

# City of Austin: Opportunity to Lead Texas in Bird Safe Buildings

Heidi Trudell  
Bird Safe Design Specialist

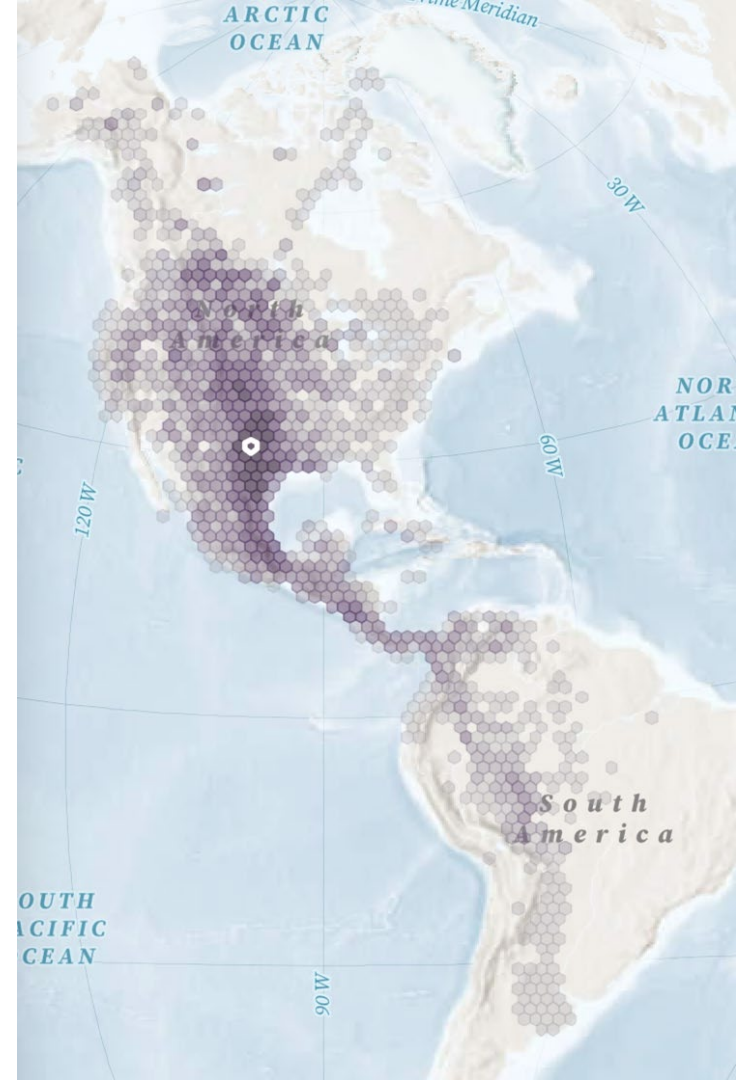


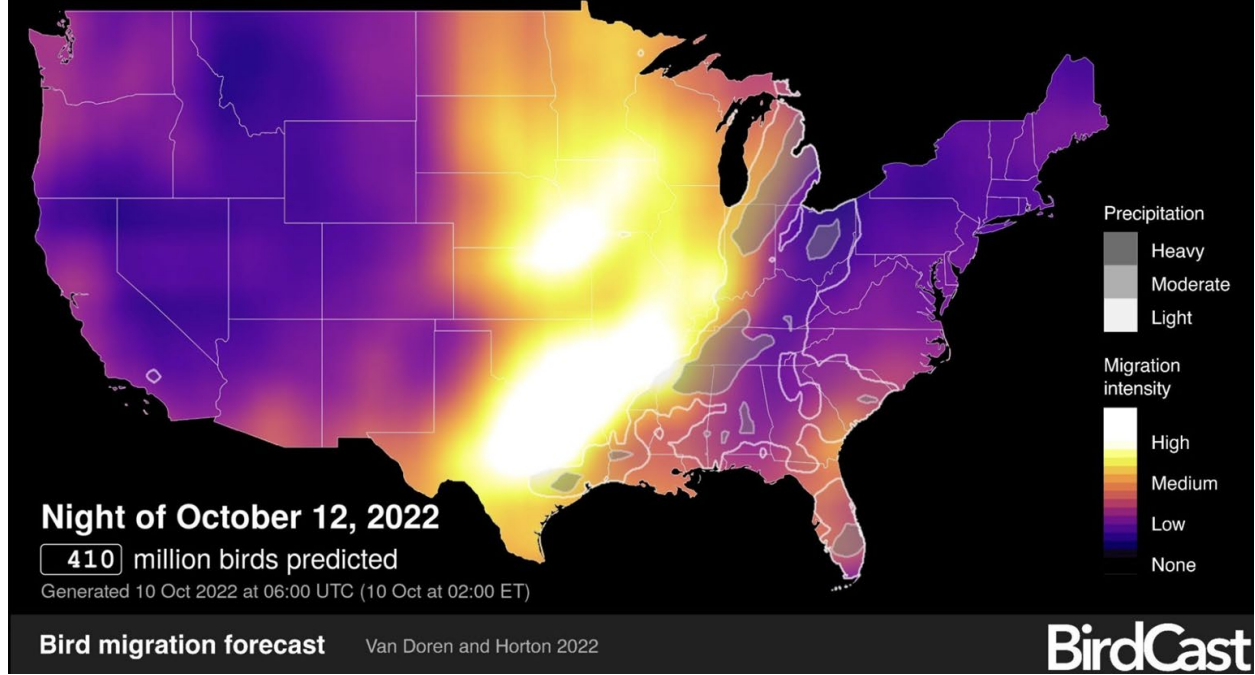


# Roadmap:

Geography + conservation

Design in action





Austin is in the heart of North America's Central Flyway, which is the spring and fall migration corridor for hundreds of species of birds.

Texas is home to three of the top 10 deadliest cities for birds: Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, making it critical to proactively preserve biodiversity.





# Local buildings have global consequences

Blackpoll Warbler  
*Setophaga striata*



Nashville Warbler  
*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*



Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
*Archilochus colubris*



Tennessee Warbler  
*Oreothlypis peregrina*



Swainson's Thrush  
*Catharus ustulatus*



Black-throated Green Warbler  
*Setophaga virens*



American Robin  
*Turdus migratorius*



## LEGEND

- Year Round
- Summer (breeding)
- Winter (non-breeding)
- Migration

Map by Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Range data by NatureServe

What's good for birds is good for people.



© M.W. York 2006



With a great state comes great responsibility:

Bird watchers spend **\$1.8 billion/yr** in Texas



427 species of birds have been recorded in Travis Co.  
(more than 14 states)

Austin has committed to maintaining a Bird City designation,  
achieving the status in February 2023.



## What is Bird City Texas?

Audubon Texas and Texas Parks and Wildlife started this [community-focused certification program](#) in our state to help people protect birds and their habitats where we live, work, and recreate. The criteria required to attain certification are designed to be impactful and efficient against habitat loss and other harmful factors impacting birds.

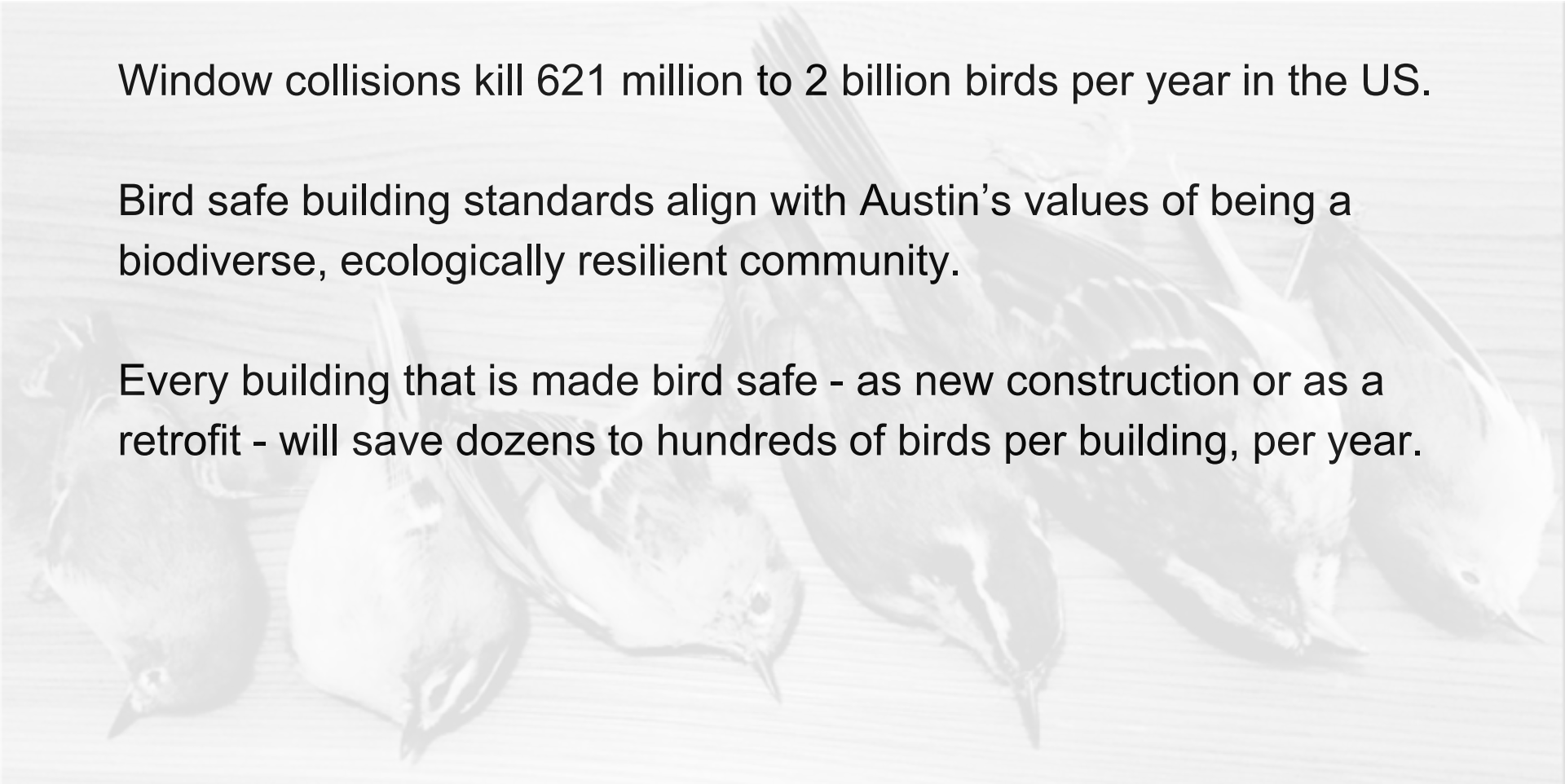


## **Birds are unable to see glass.**

Window collisions kill 621 million to 2 billion birds per year in the US.

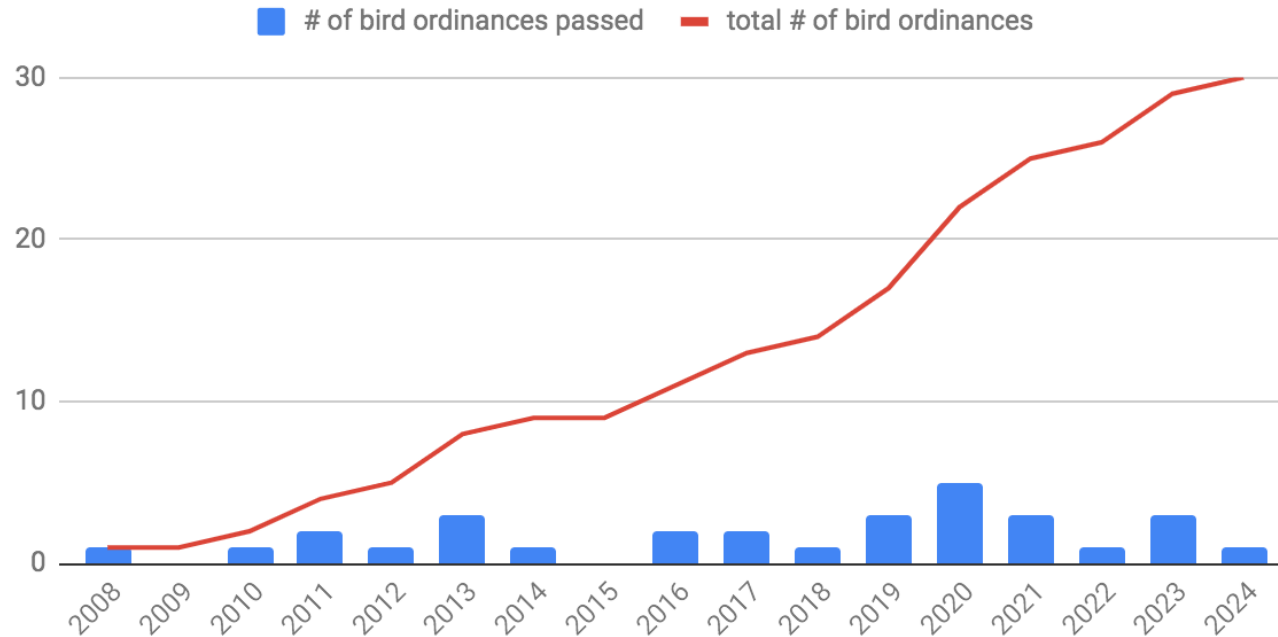
Bird safe building standards align with Austin's values of being a biodiverse, ecologically resilient community.

Every building that is made bird safe - as new construction or as a retrofit - will save dozens to hundreds of birds per building, per year.



# To date, no city in Texas has enacted a bird safe standard.

## # of bird ordinances passed and total # of bird ordinances



NYC, Mountain View, Toronto, Chicago, San Francisco, Portland, Washington DC  
+ 22 more





Birds and buildings **can** coexist.

Cost % of project totals:

Bird-safe glass can range from **0.00021% to 0.38% of total project cost** for a new building.

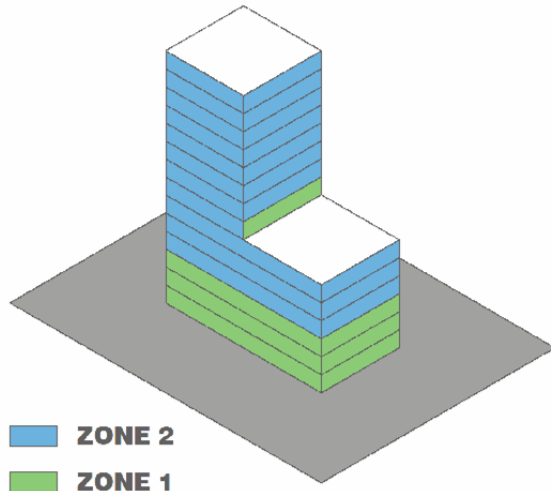
When incorporated from the schematic design phase or pre-design phase, bird safe features are not a financial burden, not an energy burden, not a visual burden. After design development, costs, delays, and logistical challenges increase.

Suggested Reading:

Bird-Safe Windows A Winner For Builders and Birds  
A Report of the Ornithology Center at Muhlenberg College

Comprehensive codes include:

- Ground level to above tree canopy (the most critical zone)
- Include all hazardous features (glass walkways, railing, corners, etc.)
- New **and** retrofit construction
- All habitats, no restrictions
- Defined, acceptable measures of collision prevention



Voluntary codes may include incentives for compliance.

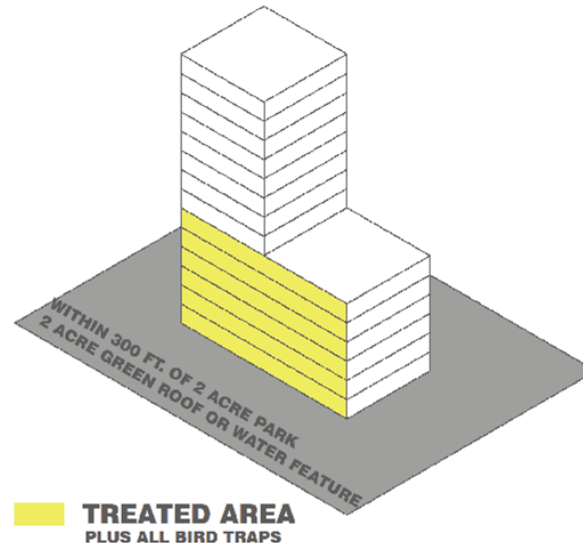
Image: LEED Innovation Credit:  
Bird Collision Deterrence

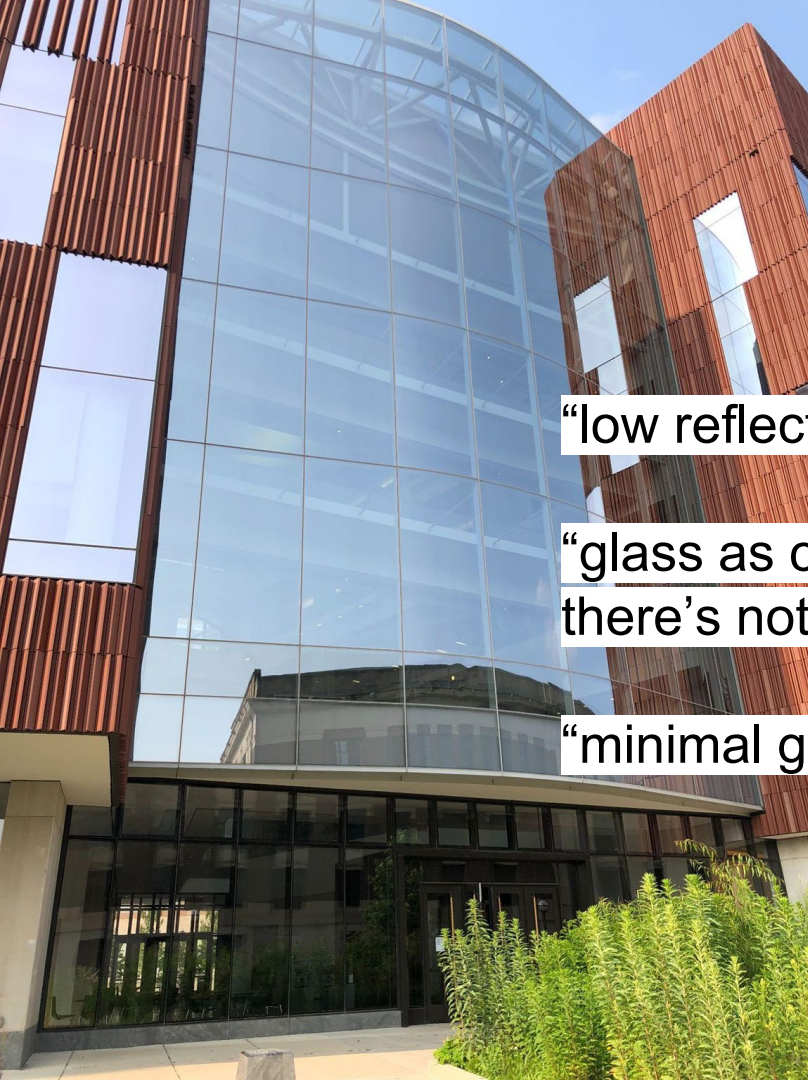


Incomplete codes apply only to buildings:

- Over x ft high
- Over x square feet
- Within x feet of x habitat
- On sides more than x% glass
- Only [listed] products can be used, or x% reflectivity range
- Seasonally (lighting)

Image: San Francisco Bird-Safe Building Standard

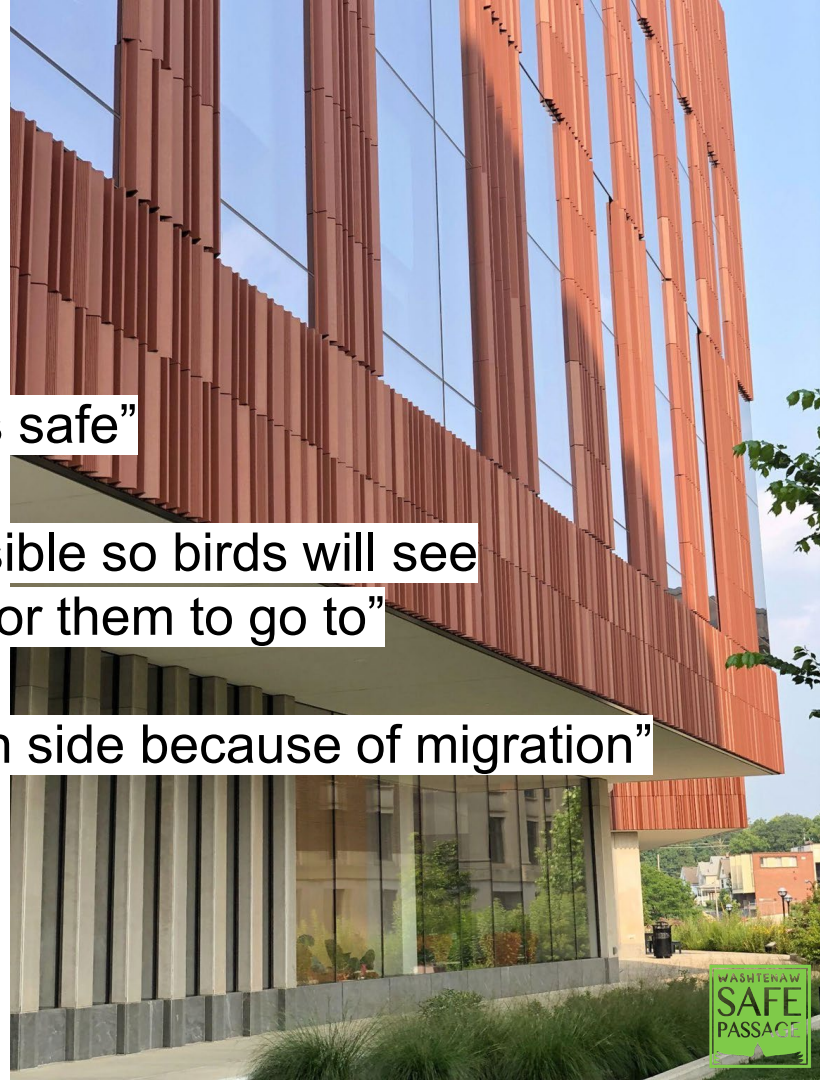




“low reflectivity glass is safe”

“glass as clear as possible so birds will see  
there’s nothing inside for them to go to”

“minimal glass on north side because of migration”



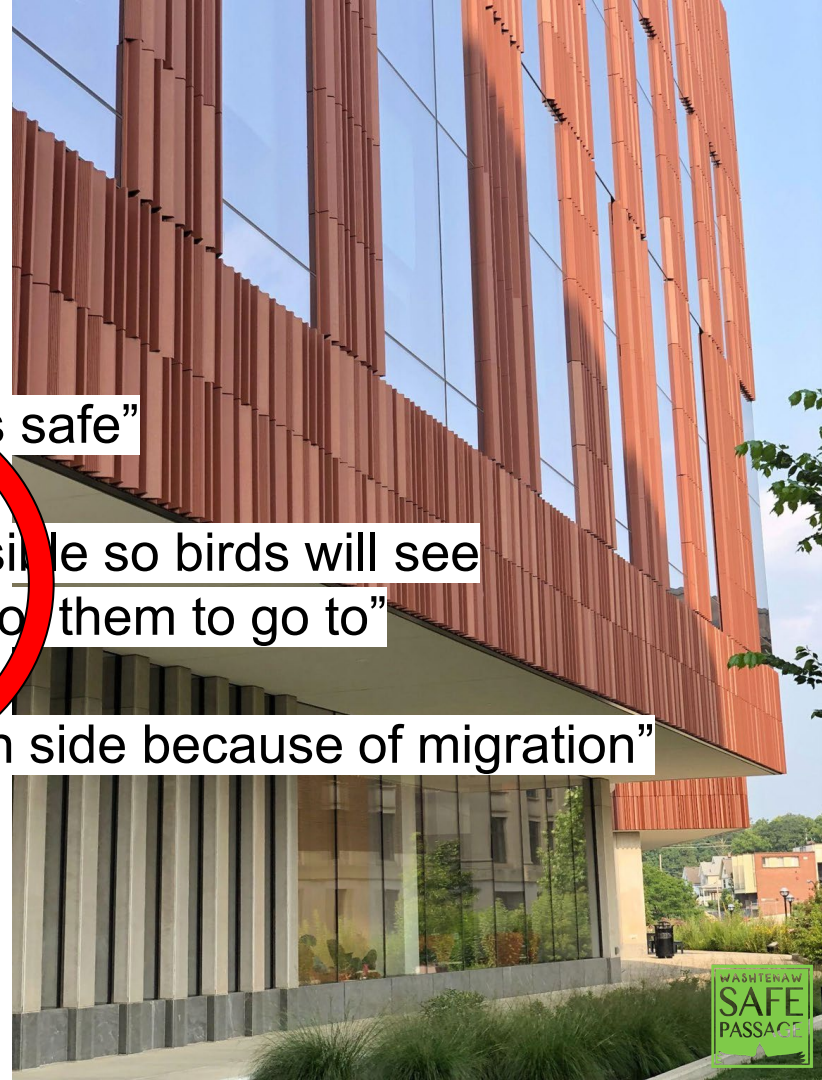




“low reflectivity glass is safe”

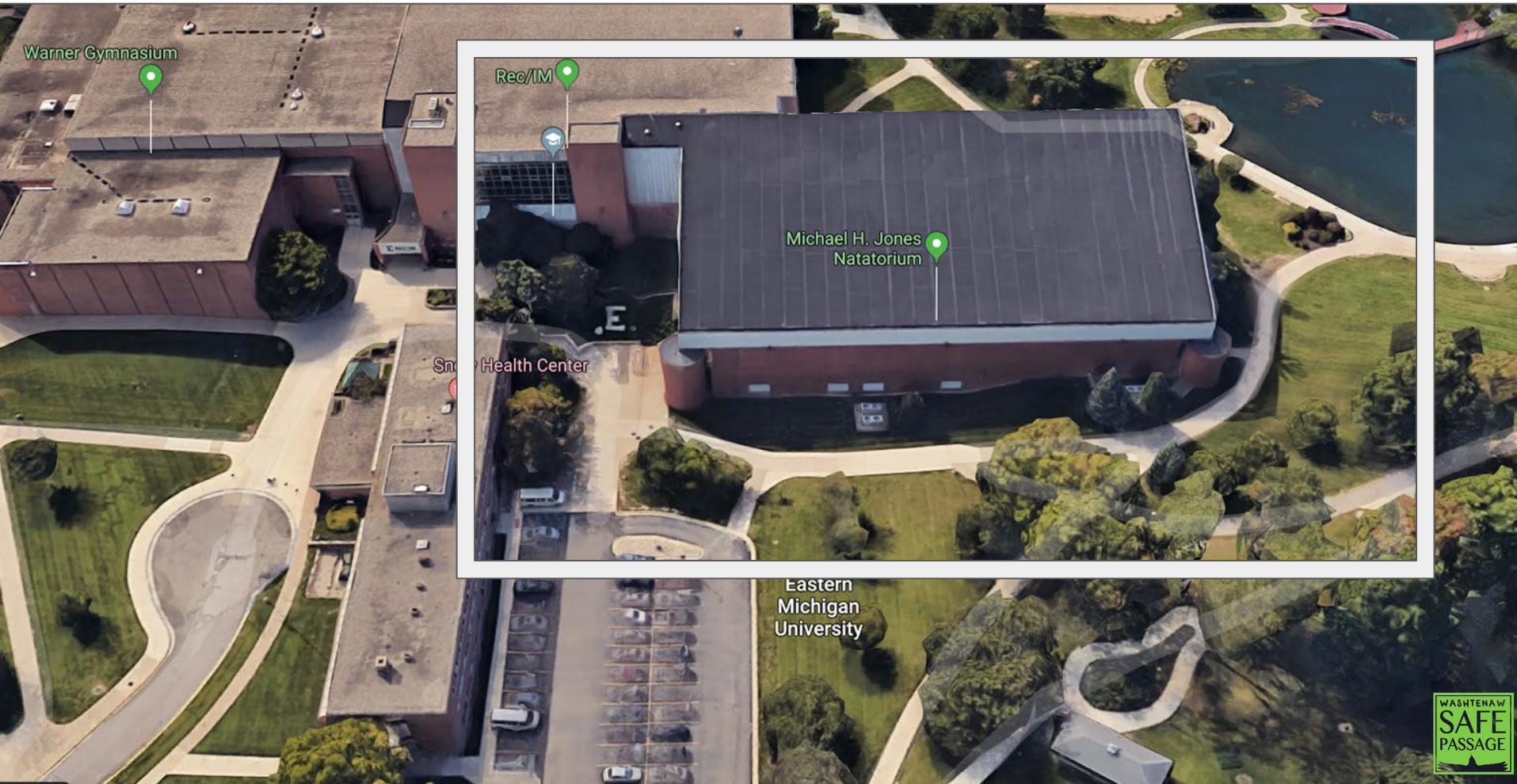
“glass as clear as possible so birds will see  
there’s nothing inside for them to go to”

“minimal glass on north side because of migration”



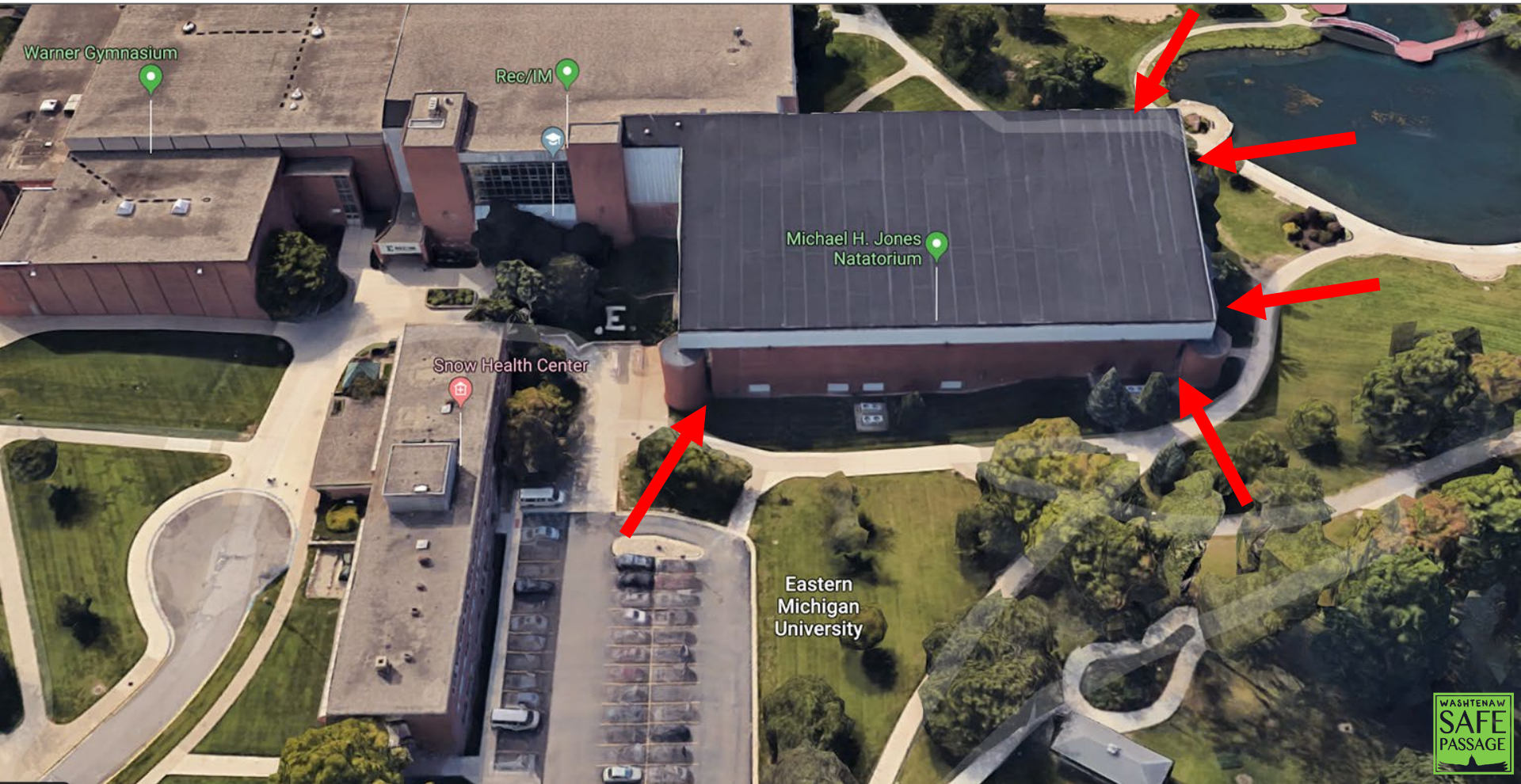


# The Natatorium is brick. Where's the problem?





# The Natatorium is brick. Where's the problem?







“The more masonry a building has, the safer it is.”





“The more masonry a building has, the safer it is.”





“Funnel” features

Birds see isolated portals

Landscaping is a risk factor but not a prevention method

Comprehensive resources exist, product options are diversifying (abrasive/acid/laser etch, frit, UV, etc.)



## How to Design and Legislate Bird-Friendly Buildings

Whether you want to reduce bird collisions at an existing building, design a new bird-friendly building, or promote bird-friendly building legislation, ABC has solutions.



Architecture & Planning



Legislation, Code, & Ordinances

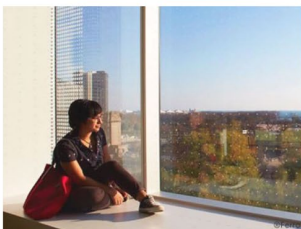
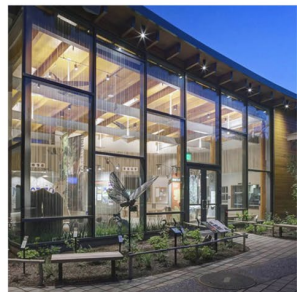


NYC Bird-Friendly Legislation

## Bird-Friendly Buildings Gallery

Visit our photo gallery to see how a variety of materials and techniques can be used to make buildings safe for birds and great for people.

[View Gallery](#)



## Products That Prevent Collisions

Looking for glass for a new building, or a solution to fix existing windows? Search our comprehensive material database to find the right product.

[View Database](#)



## Bird-Friendly Design Guide

*Bird-Friendly Building Design* provides a complete overview of collisions and solutions. This includes information on how birds see the world, the threats that glass poses, collision prevention techniques, and the science behind those solutions. The guide can be ordered in hard copy or downloaded free of charge.

[Download Guide](#)





## **What is hindering companies from investing in... valuable conservation projects?**

...lack of information about the environmental and economic impacts of their investment. Despite their impactful environmental, economic, and social returns... conservation projects are often boxed out of corporate sustainability portfolios.

- **Texan By Nature**





# What's good for birds is good for people.

## Keep Austin birdy.



© M.W. York 2006

Questions?

Heidi Trudell - [justsavebirds@gmail.com](mailto:justsavebirds@gmail.com)

Additional reference:  
[Design Commission report](#)

April 22, 2024

Design Commission

The Travis Audubon Society requested this report on bird safe buildings for presentation to the City of Austin and general dissemination within the Central Texas community. It was submitted to the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board on March 18, 2024, and was prepared by Heidi Trudell, a bird collision prevention researcher and consultant, who in March 2024 was hired as a technical advisor by Guardian Glass.