

Zilker Conservancy



Location: **Austin, TX**

Owner: **City of Austin**

Designer: **TetraTech**

Contractor: **Muniz C & C**

Installer: **Muniz C & C**

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION

Boardwalk Length(s): 164', 60'

Tread Width(s): 14'-3"

Color: Natural Concrete

Texture: PermaPlank

Installation Date: 9/5/24

Challenge

Austin's beloved Zilker Park, has been the subject of a years-long capital improvement project to bring its pedestrian routes and safe cycling infrastructure into ADA-compliance. A recent project focused on the perimeter of the botanical gardens area, where a growing need for safe sidewalks, wide enough to support 2-way traffic for thousands of annual visitors, was needed.

The project faced significant constraints from heritage trees with extensive critical root zones that severely limited design options. Austin's robust tree protection ordinances required innovative approaches that would avoid any damage to valuable mature trees. Traditional ground-level and retaining wall based pathways proved inadequate due to both drainage problems and the potential for extensive root system damage.

Solution

The City of Austin assembled a collaborative multi-departmental team who, working with PermaTrak, developed an innovative elevated boardwalk solution. The team evolved the design from the original retaining-wall concept to a sophisticated pier-based PermaTrak system that could navigate around tree roots while maintaining ADA compliance, eliminating the need for excavation within critical root zones.

The project used air spading techniques to precisely map root systems before finalizing pier placement. PermaTrak's modular concrete boardwalk system provided the flexibility needed for this complex site, allowing the walkway to "float" above sensitive root zones while maintaining the structural integrity to support the routine heavy pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as well as accommodate vehicles when needed. The elevated design also resolved drainage issues by allowing natural water flow patterns to continue unobstructed, creating a model for future tree-sensitive infrastructure projects throughout Austin.