



Zilker Park Stratford Drive Upgrades Fact Sheet

As you may know, the Parkland Events Task Force was created by Council Resolution and the Task Force developed recommendations to ensure that all City Parks, particularly Auditorium Shores, Zilker Park and Festival Beach, remain assets for community members to enjoy and that they are preserved and enhanced for future generations to experience and enjoy. As part of the Task Force Recommendations, PARD was asked to develop parking and traffic recommendations for parks that would reduce usage of green space parking, such as the Polo Field at Zilker Park. With the rehabilitation of the existing landfill on Stratford Drive (in cooperation with C3), PARD's intention is to improve the space in an environmentally sensitive manner and act upon the recommendation to reduce green space parking at Zilker Park. This plan provides an opportunity to stabilize a space that is currently a concern, potentially reduces parking on the polo field, and provides for much needed parking access to the Zilker Botanical Garden, Austin Nature and Science Center, the Hike and Bike trail, and Zilker Park.

The rehabilitation of the existing Landfill project on Stratford Drive will include landscape enhancements, new stormwater detention, and upgrades intended to protect the landfill by reducing or eliminating erosion of the clay cap and limiting the infiltration of water into the landfill. These improvements will provide a safe area for event staging, overflow parking when needed, and an overall beautification of the park. The design has been completed in an environmentally sensitive manner, with guidance from environmental partners in Watershed Protection and TCEQ, to name a few.

With regard to studies, the consulting engineers performed soil borings to establish the approximate thickness of the cap, and biologists performed a wetlands delineation survey. The City has periodically written reports about the landfill and cap status. The exhaustive studies mentioned in the C3 press release, involved multiple design iterations and evaluations of alternative solutions that had to meet performance objectives related to TCEQ (Landfill Group and Edwards Group) and City requirements.

Currently, several identified issues constitute potential concerns from TCEQ about the integrity of the existing landfill cap. The proposed project will address these issues:

1. Offsite runoff flows across the cap, providing additional water that the cap must shed to keep it from percolating into the landfill.
2. There are undulations, pockets, and depressions in the top of the cap that trap and hold water potentially percolating into the landfill, creating hazardous and environmentally unsafe conditions.
3. There are trees growing in the cap and probably into the landfill that are not allowed under TCEQ Cap requirements. The trees can provide a direct connection from the surface run off to the landfill and if blown over, disrupt the cap, and expose the landfill below.
4. There is an existing area of wetland on the cap, which is essentially a pond. Ponds are not allowed on the cap per TCEQ rules. (The proposed water quality pond has been carefully engineered and will be double lined and only hold water for 48 hours after a rain event.)
5. The outfall structure from the depression area of the cap is a potential erosion problem that could discharge significant material into the lake, and potentially erode the trail.
6. The outlet pipe from the drainage basin contributing to the existing depressed area of the cap is too small, which could therefore cause the trail to be overtopped and eroded away.
7. The cap area has been used during wet periods causing ruts and depressions, which disturbs the cap.

A subset of design solutions were evaluated by multiple groups at TCEQ and City Departments. The evaluation of these options led to the path forward to comply with jurisdictional requirements.

Design concepts evaluated:

- Evaluation of surface materials – TCEQ would prefer concrete but could accept crushed stone
- Use of large open graded stone is not impervious, and while TCEQ agreed with this approach the City did not.
- Minimize Cap disturbance – we cannot change the existing grade significantly
- Offsite mitigation for Water Quality, as water quality treatment is required at multiple locations around the park. This treatment would cause significant disruption, increased maintenance costs, and visual distraction.
- Re-irrigation of runoff; There is currently insufficient land area close-by as most surrounding land is on the landfill cap. The Polo fields are further away and this would be a greater disruption of the park and require use restrictions.
- Creation of a Water Quality pond on cap; While the City accepts this plan, it has not previously been allowed by TCEQ. However, TCEQ will accept the pond with a double liner and minimal water retention time.

Below is a brief summary of the features of the proposed solution in response to the issues identified above:

- Capture and piping offsite drainage across the cap
- Re-grading the underlying cap materials to create a self-draining surface
- Removal of existing trees and re-planting new trees in appropriate and carefully selected places
- Removal of the wetland and replacement with a double lined water quality pond, which will provide a greater water quality benefit than the wetland
- Replacement of and appropriately sizing the outlet pipe to minimize erosion and trail over topping
- Topping the cap with a stable layer of crushed stone, which will minimize cap erosion, avoid future disturbance of the cap and allow operation in most weather conditions

Please know that there are other elements of the project, unrelated to the landfill cap, that add significant value to the park and the visitors' experience, including:

- Adding sidewalk along Stratford Dr. from the Great Lawn to MOPAC, addressing pedestrian safety
- Adding a roadside swale to Stratford Drive, draining the low point that currently ponds, thus improving the pavement durability.
- Providing designated access points with lighting to control traffic and protect pedestrians
- Provide a replacement parking area for the MOPAC lot when it goes under construction
- Improving the trailhead and connection to the trail from the lot
- Improving the usability of the area along Lou Neff, flat areas and defined slopes
- Installing fence, gates and barriers to control traffic from getting into inappropriate areas of landscaping, allowing PARD to control use of lot

For further information, please contact the PARD Acting Director, Kimberly McNeeley at (512) 974-6722 or via email at Kimberly.McNeeley@austintexas.gov.