ENVIRONMENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The City of Austin’s vision is to make Austin the most livable city in the country. To achieve that, we also need to be the most “green”. Below are a few of our accomplishments to date.

To make Austin sustainable …

- The redevelopment of the downtown area has brought together many of the major concepts of sustainability. People are living in compact environments, with walkable distances to restaurants, work, groceries and shops.
- An increase in Green buildings in 2007 resulted in saving of 16.5 tons of carbon dioxide, 10.4 tons of sulphur dioxide and 1.15 tons of NOx pollutants. That’s the equivalent of taking 3,625 cars off the road in Austin, attributable directly to the city’s green-building efforts.
- Street trees provide an enjoyable environment, while reducing urban heat island and helping to mitigate both air pollution and global warming.
- City Hall is a prime example – it has received the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certification, becoming only the second City-owned building in Austin to receive this designation.

To protect our air and our climate …

Energy Savings:
- A recent $1.7M energy upgrade project at the airport will reduce the electrical consumption by 12% annually.
- The airport’s use of thermal energy storage will reduce its peak demand by almost 50 percent.

Emissions Reduction:
- Commute Solutions is a voluntary trip reduction program administered through the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) that recommends transportation alternatives (carpools, vanpools, transit, bicycling, walking) and work schedule alternatives (flextime, compressed work weeks, teleworking)
• River Cities Ride Share is a new web-based, real-time ridesharing program helps commuters reduce automobile dependency by providing carpool and vanpool matches, biking and pedestrian information and public transportation options.
• Bicycle Commuting in Central Austin increased almost 100% between 1990 and the year 2000 during which time 66 miles of bike lanes were installed.
• A new web-based “finding” system is due out in early 2008 for bikers. Like map quest, the routing system will chose a route for you based on your experience riding, calculate the calories you will burn on your ride, the cost savings as compared to a car, and your carbon footprint reduction – so, you will get energy savings and weight loss at the same time!!
• To encourage another alternative to driving, Public Works is in the process of completing 140,000 feet of additional sidewalk throughout the city.

Cleaner Fuel:
• In the near future, six trash collection trucks will run on Compressed Natural Gas.
• Clean burning propane is used for all airport parking shuttles.
• The Parks and Recreation department is shifting to alternately fueled mowers -- a conventional lawn mower creates as much air pollution as driving a car for 100 miles.

To protect our health …
• Austin implemented a smoking ban in public places in 2005. Tests show that fine particle air pollution in local bars has been reduced by 94% since then.
• Watershed Protection and Parks and Recreation gave away over 500,000 Scoop the Poop bags in our parks last year alone to encourage people to clean up after their pets and reduce bacteria in our waterways – that’s about 165,000 pounds of poop!

To protect our landscape and habitat …
• The City has purchased over 32,000 acres of land for parks and preserves to protect both our water and our endangered species.
• A program is being launched to guide both homeowners and stewards of public lands to create natural habitats and reduce our impact on wildlife.
• Along with many community groups, the City plants thousands of trees each year to ensure a healthy urban forest.
• The City cares for existing trees by establishing an oak wilt program to address concerns that threaten our oaks.
To protect and conserve our drinking water...

Drinking Water Quality:

- Austin's drinking water system, which expects to treat nearly 55 billion gallons of water next year, holds a Superior Water Rating.

Water Conservation

- Under the new measures recommended by the Water Conservation Task Force, and in conjunction with LCRA, the City expects to save over 32 million gallons of water a day in peak season by 2017.

To protect our creeks, aquifer and aquatic life ...

- The Water Utility has reduced the annual total of about 13 million gallons of sewage overflow in 2002 to about 1 million in 2006 and expects a further reduction this year.
- Through restoration or relocation of old wastewater lines, the Austin Clean Water Program has rehabilitated 12 miles of pipeline with minimal impact on traffic and neighborhoods, and is on schedule to meet the EPA deadline for improving the system.
- Watershed Protection’s ban on coal tar-based pavement sealants has cut the use of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in Austin in half -- from approximately 500,000 pounds to less than 250,000 per year. The chemical is a known water pollutant and contains numerous carcinogens. Based on this work and enhanced environmental policies, Home Depot and Lowes have stopped selling coal tar sealant in their stores nationwide.
- Last year, over 778,000 gallons and over 1,100 cubic yards of pollutants were removed from the environment as a result of pollution inspections and investigations done by City staff.

To encourage recycling and recycled materials ...

Waste

- As one of the first cities in Texas to have curbside recycling, our innovative Pay-As-You-Throw Program encourages Austinites to recycle more and “trash” less.
- Parks and Recreation’s diversion of yard waste from landfills through brush chipping and mulch giveaways has kept organic material recycling.
• Austin has been awarded EPA’s first place national award two times for recycling all of its yard trimmings and biosolids.

Materials
• All of the primary structural framing system in the airport terminal building is made of 100% recycled steel.

In Support of our Children and our Future ...

• Each year over 30,000 elementary school children are educated and entertained by the Dowser Dan Water Conservation Presentations.
• This year the Watershed Protection Department provided water quality education to all 6000 fifth grader in Austin. Through Earth Camp, students in the lower socio-economic schools were treated to four days of hands-on science outside their classrooms.
• Over 7000 school children and families attend Parks and Recreation classes and programs covering environmental stewardship concepts each year.
• Austin high school students have been monitoring the water quality in our creeks for the past 15 years.

And, this is just the beginning...