not feel obligated to respond outside your normal work hours.*

**From:** Reed, Holly - BC <[BC-Holly.Reed@austintexas.gov](mailto:BC-Holly.Reed@austintexas.gov)><sup>[L]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup> **Date:** Thursday, June 8, 2023 at 1:29 PM<sup>[L]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup> **To:** Lyons, Kanya <[Kanya.Lyons@austintexas.gov](mailto:Kanya.Lyons@austintexas.gov)><sup>[L]</sup><sup>[SEP]</sup> **Subject:** Questions about Parking in Zilker Park

Hello Ms. Lyons,

I have a couple of questions for you. I am trying to understand some of the realistic current and near-future uses and conditions of the Zilker Park Polo Field Lot and the Butler Landfill Gravel Lot.

(1) Does PARD have a date in mind yet for when the Polo Fields will be 100% closed for overflow parking?

Because, I see that the Zilker Park Working Group (in their final report, June 2019) recommended a timeline for closing the Polo Field as an overflow parking area by May 1, 2022.

[• Years 4 (2022): Close Polo Fields overflow parking area by May 1, 2022 after securing an equivalent number of viable, preferably offsite parking alternatives to the reduced parking that will accommodate the displaced parking and that are similar to the displaced parking in affordability, convenience, and usability. ZPWG Final Report June 2019, page 13.]

I know that we had a pandemic in between. I can see that we're not quite there yet. But I've heard that a further reduction in the number of cars in that lot is scheduled for later this summer.

Can you provide me details of the date of the next scheduled percentage reduction, how much it will be reduced, and when the 100% closure for car parking "as an overflow lot" is anticipated?

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Please be assured that the Department recognizes the need to remove parking from Polo Field. As a first step, last year the use of the Polo Field by park visitors was reduced to only Sat, Sun and holidays during peak demand in the spring and summer (March through Labor Day) when thousands of visitors are at the park.

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This year, the Department reduced the available parking area to only half of the field. As we continue to gather data and offer opportunities for offsite parking and the use of the shuttle, we will continue reducing the parking area.

At the end of the summer we plan to evaluate the conditions and discuss further reductions, if possible, to 25% or 30% of the area.

SEP

In addition to public parking, the Polo Field is used for parking during events. The Zilker Summer Musical, Zilker Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony, Kite Festival, Blues on the Green, and Trail of Lights all use the Polo Field for overflow parking.

SEP

Please know that the Department has to consider the budget and operational impacts to all these events when the Polo Field closes. Some will likely be unable to continue or afford shuttles and we should expect that without viable alternatives, a reduction will have a negative impact on the community accessibility. As per the workgroup's recommendation, the gradual closure should take place after securing an equivalent number of viable alternatives.

SEP

SEP

The current DRAFT Vision Plan states that the closure of the Polo Field parking would be a near term item. This recommendation can be found in the draft plan on page 205. The DRAFT Plan also states on page 206 that the closure of the landfill parking should be completed as a mid-term item.

According to the vision plan, careful calibration of alternative ways to arrive at Zilker will be needed as existing surface and temporary parking spaces are removed. Surface parking should be removed to align with the plan when the following conditions are present: a. internal shuttle and external shuttle systems are running, b. shared use parking is viable through third-party software platforms, c. alternative parking spaces are constructed as projects are realized.

SEP

Overall, we are making progress toward reducing the parking at Polo Field, but at the same time, we need to ensure that parking alternatives (shuttle, public transportation, remote parking, etc.) are available and convenient to use.

SEP

(2) What is the status of the Butler Landfill Gravel Lot? Does the City of Austin regard it to be in a stable condition, not requiring

either reseeding or added gravel to continue as a staging area for extra-large events in Zilker Park? Has it sufficiently satisfied its various code requirements to continue as a parking lot for recreational visitors in Zilker Park in the near-term? In other words, is it on a schedule for reseeding/irrigation or can we expect it to be available for both car parking and strategic staging for trailers for a few more years?

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The Butler Landfill now consists of a 5-acre gravel area and a 3-acre revegetated area. The information below is for the gravel area.

Per the approved Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) maintenance plans, the maintenance improvements at the gravel portion of the Butler Landfill were completed in mid-January 2023. The maintenance performed at the gravel lot has met state codes and complies with COA standards. The completion of the maintenance work on the gravel lot allows the use of the lot for parking and event staging for the near-term and for several years.

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The 3-acre revegetated area has been seeded and irrigation utilizing lake water was installed earlier this year.

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The vision plan, when approved by Council, will provide guidance on the future use of the Butler Landfill.

I would appreciate any information you have on parking in these areas.

Thank you,

Holly Reed  
Parks and Recreation Board

## SEP Holly Reed SEP Boards and Commissions

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