



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor and Council Members

**CC:** Marc A. Ott, City Manager; Michael McDonald, Deputy City Manager; Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager; Robert Goode Assistant City Manager; Anthony Snipes, Assistant City Manager; Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager; Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager; Ray Baray, Assistant to the City Manager

**From:** Lucia Athens, Chief Sustainability Officer

**Date:** April 22, 2014

**Subject:** **STAR Community Rating Earth Day Announcement**

Today is Earth Day, and in celebration of that, we have exciting sustainability news to share. The STAR Community Rating System (STAR) is the nation's first voluntary, self-reporting framework for evaluating, quantifying and improving the livability and sustainability of U.S. communities. With a strong record for sustainability leadership, we are pleased to announce that **Austin has received certification as a 4-STAR Community**. Austin is one of only 7 cities in the U.S. thus far, to have been rated using STAR. Other 4-STAR Communities include Tacoma, Washington; Broward County, Florida and Evanston, Illinois. In addition there are three 3-STAR Communities: Indianapolis, Indiana; Lee County, Florida and Fort Collins, Colorado.

**What is STAR?** STAR is designed to assess a community's sustainability performance in three broad areas: 1) prosperity and jobs, 2) conservation and the environment, and 3) community health, equity, and cultural vitality. The STAR rating system further delineates these areas into seven specific sustainability goal categories:

- *Built environment* – quality, choice, and access to where people live, work and play
- *Climate and energy* – increase efficiency, reduce impact
- *Economy and jobs* – quality jobs, shared prosperity
- *Education, arts, and community* – vibrant, connected, and diverse culture
- *Equity and empowerment* – inclusion and access for all community members
- *Health and safety* – strong, resilient and safe
- *Natural systems* – protect and restore the resources of life

More than 600 specific actions and outcomes are identified within the seven goal areas for evaluation to receive a rating.

**Further Background.** The City of Austin's involvement with STAR dates back to 2008. At that time, Mayor Will Wynn was part of the Steering Committee that helped develop the organizing structure and issues that STAR would address in evaluating a community's sustainability progress. The Office of Sustainability continued the City's involvement with STAR as a Beta Community, involved with identifying, developing, and testing sustainability measures for inclusion in the STAR Rating System.

**How was Austin's rating determined?** Led by the Office of Sustainability over a 14-month period, more than 160 individuals from City departments and community partner organizations provided detailed documentation to support our application for a STAR rating. The City of Austin's submittal was evaluated by STAR's Technical Manager, who is supported by a large Technical Advisory Group comprised of individuals with expertise for each goal category. This third-party evaluation process gives validity to our efforts to self-report Austin's sustainability performance. Based on this comprehensive evaluation, Austin received a 4-Star rating (out of a possible 5 Stars).

**What happens next?** The information collected as part of the submittal process provides a rich, detailed accounting of Austin's sustainability performance and progress. The STAR rating further helps in identifying areas where our community is a leader, as well as areas for improvement. In the coming months, the Office of Sustainability will be working with the City's Chief Innovation Officer to determine opportunities to utilize technology and open source data platforms to share detailed STAR results and data sets publicly, as a resource for further dialogue and community engagement.

The attached document provides additional details about STAR Communities and rating process. More information can be found at: <http://www.starcommunities.org/communities/5-austin-texas>.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

# STAR: What is it?

- The nation's first framework for evaluating, quantifying, and improving the livability and sustainability of communities
- Rates community sustainability like LEED rates building sustainability
  - third party verification
  - voluntary
  - self-reporting
  - menu-based

# Certified STAR Communities

- 4-STAR Communities
  - Austin, Texas
  - Tacoma, Washington
  - Evanston, Illinois
  - Broward County, Florida
- 3-STAR Communities
  - Indianapolis, Indiana
  - Lee County, Florida
  - Fort Collins, Colorado

# Communities Using the STAR Rating System

**More than 70 communities representing 33+million people across North America**

**Alabama:** Birmingham

**Arizona:** Chandler, Flagstaff, Phoenix and Tucson

**Arkansas:** Fayetteville

**California:** El Cerrito, Redlands, Riverside and Santa Monica

**Colorado:** Fort Collins, Lakewood Nederland

**District of Columbia**

**Florida:** Bonita Springs, Broward County, Lee County, Orange County, Palm Bay and Sarasota County

**Georgia:** Atlanta

**Idaho:** Boise

**Illinois:** Elgin, Evanston, Park Forest and Peoria County

**Indiana:** Bloomington and Indianapolis

**Iowa:** Charles City, Davenport, Des Moines and Dubuque

**Kentucky:** Louisville/Jefferson County

**Maine:** Portland

**Maryland:** Baltimore and Frederick

**Massachusetts:** Northampton

**Minnesota:** Rosemount

**Missouri:** Saint Louis

**Nebraska:** Omaha

**Nevada:** Henderson

**New Jersey:** Woodbridge Township

**New Mexico:** Santa Fe

**New York:** Albany and Madison County

**North Carolina:** Raleigh and Rockingham County

**Ohio:** Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Hamilton

**Oregon:** Coos Bay and Portland

**Pennsylvania:** Allegheny County and Philadelphia

**Tennessee:** Chattanooga and Memphis/Shelby County

**Texas:** Austin, Denton, Houston and Plano

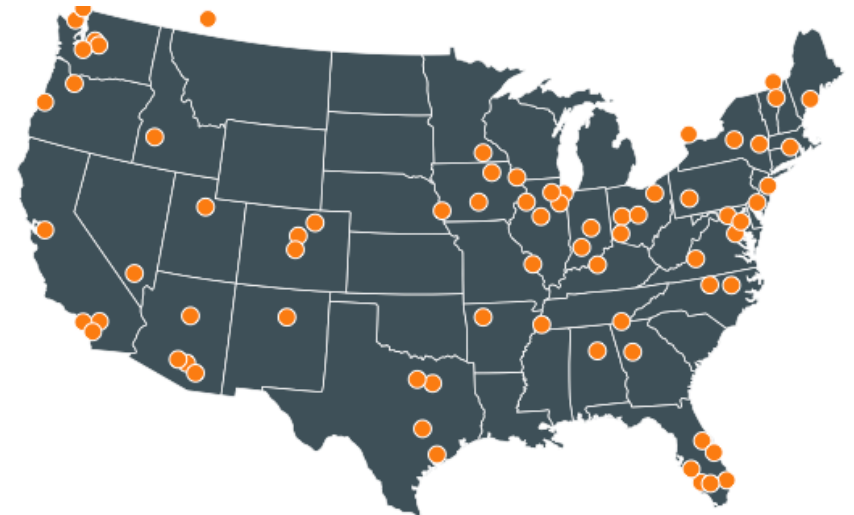
**Utah:** Salt Lake City

**Vermont:** Burlington/Chittenden County

**Virginia:** Blacksburg

**Washington:** King County, Seattle and Tacoma

**Canada:** Calgary, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Victoria



Updated April 1, 2014

# What STAR measures

- **Ecological, economic, and social** performance against national benchmarks, for example:
  - waste diversion
  - creative sector economic impact
  - voter turnout
  - acres land preserved
  - median household income
- Expands on scope of Imagine Austin, Sustainability Action Agenda, Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project

# Cities earn points in 7 categories across 44 sustainability areas

Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Education, Arts, & Culture	Economy & Jobs	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Arts & Culture	Business Retention & Development	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Community Cohesion	Green Market Development	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health & Health System	Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Local Economy	Environmental Justice	Emergency Prevention & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	Historic Preservation	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Resource Efficient Buildings	Social & Cultural Diversity	Targeted Industry Development	Human Services	Indoor Air Quality	Water in the Environment
Public Spaces	Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure		Workforce Readiness	Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	Natural & Human Hazards	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	

# What (else) is it good for?

- Drives continuous improvement and fosters competition among local governments
- Defines community-scale sustainability and presents a vision of how communities can become more healthy, inclusive, and prosperous
- Provide a vocabulary that local governments can use to more effectively strategize and define sustainability planning efforts



# Austin's STAR Certification

- Austin is a Certified 4-STAR Community (5 is maximum)
- Recognized for national excellence
- Helps us quantify successes and pinpoint areas of opportunity
- Office of Sustainability led effort supported by 160+ SPOCs from City departments and community partners



# What's Next?



- Analyze Austin's rating results to identify program opportunities and priorities
- Share what we have learned with City departments
- Re-evaluate another STAR rating in 3 years