



Parks and Recreation Department Policy on Accepted Recyclable Items in Outdoor Parks

October 15, 2020

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) minimizes waste generation through recycling wherever possible to both reduce the amount of waste sent to the landfill and reduce costs for disposal of trash. Our goal is to ensure that our park spaces and facilities are compliant with Universal Recycling Ordinance guidelines and our own City of Austin Zero Waste standards. PAR began implementation of a multi-phase recycling program at outdoor facilities in 2016 and is working to add recycling receptacles to municipal, district, and neighborhood level parks as well as Athletics sites and Aquatics sites, trailheads, and outdoor event spaces. The PAR policy is to collect recyclable materials in indoor and outdoor recreation facilities and on parkland where receptacles exist.

PAR contracts with Texas Disposal Systems for landfill trash dumpster service and with Balcones Recycling for recycling dumpster service. PAR has a “Cans and Bottles Only” policy for outdoor receptacles to encourage park patrons to only recycle aluminum cans and plastic bottles. We do not allow glass containers at our outdoor park facilities largely because of the hazards that broken glass present for park patrons and park maintenance staff (see City of Austin Municipal Code, § 8-3-4 GLASS CONTAINERS PROHIBITED). We want to discourage park patrons from recycling paper because wet paper can lead to contamination of the recycling stream. We also want to discourage park patrons from trying to recycle food containers with leftover food which can also lead to contamination. While organics diversion is an important aspect of waste reduction, PAR currently discourages collection of organics in the parks in order to avoid and minimize rodents and other animals raiding receptacles for leftover food, with an exception for special event-related organics collection in designated receptacles. Collecting cans and bottles only for recycling is a best practice to ensure reduction of contamination and to maximize what can be recycled (metal and containers with #1 and #2 recycling symbols) and avoid soft plastics like plastic bags that cannot be recycled at municipal facilities.

For some indoor park facilities and Aquatics sites, PAR has weekly blue cart recycling service through Austin Resource Recovery (ARR). At these sites, park patrons can recycle all materials that regular ARR curbside customers are allowed to place into recycling carts, with the exception of glass containers per the City Code. Reference <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/residential-recycling-collection> for more information on what items are allowed.





Addendum 1. City of Austin Municipal Code

§ 8-3-4 - GLASS CONTAINERS PROHIBITED.

- (A) Except as provided in Subsection (C), a person may not knowingly or intentionally possess a glass container in a public recreation area.
- (B) For purposes of this section, a glass container does not include:
 - (1) a glass-lined vacuum bottle or glass-lined picnic beverage cooler;
 - (2) a baby bottle or baby food jar containing a product for consumption by a baby; or
 - (3) a drug container holding an over-the-counter or prescription drug.
- (C) By department rule, the director may designate all or part of a park, recreational facility, or nature preserve as an area where glass containers are allowed.
- (D) In adopting a rule that allows glass containers, the director may consider:
 - (1) the nature and use of the area;
 - (2) the use of surrounding land;
 - (3) the relationship between the area and the surrounding community;
 - (4) a problem caused by the use of a glass container in the area; and
 - (5) other factors the director determines are relevant.
- (E) This section does not apply to the occasional sale of nonalcoholic beverages by a person under the age of 18.

Source: Ord. No. [20190307-014](#), Pt. 8, 3-18-19; Ord. No. [20190919-038](#), Pt. 6, 9-30-19.