



AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY

2015

ANNUAL
REPORT

"INNOVATION DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN A LEADER AND A FOLLOWER." ~ STEVE JOBS



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Bob Gedert – Director, Austin Resource Recovery, City of Austin

I'm pleased to present to you the 2015 annual report for Austin Resource Recovery. Throughout Fiscal Year 2015, we embarked on a number of innovative projects in order to further our [Zero Waste](#) goal.

We partnered with an independent research firm to conduct a [residential waste composition study](#), which produced valuable information about the recycling challenges among our residential customers. This was the first study of its kind for the Department and we learned that approximately 44 percent of what our customers throw away could have been recycled.

We knew we needed to gather community input about why residents aren't recycling more, what their challenges are and how we can make recycling easier. To meet this goal, we partnered with the City's new Innovation Office to launch the [Insights](#) campaign, a crowdsourcing initiative to survey Austinites. We received nearly 1,500 responses. The insights gathered have already helped inform decisions we're making about future projects. Everyone who participated online received follow-up email communication about those decisions and they were also posted publicly on the website.

Another innovation was Austin's first ever [\[Re\]Verse Pitch Competition](#), a one-of-a-kind program to convert raw materials that local businesses are currently throwing away into the foundation for new social enterprises. This was the first time a City initiative used a challenge-prize structure, offering a financial incentive for local entrepreneurs to solve a problem. The winning entrepreneurs have already started their new business, which repurposes spent grain from breweries into food – Brewnola Bars.

In addition, [Austin Materials Marketplace](#) (where one company's waste becomes another company's raw material) was recently selected from an impressive group of more than 200 entrants to receive a prestigious "Circulars" Award at this year's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting. The Circulars, the world's premier circular economy award program, is a collaboration between the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders and Accenture. The awards recognize individuals and organizations from commerce and civil society that have made a notable contribution to driving circular economy principles – where growth doesn't depend on the use of scarce natural resources.

I'm proud of what we've accomplished so far and look forward to the coming year as we continue to improve our programs and processes in order to increase the diversion rate. Our dedicated staff and innovative ideas have helped us establish Austin as a nationwide Zero Waste leader.



MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Marc Ott – Austin City Manager

As our community works to achieve our ambitious Zero Waste goal, we must go beyond “business as usual” and find innovative ways to set ourselves apart. Austin Resource Recovery did just that with several new approaches in Fiscal Year 2015.

The department conducted a multi-faceted crowdsourcing campaign to gather citizen input, expanded services to allow everyone to recycle more, engaged local entrepreneurs to turn waste into new products, and worked toward a new ordinance that will require construction debris to be recycled or reused. That’s just a sampling of this year’s accomplishments!

In support of Council’s Zero Waste vision, Austin Resource Recovery is actively engaging citizens toward a more sustainable future through innovative programs.



OUR VISION

To be a national Zero Waste leader in the transformation from traditional waste collection to sustainable resource recovery.

OUR MISSION

To achieve Zero Waste by providing excellent customer services that promote waste reduction, increase resource recovery and support the City of Austin's sustainability efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[2 MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR](#)

[3 MESSAGE FROM THE CITY MANAGER](#)

[5 BY THE NUMBERS](#)

[6 FINANCIAL REPORT](#)

[7 WHAT'S IN OUR TRASH?](#)

[8 INSIGHTS – CROWDSOURCING RECYCLING SOLUTIONS](#)

[9 RECYCLE ON THE GO](#)

[10 BATTERY RECYCLING CHALLENGE](#)

[11 RECYCLE & REUSE DROP-OFF CENTER](#)

[12 REVERSE PITCH – INNOVATION PRIZE](#)

[13 CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION RECYCLING ORDINANCE](#)

[14 CUSTOMER SERVICE](#)



BY THE NUMBERS

HOUSEHOLDS IN AUSTIN SERVICED BY ARR
191,580

TONS OF CURBSIDE RECYCLING COLLECTED

56,827

RESIDENTS USING RECYCLE & REUSE DROP-OFF CENTER

22,878

TONS OF CURBSIDE TRASH COLLECTED

130,843

TONS OF CURBSIDE YARD TRIMMINGS COMPOSTED

28,680

NUMBER OF HOME COMPOSTING REBATES GIVEN

643

TONS OF LITTER AND DEBRIS COLLECTED

501

TONS OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTED

737

CUSTOMER SERVICE REQUESTS

67,612

TONS OF MATERIAL COLLECTED AT THE RESOURCE RECOVERY CENTER

512

GALLONS OF REBLEND PAINT PRODUCED

27,960

1,687

BUSINESSES RECEIVED WASTE-REDUCTION ASSISTANCE

TONS OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE RECYCLED/REUSED

317

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE RECYCLED/REUSED



STUDENTS EDUCATED ABOUT HOME COMPOSTING

974

TONS OF BULKY ITEMS COLLECTED

9,073

RESIDENTS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES REACHED AT PRESENTATIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

8,748

TONS OF CURBSIDE LARGE BRUSH COMPOSTED

7,776

PERCENT OF CITY-COLLECTED MATERIALS DIVERTED FROM THE LANDFILLS





FINANCIAL REPORT*

REVENUE

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES	\$52,100,560
COMMERCIAL SERVICES	\$2,576,494
EXTRA TRASH FEE/CART EXCHANGE FEE	\$540,141
CLEAN COMMUNITY FEE	\$21,408,509
RECYCLING SALES	\$3,105,437
OTHER REVENUE**	\$1,326,095
TOTAL REVENUE	\$81,057,236

*The City of Austin fiscal year begins on Oct. 1 and ends on Sept. 30. For information about Austin Resource Recovery's approved fiscal year budget, visit austintexas.gov/finance.

**Includes general government charges, interest, property sales, county revenue, and other miscellaneous revenues.

EXPENSES

COLLECTION SERVICES	\$35,047,055
LANDFILL CLOSURE	\$1,459,407
LITTER ABATEMENT	\$5,026,303
OPERATIONS SUPPORT	\$4,432,142
WASTE DIVERSION	\$3,892,813
SUPPORT SERVICES	\$8,013,187
TRANSFERS AND OTHER EXPENSES***	\$22,529,887
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$80,400,794

***Includes interdepartmental charges, accrued payroll, insurance, bad debt expense, administrative support, communication and technology management (CTM) support, etc.



austintexas.gov

For more information
Call 3-1-1
austinrecycles.com

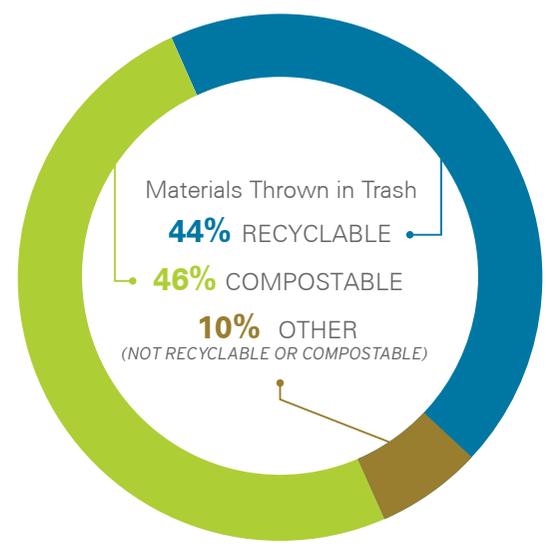
WHAT'S IN OUR TRASH?

In 2015 Austin Resource Recovery endeavored to find out just that. Through an independent study, ARR discovered that 44 percent of residential trash going to the landfill could have been recycled. An additional 46 percent could have been composted.

The study looked at loads of trash and recycling collected through Austin Resource Recovery's curbside service, which primarily serves single family homes. The results were surprising!

"Although 96 percent of Austinites consider themselves recyclers, the reality is that more than 44 percent of Austin's trash stream is recyclable materials," said Austin Resource Recovery Director Bob Gedert. "This study confirms that if we recycle and compost properly, our Zero Waste goal is entirely attainable."

The study shows that more recyclables are going to the landfill than are being recycled in residents' blue carts.



- **44 percent** of what is found in the trash stream could have been recycled:
 - **23 percent** is recyclable paper
 - **13 percent** is recyclable plastic
 - **8 percent** is recyclable metal and glass

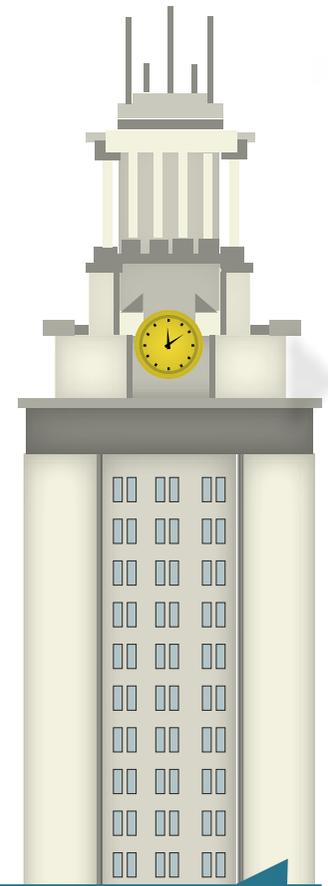
- An estimated **58,000 tons of recyclables** are going to the landfill each year. That is enough to **fill the UT tower 29 times**.

ZERO WASTE ACTIVITIES GENERATE MANY ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR OUR COMMUNITY

- The value of recyclables thrown in the trash in a year **totaled \$4.7 million**.
- **Recycling creates more jobs** than discarding materials in the landfill.
- Austin's recycling and reuse industries **generated \$720 million in economic activity in 2014 and supported over 2,600 jobs**.

To help customers recycle more, Austin Resource Recovery sent a recycling guide to all residents and launched a new online tool where customers can search for a specific item to find the correct way to recycle it.

58,000 TONS OF RECYCLABLES IS ENOUGH TO FILL THE UT TOWER **29 TIMES**



Visit the [What Do I Do With app](#) to see if you can recycle, reuse or compost your unwanted items.

View the [waste characterization study](#) or view the [study handout](#).

INSIGHTS – CROWDSOURCING RECYCLING SOLUTIONS

Austin Resource Recovery joined forces with the Innovation Office in July 2015 to ask Austin residents for their insights about recycling. This month-long effort was designed to help identify what can be done, as a community, to increase household recycling. The information gathered is allowing Austin Resource Recovery to effectively target new outreach efforts and City services to where they are needed most.

Austin Resource Recovery and the Innovation Office used a variety of methods to engage the public, including face-to-face interaction, social media resources, and a web-based “crowd consulting” tool, called [Insights](#). The tool enabled users to submit answers in response to an open-ended question. The question was:

“How might we put fewer recyclables in the trash? What are we missing?”

It turned out that Austinites have a lot to say about recycling! **More than 1,500 comments were received online and in-person.** The comments were grouped and 11 final insights were formulated. These insights are informing Austin Resource Recovery’s programs and activities as we work to increase recycling and make progress toward our Council-approved Zero Waste goal.



**MORE THAN
1,500
COMMENTS WERE
RECEIVED
ONLINE AND IN-PERSON**

**WE NEED YOUR
INSIGHTS**



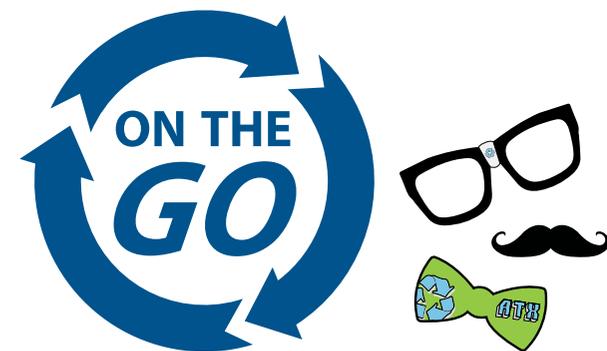
RECYCLE ON THE GO

Recycling in Downtown Austin got easier in 2015. On August 6, we announced the expansion of public recycling in the downtown area, an initiative called [Recycle on the Go](#). Where there used to be only public trash cans, there are now blue-domed recycling cans as well.

“Austin’s goal is Zero Waste by 2040, and the availability of recycling in public spaces is an important piece of our strategy to meet that goal. Increasing access to recycling while raising awareness is crucial to building a sustainable downtown,” said Mayor Steve Adler.

“I am pleased to offer this new service to Austin residents and visitors to the downtown area. I ask all Austinites to watch for the blue domes when walking downtown, and make sure to recycle your bottles and cans,” said Austin Resource Recovery Director Bob Gedert. “Together, we can all help move Austin toward a Zero-Waste future.”

City officials were joined by the Downtown Austin Alliance and representatives of downtown businesses at the announcement. City staff and downtown businesses are working together to provide recycling options and to inform residents, workers and visitors of the new service.





The results are in!

Everyone wins in the 2015 Battery Recycling Challenge

August 17 – September 18

NEARLY
3 TONS

Nearly 3 tons of consumer batteries were dropped off for recycling at 22 participating libraries.



41%

41% of libraries collected more batteries in one month than they did in the entire previous year.

> **2014**

Since its inception, Austin's consumer battery recycling program has collected

457,000 lbs

That's the equivalent weight of 5 Boeing 737 800 series aircraft.



BATTERY RECYCLING CHALLENGE

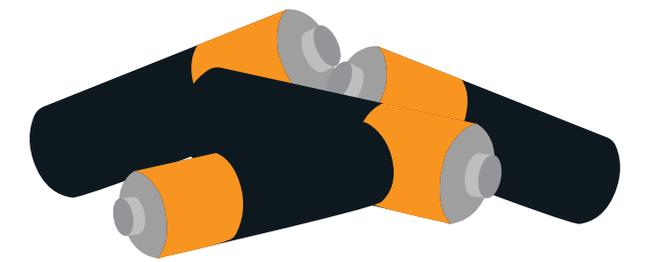
Austin Resource Recovery, the Austin Public Library and Austin residents, in conjunction with [Call2Recycle](#), Inc. diverted more than 5,800 pounds of batteries from landfills during the 2015 Austin Recharge Challenge. Twenty-one Austin Public Library locations competed to collect the most batteries for recycling, which greatly increased the city's overall collection rates.

The North Village Branch of the Library won by **collecting 1,042 pounds** of batteries during the challenge, and will receive a \$1,000 donation from Call2Recycle to help fund a sustainable project, such as a bike rack or an outdoor bench. The Spicewood Springs Branch was a close second collecting nearly 900 pounds for recycling.

Since establishing its battery-recycling program in 1999, the **City of Austin has collected more than 460,000 pounds of batteries** – equivalent to the weight of **five Boeing 737 800 series aircraft**. On average, **Austin collects up to 2,000 pounds of batteries** each month from residents and retailers, which was almost tripled during the Recharge Challenge campaign. Austin Resource Recovery does not accept batteries in its curbside recycling program.

"As a leading city in sustainable practices in multiple case studies, Austin once again proved its commitment to doing the right thing," said Tim Warren, account manager at Call2Recycle. "It is exciting to see communities come together to take action, when their city makes the effort to make recycling more available and accessible."

CITY OF AUSTIN HAS COLLECTED
MORE THAN 460,000 POUNDS OF BATTERIES



Find out where you can **drop off your batteries** for recycling.

RECYCLE & REUSE DROP-OFF CENTER

The Household Hazardous Waste Facility and the Resource Recovery Center merged in 2015 to create one convenient drop-off center, known as the Recycle & Reuse Drop-Off Center. The center provides one convenient location where residents can safely and responsibly recycle and reuse many materials. Residents can now drop off more items, including plastic bags and plastic wrap, cardboard, paper, glass, hard plastics, metal, Styrofoam and all single-stream recycling. The center's reuse area also expanded to accept reusable art supplies, which are distributed to artists and teachers for reuse in creative projects.

The grand (re)opening event included family-friendly activities such as kids' crafts and booths from local businesses, nonprofits and City departments.

AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY

RECYCLE & REUSE

DROP-OFF CENTER



Learn what you can drop off and pick up for free at the [Recycle & Reuse Drop-off Center](#).





[RE]VERSE PITCH – INNOVATION PRIZE

Austin Resource Recovery held its first [\[Re\]Verse Pitch Competition](#) in 2015. The competition is a one-of-a-kind social innovation program to turn valuable raw materials that are currently leaving local businesses, nonprofits and institutions as waste into the foundation of new social enterprises. The competition started with five local companies and institutions pitching byproduct materials to social entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs created business ideas using these byproducts.

The [Re]Verse Pitch Competition awarded a \$10,000 innovation prize to Austin resident Brandon Ward for his idea of turning spent grain, a byproduct from the brewing process, into “Brewnola” granola bars.

Ward was one of eight finalists who presented ideas on how to repurpose byproducts at the final competition. The winning pitch proposes to create a company that would pay employees \$24 per hour, locally source ingredients for the granola bars, use compostable packaging, and donate a portion of proceeds to Austin-area homeless shelters.

In addition to points from public voting, judging was based on business viability, sustainability impact, economic impact and social impact, along with effectiveness of pitch delivery.

EACH OF THE FINALISTS MADE IMPRESSIVE PITCHES FOR A VARIETY OF BUSINESS CONCEPTS:

- Sue Sende Cole, Working with Wicker (repurposing wicker baskets)
- Santiago Diaz, Austin Building Materials Depository and Working Space (repurposing books, spent grain, vinyl banners, waterproof clogs, canvas, and decorative glassware)
- Joe Diffie, The Table to Bacon Feed Company (repurposing spent grain)
- Aaron Pierron, Fine Glass Recycling (repurposing decorative glassware)
- Melissa Rothrock, Calling All Seamstresses (repurposing vinyl banners)
- Cory Skuldt, Clover's Brewery Bites (repurposing spent grain)
- Renata Sturdivant, Safe Innovative High Heels (repurposing vinyl banners and waterproof clogs)

The [Re]Verse Pitch Competition was a collaboration between the [City of Austin](#), the [U.S. Business Council for Sustainable Development](#), [Impact Hub Austin](#) and the [RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service](#), with additional support from a wide variety of community partners. Learn more about [Reverse Pitch](#).



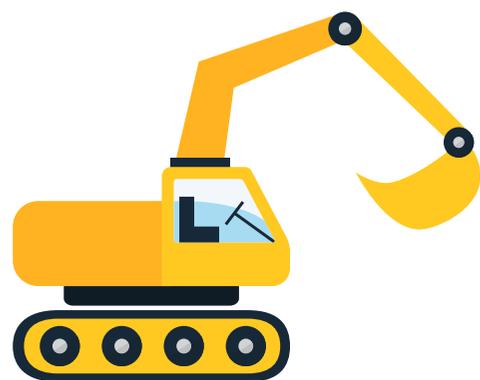
THE [RE]VERSE PITCH COMPETITION AWARDED A \$10,000 innovation prize to Austin resident Brandon Ward

CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION RECYCLING ORDINANCE

The Austin City Council passed a new ordinance that will increase reuse and recycling of materials from construction and demolition projects. The Construction and Demolition Recycling Ordinance will require 50 percent diversion of materials from construction projects larger than 5,000 square feet beginning Oct. 1, 2016. In 2019, the ordinance will expand to include commercial demolition projects.

Construction and demolition projects generate at least 20 percent of all materials that go to Austin-area landfills. Austin Resource Recovery Director Bob Gedert said, "This ordinance takes a huge step toward achieving Austin's Zero Waste goal by requiring more recycling and reuse of valuable materials."

The ordinance builds on two decades of construction material reuse and recycling guidelines championed by the Austin Energy Green Building (AEGB) program.



CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION PROJECTS GENERATE AT LEAST **20%** OF ALL MATERIALS THAT GO TO AUSTIN-AREA LANDFILLS.

Learn more about the [Construction and Demolition Recycling Ordinance](#).

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Each year, our customers are surveyed by a third party about City of Austin services, including Austin Resource Recovery services: curbside recycling, trash and yard trimmings pickup; bulk pickup; cleanliness of City streets; and household hazardous waste disposal. In recent years, Austin Resource Recovery has been very well rated compared to other large US cities, and 2015 was no exception. Austin rated higher than other cities on five of the six categories.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

CITY SERVICE	CITY OF AUSTIN	NATIONAL AVERAGE
TRASH COLLECTION	85%	79%
RECYCLING COLLECTION	84%	73%
YARD TRIMMINGS COLLECTION	75%	70%
BULKY ITEMS COLLECTION	74%	64%
STREET SWEEPING	64%	58%
HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE DISPOSAL	50%	52%



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