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Office of Sustainability Action Agenda

The City of Austin's Office of Sustainability released its **2013 Sustainability Action Agenda Progress Report**. It highlights the City's Zero Waste goal and commitments to leading the way in the transformation from traditional waste collection to sustainable resource recovery and materials management. The Office of Sustainability works

to advance local sustainability and climate action by coordinating initiatives across the City. Launched on Earth Day 2012, the Sustainability Action Agenda tracks and reports the progress on 16 initiatives being delivered by Austin Resource Recovery.

The Progress Report highlights accomplishments related to the implementation of more than 180 projects spearheaded by the contributions of 24 City of Austin departments. To view the 2013 Austin Sustainability Action Agenda Progress Report in its entirety, visit: <http://bit.ly/atxsaa2013>.

2013 accomplishments highlighted in the report include:

- Expanding the **Universal Recycling Ordinance**, affecting multi-family apartments with more than 50 dwelling units and commercial office buildings larger than 100,000 square feet.
- Improving access to single-stream recycling services for more than 400 downtown businesses and residential customers by providing additional recycling containers, reducing unneeded trash receptacles and increasing the frequency of recycling pickups.
- Launching a residential **Curbside Organics Collection pilot program** to 7,900 homes.



Curbside Organics Collection Pilot Program Now Includes 14,000 Austin Households

This year we've added about 6,500 additional households to our Curbside Organics Collection Pilot. This is the second year of the pilot program, which rolled out to 7,500 households last January.

"During the first year of the pilot, the City collected more than 1,800 tons of organic materials, including food scraps, food-soiled paper and yard trimmings," said Austin Resource Recovery Director Bob Gedert. "As we add more residents to the pilot, we look forward to keeping even more organic materials out the landfill and composting them into a resource that adds beneficial nutrients to Central Texas soil."

When buried in a landfill, organic materials do not break down as they would in nature or in a compost pile. They decompose anaerobically, without oxygen, and in the process become the number one source of human-caused methane released into the atmosphere. City of Austin curbside residential customers in the pilot received a green, 96-gallon cart to collect yard trimmings, food scraps, and food-soiled paper. Instead of going to a landfill, these materials are transported to a local composting facility, where they break down into compost. Compost helps soil retain water, and fertilizes lawns and gardens without using chemicals.

During the pilot, the City will evaluate collection efficiency, including optimal route sizes and staffing needs, and observe participation rates and contamination issues.

For more information and to watch a video about what happens after materials are collected visit austintexas.gov/austincomposts.



Take Our Survey!

Want to see changes in the Block Leader program? Give us your ideas in this quick survey.

<http://bit.ly/blsurvey2014>

Join Us For a Free Composting Class!

Austin Resource Recovery's **Home Composting Rebate program** offers Austinites a way to reduce the amount of waste produced in your household and do something good for the environment all while getting a little money back for your efforts. By composting organic materials, you help keep these valuable resources out of the landfills. You can attend one of our free classes to get started.

If you are interested in attending a composting class visit austintexas.gov/composting, and look

under Upcoming Events for a full schedule of classes.

Date	Time	Location
4/23/14	6 p.m.	SFC Farmers' Market at The Triangle
4/29/14	6 p.m.	Ruiz Branch Library
4/30/14	6:30 p.m.	City Hall
5/6/14	6 p.m.	Howson Branch Library
5/10/14	2 p.m.	Recycled Reads Bookstore
5/17/14	9:30 a.m.	SFC Farmers' Market Downtown
5/21/14	6 p.m.	Millwood Branch Library
5/31/14	9:30 a.m.	SFC Farmer's Market at Sunset Valley
6/4/14	6 p.m.	Old Quarry Branch Library
6/14/14	9:30 a.m.	SFC Farmers' Market Downtown
6/18/14	6 p.m.	Terrazas Branch Library
6/25/14	6:30 p.m.	City Hall
6/28/14	9:30 a.m.	SFC Farmer's Market at Sunset Valley

Have a group of 30 or more people interested in the rebate? You can request a class on our website or watch our online version of the class at austintexas.gov/composting

We are Out and About around Austin

April is a busy month for Austin Resource Recovery! Throughout the season you can find us out in the community talking about recycling, composting, our Zero Waste goal and more. April is Earth Month and there will be events across the City. One of the biggest events we participate in is the **Earth Day Festival at Mueller Park**. We'll be there handing out free reusable bags, recycling guides, reusable water bottles and other Zero Waste-themed items!

Austin Earth Day Festival 2014
4550 Mueller Central Dr., Austin, TX 78723
Saturday, April 26, 2014
12 - 6 p.m.

Be sure to check out these other events where you can celebrate Earth Month.

- 4/12/14 Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Clean Sweep www.keeperaustinbeautiful.org/clean_sweep
- 4/13/14 Sunday 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Family Water Festival with Colorado River Alliance www.austintexas.gov/event/family-water-festival
- 4/21/14 Monday 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Rebate Austin at Carver Branch Library
- 4/23/14 Wednesday 6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Grow Green Homeowner's Training www.growgreen.org
- 4/23/14 Wednesday 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. SafePlace Anti-Litter Project at Triangle Farmer's Market

Meet Dena Houston, Block Leader since 2008!

Block Leaders are passionate about their community. Tell us a little bit about yours.

I've lived in Austin for almost 50 years. I've lived in my current neighborhood for more than 30 years. I am a mother and grandmother. My husband, who was born and raised here, and I love Austin.

How did you hear about the block leader program?

I have always been involved in my neighborhood activities. I organized a neighborhood recycling program before curbside recycling existed in Austin. It was called "Lettuce Recycle". All of the neighbors saved their papers and once a month one of the neighbors drove all the papers to the paper recycling plant in east Austin. I will never forget that we all thought we would make enough money to have a big neighborhood picnic. The first time I took my van full of paper there we made \$1.50. That would not a picnic make. We continued this for about a year and then curbside recycling became available and we were all thrilled about that.

A few years ago I contacted someone at the City and asked if there were an official program for someone to represent the City and the neighborhood and was told about the Block Leader program.

What do you do as a block leader?

The main thing is I send out a neighborhood newsletter advising my neighbors of any changes in the recycling program. Around Christmas I



remind everyone that they can recycle their gift wrap. I also periodically remind my neighbors of other ways to recycle. For example, taking bubble wrap and big boxes to our local Pac Mail.

What does your neighborhood do stay green?

I often organize neighborhood trips to the Hazardous Waste facility so we don't all have to make the trip down there. Everyone in my neighborhood is serious about recycling. I must say that I am very proud of Austin for the plastic bag ban. It was a very courageous move and I try very hard to encourage my friends and neighbors to be positive and proactive.

What's your favorite Zero Waste tip?

Buying in bulk to reduce the amount of packaging and trash you produce right from the start.

Want to be featured in Department newsletters? Send an email to alexandria.bruton@austintexas.gov with your story!

The **National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day** is on April 26, 10 am - 2 pm at **Household Hazardous Waste Facility**. It aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible way to dispose prescription drugs. Stay up-to-date with our upcoming events and find Drug Take-Back Day drop off locations by visiting austinrecycles.com.



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