



GREEN EVENTS GUIDEBOOK



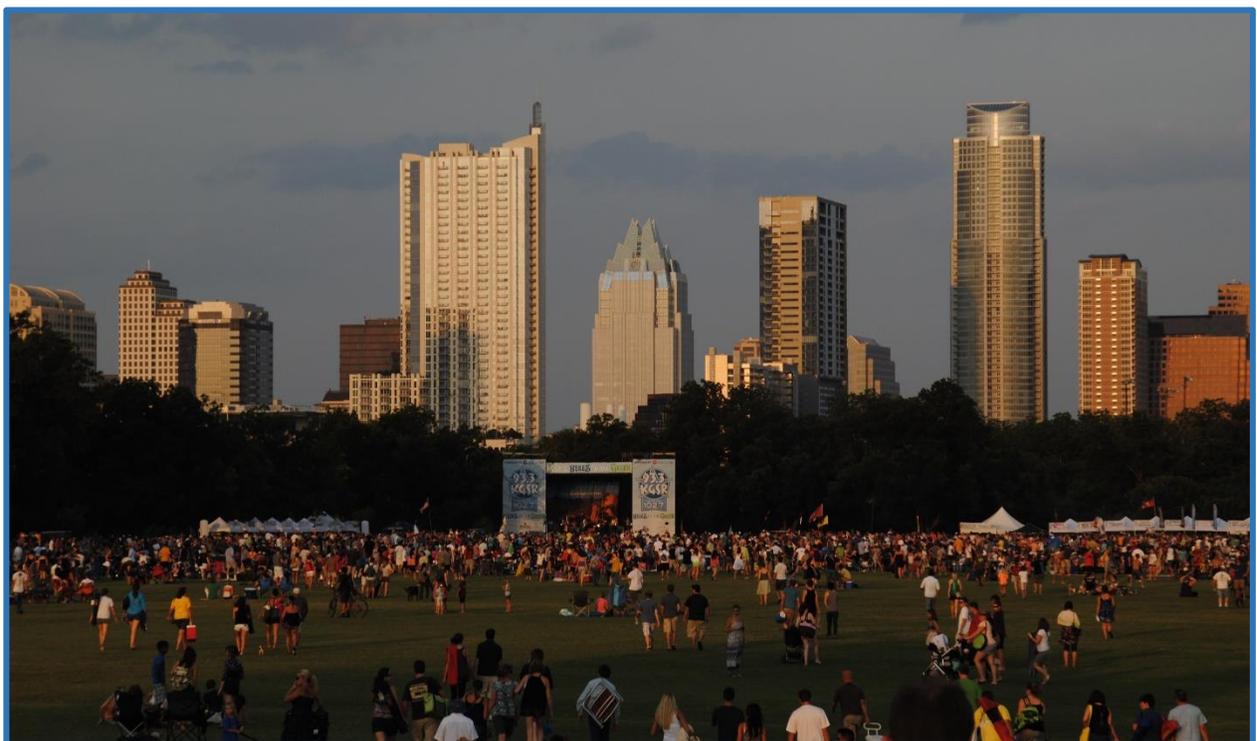
A planning tool to help event organizers coordinate a sustainable green event in the city of Austin





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About this Guide

Austin is home to hundreds of events each year, including street parades, park festivals, sporting competitions, conferences and expos, and business functions. While these events contribute to the local economy and bring our community together, events use many of our cities' resources and have an environmental impact. Each special event is unique and may experience different green challenges.

Although sustainable management planning is one of many things an event organizer must do, it is often the last priority and doesn't receive ample planning time. When event organizers place green initiatives at the very core of their planning process, the results for a healthy and clean environment benefit everyone, including residents and visitors.

The City of Austin created this guidebook to provide event organizers with information about general requirements and best practices to host a sustainable event.

Green Event Benefits

- A green event could have a positive impact on your stakeholders including vendors, attendees, exhibitors, performers, businesses, volunteers, local municipal authorities, and the general public.
- Early planning and implementing green practices into your event will not only result in less trash sent to the local landfill, but could also lower costs for your organization and third party vendors.
- As an event organizer, planning and implementing a green event demonstrates environmental leadership.
- Educate other event organizers how to also plan a green event. Use trainings and workshops to share ideas, resources and responsible practices throughout the industry.
- Increasing awareness of the need for greener events, expands the market for sustainable commodities/service, making them more accessible.
- Contributing to green event growth and supporting the local economy can potentially produce green job opportunities.

Green Event Objectives

- Evaluate and Research** - Identify potential green issues and research the event's potential impacts. You will need tools and resources to establish the importance of potential issues, and techniques to decide which issues to manage and when.
- Education, Communication and Outreach** - Ensure all stakeholders (internal and external) and decision-makers are actively engaged and committed to reaching sustainability goals together.
- Measurement and Reporting** – Measure your performance and set goals for continual improvement before your event, on event day, and post event.
- Promotion and Recognition** – Seek opportunities to communicate sustainability ideas and accomplishments through marketing and informational tools (i.e. website, social media).



Green Events Guidelines: Overview

The City of Austin encourages innovation that addresses sustainability. Sustainability means finding a balance among three sets of goals: 1) prosperity and jobs, 2) conservation and the environment, and 3) community health, equity, and cultural vitality. It means taking positive, proactive steps to protect Austin's quality of life now, and for future generations.

Sustainable Development Principles: Apply the following to your event planning process.

- Inclusivity
- Transparency
- Integrity

Environmental: Support sustainable production practices within event production.

- Resource utilization and conservation
- Materials choice
- Releases to land, air, and water
- Emissions reduction

Economic: Support regional economies by sourcing from locally-owned small and mid-sized operations.

- Local economy
- Direct economic impacts
- Indirect economic impacts

Management: Demonstrate commitment to sustainable development principles.

- Create procedures and documentation for implementation of sustainable event management.
- Assess and audit the event to identify sustainable practice opportunities.

Policy: Consider the purpose and values of the organization as they relate to sustainability.

- Create a sustainability management policy for events and include your stakeholders, vendors, attendees, and service providers.

Stakeholders: Communicate to all those who can make a positive impact and support a green event.

- Identify stakeholders/interested parties.
- Establish the needs, expectations, and resources available of stakeholders.
- Develop ways to engage stakeholders in event sustainability.
- Use communications and demonstrations to convey sustainable practices.

Destination and Venue: Consider local sustainable impacts in the area and the role the venue plays.

- Assess destination's sustainability credentials and potential for supporting sustainable event production.
- Create event-specific sustainability initiatives with available resources.

Measurement and Reporting: Measure your performance outcomes and set goals for improvement.

- Set performance objectives and realistic targets.
- Monitor, measure, analyze, and report your performance.
- Consider recommendations and opportunities for improvement.
- Share your findings and reports with stakeholders/interested parties.



Innovations in Sustainability: As the event industry evolves, include green practices to support the environment.

- For large events, consider creating an App with all conference content, instead of a bulky paper program.
- Utilize email and paperless communications wherever possible in lieu of printed or mailed materials.
- Use 2-side printing for all conference materials. Use 100% recycled content paper, lightweight paper stock, acid-free paper, soy inks, and FSC certified paper.
- Consider recycled and organic materials as well as worker welfare for event-related merchandise.
- Minimize “swag” that will end up in the landfill.
- Provide education & resources for how attendees can be greener at home.





Green Events Guidelines: Food

The food we eat not only affects our bodies, it impacts the planet as well. In the United States, food typically travels around 1,500 miles from where it was farmed to your plate. This has big implications for the local economy, our resources, and the size of our carbon footprint.

General Permit Requirements

Under City Code, event planner, operators and vendors shall comply with City of Austin Code including the [Temporary Food Service General Requirements](#), as well as all [Texas Food Establishment Rules](#).

Getting Started

Catering choices can have a considerable impact on the footprint of your event in terms of emissions generated and resources consumed in growing, processing, transporting, and disposing of food. Purchasing locally and/or organically produced food reduces our impact on the environment and improves our local economy.

Additionally, increasing the number of healthy food options for staff and visitors, event organizers can help to reduce health care costs and improve employees' health while supporting community health. Healthy food options should include fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grains, plant and lean protein sources, minimal added sugars, fats and sodium, and small right-sized portions.

Pre-Event Planning

- When considering caterers and vendors, give preference to those who have an environmental policy or social responsibility plan in place and who pay employees a living wage.
- Select locally harvested, seasonal, organic, Fair Trade and humane foods and beverages whenever possible.
- Include healthy and minimally processed food options on menus.
- Offer nutritious vegetarian and vegan menu options.
- Whenever possible, do not offer bottled water but instead provide tap water in bulk water dispensers and encourage the use of refillable containers. Compostable wax paper cups can be used if refillable containers are not offered.
- Encourage caterers and vendors to use reusable service ware such as plates, coffee cups, and glasses. If that is not an option, opt for compostable service ware to ensure ease of disposal with all waste directed towards a single composting bin.
- Avoid plastic wrapped cutlery sets that include items that customers may not need or want. If reusable or compostable options are not available, use plastic as a last resort and have customers select only what they need from a service ware station.
- Encourage food vendors to serve condiments in bulk rather than single serving packets.
- Plan to recycle yellow grease (i.e. used cooking oil).
- If composting, recycling, and landfill bins are provided, have volunteers monitoring the stations to help direct materials to the appropriate bin. (See Waste Management Guidelines for additional information).
- Research and coordinate with a nearby food pantry or food permitted facility that is willing to pick-up or accept food donations. Train all staff on proper food handling, donation, and waste management plans.



Event Day

Sustainable Food and Water

- Use of clear signage to encourage patrons to dispose of any waste in the appropriate bins.
- Label leftover food for donation to a food bank or pantry in accordance with [Department of Health requirements](#).
- Handle food in a way that will minimize waste and optimize opportunities for donation.

After the Event

- Handle surplus food safely and transport to donation recipient, making sure to maintain proper temperatures.

Resources

Feed people:

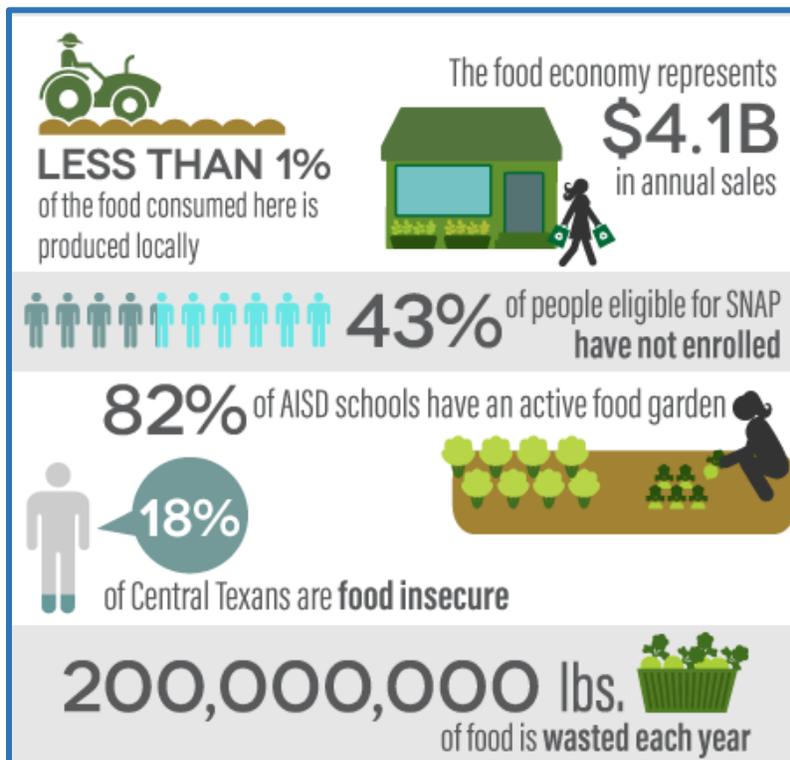
- City of Austin [Food Donation Guidelines & Resources](#)
- [Keep Austin Fed](#)
- [Central Texas Food Bank](#)

Feed animals:

- [Growers Alliance of Central Texas](#)

More information:

- [E.P.A. Food Recovery Hierarchy](#)
- [U.S. Zero Waste Business Council](#)
- [Feeding America](#)



For additional information and resources, please visit the City of Austin's [Office of Sustainability](#) website.



Green Events Guidelines: Energy

Energy is a key component for production; to operate a venue, light the stages, provide sound to an audience, and maintain food and beverage temperatures. Sustainable energy management can be a complex issue; however, the solutions to minimizing the impact of energy use for events are simple: reduce demand and use renewable energy supply.

Getting Started

Energy efficiency is simply the process of doing more with less. Including energy efficiency, renewable energy and shedding some light on the issues surrounding the environment is a great way to start and perhaps influence your producers and audience.

Pre-Event Planning

Consider the following steps when investigating the best energy strategy for almost any type of event.

Establish Resources

- Gain support internally and externally, and figure out what resources and information are needed versus what exist.
- Work within your organization, supply chain, production staff, energy providers, and program managers.

Research Energy Demand

- Evaluate what needs to be powered.
- Record and measure current, historical (if available), energy consumption.
- Identify activities and behaviors that may increase energy demand and come up with efficient and economic solutions.

Engagement and Commitment

- Who and how do stakeholders need to be engaged?
- Clear communication is needed between organizers and providers.

Evaluate Feasibility

- Estimate efficiencies and savings. Compare the costs for more efficient equipment and using renewable energy.
- Consider the timing of the event so that energy demand reduces.

Set Objectives and Establish Planning

- Confirm where reductions can take place and create an action plan.
- Reconfirm tasks and engage all your stakeholders.
- Identify what you will measure and how you will capture data.

Temporary Generator Use

- Conduct a thorough assessment of likely power needs with production staff and the power contractor.
- Obtain historic consumption data from fuel and/or energy bills (or energy supplier, if necessary).
- Consider and plan for the following: placement of generators, loads and usage patterns; cable distribution; and usage peaks.



- Use generators that run on alternative fuels, such as, biodiesel, compressed natural gas (CNG), or propane.
- Ensure power factor correction devices are installed in the generator to avoid using larger generators than required.
- Compare your fuel usage to industry benchmarks to get an idea of whether you are using more or less energy than the average festival of your size.

Venue Choice

- Consider using a venue that has been designed and built for maximum energy efficiency.
- Does the venue site operate through a renewable energy source (e.g. wind power or solar)?
- Check if venue or business is a City of Austin Office of Sustainability [Green Business Leader](#).
- Request if the venue can meter your event's power consumption for reporting and data collecting.

Lighting

- Whenever and wherever possible, remember to turn lights off when not in use.
- If the event is held indoors, try using compact fluorescent lamps (CFL) instead of incandescent light bulbs.
- Do not throw broken bulbs into landfill trash. Disposal of CFLs can be found on the [EPA website](#).
- Use mobile light towers that are solar or hybrid powered.

Event Day

Implement Energy Efficiencies

- Use stage lighting, sound and visuals with energy consumption in mind.
- Daylight is used in preference to powered lights.
- Windows are opened and fans are used over powered cooling.
- Don't leave battery charges (for phones, two-way radios and other equipment) on all day long.
- Assess and report power consumption patterns during the event for future planning.
- Ask venues to only run escalators and HVAC systems during the event hours.

After the Event

- Ensure all generators, tower lights and other fuel consumption are recorded by location on site.
- Check your electricity level by requesting a consumption meter read.
- Identify where changes can be made in the planning process to achieve better energy efficiency.





Green Events Guidelines: Transportation

A great way to go green is to reduce the number of vehicles driving to/from and parking at your event. Not only does it reduce emissions and improve air quality, event attendees will be less stressed and enjoy the experience more by walking, biking, taking public transit, hopping on a Pedi cab, or taking any other sustainable option that does not leave them stuck in traffic!

Getting Started

Active transportation and shared mobility planning and management are key elements to the success of any event, and helps the city manage overall mobility during event seasons. The city encourages event organizers to offer and promote active transportation and shared mobility options to and from events, including public transit, biking, walking, bike share, and ridesharing/carpooling. When planning your event, consider the active transportation, shared mobility, and ride hailing resources below.

The following guidelines provide the basis for forming a plan for managing transportation demand to your event.

Pre-Event Planning

Transportation Information

- Gather information and resources for all sustainable transportation modes and advertise to event staff and event attendees through the event website. See “resources” section below for all information regarding sustainable transportation modes.

Capital Metro (public transit)

- Find the routes that specifically serve your event and download the maps on the [Capital Metro](#) website to share with your event attendees. Provide specific guidance on how to download the Capital Metro app and utilize specific routes to travel to your event.
- Contact Capital Metro for custom solutions for large events.

Bicycling

- Provide self-service and/or valet parking to encourage participants to arrive by bike. Temporary bike racks are available for rent from several community-based nonprofit organizations and other sources. Contact the City’s Active Transportation and Street Design program at bicycle@austintexas.gov for options on temporary bicycle parking solutions.
- Set a goal of providing bicycle parking for a baseline percentage of anticipated attendees and monitor usage during your event (see “After the Event” section below). Plan to increase this amount next year.
- Provide bike information such as route maps, safety tips, and parking locations to event attendees.

Bike Share

- Provide bikeshare information, including how to register and use, and locations of bikeshare stations.
- Contact bike share vendor to discuss custom solutions for large events, including event-specific pick-up/drop-off locations.



Rideshare/Carpool

- Provide information on how to find carpool partners to your event, including utilizing the regional rideshare platform, myCommuteSolutions.com

Carshare

- Provide information on utilizing car share, like Car2Go and Zipcar, to your event.
- Consider providing event-specific pick-up and drop-off locations for car share.
- Contact these vendors for custom solutions for large events.

Ground Transportation and Ride Hailing

- Consider reaching out to [Ground Transportation](#) companies, including: taxis, ride hailing, shuttles, pedicabs and electric low speed vehicles, limousines, and charter services, to provide transportation options to attendees

Parking

- Consider collaborating with the City and Capital Metro to identify remote park-and-ride lots and providing connections to your event.

Event Day

Venue/Site Selection Considerations:

- The venue/site is located within walking distance from public transport hubs.
- The venue/site is accessible by bike and bike parking is available.
- Electric vehicle charging stations are available at the venue.

Attendee Travel

- A program to encourage cycling and walking to the event is in place.
- Shuttles are arranged to transport attendees to and from hotels and surrounding locations.
- A car pool/car-share program is in place and promoted to attendees.
- Attendees are rewarded or incentivized to walk, cycle, use public transport or car pool.

Exhibitors and Vendors

- Encouraged to source local staff supplies.
- Encouraged to consider load sharing.
- Storage of exhibit packaging is provided to reduce transport runs.

After the Event

- Collect ticketing geographic data if you requested a postcode upon sale of ticket. This may help identify the most popular locations your attendees arrived from.
- Host a post event meeting with your transportation providers and evaluate production travel (what modes were available) and attendee travel (what modes were used). Discuss ways to increase use of active travel and shared mobility for future events.
- Conduct attendee survey during and/or after event and capture transportation feedback and suggestions.
- Set transport related goals and objectives for next year.



Resources

Capital Metro (public transit)

- ❑ Catch a ride with [Capital Metro](#), the public transportation provider in Central Texas. [Capital Metro](#) provides a network of bus routes, new MetroRapid Route 801 and MetroRail service to keep people moving into and out of downtown and throughout the city.
- ❑ Download the new [CapMetro App](#) to buy passes and plan trips on the go.
- ❑ Find the routes that specifically serve your event and download the maps on the [Capital Metro](#) website to share with your event attendees.
- ❑ Contact Capital Metro for custom solutions for large events.

Bicycling

- ❑ Riding a bike is a fun, healthy and environmentally friendly way to get around Austin. Providing bicycle parking and bike routes to your event can encourage participants to go by bike. Bike valet (hosted bike parking) service is available from organizations such as Bike Austin and Bike Texas. You can find more information including route maps, and safety tips on the [Active Transportation Division's](#) Bicycle resources page. You may also email them at bicycle@austintexas.gov for more guidance and support.

Bike Share

- ❑ [Austin B-cycle](#) provides a network of 24 hour/day, on demand bicycle stations to the urban core. Contact Austin B-cycle for custom solutions for large events.



Rideshare/Carpool

- ❑ The [myCommuteSolutions](#) site can help you find a carpool buddy to an event. Post your trip and see if a neighbor is also heading in the same direction. Getting started is easy - register today and start finding carpool partners as soon as you verify your email.

Carshare

- ❑ View [car2go](#) and [zipcar](#) services for short-term car rental options around Austin. Contact these vendors for custom solutions for large events.

Ground Transportation and Ride Hailing

- ❑ Find [Ground Transportation](#) options, including: taxis, ride hailing, shuttles, pedicabs and electric low speed vehicles, limousines, and charter services.



For additional information and resources, please visit the City of Austin's [City Stage](#) website.



Green Events Guidelines: Emissions Reduction/Air Quality

Greenhouse gases occur at every turn within the event industry and come from several sources: electricity from the grid, burning up fuel in portable generators, gas in the kitchen, fuel in vehicles, and air travel.

The City of Austin Air Quality Program's goal is to promote healthy outdoor air for all residents and visitors while also reducing traffic congestion. The strategies below aid in improving the region's compliance with the Federal Ozone Standard. When considering emissions reductions, event organizers should evaluate the environmental impact of energy use at any event—indoor, outdoor, small, or large.

The following information has been developed to help event organizers identify emission reductions opportunities before and during their event.

Select, Purchase, and Use Renewable Energy

- Choose sustainable and lower emission sourced electricity for your event (e.g. onsite solar photovoltaic).
- Utilize event vehicles and shuttles that use fuels other than gasoline or diesel, such as, B20 (or higher) biodiesel, compressed natural gas (CNG), propane, hybrids or electric.

Implement Fuel Efficiencies

- Enforce anti-idling practices for event vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 14,000 pounds or less and event equipment on and adjacent to the event site. Idling should be limited to five (5) minutes.
- Exceptions to the idling limit of five (5) minutes are:
 - Idling for emergency response purposes;
 - Idling that is necessary for a component of mechanical operation, maintenance, diagnostic purposes; or
 - Idling is for the health or safety of the equipment operator.
 - Specific motor vehicle idling restrictions are required by City ordinance for vehicles that have a gross vehicle weight rating of greater than 14,000 pounds, refer to Austin, Texas, Code of Ordinances, Title 6, Chapter 6-1, Article 3 and visit the [Engine Off webpage](#).
 - Post 5 minute idle limit signs in areas where vehicles will pick-up/drop-off event attendees and in parking areas.

Other Recommended Actions

- Purchase Carbon Offsets to completely replace the greenhouse gas emissions attributed to your energy use.
- Locate idling vehicles and generators away from, and minimize operation near, sensitive receptors including, but not limited to, outside operable windows or fresh air intakes, under tree limbs and foliage, and near areas where people congregate.
- Anti-idling policy in place.



Green Events Guidelines: Water

With more than 300 sunny days each year, Austin locals and visitors spend plenty of time outdoors. Providing water is a health and safety recommendation for most events. Sustainable water management includes reducing water wastage, eliminating the use of chemicals, and protecting the environment.

General Permit Requirements

Under City Code, event planner, operators and vendors shall:

- Comply with City of Austin Code Title 6 (Environmental Control and Conservation), Chapter 6-5 (Water Quality). Do not discharge (directly or indirectly) into the water supply or onto the land that drains into the water supply: garbage, litter, sewage, effluent, industrial waste, other waste, or other substance that causes pollution.
- Comply with City of Austin Water Conservation Ordinance (Austin Code, Chapter 6-4. Water Conservation).
- Comply with Plumbing Code and Mechanical Code provisions requiring water efficient fixtures and equipment.

Getting Started

Sustainable best practice recommends reducing demand on water sources, strain on sewer systems and to protect natural water bodies from the effects of event activities.

Although it cost time and money to implement pollution prevention measures in advance of an event, the expense to clean up spills and restore property is much greater when prevention planning has not been done. Small, seemingly insignificant leaks and spills can become large contamination problems over time if steps are not taken for containment, cleanup, and prevention. Clean up and disposal after hazardous material spills is often extremely expensive. Spills can impact future sale or transfer of property, public health and safety, aquatic life, wildlife, and critical environmental features that may be nearby. Clean up costs, restoration costs, and real estate depreciation are not the only possible pollution costs. Fines from City, State, County, and Federal agencies can add thousands of dollars to the overall cost of a polluting discharge.

Pre-Event Planning

When beginning your planning process for your event, consider the following:

- What is “water required” during the event and how will it be supplied to the event/venue?
- What types of wastewater will be produced, and from what source?
- How can wastewater be disposed of? What is the ‘usual’ approach and how can I make it more sustainable?
- Are there natural waterways in the immediate vicinity to the event site that need consideration and protection?
- Are any chemical/toxic substances used and could they make their way into wastewater or natural water systems?



Water Conservation

- Consideration for how water is to be used and saved should be part of your event plan.
- Prohibit sale or distribution of water in single-use plastic bottles and provide approved drinking water at no charge to attendees from central sources dispensed in a safe/sanitary manner consistent with the number of expected attendees.

Flood Prevention

- Determine if your event is in a floodplain by accessing the [City of Austin FloodPro](#). You'll be able to find useful information about flooding in Austin. If the venue is in a floodplain, it might be a prudent safety measure to relocate it if there is a major storm warning.

Pollution Prevention

- Are there natural waterways with riparian vegetation (natural vegetative growth adjacent to rivers, creek, streams, lakes, bays, wetlands) in the immediate vicinity of the event site that need protection? For all events along or near waterways, the vegetative buffers that protect the water quality of our streams and reservoirs need to be preserved, protected, and carefully managed. Plan your event to prevent access points to these areas and restrict foot traffic that compacts soils and can destroy healthy plant communities.
- Are any chemical/toxic substances used that could make their way into wastewater or natural water systems? For example, chemical products applied for dust suppression, fertilizer, pesticide or herbicide control, soil stabilization, etc. must be used according to manufacturer's instructions, must not be applied during or just before a rain event, and must not be discharged or run off to the storm sewer system or a waterway, or applied in a riparian zone. Seek products with non-hazardous ingredients.
- Events involving placing items into a waterway such as floating ducks, tea lights, paper lanterns, etc. must be planned in a manner to ensure 100% recovery of each item from the waterway by use of methods such as buoys, netting, fishing line, etc.
- Avoid use of decorations that can be harmful to wildlife such as helium balloons, foil streamers, and plastic ribbon.
- If using powders at running events and obstacle courses, plan ahead to contain them in specific areas such as with tarps for ease of cleanup afterwards. Although they claim to be just corn starch with non-toxic dye, they can contain other chemicals of concern.
- For art events, choose environmentally-friendly materials as much as possible.
- Events involving adding loose dirt, sand or similar materials such as with motorcycle jumps, monster jams, dirt bike races, etc., plan to utilize erosion and sedimentation controls to protect storm drain inlets and waterways.
- Be prepared for accidental spills by having adequate containment and cleanup materials on hand to prevent illegal discharges to storm drains and waterways. Train event staff ahead of time regarding when and how to use them.
- Food vendors must plan for sufficient waste storage capacity, and coordinate with waste haulers for service as needed to prevent container overflow.



- When planning for events that involve swimming in Lady Bird Lake, coordination is done through PARD, but WPD provides specific guidance. To reduce the risk of water-borne diseases, contact recreation is restricted based on rainfall events. Wait 7 days after a rain event greater than 1 inch, wait 3 days after a rain event greater than 0.5 inches, wait 1 day for rain events smaller than 0.5 inches.

Event Day

Water Conservation

By reducing the amount of water used, not only is an important resource conserved, but there is also a direct impact on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. This means reducing the need to transport water and sewage to and from the event. Consideration for how it is to be used and saved should be part of your event plan.

- Encourage the use of sites and venues that showcase the use of alternative on-site sources of water such as rainwater or AC condensate and native, drought tolerant landscapes, and “rainscapes” with signage explaining their water conservation and water quality benefits.
- Reduce water pressure.
- Provide approved drinking water at no charge to attendees from central sources dispensed in a safe/sanitary manner as an alternative to single-use bottled water consistent with the number of expected attendees.
- Reduce water demand through ‘water-wise’ grounds preparation and gardening.
- Have central stand-pipes and require water to be carried to food trucks/vendors.
- Use waterless urinals and toilets.
- Use hand-held misting sprays, rather than continually running misting stations.
- Supply hand sanitizer to reduce hand-wash water use.
- Use dust suppressant additives to reduce water volume used to dampen dust.
- Carry out water conservation messaging to your attendees and crew.

Pollution Prevention

- Store chemical products, such as those used for sanitation (i.e. port-a-potty disinfectant), fueling, cleaning, in a manner protected from stormwater runoff and prevented from discharge to the ground, storm drain or waterway.
- Secure outdoor decorations and other event materials (i.e. kites) so they don’t accumulate in the environment.
- Install tarps or other controls to contain powders used at running events or obstacle courses so they can be cleaned up afterwards.
- For outdoor art events, conduct surface preparation and application/installation in a manner that prevents potentially polluting discharges to the surrounding environment, storm drainage system, and waterways. Contain and collect wastewater and solid waste.



- Clean up accidental spills as they occur. If a spill reaches a storm drain or waterway, immediately notify the Watershed Protection Department by calling the 24-Hour Pollution Hotline at 512/974-2550.
- Food vendors (tents, trailers, and kiosks) must collect used cooking oil as well as wastewater generated from washing dishes, utensils, interior and exterior surfaces of the unit. Wastewater and used cooking oil must not be discharged to the ground, a storm drain or waterway.
- Food vendors must use receptacles intended for the waste to be stored inside them and receptacle lids must be kept closed.

After the Event

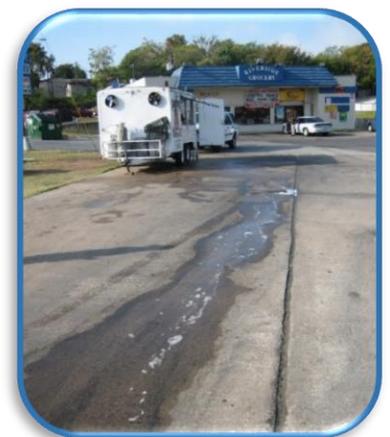
Water Conservation

- Measure and report total water consumed.
- Measure and report total wastewater created.
- Collect feedback from attendees, vendors, staff to understand successes, challenges and potential process improvements. Incorporate feedback into recommendations for future events.
- Inform management, stakeholders, vendors, and the public about the event's success by posting newsletters, social media announcements, or annual reports.



Pollution Prevention

- Dispose of wastewater and solid waste collected from art events, running events, obstacle courses properly. They must be kept out of our storm drain system and waterways. Contact the Watershed Protection Department (512/974-2550) for details.
- Dispose of food vendor wastewater (i.e. from dishes and hand washing) via a licensed liquid waste hauler, or transported to the registered Central Preparation Facility (CPF) / commissary for disposal via a sanitary drain permitted by Austin Water Industrial Waste Division (512-972-1060).
- Dispose of used cooking oil via a grease recycling hauler.
- If damaged, restore riparian areas and vegetative buffers along or near waterways impacted by event foot traffic. They must be restored according to requirements prescribed by the Watershed Protection Department, which may include soil decompaction, mulching, seeding, or even new planting. Contact Ana Gonzales (512/974-2929).



Resources

- [City of Austin Watershed Protection Department Pollution Prevention and Reduction Information](#)
- [Austin Water – Mobile Food Vendor Wastewater Disposal Guidelines](#)
- [City of Austin Used Cooking Oil Compliance Standards](#)
- [Contact Recreation in Town Lake as Impacted by Fecal Coliform Bacteria](#)

For additional information and resources, please visit [Austin Watershed Protection](#) or call 512-974-2550.



Green Events Guidelines: Waste Management

The City of Austin plays an important role in helping event organizers bring people together safely and successfully in both city-wide and neighborhood events. Austin Resource Recovery, the City department responsible for implementing policies and programs to achieve the City's Zero Waste goal, is committed to providing the necessary information for event organizers to create and implement effective waste management plans.

General Permit Requirements

All permit applications submitted to the Austin Center for Events must include a waste management plan. The plan should include details about onsite collection containers for landfill trash, recycling, and compost (i.e. dumpsters and receptacles for vendors and patrons). Event organizers should include detailed information about plans for the surrounding areas leading to the event, event setup, and post event cleaning associated with the event.

Material Prohibitions

Under City Code, event planners, operators and vendors are prohibited from distributing the following materials to event employees or attendees at any event held on City park grounds:

- Single Use Carryout Bags (City Code 15-6-7)
- Polystyrene (Styrofoam) (City Code 14-1-24)
- Glass containers (City Code 8-3-6)
 - This prohibition also applies to any event held within the glass prohibition area, which currently includes downtown and East Austin (City Code 9-14-12)

Getting Started

Special events often draw large crowds and produce a significant amount of waste, and it is important to maximize efforts to keep our streets, parks and communities clean. Planning a green event is a great way to show your commitment to Austin's Zero Waste goal and the environment.

For special events held on private commercial properties, the [Universal Recycling Ordinance](#) (URO) applies. The URO requires property owners and managers to provide tenants and employees convenient access to recycling. Commercial properties should provide at least a 1:1 ratio of recycling to landfill trash service capacity, and a recycling dumpster should be within 25 feet every landfill trash dumpster. Keep in mind the types of materials that will be generated during your event and consider increasing service levels as needed.

A successful green event is dependent on creating, implementing and communicating a comprehensive waste management program. Successful waste management planning considers everyone involved in the management of your event, including attendees. By developing guidelines for your event attendees, participants, vendors, and service providers, your event may generate less waste and save money on collection and disposal costs.



Pre-Event Planning

When beginning your planning process for your event, consider the following:

- Submit the required waste management plan with Austin Center for Events permit application.
- Perform a zero waste assessment before the event to identify types of materials that will be generated at the event.
- Consider appointing a “Green Event Leader” from your team to plan and manage your Zero Waste efforts.
- To reduce waste, consider online and email invitations or use an electronic system for guests’ responses and registration.

Communicate Plans and Set Expectations with Vendors

- Incorporate Zero Waste guidelines in vendor contracts. Less material brought to the event, means less material to pay to haul away.
- When composting collection is available, require that paper or compostable food service ware be used. For more information, visit the [Biodegradable Products Institute](#) (BPI).
- Encourage food vendors to serve condiments in bulk rather than single serving packets.
- Train vendors and staff on:
 - Signage and how to participate in recycling efforts
 - Breaking down all cardboard to maximize space
 - Keeping their areas clean
- If you anticipate heavier foot traffic, consider increasing recycling and trash dumpster service level.

Collection Bins

- Make recycling convenient! Pair each landfill trash bin with recycling and/or compost for attendee and vendor use.
- Contact [Keep Austin Beautiful](#) for free recycling bins for events.
- Purchase different colored bags to use for each stream for easy identification at the dumpsters (clear for recycling, black for trash, green for compost).
- Ensure vendors have access to a grease drum to recycle leftover grease.
- Utilize clear, bilingual signs with images indicating accepted materials.
- Create signs with items specific to your event with Austin Resource Recovery’s free [SignMaker](#).
- Plan to place bins in high foot traffic areas (e.g. activities, food vendors, guest seating and exits).

Dumpster Hauling Services

- Ensure sufficient recycling and landfill trash capacity (dumpster size and service frequency).
- If onsite services are inadequate, contract with a [City of Austin licensed hauler](#).
- Ask hauler about staffing and bins for attendees to use.
- If food and organic material (e.g. paper towels, soiled paper, food scraps) will be generated onsite, consider contracting with a [City of Austin licensed hauler](#) for their compost collection services. Make sure you understand what materials are accepted and what degree of contamination they will allow.
- When scheduling services, it is recommended that bins and dumpsters are ready to be used before vendors arrive to setup. Getting ready for an event generates trash too!



Reduction

- Provide water filling stations and encourage patrons to bring reusable water bottles.
- If difficult-to-recycle materials are anticipated (e.g. pallets, untreated scrap wood from a build, furniture), contact [Austin Materials Marketplace](#). A small fee may apply.

Education and Training

- Educate and train volunteers, event and cleaning staff, and vendors on Zero Waste procedures.
- Advertise the event will have recycling and/or compost containers through online and social media outlets.

Event Day

Before the event setup begins, make sure the Green Event Leader and other key event staff are equipped for success (e.g. event map with dumpster and collection station locations, signage to identify green vendors/locations, staff/volunteer roles and shifts). Consider staging a 'Zero Waste base' to keep supplies, including bags, gloves, extra maps and extra signs.

Set-Up

- All dumpsters are clearly labeled indicating the stream type in English and Spanish (landfill, recycling, compost) and can be read from afar and at night. If labels are missing, contact the hauler.
- Distinguishable liners for each bin type: black for landfill trash, clear for recycling and green for compost.
- Create collection stations by placing trash, recycling, compost bins together in visible and high volume areas (e.g. near food vendors).
- Staff and/or volunteers are familiar with dumpster locations, what materials are accepted in each stream.
- Assign staff and/or volunteers to monitor collection stations.
- Place Green Vendor signs on food trucks, event booths and near collection stations.
- Ensure food trucks/vendors have a collection system in place for back-of-house operations (e.g. cardboard recycling).



Execute

- Take pictures and monitor the collection stations and dumpsters throughout the event to ensure materials are handled properly.
- Pass along Zero Waste education to attendees through stage announcements.
- Showcase the event's success and publicize Zero Waste updates via social media and interviews.
- Ensure the Green Event Leader is available during the event to train volunteers and staff upon arrival.
- Check in with food trucks/vendors and their collection areas.



Tear Down

- Final sweep of all the bags and material after the event has concluded and vendors/food trucks have broken down and left the site.
- Leave the event site in better condition than how you found it.
- Coordinate and/or deliver any reusable, leftover food and material to appropriate organization.

After the Event

Reporting, Evaluation, and Promotion

- Complete a “Post Event” report (weight tickets, diversion rate, materials generated).
- Follow up with hauler for final weights or the amount of collected landfill trash, recycling and/or composting material.
- Collect feedback from attendees, vendors, staff to understand successes, challenges and potential process improvements. Incorporate feedback into recommendations for future events.
- Submit required documentation if event organizer applied for the Zero Waste Event Rebate.
- Inform management, stakeholders, vendors, and the public about the event’s success by posting newsletters, social media announcements, or annual reports.

Thank your volunteers, vendors, staff, and attendees for participating. Follow-up with electronic thank you notes to continue the zero waste trend. Consider sharing your post event report with your team once it’s completed.

Resources

Zero Waste Event Rebate. The City of Austin’s Zero Waste Event Rebate is an incentive for event organizers to make their outdoor public events more sustainable and help reduce the amount of trash sent to area landfills. Applicants who are eligible, may qualify to earn up to \$750 back on their recycling/composting costs (dumpsters, bins, and staff). Applications must be turned in prior to event. Visit [Zero Waste Event Rebate](#) for rules, eligibility, and requirements.

Keep Austin Beautiful. Keep Austin Beautiful provides recycling containers for free through their online [Container Loan Program](#)



For additional information and resources, please visit our [site](#) or email ARRspecialevents@austintexas.gov