



Cities Connecting Children to Nature

AUSTIN, TX

Cities Connecting Children to Nature Austin

Mayor Adler, City Manager Cronk, and City Council members are working to build a *Complete Community* in Austin that preserves culture and identity while providing the needs of daily life for our community. This includes fostering connections to nature, where all of Austin’s kids can spend consistent time playing and learning outside.

Research shows that regular time spent outdoors enhances children’s physical and mental health, social emotional skills, and academic outcomes—inspiring environmental ownership and community cohesion.

The National League of Cities and the Children & Nature Network selected Austin as one of 18 US cities to join the Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative. CCCN helps cities increase equitable access to nature to improve the wellbeing of children.

Since 2014 through the CCCN initiative, Austin has received technical assistance, grants, and peer learning designed to help implement nature connection strategies so that Austin’s children experience the many benefits of nature.

Benefits to Austin



Students at Barrington Elementary Green School Park making seed balls.

Alignment with City of Austin Strategic Direction 2023 Outcomes related to:



Health and Environment: Enjoying a sustainable environment and a healthy life - physically and mentally



Culture and Lifelong Learning: Being enriched by Austin’s unique civic, cultural, ethnic, and learning opportunities

Increase equitable access to nature for all children by creating connections to nature where children learn, live, and play - in childcare centers, schools, parks, and through job training – and intentionally invest resources to high-need communities with limited nature access.



Strategies to Connect Austin Kids to Nature:

Green School Parks. Create a network of school parks that provide schools and the surrounding community the opportunity to learn from, steward, and play in nature

- Key Partners: Parks & Rec Dept, Watershed Protection Dept, Urban Forestry, Austin Parks Foundation, Austin ISD, Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin, EcoRise, PEAS

Nature Play. Activate city parks, natural areas, and recreation centers through nature-based play elements

- Key Partners: Parks & Rec Dept, Austin Nature & Science Center, Zilker Botanic Gardens, Urban Patchwork

Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments (OLE). Improve outdoor spaces at childcare centers to enable 0 - 5-year olds to be active, learn in nature, and develop motor skills

- Key Partners: Parks & Rec Dept, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, UTHealth, ACC Lab School, Dept. of State Health Services

Youth Leadership. Elevate youth voices and create a pipeline for youth, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities, to nature-based professions through training, networking, and mentorship

- Key Partners: Parks & Rec Dept, Development Services Dept, Keep Austin Beautiful, El Ranchito, Austin Youth River Watch

Nature Smart Libraries. Foster connections to nature through stories, experiences, and resources to promote curiosity and environmental literacy.

- Key Partners: Parks & Rec Dept, City of Austin Libraries, Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center

HOW YOU CAN HELP



PARTNER with the city and other organizations to maximize city resources to reach even more kids!



COLLABORATE by joining a committee, attending meeting, or making critical city connections to expand opportunities.



SIGN Austin's *Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights*:
<http://austintexas.gov/online-form/austin-childrens-outdoor-bill-rights>

GET CONNECTED:

Visit us online at <http://austintexas.gov/department/cities-connecting-children-nature-initiative>
For more information, contact Melody Alcazar (melody.alcazar@austintexas.gov or 512-974-9466)