

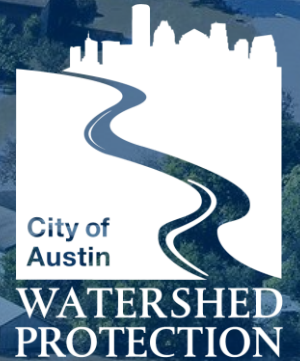
Rain to River

A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's Creeks and Communities

Joint Sustainability Committee
June 22, 2022



Watershed Protection Department



MISSION

The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) protects lives, property, and the environment of our community by reducing the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution.



What is the Strategic Plan?

GUIDING BLUEPRINT FOR DEPARTMENT

- Sets goals and objectives
- Establishes method to prioritize problems
- Creates a process for evaluating solutions

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Provides framework for evaluating future programs, projects, and regulations and measuring success of current portfolio

COMMUNICATION TOOL

Helps explain WPD's work and priorities to staff, City executives, policymakers, and Austin community



Why are we updating the plan?

- *Watershed Protection Master Plan* was originally adopted by City Council in 2001
- The previous planning effort did not prioritize gathering input from the full diversity of Austin's residents
- Revisions have been ad-hoc and focused on updates to technical information without public input
- The plan does not address major challenges like climate change, population growth, and racial inequities
- The plan does not sufficiently capture the knowledge and experience our staff have gained over the last 20 years
- The plan does not reflect the findings and recommendations of other City plans
- The plan does not set time-specific targets or objectives to demonstrate we are making measurable progress



What are our goals for the update?

The Plan

- Reflect the vision and values of our community
- Incorporate equity and climate resilience
- Be informative and accessible

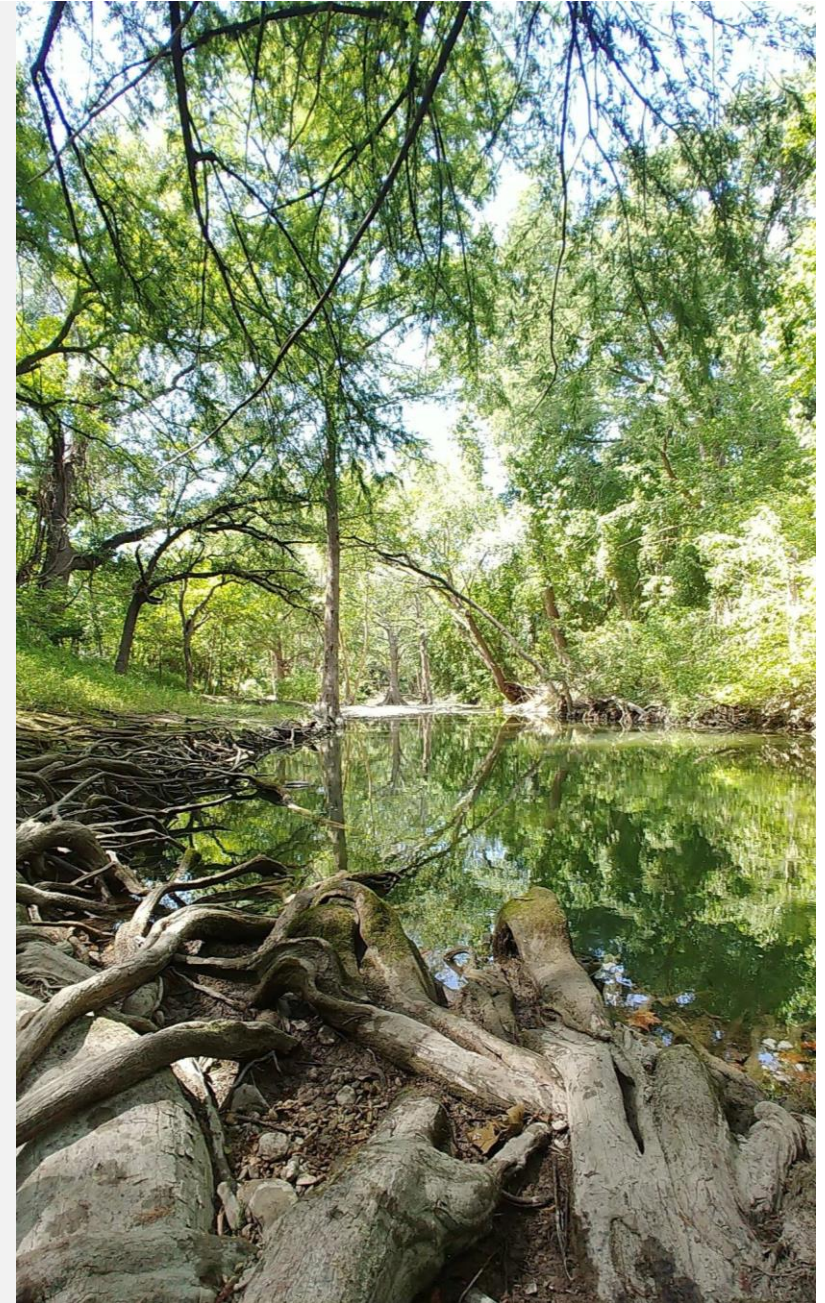
The Process

- Be open to changing WPD's priorities and operations based on community values and priorities
- Strive for consensus, but make decisions and resolve conflicts when consensus cannot be achieved
- Identify questions that cannot be resolved within the process timeline and commit to next steps
- Create clear connections between engagement and plan content



What's in the Strategic Plan?

- Our Community's Vision and Values
- Our Mission Statement and Guiding Principles
- Goals to Implement the Community's Vision
- Issues and Challenges
What is preventing us from achieving our goals?
- Strategies
How do we overcome these issues and challenges?
- Objectives and Metrics
How do we show we're making significant progress toward our goals?
- Problem Identification and Prioritization
- Guidelines for Decision-Making
- Approach for Future Updates



Community Engagement Phases

PHASE 1: Community Input

Objective: Gather community input and answer research questions using a broad range of strategies.

PHASE 2: Did We Get it Right?

Objective: Evaluate how effectively we translated what we heard from the community during Phase 1 into content. Gather input on community priorities for identified issues and strategies.

PHASE 3: Review the Draft Plan

Objective: Present the draft plan to the community, gather reactions to the content, and finalize the plan for adoption.



Project Timeline

Draft Project Timeline	2022												2023												2024												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Focused Outreach and Partnerships																																					
Community Engagement Phase 1																																					
Community Engagement Phase 2																																					
Plan Development																																					
Community Engagement Phase 3																																					
Plan Review and Adoption																																					



Engagement Approach

RESPECTFUL TO PARTICIPANTS

- Make it easy and enjoyable to contribute input
- Be transparent about how feedback is being used; respect participants by only seeking feedback when it will inform a decision
- Utilize the most appropriate strategies and tools for specific groups or topics
- Use an iterative process; check in about what we've heard

ADAPTIVE PROCESS

- Define success metrics for engagement, track performance, and commit to continuing engagement until we have met the metrics for success
- Adapt to potential limitations on engagement strategies due to COVID-19
- Coordinate and collaborate with other organizations on engagement efforts when possible

FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIPS

- Build relationships and trust with entities, leaders, and individuals in historically under-served groups and groups impacted by negative watershed outcomes
- Create systems to gather input from historically under-served communities that can be used beyond this engagement process



Priority Stakeholders

Prioritize the following groups:

- **Under-served groups.** Residents who have been systematically marginalized from or denied a full opportunity to participate in past planning and decision-making processes and/or who are more likely to experience negative quality of life outcomes
- **Impacted groups.** Residents who have experienced or are at an increased risk of experiencing impacts of negative watershed outcomes (flooding, erosion, water pollution)
- **Organizations with relevant expertise.** Organizations that work on environmental, community health, or safety issues and who bring environmental and/or technical and policy expertise

And reach representative sample of the Austin community



Priority Stakeholders

Under-served groups:

- People of color
 - Hispanic/Latinx residents
 - Black/African American residents
 - Asian/Asian American residents
 - American Indian/Indigenous residents
 - Additional POC residents
- Low-income people
- Non-English-speakers
- Immigrants and refugees
- People with disabilities
- People lacking digital literacy and /or internet access
- People lacking access to transportation
- People experiencing homelessness
- LGBTQIA+ people
- Youth and seniors



Priority Stakeholders

Impacted groups:

- People who live in areas susceptible to negative watershed outcomes (creek flooding, local flooding, erosion, water pollution)
- People impacted by recent major flood events
- People who have accepted a floodplain buyout or who have been displaced by flooding
- People who live in poor housing conditions that are more susceptible to flood damage
- People with homes or businesses that are threatened by severe erosion
- People who swim, paddle, or fish in water bodies impacted by significant pollution or harmful algal blooms
- People who live in areas where WPD has recently carried out an infrastructure project
- Local businesses and organizations directly impacted by flooding, erosion, or water pollution



Priority Stakeholders

Organizations with relevant experience:

- Environmental advocacy groups
 - e.g., Austin Youth River Watch, Clean Water Action, Environment Texas, Hill Country Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER), TreeFolks, Save Barton Creek Association, Save Our Springs Alliance, Sierra Club, Shoal Creek Conservancy, Waterloo Greenway
- Professional organizations
 - e.g., American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Environmental and Water Resources Institute (EWRI), American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
- Community health and public safety advocacy groups
 - e.g., Austin Parks Foundation, Bike Austin, Go Austin/*Vamos Austin* (GAVA), Keep Austin Beautiful, Red Cross, The Trail Foundation, Travis Austin Recovery Group, River City Youth Foundation
- Other government entities
 - e.g., Austin Independent School District (AISD), Barton Springs Edward Aquifer Conservation District (BSEACD), Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), Travis County, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)
- Faculty with relevant expertise at local universities



Engagement Strategies

PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Community Ambassadors (compensated)
- Focus groups (compensated)
- Mini-grants for community organizations
- One-on-one meetings with community leaders and organizations
- Participate in community meetings and events

ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- Surveys
- In-person walk-and-talks
- Virtual open house
- Online educational events
- Partnerships with Council Members
- Paid advertisements
- Website and communications
- Commissions and Council review



Visit RaintoRiverATX.com and sign up for our contact list!

Rain to River

A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's Creeks and Communities

Each time rain falls on our city, it flows through a vast network of built and natural infrastructure and into our creeks, lakes, springs, and the Colorado River. Rain feeds the beautiful places that make Austin special—places where we can spend time with friends and family, explore nature, cool off, and relax. But rain can also pick up pollutants, erode creek banks, and flood homes and businesses.

What is Rain to River?

Rain to River is a strategic plan that will guide the work of the Watershed Protection Department for the next 10 years. Our department will use this plan to set goals, prioritize our work, and guide our decision making to tackle urgent challenges such as climate change and racial inequities. The plan will update and replace the current Watershed Protection Strategic Plan. We need your help to draft the plan!



Take the Community Vision Survey and add to our map!

16



Drag to
comment



Favorite
Place



Watershed
Problem



Idea or
Suggestion



Community Vision
Survey

Watershed
Problems



Favorite Places



Idea and
Suggestions



Recent Comments



Get Involved



socialpinpoint

Share your vision for Austin's creeks and communities!

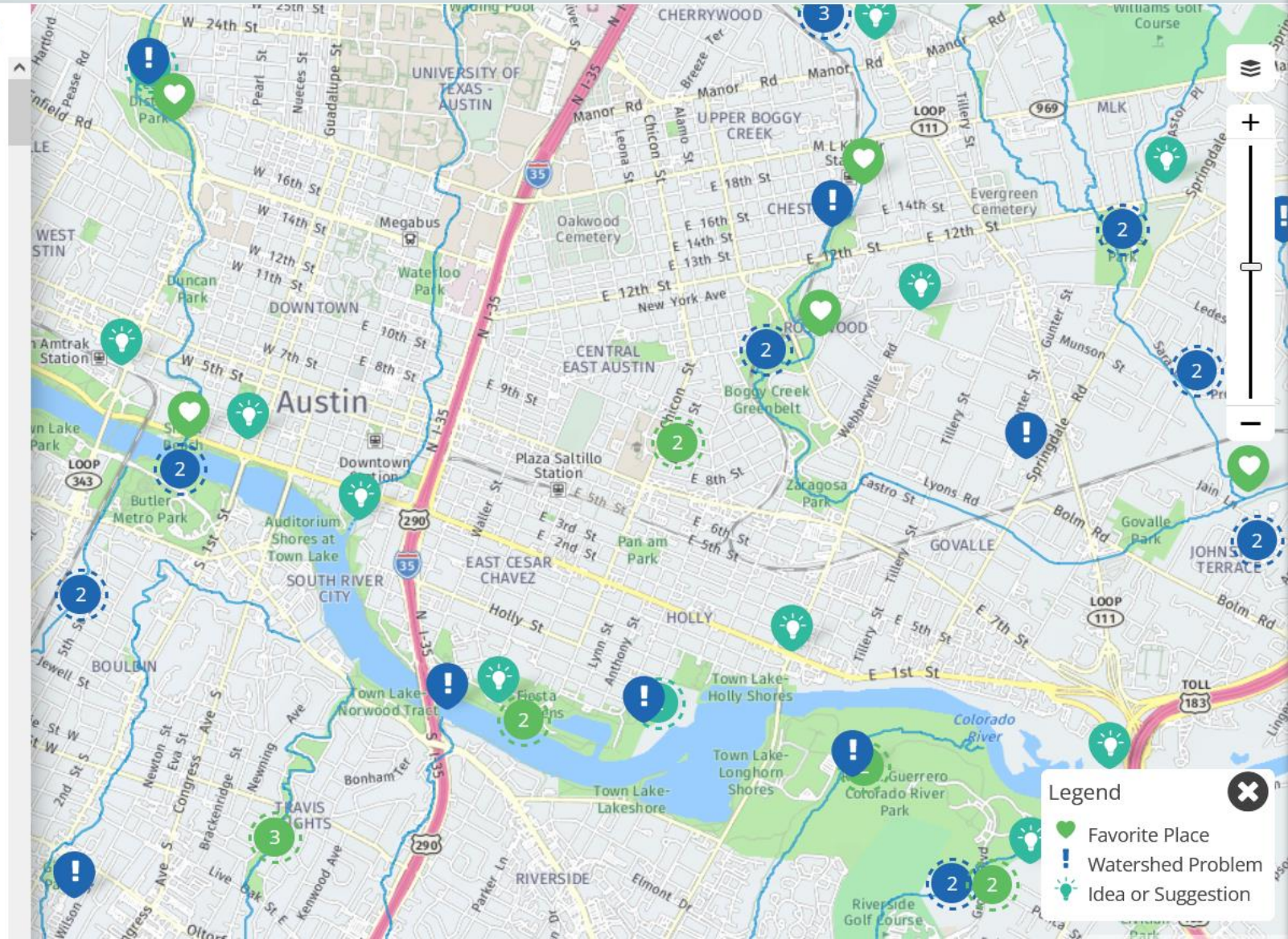
Take the Rain to River Community Vision Survey!

Rain that falls all over the city flows through a network of built and natural infrastructure to our creeks, lakes, springs, and the Colorado River. Rain feeds the places that make Austin special. But rain can also pick up pollutants, erode creek banks, and flood homes, roads, and businesses. The City of Austin is creating a strategic plan to protect Austin's ecosystems, creeks, and communities, and we want to hear from you!

Your input will help prioritize the Watershed Protection Department's work and guide decision making to tackle urgent challenges. We'll use this information to develop goals and explore the community's vision for how to embed equity and climate change at the core of Watershed Protection's work.

Visit RaintoRiverATX.com to learn more.

Community Vision Survey



Legend

- Favorite Place
- Watershed Problem
- Idea or Suggestion



Rain to River

Spread the word!

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Rain to River

Thank you!

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