

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

CITIES
CONNECTING
CHILDREN TO
NATURE

Cities
Connecting
Children to
Nature
AUSTIN, TX



Table of Contents

01

About Us

Intro to CCCN National,
History, Goals, & Austin
Efforts

02

COBOR

Austin's commitment to
nature equity

03

Our Strategies

Youth Leadership, Green School
Parks, OLE! Austin, Nature
Smart Libraries & Nature Play

04

Our Team

Local and national
partners



O

7

About Us

CCCN National Initiative



Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) is a national initiative that seeks to create more equitable and abundant access to nature in cities through a partnership between The National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families and the Children & Nature Network. CCCN supports robust citywide action plans to implement policy, develop new partnerships, amplify nature-based programming, and create more equitable nature access.

CCCN Austin: Our Evolution

2016

Austin receives strategic planning & implementation **grant from CCCN**

2017

City adopts **Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights** & begins collection of nature deficient area data

2018

Focus on Green School Parks, Nature Play, Youth Leadership & Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE!) strategies; **FTE CCCN Coordinator position** through PARD

2020

Five focal strategies with addition of **Nature Smart Libraries**

2021

Temp, Full-Time Coordinator **position funded through WPD**

City Goals

Strategic Direction 2023

Meeting Health & Environment, Culture &
Lifelong Learning Outcomes

PARD Long Range Plan

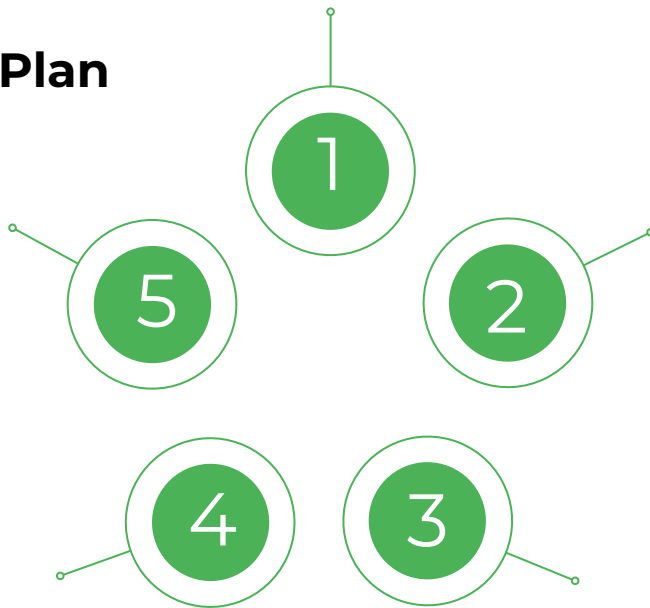
Increasing park and
nature access,
activating spaces

Imagine Austin

Creating complete
communities through livable
and sustainable places

Other City Depts
Aligning with Public Health,
Watershed Protection,
Transportation Dept. goals

Climate Equity Plan
Helping to create green job
pathways, carbon reduction,
and healthy natural systems



\$364,394

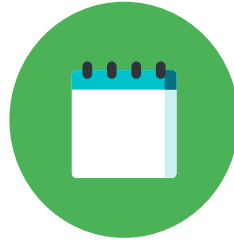
Leveraged for CCCN efforts in FY22

↑40% from FY21

Outreach Efforts



**104 total
participants
from 7 events**



**CCCN
featured in
10 articles**



**16 trainings
with 449 total
participants**



02

COBOR

Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

- The Parks and Recreation Department, along with dozens of partner organizations, created the Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBOR) in 2016
- In 2017, Austin City Council unanimously voted to pass the COBOR with the support of more than 1,000 citizens, key partners such as Austin Independent School District, and Mayor Steve Adler.
- We believe Austin has a vested interest in ensuring all children in our city have the opportunity to connect with the natural world and help create the next generation of environmental stewards who will conserve Austin's quality outdoor space.

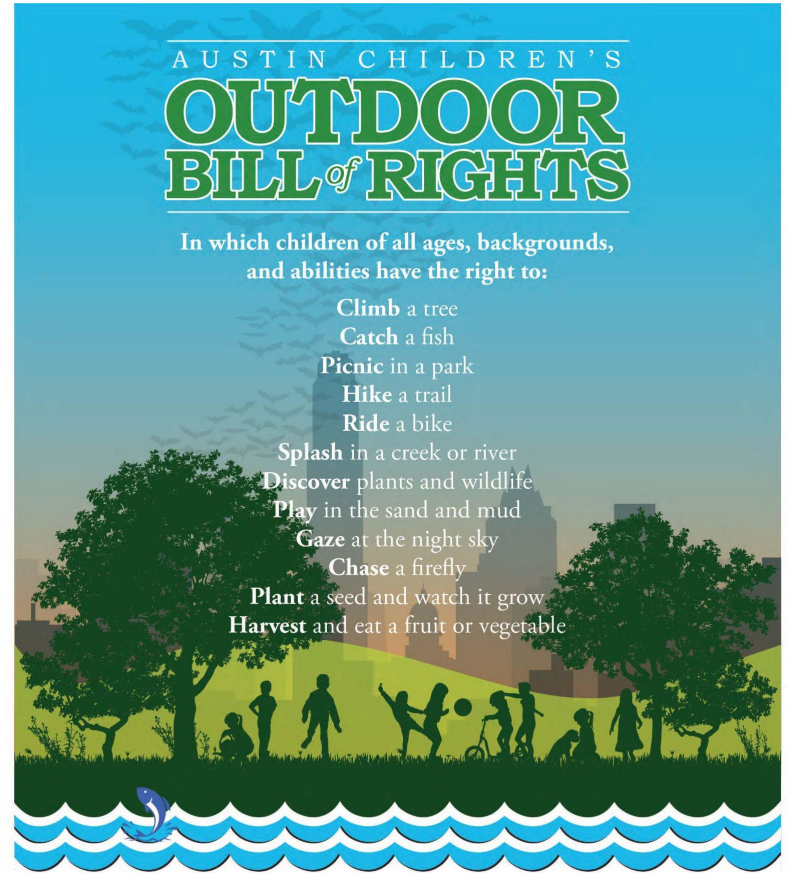
Our Results

40

2021-22 Signatures

1,590

Total Signatures



Understanding that research shows children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school, we enthusiastically support this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/ccn





03

Our Strategies

Our Strategies

1

Youth Leadership

2

Green School Parks

3

**Outdoor Learning Environments
(OLE!) Austin - ON HOLD**

4

Nature Smart Libraries - ON HOLD

5

Nature Play

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Vision: Collaborating to build an Austin in which young people can easily access careers in outdoors, nature, and the environment, are fairly compensated for their contributions, and that the field, and leadership within, represents the communities we serve

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Participants:
 - 45 participants from 16 org.
 - 41 zip codes
 - > 55% ages 16-24
 - 44% non-White (Black/African-American, Asian-American and Pacific Islander, and Latinx/Hispanic)
- Continued co-facilitation of meetings with youth
- Normalize talking about race & racism with stakeholders, partners, participants, leadership
- Hosted 2 trainings on equitable hiring practices, with 42 total participants
- Creating pathways into nature-based jobs with organizations (Austin Civilian Conservation Corp, Youth Forest Council, Austin Youth River Watch):
 - ACCC (Internal Pathways): 38 summer temp jobs at COA, 13 continued/still employed
 - YFC: hired 13 interns
 - AYRW: hired 10 interns (5 returning interns + 5 new interns); half of our current intern cohort are former Riverwatch students

A photograph of five children standing in a garden, each holding a large radish with green leaves. The children are of diverse backgrounds and are smiling. The background shows various green plants and a fence. The text 'GREEN SCHOOL PARKS' is overlaid in large, bold, black letters.

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

Vision: Create a network of school parks that provide schools and the surrounding community the opportunity to learn from, steward and play in nature

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

- Green Administrator Cohort conducted in partnership with EcoRise and Austin ISD to support green campus initiatives
- Joint Use Agreement content finalized
- Coordinating between PARD + AISD on upcoming AISD Bond, which will impact about 6 joint use school parks
- Completed all data analysis for Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, studying the impact of green infrastructure installed as part of the GSP program. Final conclusions include:
 - As temperatures rise, children decrease physical activity and seek shade
 - Children's connection to nature had a significant positive effect on their:
 - Overall SEL skills
 - Self management
 - Self-awareness
 - Relationship skills

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

- GSP Designation process and form created (signs, marketing to roll out in August)
- APF volunteer days to maintain GSP gardens, trees, trails, etc.
- Outdoor seating installed at all campuses through CARES funding from District; outdoor classrooms installed at 6 joint use sites through APF Grant
- Purchased new park amenities and finalized placement for joint use sites
- Principal Q+A started during GSP Committee meetings, with at least 2 Principals attending every meeting



Welcome to your **GREEN School Park!**

This schoolyard supports nature and encourages outdoor learning with features like gardens, an outdoor classroom, rain water collection, and more!

As a Green School Park, this space is open and accessible to the public outside of school hours. When school is out, come enjoy this area as a place to play, learn, and gather!

Bienvenido a su **Parque de la Escuela VERDE!**

Este patio escolar apoya la naturaleza y fomenta el aprendizaje al aire libre con características características que se encuentra en la naturaleza como jardines, y drenaje de agua de lluvia y mas.

Como Parque de la Escuela Verde, este espacio está abierto y accesible al público fuera del horario escolar. Cuando la escuela esta cerrado, el público puede disfrutar de esta area área como un lugar para jugar, aprender y reunirse!

NATURE PLAY

Vision: Activate parks and greenspaces through nature play programming and installation of nature play spaces across the city

NATURE PLAY

- Published Nature Play Guidelines to assist City staff and partners in the design, installation, maintenance, and management of nature play spaces.
- Installed 3 nature play space, in partnership with Austin Parks Foundation, at MLK Station, Kendra Page, and Grand Meadow Neighborhood Parks
- Added nature play into PARD Standard Amenity Guide for all staff, park adopters to reference
- Developed Maintenance checklist, observation criteria, and wood degradation process for all new nature play spaces
- Loose parts lending kits re-started, with kits checked out 22 times
- Secured PARD Mitigation funds to cover the cost of moving logs
- Infrastructure Subcommittee quarterly meetings, providing space for staff and partners to discuss best practices for nature play



04

Our Team

Meet the Team



Melody Alcazar

Program Manager,
CCCN Austin



Julia Hill

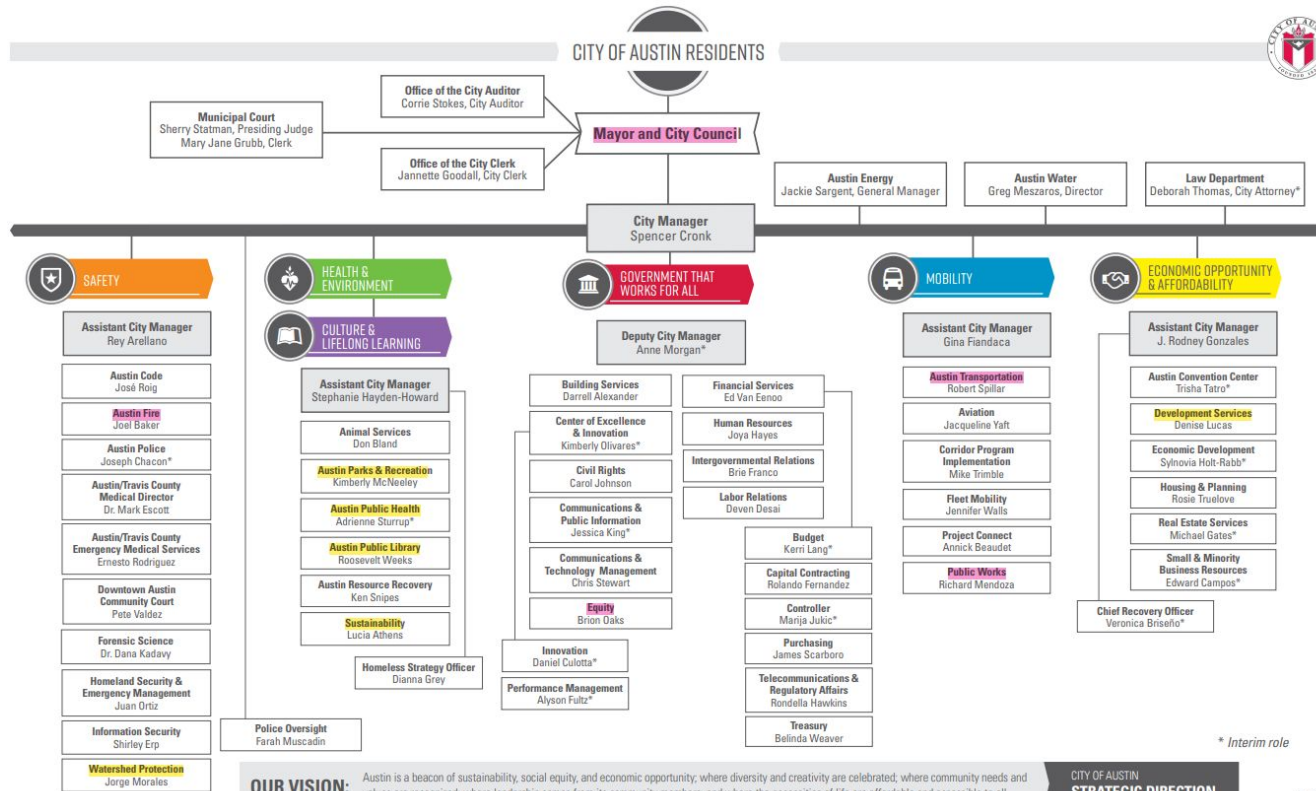
Program Coordinator,
CCCN Austin
(outgoing)



Sarah Kennedy

AmeriCorps VISTA, Park
Planning, Austin Parks
& Recreation Dept.

City Partners



Local Partners



Connect with Us

<http://austintexas.gov/CCCN>

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