

Rain to River

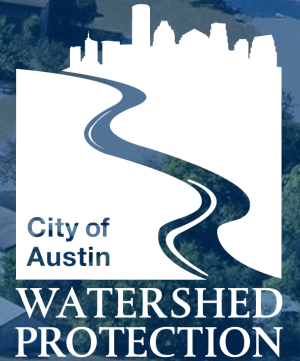
A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's Creeks & Communities

Un plan estratégico para proteger los arroyos y comunidades de Austin

Austin Water Oversight Committee
October 19, 2022



Watershed Protection Department



MISSION

The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) protects the lives, property, and environment of our community by reducing the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution.



What is the Strategic Plan?

GUIDING BLUEPRINT FOR DEPARTMENT

- Sets goals and objectives
- Establishes method to prioritize problems
- Creates a process for evaluating solutions

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Provides framework for evaluating future programs, projects, and regulations and measuring success of current portfolio

COMMUNICATION TOOL

Helps explain WPD's work and priorities to staff, City executives, policymakers, and Austin community



Why are we updating the plan?

- *Watershed Protection Master Plan* was originally adopted by City Council in 2001
- The previous planning effort did not prioritize gathering input from the full diversity of Austin's residents
- Revisions have been ad-hoc and focused on updates to technical information without public input
- The plan does not address major challenges like climate change, population growth, and racial inequities
- The plan does not sufficiently capture the knowledge and experience we have gained over the last 20 years
- The plan does not reflect the findings and recommendations of other City plans
- The plan does not set time-specific targets or objectives to demonstrate we are making measurable progress



Goals for Rain to River Update

REFLECT COMMUNITY VALUES

- Reflect goals, priorities, knowledge, and experience of community, staff, and stakeholders

INCORPORATE EQUITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Advance racial equity in all department operations, resulting in equitable outcomes for all Austinites
- Incorporate climate adaptation to increase community's resilience to impacts of climate change
- Focus on groups most vulnerable to watershed impacts in terms of both exposure and ability to recover

ACCESSIBLE & INFORMATIVE

- Be accessible and informative to a broad audience, including staff, City executives, policymakers, and the Austin community



Engagement Approach

RESPECTFUL TO PARTICIPANTS

- Make it easy and enjoyable to contribute input
- Be transparent about how feedback is being used; respect participants by only seeking feedback when it will inform a decision
- Utilize the most appropriate strategies and tools for specific groups or topics
- Use an iterative process; check in about what we've heard

ADAPTIVE PROCESS

- Define success metrics for engagement, track performance, and commit to continuing engagement until we have met the metrics for success
- Adapt to potential limitations on engagement strategies due to COVID-19
- Collaborate with other organizations on engagement efforts when possible

FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIPS

- Build relationships and trust with entities, leaders, and individuals in historically under-served groups and groups impacted by negative watershed outcomes
- Create systems to gather input from historically under-served communities that can be used beyond this engagement process



Priority Stakeholders

- **Under-served groups.** Residents who have been systematically marginalized from or denied a full opportunity to participate in past planning and decision-making processes and/or who are more likely to experience negative quality of life outcomes
- **Impacted groups.** Residents who have experienced or are at an increased risk of experiencing impacts of negative watershed outcomes (flooding, erosion, water pollution)
- **Organizations with relevant expertise.** Organizations that work on environmental, community health, or safety issues and who bring environmental and/or technical and policy expertise

And reach representative sample of the Austin community



Community Engagement Phases

PHASE 1: Community Input (2022)

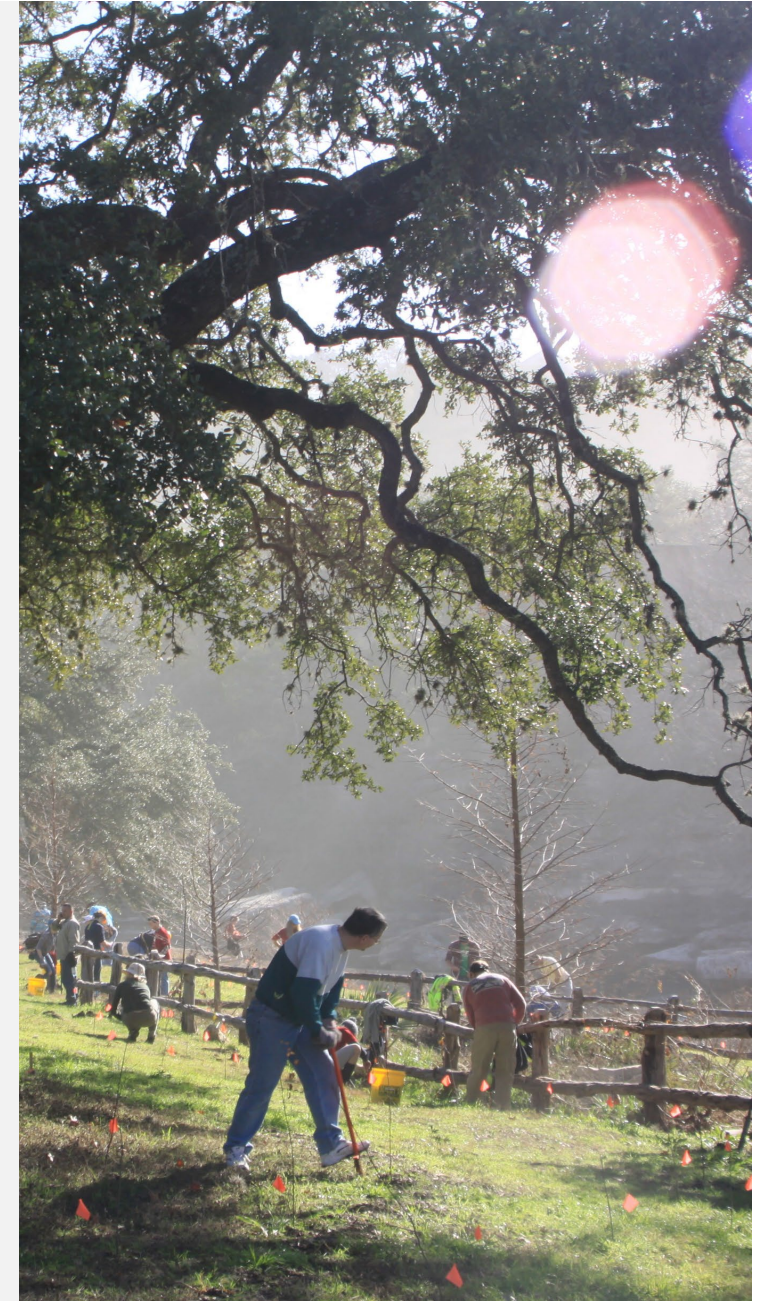
Objective: Gather community input and answer research questions using a broad range of strategies.

PHASE 2: Did We Get it Right? (2023)

Objective: Evaluate how effectively we translated what we heard from the community during Phase 1 into content. Gather input on community priorities for identified issues and strategies.

PHASE 3: Review the Draft Plan (2024)

Objective: Present the draft plan to the community, gather reactions to the content, and finalize the plan for adoption.



Engagement: Phase 1 Progress

- Launched our website (**RaintoRiverATX.com**) and promoted Rain to River across traditional and social media platforms
- Reached out to over 120 different priority stakeholder organizations to make new connections and build relationships
- Created a Community Vision Survey and Map for people to share their experiences with natural spaces, waterways, and drainage infrastructure





Rain to River

A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's Creeks and Communities

Each time rain falls on our city, it flows through a vast network of built and natural infrastructure and into our creeks, lakes, springs, and the Colorado River. Rain feeds the beautiful places that make Austin special—places where we can spend time with friends and family, explore nature, cool off, and relax. But rain can also pick up pollutants, erode creek banks, and flood homes and businesses.

What is Rain to River?

Rain to River is a strategic plan that will guide the work of the Watershed Protection Department for the next 10 years. Our department will use this plan to set goals, prioritize our work, and guide our decision making to tackle urgent challenges such as climate change and racial inequities. The plan will update and replace the current Watershed Protection Strategic Plan. We need your help to draft the plan!



Share your vision for Austin's creeks and communities!

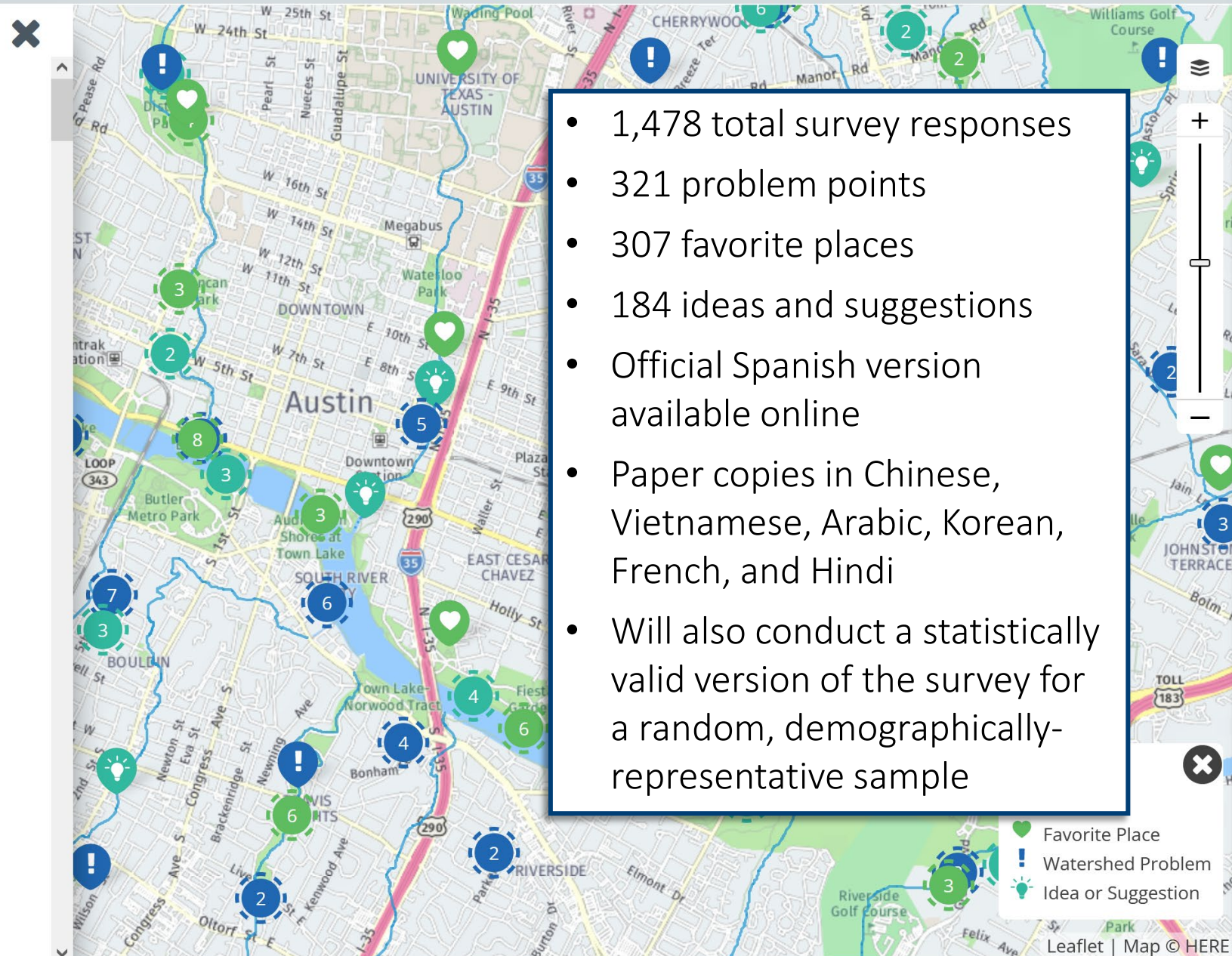
Take the Rain to River Community Vision Survey!

Rain that falls all over the city flows through a network of built and natural infrastructure to our creeks, lakes, springs, and the Colorado River. Rain feeds the places that make Austin special. But rain can also pick up pollutants, erode creek banks, and flood homes, roads, and businesses. The City of Austin is creating a strategic plan to protect Austin's ecosystems, creeks, and communities, and we want to hear from you!

Your input will help prioritize the Watershed Protection Department's work and guide decision making to tackle urgent challenges. We'll use this information to develop goals and explore the community's vision for how to embed equity and climate change at the core of Watershed Protection's work.

Visit RaintoRiverATX.com to learn more.

Community Vision Survey





Watershed Protection @A... · 7/1/22 ·
¿Dónde quisiera ver proyectos y mejoramiento en los espacios naturales, arroyos, lagos, e infraestructura de drenaje de Austin? ¡Muéstralo a la Ciudad de Austin con esta encuesta y mapa interactivo! tinyurl.com/R2Resp



Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA)
@GoAustinVamos

Take the Austin Watershed's Community Vision Survey below! Input will guide decision making tactics related to challenges like flooding and erosion.



Nature in the City @NatureC... · 4/6/22 ·
The City's @AustinWatershed is updating their "Rain to River" strategic plan to better protect creeks & communities over the next decade. They need your input! Visit RainToRiverATX.com to learn more + register for the online kick-off event on April 19!

Watershed Protection liked



Vanessa Fuentes @Vanes... · 19h ·
Looking to get more involved in the community? Check out this neat ambassador opportunity! 📌

Watershed Protecti... · 4/14/22
Are you passionate about community engagement and looking for part-time work with flexible hours? We're hiring Community Ambassadors to gather the perspectives + experiences of historically excluded voices for our upcoming Rain to River plan



Share your vision for Austin's creeks and communities! ¡Comparta su visión para los arroyos y comunidades de Austin!

The City of Austin is creating a strategic plan to protect Austin's creeks and communities, and we want to hear from you! The Watershed Protection Department protects lives, property, and the environment by reducing the impacts of flooding, erosion, and water pollution. Your input will help prioritize our work and guide decision making to confront urgent challenges such as climate change and racial inequities.

La Ciudad de Austin está creando un plan estratégico para proteger los arroyos y las comunidades de Austin, y queremos conocer su opinión! El Departamento de Protección de Cuencas protege las vidas, las propiedades y el medio ambiente reduciendo el impacto de las inundaciones, la erosión y la contaminación del agua. Sus comentarios nos ayudarán a establecer prioridades en nuestro trabajo y a guiar nuestro proceso de toma de decisiones para atender retos urgentes, tales como el cambio climático y las inequidades raciales.



Take our survey and add to our map!

¡Participa en nuestra encuesta y añadir a nuestro mapa!

www.RaintoRiverATX.com



For questions, please contact:

Si tiene preguntas, por favor comuníquese con:

raintoriverATX@austintexas.gov
512-974-2237

Rain to River



Become A Rain To River Ambassador



The City of Austin is updating its strategic plan to guide the work of the Watershed Protection Department for the next 10 years.

This plan (called Rain To River) will help the department figure out how to tackle urgent challenges, like the impact climate change, population growth, & racial inequities have on flooding & water pollution in our local streams.

The City of Austin is hiring Community Ambassadors to ensure a diverse array of voices are able to contribute to the plan. You can apply at raintoriveratx.com. (You can also contribute to the plan by filling out an online survey, if you don't feel the Community Ambassador position is right for you.)

Search Nextdoor



City of Austin ✓
Communications and Public Information
Office · 1h



Make an Impact on Your Community and Creeks! /
Tenga un impacto en su comunidad y arroyos! Make an Impact on Your Community and Creeks!

Engagement: Phase 1 Progress

- Hosted a Virtual Kick-Off Event in April for people to learn about Rain to River and how to share their input
- Attended over 45 community events around town, including Earth Day, Rainbow on the Creek, Juneteenth, Back to School Bash, and Viva México
- Partnered with other departments as well as community organizations to leverage engagement opportunities
- Will continue attending community events for the rest of the year based on identified gaps in representation





Juneteenth Celebration at Rosewood Park



Rainbow on the Creek at Waterloo Park



Austin Chinese Culture Festival





Austin Community Mosaic Project



Stonewall Equality Employee Network Event



Austin Nature Day





Blazier Elementary Field Trip

RESPONSES

Austin is growing super quickly, which means our urban center is getting exponentially larger. I want to see Austin's natural features be maintained and protected, even with this growth.

I see trash clean ups, and local government campaigns to help stop litter.

Preservation of our creeks and lakes, keeping everything clean, and making sure we're just being conscious about how our actions might impact our surroundings.

Expanding the range of those who can involve themselves and offer their pov, a focus on youth

restricting use of synthetic fertilizer - especially toward companies

raising awareness

city-funded trash cleanup

Teaching about the concept of leave no trace.

the people who ne

Keeping the idea of equity at the forefront when considering solutions to environmental problems.

their waste

creating more green jobs

QUESTIONS

1 What is your vision for Austin's natural environment – especially our creeks and lakes? Where do you hope Austin will be in 2035?

2 How do you see the city helping to achieve this vision? What is most important/urgent to the youth council in this regard?

3 How do you see our department helping to achieve climate equity and climate resilience? What steps should we take? What is most important/urgent to the youth council in this regard?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Preservation Restoration clean-up

advocating empowering underrepresented voices protection

funding Education

accountability regulation incentivizing

Representation opportunity

Austin Youth Climate Equity Council



Eastside STEAM Fest at Martin Middle School



Engagement: Phase 1 Progress

- Worked with MEASURE, a local black-owned nonprofit, to conduct five compensated focus groups designed by and centered on historically-excluded communities
- Hired 10 community ambassadors – a group of paid community members who are gathering stories and perspectives from racially and economically diverse communities
- Awarded \$5,000 mini-grants to six organizations that can help further our goals for community engagement and representation





Community Ambassador Meeting

THE IMPACTS OF FLOODING, POLLUTION, & EROSION ON AUSTIN COMMUNITIES

SEPTEMBER 2022



A LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA BLACK PAPER

Deanna Cureton, MPH
Janis Bookout

MEASURE
Community Led. Data Driven.



Next Steps

- Complete Phase 1 of Community Engagement
- Issue an RFP for a consultant to help with the synthesis of input and the development of content
- Work with Dr. Tane Ward to develop and conduct an Equity Grounding Training for Watershed staff
- Provide a memo to Mayor and Council in November re: how equity is being incorporated into Rain to River



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