

IMPACT REPORT

2022-2023

CITIES
CONNECTING
CHILDREN TO
NATURE

Cities
Connecting
Children to
Nature
AUSTIN, TX



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01

About Us

CCCN National Initiative



Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) is a national initiative that seeks to create more equitable and abundant access to nature in cities through a partnership between National League of Cities and Children & Nature Network. Recognizing the importance of children's connection to nature, CCCN is dedicated to assisting municipal leaders and community partners in fostering greater access to nature for children, with a specific focus on addressing economic and racial disparities.

CCCN Austin: Our Evolution



RECENTERING RACIAL EQUITY

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature Austin initiative seeks to provide equitable access to nature for all children, with a specific focus on Black and Latinx children in communities that have historically and are currently the most impacted by systemic racism, underinvestment in green spaces, and inequitable access to resources. By acknowledging the difference between equity and racial equity we can begin to re-center our focus towards changing policies and practices that exclude communities of color.

Integrating a racial equity lens when building relationships will ensure children facing barriers have opportunities to foster a deeper appreciation for the environment and a lifelong connection with nature.

Racial Equity Journey

December 2022

**Undoing Racism
Workshop**

Action & Learnings

Self reflection, understanding personal implicit bias

Quarterly Newsletter:

- Incorporated (re)centering racial equity article

Joined City's Equity Action Team (EAT!)

- Attend Monthly meetings

February 2023

**Rethinking Racism
Workshop**

Action & Learnings

Joined City's Equity Network

- Attend Monthly meetings

Discovered parallel disparities in racial equity and equitable access to nature

May 2023

**Latinx Challenge
Workshop**

Learnings

Understanding of singular history between Latinx, Black, and White races

Diversity within Latinx community

Societal individualism

June 2023

**Children & Nature
Network, Inside-Out
International
Conference**

Learnings

Dismantling conventional systems

(Re)centering spaces and conditions for new ways of thinking

July 2023

**CCCN Austin Core
Team Retreat**

Action

Integrated learning from previous workshops:

- Critical analysis of action plans using racial equity lens
- Added "race" layer to nature equity map

City Goals

Strategic Direction 2028

Meeting Health & Environment, Culture & Lifelong Learning Outcomes

PARD Long Range Plan

Increasing park and nature access, activating spaces

Imagine Austin

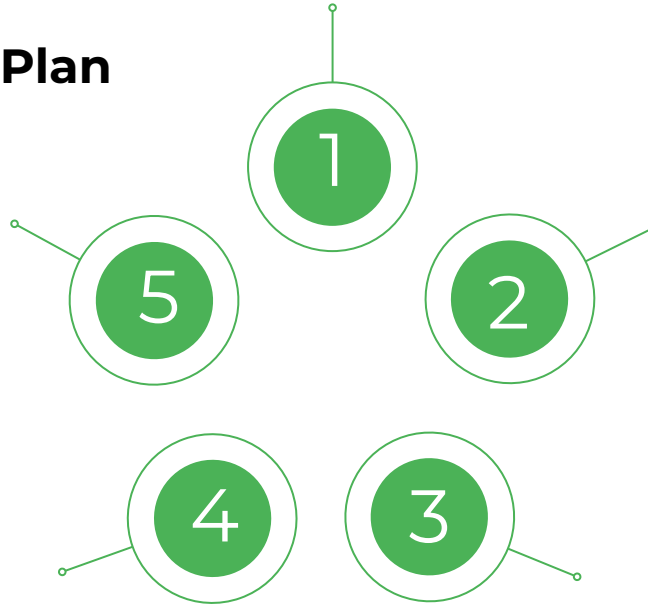
Creating complete communities through livable and sustainable places

Climate Equity Plan

Helping to create green job pathways, carbon reduction, and healthy natural systems

Other City Depts

Aligning with Public Health, Watershed Protection, Transportation Dept. goals



\$5,399,172

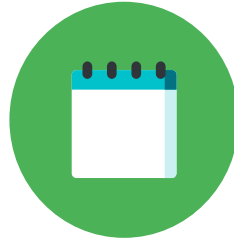
Leveraged for CCCN efforts in FY23

↑ 93.3% from FY22

Outreach Efforts



**CCCN Austin
staff presented
in 4 different
cities**



**CCCN
featured in 3
national
articles**



**Conducted 15
presentations,
with 514 total
participants**



02

COBOR

Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

- The Parks and Recreation Department, along with dozens of partner organizations, created the Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights (COBOR) in 2016
- In 2017, Austin City Council unanimously voted to pass the COBOR with the support of more than 1,000 citizens, key partners such as Austin Independent School District, and Mayor Steve Adler.
- We believe Austin has a vested interest in ensuring all children in our city have the opportunity to connect with the natural world and help create the next generation of environmental stewards who will conserve Austin's quality outdoor space.

1,602

Total Signatures

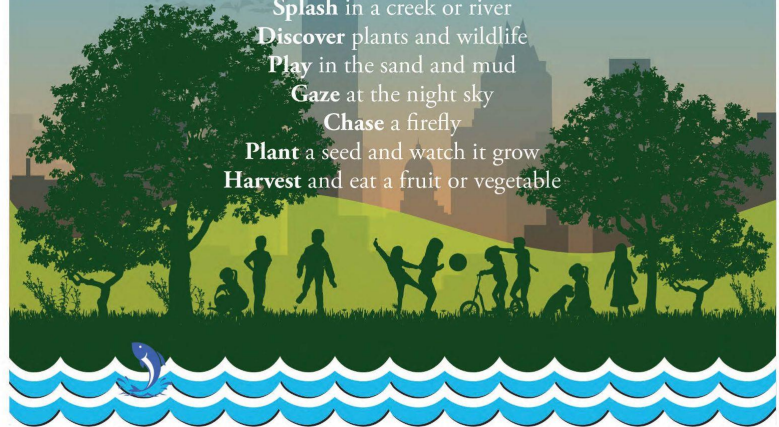


COBOR featured in Austin Civilian Conservation Corps "Nature Connection" video

AUSTIN CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR BILL of RIGHTS

In which children of all ages, backgrounds,
and abilities have the right to:

- Climb a tree
- Catch a fish
- Picnic in a park
- Hike a trail
- Ride a bike
- Splash in a creek or river
- Discover plants and wildlife
- Play in the sand and mud
- Gaze at the night sky
- Chase a firefly
- Plant a seed and watch it grow
- Harvest and eat a fruit or vegetable



Understanding that research shows children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school, we enthusiastically support this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/ccn





03

**Our
Strategies**

Our Strategies

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Green School Parks

2

Nature Play

3

Youth Leadership

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**Outdoor Learning Environments
(OLE!) Austin**

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Nature Smart Libraries

A group of five children are standing in a school garden, each holding a large radish with its green leaves. They are smiling and looking at the camera. The background shows various green plants and a fence. The text is overlaid on the image.

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

Vision: Create a network of school parks that provide schools and the surrounding community the opportunity to learn from, steward and play in nature

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

- CoA/AISD Interlocal Agreement amendments for the 21 existing school parks (joint use sites) passed on consent by City Council January 26, 2023.
- Green School Park designation moved to self-assessment and opened to all AISD schools
 - Increased from 3 to 16 Green School Parks
- Ongoing coordination between PARD + AISD on upcoming AISD Bond, which will impact 9 joint use school parks + coordination on fencing at both joint use school parks and schools adjacent to parks
- Completed Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, studying the impact of green infrastructure installed as part of the GSP program. Final conclusions include:
 - As temperatures rise, children decrease physical activity and seek shade
 - Children's connection to nature had a significant positive effect on their:
 - Overall SEL skills
 - Self management
 - Self-awareness
 - Relationship skills





NATURE PLAY

Vision: Activate parks and greenspaces through nature play programming and installation of nature play spaces across the city

NATURE PLAY

- Published Nature Play Guidelines V2
- Nature play spaces designed for 4 parks, with the expectation that all parks moving forward will include nature play
- Permanent nature play signs installed into all parks with nature play spaces
- Loose parts lending kits updated, with kits used by 254 people
- Secured PARD Mitigation funds to cover the cost of moving logs
- Infrastructure Subcommittee quarterly meetings, providing space for staff and partners to discuss best practices for nature play
- Held nature play training and evening presentation, led by Adam Bienenstock, for 66 participants from 26 different City Divisions and Organizations
- Initial prep started at John Trevino Metro park for housing nature play material



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Vision: Collaborating to build an Austin in which young people can easily access careers in outdoors, nature, and the environment, are fairly compensated for their contributions, and that the field, and leadership within, represents the communities we serve

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Participants:
 - 49 participants from 18 organizations
 - 18 different zip codes
 - 7 new folks ages 16-24
 - 12 non-White (Black/African-American, Asian-American and Pacific Islander, and Latinx/Hispanic)
 - 64 total members
- Committee Chairs: 2 youth + 2 adults
- Normalize talking about race & racism with stakeholders, partners, participants, leadership
- Gather to talk about green careers and opportunities, network with professionals
- Combination of in-person + virtual meetings: Nature Networking, Adult-Youth Collectives, Culture Change/ Building a net that works
- Creating pathways into nature-based jobs:
 - Austin Civilian Conservation Corp: 38 summer temp jobs at COA, 13 still employed
 - Youth Forest Council: 12 interns
 - Austin Youth River Watch: YLWG chairperson employed at AYRW



An outdoor play area for children, featuring a wooden table and bench set on a mulch surface. Several stacks of old tires are used as planters for small plants. In the background, there is a chain-link fence with a 'STOP' sign, a 'YIELD' sign, and a 'FARM ROAD 973' sign. A building with a window and some outdoor furniture is visible on the left.

OLE! AUSTIN

Vision: Improve outdoor spaces at childcare centers to enable 0-5 year olds to be active, learn in nature and develop motor skills.

OLE! AUSTIN

- Restarted OLE! Austin coalition following the COVID-19 pandemic and transition in leadership
- ACC Lab School officially opened its OLE! space early 2023
- City of Austin's Dove Springs childcare site held community engagement and drafted an initial design
- Teacher training Winter 2022
- Magic Dragon Preschool received OLE! design in Fall 2022
- Abiding Love Childcare Center will receive its design in Fall 2023 after participating in OLE! design and community engagement event led by Texas Tech University this September



NATURE SMART LIBRARIES

The background image shows a group of people in a lush, green garden or park. In the foreground, a person in a blue hoodie is looking at a book or document. To their right, another person in a grey hoodie is partially visible. In the background, several other people are standing and talking. The scene is bright and sunny, with many green plants and trees.

Vision: Foster connections to nature through stories, experiences, and resources to promote curiosity and environmental literacy.

NATURE SMART LIBRARIES

- Re-started NSL strategy, with goals that aim to foster connections to nature through stories, activities, and resources to promote curiosity.
- Summer programming that connected children to nature through environmental education.
- Partnerships with the nature-based organizations BK Bones and Crowe's Nest Farm to provide children and families with the opportunity to learn about careers
- Expansion of APL's story walks, including the first accessible StoryWalk® at APL's Windsor Park branch, enabling braille-reading visitors to touch and read along



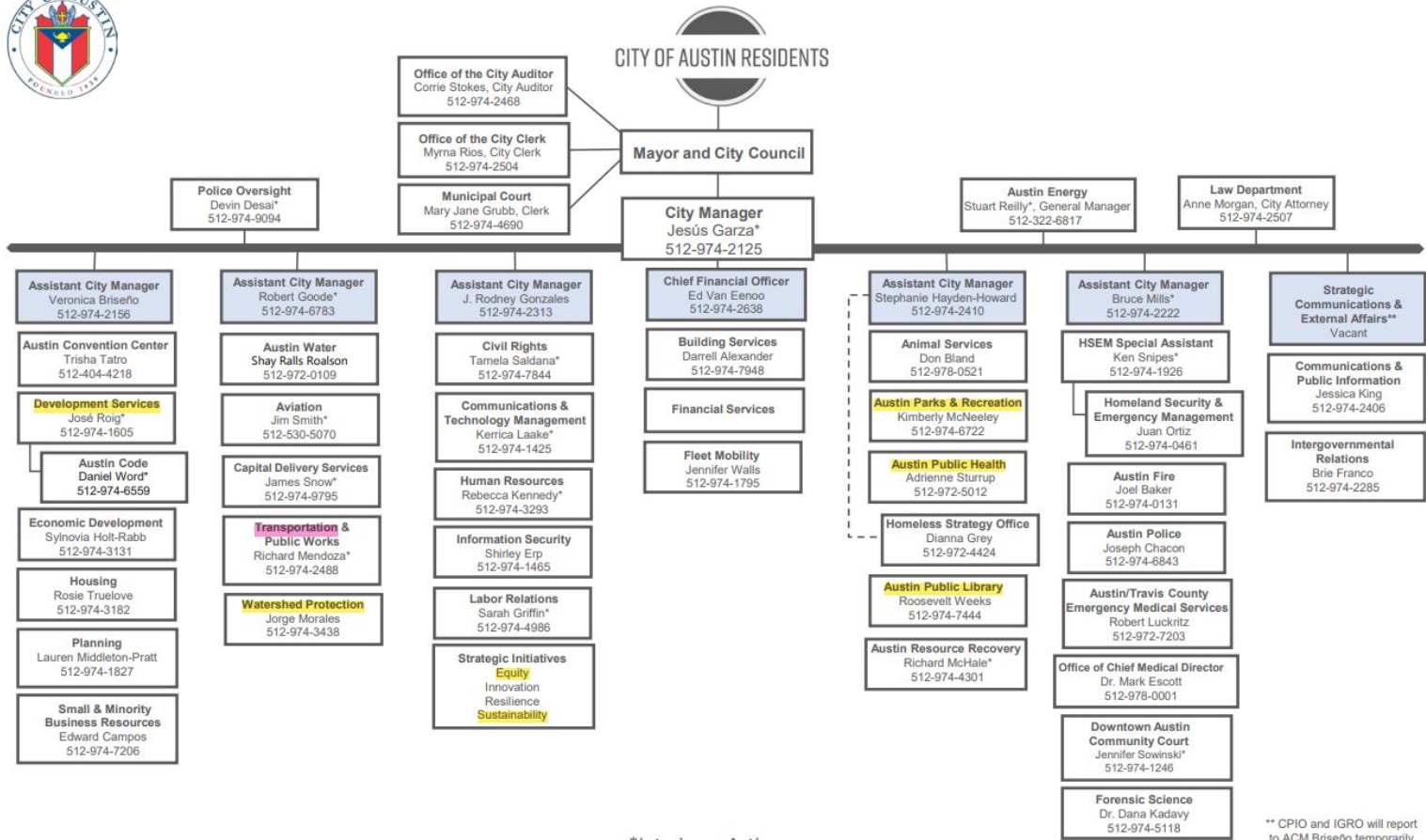


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Our Team

City Partners



*Interim or Acting

** CPIO and IGRO will report to ACM Briseño temporarily

Local Partners



Connect with us



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