



Austin Climate Equity Plan | *Quarterly Update*

Natural Systems

March 7, 2023



Presentation Outline

- **Overview**
 - *Zach Baumer, Interim Chief Sustainability Officer*
- **Community Support**
 - *Andrew Smiley, Executive Director, TreeFolks*
- **Coordinated City Action**
 - *Katie Coyne, COA Environmental Officer; Asst. Director, Watershed Protection*
 - Austin Water
 - Development Services
 - Parks and Recreation Department
- **Next Steps**



Austin Climate Equity Plan Adoption: September 30, 2021

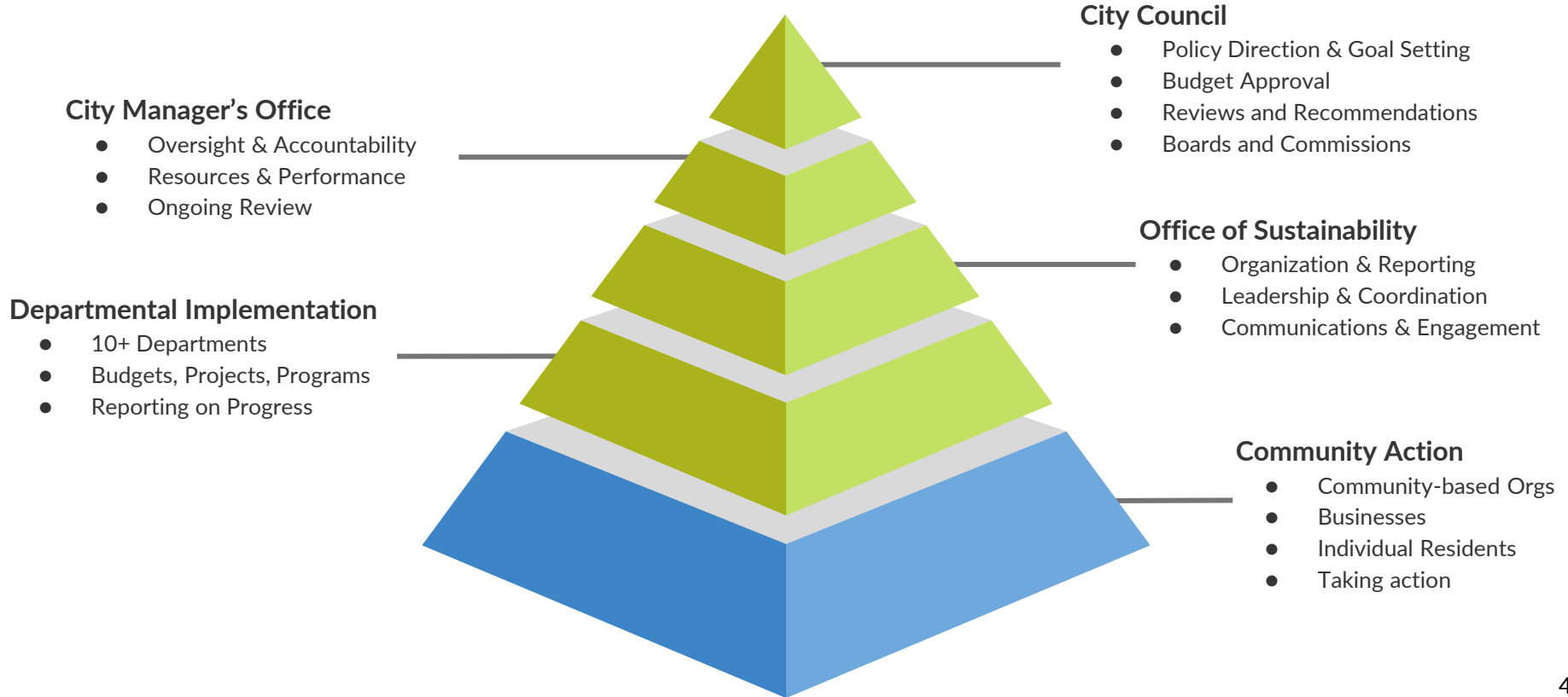
Resolution 99

- *Adopted the Austin Climate Equity Plan, including a new community-wide goal of equitably reaching **net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040***

Resolution 110

- Funding requests for implementation
- Leadership & reporting
- Dashboard, Climate Ambassadors, Green Jobs
- Near-term council priorities (airport, natural gas, carbon capture)

Implementation Overview



Climate Equity Plan Summary

17 Goals

*What needs to be accomplished **by 2030** to keep us on track*

74 Strategies

*What should be implemented in the **next 5 years** to make progress*



Climate Equity Plan Summary – Plan Focus Areas

5 Goal Areas

1 Consumption of Goods



2 Sustainable Buildings



3 Natural Systems



4 Transportation & Land Use



5 Transportation Electrification



Natural Systems Benefits



reduced
energy
costs



carbon
sequestration



pollution
removal



avoided
healthcare
costs

\$18.9
million

\$11.6
million

\$2.8
million

\$5.5
million



Natural Systems – 3 Goals to be achieved by 2030, 1 by 2050

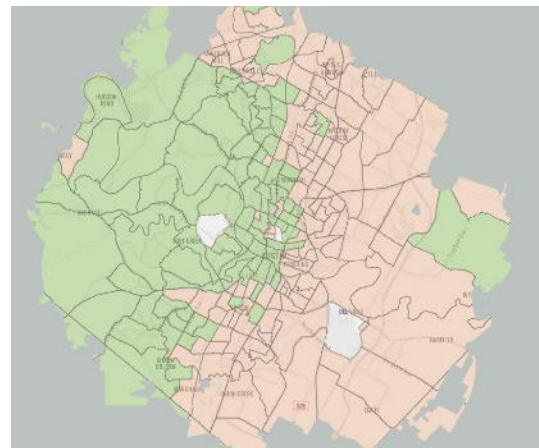
- 1** Protect an additional 20,000 acres of carbon pools on natural lands and manage all new and existing natural areas (approx. 70,000 acres total), focusing on resilience.
- 2** *Protect 500,000 acres of farmland from development in the 5-county region through legal conservation or regenerative agriculture programs.*
- 3** Achieve at least 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050, focusing on increasing canopy equitably.
- 4** Include all City-owned lands under a management plan that results in neutral or negative carbon emissions and maximizes community benefits.

TreeFolks



TREEFOLKS

Empowering Central Texans to build stronger communities through planting and caring for trees.



Climate Resilience & Tree Canopy Equity

- Community Tree Planting
- Floodplain Reforestation
- Tree Distribution
- Education & Engagement

TreeFolks

Shared Goals: 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050

- More trees on public lands
- Tree protections and mitigation
- Community tree plantings
- Promoting tree health
- Data driven investments

City Partnerships

- Carbon+ Credits
- Ready, Set, Plant!
- NeighborWoods
- Grants/Contracts
- Hornsby Bend

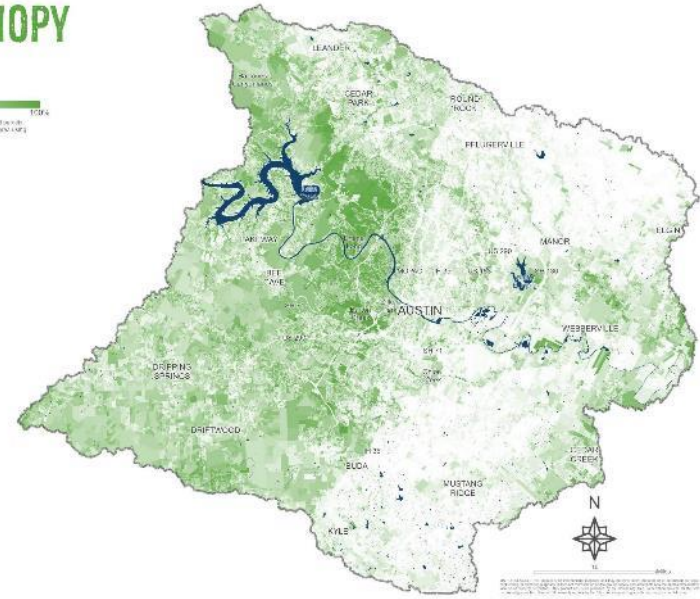


Austin's Urban Forest

Over 30% of the city is shaded by trees



TREE CANOPY



Austin's Urban Forest & Climate

City goal: At least 50% citywide tree canopy cover by 2050, focusing on increasing canopy cover equitably.

Current Strategies

- Tree protection & planting regulations
- Increasing canopy cover in right-of-way capital improvement projects
- Tree planting prioritization plan for equitable planting
- Public-private partnerships for tree education & planting programs



Rain to River Plan



Reflect Community Values

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

Incorporate Equity & 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

Blackland Prairie Stream Corridor Study

Objective

Characterize the condition of our creekside corridors in Austin's Blackland Prairie watersheds

Main findings

- Riparian corridors in poor condition and not recovering on their own
- Streams eroding or projected to erode
- Not all is lost (some rare sites in good condition)



Blackland Prairie Stream Corridor Study

Recommendations:

- Revise provisions for Critical Water Quality Zone Restoration
- Emphasize in Rain to River
- Improve erosion identification & management
- Active Riparian Restoration and Reforestation
- Land Protection for sites in good condition

Current actions

- Floodplain reforestation contract with TreeFolks for public parcels (\$125K per year, 10 acres per year)
- Partner with other departments to explore land acquisition focusing on East Austin



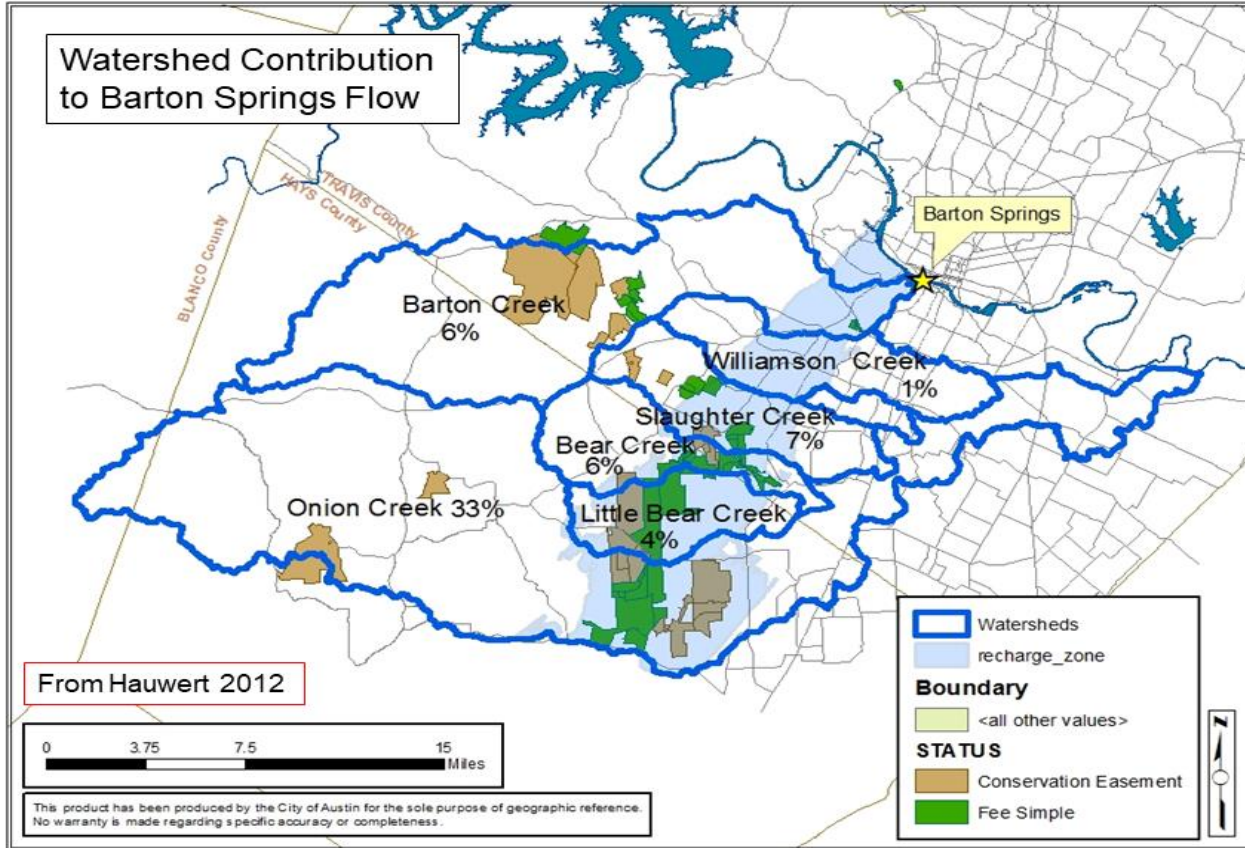
Austin Water Wildland Conservation - Balcones Canyonlands



Before & After



Water Quality Protection Lands





PARD Long Range Plan & Land Acquisition

- Our Parks, Our Future Long Range Plan
- 2018 Parks Bond and Parkland Dedication (land or fee-in-lieu)
 - **460 acres of parkland acquired since 2018**
 - Parkland access expanded to 40,000 additional residents
- Community PARKnerships Program
 - Community Activated Park Projects Program
 - Cities Connecting Children to Nature – *Nature Play Guidelines* published & nature play installations
- Austin Civilian Conservation Corps Program
 - In the process of hiring 2 full time permanent positions
 - Internal City Pathways Program (race equity in green workforce development) – 31 youth temp staff
 - ACCC Crews run by American Youthworks – 15 employees



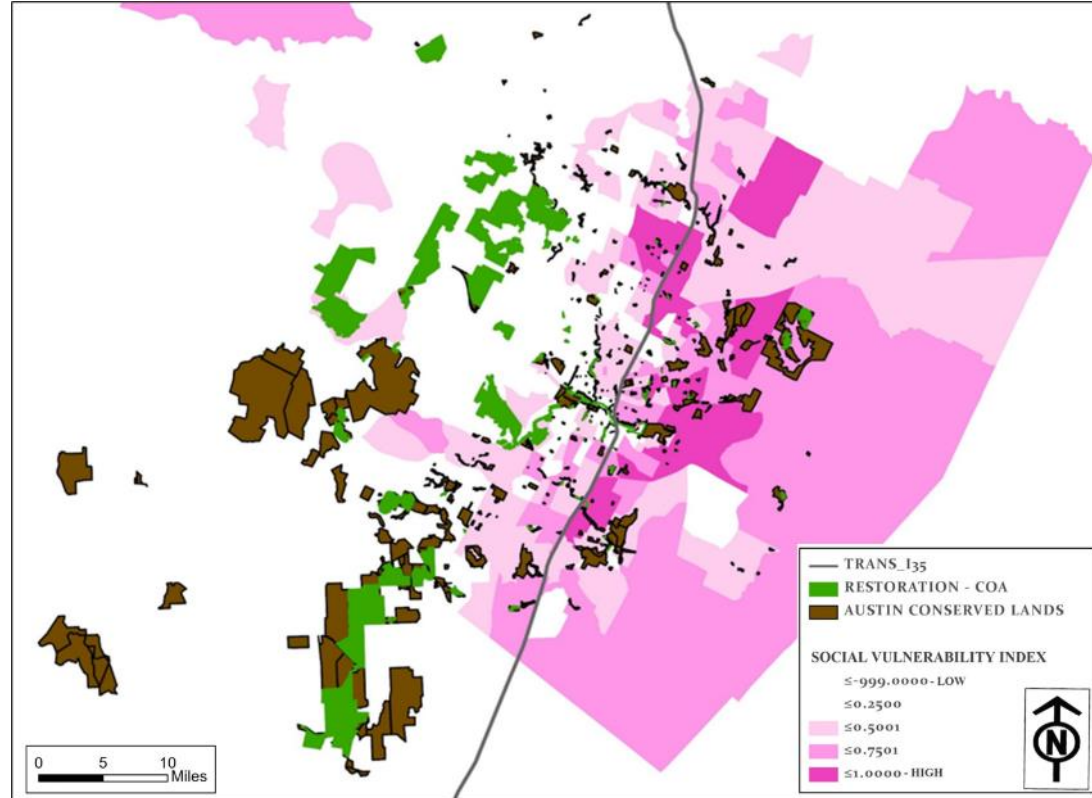
PARD Land Management

~ 87.5% of conserved land and 98.5% of restored land is west of I-35

Land Management Plan: “Recommended Management Strategies and Climate Vulnerability Assessment” for PARD natural areas – *10,347 acres (~60% of parkland)*

PARD land management activities will be prioritized based on:

- Staff resources & funding
- Social vulnerability
- Environmental vulnerability & risk
- Community support
- Restoration potential
- Other challenges & opportunities



PARD Land Management

Land Management Plan

- **Purpose:** Improve resilience and health of natural areas, including reducing wildfire risk
Draft Plan will go to City Council in Spring 2023
- **Aligns with:**
 - 2019 Wildfire Audit
 - PARD Long Range Plan
 - Park vision plans
 - Climate Equity Plan
 - Austin Green Infrastructure Analysis
- **Implementation:** Prioritize management where both environmental and social vulnerability are high



PARD Sustainable Design and O&M

Sustainable SITES Initiative

- *In 2021, Austin became the first city worldwide to incorporate the SITES rating system into local policy and currently has more participating projects than anywhere else in the world.*
 - **Certified:** Kingsbury Commons at Pease Park
 - **Registered:** Confluence at Waterloo Greenway, Colony Park Pool, Givens Pool, Montopolis Pool, Northwest Pool, Pharr Tennis Center, Brownie Park, Walter E. Long Metro Park, & Brush Square
- Operations & Maintenance
 - Integrated Pest Management: Initiated 2017, updated 2021
 - No-Mow and Low-Mow zones: PARD Mowing and Managed Habitat Dashboard provides tracking and transparency

Managed Habitat Area Counts	Wildflower Meadow Areas (sq ft)	Pollinator Habitat Areas (sq ft)
54	3,570,445	80,355



Next Steps

- Create climate and environment focused land management plans for all City-owned lands
- Increased focus on Eastern Crescent lands, centering community needs through active collaboration with community organizations
- Remedy disparities in the east/west distribution of protected and actively managed public lands through land acquisition and funding for increased stewardship and restoration activities
- Complete an Equity Assessment of the City Environmental Code



Thank you!



More information:

- austintexas.gov/climateplan
 - www.treefolks.org
 - [Wildlands Story Maps](#)
 - [PARD Long Range Plan](#)
 - [Parkland Dedication Story Maps](#)
 - [Rain to River](#)
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