

IMPACT REPORT

2023-2024

CITIES
CONNECTING
CHILDREN TO
NATURE

Cities
Connecting
Children to
Nature
AUSTIN, TX



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Overview



Cities Connecting Children to Nature

(CCCN) is a national initiative that seeks to create more equitable and abundant access to nature in cities through a partnership between The National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families and the Children & Nature Network.

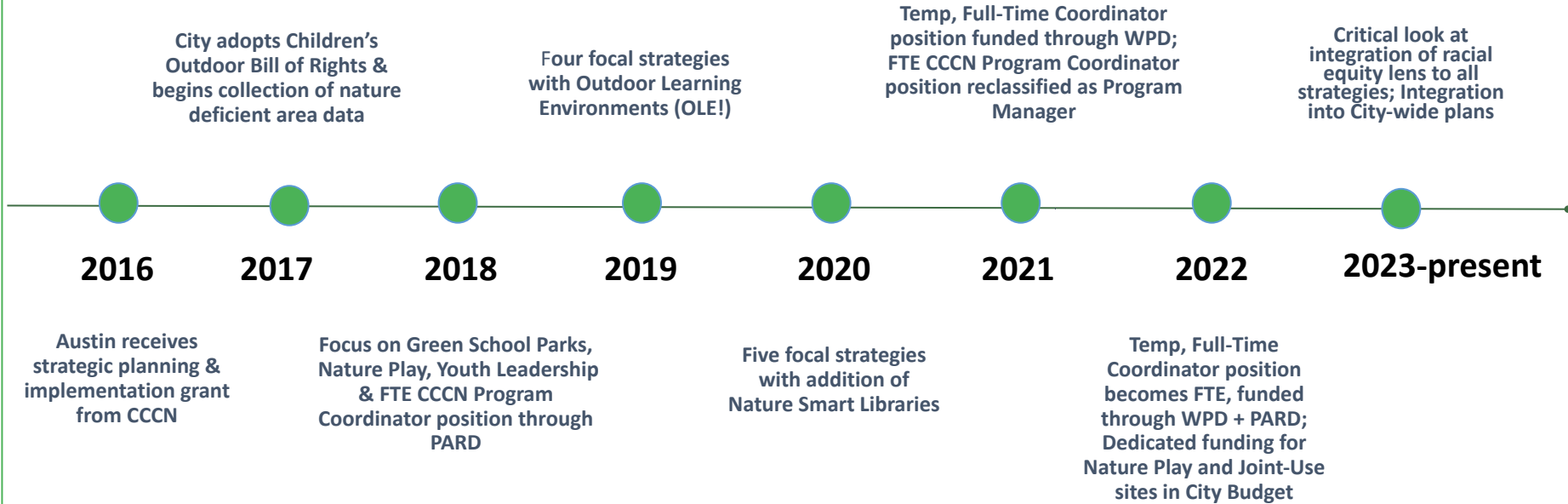
Austin Initiative

Our Vision and Mission

Cities Connecting Children to Nature strives to ensure every child has access to and connection with nature every day.

We are committed to connecting people with the natural spaces where they live, learn, and play, which fosters lifelong beneficial relationships with nature. CCCN collaborates across institutions and systems, amplifying efforts, sharing resources, and creating partnerships that deepen our collective vision and advance our mission.

CCCN Austin: Our Evolution



City Goals+CCCN

Plans/Programs that call out CCCN

- Heat Resiliency Playbook (Office of Resiliency)
- Climate & Environmental Initiatives at CoA (Office of Sustainability)
- Sustainability & Resilience Program (Parks and Recreation Dept)
- Long Range Plan (Parks and Recreation Dept)
- Green Building Program (Austin Energy)

Other related plans

- Community Health Improvement Plan (Austin Public Health)
- Climate Equity Plan (Office of Sustainability)
- Food Plan (Office of Sustainability)
- Urban Forest Plan (Development Services Dept)
- Comprehensive Library Strategic and Facilities Plan (Austin Public Library)
- *Rain to River (Watershed Protection Dept)*

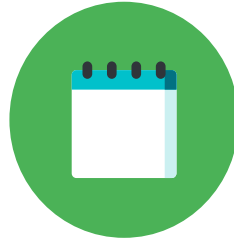
\$403,739

CCCN efforts leveraged in FY24

Outreach Efforts



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



**CCCN
featured in
6 local &
national
articles**



**Conducted 7
presentations,
with 237 total
participants**



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Foundation

Austin Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

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

1,630

Total Signatures

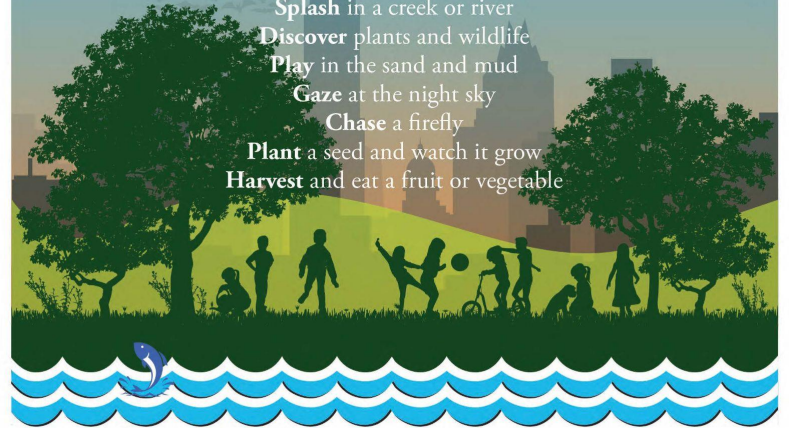


COBOR featured in Austin Civilian Conservation Corps "Nature Connection" video

AUSTIN CHILDREN'S OUTDOOR BILL of RIGHTS

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

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



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

Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/ccn



Racial Equity

CCCN Austin integrates racial equity into all aspects work from strategy action plans to relationships and partners. Using a lens of racial equity ensures children facing barriers have opportunities to connect with nature.



State + National Presentations

- Racial Equity in Nature
 - Texas Children in Nature Network Summit - Panel
 - Children & Nature Network - Keynote Panel
 - Children & Nature Network Conference - Panel

City of Austin Equity Network

- Monthly meeting for city staff + workshops

Equity Action Team (EAT!)

- Monthly meeting for City staff + Community

CCCN Demographics

- Collecting information during all strategy and quarterly meetings



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Strategies

Strategies

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Green School Parks

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Nature Play

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Emerging Green Leaders

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

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Nature Smart Libraries

A group of five children of diverse backgrounds are standing in a garden, each holding a large radish with green leaves. They are smiling and looking at the camera. The background shows various green plants and a fence. The text 'GREEN SCHOOL PARKS' is overlaid in large, bold, black letters across the middle of the image.

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

Vision: Every schoolyard creates access to nature and fosters play and learning outdoors for all.

GREEN SCHOOL PARKS

- New vision and direction that recognizes the interconnectedness of green spaces, social change, health and climate resilience.
- Ongoing coordination between PARD + AISD on AISD Modernization which will impact 9 joint use school parks + coordination on fencing at both joint use school parks and schools adjacent to parks.
- Updated park signs for joint use school parks. Installation is ongoing and part of the coordination between PARD + AISD.
- Environmental Education Partners provided programming to 73 Austin ISD schools. 64% of the schools activated are Title 1.
- Austin ISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) and GSP launched an amenity mapping working group to conduct comprehensive inventory of eco and park features on all Austin ISD campuses.
- Summer partnership with EcoRise and their Green Careers Academy Program. Two interns worked on amenity mapping for 6 weeks.
- 31 stewardship projects and park celebrations were completed at schools during Austin Park Foundations' biannual It's My Park Day Events.



A photograph of a nature play area. The ground is covered in light brown wood chips. Several large, weathered logs are scattered across the area, some arranged in a rectangular shape. The play area is bordered by low, curved concrete walls. In the background, there are trees, a blue sky with white clouds, and a few people walking. The text "NATURE PLAY" is overlaid in large, bold, black letters in the center of the image.

NATURE PLAY

Vision: Building a world where all children can explore nature through play.

NATURE PLAY

- Updated strategy vision
- Nature play spaces installed at 5 parks, including last pilot site, with 14 additional sites in design
 - Community advocating for nature play to be added
- Loose parts lending kits used by 1587 people
- Infrastructure Subcommittee quarterly meetings ongoing
- Wood degradation of nature play features tracked by Youth Forest Council
- Procurement ongoing:
 - Hornsby Bend collection
 - Old Lampasas Dam project
 - Materials moved to Trevino as permanent storage location
 - Staff hired to assist
- Nature Play called out in departmental plans/programs as a way to meet goals:
 - Office of Resiliency – Heat Resiliency Playbook
 - Office of Sustainability – Climate & Environmental Initiatives
 - Austin Energy Green Building Program
 - PARD Sustainability + Resilience Program



Emerging Green Leaders

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

Emerging Green Leaders

- Combination of in-person + virtual meetings: Nature Networking, Adult-Youth Collectives, Culture Change/
Building a net that works
- Participants:
 - 25 organizations
 - 215 participants
- Increased Committee Chairs
 - 4 Adults & 2 Youth
- Normalize talking about race & racism with stakeholders, partners, participants, leadership
- Gather to talk about green careers and opportunities, network with professionals
- Help brainstorm and implement Green Workforce Collaborative
- Provide Green Career Development workshops
- Creating pathways into nature-based jobs:
 - Emerging Green Leaders Job Opportunities
 - Austin Civilian Conservation Corp: 38 summer temp jobs at COA, 13 still employed
 - Youth Forest Council: 13 interns



OLE! AUSTIN

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



OLE! AUSTIN

- Congratulations to the coalition's work during the first 5-year cycle:
 - 16 childcare centers actively participated - a big COVID win!
 - 2 are active OLE! demonstration sites
- OLE! Contract now with TCiNN, efforts to include:
 - Professional development
 - Local site visits
 - TCiNN Summit Tract on early childhood education
 - EE newsletter specific
 - Best Practice Quality Seal
- Local coalition regrouping with initial goals:
 - Recenter equity
 - Resources + Networking
 - Mentorship + Professional Development
 - TCiNN hosting [shared Google folder](#) - resources, photos, etc.
 - Meetings rotating between Centers with a focused topic each month
- Abiding Love Children's Center hosted Texas Tech Coalition for Natural Learning Community Engagement & OLE design



NATURE SMART LIBRARIES

A group of people, including children and adults, are gathered in a lush garden or park. Some are looking at a book or document held by one of the children. The background is filled with green foliage and trees. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark grey background.

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

NATURE SMART LIBRARIES

- Updated APL Programming Manual to prioritize NSL programming into future library offerings
- Partnership with Parks & Recreation for loose parts lending kit to circulate between library branches
- Plant parties & nature-based story time during Roots & Wings Festival
- Environmental programs embedded in over 300 summer events across the library system
- Texas State intern project focused on promoting equitable access to nature-related resources
- Outreach & engagement with the bookmobile
- Pollinator garden at the Ruiz Branch



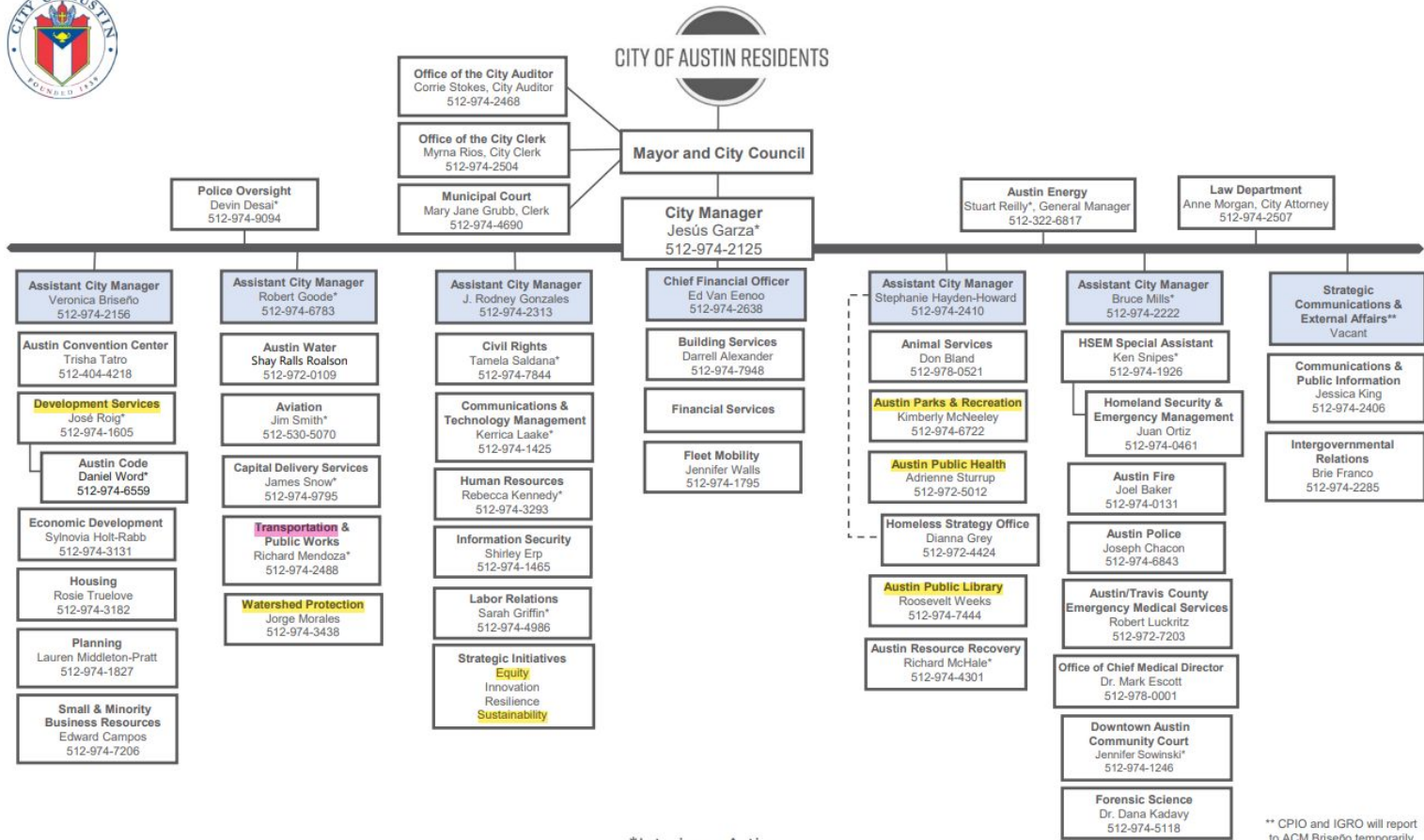


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Team

City Partners



*Interim or Acting

** CPIO and IGRO will report to ACM Briseño temporarily

Local Partners



Connect with us



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