



## AUSTIN COMMUNITY CLIMATE PLAN

### Communications and Outreach Plan

This Communications and Outreach plan has been developed in response to Recommendation 2 contained within the Executive Summary of the Austin Community Climate Plan, which states:

*“... a public outreach and engagement plan should be created to encourage emissions reductions behavior by local businesses, organizations, and residents.”*

The activities identified in this document are designed to support meeting the initial 2020 emissions reduction target and will be implemented over the course of FY 2016-17. Beyond that timeframe, communications and outreach initiatives will be evaluated and adjusted on an annual basis in response to community feedback, an analysis of performance metrics, and whether or not emissions reduction targets are being met. In addition to the initiatives identified here, Austin Energy, Austin Transportation, and Austin Resource Recovery will implement various communications and outreach activities associated with the programs and projects specific to each department that support the Austin Community Climate Plan.

#### **Situational Analysis:**

According to a 2007 report by Yale University called Global Warming's "Six Americas," communications and outreach efforts that support taking personal action in response to climate change should be adapted to the specific beliefs, behaviors and preferences of six segments of the population:

##### **Alarmed** (19% of Americans):

“The Alarmed are more worried about global warming than members of any other segment. They are completely convinced that global warming is real, that most scientists agree that it is happening, that humans are the primary cause, that it's a very bad thing, and worry about global warming 'a fair amount' to 'a great deal.'...they strongly believe that they personally and the United States as a whole can take actions to reduce global warming.”

##### Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Heavy news consumers that seek information from a variety of sources – print, television, web, and radio.
- Very likely to act according to their beliefs (purchasing energy efficient products, using alternative transportation, etc.).
- Strong supporters of policies that require higher energy efficiency for buildings and cars, utilities to produce more renewable energy, and international treaties to reduce emissions.

**Concerned** (22% of Americans):

"The Concerned...see [climate change] as less of a threat to themselves or their families than Alarmed Americans do.... Despite their lower levels of perceived personal threat, they nonetheless strongly support aggressive government policies and say they are willing to change their own climate change-related behaviors."

Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Active users of news media (print, web, radio, TV), but not as much as Alarmed Americans.
- Slightly less likely than Alarmed Americans to take personal action in buying energy efficient products and using alternative transportation.
- Strong supporters of policies that require higher energy efficiency for buildings and cars, utilities to produce more renewable energy, and international treaties to reduce emissions.

**Cautious** (20% of Americans):

"Cautious Americans...are somewhat less convinced that global warming is happening or caused by humans....On average, they believe that global warming will begin to harm people further into the future – between 10 and 25 years from now....They are much less likely than Concerned Americans to believe that the actions of a single person will make any difference, and modestly less likely to believe that either they personally or the U.S. as a nation, can take actions to reduce global warming."

Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Most likely to "trust the media to deliver the news accurately" – particularly from TV sources. Least likely to listen to the radio or use the internet to get news.
- Somewhat less likely than Concerned Americans to take personal action in buying energy efficient products and using alternative transportation.
- Oppose tax increases on gasoline and electricity, but show some support for other policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Unconcerned** (12% of Americans):

"...although members of this segment are significantly less concerned about global warming than are members of the Cautious segment, they are stronger supporters of government policies to combat global warming and are more willing to change their behavior. Their willingness to change, despite low confidence in the reality of the threat, may reflect a 'better safe than sorry' stance...."

Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Mostly likely to read newspapers – particularly local newspapers. They are also above average listeners of AM talk radio.
- More likely than Cautious and similar to Concerned Americans in taking personal action around purchasing energy efficient products and using alternative transportation.
- Support policies that require higher energy efficiency for buildings and cars, utilities to produce more renewable energy, and international treaties to reduce emissions.

**Doubtful** (16% of Americans):

"Members of this segment are significantly less likely to believe that global warming is happening or human caused. Of those who think it might be happening, most see it as a distant threat that won't harm people for at least 50 years."

Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Higher than average distrust of news media, but also have higher than average rates of radio use.
- Somewhat likely to buy energy efficient appliances, but are unwilling to increase use of public transportation.
- Modestly in favor of climate change policies that have no direct cost to consumers.

**Dismissive** (11% of Americans):

"Members of this segment are not all convinced that global warming is happening and therefore don't support any form of societal response."

Communications and Policy Preferences:

- Least likely to read national or local newspapers, and most likely to watch conservative television and listen to AM talk radio.
- Somewhat likely to buy energy efficient appliances, but are unwilling to increase use of public transportation.
- Modestly in favor of climate change policies that have no direct cost to consumers, but strongly opposed to the U.S. becoming party to an international climate treaty.

Based on this attitudinal analysis, **Alarmed** and **Concerned** constituents will be most receptive to messaging about net-zero initiatives and are likely to actively seek information about taking personal action to reduce their carbon footprint. These groups are likely to find City-provided information and resources on web and social media platforms on their own.

**Doubtful** and **Dismissive** residents are likely to be unreceptive to climate change information and resources; even if messaging and communications reach this group, they are unlikely to adopt emissions-reducing behaviors, particularly with regard to using public transportation. Since increasing the use of alternative modes of transportation will be key to achieving community-wide net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in Austin, these are not the audience segments to target with messaging around those initiatives.

The City's best opportunity for broadening participation in the choices and behaviors that reduce greenhouse gas emissions is to target outreach and engagement activities toward **Cautious** and **Unconcerned** audiences, who may take action if provided with helpful educational materials and tools that make it easy to act. Messages that may resonate with these groups should emphasize the fact that Austin is already experiencing negative impacts from climate change, the importance of individual actions in making a difference, and that there are many benefits that come from taking action in addition to emissions reduction. Communications channels that are likely to help reach these audience segments include local newspapers, AM talk radio, and local television news programs.

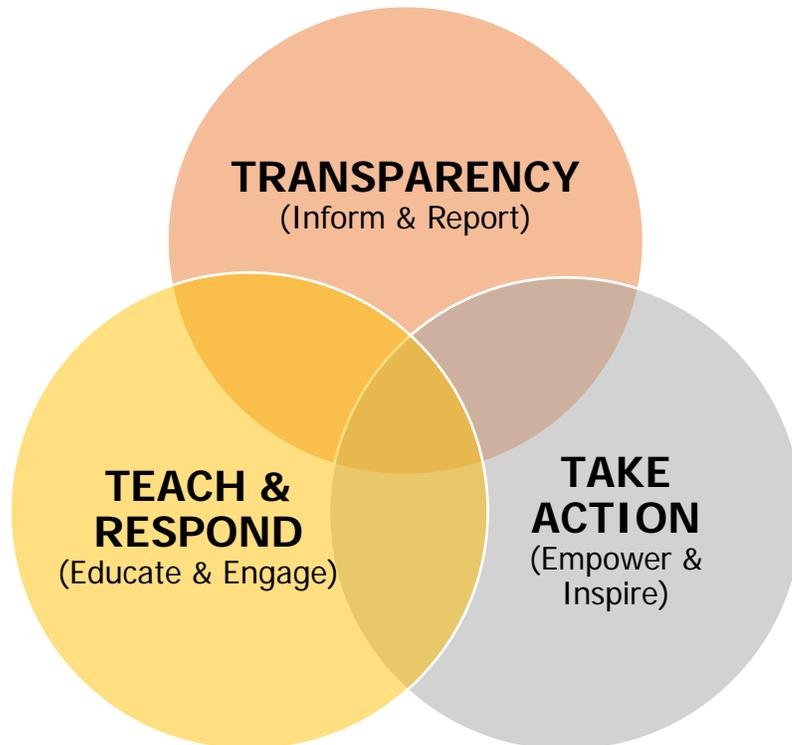
**Overall Goal:**

Achieve widespread adoption of behaviors that reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet the 2020 interim target, so that over time, these behaviors become the “new normal” for Austin residents and result in a thriving, more resilient city for generations to come.

**Communications and Outreach Objectives:**

1. **Inform:** Provide information about the City of Austin’s climate leadership and commitment to net-zero community-wide emissions.
2. **Report:** Regularly share updates about progress toward meeting targets for emissions reductions.
3. **Educate:** Teach about climate science, carbon footprints, and what net-zero emissions means – with an emphasis that is specific to Austin.
4. **Empower:** Provide resources and tools that make it easy for everyone in Austin to take action.
5. **Inspire:** Motivate local businesses, organizations, and residents to take action to help meet the net-zero goal.
6. **Engage:** Provide opportunities for conversations and learning about climate change, as well as ways to reduce or avoid emissions.

These objectives will provide transparency around emissions reduction policies and initiatives, educate the community about climate change and respond to questions or confusion, and help Austinites adopt behaviors that support the net-zero goal:



**Challenges:**

1. Limited Office of Sustainability resources and budget for communications activities aimed at the greater Austin community on a continuous basis over the long-term.
2. Difficulty in reaching some audience demographics due to language barriers, education levels, and access to communications channels.
3. Complexity of subject matter and long-range timeframe of climate impacts, which is difficult to summarize and distill into impactful, easy-to-understand content.
4. Resistance to climate change information and the net-zero goal from some audiences.

**Key Overarching Messages:**

1. Climate impacts everything in the natural and built environments.
2. Getting to net-zero ensures a safe, healthy, vibrant Austin for many years to come.
3. Everyone in Austin must take action to achieve the net-zero emissions goal.
4. Taking action to achieve net-zero emissions addresses many other challenges facing Austin.

**Supporting Themes:**

1. In addition to avoiding greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy, reducing waste, and using alternative transportation:
  - Reduces dependence on foreign oil.
  - Creates new jobs and a strong local economy.
  - Saves money.
  - Protects the environment.
2. We all need to protect what we love – Austin.
  - We all love Austin for the special place that it is and want to keep it that way.
  - Austin isn't a dumping ground for trash OR carbon emissions.
  - Taking action to live more sustainability protects this place we call home – now and for future generations.

## **Tactical Plan:**

### Content and Resources:

Materials that **inform** and **report** on what the City of Austin is doing to mitigate the impact of climate change are provided at [www.austintexas.gov/climate](http://www.austintexas.gov/climate). This includes Council Resolutions, climate projections for Central Texas, updates on progress to Council, and community-wide greenhouse gas inventories, as well as those for the City of Austin's municipal operations.

A toolkit of resources designed to **educate** and **empower** Austinites about what they can do to support the net-zero goal, is also hosted at [www.austintexas.gov/climate](http://www.austintexas.gov/climate) and will be distributed through social media platforms, promoted through advertising, and provided as handouts at Town Hall Meetings, community events and presentations over the course of FY 2016-17. This toolkit includes:

- A 2-minute video about climate change in Austin, what's in the Austin Community Climate Plan, and ways to help reduce the community carbon footprint (*production is currently underway with completion anticipated this Fall*).
- Easy, Intermediate and Advanced Action tip sheets that offer helpful suggestions for Austinites to cut their carbon (*Spanish versions of these documents will be also be available this Fall*).
- Links to City of Austin programs, rebates, and incentives that support emissions reduction.
- Quarterly white papers from subject matter experts about climate change and emissions reduction.

### Campaigns:

The following communications campaigns will be implemented to **inspire** everyone community-wide to take action:

- Net Zero Heroes (monthly profiles of community members taking action, shared through social media and other digital platforms) – *currently underway*
- Protect This! (monthly social media posts and blogs that pair a tip for reducing emissions with iconic images of Austin) – *to be launched in early 2017*
- Assess opportunities to engage with the business community through programs such as Austin Green Business Leaders or Austin's 2030 District about ways to reduce their organizational carbon footprint.

### Content Delivery Platforms:

- Digital (web, e-newsletters, social media):  
**Alarmed** and **Concerned** audiences are the most likely segments to seek information about climate change and what they can do to help on online platforms. Content about climate change and tips for reducing emissions, as well as dates for community events and opportunities to learn more will be provided for these audiences through the following digital platforms:
  - Climate web pages at [www.austintexas.gov/climate](http://www.austintexas.gov/climate) (updated as needed)
  - Facebook posts (weekly)
  - Blog posts (monthly)
  - Office of Sustainability Rethink/ e-newsletter articles (bi-monthly)
  - NextDoor (quarterly)

- Advertising:
 

Paid advertising will target **Cautious** and **Unconcerned** segments to expand audience reach beyond Alarmed and Concerned groups. Advertising will link to materials that **educate** about the climate change impacts that Austin is already experiencing; resources that **empower** taking action with simple, low or no-cost ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and stories from people throughout Austin that **inspire** participation in meeting the net-zero goal. Advertising is likely to include:

  - Facebook ads and boosts to promote Net Zero Heroes, posts about net-zero benefits for Austin, tips, and City resources that can help citizens take action
  - Radio and television advertisements to promote the climate education video, community emissions reduction challenges, and community events
  - Limited advertising in print publications to recognize Net Zero Heroes
  
- Media:
 

To reach more of the **Cautious** and **Unconcerned**, newsworthy initiatives or outcomes will be pitched for coverage in local media, including Spanish-language media. Opportunities to share tips and resources on local lifestyle morning or community-interest programming will also be explored. Some of these might include:

  - A retrospective of the 2016 Net Zero Heroes
  - How to cut your carbon by using less energy
  - How to waste less and lower your carbon footprint
  - Ways to get out of your car more often and avoid traffic congestion

In-depth coverage of more technical information, such as climate projections, resilience and adaptation strategies, and the community-wide carbon footprint, will be explored as a series of stories in local newspapers and print publications.
  
- Internal and External Partners:
 

The Office of Sustainability will continue to work with internal and external partners to cross promote and share social media posts, blog posts, and web links. These partners include:

  - Austin Energy
  - Austin Transportation Department
  - Austin Resource Recovery
  - Communications and Public Information Office
  - Capital Metro

Engagement Opportunities:

Opportunities to **engage** in discussions with the community about climate change will be offered throughout the year; the topics for these events will be continuously refined based on the insights gained from these conversations to address questions people have, misperceptions or confusion about climate change, or emissions reduction activities that seem particularly challenging for residents. Initial engagement opportunities will include:

- Reddit AMA (Ask Me Anything) sessions *(to launch Fall of 2016)*:
  - The Impacts of Climate Change in Austin
  - Austin's Carbon Footprint
  - What the City of Austin is Doing About Climate Change
  - Ways to Cut Your Carbon Footprint

- Community-wide rethink/ mobile app Earth Month Challenge *(to launch April of 2017)*
- Participation / representation at various community events throughout Austin *(on-going throughout FY 2016-17)*
- Presentations to faith-based groups, neighborhood associations, senior centers, and as part of programming at branch libraries and community centers *(on-going throughout FY 2016-17)*
- City staff who are subject-matter experts will be available for presentations through a Request a Speaker portal on [www.austintexas.gov/climate](http://www.austintexas.gov/climate) *(on-going throughout FY 2016-17, as requested)*

**Measures of Success:**

1. Creation of a suite of tools and resources that help the community take action (Easy, Intermediate, and Advanced tip sheets; educational video; links to City programs, rebates, and resources).
2. Reach 500,000 people with educational content about climate change and how to take action through digital and advertising platforms.
3. Engage with 5,000 people through online discussions, community events, and group presentations.
4. 10,000,000 pounds of CO2 emissions avoided *(as documented through the rethink/ mobile app during April 2017 Earth Month Challenge).*