



Zoning and Platting Commission Recommendation

Recommendation Number: 20240806-012

Bird Safe Buildings

Date: August 6, 2024

Subject: Bird-friendly design and building solutions

WHEREAS, the Zoning and Platting Commission was given a presentation about Bird Safe Design by Heidi Trudell, Bird Safe Design Specialist with support from Travis Audubon; and

WHEREAS, the core principles of Imagine Austin include the integration of nature into the city and sustainably managed environmental resources; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin was named a Bird City in February 2023; and

WHEREAS, each year, nearly two billion birds travel through the State of Texas, and

WHEREAS, over 400 species of birds reside or migrate through Travis County every spring and fall. Both endangered species and species of concern utilize the Central Flyway and geological way finders of the Balcones Escarpment and Colorado River during their migration; and

WHEREAS, the hills of Austin and Travis County are home to the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin benefits from the annual \$1.8 billion generated from bird tourism in Texas; and

WHEREAS, birds colliding with poorly designed buildings results in up to 2 million birds dying in the US every year; and

WHEREAS, more than 30 cities have adopted bird-safe design practices into their code and/or practices. However, no city in Texas has yet to adopt these design practices, which means Austin could lead the way; and

WHEREAS, turning off non-essential lights helps to reduce bird-building collisions as well as additional benefits reducing electricity consumption, costs, and pollution associated with

power production; and

WHEREAS, habitat loss for nesting and wintering birds also has a negative impact; and


WHEREAS, the loss of insects due to the use of pesticides diminishes food supply for birds.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Zoning and Platting Commission recommends the City of Austin take the following actions:

1. Strive to be the FIRST city in Texas to be a bird-safe design city.
2. Require all new construction or remodels of both low-rise and high-rise buildings to utilize, at a minimum, bird-friendly glass and downcast, Dark Skies lighting.
3. Use Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues to promote bird tourism by making grants available to fund the addition costs associated with bird-friendly building designs.
4. Continue the “Lights Out” policy in which non-essential lighting in City buildings is turned off between 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM during the spring and fall migration periods.
5. Provide information to the public about the “Lights Out” campaign and the importance of turning off non-essential lighting to protect bird populations during migration periods.
6. Limit the use of pesticides on all city managed properties, especially during peak migration and nesting seasons.
7. Continue to actively add parkland or preserves along creeks and wetlands, and in the rapidly disappearing Blackland Prairie ecoregion and consider wintering bird habitats and migration corridors and nesting habitat when selecting these sites.
8. Encourage developments to leave wild spaces with native tree and plant communities that support birds, healthy insect populations, and other wildlife.

Date of Approval: August 6, 2024

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 7-0 vote

Attest: 

Carrie Thompson, Secretary of Zoning and Platting Commission