



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Robert Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager 

FROM: Shay Ralls Roalson, P.E., Director, Austin Water 

DATE: April 12, 2024

SUBJECT: **WaterWise Landscape Rebate Program (Resolution No. 20240307-022)**

I am pleased to provide this response to [Resolution 20240307-022](#), which directed the City Manager to create an educational campaign that raises public awareness about Austin Water's WaterWise Landscape program and rebate. With drought Stage 2 watering restrictions in effect since last August, and with hot weather just around the corner, highlighting landscape principles that incorporate drought-tolerant plants and require less water to maintain is more important than ever. Between now and the hot summer months, Austin Water will meet the directives of this Resolution specifically by:

1. Providing educational materials to the public that demonstrate the benefits of the WaterWise program.

Austin Water has produced a comprehensive [Residential Conservation Rebates guide](#) in English and Spanish that highlights the WaterWise Landscape program as well as other programs that support water conservation. This brochure, along with the Watershed Department's [Grow Green](#) materials that provide information about native, drought tolerant plants and how to maintain sustainable landscapes, will be distributed at more than 10 community events in April across the city. In prior years, these events have helped us reach more than 5,000 community members with water conservation messaging and we expect similar attendance this year. Future opportunities for community outreach and education will be explored for the months of May and June, and again in the fall in time for the cooler planting season.

2. Creating a dedicated section on the City's website with resources, guides, and interactive tools to help residents plan and execute their xeriscaping projects effectively.

Austin Water has improved our online information about the [WaterWise Landscape](#) program to make it easier to access and apply for a rebate. Content has been created that is formatted for viewing by computer, tablet, or mobile phone, and customers can complete an [application for a rebate](#) before purchasing any of the materials for a WaterWise Landscape. This pre-approval process helps households manage their budget and base their landscape purchases on the pre-approved rebate amount.

3. Using multilingual and accessible multimedia advertisement.

Austin Water has already purchased advertising spots – digital, print, and radio – for a WaterWise Landscape campaign to run during the month of April through outlets such as *Community Impact*, KUT/KUTX, KLBJ, and Sun Radio. These are platforms that reach a wide, diverse audience in our service area. In addition, we are working to secure additional advertising to reach Spanish and speakers of other languages in *La Voz*, *El Mundo*, *La Prensa*, and *Ujima Magazine*. For all print publications, we have or will secure full-page and 2-page ads, so that this information will be highly visible and engaging. Digital ads will link directly to information on Austin Water’s web site about the WaterWise program and how to apply.

4. Providing additional communication methods for connecting with communities outside the reach and scope of traditional advertising mediums.

We will enhance our community presence and advertising efforts with paid social media posts on Austin Water channels (Facebook and X) that feature short WaterWise concept videos. Posts to NextDoor and a series of online Lunch and Learn sessions will also occur in April and May. Finally, we will distribute a media release about the WaterWise Landscape rebate and are working with *Community Impact* to develop a feature article about the program that will run the week of April 15-19.

Altogether, we expect to achieve more than four million impressions, 1,000 views on our web site, and direct outreach to at least 5,000 customers about the WaterWise Landscape program in the month of April alone. And, as mentioned, outreach and educational efforts will continue in May and June as well.

Given climate projections that show increasing frequency and duration of droughts for Central Texas, Austin Water is committed to continuing to implement best practices to advance the WaterWise Landscape program, rebates, and City Code for a sustainable water future.

Austin Water will provide a staff briefing on the Water Conservation program, including the WaterWise Landscape Rebate program, at the May 9 Austin Water Oversight Committee meeting.

If you have additional questions, please contact me at Shay.Roalson@austintexas.gov or 512-972-0108.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager