

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Sheryl Sculley, City Manager



COPIES TO: Executive Leadership Team, Mike Frisbie, Director of Transportation & Capital Improvements

SUBJECT: Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center Soil Excavation

DATE: February 18, 2015


Two environmental engineering firms, GeoStrata and Raba Kistner Environmental, produced two independent studies that showed the soil removed from the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center expansion site meets residential-grade development standards. The soil was removed because it was not structurally sound to handle the load of the planned convention center expansion. The City had the soil taken to a vacant City owned property located at Highway 151 and Old Highway 90 for a resulting in a savings of over \$5.5 million.

In spite of this, I have directed the San Antonio Metro Health Department to oversee a new independent study by a third party environmental engineering firm of the approximately 150,000 cubic yards of soil that was removed from the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center expansion site.

Attached is a memo providing a brief history and explanation of the soil excavation at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center provided to you yesterday from Mike Frisbie, City Engineer. We will provide you the third party study when it is completed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Erik Walsh, Deputy City Manager, or me.



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
TRANSPORTATION & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
Interdepartmental Correspondence

TO: Sheryl Sculley, City Manager
FROM: Mike Frisbie, P.E., Director/City Engineer 
COPIES TO: Mayor and City Council, Executive Leadership Team
SUBJECT: Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center Soil Excavation
DATE: February 17, 2015

In late 2013 and early 2014, approximately 150,000 cubic yards of soil was removed from the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center expansion site. The soil needed to be removed because it was not structurally sound to handle the load of the planned convention center expansion.

Prior to removal, the soil was tested by two environmental engineering firms. The data from both firms showed that the soil is safe and meets residential-grade development standards, as established by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Given this information, the soil was put to productive use by using it to prepare a vacant City of San Antonio business park property for development located at Highway 151 and Old Highway 90 in City Council District 6.

The initial soil assessment was conducted by the design-build contractor's subconsultant, Geo Strata, in August 2013. The assessment only included limited soil boring samples in the approximately 11 acre expansion area. While the data showed that the soil was within residential-use levels, the design-build subconsultant recommended that the soil be placed in a landfill.

To verify the results and recommendation of Geo Strata, the initial study was sent for a third-party assessment by a nationally-recognized environmental engineering company, Raba Kistner Environmental. After reviewing the initial study, Raba Kistner recommended that more thorough testing be conducted on the Convention Center expansion site.

Raba Kistner performed a more thorough Environmental Assessment that included 58 soil boring samples taken throughout the approximately 11 acres of the facility expansion area. Raba Kistner included the Geo Strata data in their analysis and the results showed that the soil was safe and within residential-use levels as per the TCEQ. The Raba Kistner report indicated that the soils were appropriate for re-use at another site instead of being taken to a landfill.

Since the soils are safe enough for residential development, clearly they are safe for business park development. As planned, the next step in preparing the business park property for sale and development is to have an environmental report conducted for the property at Highway 151 and Old Highway 90. The

City's Metro Health Department will oversee this effort and currently is engaging to use a firm not associated with either of the previous reports.

Prior to making the decision to move the excavated soil to the business park, the City and SAWS were discussing exchanging the City's business park property for SAWS property in which the City is interested in acquiring for another project. However, the property exchange was not being considered at the time when the soil was being moved to the business park over a year ago. That is why staff did not mention the soil to SAWS. More recently, the idea of property exchange came up again, but clearly SAWS does not have a need for the business park property and the exchange is not being considered any longer. The City will purchase the SAWS property outright.

In summary, proper due diligence was conducted prior to excavating and moving Convention Center soil. The soil is safe and although it could be used for residential development, it was placed for business park development purposes. The Health Department will oversee a new study conducted by a firm that has not been involved in this process to date.