




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden-Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M. Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: March 29, 2023

SUBJECT: **Staff update to Austin Civilian Conservation Corps Evaluation and Direction (Ordinance No. 20220817-004)**

This memorandum serves as an update to [Ordinance No. 20220817-004 Mayor Adler's Budget Rider 3 \(ACCC\) v3](#), which directs the City manager to explore whether and how the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) mission and workplans (1) should include pathways to jobs specifically for people experiencing homelessness who otherwise would not have access to or would have difficulty accessing employment, or (2) should otherwise support and be a part of our community's homelessness response system (for example, assisting with placemaking efforts associated with the HEAL initiative). This exploration should include input from ACCC, APH, EDD, and HSD staff with a report back to Council no later than the first quarter of 2023. Additionally, the City Manager is further directed to prepare an evaluation of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps pilot that includes the number of individuals served and evaluates how the program has helped put people on pathways to employment, and how it has helped advance conservation and sustainability goals as well as how the ACCC has enhanced and can enhance the homeless response system. Finally, the City Manager shall detail and outline how he intends to build out the ACCC program over the next five years.

Pathways to Jobs for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

During the FY2023 Budget Approval Process, Council approved two (2) full-time positions to further develop and execute the ACCC mission of equity prioritization in green workforce development and expansion of green vocations. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) has hired one of the full-time (Program Coordinator) positions and is scheduled to complete the hiring of the second position (Program Manager III) in April 2023.

To date, the ACCC team members and PARD leadership have met with multiple external non-profit organizations that support creek corridor restoration, greenbelt restoration or individuals experiencing homelessness. The meetings kicked off exploration into ACCC workforce development pathways to green job work force development. In the coming months, with the hiring of an ACCC Program Manager

III position, PARD will fully develop the relationships and integrate opportunities in coordination with the Austin Public Health Department, Homeless Strategy Division and Economic Development Department.

Austin Civilian Conservation Corps Evaluation

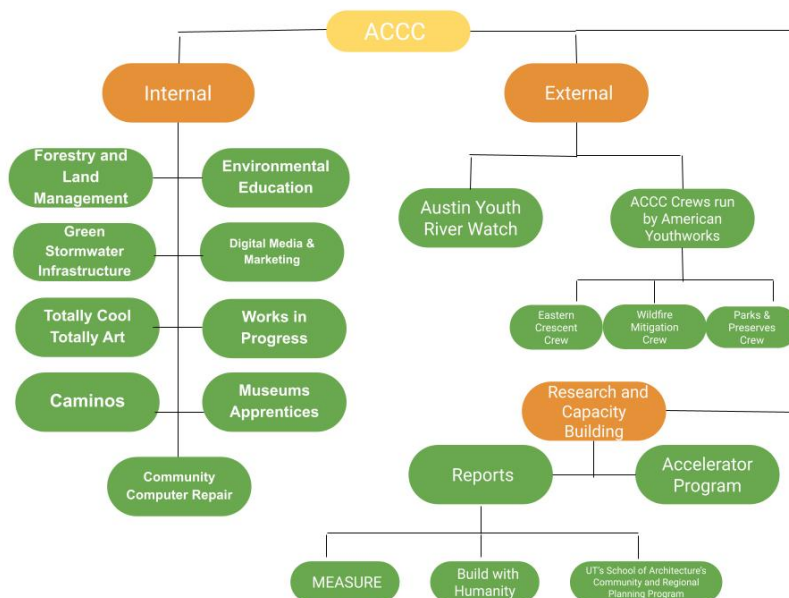
On May 7, 2020, the Austin City Council approved [Resolution No. 20200507-061](#). This resolution created the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) as a re-employment and workforce development program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was housed within the Economic Development Department.

In 2022, ACCC transitioned to the Parks and Recreation Department. Since the transition, ACCC has an expanded programmatic focus beyond pandemic response to address the overarching strategy of expanding green jobs through workforce development as outlined in the [Austin Climate Equity Plan adopted in September of 2021](#).

ACCC prioritizes working with communities who have been historically most impacted by extreme weather and will continue to bear the brunt of impacts as climate change accelerates, including low-income communities, those experiencing homelessness, and BIPOC (black indigenous, and people of color) communities.

ACCC has added pathways into employment within the City of Austin to expand workforce opportunities to include the City's own critical workforce needs. ACCC members and specialists are completing green job exposures and training pathways internal to the City of Austin. ACCC is also working within various departments to align current workforce needs with the existing and future pathways of ACCC programming.

The ACCC program consists of three programmatic areas: 1) internal City pathways; 2) external pathways and partnerships; and 3) research and capacity building.



The following chart summarizes both the internal and external pathways program to date:

Total number of individuals employed	197
Individuals transitioned from ACCC to full time positions	15
Months employed	3-9 depending on term

Internal Pathways

The Parks and Recreation Department has created nine (9) Internal Pathways in a cross-departmental effort that employed 56 staff in green job fields in 2022. The following link provides information related to the ACCC Internal Pathways: [Austin Civilian Conservation Corps ACCC Internal City Pathways to Employment \[VIDEO\]](#). Below is a brief description of each program.

[Forestry and Land Management](#) is a collaboration between the Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Division's Land Management, Urban Forestry units and with the Youth Forest Council within Development Services Department's Urban Forestry. Projects on public land include planting, restoration and maintenance of natural areas, forest health analysis, invasive species mapping and control and environmental education.

[Environmental Education](#) - a partnership with our Parks and Recreation, Watershed Protection Department, and Development Services Department that provides exposure to environmental education careers and provides nature focused programming in recreation centers, playgrounds, parks, and other spaces to hundreds of people each year.

[Green Stormwater Infrastructure \(GSI\)](#) - a partnership with our Parks and Recreation and Watershed protection department to provide exposure to water conservation careers. This team supports the design process, installations, & maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure for residential and public land. The National Wildlife Federation and Hill Country Alliance have sponsored some of this work.

[Digital Media and Communications](#) - employs members of the community in communications related to ACCC planning and networking. This pathway is designed to shape the marketing and communication direction of ACCC. The team works to tell the story of ACCC using a variety of tools and technology to produce photos, videos, website content and more.

Museums Apprentices - exposes participants to professional development training while they support running summer camps at the George Washington Carver Museum, Asian American Resource Center, Dougherty Arts Center, and Mexican American Cultural Center. They collaborate on major public events such as CelebrAsia, Midsommar and Juneteenth. Other projects include creating environmental artworks, working on landscape improvements, assisting artists, and giving tours.

[Works in Progress](#) - an immersive program that prepares teens living in Austin for careers in the arts. Through workshops and networking, students will develop their professional skills, prepare for artistic careers and education beyond school, and meet with industry professionals and working artists.

[Caminos](#) - created by the Latino Quality of Life Commission, is a pathway program in collaboration with the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC). Caminantes gain support, career exposure and professional development relating to arts and creative sectors. ACCC has supported

Caminos in expanding job opportunities for Caminantes and creating leadership positions for the program, Senderistas.

[Totally Cool Totally Art \(TCTA\)](#) - cultivating creative teens since 1996. This summer ACCC is piloting the TCTA Theater Internship where the ensemble of teen writers, actors, directors, and crafts will create works that will be toured to the youth summer playgrounds and recreation centers. The ensemble will create a short film and play about issues like climate change, social justice, advocacy, self-expression, and self-care. This pathway is launching this summer, 2023.

Community PC Internship Program - a collaboration between PARD, Austin Resource Recovery and Financial Services Department's Community Technology Division. Interns will allow for expansion of the [Community PC Program \(CPC Program\)](#) which takes in retired City and private sector devices, refurbishes those devices, and makes them available to non-profits for public benefit. Also, this pathway is investigating supporting city employees without a laptop or PC at home to gain access to a device through Austin Free-Net. This pathway is launching this summer, 2023.

The following charts summarizes the internal pathways program to date:

Total number of individuals employed	56
Individuals transitioned from ACCC to full time positions	1
Months employed	3-9 depending on term

Summer 2022

Program	Number of people employed	Months	Into temp jobs/continued employment	Into Full time
Natural Resources (Land Management, Forestry, Environmental Education, Green Stormwater Infrastructure)	21	3	13 (62% offered ongoing employment)	1
Museums & Cultural Programs (Caminos, Works in Progress, Museums Apprentices)	17	3	8 (47% offered ongoing employment)	0
TOTALS	38	3	21 (55% offered ongoing employment)	1

September 2022 - Current

Program	Number of people employed	Months	Into temp jobs	Into Full time
Natural Resources (Land Management, Forestry, Environmental Education, Green Stormwater Infrastructure)	13	7	TBD	TBD
Museums & Cultural Programs (Camino, Works in Progress, Museums Apprentices)	18	7	TBD	TBD
TOTAL	31	7	TBD	TBD

External Pathways and Partnerships

The ACCC program partners with area non-profit organizations and other organizations that support the ACCC mission. These partners execute green workforce development programs to employ, train, mentor, and support participants with green job placement. External partners are asked to center equity in program design. Current external partners include American Youth Works and Austin Youth River Watch.

[American Youthworks](#): ACCC partners with the Texas Conservation Corps (TXCC) at American Youthworks to provide career exposure and hands-on experience to 8-to-10-person conservation corps crews. The ACCC crew pathway builds leadership skills and prepares young people to enter the workforce with a strong work ethic and sense of service through hands-on conservation work. The three ACCC crew pathways are: Eastern Crescent, Wildfire/Fuels Mitigation and Parks and Preserves. See more about the crews here: [The Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \(ACCC\) \[VIDEO\]](#). The City Council approved a contract on March 9, 2023, with American Youth Works to utilize green workforce development employees through the American Youth Works external pathway in completing multiple City departments' land management projects

[Austin Youth River Watch \(AYRW\)](#) provides multi-year after school and summer programs for high school students. AYRW combines peer mentoring with intensive environmental education while engaging youth through nature-based and experiential service-learning programs in environmental science. River Watchers collect, analyze, and publish water quality data from Austin-area streams and rivers. They report their data to local and statewide agencies. Initiated in fall of 2022 ACCC has supported AYRW in funding positions and expanding job opportunities for participants.

The following charts summarizes the external pathways program to date:

Total numbers of individuals employed	141
Individuals transitioned from ACCC to full time positions	14 (as of FY22)
Months employed	3-9 depending on term

Fiscal Year 2023 - Current

Year	Program	Number of people employed	Months	Into Full time
FY23	Austin Youth River Watch	86 (9 employees with Austin Environmental Leaders, 77 compensated in after school programs)	3-9	TBD
FY23	American Youth Works 2 crews: Parks & Preserve and Eastern Crescent Crew * <i>March 9, 2023: Contract approval will allow for additional crews</i>	15	9	15 Forestry Technician positions open, with multiple applications expected from ACCC participants
FY22	American Youth Works 3 crews: Parks & Preserve, Eastern Crescent Crew, Fuels	26	9	14 (1 City position)
FY21	American Youth Works 2 crews: Parks & Preserve and Onion Creek	14	8	0

The ACCC Internal and External Pathways have advanced conservation and sustainability goals as follows:

- Internal Pathways:
 - 3,145 hours of natural systems management on parkland. Projects include planting, restoration and maintenance, forest health analysis, invasive species mapping and control, design, installation, and maintenance of green stormwater infrastructure
 - 503 hours of environmental programming with 2000 participants
- External Pathways:
 - 167 person-hours of riparian restoration projects on parkland. In Q1 (Oct-Dec 2022), Austin Youth River Watch participants were trained in environmental topics, such as identifying native trees and plants; monitored water quality at 7 different sites.
 - 80,550 hours of natural systems management since FY21 have been provided by ACCC crews run by American Youth Works. Projects include vegetation control, general forest health maintenance, invasive removal, trail and fence building, fuel reduction on public lands and wildfire mitigation on public land.

Research and Capacity Building, and the ACCC Five Year Plan

In 2022 ACCC partnered with Build with Humanity and MEASURE to chart a course for the next five years of its development. These two organizations are owned and operated by people of color and have strong ties within communities of color as well as other underserved groups that may realize significant benefits from participating in the ACCC, but who often face barriers to accessing such programs. ACCC also collaborated with the University of Texas' School of Architecture's Community and Regional Planning Program to provide a framework for defining green jobs within the local context and to provide an outline of current and future green job growth. This report will help to shape the long-term potential pathways of growth for future ACCC investment.

- [What Works in Works Programs: Building Equity in the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \[PDF\]](#) – This report, by MEASURE's Shadeequa (Dee) Miller and Janis Bookout, lays out the insights gained from examining the history of racism and discrimination embedded in infrastructure, policies, and practices throughout the City of Austin, and provides a path forward through equitable programs that dismantle and account for these realities.
- [Lived Experience & the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps \[PDF\]](#) – This report, by Build with Humanity, presents a systems map of the current economic conditions facing Austin communities including micro, meso, and macro level drivers.
- [Expanding Pathways to Quality Jobs in Austin's Growing Green Economy \[PDF\]](#) - This report, developed in conjunction with the University of Texas Community and Regional Planning Program and released in the summer of 2022, will assist with future analysis of workforce sectors for green job growth. This study included a photovoice research methodology which gathered firsthand experiences of ACCC members in the field to help inform future programmatic design to address participant needs.

These three reports will guide the programmatic outcomes of ACCC over the next five years as outlined below:

- Consider workforce incentives such as sick leave and paid time off,
- Strengthen job placement support,
- Build more relationships with community organizations,
- Develop green job programs based on community interest,
- Implement case management and make career advancement a structured part of the program,
- Include representative program participants and members of the targeted community in planning meetings,
- Ensure diversity of program leadership to relate to the population served,
- Collaborate with program partners to re-evaluate program roles and responsibilities,
- Define core elements of the problem(s) being tackled by the ACCC (community sustainability, employment, and workforce development),
- Define and explore relationships between elements within the current employment system that serves the ACCC's target audience,
- Prioritize and affirmatively target key points of leverage to understand opportunities to make ACCC more effective,
- Scope the domain(s) of exploration,
- Refine program design to address participant needs.

The Parks and Recreation Department intends to complete the hiring of the ACCC Program Manager III position in April 2023 and actively work to prioritize and plan for a five-year implementation. PARD will provide another progress update by September 1, 2023.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager