



## Austin Youth River Watch

### Austin Strategic Direction 2023

#### **Strategic Outcome: Economic Opportunity and Affordability**

*Priority Indicator - Skills and capability of our community workforce (including education);*

*Indicators - Employment, and Economic Mobility:*

Austin Youth River Watch provides education and skills training primarily to Austin teens who are at-risk and from underserved communities.

Our educational service-learning program focuses specifically particularly on STEM and environmental fields, an area of increasing projected demand in the future.

AYRW is helping to produce a more equitable community workforce.

#### **Strategic Outcome: Health and Environment**

*Priority Indicator - Climate change and resilience:*

Austin Youth River Watch directly addresses this. Our students improve the health of our waterways and watersheds by regularly monitoring water quality conditions; and by performing restoration projects that help mitigate flooding and impervious cover, improve water quality and water quantity, and ultimately enhance the ecological health of our watersheds.

*Priority Indicator - Accessibility to quality parks, trails, and recreational opportunities:*

Austin Youth River Watch provides educational outdoor adventures at quality parks and trails to local teens who would otherwise not have these experiences. In our program, students go hiking at nature preserves, camping at state parks, and canoeing on Lady Bird Lake – most for the very first time. Austin Youth River Watch provides full transportation and support for these recreational and educational opportunities.

*Priority Indicator - Accessibility to quality health care services, both physical and mental:*

Health care services are not something we provide directly; however, AYRW interacts with its students so regularly that we have gained their trust. We have often provided support to students dealing with mental health issues, and referrals to mental health care providers. AYRW staff are trained in first aid, and will soon be trained in youth mental health first aid.

#### **Strategic Outcome: Culture and Lifelong Learning**

*Indicators - Quality, accessibility, and diversity of civic and cultural venues, events, programs, and resources; Appreciation, respect, and welcoming of all people and cultures; and Lifelong Learning Opportunities*

Austin Youth River Watch instills a sense of belonging and ownership of Austin's cultural assets among our students who are from primarily at-risk and underserved communities.

Because of our program, our students learn so much more about Austin than they ever have before, and because of our stewardship and community engagement lessons, they gain a sense of pride and appreciation for all that Austin has to offer.



We are exploring opportunities to create a program for youth ages 18+, targeted to our alumni and members of their communities. This new program will provide further education, training, and support for career development.

**Strategic Outcome: Government That Works for All**

*Priority Indicator - Condition/quality of City facilities and infrastructure and effective adoption of technology;*

*Indicators - Satisfaction with City Services, Stakeholder Engagement and Participation, and Equity of City Programs and Resource Allocation:*

Austin Youth River Watch introduces youth from at-risk and underserved communities to many of Austin's parks and waterways that they may otherwise never visit.

Our restoration projects improve City public land and facilities, especially parks and waterways, and assist in water and stormwater management. For example, AYRW students worked with PARD park rangers to establish the Zilker Park Ranger House, and the rain gardens students have built and helped build around town improve water quality and quantity, help with flood mitigation, and assist with stormwater management.