

# Eastside Environmental News

A City of Austin Newsletter from the East Austin Environmental Initiative



JULY  
2012  
ISSUE 4

## Reconnecting a Community to the Creek: JJ Seabrook Stream Restoration and Rain Garden Project

**A** new project in East Austin will transform an unremarkable reach of Tannehill Branch into a thriving creek corridor that will benefit the environment and the local community. The JJ Seabrook Stream Restoration and Rain Garden Project goals include reducing pollution from urban runoff and restoring the ecology and stability of the stream system.

The project will include environmental features such as a restored channel, riparian parkland and woodland corridors, rain gardens, and bioswales. Bioswales are landscape features that use native vegetation to filter pollutants and regulate stormwater flows. It will have amenities like strategically placed boulder crossings and a greenbelt trail system that meanders with the creek to provide opportunities for exploration and leisurely strolls.

The project will remove a road that was cut through the park in the late 1960s to accommodate traffic from Robert Mueller Airport. Removing the roadway will create a unified park that has been divided for more than 40 years. It will bring the neighborhood together by creating a unique sense of place for the community to reconnect with the creek.



Tannehill Branch project will create riparian parkland and woodland corridor



Oscar Garza

### Field Notes...

As 2012 rushes past us, I am pleased to present the latest issue of our newsletter.

This issue highlights a couple of things the City is doing to bring positive changes to East Austin. It also highlights a couple of ways citizens can help improve their neighborhood.

*How is the City helping? The City of Austin's Colony Park Project plans to help a historically underserved East Austin community by creating a sustainable mixed-use, mixed-income community. Also, the JJ Seabrook Creek Restoration Project will bring some welcome changes to Tannehill Branch Creek in an East Austin neighborhood.*

*How can you help? Well, for one thing, think about taking advantage of the City's free paint offer. This allows one to reuse otherwise unwanted paint which helps the environment and improves your surroundings. If you're a do-it-yourself auto repair type, you can do your part by participating in the Shade Tree Mechanic program. Being responsible with auto fluid disposal helps preserve and protect the environment.*

*In order for us to improve what we do, we are soliciting feedback from the community. Please take a moment to fill out our East Austin Environmental Initiative survey and help us identify current environmental problems and interests in your neighborhood. As always, please feel free to contact me, Oscar Garza, at 512-974-1893 or email at [oscar.garza@austintexas.gov](mailto:oscar.garza@austintexas.gov).*

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*Pedestrian/bike bridge to replace roadway bridge pipes*

(continued from pg.1)

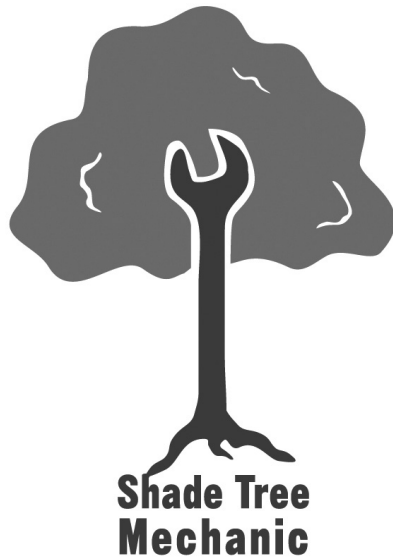
The JJ Seabrook Neighborhood has taken an active role in working with the City on the project plans. In fact, Watershed Protection Department (WPD) team members have attended monthly neighborhood meetings and park volunteer days to listen to the community's vision for the area. WPD has also used the neighborhood meetings as a forum for educational outreach. At one meeting, staff showed homeowners how to build a rain garden with the message, "there is strength in numbers – the more the community can build and take ownership of their watershed, the cleaner our local creeks will be." The partnership between the neighborhood and the City continues to grow, and neighbors are seeking opportunities to volunteer for planting days and assist with water quality monitoring.

For more information contact Kristin Kasper Pipkin at 512-974-2550

## Shade Tree Mechanic Program Helps Reduce Pollution

Are you one of those dying breed who likes to tinker with automobile repair? Don't mind getting grease under your fingernails? If so, you may qualify for being a part of the City's Shade Tree Mechanic Program. Whether changing motor oil or replacing an entire engine, Shade Tree mechanics know there's no better repair shop than your own garage.

The Shade Tree Mechanic Program is designed to help home mechanics be environmentally responsible. The program will help you properly dispose of motor oil, filters, batteries, antifreeze and tires, typically **free** of charge. You will receive a free five-gallon yellow bucket to store waste oil and other auto fluids. The bucket's lid is designed to be a drain pan for oil changes. When the bucket is full, you can take it to an auto parts stores or lube shop to be disposed of properly.



Improper disposal of used oil and other auto fluids pose a direct threat to the environment and can lead to costly cleanups that can impact everyone. Spilled fluids and improperly stored chemicals can travel to Austin's storm drains and flow into creeks. The oil from a single oil change can contaminate one MILLION gallons of fresh water!

Follow these tips to help reduce pollution:

- Never dispose of car fluids on the ground, in the trash, or in the storm drain.
- Use drip pans to catch leaking or drained fluids.
- Clean spills with an absorbent material such as kitty litter, sawdust or rag; dispose in your trash can.
- Recycle your motor oil, drained oil filters, spent solvent, antifreeze and car batteries. The City provides a list of drop-off locations. [www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-resource-recovery/locations](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-resource-recovery/locations)
- Place absorbent material or cardboard below your work area.
- Never use motor oil or gasoline to kill weeds.

For more information or to become a part of the Shade Tree Mechanic Program, call (512) 974-2550.



# EASTSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

## Free Paint from Austin Resource Recovery



Free paint is available to Austin and Travis County residents who are looking to save money when refurbishing their homes. Austin ReBlend, as the paint is called, is available to nonprofit organizations and to the public for individual projects. The paint is not available to contractors for commercial uses.

Austin ReBlend comes in two colors, Texas Limestone (off white) and Balcones Canyonland (dark beige). You can get the paint in either two or five gallon containers at the City of Austin's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facility. The facility is located at 2514 Business Center Dr. in Southeast Austin and is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. and every Saturday 7 a.m. – Noon.

Austin ReBlend is a 100 percent reused product. It is made from paint dropped off at the HHW facility. The paint collected is inspected before it is chosen to be used for Austin ReBlend. It is then consolidated, blended, filtered and packed by trained personnel to ensure a quality product. To date, the HHW has produced about 11,500 gallons of paint, which have been given to more than 600 participants.

Paint accounts for the majority of materials brought to the HHW. Taking your unwanted paint to HHW helps to keep it out of the landfill. Do not put liquid paint in the trash, down the drain or on the ground. Pouring it down the drain, dumping it on the ground, or putting it in the trash can be harmful to the environment. If you buy the right amount of paint, it saves you money and eliminates the need for storage or disposal. To learn more about properly disposing of paint, how to determine how much paint you need for a project, and for more information about Austin ReBlend, visit [www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-reblend](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-reblend).

## Innovative Community Plan - Colony Park Sustainable Community Pilot Project

The beginning of this year marked some welcome news for the historically underserved community of Colony Park. Mayor Lee Leffingwell and other city officials announced a \$3 million grant awarded to the City of Austin from the U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Austin was one of twenty seven cities chosen nationwide to receive the HUD Community Challenge grant. The grant will help improve economic development and increase economic competitiveness by connecting housing with transportation, job centers and quality schools in East Austin.

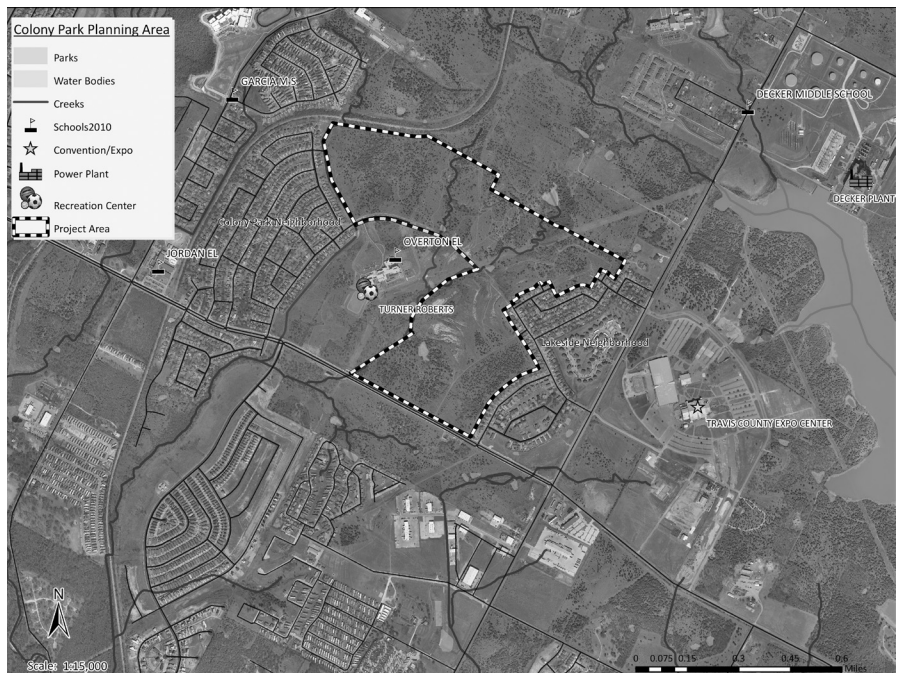
The Community Challenge grant will be used to create a master plan for development of 208 acres of vacant land in the Colony Park community. The master plan will incorporate strategies for energy efficient building design, water conservation and Zero Waste technology. The vision is to create a model for a sustainable and livable mixed-use, mixed-income community in East Austin.

The development of the master plan will be led by the City's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office in partnership with the Austin Housing Finance Corp. (AHFC). AHFC will serve as the master developer of the site and as a builder for a portion of the housing. AHFC anticipates partnering with other entities to develop single-family and multi-family housing.

The grant will accelerate already existing private investments in the Colony Park area. The City's investment in this area over the last decade includes a new recreation center, widening and reconstruction of Loyola Lane, and increased animal-control efforts.

The goal is to improve the quality of life for Colony Park. This will be accomplished through a public-private partnership that creates a thriving neighborhood and offers affordable housing for mixed-income families, shopping amenities, and interconnectivity with viable transportation options.

For more information contact Zachary Stern at (512) 974-3155 or email [zach.stern@austintexas.gov](mailto:zach.stern@austintexas.gov) (512) 974-3155 or email [colonypark@austintexas.gov](mailto:colonypark@austintexas.gov).



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# EASTSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS



## Where to Call for Pollution Information & Assistance

### CITY OF AUSTIN NUMBERS

General non-emergency  
311

Health & Human Services Department  
512-972-5600

Austin Clean Water Partners Program  
512-974-2550

East Austin Environmental Initiative  
512-974-1893

Pollution Hotline (24 Hr.)  
512-974-2550

Household Hazardous Waste program  
512-974-4343

Public Information Office  
512-974-2220

Solid Waste Services Customer Service  
512-494-9400

Stormwater Drainage/Erosion Complaints  
512-974-3355

Austin Water Utility  
(sewage complaints 24 Hr.)  
512-972-1000

Zoning and Building Use Complaints  
512-974-2875

Austin Brownfield Revitalization Office  
512-974-1954

### OTHER NUMBERS

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
512-339-2929

Lower Colorado River Authority  
512-473-3307

### CITY OF AUSTIN ELECTED OFFICIALS

Mayor Lee Leffingwell 512-974-2250

Mayor Pro Tem Mike Martinez 512-974-2264

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

Chris Riley 512-974-2260

Laura Morrison 512-974-2258

Randi Shade 512-974-2255

Bill Spellman 512-974-2256

Sheryl Cole 512-974-2266

## The East Austin Environmental Initiative Wants To Hear From You!

The East Austin Environmental Initiative is asking you to take a moment and fill out our online survey. This survey is an effort to open lines of communication and receive feedback from the East Austin community.

The Initiative's goal is to increase awareness and develop community interest in pollution prevention and environmental protection in a part of Austin valued for its rich history and beautiful natural resources such as the Oak Springs Preserve and the Colorado River Park. This program strives to help the East Austin community resolve environmental issues and problems by focusing the City's environmental resources.

For the Initiative to continue to be successful, we must build upon the partnership between City government and the East Austin community. Maintaining dialogue between City staff, neighborhoods, and businesses is crucial to our effort. Working closely with the community allows us to be more responsive to the environmental issues facing East Austin, as well as creates opportunities for citizens to get involved in developing solutions.

To take our survey, log in to:

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/EastAustinEnvironment](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/EastAustinEnvironment)

and let us know what you think. Please only one survey per person.

## Community Corner

**Question:** "How can the City of Austin help you address pollution concerns in East Austin?"



1) "The city should educate the public about improperly maintained vehicles that leak automotive fluids; this is evident on most of the parking lots in East Austin."

-- Sohail A. Lodhia (East 1st Grocery- Owner)



2) "The city should be more vigilant about illegal dumping of trash and hazardous waste in private use dumpsters."

--Maria Luisa Mendoza (Mr. Natural- Manager)



3) "There is a problem with cans and bottles being thrown to the curb and ending up in the stormdrain."

--Bhupal G.K. (El Aguacate Food Mart- Employee)

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