

**Austin Water Utility Conservation Marketing Study & Plan**  
May 13, 2010



Late Backup



**Austinites are ready and willing to become even more efficient with water use, but are looking for leadership and solutions.**

*The door is open for Austin Water to step up and lead the way, through enhanced education and community engagement.*



## Key Findings

1. One out of 5 Austinites are unaware of Austin Water Utility.
2. Among those who know Austin Water, perceptions about its core service and conservation programs are positive, though they are not typically associated with Austin Water.
3. There is extremely low public knowledge of the natural source of our drinking water.
4. There is strong public support for strategic, year-round water conservation education.
5. Austin Water must work with community leaders and conservation advocates to foster a "culture of conservation" to secure Austin's long-term water supply.



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## Research

- Audit of Austin Water Communications Materials
- Audit of Austin Water Media Coverage (Feb 2009 – Feb 2010)
- In-Depth Interviews with Austin Water Communications Staff (7)
- In-Depth Interviews with Teachers (3)
- Analysis of Peer City Conservation Programs (3)
- In-Depth Interviews with Community Stakeholders (20)
- Quantitative Survey of Austin Residents (618 scientific sample)



## Key Findings

> Support for conservation

### Customers

- 61 percent think Austin Water should do more to promote water conservation.

#### Their solutions:

1. Broader public education campaign
2. Toilet retrofits
3. Additional watering restrictions



## Key Findings

> Support for conservation

### Stakeholders

- Many stakeholders indicated Austin Water does not seem to have one, clear message, vision or a consistent presence when it comes to conservation.

#### Their solutions:

1. Higher, visible reduction goals
2. Community, business outreach, consumer education
3. Programs with best ROI



## Key Findings

### > Support for conservation

*"Do I believe Austin Water is a nationally recognized leader in conservation? I would believe it, but I wouldn't have thought it."*

—Community Stakeholder

*"There has to be a real commitment to garnering a conservation culture in Austin through education. Austin Water needs to educate people, and it's not just shaving peak water use but overall consumption reduction. Make people think differently, change their mindset. Everyone should know where their water comes from in this town. Everyone needs to feel the connection."*

—Community Stakeholder



## Overall Recommendations

### > Top Tasks

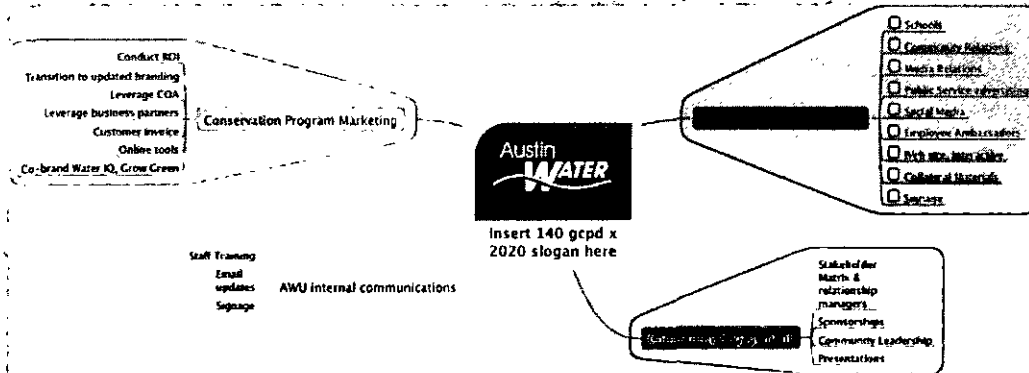
Austin Water needs to:

- Create a bold, progressive consumer-friendly vision statement (based on 140 gpcd), which the public can understand and rally behind.
- Take a comprehensive approach with tactics, and show Austin how current conservation programs support the vision and goals.
- Communicate via one brand that is embraced by the community.
- Develop a consistent, comprehensive water conservation public education campaign that builds a sustained presence with the public.
- Enhance community engagement about conservation efforts through outreach to media, businesses, schools, civic leaders, environmentalists, elected officials, neighborhoods and the public.
- Determine ways to measure and report conservation successes.



## Overall Recommendations

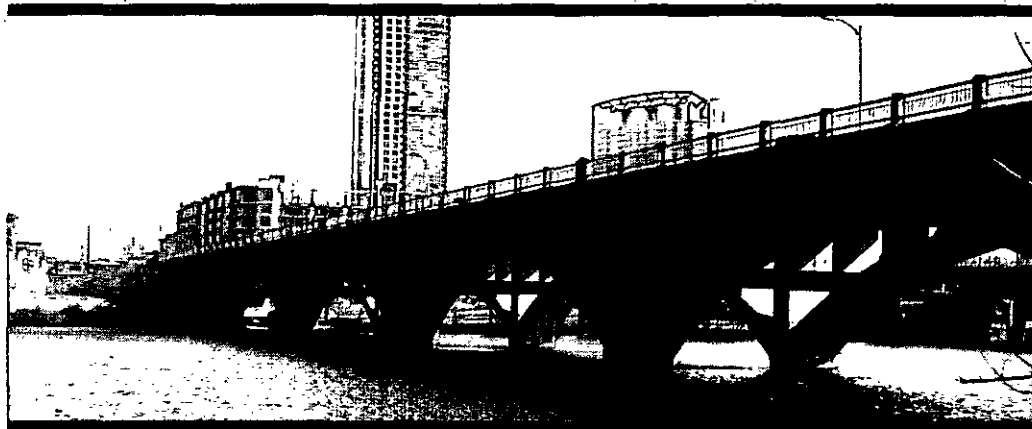
> Comprehensive Customer Education



Austin WATER



Austin WATER



## Supporting Information



AUSTIN WATER UTILITY MARKETING PLAN

## Research

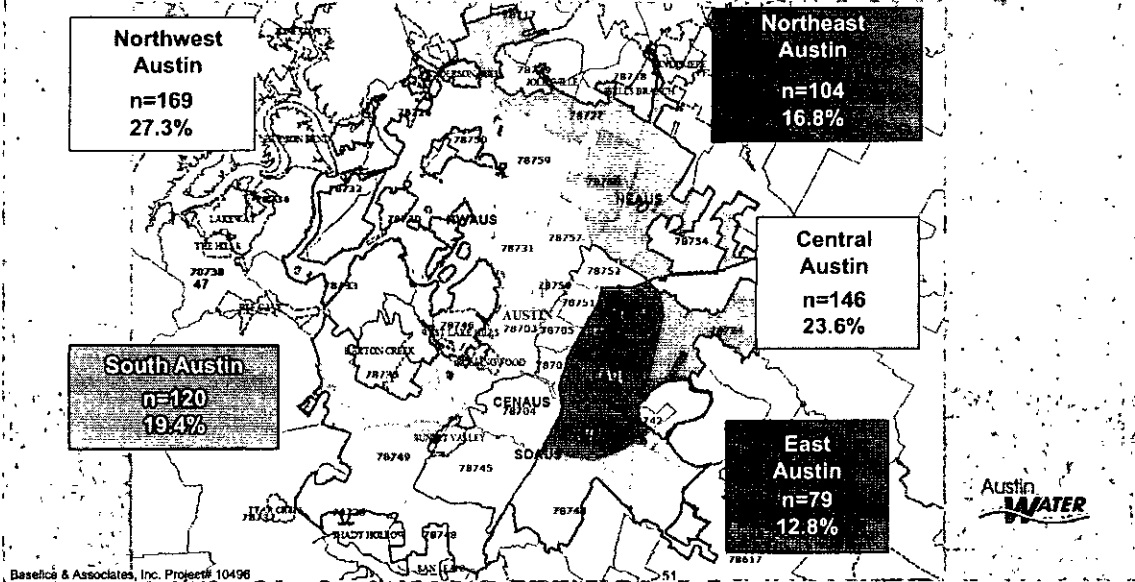
### Telephone & Online Survey of Austin Adults:

- Sample size: 618
  - Phone: 317
  - Internet: 301
- Conducted March 7-10, 2010
- Random-digit dialing of Austin Water ZIP codes
- Regional distribution of interviews, weighted by socio-demographics
- Margin of error +/-4.1 percent



## Research

### Telephone & Online Survey of Austin Adults:



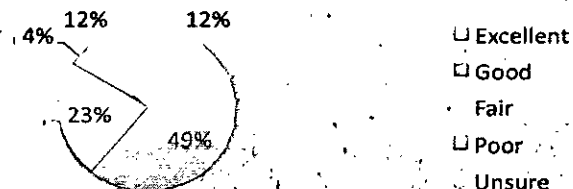
## Key Findings

> Positive Image

The overall impression of Austin Water is generally positive:

- More than half (58 percent) of the general public give Austin Water a positive overall rating.
- Sixty-one percent of Austinites think Austin Water is doing an excellent or good job managing the city's water.

How would you rate the job Austin Water is doing managing the city's water?



## Key Findings

### > Branding

Austin Water has lower brand awareness than peer utilities in the region:

- 19 percent of Austinites had never heard of Austin Water (or AWU), versus 2 percent for Austin Energy or 6 percent for LCRA.
- Although 92 percent of Austinites surveyed had recently seen, read or heard of a conservation program, only 45 percent associated these programs with Austin Water.

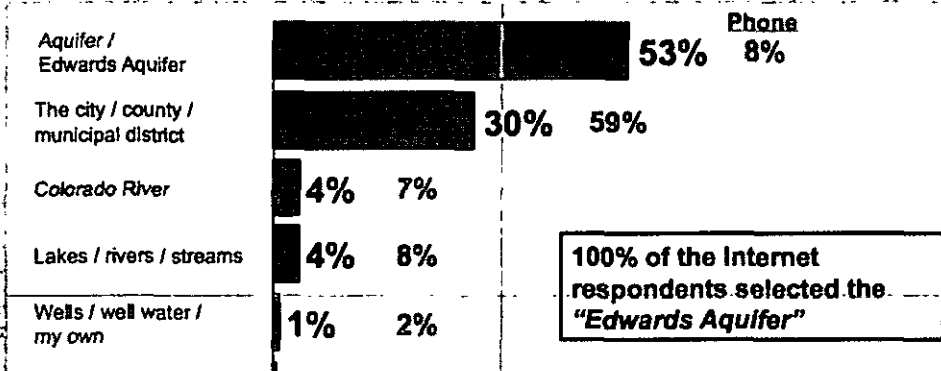


## Key Findings

### Confusion about Water Source

Research for the Texas Water Development Board revealed when people know the natural source of their water, they're twice as likely to conserve it.

Q: "In your own words, what is the natural source of your drinking water?"



## Key Findings

### > United call for more outreach

Stakeholders from all backgrounds suggest Austin Water would benefit from external communications to develop relationships with the community, including:

- media
- businesses
- civic organizations
- neighborhoods
- the general public



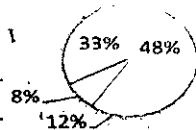
## Key Findings

### > Planning for the Future

We needed to know if the negative news attention about WTP4 represented a liability to Austin Water's opportunity to authentically communicate its vision for planning for the future.

Almost half (48 percent) of Austinites think the City needs a new water treatment plant. One-third (33 percent) of those surveyed are unsure.

Do you think the City of Austin needs a new water treatment plant?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends
- ☐ Unsure



## Key Findings

### > Planning for the Future

Among stakeholders surveyed:

- Business and civic leaders were in favor of WTP4, as were many of the other stakeholders interviewed, citing a need for both conservation and improved facilities in order to meet future demands.
- Even the harshest critics can put aside their disapproval of WTP4 and appreciate at least some of Austin Water's planning or conservation programs.
- Misinformation about WTP4 has led many to believe the plant would immediately begin drawing 300 million gallons of water from Lake Travis – even if the demand were much lower.

*"Austin Water should have promoted all their conservation programs more so people would know they are focused on conservation, and then they wouldn't have received so much backlash on WTP4."* –Community Stakeholder



## Overall Recommendations

Cultivate a "Culture of Conservation"

Stakeholders and citizens agree: there is a need to mobilize the community and cultivate a conservation culture about water availability.

The door is open for Austin Water to step up and lead the way.



## Looking Forward

### > Next Steps

Shape campaign (brand, strategy, messaging, materials) based on recommendations from research and marketing plan:

- Determine campaign's measurable goals, and resulting strategies and tactics. Develop vision statement, positioning statement and message map
- Identify marketing tactics by key audiences: by geography and sector (business, stakeholders, media, general public)
- Develop campaign tactics (media relations, advertising/paid media, outreach, social media, partnerships, research)
- Develop permanent community engagement process, including stakeholder matrix and assign relationships managers within Austin Water