



## Sustainability Action Agenda Progress Report

Sustainability means finding balance among three goals:

- Prosperity and Jobs
- Protecting the Environment
- Community Health, Equity, and Cultural Vitality

Sustainability involves taking positive, proactive steps to protect our quality of life now and for future generations.

The City of Austin has a strong record for sustainability leadership, with numerous innovative community-focused projects and programs that are achieving tangible results. The Office of Sustainability tracks and reports on these initiatives using a framework known as the Sustainability Action Agenda. Launched on Earth Day of 2012, the Action Agenda identifies 10 focus areas that shape how Austinites live, work, and play. This Progress Report highlights accomplishments related to the implementation of more than 180 projects being achieved through the contributions of 24 City departments.



### KEY DEPARTMENTS

Animal Services	Austin / Travis County EMS	Parks & Recreation
Austin Convention Center	Aviation	Planning & Development Review
Austin Energy	Code Compliance	Public Works
Austin Fire Department	Economic Development	Real Estate Services
Austin Police Department	Health & Human Services	Small & Minority Business Resources
Austin Public Library	Homeland Security & Emergency Mgmt.	Transportation
Austin Resource Recovery	Neighborhood Housing & Comm. Dev.	Watershed Protection
Austin Water Utility	Office of Sustainability	Youth & Family Initiatives Office



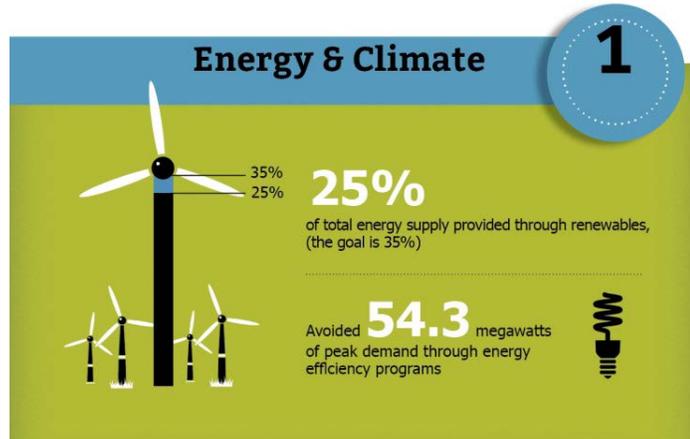
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CITY OF AUSTIN

# Action Agenda Highlights

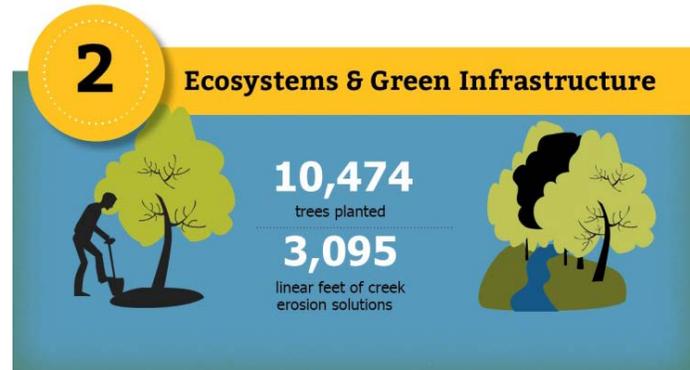
## Energy & Climate

Making Austin the leading city in the nation in climate protection, energy efficiency and renewable power, while reducing the negative impacts of global warming



## Ecosystems & Green Infrastructure

Protecting watershed health and environmentally sensitive areas, as well as integrating nature into the city by providing interconnected green spaces for recreation, transportation, and habitat



## Arts & Culture

Supporting Austin's creative economy and cultural assets as an inspiring part of our community identity, while greening their impacts



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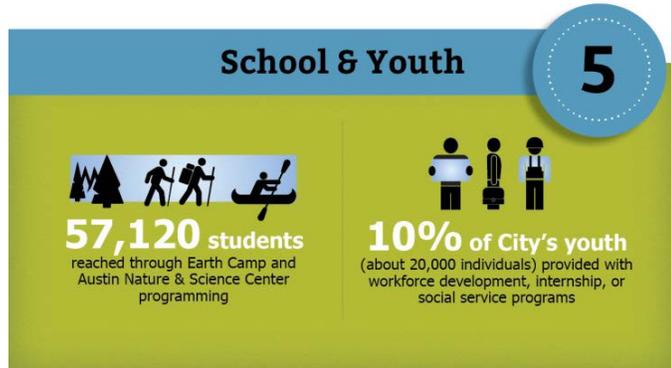
### Zero Waste

Reducing waste generation, diverting the amount of solid waste sent to landfills and incinerators, and recovering useful resources



### Schools & Youth

Encouraging environmental stewardship, engagement in the arts, and career-readiness by providing learning opportunities in nature, hands-on sustainability projects, and workplace training for students



### Water Security

Sustainably managing and protecting our water resources by creating a culture of conservation



### Health & Safety

Ensuring a healthy community, providing local and healthy food, encouraging active and tobacco-free living, and reducing threats from environmental risks



## Livability & Complete Neighborhoods

Encouraging the development of neighborhoods that provide access to alternative and public transportation, are safe and affordable, promote physical activity, and are designed according to green design and construction principles



## Mobility & Air Quality

Investing in a compact and connected Austin that is less car dependent and more walking, bicycling, and transit friendly



## Green Economy & Innovation

Growing Austin's economy by investing in green jobs for our workforce, clean energy and technology, environmental entrepreneurs, and local businesses who promote sustainability in their operational choices

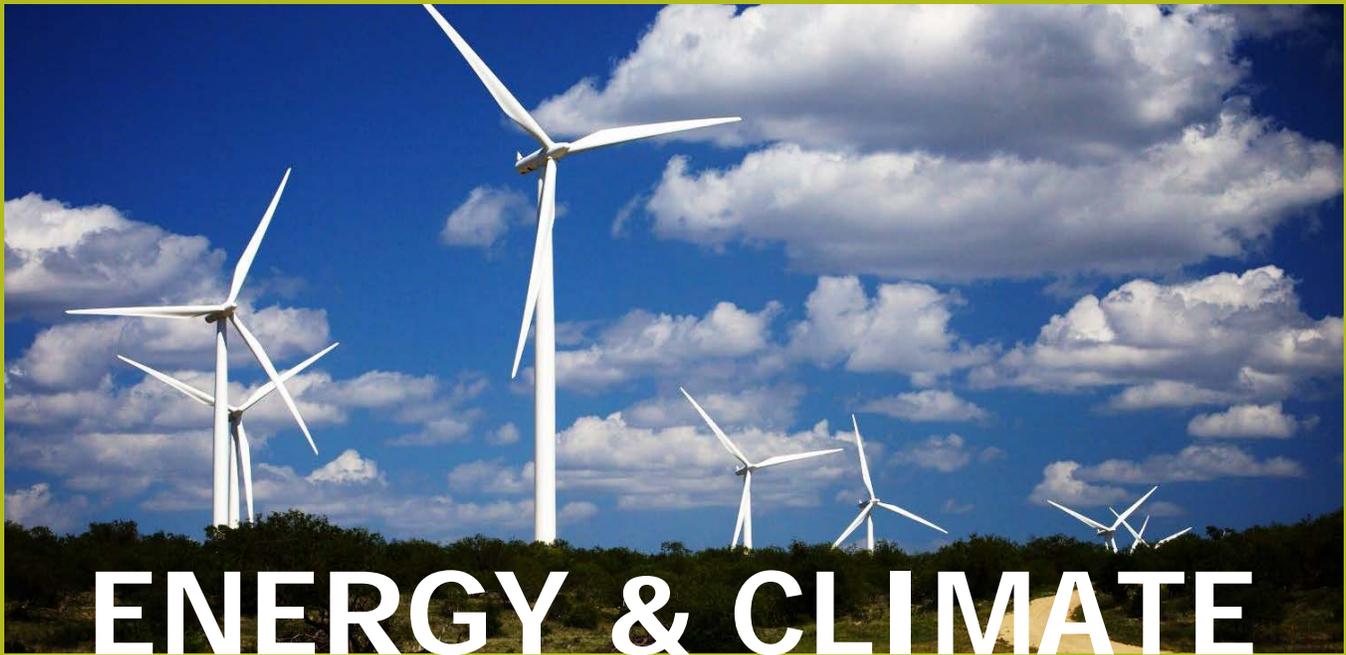


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In 2007, City Council set aggressive goals to address the threats posed by climate change through the Climate Protection Resolution. Among the targets to be met by 2020 are: 1) achieve 35% of Austin Energy's energy supply from renewable resources; 2) implement the most energy efficient building codes in the nation; and 3) actively pursue energy efficiency retrofits and upgrades to existing buildings. Austin Energy and the Office of Sustainability are leading efforts and initiatives designed to achieve Council's climate protection goals, including making investments in renewable energy, advancing energy efficiency and conservation through incentive programs and outreach, adopting innovative energy efficient building codes, and creating local carbon offset projects. In total, 32 separate activities are being tracked as part of the Sustainability Action Agenda.

*Making Austin the leading city in the nation in climate protection, energy efficiency, and renewable power, while reducing the negative impacts of global warming.*

**Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Generated 25% of the total energy supply from renewable resources, which includes three new wind power contracts totaling 570 megawatts, existing contracts from eight wind farms that produce 850 megawatts, the 30 megawatt Webberville solar farm, and the 100 megawatt Nacogdoches biomass plant. This puts Austin Energy four years ahead of schedule to meet the renewables target of 35% by 2020.
- Promoted customer enrollment in 100% renewably-sourced GreenChoice power and achieved recognition for Austin Energy as the country's top public power utility for sales of renewable energy, delivering 744,443,000 kilowatt hours of power in 2012.
- Provided 3,170 kilowatts of residential capacity-based solar incentives, 925 kilowatts of commercial performance-based solar incentives, and 20 kilowatts of solar water heater rebate savings in 2013.

- Delivered solar installations to 16 municipal projects in 2012, including the George Washington Carver Museum and Library, African American Cultural Center and Resource Facility, and Austin-Bergstrom International Airport among others. This brings the total to 58 municipal solar PV installations totaling over 1.5 megawatts, which will generate over 2,731,757 kilowatt hours annually.



*Solar installation at Palmer Events Center*

- Adopted a new City of Austin Energy Code, which is expected to improve energy efficiency in new homes by more than 40% over the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code and brings us closer to the 65% goal for Zero-Energy-Capable homes by 2015.
- Continued implementation of Energy Conservation Audit and Disclosure (ECAD) Ordinance requirements, receiving reports for 2,783 single family residences, 2,836 commercial properties, and 8,580 multi-family properties. In addition to reporting, ECAD efforts included outreach, educational seminars, and code enforcement for non-compliant properties.
- Achieved 4,278 residential and 89 commercial participants in the Power Partner Program by conducting public outreach and webinars with information about loans, rebates, assessments, and tools and tips for energy efficiency in residential and commercial structures.
- Avoided 54.3 megawatts of peak demand through energy efficiency programs, which helped meet 40% of the 2020 target for energy efficiency and conservation. Austin was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> among the nation's 34 largest cities for adopting policies and programs that advance energy efficiency by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) in 2013.
- Funded three local carbon reduction projects through a community challenge grant program that resulted in planting 200 trees along biking and jogging trails, installing a solar photovoltaic array on the roof of the Yellow Bike Project bicycle repair facility, and locating another solar photovoltaic array on the roof of M Station, a mixed-use, affordable housing development. Together, these projects offset or avoid 13.26 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions annually.



### **SPOTLIGHT: BUILDING WEATHERIZATION**

Based on its national reputation as a leader in energy efficiency, Austin Energy was awarded \$5.9 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2010 to weatherize 1,064 homes over a two-year period. Under this program, each dwelling received on average about \$5,000 worth of improvements including new energy efficient appliances and air conditioning and heating equipment. This weatherization program targeted qualifying low-income, elderly, and physically or mentally disabled customers – many of the homes that received improvements housed children under the age of 5. Through this federal funding, Austin Energy was able to weatherize 1,886 homes, which was 77% more than the original goal. In addition to the federal funding through ARRA, Austin Energy has weatherized more than 14,000 homes over the years through its own free weatherization program. These weatherized homes save 16.4 million kWh annually, or enough electricity to power 8,200 average-size homes in Austin year-round.

# ECOSYSTEMS



Healthy ecosystems and forests provide wildlife and plant habitats, improve water and air quality, lower urban temperatures and decrease energy consumption, reduce flood risks and drought impacts, sequester carbon, and protect property values. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking 22 activities initiated by the Parks & Recreation, Watershed Protection, Public Works, and Planning & Development Review Departments that are focused on green infrastructure enhancements. Many of these initiatives will have a positive impact on the health of Austin's park system, urban forest, and stream and creek water quality. These projects will also protect endangered wildlife and promote native plant habitats.

## **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Increased the total amount of open space to 66,585 acres with the addition of 59 acres of wildland and 169 acres of parkland to the City's inventory of preserves and water quality protection lands.
- Implemented 3,095 linear feet of creek erosion solutions and established 21 Grow Zones on 80.7 acres that will improve riparian zones. These zones play a vital role in filtering storm runoff and removing pollutants before they reach creeks, preventing stream bank erosion, and reducing the City's carbon footprint through reduced mowing and increased plant-based sequestration.
- Planted a total of 10,474 trees to supplement Austin's urban forest, including 3,290 trees planted in Austin Parks or on other City-owned property, as well as 3,391 trees along roadways in the public Right of Way. Trees were also planted on public and private property in the Dove Springs neighborhood to help shade homes and cut energy use through the Austin Community Trees Program.

*Protecting watershed health and environmentally sensitive areas, as well as integrating nature into the city by providing interconnected green spaces for recreation, transportation, and habitat.*

- Worked with community partners to develop and begin implementation of the Invasive Species Management Plan, which will help promote biodiversity and protect sensitive streams, lakes, natural areas, and parks. Activities included creation of web and print materials, training for volunteers, and collecting data on invasive plants on City-managed properties.



*Tree planting*

*Photo Credit: Jay Janner*

- Adopted a new Watershed Protection Ordinance that adds 400 miles of new headwater protections to Austin's creeks, improves floodplain protection, prevents unsustainable public expense on drainage systems, encourages land development patterns that protect property and provide access and connectivity to greenways and trails, and simplifies development regulations via more than 220 code changes.
- Removed 429,278 gallons and 4,605 cubic yards of pollutants from the environment resulting from 708 industrial and commercial stormwater inspections and 1,176 investigations of pollution complaints and responses to hazardous and non-hazardous chemical spills/discharge incidents.



## **SPOTLIGHT:** PROTECTING AUSTIN'S URBAN FOREST

Austin's urban forest is considered an important element within a much larger green infrastructure network, playing an invaluable role by providing social, ecological, and economic benefits to the community and by enhancing the quality of life for residents. In fact, Austin has been recognized as one of the Top 10 Cities for Urban Forests. The impacts to our urban forest from continued population growth and development, combined with long-term drought conditions, made it imperative to develop

a plan that would support the health and vitality of our public urban forest resource. The *Austin Urban Forest Plan: A Master Plan for Public Property* establishes a broad-scoped, long-range vision for Austin's public urban forest and provides a framework for the City of Austin to use in managing Austin's public urban forest over the next 20 years. Implementation will roll out in 2014 after Council adoption. Each City department that interacts with trees on public property will develop their own tailored Departmental Operational Plan to address specific issues such as existing tree care, new plantings, and canopy coverage goals. There will also be an annual State of the Urban Forest Report, which will track the overall health of Austin's public urban forest.



The arts are an important part of Austin's unique identity, economic vitality, and cultural vibrancy. Engagement in the arts supports the triple-bottom-line of sustainability by helping the local economy, spurring personal creativity, enriching social connections, and enhancing overall well-being. While numerous other efforts are underway throughout the City to enhance Austin's creative economy, the Office of Sustainability and Economic Development Department identified 31 activities as part of the Sustainability Action Agenda that will enrich Austin's cultural standing by *greening* the arts, major events, and tourism.

#### **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Completed the African American Cultural & Heritage Facility, which features an Art in Public Places mosaic tile mural designed by artist Reginald C. Adams that involved community and student involvement to provide input and install portions of the artwork.
- Dedicated the Solar Tree sculpture at the Dittmar Gymnasium, public artwork that harvests energy from the sun to supply Austin Energy's power grid while providing shade for the plaza.
- Reached 800 people with global warming and climate change commentary delivered by 20 community opinion leaders at the *100 Places To See Before They Disappear* event, held in conjunction with the SXSW Eco Conference.
- Established Red River Street and the live music clubs located there as a Cultural District in recognition of the area's distinct contribution to Austin's character.

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- Created a local carbon fund by partnering with local event organizers – ACL Live at the Moody Theater, Austin City Limits Music Festival, South by Southwest, and Circuit of The Americas. This year, the Positive Impact on Climate and Community (PICC) program raised \$6,000 to be divided between the Hill Country Conservancy's Violet Crown Trail and third-party-verified greenhouse gas emission reduction projects in Texas at the ACL Music Festival. PICC funds will offset more than 2.2 million pounds of CO2.
- Initiated the Music Venue Assistance Program to provide qualifying venues with low interest loans for the acquisition and implementation of sound mitigation solutions to lessen the adverse effects from sustained noise impacts to nearby businesses and residents.
- Hosted 1,153 live music performances for visitors to the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.
- Provided green tourist information to visitors at the Information Desk at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport via a Green Gems Map of downtown Austin.



*ACL Music Festival at Zilker Park*



**SPOTLIGHT:**  
**AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL & HERITAGE FACILITY**

The new African American Cultural and Heritage Facility involved the restoration of the historic 1880 home of Thomas Dedrick, one of the first freed slaves in Travis County, and construction of a 4,000 square foot building to offer meeting space, offices, and a multi-purpose room. The African American Cultural and Heritage Facility is designed to serve as a central gathering place for the East Austin community and to help stimulate

business and economic development. It was also designed and constructed to be environmentally-friendly and has submitted documentation to achieve LEED Gold certification. A prominent feature of this facility is a specially commissioned Art in Public Places mosaic tile mural, serving as a reminder of East Austin's cultural significance and a tribute to the African American community in Austin. The mural by artist Reginald C. Adams is titled "Reflections" and features 89 portraits of local African Americans as well as scenes of community life. The finished piece is a beautiful collage of the places, people, and historical events that paved the way for East Austin to become the vibrant cultural community that it is today.



The City of Austin is committed to being a leader in the transformation from traditional waste collection to sustainable resource recovery and materials management. Zero Waste is the guiding principal for the way Austin Resource Recovery provides services. This approach treats materials collected as resources that can be recovered for a second life, not solely as waste streams. Not only does the generation of waste have huge resource use implications, the management and processing of waste and recovered materials has a very large environmental and carbon footprint. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking progress on 16 initiatives being delivered by Austin Resource Recovery that support achieving the City's Zero Waste goals. These actions target waste reduction at home, work, special events, and while shopping.

#### **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Implemented year two of the Universal Recycling Ordinance affecting multi-family apartments with more than 50 dwelling units and commercial office buildings larger than 100,000 square feet.
- Improved 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. These changes resulted in a more than threefold increase in available recycling capacity for downtown apartments and businesses.
- Provided more than 1,260 businesses and organizations with Zero Waste education, onsite assessments, and technical assistance.
- Issued 8 event recycling rebates, collected 360 pounds of compost and 15,630 pounds of recyclables, and diverted 34% of materials generated at 14 events in 2013.

*Reducing waste generation, diverting the amount of solid waste sent to landfills and incinerators, and recovering useful resources.*

- Offered 47 online and in-person composting training classes to 1,366 residents in both English and Spanish. 723 composting rebates were issued.
- Launched a residential Curbside Organics Collection Pilot Program to 7,900 homes with the goal of expanding compost collection services citywide.
- Sold or repurposed 463,200 donated books, DVDs, videos, and other items at the Recycled Reads Used Bookstore, resulting in 175 tons of material reused and diverted from landfills.
- Adopted and implemented the Single-Use Carryout Bag Ordinance by providing training and online resources for businesses, retailers, and shoppers. Distributed more than 16,300 reusable bags at community events, neighborhood centers, food banks, and organizations assisting the elderly.



*Canvas bag give-away at 2013 Earth Day event*



### **SPOTLIGHT:** RESTAURANT COMPOSTING & RECYCLING

Approximately 40% to 50% of the waste generated by restaurants is from food scraps and other compostable items. Composting food is sometimes referred to as the “next best use” for feeding hungry people and animals. Food waste contains valuable nutrients that can be used as a fertilizer to grow future food items. To demonstrate how restaurants can help meet Zero Waste goals and save money by implementing recycling and composting programs, the City implemented a year-long Restaurant Composting and Recycling Pilot Program, which ended in September 2012. Fourteen local restaurants participated in the pilot. Outreach materials were provided to participating restaurants that included educational signage and container decals, as well as bilingual training for restaurant managers and staff. Ecology Action and Organics by Gosh provided composting and recycling collection services. Over half of the participating businesses experienced a considerable reduction in their trash collection service. The Pilot Program included identifying challenges and potential solutions for issues such as:

- adding recycling and composting to existing trash collection services
- placement of collection containers, given restrictions in size, space, and lease agreements
- optimizing container sizes and service frequencies
- educating the food service work force

The Pilot Program was well-timed. In April of this year, Council approved an ordinance requiring all Austin restaurants to begin recycling other materials, such as paper, plastics, and aluminum by 2014, and to begin diverting food and other compostable materials by 2017.

# SCHOOLS & YOUTH



Providing learning opportunities that encourage an ecological sense of place, as well as produce college-ready students and a skilled workforce, will promote civic engagement and help sustain Austin's way of life. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking 33 activities initiated in the Youth & Family Initiatives Office, Austin Energy, Office of Sustainability, Parks & Recreation Department, Austin Water Utility, and Watershed Protection Department that promote youth education. These activities are focused on promoting stronger connections between children and nature, advancing career readiness for high school and college students, developing sustainability and arts curriculum for K-12 students, and encouraging sustainability projects and education at area schools.

## Accomplishment Highlights:

- Funded three school-based sustainability projects that benefit the community through the Bright Green Future Grants program at area elementary, middle, and high schools. The completed projects produced 700 pounds of vegetables, planted 15 different native species of plants, and saved 13,000 gallons of water.
- Engaged 51,959 participants through programs at the Austin Nature & Science Center and 5,161 fifth grade students through the Earth School program.
- Established partnerships that include Austin Independent School District, Texas Parks & Wildlife, the University of Texas, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, and Barton Springs / Edwards Aquifer Conservation District to increase educational programming for children at Earth Camp. Reached 1,510 students through Earth Camp.

*Encouraging environmental stewardship, engagement in the arts, and career-readiness by providing learning opportunities in nature, hands-on sustainability projects, and workplace training for students.*

- Partnered with 12 organizations to present the Groundwater to the Gulf summer institute focused on hydrology, groundwater, urban watersheds, water quality and conservation. This teacher training program reached 33 teachers.



- Partnered with Keep Austin Beautiful to develop service learning projects and lessons through Clean Creek Campus and Clean Creek Summer Camp programs focused on hydrology, groundwater, urban watersheds, water quality, and conservation.

- Completed installation of 15 outdoor interactive Solar Learning Centers at Austin Independent School District campuses that include fully functional solar arrays which produce an estimated 4,905 kilowatt hours annually, for a combined total of 73,575 kilowatt hours of energy each year.

- Provided 25 12-week internships at Austin Energy through the College Readiness Program for Juniors, Seniors, and Graduate students majoring in Business & Engineering.

- Offered 349 programs to approximately 20,000 City youth through multiple City Departments, including summer internships, youth employment, volunteer opportunities, development programs for at-risk youth, leadership programs, and civic engagement opportunities.

- Completed a comprehensive audit of K-8 arts education programming in partnership with the Any Given Child program, Austin Independent School District, and mindPOP that identified gaps in access, teacher training, and community partnerships for creative learning opportunities. The audit identified 4 goals to improve arts instruction that will be implemented as part of long-range district plans.



### SPOTLIGHT: BRIGHT GREEN FUTURE GRANTS

Bright Green Future Grants provides funding for innovative sustainability projects that will inspire students to become lifelong environmental stewards. 2012 grant recipients were:

**Cunningham Elementary School** was able to expand their PEAS organic farm to include an outdoor classroom for hands-on learning for educators, students, parents, and members of the surrounding community, who learned about irrigation and organic farming practices, composting, and healthy cooking.

**Fulmore Middle School** expanded a successful air-conditioning condensate collection project; the condensate becomes a self-

sustaining water source for a native habitat on campus. The project helped educate students about water conservation and responsible landscaping practices during one of the worst droughts in Central Texas history.

**American YouthWorks** used its grant for the school's Texas Conservation Corps program. Funds allowed installation of a rain garden on the school's campus that creates habitat for native species, promotes water conservation, and protects water quality. The rain garden provided students with green jobs training through American YouthWorks and students who participated in the project will help educate others.

# WATER SECURITY



Austin Water is committed to providing reliable and safe water for Austin's growing population, while conserving water resources for future generations. With the Austin area also facing extreme drought conditions, conservation and environmental protection initiatives are critical to meeting our community's water supply demands. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking progress on activities that promote water quality and conservation, laying the groundwork for measures that will protect and manage our precious water resources for years to come. These actions target residential and commercial water use, reclaimed water utilization, water efficient yard and lawn landscape practices, and the elimination of leaks.

*Sustainably  
managing and  
protecting our  
water resources  
by creating  
a culture of  
conservation.*

## **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Reduced the total gallons of water pumped per person per day from 142 gallons in 2012, to 136 in 2013 through water conservation services, outreach, and customer education. In total, 496,374 peak day gallons were saved in 2013.
- Reduced water system losses by rehabilitating or replacing 50,814 linear feet or 9.62 miles of aging water distribution pipe.
- Increased utilization of reclaimed wastewater for beneficial purposes to 1.47 billion gallons of water per year by continuing the expansion of the 43.5-mile Purple Pipe system, adding connections to the University of Texas and BAE Systems.
- Performed over 700 irrigation audits that saved an estimated 351,000 peak day gallons.

- Completed a Graywater Stakeholder Process that included an assessment of codes in Austin compared to other cities and recommended changes, such as adoption of the 2012 Uniform Plumbing Code and streamlined permitting. A fact sheet on residential graywater collection requirements was created to educate Austin residents and promote its use.
- Added 334,433 gallons of rainwater harvesting capacity through the Rainwater Harvesting Rebate Program.
- Developed strategies for continued response to the drought that include the requirements and timing for Stage 3 and Stage 4 watering restrictions, revisions to the LCRA Water Management Plan, and examination of the use of alternative water sources to meet demand.



*WaterWise landscaping at City of Austin North Village Branch Library*



### **SPOTLIGHT: EXTENDING WATER RECLAMATION SERVICE**

Reclaimed water is created by reusing highly treated effluent from wastewater treatment plants that is normally discharged into the Colorado River. Austin Water uses reclaimed water for non-drinking purposes, such as irrigation, cooling and manufacturing, and delivers the reclaimed water through distinctive purple pipes. The program is setting new standards in conservation by building a comprehensive distribution system that today uses 1.47 billion gallons per year of reclaimed water (that's about the same amount of water used by 5,300 Austin homes in a year). Future plans call for that amount to reach 8.5 billion gallons annually, which will free up potable water supplies to serve the equivalent of more than 37,000 homes.

The Burnt Orange faithful welcomed purple pipes to campus in March of 2013, when Austin Water's reclaimed water distribution system was successfully expanded to The University of Texas at Austin. Austin Water and UT collaborated on connections that enhance community sustainability by linking a university chilling station to the reclaimed water system. Other reclaimed water projects include the Montopolis main (under construction), the BAE Integrated Vision Solutions of Austin systems main (recently completed), the Smith Road Extension (under construction), and the Capitol Complex main, which will extend from the UT main into downtown (currently in design).

# HEALTH & SAFETY



Meeting goals that address the triple-bottom-line of sustainability – people, prosperity, and planet – have a direct impact on the health and safety of a community. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking 27 activities initiated in the Health & Human Services, Parks & Recreation, Planning & Development Review, Watershed Protection, Public Works, Animal Services, Economic Development, and Austin Fire Departments that promote health and safety within the Austin community. These activities are focused on providing access to local and healthy foods, promoting healthy and active lifestyles, developing sound plans for wildfire and flood safety, and helping animals.

## Accomplishment Highlights:

- Identified land development opportunities to create a Healthy Community Code, such as locations for clinics, corner stores, and pedestrian and bike connections from neighborhoods to transit networks or trails. These code changes will make it easier to lead an active, healthy lifestyle in Austin.
- Awarded \$31,000 in mini-grants to 13 non-profit organizations that will apply the funding to projects that support agricultural and food innovations, including community gardens, food hubs, sustainable urban farms, and educational programs for farmers.
- Established 8 new community gardens and 4 senior gardens since 2012 located on public, private, or donated parcels, for a total of 2.68 acres.
- Streamlined the process for establishing community gardens, involving development of a comprehensive land database containing information about site availability and access to Austin Water Utility taps and waivers, identification of joint funding through Neighborhood Partner Programs, and guidance for permitting.

*Ensuring a healthy community by providing local and healthy food, encouraging active and tobacco-free living, and reducing threats from environmental risks.*

- Completed an economic impact analysis of urban agriculture and the local food system, showing that this sector generates \$4.1 billion in economic activity and supports 43,000 jobs in Austin. Based on this report, the City updated its urban agriculture zoning code, created a Food Policy program manager position in the Office of Sustainability, and worked with area partners such as CAPCOG and Texas A&M Extension Services to share opportunities and resources available for local growers, producers, and businesses.



- Convened a multi-departmental task force to create a unified approach to planning for wildfires and addressing community risks, resulting in the creation of tools and checklists available online and at area fire stations to help residents combat wildfires including a video series, Ready Set Go booklets, and planning guidelines for homes, emergency access and evacuation, and water supply.
- Launched Prepared.ly, a web-based tool to help homeowners assess and minimize their risk from wildfires.
- Hosted community events that encourage active and healthy living through recreation, fitness activities and healthy food, such as the annual Mayor's Resolution Run / Walk and Viva Streets.
- Certified 6 worksites, including Seton Healthcare Family, City of Austin, and Capital Metro, as Mayor's Fitness Council Partners for their implementation of comprehensive wellness practices.
- Protected citizens from second-hand smoke with adoption of a smoking ban in all City of Austin parks and golf courses, libraries, and affordable housing.
- Achieved LEED Gold Certification for the Austin Animal Shelter by incorporating fixtures that reduce water consumption by 35%, solar panels and energy-efficient lighting that will result in a 32% energy savings, low VOC materials to improve indoor air quality, and diversion of 77% of construction materials from landfills.



### **SPOTLIGHT: ANIMAL COMPASSION**

For most, sustainability related to animals is associated with efforts to protect wildlife and their natural habitats. The City of Austin takes the concept further, extending it to the protection and care of domestic animals as well. Recognized as a No-Kill Shelter, the Austin Animal Center must achieve a live animal outcome rate of 90% or better. Since February 2011, shelter staff, volunteers, and rescue partners have consistently achieved or exceeded this goal, making Austin one of the largest cities in the country that maintains a no-kill status. This is an impressive statistic given that the shelter cares for more than 20,000 animals annually. In one quarter alone, more than 4,300 dogs and cats were returned to their homes or adopted from the shelter.



The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking 32 separate initiatives to provide a compact and connected Austin as envisioned in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. These activities are focused on ensuring equal access to diverse affordable housing; neighborhoods that include parks, public amenities, and alternative transportation choices; and investments in green building that deliver utility bill savings and healthy indoor environments. Neighborhood Housing & Community Development, Austin Energy, Public Works, Watershed Protection, Economic Development and the Office of Sustainability have made significant progress on these initiatives.

#### **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Rated 616 single family homes, 1,548 multi-family units, and 2,035,000 square feet of commercial office space under the Austin Energy Green Building rating system, resulting in 14,390,000 kilowatt hours of electricity saved, a reduction of 19,447,000 gallons of potable water used, and more than 35,877 tons of construction waste diverted from landfills.
- Educated 2,857 homeowners and building and design professionals about the Austin Energy Green Building rating system.
- Partnered with the Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation, University of Texas Center for Sustainable Development and School of Architecture, and community residents to select a site and complete design for a Green Alley Demonstration Project, which will include Alley Flats and other affordable housing, porous pavement, rain gardens, edible landscaping and public art elements.

*Encouraging the development of neighborhoods that provide access to alternative and public transportation, are safe and affordable, promote physical activity, and are designed according to green design and construction principles.*

- Created 343 new Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units – 206 of which are occupied – that link affordable housing with support services for chronically homeless individuals and families.
- Delivered homebuyer training to 302 people to provide attendees with practical skills for successfully buying and retaining ownership of their home.
- Completed design and initiated construction of the new Central Library, which will be one of the best daylight libraries in the world. The Library is targeting a LEED Gold designation by featuring demand-controlled ventilation, variable air and water flow, daylighting controls, and onsite energy production through a 200 kilowatt solar photovoltaic array. The library will also feature a rainwater collection system, with a 300,000 gallon underground cistern.
- Engaged stakeholders in the Seaholm EcoDistrict initiative and identified opportunities to provide 3.67 megawatts of solar power and 35.1 million kilowatt hours of solar thermal heating, capture 8.98 million gallons of rainwater, treat 54 million gallons of stormwater, and grow 865,000 pounds of food per year.



*Photographer: Ray Briggs*

**SPOTLIGHT:**  
**GREEN PROGRESS IN THE  
 MUELLER NEIGHBORHOOD**

The community being developed at the former Robert E. Mueller Airport puts a strong emphasis on sustainability. Homes are designed to be resource efficient, feature recycled materials, and must achieve a minimum 3-star rating from the Austin Energy Green Building program. One tree is planted for every four parking spaces and 500 acres of the site are being preserved for parks

and open spaces. The community is designed to be compact and connected, with retail shops, office space, and residential neighborhoods all within walking distance.

In 2012, sustainably designed and construction residential and commercial developments in the Mueller Neighborhood resulted in saving an estimated 17,798 megawatts of electricity, 9.25 million gallons of water, and 26 million gallons of outdoor potable water.

A recently completed milestone at Mueller is the flagship HEB grocery store. Recognizing that being energy efficient and conserving natural resources creates savings that can be passed on to customers, the HEB store features:

- Daylighting and LED lighting
- Water-cooled refrigeration cases with propane refrigerant and doors on reach-in refrigerated cases
- Photovoltaic panels on the roof
- Extensive covered bike parking with repair kits

# MOBILITY & AIR QUALITY



The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan prioritizes investments in pedestrian and biking amenities, high-capacity transit, and compact and connected development, which will help ease traffic congestion, reduce air pollution, and maintain Austin's livability and affordability. The Sustainability Action Agenda is tracking 39 activities led by 5 City departments – Transportation, Public Works, Planning & Development Review, Parks & Recreation, and Austin Energy. These activities are designed to increase transportation options and improve air quality by providing additional sidewalks and bike lanes, improving traffic flow, creating a regional electric vehicle plug-in infrastructure, and developing options for alternative commuting.

*Investing  
in a compact  
and connected Austin  
that is less  
car dependent  
and more walking-,  
bicycling-, and  
transit-friendly.*

## **Accomplishment Highlights:**

- Finished the first phase of the Austin Bicycle Boulevard, broke ground on the Bike / Pedestrian Bridge over Barton Creek, and began construction of the Boardwalk at Lady Bird Lake as part of the Bicycle and Urban Trails Plan that will provide a connected and protected active transportation network.
- Completed 37.8 miles of new bike lanes and 12.5 miles of new sidewalk.
- Provided pedestrian and bicycle safety training to 53,429 elementary children, teaching them how to cross the street safely and ride bikes responsibly.
- Launched foundational work for a new bike share program in downtown Austin by initiating management contracts with B-Cycle and Bike Share of Austin. An initial bike share service launched in December 2013 with 100 bicycles and 10 stations.
- Finalized design standards and began implementation of a Downtown Wayfinding Program that will make it easier to find destinations, attractions, and parking, as well as improve traffic flow.

- Initiated construction of transit priority lanes downtown in preparation for MetroRapid transit lines, coming in January 2014. The MetroRapid routes planned for North Lamar / South Congress and Burnet / South Lamar are expected to reach 20,000 daily trips within two years of operation.

- Funded Movability Austin in partnership with the Downtown Austin Alliance, Travis County and Capital Metro to help increase carpooling, vanpooling, and other transportation options for downtown employers through customized work plans based on company-specific needs and opportunities, print and web-based alternative commute options, and employee tool boxes. To date, 30 members have enrolled in the program with a combined total of more than 15,000 employees who commute downtown.



*MetroRapid bus*

- Implemented 2,405 signalization improvements and upgrades to traffic signal hardware and software, resulting in an estimated 7.9% reduction in vehicular travel time in corridors and intersections.
- Provided real-time information from City of Austin “smart” parking stations to assist with the launch of a downtown Austin-specific ParkMe app for mobile phones. Since its launch, the ParkMe app has been downloaded more than 1 million times.
- Partnered with the Capital Area Council of Governments, Commute Solutions Coalition, and Clean Air Coalition to promote trip reduction strategies in a public education campaign.



### **SPOTLIGHT: BIKE SHARE PROGRAM**

Biking offers many benefits – improved health and fitness, reduced traffic congestion and air pollutants, decreased stress and less time wasted sitting in bumper to bumper traffic. Austin was awarded a \$1.5 million federal grant in the summer of 2012 to fund implementation of a bike share program which will be managed and operated by B-Cycle. The first phase of the bike share program launched in December 2013. Initially the service will focus on the downtown area, with 10 stations and about 100 bicycles in operation. By next spring, the remaining 30 stations and 300 bikes will be installed. Bikes will be equipped with always-on front and rear lights for safety purposes. The docking stations and kiosks will be powered by a combination of solar, A/C, and batteries. Throughout the summer, the Public Works Department offered ways for residents to submit input on program specifics. Facebook, Twitter, blog posts, public meetings, and the City website were used to collect votes for proposed station locations as well as color preferences for the bikes.



# ECONOMY & INNOVATION

Our thriving economy reflects a spirit of creativity, innovation, diversity, and entrepreneurialism, which has allowed Austin to remain competitive despite a national recession. Initiatives to grow Austin's *green* economy are underway by the Office of Sustainability, Austin Energy, and the Economic Development Department. These activities are centered around supporting local businesses in their efforts to go green; advancing research and development in emerging technologies, clean energy, and alternative transportation; and preparing the region to accommodate rapid population growth sustainably.

## Accomplishment Highlights:

- Avoided 152 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions through the purchase of 106.8 megawatt hours of renewable GreenChoice energy at Plug-in EVerywhere charging stations.
- Through the Plug-in Partners program, issued rebates for 679 electric bikes and 167 at-home charging stations.
- Continued partnership with Pecan Street, Inc. to test and implement smart grid customer services, manage distributed energy generation, and build energy storage capacity. Smart grid projects included a rebate program that resulted in the purchase of 4,000 smart, two-way communicating thermostats by Austin Energy customers to manage air conditioning and heating via smart phones.
- Installed 161 level 2 public Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations that have provided 20,216 charges and 107 megawatt hours of renewable GreenChoice™ power for local EV drivers.
- Developed a regional EV infrastructure plan with input from over 50 organizations in a 10-county region representing government, university, industry, and community groups.

*Growing Austin's economy by investing in green jobs for our workforce, clean energy and technology, environmental entrepreneurs, and local businesses who promote sustainability in their operational decisions.*

- Launched the Austin Green Business Leaders program and recognized 111 businesses representing 10.2 million square feet of office space and more than 12,000 employees, for their sustainable business practices. These local companies are making energy efficiency, water conservation, alternative transportation, healthy work environment, zero waste, education and outreach, and community stewardship a key part of their day-to-day operations.



*2013 Austin Green Business Leaders Award Recipients*

- Created a Sustainable Places Analytic Tool for Central Texas in partnership with Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) to identify the long-term effects of various growth scenarios on municipal budgets and the health of communities, with the goal of sustainably aligning housing, jobs, and transportation options. The City is utilizing the tool to analyze the sustainability benefits of investments in Urban Rail.
- Collaborated with Circuit of The Americas (COTA) to verify compliance with sustainability requirements, providing guidance on sustainability initiatives identified by COTA to meet goals for event-day transportation planning, waste reduction, and air quality protection.



**SPOTLIGHT:  
ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE**

Austin Energy has been promoting transportation electrification initiatives since 2008. Electric vehicles have zero tailpipe emissions and avoid 13,212 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per car per year. It is estimated that there are 678 electric vehicles in Austin.

Today, Austin Energy has one of the leading programs in the nation supporting Plug-In Electric vehicles (PEVs). Austin Energy's Plug-In EVerywhere™ Network has over 160 charging

stations at 70 locations that are powered by 100% renewable GreenChoice™ energy. As of July 2013, the Plug-In EVerywhere network has had over 20,000 charging events. Future plans include expanding charging to workplace and multi-family properties.

Austin Energy is also a founder and board member of the Pecan Street Project, an initiative that includes the Mueller Neighborhood and represents the largest non-fleet concentration of Plug-In Electric Vehicles (PEVs) in the country. Austin Energy is integrating electric vehicle charging into their demand response programs to further improve grid reliability.