

Public Land Management - Homeless Encampments

Downtown Austin Community Court Advisory Board
September 2020

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Watershed Protection Department



**WATERSHED
PROTECTION**

Agenda

- Watershed Impacts
 - Pilot Project
 - Citywide Coordination
 - Covid Posture
 - Q&A

Emergence

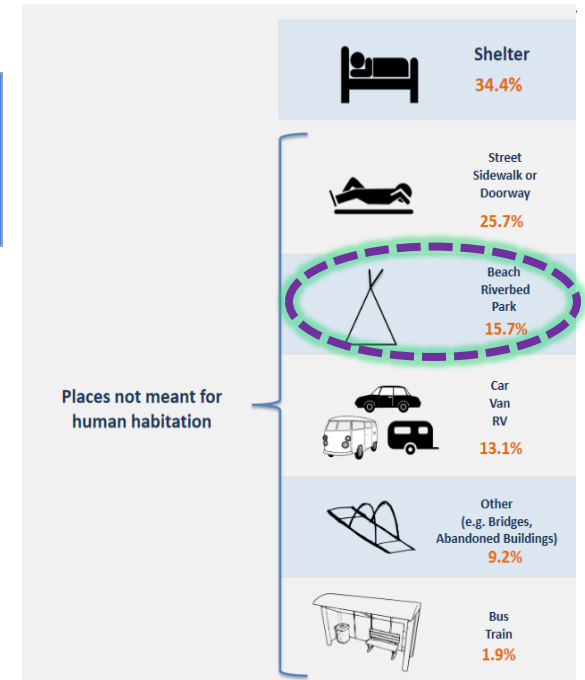
1. The process of coming into view or becoming exposed after being concealed.

2. The process of coming into being or becoming important or prominent.

The growing population of unsheltered persons experiencing homelessness have environmental health impacts on the City of Austin.

For many, the only immediate option is to reside in public spaces, often near creeks and stormwater infrastructure.

HOMELESSNESS IN AUSTIN WHERE ARE PEOPLE SLEEPING?



Statistics source: Austin Echo. <http://austinecho.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Austin-Homelessness-Needs-and-Gaps3.pdf>

The Question

Can we define a new process to
*addresses **human waste** and **litter** in creeks & ponds*
generated by homeless encampments that is
safer and more cost effective
while meeting WPD ***pollution prevention goals***
in a manner that is **respectful** of both
the homeless community and surrounding neighborhoods?

How might we support our WPD mission areas while minimizing harm to people experiencing homelessness?

Good ideas come together across disciplines to identify innovative solutions:

- Human centered design with the Office of Design and Delivery (ODD)
- Leave No Trace (LNT) with Parks and Recreation Department (PARD)
- Public safety with Austin Police Department (APD).
- Meeting people and their needs where they are with the Integral Care Programs for Assistance in the Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Team

Encampment Management: Design and test a standardized process for managing encampments on WPD managed lands.

Assessment and Prioritization

1. Develop and test a method for prioritizing sites needing clean-up or removal, and to identify alternate locations where people can be safely provided services in place.
2. Reduce safety risks to homeless individuals living near creeks or in storm drain infrastructure.

Contract

1. Learn more about contract requirements and coordination efforts by contracting for ongoing maintenance at a select group of historically cleaned watershed protection sites.
2. Reduce additional burden on WPD field crews.

Site Prioritization for Clean -Up

Prioritized

Risks to human safety and environmental quality

Deprioritized

Low-risk to human safety and environmental quality

Strategy	PATH - Connect to services plan to relocate	PATH and Integral Care Case Management
Supplies	To meet immediate needs and support move	To support Leave No Trace principles
Removal Timeline	72-hour to 30-Day Notice	Self-sort garbage for regular pick-up at designated spot
Goal	Mitigate moderate environmental health and safety risks and connect resident to services.	Provide services in-place and connect to permanent housing while improving environmental quality.



Wickersham



Performance Indicators: Cleanups

From March through September:
37 cleanups across 11 sites; removed over **24 tons** of material from
WPD land, creeks, and infrastructure.

Before



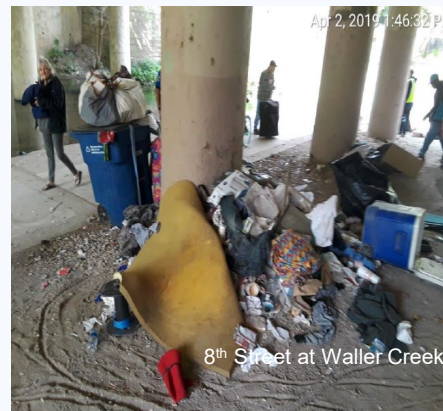
After



Before



After



Performance Indicators: Engagement

Total Persons Engaged: 400 (approx.)

152 residents been outreached **with engagement**
(Mental Health, medication, CareCo Clinic, Street Medicine, Community Care)
21 linked up with The Other Ones Foundation
7 residents housed

Over **250 residents** been outreached **without engagement**

Three **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training to 75-80 people

The total contracted cost through this period has been approx. **\$60,000**

Insights about Prioritized Sites

- **Encampment Location and Frequency:** regular clean-ups are needed in some areas but locations are not static and flexibility is needed as well.
- **Capacity:** Adding capacity through the contract meant that staff could maintain focus on the needed maintenance of the City's water protection infrastructure.
- **Communication Strategy :** WPD developed and enhanced a coordination and communications strategy between the contractor, the social services providers, and APD.
- Need a tool to communicate to persons experiencing homelessness at Encampment Sites.
- **Notification:** Official notification postings were one of the most beneficial additions to WPD's clean-up approach.

Scale Up and Recommendations -Watershed

- **Capacity:** The WPD contract will need to expand to citywide.
\$250K Contract, Dec 5, '20 RCA
COVID Impacts
Emergency Contract
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** WPD to review inherently unsafe sites for possible **infrastructure changes** that will prevent camping in extremely dangerous conditions. (E.g. 2301 E Riverside Culvert design and construction estimated \$250,000)
- **Wraparound Services:** Expand **budget and resources for Integral Care PATH** team and other providers needed to support the cleanup efforts citywide (i.e. **Violet Bag Program**).

Scale up and Recommendations-Citywide Solutions

- **Cleanup Contract Coordination:** Collaborate and coordinate citywide encampment cleanups.
- **Trash Collection:** Expand the highly successful **Violet Bag** trash collection program citywide.
- **Non-Profit Agency Collaboration:** Increase capacity to provide meaningful employment for persons experiencing homelessness with the non-profit agencies: **The Other Ones Foundation**.
- **Decentralized storage:** Provide a **place to store** their belongings.

Citywide Solutions

Clean City Strategy

Cross-departmental approach to maintaining public spaces in partnership with people experiencing homelessness. Connects the programs that residents experience allowing for greater coordination of resources and services, learning and innovation, and a more compassionate approach to engaging the community.

- **Violet Bag Program:**
 - Pilot four sites-July 2019
 - 20 sites currently-future expansion FY21
 - Daily Service
 - Remove Litter from immediate area of kiosk



VIOLET BAG PROGRAM



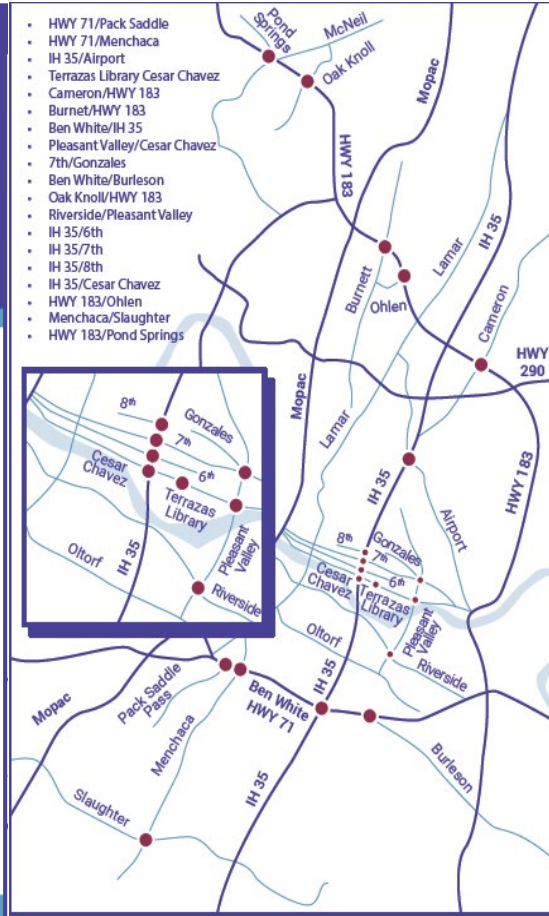
Use the violet garbage bags at kiosks throughout the City to help keep your living area clean. Once the bag is full, tie it securely and put it into one of the violet trash carts near the bag kiosk. If the carts are full, put extra bags on the ground near the carts. Austin Resource Recovery services all violet trash carts at least once a day, seven days a week.

Put these items in the violet bags:

- Food waste
- Food wrappers and bags
- Clamshells or takeout containers
- Empty drink bottles and cups
- Clothes
- Used toiletries

Keep these items out of the violet bags:

- Hazardous materials like gas, chemicals, batteries or paints
- Rocks or heavy debris
- Sharps and needles (use sharps containers at the kiosk)



Citywide Solutions

- **Violet Keep Safe Storage Program:**

Free downtown storage facility with weekday access morning, afternoon and evening.

Opened to clients August 2020 with 14 clients currently and looking to expand.

Currently working with the Office of Design and Delivery to establish satellite locations throughout the City in FY21

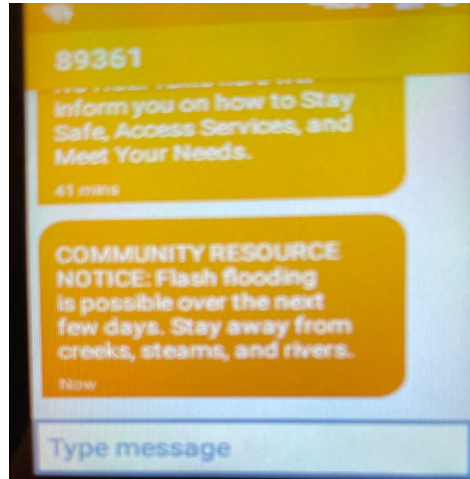
- **Homeless Text Alert System**

One way texting to get critical information

HSEM + Capcog Collaboration

Approx. 600 Numbers

DACC, Integral Care, Front Steps



Looking for a secure place to keep the things that matter the most?

The City of Austin has created a **free** downtown **storage facility** with weekday access morning, afternoon and evening to lighten your load during challenging times. At Violet KeepSafe, you will have a **secure, personal bin** where you can store items for a few hours or months at a time, making it the perfect spot to keep your **vital documents, family memories, clothing, bedding, and more.**

Location:

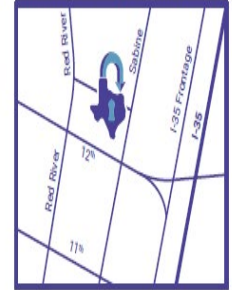
612 E. 12th Street in the former Health Parking Garage

Hours:

Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. - 10 a.m., 3 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Access:

Walk-in or call 512-974-4360



How it Works:

- Present this note of referral or the name of the agency that sent you to the attendant at the Violet KeepSafe Storage facility.
- The attendant will have you fill out a cart claim tag, provide photo ID (or take a photo) and sign a waiver.
- Next you will be assigned a storage bin and a lock, which the attendant will bring to you, then you will fill out an inventory sheet, finally, you may leave with your claim tag and key.
- When you come back to access your storage bin, present your claim tag, picture ID or name to the attendant. They will also have a back-up key if you have misplaced yours.

Food items, flammables, and firearms are not allowed.

Because of limited resources, storage access is available by referral only. When the City has more space and more bins, the program will grow to include more of your neighbors.

Clean Creek Crew

New program for Fiscal Year 2021 with 8 dedicated FTEs

Collaborative approach between Watershed Protection and Austin Resource Recovery

Provides for general litter abatement in creeks based on information from WPD



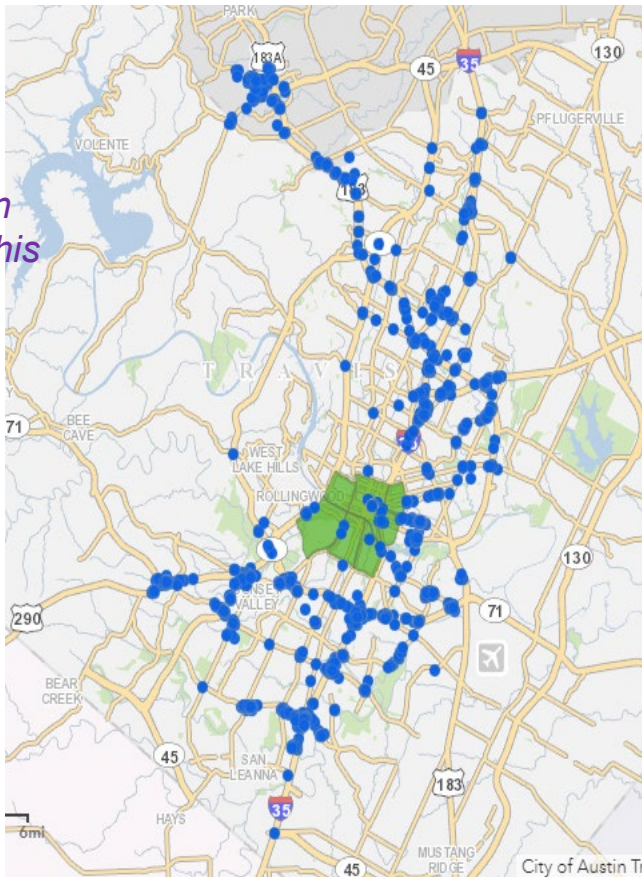
Boggy Creek

Covid Posture

CDC Guidelines:

Allow people who are living unsheltered, or in encampments, to remain where they are at this time, to minimize community spread of the disease and maximize access to services

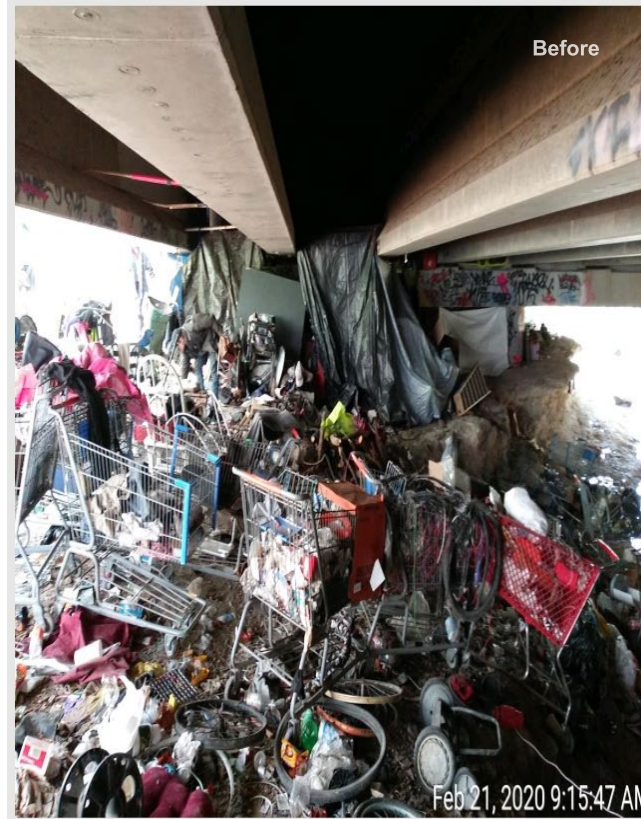
- **Cleanups**
WPD-Emergency Contract
\$200K (approx.) Council ratification Oct. 2020
- **Eat Apart Together Initiative**
<https://www.austintexas.gov/eat>
465K Meals served across the city (see map)
EOC, TOOF
PPE, Hygiene stations



Cleanups



Little Walnut Creek



Before

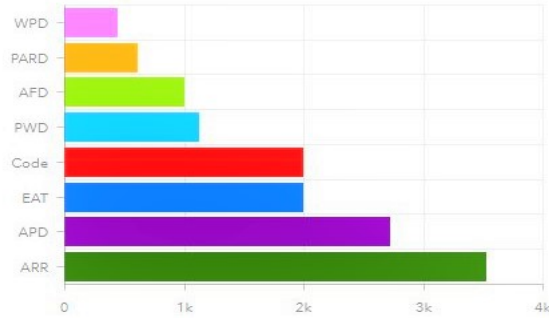


After

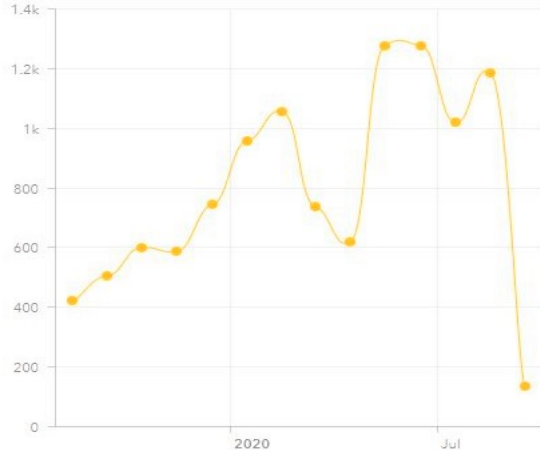
Buttermilk Branch-E. Anderson and Cameron Road @ 183 S

Citywide Dashboard-All City Departments

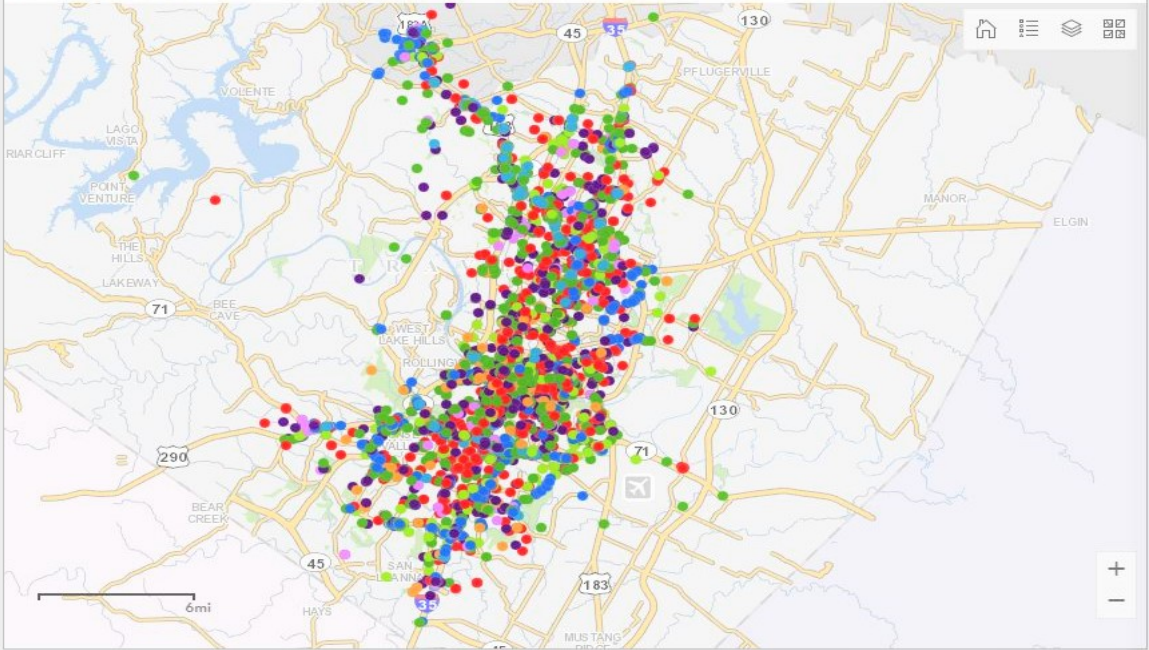
Types of Points by Data Source



Site Visits by Month



Encampment Visits By Area



Site Visit 42.23%



Report 57.77%

Total
number of
Points

13,351

[Click here](#) to learn more about the data in this map.
This map contains data from 1/1/2019 to present.
Click on the pie chart slices and bar graphs to filter the map data.

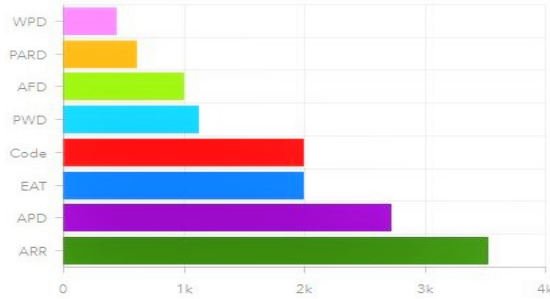
Points on this map may not represent the exact location of the site visit.

Last Map Data
Update:
9/14/2020, 7:07 AM

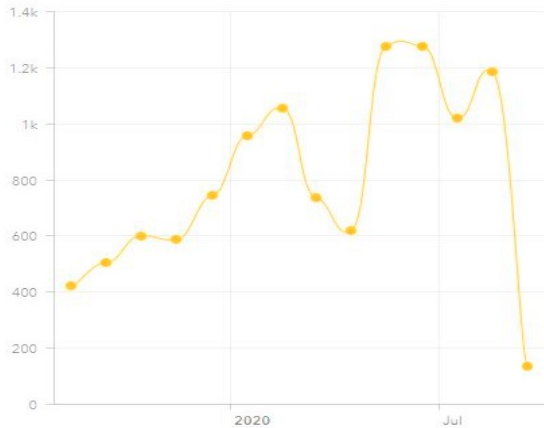
Last update: a few seconds ago

Citywide Dashboard-All City Departments

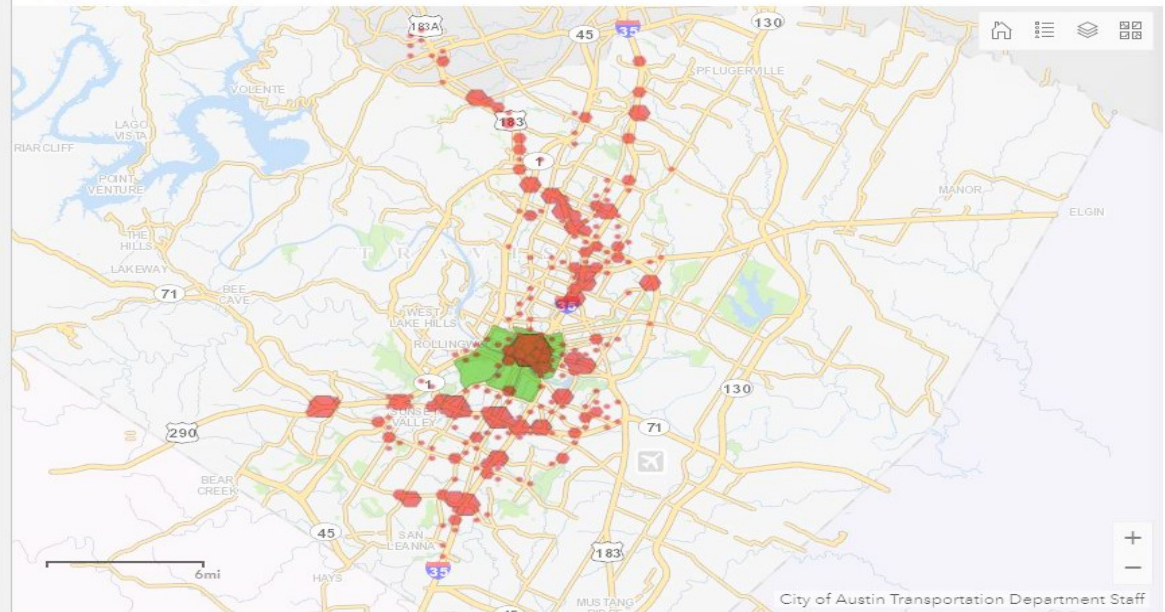
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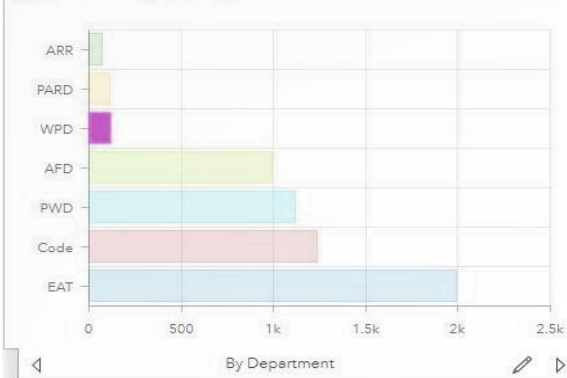
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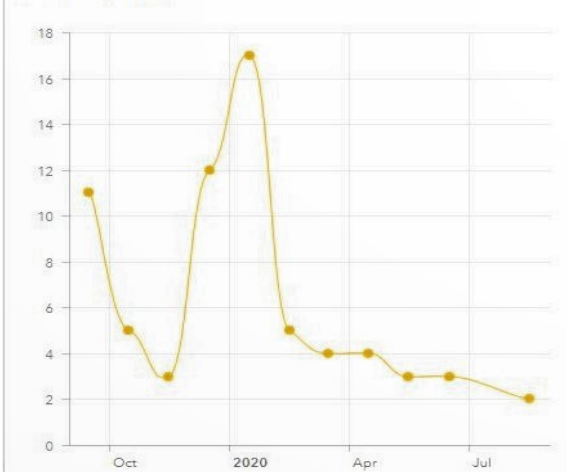
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Citywide Dashboard-Watershed Department

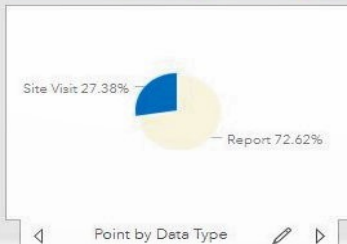
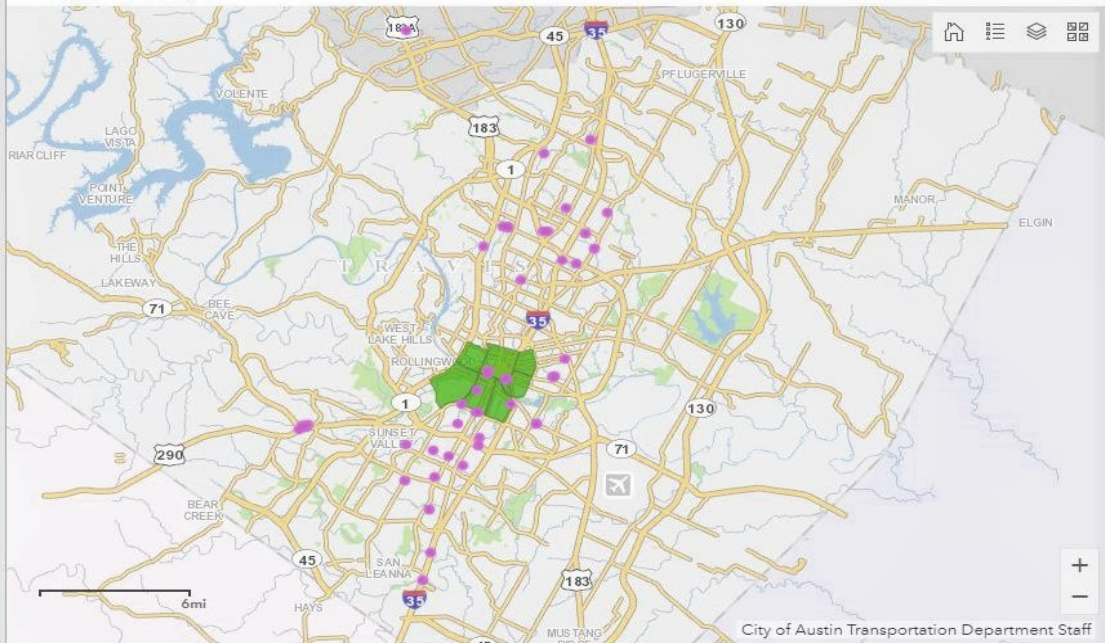
Types of Points by Data Source



Site Visits by Month



Encampment Visits By Area



Total
number of
Points
118

[Click here to learn more about the data in this map.](#)
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9/14/2020, 7:07 AM



Questions

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