

AUSTIN & TRAVIS COUNTY ACTIVE LIVING PLAN



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Acknowledgements

Austin Public Health wishes to recognize and express its gratitude to the many organizations who generously contributed their time and expertise to the development of the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan*. Thank you to the following organizations:

- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- American Heart Association
- Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area
- Ascension Seton
- Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission
- Austin and Travis County Success by 6 Coalition
- Austin Commission on Seniors
- Austin Independent School District
- Austin Outside
- AustinUP
- Bike Austin
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- City of Austin, Austin Transportation Department
- City of Austin, Equity Office
- City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department
- Colony Park/Lakeside Neighborhood Association
- Diocese of Austin
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- It's Time Texas
- Las Comadres Para Las Américas
- Manor Independent School District
- Pflugerville Independent School District
- Red Line Parkway Initiative
- St. David's Foundation
- Travis County
- Travis County Medical Society Foundation - Project Access Austin
- University of Texas, Austin – Dell Medical School
- University of Texas, Austin – School of Public Health
- woom bikes

The creation of the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* was made possible by generous funding from the Texas Department of State Health Services.





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INTRODUCTION

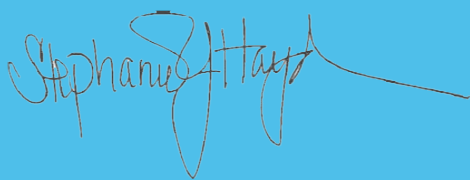
A MESSAGE FROM AUSTIN PUBLIC HEALTH

Dear Community Stakeholder,

At Austin Public Health we recognize that nothing is more important than our community's health. Chronic disease is a leading cause of death in the United States, and risks for developing chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and hypertension, are significantly influenced by lifestyle behaviors. Increasing physical activity, eating healthy, and living tobacco free are all ways we can reduce our risk for chronic disease.

The *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* is the first of its kind in our community. It acknowledges that while there are things individuals can do to increase their daily physical activity, supporting environmental, systems, and policy changes is critical to improving the quality of life for all residents of Austin and Travis County. The plan builds upon the great work already being done by city and county leaders and our wonderful community partners. It aims to provide a framework for increasing physical activity in our community, while growing partnerships.

We look forward to working together as a community to implement the *Active Living Plan*. Together we will make Austin and Travis County the healthiest, most physically active community for all our residents.



Stephanie Y. Hayden, LMSW
Director, Austin Public Health



THE NEED FOR AN ACTIVE LIVING PLAN

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), chronic diseases are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems (2020). More than half (51.5%) of all deaths in Travis County in 2017 were attributed to chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes (CDC Wonder Online Database, 2017). According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, between 2014 and 2018, 59.2% of Travis County residents were classified as overweight or obese, and of those that were obese 19% have diabetes compared to 5% of those who are not obese. There are many ways to prevent chronic disease: maintain a healthy diet, do not use tobacco, avoid drinking too much alcohol, get enough sleep, get routine preventative care, and get regular physical activity, however incorporating regular physical activity into a busy lifestyle can be hard. As of 2017, 45.8% of residents were insufficiently active with 22% not participating in any physical activity (BRFSS, 2017). Additionally, Hispanic and Black residents are less likely than their White counterparts to meet physical activity requirements: from 2011-2017 53% of white adults met the recommended 150 minutes per week of moderate-intense activity, compared to 41% of Hispanic adults and 37% of Black adults (BRFSS, 2018). The cost of these chronic diseases and inactivity is large. Chronic disease may lower an individual's quality of life and increase healthcare costs. In fact, according to the CDC 90% of the nation's annual health care expenditures are for people with chronic and mental health conditions. This plan is going to focus on strategies that will help individuals increase their daily physical activity by making the healthy choice the easy choice and involving the whole community in implementation.



MISSION, VISION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

Mission

The Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan (ALP) is a working document that will coordinate – alongside public, private, and non-profit stakeholders – the creation of environments, policies, and programs to help all residents be physically active for improved health and well-being.

Vision

In Austin and Travis County, active living is a way of life for all residents. The City and County are recognized as leaders in active living and continue to push for more equitable active living opportunities. Residents all live, work, and play in environments that facilitate day-to-day physical activity.

Goals and Objectives

1 Lead with and incorporate an equity lens and improve quality of life for all.

- » The Plan will incorporate residents of all genders, ages, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic status, geographies, and physical, cognitive or sensory abilities.
- » The Plan will address historic racial inequities.
- » The Plan will build and cultivate relationships with community leaders to create opportunities to engage with communities of color whilst prioritizing equity throughout implementation.

2 Develop a collective action framework to help in the promotion and implementation of active living goals.

- » The Plan will build upon previous plans and create a framework for future plans that will complement it.
- » The Plan will engage and support community stakeholders, businesses, private institutions, governmental agencies, and decision makers to maximize their role in improving health outcomes.
- » The Plan will align public and private resources to develop strong partnerships, identify gaps in resources, and maximize health impacts.

3 Help educate communities on all aspects of active living and physical activity.

- » The Plan will utilize a Health in All Policies approach, encompassing health considerations into decision-making across sectors.
- » The Plan will address multiple sectors including: Business and Industry; Community, Recreation, Fitness, and Parks; Education; Faith-Based Settings; Healthcare; Mass Media; Public Health; Sport; Transportation, Land Use, and Community Design.
- » The Plan will showcase and highlight best practice examples and evidence-based research.

4 Build awareness of the plan among residents and stakeholders.

- » The Plan will create key messages that can easily be identified and adopted by stakeholders in the ALP process.
- » The Plan will serve as a platform to increase citizen awareness and engagement.

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PROCESS

Creating and compiling the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* took place over a six-month period between February 2020 and August 2020. The process was broken down into three separate phases.

Phase 1: Support [February - April]

Existing Plan Review

We examined ten previous existing plans and identified opportunities to advance recommendations in those plans while highlighting areas to leverage and complement efforts being made by the City of Austin and Travis County. This baseline helped guide and facilitate conversations throughout the engagement process and establish a foundation for our understanding what strategies may be missing to increase access to healthy living opportunities. We examined the following ten plans: *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*; *Austin Strategic Direction 2023*; *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*; *Our Parks, Our Future*; *Community Health Improvement Plan*; *Age-friendly Austin Action Plan*; *Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, & Caldwell Counties*; *2045 Regional Active Transportation Plan*; *Travis County Parks Master Plan*; and the *Travis County Transportation Blueprint*.

Stakeholder Interviews

We conducted six stakeholder interviews with agencies, departments, and partners to better understand what strategies may be missing from existing planning efforts or what strategies may need to be strengthened to increase active living opportunities. We interviewed 19 individuals across the following seven institutions: Austin Transportation Department, Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission, Commission on Seniors, Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas, Travis County, Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin, and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

Best Practices Review

We explored gaps found from the existing plan review and the stakeholder interviews and informed preliminary recommendations by a review of best practices from other city, state, and national active living plans to determine common themes that may translate to the Austin and Travis County context. We looked at three plans: *San Antonio Active Living Plan*, *Active Texas 2020*, and the *National Physical Activity Plan*.

Phase 2: Convene [May - July]

Stakeholder Interviews

After the completion of Phase 1, we conducted interviews with stakeholders for sectors or areas of the ALP that would address any remaining gaps in our current understanding of the active living landscape. We interviewed 11 individuals across the following eight institutions: Austin Independent School District, Pflugerville Independent School District, City of Austin's Equity Office, Austin Outside, St. David's Foundation, Colony Park/Lakeside Neighborhood Association, Las Comadres Para Las Américas, and Diocese of Austin.

Stakeholder Convening

We held a virtual stakeholder convening attended by over 40 individuals from over 30 different organizations around Austin and Travis County. During the convening, we presented the plan's current findings, worked with attendees to develop goals and recommendations for each of the plan's nine sectors, and had stakeholders present work their respective organizations are doing related to active living.

Phase 3: Lead [July - August]

Active Living Plan Development

Putting together both quantitative and qualitative information obtained from Phase 1 and Phase 2, we developed the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan*. A draft report went out to a selected list of stakeholders for a round of comments and suggestions. This feedback was then incorporated into an updated active living plan.

Community Input

After gaining feedback from stakeholders who were engaged throughout the process of developing the plan, an executive summary detailing the goals and recommendations of the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* was presented to the public on the Speak Up Austin! website in both English and Spanish. A survey was then conducted to solicit feedback. This feedback was incorporated in the final active living plan presented here.





BACKGROUND

EXISTING PLAN REVIEW

One of the main components of the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* is to examine plans, policies, and strategies that have come before it, analyze them, and build upon them. The following 10 plans focus on several active living components in *Austin and Travis County* that the *Active Living Plan* can complement and strengthen. Specifically, the plans provide foundations around mapping, community engagement, and funding efforts all of which are detailed below.

Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (2012, amended in 2018) City of Austin

Relation to this effort: There are numerous initiatives, strategies, and policies in this robust comprehensive plan that relate directly to active living. When looking at land use and transportation policies, mixed-use projects are encouraged to be walkable and bikeable with transit stops, sidewalks, and bike lanes to help connect people to destinations. Development is promoted as part of compact communities, communities “in which housing, services, retail, jobs, entertainment, health care, schools, parks, and other daily needs are within a convenient walk or bicycle ride of one another” (p. 129). These compact communities are supported by a complete transportation system, usually encompassing complete streets, encourage healthier lifestyles and community interaction, and allow for more efficient delivery of public services.

Furthermore, when it comes to urban design policies, the plan puts people-friendly places at the forefront to attract people to gathering spaces. “Investments in people-oriented places and parks promote equity; they can be enjoyed equally by city dwellers and visitors of all income levels, ethnicities, and ages” (p. 132). Some of the benefits include the outcome that people are more likely to walk, bike, skateboard, or jog in people-friendly places, which can promote health.

The challenge, however, is that active living, active behaviors, and active lifestyles are not as easy to pursue when there is a lack of access to amenities, including public gathering and recreational spaces and a disconnected network that reinforces auto-dependency and/or does not provide space for people to safely bike

SUMMARY

Imagine Austin provides a vision of a “city of complete communities.” This city is livable, natural and sustainable, mobile and interconnected, prosperous, creative, educated, and values and respects its people. Included in these complete communities is a vision for residents to be active and healthy, to be able to access park space and recreation amenities, to be able to use active transportation for leisure and commuting purposes, and for residents to have equitable access to participation and decision making processes.

and walk. To support active living, people need to be able to access places outside of car use and have equitable access to infrastructure and land uses that support active behaviors and lifestyles as well as access to infrastructure, connected networks, and safe routes to be able to access places to be active or to reach places

through active transportation means.

Imagine Austin's Priority Programs support active living by investing in a compact and connected Austin and creating a Healthy Austin program. Revising the City's development regulations and processes is part of the work needed to create a compact and connected city, as described above, and to support the creation of a Healthy Austin program that allows its programmatic actions to be pursued.



Austin Strategic Direction 2023 (2017) City of Austin

Relation to this effort: The Mobility outcome metrics and strategies are in development “as part of the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, the City’s first locally focused, multimodal transportation plan” (p. 13). Relevant active living policies, strategies, and implications are included under the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan* review in this section.

One Safety outcome strategy holds significant importance to promoting active living in Austin, which is developing and acting on “recommendations [that] ensure all community members are treated fairly and equitably in the enforcement of laws and the adult and juvenile justice systems” (p. 16). In order for residents of all ages and backgrounds to feel safe participating and gathering in public spaces as well as accessing places that promote active living, residents must also feel safe from unequal treatment from law enforcement officials.

Health and Environment outcomes strategies that are relevant to promoting active living include:

- **Strategy 1:** *Promote healthy living and well-being with a particular focus on areas and communities with high rates of chronic disease and high-risk behaviors who lack access to services.*
- **Strategy 5:** *Incorporate health considerations into program and policy decision-making, taking into account the influence of race, income levels, education, and the built environment on health outcomes.*
- **Strategy 9:** *Provide accessible, diverse, and inclusive parks and recreation programs and amenities to encourage utilization by all ages and abilities with a specific focus in historically marginalized communities.*

SUMMARY

The *Strategic Direction 2023* is a guiding document, described as a “single playbook” for the City, that defines six outcomes with specific strategies to advance the vision of *Imagine Austin*. These six outcomes are economic opportunity and affordability, mobility, safety, health and environment, culture and lifelong learning, and government that works for all. Across all of these outcomes, the values of equity, affordability, innovation, sustainability and resiliency, proactive prevention, and community trust and relationships, inform the recommended strategies.



Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (2019) City of Austin

Eight mobility goals guide the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, which are commuter delay, placemaking, travel choice, economic prosperity, affordability, sustainability, health and safety, and innovation. Four focus groups were engaged, which include youth (people aged 15 to 24 years), seniors (people aged 65 years or older), people with mobility impairments, and people of color. Overall, engaged residents prefer more investment in public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrian projects over investment in roadway projects. One high-level finding is that “both the overall and focus populations” chose “[providing] more public transit service and [enhanced] connections to/from public transit” as their top strategy (p. xx).

Relation to this effort: To promote the “safe behaviors” policy under the safety goal, the plan recommends integrating active transportation into the driving curriculum. To promote the “transportation demand management programming” policy under the demand management goal, the plan recommends reducing barriers to multimodal transportation, particularly reducing fees for transit, bikeshare, and scootershare. To better serve active transportation via bicycle under the transportation infrastructure goal, action items include constructing new and maintaining bicycle facilities, connections, and amenities such as lighting and wayfinding. To support public health under the health and environment goal, action items include evaluating walkability and bikability and developing active transportation encouragement programs. To support the community, the equity policy includes action items to analyze historic investment patterns and equity zones as well as developing a memo about institutional racism.

SUMMARY

The *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan* continues the work of *Imagine Austin* by considering how multimodal transportation can achieve the comprehensive plan’s transportation vision. The *Imagine Austin* transportation vision states:

Austin is accessible. Our transportation network provides a wide variety of options that are efficient, reliable, and cost-effective to serve the diverse needs and capabilities of our citizens. Public and private sectors work together to improve our air quality and reduce congestion in a collaborative and creative manner (p. vii).

Austin Strategic Mobility Plan



GETTING THERE
TOGETHER
ASMP

Adopted April 11, 2019

Our Parks, Our Future (2019) City of Austin, Austin Parks and Recreation, Austin Parks Foundation

As a long range plan, this document was developed to mirror and complement efforts of other plans including *Imagine Austin*, the *Austin Strategic Mobility Plan*, and the *Austin Strategic Direction 2023*. Based on community engagement efforts, ten themes emerged: natural experiences, unstructured spaces, green infrastructure, linear parks and trails, proximity and access, urban spaces, parks and arts/culture, educational opportunities, inclusivity, and cleanliness and safety. These ten themes were organized to develop five strategies, each with their own actions and recommendations:

1. Ensure parks act as a relief from urban life
2. Expand and improve parks access for all
3. Activate and enhance urban public spaces
4. Align programs with community interest
5. Optimize and improve efficiency of operations

Relation to this effort: Specific strategies from the above main strategies of the plan include:

- **Strategy A5.** Invest in multi-purpose, unstructured spaces capable of supporting flexible uses.
- **Strategy B1.** Work with partner organizations and current and long-time residents to ensure community involvement in the process, prior to any significant master plan or development.
- **Strategy B2.** Invest in the acquisition of new parkland that can make parks a part of everyday life in existing and future underserved areas.
- **Strategy B3.** Increase the number of entrances to existing parks in order to expand the number of residents within walking distance of a park.
- **Strategy B5.** Support the efforts of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, city departments, and partners in advancing the mobility network beyond the PARD parks system.
- **Strategy C3.** Support more dense, flexible, and diverse programs and amenities (e.g., temporary seating or play equipment) in urban public spaces within and beyond PARD parkland.

SUMMARY

This document is a long range plan that was prepared by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department; it guides how the department develops master plans, programs, and improvements for individual parks.

OUR PARKS OUR FUTURE

AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION LONG RANGE PLAN



2020-2030

WRT in Collaboration with:
PRDC Consulting, Inc., Studio Blueprint, Civic Arts, Arlio
Communications, EDC Institute - The Trust for Public Land
City Council Adopted
November 14, 2019



- **Strategy D2.** Increase adult and senior programming across multiple categories – active recreation, nature-based, and arts and culture.

This is also the only plan that divided Austin into six different locations – central, north, east, southeast, southwest, and west – and provided specific recommendations for partnerships, programming, and park development and implementations according to each of the six locations.

Community Health Improvement Plan (2018) Austin/Travis County

Relation to this effort: The second priority area explores ways to reduce chronic disease incidence through prevention measures and changes in the built environment. Specifically, Objective 2.5 states seeks to “increase by 5% the number of safe, accessible, equitable, and culturally competent assets and opportunities for healthy food and physical activity” by 2023 (p. 28). Some of these strategies include the following:

- **2.5.1:** Establish baseline data by convening community conversations and compiling existing data where community members identify existing assets (e.g., urban gardens, community gardens, green space, trails, parks, etc.) and opportunities for healthy food and physical activity. Use City data of community assets to confirm and supplement.
- **2.5.2:** Utilize community member input to inform education about currently available assets and opportunities for healthy food and physical activity.
- **2.5.3:** Utilize community member input to improve access to existing assets and opportunities for healthy food and physical activity.
- **2.5.4:** Utilize community member input to create new assets and opportunities for healthy food and physical activity.
- **2.5.5:** Identify publicly owned property for use as parkland, trails or green space in areas of high need.
- **2.5.6:** Advocate for the automatic incorporation of green space in private development plans.
- **2.5.7:** Advocate for and support ongoing efforts (e.g. Vision Zero Action Plan) to develop and enhance safe, multimodal transportation options across the community, paying particular attention to efforts that increase healthy food access and opportunities for physical activity. Ensure that plans and development take into consideration issues of equity.

SUMMARY

The *Community Health Improvement Plan* is a data-driven, community informed plan that creates a vision for community health in Austin and Travis County. The plan outlines four overarching health priorities (access to affordability of healthcare, chronic disease, sexual health, and stress, mental health, and well-being) and provides goal-specific objectives and strategies for improving health priority indicators.

Community Health Improvement Plan

Austin/Travis County, Texas
August 2018



Together We Thrive
Austin/Travis County Community Health Plan



Age-Friendly Austin Action Plan (2018) City of Austin

Relation to this effort: Two domains are specifically relevant to the active living: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings and Transportation.

The former focuses on physical access, functional space, and programming. For physical access, the plan creates strategies focusing on increasing access to and utilization of parks, open spaces and public buildings, whilst also ensuring that residents have access to recreation facilities within a mile of their home and access to parks and open space within half a mile of their home. This domain also stresses “functional seating at frequent intervals, drinking fountains, shaded resting areas, walkways suitable for wheelchairs/walkers and accessible public restrooms” (p. 6). Finally, it recommends providing multigenerational programs such as yoga, tai chi, art in the park, etc. in neighborhood parks.

For the transportation domain, in order to “ensure all modes of transportation are safe, affordable and accessible for residents of all ages and abilities” (p. 5), the plan outlines strategies to repair and maintain existing as well as construct new sidewalks to improve safety and visibility. Other strategies to enhance the pedestrian experience include making more seating options available near transit stops, installing “pedestrian-friendly crossing signals,” and improving the visibility of crosswalks and signage. The plan does not include any mention of bicycling.

SUMMARY

This plan evaluated “eight domains of livability” as defined by the AARP Network of Age-friendly Communities and World Health Organization to identify gaps in the existing system in order to develop age appropriate recommendations.



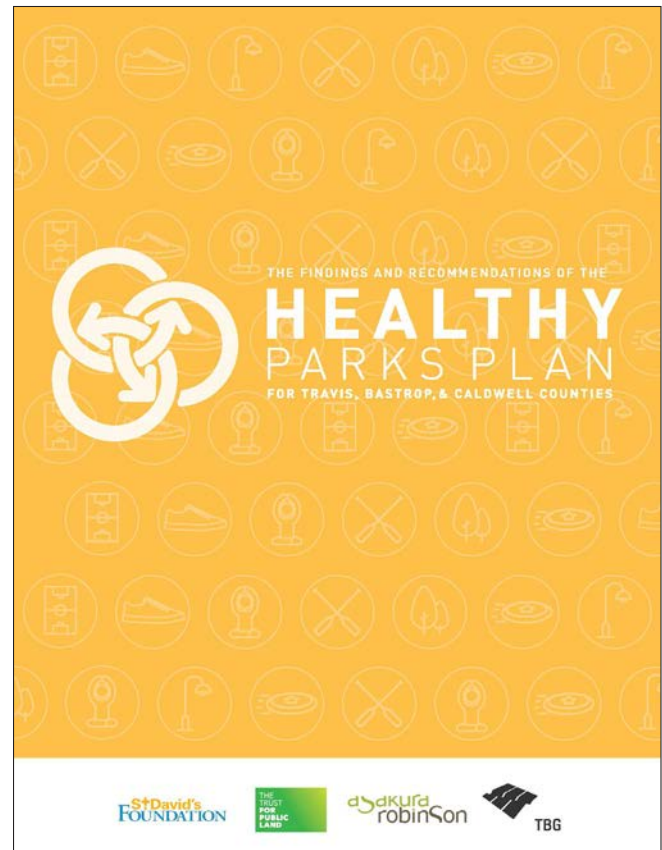
Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties (2019) St. David's Foundation

Relation to this effort: Through several spatial data analyses, the plan identifies geographic priorities to support park access based on five topics: socioeconomic vulnerability, level of park need, flooding and water quality, community health, and heat islands and poor air quality to promote equitable access for community most in need of park access. The plan also defines the building blocks of a “healthy park,” to support different areas of health.

The plan also developed three different toolkits for implementation, which include physical health, mental health, and environmental health. The physical health toolkit provides a range of possible tools that could be considered in the design of a “healthy park” ranging from athletic fields and fitness programs to multi-use trails and fitness equipment.

SUMMARY

This plan created a vision for healthy communities, specifically related to parks access, and includes concept designs for three parks. Based on engagement activities, the team learned that the “greatest barrier to physical activity in the park is the lack of amenities,” with stakeholders requesting a wide range of active amenities, such as water features and exercise equipment, that are also accessible to people across a spectrum of abilities.



2045 Regional Active Transportation Plan (2017) CAMPO

Relation to this effort: Based on stakeholder engagement, an inventory of existing facilities, and data and policy analysis, the final plan includes recommendations for planned bike and pedestrian facilities along with an implementation plan. Surveys of stakeholders indicate that residents are more likely to bike and walk for exercise and recreation than for other reasons; 28% of survey respondents reported that they never ride a bike (3% reported that they never walk). Survey respondents would like new sidewalks, new trails and paths, better maintained sidewalks, and safer road crossings and prefer off-street trails and separated or buffered bike lanes compared to other facilities. The top two primary reasons why respondents do not bike more are due to safety concerns around traffic and a lack of trails and bike lanes.

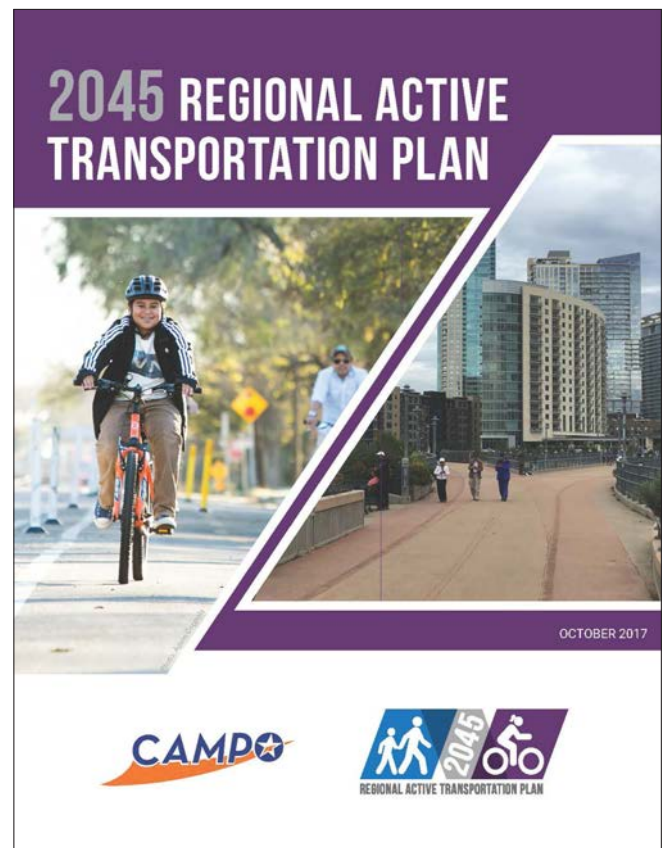
An analysis of existing conditions reveals that “[48%] of households in poverty and [42%] of households without a car do not have access to even one sidewalk within an eighth of a mile” (p. 3-6). These figures are similar with regard to bikeway access: 42% and 36%, respectively, live more than one-quarter mile from the nearest bikeway (p. 3-8). After developing a detailed demand heat map based on the analysis of several factors, a priority network divided into time-phase tiers for implementation was mapped out for each of the six counties.

While Travis County has the highest demand in the six-county region in addition to the greatest number of miles of sidewalks and bikeways, it also has the greatest density of bike and pedestrian related crashes. These trends are explained by the level of density workers, residents, and visitors within the Austin area. Policy and program recommendations specific to Travis County include reducing maximum block lengths, changing mixed-use zoning districts to incorporate particular street design standards, developing and adopting Complete Streets policies, developing trail standards that supplement existing design guidelines, and utilizing more education and encouragement programs.

SUMMARY

This plan developed a vision for expanding existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities for the six counties in the CAMPO region, which include Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties. The seven goals of the plan are safety, accessibility, functionality, equity, everyday use, quality of life, and regional coordination and connectivity.

The plan also includes a robust pattern book, which outlines specific design measures for a wide array of different pedestrian and bikeway facilities and design interventions.



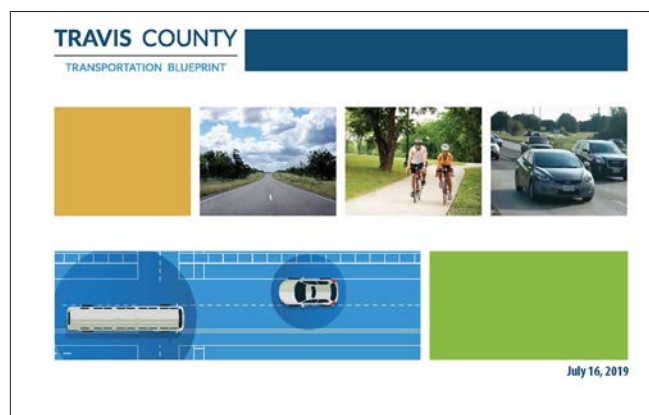
Travis County Transportation Blueprint (2019) Travis County

SUMMARY

This blueprint is a long-range transportation plan that “identifies transportation needs and solutions, incorporates future options and choices, and prioritizes improvements in the unincorporated areas of Travis County” (p. 1) through the year 2045 as part of the *Travis County Land, Water and Transportation Plan*.

Relation to this effort: In regards to active transportation, this plan supports biking and walking through “connecting communities and centers, improving bicycle safety, constructing bicycle and pedestrian facilities on arterials roadway, developing the County’s Greenway system, [and] connecting County off road trails to other jurisdictions’ non-recreational, off road trails” (p. 19).

This blueprint is the first comprehensive active transportation plan for the County by incorporating the existing and planned facilities described in other county transportation plans and includes both funded and unfunded planned segments.



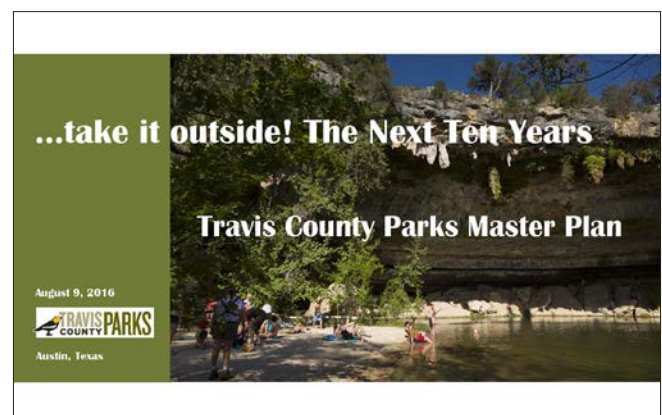
Travis County Parks Master Plan (2016) Travis County

SUMMARY

The *Travis County Parks Master Plan* seeks to support a diverse population through specific objectives and policies, which include preserving cultural resources and creating a multimodal trail system.

The Travis County Parks system includes 26 public parks with nearly 10,000 acres. The master plan divides this system into four planning areas to examine future growth, elevation, hydrology, and the unique ecoregions in each quadrant. Each planning area includes a profile, inventory of park resources, area needs, and implementation priorities; the City of Austin is divided into each of the quadrants.

Relation to this effort: Six types of parks are described in the document, each with their own surrounding service areas; these park types include neighborhood parks, community parks, metropolitan parks, regional parks, connector parks, and preserves. The master plan prefers a system that prioritizes regional parks and preserves connected by greenways and river corridors to consolidate land into larger areas to centralize resources. Public input received during this planning process demonstrates that biking and walking are important for a majority of respondents, especially in terms of having access to sidewalks, trails, and paths.



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

After conducting 12 stakeholder interviews with 30 individuals, we noticed five themes emerge:

1. Active living means different things to different people.

Definitions of active living primarily revolve around physical activity, framed around trails and parks. Physical activity does not only include aerobic activity, as lower intensity activities are an integral part of an active living. These activities need to fit with people of all ages, abilities, and interests. There was also an emphasis on mental well-being through relaxation and creating communities within open space. Even social gatherings and cultural events counted towards definitions of active living. One of the interviewees mentioned that opportunities for an active lifestyle will be different depending on family composition, age, housing type, etc.

2. Opportunities for active living are uneven across a number of spectrums.

Austin has many opportunities for active living with its parks, trails, and water bodies. The further one goes out into the suburbs, however, the less parkland there is. It is harder to lead an active lifestyle because of the nature of suburban sprawl. A representative from one of the organizations described new suburban development as car-oriented and highway-oriented retail. Depending on where a person live, he or she might need to drive to access a park. There are also more issues with the pedestrian realm the further one moves away from the central city: low quality or missing sidewalks, inconsistent lighting, and lack of shade are just a few. Areas that are historically underserved particularly lack active living opportunities.

Although Austin is active according to national rankings, our interviewees reveal that this has been primarily defined by Austin's white population. People of color may not feel welcome or safe in recreational areas that are predominantly white. Their neighborhoods are often lacking in opportunities for activity. For example, as one of the interviewees mentioned, bike lanes, although a great idea, are usually mostly used by white residents, and thus can come with a stigma of not being inclusive depending on the neighborhood they're created for.



Austin's Healthy Streets Initiative



3. Pedestrian realm improvements are essential.

All interviewees expressed a need for improvements in the pedestrian realm. Here are some of the main highlights for pedestrian realm improvements:

- The quality of sidewalks is poor in some areas and sidewalks are missing altogether in others. Even where sidewalks exist and are up to standards, they are still not sufficient to encourage foot traffic or the necessary social distancing required during events like COVID-19.
- Lighting is essential to feel safe at night; however, the amount of lighting needs to be improved upon as a whole.
- Shade is crucial in the built environment, but especially in Texas.

It is also important to note that the disparities in pedestrian infrastructure are more apparent in historically underserved areas.



4. Lack of access to parks comes in many forms.

Public transportation to parks is often lacking or confusing for those not familiar with the system. Walking to public parks is usually only an option in affluent parts of Austin. Driving to parks is often the only choice, but that excludes those without access to a car. Trails for walking and biking lack connectivity to each other and destinations. One of the interviewees expressed a need for transit outside of the Capital Metro Transportation Authority's service area because transit is a key part of active living.

5. Equitable engagement is needed in the planning process.

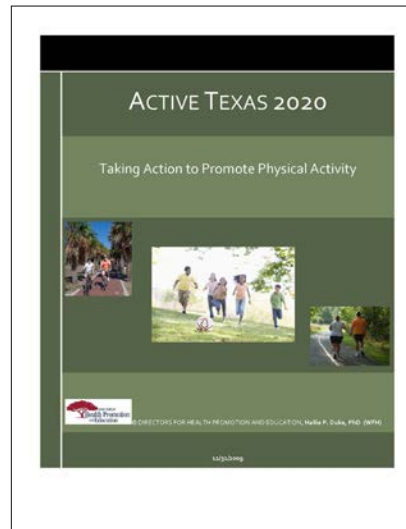
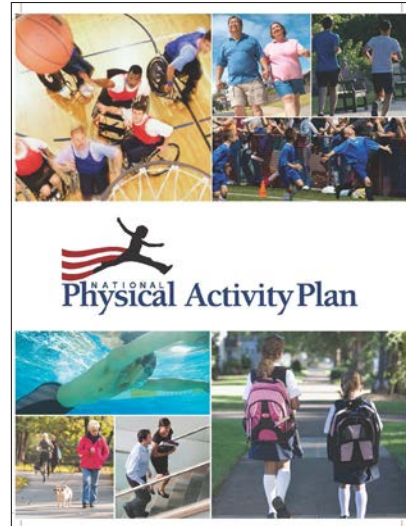
Community outreach is essential for implementing new infrastructure or services. This is especially the case for those who currently lack opportunities for outdoor activity: people of color, residents of lower income neighborhoods, senior citizens, and children. Community leaders, often described as "cultural ambassadors", who represent certain groups, can assist in implementation. Many do not trust government agencies, and there needs to be some accountability for them to incorporate ideas from the community. One of the organizations interviewed voiced the importance of building key relationships with neighborhood organizations so that residents know who to communicate their concerns with and so that they may begin to take accountability for the projects and steward them themselves.

BEST PRACTICES REVIEW

The best practices review evaluated three plans — the *National Physical Activity Plan*, *Active Texas 2020*, and the *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio* — through the framework of the five interview themes and for the context of Austin and Travis County.

The *National Physical Activity Plan*, *Active Texas 2020*, and *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio* provide suggestions and frameworks for active living that range from high to low level implementation. Together, they provide national, regional, and local suggestions with various nuances. The *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio Plan* has the most specific and measurable goals across sub sectors like “business” and “education.” This plan is the most translatable to Austin’s efforts. *Active Texas 2020* has a broader lens that provides a guidebook and toolkit on how best to envision, manage, and implement healthy living processes for city leaders and decision makers. It includes some specific suggestions, such as how to leverage faith-based institutions in more rural communities, but mostly serves as a strategic planning resource. The *National Physical Activity Plan* offers the most general of objectives and implementation strategies. It demarcates suggestions by the social sector, such as “business and industry,” “education,” and “health care,” to offer targeted recommendations.

All three plans do well in acknowledging that social and cultural differences will affect the reception, adoption, and translation of active living practices into everyday life. Mitigating and adjusting for local, hyper-local, and cultural variances is an important undercurrent running through all suggestions.



THEME 1

Active living means different things to different people.

It is possible and often more interesting to accommodate multiple definitions of active living in proposed interventions. This makes suggestions community-specific and multi-dimensional. However, the difference in definitional understandings of “active living” could transpire into uncoordinated efforts at a local or regional scale. All three of these plans addressed the tension between standardizing the term “active living” for and with communities. The *National Physical Activity Plan* focused on a holistic approach: advocating for health and wellness education for graduates and undergraduates in various fields of study, providing agency to faith and business leaders to model and integrate physical movement within their own communities, and to amplifying a narrative that active living is more than just exercising.

Most suggestions required a high implementation cost because they aim to change culture at both the micro scale of specific schools and businesses as well as the macro level by integrating physical activity into all sectors of life. Some suggestions like “develop outdoor education models that integrate physical activity, natural settings, and learning for application in early care and education programs” require medium implementation costs. This particular example would require adjustment of school curricula and access to outdoor learning environments. However, others like “develop programs that link physical activity programs to other activities, such as prayer and study groups,” require low implementation costs. Achieving this aim could be done by simply implementing 5 minutes of stretching during other social engagements.

Active Texas 2020 “focuses on community-level change,” and embraces hyper local interpretations and solutions for healthy living. It provides links to toolkits to guide community leaders towards creating “actionable and measurable goals for communities.” Some small scale interventions include placing signs next to elevators and escalators that encourage taking the stairs. Medium scale interventions include providing childcare for parents as they exercise or creating family-friendly active opportunities. This was in response to findings that family responsibilities often infringe on adults’ abilities to create active habits. Finally, high implementation suggestions include interventions that focus on building, strengthening, and maintaining social relationships. In Texas, this is often found in many residents’ faith-based communities.

Active Living for a Healthier San Antonio suggests practices that work to make a cohesive definition of active living and dynamically integrate it into the community. This includes selecting local lead organizations throughout various sectors (like Business and Industry, Education, etc.) that will oversee sector-specific active living goals, create forums, and encourage others to adopt healthy living strategies. There are other lower implementation tasks, such as creating a city wide website, and medium tasks of creating data collection task forces and five-year media campaigns.

THEME 2

Opportunities for active living are uneven across a number of spectrums.

All three reports acknowledge that active living resources need to be accessible if they are to become daily habits. Current social inequities make this much more difficult. The *National Physical Activity Plan* advocates for high level solutions like tax incentives to promote development of community activity spaces and an establishment of a statewide Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation to “develop policies and partnerships between federal, state, and local land management agencies and encourage partnerships that promote physical activity.” It also suggests medium cost solutions like lowering the price of physical activity services to those in need and directing funding towards non-car infrastructure. Finally, it encourages businesses to provide the time and space for employees to engage in exercise throughout the work day.

Active Texas 2020 suggests high level strategies such as researching what motivates inactivity decisions, medium-level strategies such as undergoing a strategic visioning process to deduce a community’s health goals, and low level suggestions like hosting health centered events. The *Active Living for a Healthier San Antonio Plan* looks to schools as the places where inequality can be addressed. It suggests intensive tasks like developing and implementing city wide physical activity standards and goals (such as “eighty percent of full-day child care facilities provide at least 60 minutes each of structured and unstructured physical activity per day”), that require great collaboration. Other suggestions like providing at risk students with additional resources and programs and organizing International Bike/Walk to School Days are medium- and low-level interventions.



THEME 3

Pedestrian realm improvements are essential.

All three plans look to design and planning policy and built form solutions to provide safe walkable cities. The *National Physical Activity Plan* encourages businesses, corporations, schools (primary to higher education), and faith-based organizations to make their campuses walkable. It includes providing grants and leveraging market forces to encourage the creation of walking, biking, and public transportation infrastructure. It also reminds readers that interventions can be low-tech and temporary. Short term and pilot programs not only provide an opportunity for a community to be creative, but to create knowledge about what is possible. *Active Texas 2020* relies heavily on the crafters of the built environment to drive healthy changes. It suggests high impact actions like crafting policies that promote residential access to stores, and road, building, and environmental policies that manifest in healthier communities. It offers lower cost strategies, such as adding adequate lighting, street calming, and landscaping to make the public realm more attractive to pedestrians. The *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio* provides similar code based suggestions as well as the goal of having 70% of neighborhoods be within a ¼ mile of a recreation opportunity.



THEME 4

Lack of access to parks comes in many forms.

The suggestions offered by the three plans indirectly display an understanding of this theme. Their solutions point towards redefining what one means when they say “park,” and foster creative reinterpretation of the term. The *National Physical Activity Plan* asks for schools, hospitals, businesses, and community organizations to work together in cross-sectional partnerships that promote physical activity before and after both school and work. *Active Texas 2020* suggests that each community inventory what resources currently exist for physical activity and notice any emerging trends or gaps. Then, brainstorm which resources can be shared or amplified in creative ways. The *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio* calls for the large tasks of developing, rehabbing, and maintaining current parks through dedicated funding streams and creating a dedicated volunteer stewardship program. It encourages “bringing the park to kids,” with a goal of fifty percent of schools offering before or after school clubs and intramurals. Finally, it calls for the creation of monthly family fitness programming that incorporates games and activities into the community along residents’ natural commutes.



THEME 5

Equitable engagement is needed in the planning process.

A wonderful dimension of all surveyed plans is that they recognize and promote the power people have in creating their own healthy environments. In this regard, “engagement” is multi-faceted. The *National Physical Activity Plan* suggests engagement efforts that range from the intensive work of “developing and disseminating policy tools to reduce the possible impacts of gentrification on low-income neighborhoods” to forming governor advisory panels. It also encourages more approachable solutions such as a robust community planning process around sidewalks and physical connectors to and from recreation areas. It also supports forming interactive communication strategies that continually engage constituents. *Active Texas 2020* relies heavily on the large lift of creating engaged and diverse “action teams.” These teams are formed with community leaders and members and have agency to develop neighborhood specific goals, strategies,

and indicators of success. It asks the primary funding stream be local, providing both a literal and a figurative “buy in” from the community. It then enforces that varying ethnic and cultural groups need to be engaged, heard, and active members of change. These final solutions, although considered to be medium-level interventions, will likely lead to systemic cultural changes. The *Active Living Plan for a Healthier San Antonio* provides examples of what community engagement could look like. It offers the low-level intervention implementation suggestion of hosting fitness challenges that are unique to each community. It also notes that “cultural preferences of the neighborhood” should be integrated into creation of new parks. This would not only provide a sense of ownership to any new spaces, but ensure that a range of age groups can find their place in larger recreational goals.







ACTION PLAN



SECTOR SUMMARIES

The recommendations for the *Austin and Travis County Active Living Plan* are organized around the following nine societal sectors based on the National Physical Activity Plan: Business and Industry; Community, Recreation, Fitness, and Parks; Education; Faith-Based Settings; Healthcare; Mass Media; Public Health; Sport; and Transportation, Land Use, and Community Design.

Business and industry operations are integral to ensuring employees have opportunities to support their physical health. Business investments into public health programs are associated with lower health risks from non-communicable diseases, including obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Such investments also reduce economic and social costs to both the employers and employees and healthier lifestyles lower healthcare costs and improve worker productivity. Businesses and industries in Travis County must commit to a workplace culture of a healthy, active lifestyle to benefit their operations and employee livelihood.

Business and Industry



Public and private parks, recreational, and fitness organizations provide free to low-cost programming for residents to maintain active lifestyles. Living near such facilities has been shown to play a critical role in residents' physical health. This sector notably contributes to facilitating activities for all ages and groups who may lack access close to home otherwise. Only 54% of residents in Austin, however, report living within half a mile to a park.¹ Equitable distribution of these facilities is fundamental to reducing health disparities.

¹ City of Austin. 2019. *Austin Sustainability Indicators*.

Community, Recreation, Fitness, and Parks



School and childcare settings serve as a major location for children to begin adopting physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Obesity can be seen in children as young as preschool age, however fortunately it is preventable. Approximately 15.5% of children in Texas is obese.¹ Education systems operate public health and physical activity programs ranging from early childhood to post-secondary education. Walking or bicycling to school also ensures youth are receiving the recommended 30 minutes of physical activity daily.

¹ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 2018. *State of Childhood Obesity, 2017-2018 data*.

Education





Faith-Based Settings

The primary mission of religious organizations is the well-being of their communities. Coupled with their promotion of community service and volunteerism, faith-based congregations are in a strong position to promote physical activity for a diverse audience. As a result, they can play a role in facilitating public health practices and programs. Research into faith-based health promotion programs has shown positive health outcomes for short-term programs¹; these initiatives can be expanded to yield further positive results.

¹ Pew Research Center. (2015). *America's Changing Religious Landscape*.



Healthcare

Healthcare resources can be utilized to improve individuals' physical activity and wellness. Individuals commonly receive assessments, counseling, and recommendations on physical health and promotion of safe and effective physical activity from their health care providers. Access to healthcare is necessary to receive this vital information. Healthcare providers can empower individuals to change their behaviors and improve their physical activity levels. Health care providers can form partnerships with other sectors to ensure individuals have access to physical activity resources.



Mass Media

Mass media campaigns are necessary to increase awareness, influence beliefs, and change physical activity behavior. Research shows that mass media campaigns significantly promote physical activity at the population level. Campaigns can be distributed through television, radio, social media, and messaging to cater to all demographics. Many active plans, policies, and studies demonstrate how effective media and marketing campaign can promote and support existing organizations and health resources as a strategy.



The public health sector consists of governmental organizations at all levels - federal, state, county, and local - as well as non-governmental organizations with the mission of promoting health overall. These organizations serve a variety of functions, such as research, monitoring, program development, and advocacy. Their expertise makes it possible to develop effective physical activity programming through research and evaluation, information that can then be used for policy advancement.

Public Health



The sports sector plays a significant role in influencing youth and adults to engage in physical activity. Physical activity and its health benefits are significantly associated with sports. Participating in sports also supports child development, academic achievement, tolerance, and inclusion. Sports, nonetheless, can present socioeconomic and other barriers. Thus, changes to expand access and infrastructure for sports is critical to permit youth and adult involvement.

Sport



Equitable designs that promote walking and bicycling accessibility subsequently boast an active physical lifestyle. Affordable and safe transportation options, such as walking and bicycling additionally combats public transportation barriers to people of color, people with disabilities, and people of low socioeconomic status. Land use and zoning policies also influence the creation of sprawl or easily accessible destinations, such as grocery stores, schools, jobs, and health services.

Transportation, Land Use, and Community Design

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BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

GOAL

Increase communication and outreach to facilitate business and industry partnerships



Recommendation 1: Identify and circulate materials for best practices, models, and evidence-based physical activity interventions in the workplace

Building upon one of the strategies from the *San Antonio Active Living Plan*, materials should be made available to local businesses to help disseminate information about physical activity interventions in the workplace. These materials can be developed not only by local governmental agencies like Austin Public Health, but also by local businesses themselves, highlighting interventions that have best worked to promote active living for them and their employees.

Partners:

- Austin Business Group on Health/Mayor's Health & Fitness Council
- Austin Public Health

- Chambers of Commerce
- Local businesses and industry

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Identify minority-owned businesses to be a part of the forum
- Work towards ensuring that these practices, models, and interventions include people of all backgrounds and abilities
- Develop options for businesses based on their structure such as number of employees, physical space, etc.





Recommendation 2: Create an accessible forum that nurtures natural collaborations between industry, agency, and business to share worksite wellness resources and programming and promote physical activity among employees

Recommendation 2 builds upon Recommendation 1 by creating a forum to nurture partnerships and collaborative opportunities amongst various stakeholders. Businesses in the same location or working in the same industry can come up with innovative solutions as part of a community working towards creating an active living lifestyle. This platform can be a place for businesses to communicate and can help provide a public space to better understand the role of businesses and industry in active living.



Partners:

- *Austin American-Statesman*
- Austin Business Group on Health/Mayor's Health & Fitness Council
- Austin Business Journal
- Better Business Bureau-local chapter
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local fitness facilities/instructors
- Local nonprofits

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Set up friendly competitions to promote physical activity
- Survey respective employee populations to better understand what the populations are most interested in
- Tailor resources and programming according to different sectors or employer groups



Recommendation 3: Incentivize transit choices

To encourage the use of alternative transit, businesses and industry should help defray costs to their employees or consumers, including free or discounted bus passes. Other incentives include employer-provided subsidies, reimbursements, partial payments, or pre-tax payroll deductions. This could also include facilities for showering or changing clothing to make the active transportation option more appealing.

Partners:

- Alternative transportation organizations
- Austin Transportation Department
- Bike organizations/Repair organizations
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Get There ATX

- Local businesses
- Walk Texas

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Collaborate with Project Connect to better incorporate community and neighborhood stations in addition to downtown locations
- Survey employees to understand what options would be of interest and most utilized
- Develop commuter reward program within agencies, i.e. Smart Commute program at the City of Austin

COMMUNITY, RECREATION, FITNESS, AND PARKS

GOAL

Increase access to spaces for active living by increasing transportation options, increasing resources for being active in nontraditional active spaces like the home, and increasing access to other active living resources



Recommendation 1: Build on the City of Austin Park Ranger Program and apply it to other programs for youth in open spaces

Originally created by City of Austin's Parks and Recreation Department, the Park Ranger Program connects young people to green spaces and creates opportunities for young people of color to experience careers in the outdoors. This program can help promote active living amongst many marginalized communities as well as provide a greater sense of safety for those marginalized communities in open spaces.

Partners:

- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- Yellow Bike Project and others that provide greater access to biking and other physical activities

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Ensure the dissemination of information regarding the programs is done equitably, e.g. not just flyers in libraries and bus stops, but announcements at local schools or parent-teacher association meetings





Recommendation 2: Focus on the development of smaller, neighborhood parks that include swimming pools and are easily accessible to nearby residents by foot, bike or public transit

Austin is known for its beautiful parks like Zilker Park that attract people from all over the state. However, neighborhood parks that are easily accessible by foot, bike, or public transit to nearby residents provide a greater opportunity to engage in active living for many Austinites. Ensuring the parks have water features, like swimming pools, ensures that residents of all ages and abilities can stay active during the Texas heat. According to the Healthy Parks Plan for Travis, Bastrop, and Caldwell Counties, neighborhood parks are categorized as being between 1 and 15 acres with a service area of half a mile or a 10-minute walk.



Recommendation 3: Restart the Viva! Streets Austin: Ciclovía Festival on a quarterly basis and combine it with an Austin Open House

Ciclovía is an open street event where streets are temporarily closed to cars and open for people to enjoy exploring their community by walking, bicycling, dancing, playing, and socializing. The open house would be a self-organized city-wide event where residents are encouraged to walk around their neighborhood, sharing stories and discovering it by foot, and participating businesses (retail, museums, restaurants, etc.) keep their doors open for longer hours to encourage people to walk to them. This event could also encourage businesses, entities, and organizations to open spaces that usually are not open to the general public to help promote the "open house" concept.

Partners:

- Existing recreation centers
- Neighborhood associations
- Neighborhood contact teams, i.e. groups of representatives from neighborhoods that meet and make decisions about the broader area that encompasses several neighborhoods

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Use mapping techniques to target underserved and disadvantaged areas and figure out how best to utilize resources
- Talk to the community about what they want whether it is about location, amenities, or even whether they want to see a park, pavilion, or activity center
- Think about the impact on existing amenities
- Consider increasing land set asides alongside funding or fees that developers are required to pay for new development in Austin to help fund open space

Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Transportation Department
- Bike Austin
- Community organizations
- Neighborhood associations
- Yellow Bike Project

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Understand people's preferences on the types of activities they want to see
- Involve struggling local businesses

EDUCATION

GOAL

Ensure students of all ages have access to outdoor programs and space for physical activity and classroom instruction year-round



Recommendation 1: Partner with school districts and childcare providers to better fund and implement active education and youth programs and provide students with a variety of options to be physically active

Physical education professionals within school districts and early childhood educators have an abundance of ideas for helping keep their students physically active. With the right partners and funding, students at every level can ensure that active living becomes integrated into their lifestyle.

Partners:

- Austin and Travis County Success by 6 Coalition
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Austin Safe Routes to School Program
- Ghisallo Cycling Initiative

- Independent school districts
- Learn All the Time
- Nonprofits already working with schools

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Focus on schools that are under-resourced
- Work with childcare providers who accept childcare subsidies
- Incorporate both summer and winter time frames when implementing active education and youth programs
- Work towards making supplemental active or youth programs affordable and creating financial support





Recommendation 2: Expand programs with existing educational program partners, such as the Austin Nature and Science Center and Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, focused on offering more hands-on activities and creating more outdoor learning environments

Studies have shown that various forms of exercise can help us learn better and keep us engaged for longer. Educational programs in institutions all around Austin can incorporate active living components into their curriculum in order to attract more visitors. Engaging with partners can also facilitate the development of additional outdoor learning environments that promote physical activity.



Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department, specifically the Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative
- Austin Public Health
- Capital Area Council of Governments
- Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin (CiNCA)
- Environmental companies
- It's Time Texas
- Partners for Education, Agriculture, and Sustainability
- Thinkery

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Focus on schools that are under-resourced
- Bring partners into schools and childcare facilities to decrease barriers or create field trip funds
- Work with childcare providers who accept childcare subsidies
- Work towards making supplemental active or youth programs affordable and creating financial support



Recommendation 3: Carve out a space to test and pilot new, innovative ideas to increase physical activity, especially considering the impact of events like COVID-19

Being innovative in the classroom is often a difficult hurdle to overcome. However, it is important to use the momentum for change driven by events like COVID-19 to test and pilot ideas that promote active living within varying types of educational settings. Some of these ideas might look like incorporating deep breathing techniques throughout the day to help students focus, working on a class community garden to educate about good nutrition, and integrating platforms such as GoNoodle into daily lesson plans to promote physical movement.

Partners:

- Gardening educators
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- Physical therapists
- TX Sprouts program
- Yoga, dance, tae kwon do, and zumba instructors

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Focus on schools that are under-resourced
- Utilize Universal Design for Learning methods

FAITH-BASED SETTINGS

GOAL

Engage with faith leadership and community resource providers to provide increased awareness of physical activity benefits, spaces and opportunities for active living, and long-term support through a holistic approach that focuses on building a supportive community and building health leaders



Recommendation 1: Tailor faith-based physical activities or programs to take place outdoors when feasible

The outdoors is considered a great setting to conduct faith-based activities such as community gatherings, teachings, and youth groups. When possible, activities and programs should be encouraged to take place outdoors where they can promote physical, mental, and spiritual health and can shed light on the presence or absence of green space in many communities.

Partners:

- AgriLife Extension
- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- Austin Parks Foundation
- Austin Public Health
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Ghisallo Cycling Initiative
- Interfaith Action of Central Texas
- It's Time Texas
- Retirement communities
- Senior living centers
- Sustainable Food Center

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Connect with faith leaders and members on how they currently use the outdoors for physical activities
- Identify which partner programs can be tailored to faith communities needs and goals
- Connect faith communities together and share best practices
- Conduct pilot programs in faith community to provide proof of concept, then share findings
- Identify resources in neighborhood that can be used for outdoor physical activity





Recommendation 2: Encourage the development of partnerships with organizations focused on active living throughout changing seasons

Partnerships with organizations can help strengthen faith-based communities and bring about positive change. It is important to acknowledge that these partnerships might look different during the summer, when heat becomes a barrier, and so the way partnerships look need to adjust accordingly.

Partners:

- AgriLife Extension
- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- Austin Parks Foundation
- Austin Public Health
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Interfaith Action of Central Texas
- It's Time Texas

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Start having conversations with faith leaders and

partnerships organizations to develop tailored actions to meet the needs of the faith community

- Review the resources already existing within faith communities addressing physical activity and overall holistic approach to health



Recommendation 3: Build upon the success of existing faith-based health programs

Faith-based health programs are the many programs of a faith community that promote holistic health. They have shown promising results in Austin when it comes to encouraging lifestyle changes amongst the people who attend these programs. Primarily focused on food, these programs can also work to include active living changes.

Partners:

- Austin Interfaith
- Austin Public Health
- Faith communities that may be smaller or not part of larger networks
- Interfaith Action of Central Texas
- Travis Interfaith
- Social media influencers

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Find ways to showcase successful large and small physical activity and holistic programs in faith communities
- Support faith communities in implementing programs specifically tailored to their community
- Find opportunities and create opportunities for health ministry leads or faith leaders to engage in productive conversations and share best practices
- Engage influencers to promote active living

HEALTHCARE

GOAL

Empower and educate all patients on physical activity during any touch with the healthcare system, e.g. clinic or hospital visits, and ensure that health care providers have the tools to assess, support and guide patients to promote regular physical activity and a healthy lifestyle



Recommendation 1: Supply health care providers with access to and knowledge of successful, evidence based, culturally appropriate community programs for physical activity

Ensuring that health care providers are aware of the various active living interventions and programs is a great strategy to incorporate physical activity into daily life. As the *National Plan for Physical Activity* states, "Educating and including advanced practice clinicians and allied health professionals is crucial as we seek to deliver a consistent, coherent, and comprehensive physical activity message to patients."

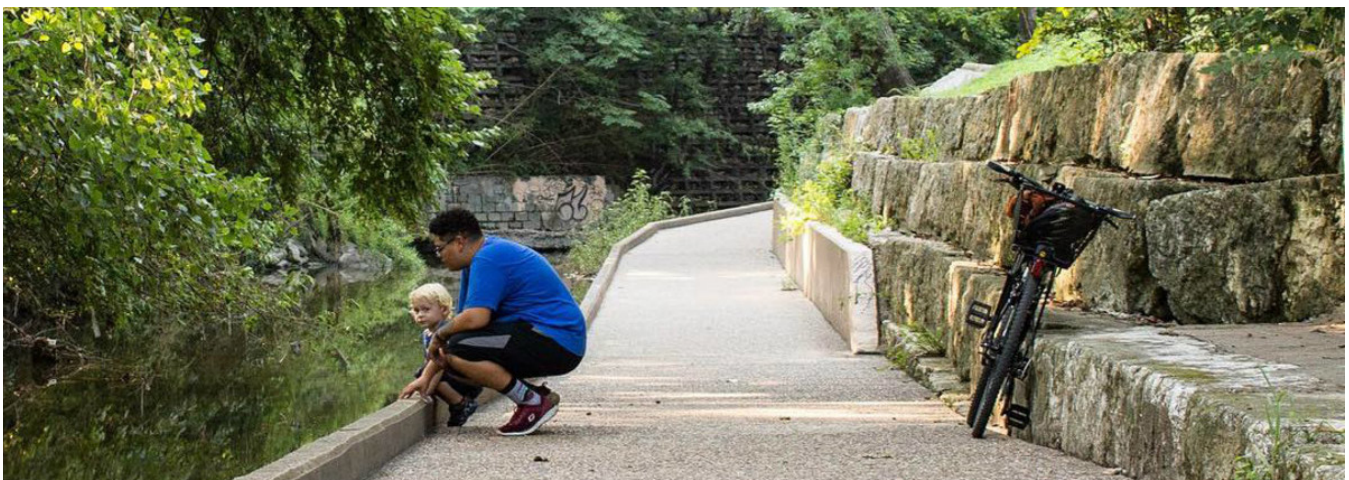
Partners:

- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- *Community Health Improvement Plan* – Chronic Disease Workgroup

- Community physical activity programs, e.g. YMCA and Austin Parks and Recreation Department Centers
- Travis County Medical Society

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Provide a central place for physical activity program information
- Create a point-person or point-organization to connect physicians to the needed resources
- Include all members of a healthcare team, e.g. resident nurse, social worker, community health workers, etc.
- Ensure that strategies do not promote ableism





Recommendation 2: Implement a Park Prescription (Park Rx) program

Park Prescription programs involve health or social service providers encouraging people to spend time in nature to improve their health and well-being. They can be as diverse as the communities for which they are designed and often include collaboration between park and public land agencies, healthcare providers, and community partners.



Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Federally Qualified Health Centers
- Hospital systems
- Travis County Medical Society

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Promote the program to all providers, with a specific focus in areas with high rates of chronic disease
- Find cheerleaders to be early adopters of the program and share success stories
- Create partnerships with organizations and entities to reduce associated cost barriers of outside spaces, if applicable



Recommendation 3: Work with the senior population to help promote policies for aging in place

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines aging in place as "the ability to live in one's own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level." Working to ensure that a traditionally marginalized community is able to access active living resources to provide a better quality of life is essential.

Partners:

- AGE of Central Texas
- Aging Services Council of Central Texas
- Area Agency on Aging
- Austin Area Urban League
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Public Health
- City of Austin, Commission on Seniors

- Housing Authority of the City of Austin
- Dell Seton Medical Center at The University of Texas
- St. David's Foundation

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Include referrals for balance, fall prevention, and other programs specifically targeted for the senior population
- Improve access to home repair programs and home safety programs so individuals with impairments can safely maneuver their homes
- Include assessment by a healthcare team to determine if seniors are at risk for falls or lack of physical activity

MASS MEDIA

GOAL

Increase knowledge/awareness of active living opportunities and benefits



Recommendation 1: Create digestible, regularly updated information on active living

Similar to Recommendation 1 under the Business and Industry Theme, it is vital to ensure that people of all communities in Austin and Travis County have access to easy-to-understand programs and graphics on different components of active living — from diet to lifestyle to exercise — and the understanding on how these components can look different depending on socioeconomic, racial, or geographic background. These programs and graphics can be hosted on an Austin and Travis County Active Living website.

Partners:

- Austin Public Health
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Transportation Department

- City of Austin boards and commissions
- Local businesses, non-profits, and universities and academic institutions
- Public libraries

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Make resources and subject matter experts readily accessible through interviews, stories, etc.
- Use diverse outlets to reach community members, which may differ by community
- Create a toolbox of shareable educational campaigns, i.e. Austin Public Health's sugar sweetened beverage campaign





Recommendation 2: Launch a regular schedule of active living campaigns focused on different parts of Austin and Travis County

Media campaigns are a coordinated effort to reinforce or assist with active living goals. Such campaigns would partner with different organizations every time and would work with residents of different regions to showcase and increase opportunities for active living across Austin and Travis County.



Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Parks Foundation
- Bike share companies and programs
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Local business community
- Local non-profits that focus on active living
- Neighborhood associations and homeowners' associations
- Entities deemed points of interest, e.g. restaurants, libraries, farmers markets, etc.

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Build a template for community campaigns
- Build and convene a team of partners to help bring the community together for these campaigns
- Incorporate evaluation into each campaign



Recommendation 3: Create and publicize a vision for the future of active living in Austin and Travis County based on public input

This recommendation is aimed at showcasing some of the wildest ideas that Austinites have about the future of their city and county, e.g. imagining Austin in 2040. This process would aim to create a more symbolic and morale boosting vision that future programs aimed at improving active living could look towards.

Partners:

- Community members
- K-12 and higher educational institutions
- Local and regional news outlets
- Local and regional non-profits
- Neighborhood associations and homeowners' associations

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Create an ambassador program, i.e. similar to how Austin Public Library launched their new site
- Utilize blogs, listservs, social media and others that could publicize this vision
- Create a campaign to best portray the results
- Create a toolkit, e.g. branding, newsletters, videos, to encourage businesses, etc., to promote to specific audiences



PUBLIC HEALTH

GOAL

Achieve health equity by ensuring all community members have access to health services, active living resources, and physical activity opportunities



Recommendation 1: Create an active living coalition

Coalition members would consist of peer educators, community health workers, and residents from the communities themselves. There would be different strategies for different ambassador groups. This could have a general framework, but then can be adapted according to different ambassador needs.

Partners:

- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- Austin Transportation Department
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Community Coalition for Health
- Explore Austin
- GirlTrek
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- The Trail Foundation

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Tap into existing community leaders and their grassroots organizations
- Create a standard of training so that we can measure effectiveness and outcomes
- Identify funding to improve income and employment of community leaders and ambassadors
- Utilize students in public health or social work





Recommendation 2: Mitigate the disparities exacerbated by events like COVID-19 that are a barrier to services, resources, opportunities, and other health-promoting activities

Specific events like natural disasters or global pandemics tend to exacerbate disparities, especially in health. It is important to acknowledge how such events worsen existing inequalities and work towards finding solutions within active living parameters such as ensuring every Austinite and resident of Travis County has access to healthy open space, for example.

Partners:

- Andy Roddick Foundation
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Public Health
- Central Texas Food Bank
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- Independent school districts and local community colleges
- Stronger Austin
- Public libraries
- YMCA of Austin

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Distribute a network of WiFi hotspots around Austin and Travis County, e.g. on buses
- Improve computer literacy by teaching people how to access the internet and use video conferencing
- Examine and address greenspace equity issues
- Incorporate evaluation into each campaign



Recommendation 3: Create, maintain, and leverage cross-sectoral partnerships and coalitions that implement evidence-based strategies to promote physical activity

This recommendation stems from Strategy 2 of the *National Physical Activity Plan*, whereby public health agencies work towards creating partnerships that accept responsibility to promote active living. From there, indicators that track progress can be developed and shared. This recommendation is similar to the forum discussed in Recommendation 2 of the Business and Industry theme.

Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Public Health
- Austin/Travis County Chronic Disease Work Group
- Blue Zones
- It's Time Texas

- Public libraries
- Stronger Austin

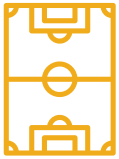
Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Continue to develop eco-map of partners and non-profits and their work
- Show where physical activity resources that are free or low-cost exist, highlighting mostly green spaces and physical activity programs
- Create a partnership between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Commission on Seniors to ensure seniors can access and enjoy activity in parks
- Make sure community voices are heard in these coalitions and partnerships so they can make an impact

SPORT

GOAL

Ensure people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities have ample opportunities to participate in sports activities



Recommendation 1: Work on increasing more artificial turf space that requires less maintenance

Artificial turf systems are considered to be a great alternative for sport arenas when compared to a natural grass field because of easy maintenance, great durability, aesthetic appeal, and increased safety. Specifically in Austin and Travis County where temperatures in the summer tend to be very high, artificial turf is a viable option. Parks and health stakeholders should work with the Watershed Protection Department to ensure the regional standards for the addition of artificial turf fields does not cause degradation of any environmental systems.

Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Private companies
- Travis County
- University and independent school district athletics

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Focus on neighborhoods and communities that need artificial turf, e.g. communities that tend to play a lot of sports like soccer





Recommendation 2: Ensure the virtual delivery of sports activities to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, and promote individual sports such as biking, skateboarding, and running

Given the recent shift to online and virtual methods because of COVID-19, it has become difficult to continue with most sports in-person. Similar to virtual summer camps, stakeholders should work together to develop virtual sports delivery, which could look like virtual skill-building drills or virtual training. Promoting individual sports gives people an opportunity to stay active while social distancing during the pandemic, while also allowing for group activities once they are deemed safe.



Partners:

- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Local gyms, clubs, teams
- Mayor's Council on Fitness
- University and independent school district athletics

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Understand how virtual delivery will look different to different people
- Work to ensure that the virtual sports programs are themselves diverse
- Create family-friendly sports activities



Recommendation 3: Establish an entity that can serve as a central resource to unify and strengthen stakeholders in the sports sector

Currently, many stakeholders exist that operate within the sports realm in Austin and Travis County. However, a singular unifying entity that represents sports does not exist. Working towards establishing such an entity would help promote and carry out many of the recommendations in this section.

Partners:

- Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- For-profit sports leagues
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- Greenway partnerships, e.g. Waterloo Greenway partnership

- It's Time Texas
- Mayor's Council on Fitness
- Semi-pro teams, e.g. B leagues

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Push for cost sharing and scholarships from semi pro and for-profit leagues because of the limitations of city budget
- Engage historically underutilized businesses in the effort and find job opportunities that employ people
- Talk with the people you want to engage and utilize the individuals to actually develop the plan

TRANSPORTATION, LAND USE, AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

GOAL

Prioritize development investments away from auto-centric patterns, from new development to neighborhood retrofitting, to promote walkability and health-supportive infrastructure for underserved communities



Recommendation 1: Use social determinants of health to set benchmarks and use an evaluation tool to measure impact of planning programs, policies, and land use changes

Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. They include factors like socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care. Utilizing and weaving these determinants into benchmark and evaluation tools can help aid in moving towards more equitable active living recommendations.

Partners:

- American Heart Association
- Austin Outside
- Austin Public Health
- Chambers, e.g. African American Chamber, Hispanic Chamber, etc.
- Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin
- People United for Mobility Action
- Planning Our Communities

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Invite proposed stakeholder partners to table to determine equitable strategies
- Create stipends or funding to support trusted community organizers to survey community members
- Prioritize initiatives like complete communities and other developments that support walkability





Recommendation 2: Improve shared use active transportation infrastructure, such as sidewalks and bikeways, by prioritizing "quick build" solutions and reallocating street space to active transportation uses/users

The City of Austin and Travis County have several plans and initiatives that are focused on complete streets and active transportation infrastructures such as Corridor Mobility Programs and the Healthy Streets Initiative. Studying and building on these existing programs and initiatives can prioritize the "quick build" solutions.

Partners:

- Austin Outside
- Austin Economic Development Department
- Austin Neighborhood Housing & Community Development
- Austin Parks and Recreation Department
- Austin Planning and Zoning Department
- Austin Public Works Department
- Austin Transportation Department
- Bicycle and pedestrian advisory committees
- Bike Austin
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority

- Central Health
- Travis County
- Walk Austin

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Refer to existing plans that have identified gaps and prioritized recommendations such as the *Sidewalk Master Plan*
- Prioritize historically underserved communities
- Refer to community needs assessments from other organizations, such as Central Health and Community Care
- Prioritize gaps in the existing active transportation network to connect neighborhoods



Recommendation 3: Prioritize mitigating urban heat island effect in design, especially prioritizing tree canopy and other shade creation strategies

Urban heat islands occur when cities replace natural land cover with dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that absorb and retain heat. This effect increases energy costs (e.g., for air conditioning), air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality.

Trees, green roofs, and vegetation can help reduce urban heat island effects by shading building surfaces, deflecting radiation from the sun, and releasing moisture into the atmosphere.

Partners:

- Austin Corridor Mobility Program
- Austin Development Services Department
- Austin Office of Sustainability
- Austin Outside
- Austin Parks and Recreation Board
- Keep Austin Beautiful
- Local landscape architecture chapters or firms
- TreeFolks
- Various environmental commissions

Equitable strategies for implementation:

- Review tree canopy disparities mapping efforts

