

Green Infrastructure Program

Community Partner Profiles

2011 Partners

REGION 6: Austin, Texas

Community Background

Located on the banks of the Colorado River, the City of Austin is the capital of Texas and home to a population of nearly 800,000. The city is known for its independent and progressive character, and has a long history of pursuing green development. In 2000, Austin became one of the nation's first cities to require a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver Certification for new municipal buildings and major renovations. In 2007, the Austin City Council passed two resolutions to build upon this green building requirement. The first, the Municipal Buildings LEED Resolution, directed the City Manager to develop sustainability standards for the design, operation, and maintenance of municipal buildings, and to secure the budget and personnel to implement the resolution. The second, the Green Infrastructure Resolution, directed the City Manager to:

- Ensure all city building projects are constructed to meet the provisions of the city's Commercial Design Standards and all other city sustainability initiatives;
- Present municipal building projects to the Design Commission to ensure that they are in compliance with city design and sustainability standards; and
- Include consultation with the Watershed Protection Department regarding innovative site development opportunities.

Additionally, in 2007 the Interdepartmental Sustainability Working Group (ISWG) was directed to develop processes and tools to ensure the success of both resolutions across the city government.

Drivers for Green Infrastructure

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The drivers for green infrastructure in Austin include its progressive character and its arid climate. City leaders view green infrastructure as an opportunity to advance the city's commitment to sustainability, decrease the use of potable water for landscape irrigation, and reduce urban heat island effects.

Green Strategies and Programs

In July 2011, the Watershed Protection Department formalized its commitment to green infrastructure by creating the Green Infrastructure Team. This team is a cross-disciplinary group with members from each of the department's function units: water quality, stream restoration, flood mitigation, education, maintenance, policy, and planning. The mission of the team is to investigate and maximize the opportunities for green stormwater infrastructure to reduce flooding and erosion, improve water quality, and reduce the use of potable water for landscape irrigation.

The Green Infrastructure Team has expanded on Austin's previous green infrastructure efforts. In addition to sponsoring stormwater retrofits, updating design criteria, and conducting outreach to homeowners and schools, the GI team is engaged in:

- Modeling the impacts of large-scale green infrastructure implementation on flooding and water quality problems;
- Producing a Standard Operating Procedures Manual for green infrastructure in Austin, informed by benchmarking the experience of other cities;
- Further refining the Austin development code in order to incentivize green infrastructure and reduce obstacles to its implementation; and
- Conducting outreach to the private sector design community to encourage design partnerships with neighborhoods and schools.



Rain Gardens at Big Stacy Park. Photo courtesy of [City of Austin – Sustainability Achievements](#).

For more information: [City of Austin - Sustainability](#)

[City of Austin- Watershed Protection](#)