

IMAGINEAUSTON

SPEAKER SERIES

Partnering with Community Leaders: Equity-Focused Approaches to Community Engagement for the Rain to River Strategic Plan update



Thanks for coming tonight!

We'll start with the instructions for language access.

¡Gracias por venir esta noche!
Comenzaremos con las instrucciones para
la interpretación de idiomas.





IMAGINEAUSTON

Vibrant. Livable. Connected.



Rain to River

A Strategic Plan to Protect Austin's Creeks & Communities

Un plan estratégico para proteger los arroyos y comunidades de Austin

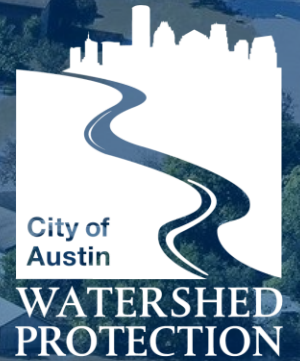
Sari Albornoz, Planner – Sari.Albornoz@austintexas.gov
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www.RainToRiverATX.com



Watershed Protection Department



MISSION

The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) protects the lives, property, and environment of our community by reducing the impact of flooding, erosion, and water pollution.



What is the Strategic Plan?

CITY OF AUSTIN

WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

**GUIDING BLUEPRINT
FOR DEPARTMENT**

**EVALUATION
FRAMEWORK**

**COMMUNICATION
TOOL**



What are our goals for the update?

Reflect the vision and values of our community

Incorporate equity and climate resilience

Be informative and accessible



Engagement Approach

RESPECTFUL TO PARTICIPANTS

ADAPTIVE PROCESS

FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIPS



Priority Stakeholders

- Under-served groups
- Impacted groups
- Organizations with relevant expertise

And reach representative sample of the Austin community



Engagement Strategies

PRIORITY STAKEHOLDERS

- Community Ambassadors (compensated)
- Partner Organizations (mini-grants)
- Focus groups (compensated)
- Participate in community meetings and events
- One-on-one meetings with community leaders

ALL STAKEHOLDERS

- Surveys
- Virtual open house
- Online educational event
- Partnerships with Councilmembers
- Paid advertisements
- Website and communications
- Environmental Commission input
- Commissions and Council review



Watershed Protection @A... · 7/1/22
 ¿Dónde quisiera ver proyectos y mejoramiento en los espacios naturales, arroyos, lagos, e infraestructura de drenaje de Austin? ¡Muéstralo a la Ciudad de Austin con esta encuesta y mapa interactivo! tinyurl.com/R2Resp



GAVA Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA) @GoAustinVamos

Take the Austin Watershed's Community Vision Survey below! Input will guide decision making tactics related to challenges like flooding and erosion.

Nature in the City @NatureC... · 4/6/22
 The City's @AustinWatershed is updating their "Rain to River" strategic plan to better protect creeks & communities over the next decade. They need your input! Visit RaintoRiverATX.com to learn more + register for the online kick-off event on April 19!

Watershed Protection liked **Vanessa Fuentes** @Vanes... · 19h
 Looking to get more involved in the community? Check out this neat ambassador opportunity!

Watershed Protecti... · 4/14/22
 Are you passionate about community engagement and looking for part-time work with flexible hours? We're hiring Community Ambassadors to gather the perspectives + experiences of historically excluded voices for our upcoming Rain to River plan



Share your vision for Austin's creeks and communities! ¡Comparta su visión para los arroyos y comunidades de Austin!

The City of Austin is creating a strategic plan to protect Austin's creeks and communities, and we want to hear from you! The Watershed Protection Department protects lives, property, and the environment by reducing the impacts of flooding, erosion, and water pollution. Your input will help prioritize our work and guide decision making to confront urgent challenges such as climate change and racial inequities.

La Ciudad de Austin está creando un plan estratégico para proteger los arroyos y las comunidades de Austin, y queremos conocer su opinión! El Departamento de Protección de Cuencas protege las vidas, las propiedades y el medio ambiente reduciendo el impacto de las inundaciones, la erosión y la contaminación del agua. Sus comentarios nos ayudarán a establecer prioridades en nuestro trabajo y a guiar nuestro proceso de toma de decisiones para atender retos urgentes, tales como el cambio climático y las inequidades raciales.



Take our survey and add to our map!
 ¡Participa en nuestra encuesta y añadir a nuestro mapa!
www.RaintoRiverATX.com



For questions, please contact:
 Si tiene preguntas, por favor comuníquese con:
raintoriverATX@austintexas.gov
 512-974-2237

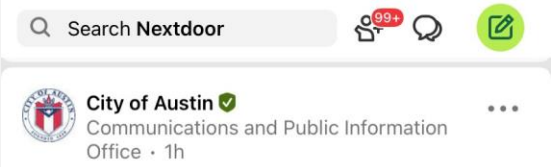


Become A Rain To River Ambassador

The City of Austin is updating its strategic plan to guide the work of the Watershed Protection Department for the next 10 years.

This plan (called Rain To River) will help the department figure out how to tackle urgent challenges, like the impact climate change, population growth, & racial inequities have on flooding & water pollution in our local streams.

The City of Austin is hiring Community Ambassadors to ensure a diverse array of voices are able to contribute to the plan. You can apply at raintoriveratx.com. (You can also contribute to the plan by filling out an online survey, if you don't feel the Community Ambassador position is right for you.)



Make an Impact on Your Community and Creeks! /
 Tenga un impacto en su comunidad y arroyos! Make an Impact on Your Community and Creeks!





Juneteenth Celebration at Rosewood Park



Rainbow on the Creek at Waterloo Park



Austin Chinese Culture Festival



Community Ambassador Program



- Timeframe: July–November 2022
- Full time coordinator for program
- Compensated \$25/hour for up to \$2500, including \$500 engagement budget
- Worked up to 80 hours
- Interviewed ~30 people and submitted monthly reports of findings
- Ambassador report coming Spring 2023





Community Ambassador, Faiz Baghezza, conducting outreach



Community Ambassadors share findings with Watershed Protection Department leaders at a Rain to River Steering Committee meeting



Community Ambassador offering participants refreshments and gift cards





Community Ambassador, Mirna Rodriguez, sharing about Rain to River with community members



Partner Organization Mini-Grant Program



- Timeframe: January–April 2023
- \$5,000 mini-grants awarded to six organizations
- Gathering qualitative data from community members using a variety of strategies

Partner Organizations:

- African American Youth Harvest Foundation
- Del Valle Community Coalition
- Dove Springs Proud
- Indigenous Cultures Institute
- Queertopia
- Red Salmon Arts





Queertopia volunteer and WPD staff assembling care packages for community members experiencing homelessness



Del Valle Community Coalition collecting data at a community event



What we've learned

- Successes
 - Significant insights from community input
 - Built robust network with community members
 - Education and awareness-building about WPD and other City services (esp. 311)
- Challenges
 - Administrative
 - Unforeseeable circumstances prevented some ambassadors from completing program
 - Challenge to get staff and Community Ambassadors in same room



What we've learned

- Lessons learned
 - Hiring a full time coordinator for the Community Ambassador program was wise
 - Maximize opportunities for ambassadors/organizations to collaborate and learn from each other
 - Provide balance of structure and flexibility
 - Incorporate ways for ambassadors/organizations to close communication loop with communities they engage



Meet the Panelists!

CITY OF AUSTIN

WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Rain to River
De la Lluvia al Río

**RAIN TO RIVER
COMMUNITY
AMBASSADOR**



Faiz Baghezza
CITY OF AUSTIN WATERSHED
PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Rain to River
De la Lluvia al Río

**RAIN TO RIVER
COMMUNITY
AMBASSADOR**



Mirna Rodriguez
CITY OF AUSTIN WATERSHED
PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Rain to River
De la Lluvia al Río

**RAIN TO RIVER
PARTNER ORGANIZATION:
QUEERTOPIA**



Danielle Reichman
CITY OF AUSTIN WATERSHED
PROTECTION DEPARTMENT





Members of an encampment on the way to a laundromat



Bringing warming shelters to the St. Johns Encampment



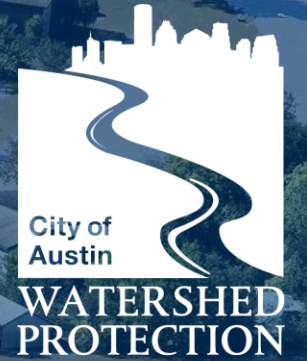
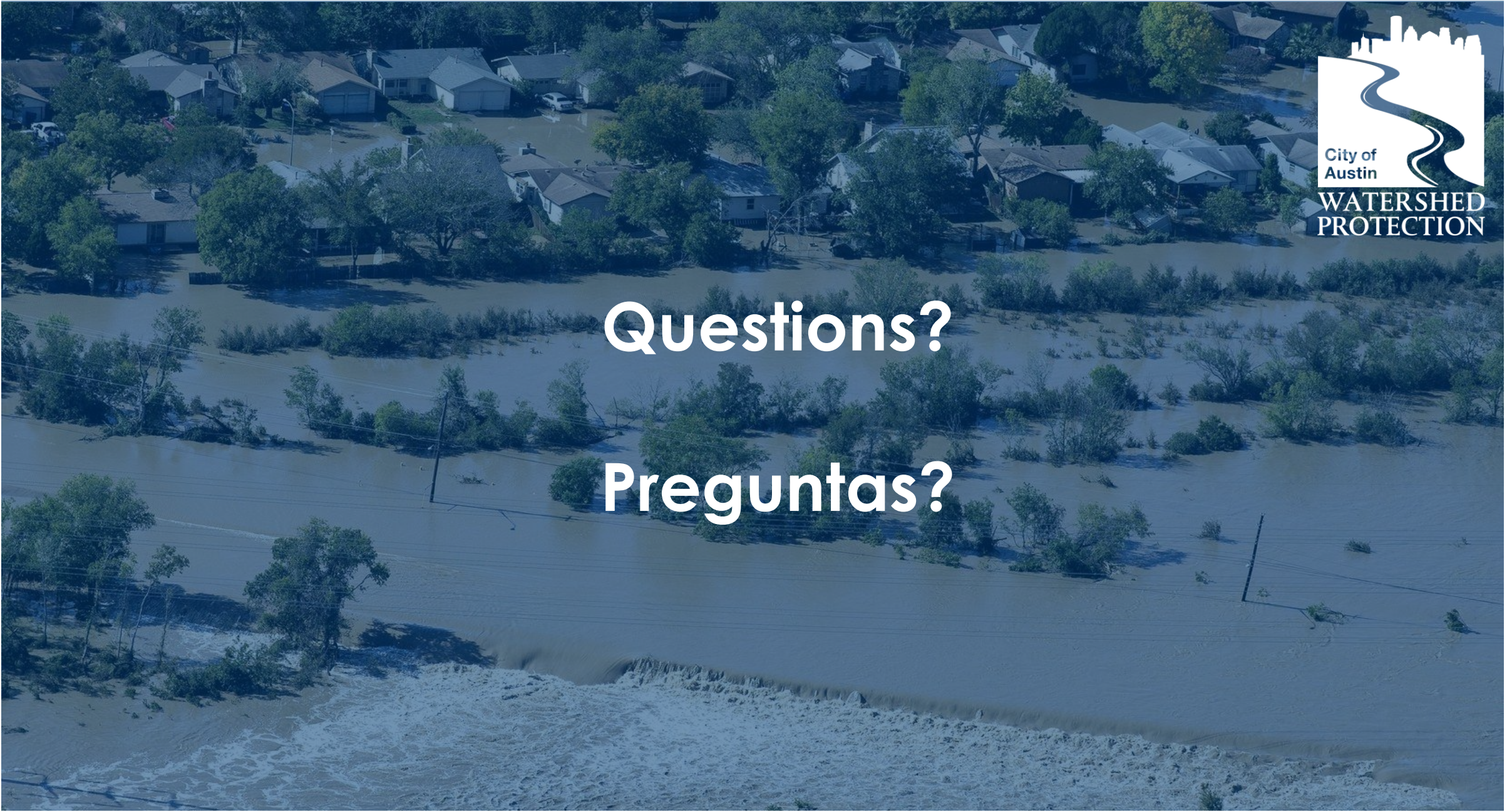
Queertopia encampment outside City Hall



Questions for Panelists

1. Why did you want to become a Rain to River Community Ambassador or Partner Organization?
2. What were a few common themes or topics you heard from the community members you talked with?
3. What issues related to flooding, erosion, or water quality are particularly important for people experiencing homelessness?
4. What do you want to see implemented in the Rain to River plan?





Questions?

Preguntas?

CITY OF AUSTIN

WATERSHED PROTECTION DEPARTMENT



Please make your voices heard: take the Rain to River survey by March 31!

www.RainToRiverATX.com



Thank you!
Gracias!



THANK YOU!

- Take the survey at bit.ly/IASsurvey
- Find out more about Imagine Austin Speaker Series at www.austintexas.gov/department/imagine-austin-speaker-series.

