

Neighborhood Resource Guide 2001

The third edition of the **Neighborhood Resource Guide** has been updated to reflect organizational changes in several City departments.¹ Our hope is that the 2001 Guide will make it easier for individuals and neighborhood groups to locate the department or organization that can best meet their needs.

Austin is an active community that thrives on the ideas of its citizens. The City invites you to participate in decision-making by attending meetings of the City of Austin's Boards and Commissions. More than 500 citizens serve on over sixty (60) Council-appointed Boards and Commissions. All of these meetings are open to the public and all citizens are invited to attend and provide input. For more information, contact the City Clerk's Office at 974-2210. To find out more about City services and activities you can also access the City Web Page at

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us>.

We have made every effort to provide accurate, current information, however, if you find an error please notify the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning staff at 974-7668 or e-mail us your comments at

neighborhood.planning@ci.austin.tx.us.

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Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department

¹ This version was updated March 2002.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION	1
HOW DO I ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?	1
HOW DO WE REGISTER OUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION OR REPORT A CHANGE OF OUR ASSOCIATION OFFICERS?	1
I AM INTERESTED IN HAVING A BLOCK PARTY IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD	1
WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT A DISPUTE WITH A NEIGHBOR?	2
NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION	5
HOW CAN I GET A BUS STOP MOVED OR ADDED IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?	5
CAN MY NEIGHBORHOOD GET A RESIDENTIAL PARKING PERMIT RESTRICTION?	5
HOW CAN I GET SPEED HUMPS ON MY STREET?	5
WHO SHOULD I CALL TO REPORT A BROKEN TRAFFIC SIGNAL?	5
WHO DO I CALL TO REPORT A MISSING STOP SIGN?	5
MY NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS A STOP SIGN INSTALLED—WHERE DO WE CALL?	5
HOW CAN WE HAVE A ‘CHILDREN AT PLAY’ SIGN INSTALLED IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD?	6
WHO DO I CALL TO REPAIR A POT HOLE ON MY STREET?	6
WHAT CAN BE DONE WHEN PLANTS OR TREES BLOCK THE VISIBILITY AT AN INTERSECTION OR ARE HANGING IN THE STREET?	6
NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY	7
HOW CAN I START A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP?	7
WHAT CAN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD DO ABOUT GRAFFITI?	7
HOW CAN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD GET MORE STREETLIGHTS?	7
WHO DO I CALL TO TRIM THE TREE GROWING INTO MY POWER LINE?	8
NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT AND APPEARANCE	9
HOW CAN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP?	9
WHO DO I CALL TO HAVE A VACANT LOT OR MY NEIGHBOR’S YARD CLEANED UP?	9
HOW DO I GET A JUNK CAR REMOVED FROM MY NEIGHBOR’S PROPERTY?	9
HOW DO I GET AN ABANDONED CAR REMOVED FROM MY STREET?	10
WHERE CAN I DISPOSE OF CAR OIL AND HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS?	10
HOW TO GET TO THE NEW HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FACILITY	11
WHERE DO I CALL TO REPORT A CHEMICAL SPILL?	11
WHO DO I CALL TO REPORT POLLUTION, FLOODING, OR DRAINAGE PROBLEMS IN THE CREEK IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?	11
WHAT IS THE EAST AUSTIN ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE?	11
WHAT IS MY SOLID WASTE SERVICE PICK-UP DAY?	12
WHO CAN I CALL TO BEGIN CURBSIDE RECYCLING?	12
WHAT CAN I RECYCLE?	12
I LIVE IN AN APARTMENT AND WANT TO RECYCLE. WHERE IS MY NEAREST RECYCLING DROP-OFF LOCATION?	13
WHAT ARE YARD TRIMMINGS AND WHEN ARE THEY COLLECTED?	13
HOW SHOULD YARD TRIMMINGS BE PREPARED FOR COLLECTION?	14
WHAT ELSE CAN I DO WITH MY YARD TRIMMINGS?	14
WHAT CAN BE COLLECTED AND HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR LARGE BRUSH COLLECTION?	14

WHEN IS MY NEIGHBORHOOD SCHEDULED FOR BULKY ITEM COLLECTION AND WHAT CAN I SET OUT AT THE CURB FOR COLLECTION?.....	15
WHERE CAN I TAKE BULKY ITEMS AND OTHER SOLID WASTE BETWEEN PICKUPS?.....	16
WHEN IS MY STREET GOING TO BE CLEANED?.....	16
WHAT ARE THE DEAD ANIMAL PICK-UP PROCEDURES?.....	16
NEIGHBORHOODS, PLANNING, AND ZONING	19
WHAT IS NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING?.....	19
WHAT IS ZONING?.....	19
HOW CAN I FIND OUT WHAT THE ZONING IS ON MY PROPERTY?.....	20
WHAT IS A NONCONFORMING USE?.....	20
WHAT IS CODE ENFORCEMENT?.....	20
DOES THE CITY ENFORCE HOMEOWNER COVENANTS OR DEED RESTRICTIONS?.....	21
CAN MANUFACTURED HOMES BE BUILT IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?.....	21
HOW DO I FIND OUT IF MY PROPERTY IS ZONED HISTORIC OR LOCATED IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT?.....	21
HOW DO I OBTAIN A BUILDING PERMIT IF MY PROPERTY IS DESIGNATED A CITY HISTORIC LANDMARK (HISTORICALLY-ZONED) OR IS IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT?.....	22
CAN I OPERATE A BUSINESS FROM MY HOME?.....	22
MY NEIGHBOR OPERATES A BUSINESS FROM HER HOME AND THE TRAFFIC IS CAUSING PROBLEMS.	23
WHAT IS A BUILDING PERMIT?.....	23
WHEN DO I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT?.....	24
WHAT SIZE FENCE CAN I BUILD?.....	25
HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF MY PROPERTY IS WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS?.....	25
HOW CAN I FIND OUT THE ADDRESS OF A PARTICULAR PROPERTY?.....	25
WHERE CAN I CALL TO FIND OUT THE DIMENSIONS OF MY PROPERTY?.....	26
I NEED A MAP OF MY NEIGHBORHOOD. WHERE CAN I GET MAPS?.....	26
I HAVE A QUESTION THAT YOU DID NOT ANSWER. HOW CAN I GET IT ANSWERED NOW OR WHERE CAN I SEND IT SO THAT IT CAN BE INCLUDED NEXT TIME?.....	27
INDEX OF HELPFUL NUMBERS	28

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

How do I organize a neighborhood association?

Before organizing a new neighborhood association, check for existing associations in and around your neighborhood. To discover the names and boundaries of existing associations and contact information within these organizations, call the City of Austin Public Information Office (PIO) at 974-2220. Information such as the names and contact numbers for current civic leaders such as the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) or other groups that can provide valuable advice is also available.

If you and your neighbors decide to organize your own neighborhood association, consider the following:

- Avoid overlapping boundaries with another neighborhood association.
- Widely distribute information throughout the neighborhood about the new association's first meeting.
- Include everyone that lives or owns property within the association's boundaries as a potential member.
- Identify regular meeting time and place.
- Elect officers and adopt by-laws. The Public Information Office has copies of other association's by-laws to assist in writing those for the new organization.
- Keep everyone informed about association activities. A newsletter or a Web site are two ways to inform your neighborhood about the association's activities.

The City of Austin's Web site, **Austin City Connection**, provides a great deal of information about different neighborhood groups. The Web site is located at

www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighbor/default.htm.

This Web page includes an easy-to-use interactive database of hundreds of neighborhood and community groups. On the same page, you can read **At Your Doorstep**, the City of Austin's newsletter for neighborhoods.

How do we register our neighborhood association or report a change of our association officers?

Call the City of Austin Public Information Office (PIO) at 974-2220.

I am interested in having a block party in my neighborhood.

If you want to close a portion of a public street for a block party, you must obtain a permit from the City of Austin. The application for a permit must be submitted at least twenty-four (24) days in advance of the event. The applicant must provide several items.

- Proof of notification of residents affected by the street closure
- Liability insurance

- Traffic control signs and barricades to close the street
- Licensed security agent
- Trash containers
- Toilet facilities

For more information, call the City of Austin's Transportation, Planning, and Sustainability Department (TPAS) at 974-7255.

What can I do about a dispute with a neighbor?

Your next door neighbor's tree is hitting your roof and she refuses to trim it. The neighbor across the street plays loud music at 3:00 AM on a weeknight. Another neighbor constructed his new fence on your property, and when watering his plants, he also waters your car. These are common disagreements between neighbors and handling these disagreements can be a delicate issue. Mediation is an effective technique that can help resolve both large and small problems.

During mediation, people involved in a dispute sit down and find their own solutions with the help of a mediator. This individual is a neutral third party and is trained in techniques to help people resolve their complaints.

Mediation can solve both small and large disagreements. The choice to enter into mediation shows that both parties

- Want to resolve their conflict
- Want to make their own decision or outcome (as opposed to a judicial decision)
- Want to maintain confidentiality.

Some common issues that are often covered in mediations between neighbors are

- Pets
- Harassment
- Property boundaries
- Vandalism
- Noise
- Money issues
- Cross-cultural conflicts
- Improper use of property (unauthorized auto repair, day care, etc.).

The City of Austin currently does not have staff mediators for neighborhood disputes. Below are two sources for more information about mediation in Austin:

Dispute Resolution Center (non-profit, community resource for conflict resolution)

(512) 371-0033

5407 N IH35, # 410

Austin, Texas 78723

Austin Association of Mediators

For a free listing of mediators in the area call (512) 476-7226

Or look at their Web site at

www.mediators.net

The City of Austin has a pilot program to assist in mediation of some land development projects. The goal of this program is to work out the issues between developers and neighborhoods or other interest groups that result in a positive project for all concerned parties. For more information on this program contact:

Tracy Watson
Director, Special Projects
(512) 974-2352.

NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

How can I get a bus stop moved or added in my neighborhood?

Moving a bus stop in your neighborhood involves a couple of steps. Provide Capital Metro the locations of the current and proposed stops. Capital Metro will review the request and evaluate the new location for safety.

To add a bus stop, Capital Metro suggests gathering signatures from neighborhood residents on a petition supporting a bus stop in the neighborhood. Submit the petition and a formal request for the bus stop to Capital Metro. The agency's planning department will schedule a meeting with the neighborhood to discuss the issue. For more information, contact Capital Metro at 385-0190.

Can my neighborhood get a residential parking permit restriction?

The Residential Parking Permit (RPP) Program limits on-street parking in certain neighborhoods to residents and their guests. Each household on a street where the RPP Program is in effect is allowed four (4) parking permits. Generally, this is a combination of two (2) resident-parking stickers and two (2) visitor hang-tags. Only residents will be eligible to purchase the parking stickers and hang tags. For more information, contact the Transportation, Planning, and Sustainability Department at 974-7129.

How can I get speed humps on my street?

The Traffic Calming Program works to reduce high speed and traffic volumes in residential areas and to improve pedestrian safety. However, due to budget constraints, no new Neighborhood Traffic Calming studies are planned for fiscal year 2001-2002.

For more information, contact the Transportation, Planning, and Sustainability Department at 974-7129.

Who should I call to report a broken traffic signal?

Citizens can report broken street signals to the Public Works Department. The response time is normally within an hour for an inspector to check out the problem. However, depending on the severity (downed pole, flashing lights), repair could range from a couple of hours to a week. Damaged signals from heavy storms may take even longer to repair. To report broken street signals, call 457-4851.

Who do I call to report a missing stop sign?

Report a downed or missing street sign to the Public Works Department. If the missing sign creates a dangerous situation, such as a missing or damaged stop or yield sign, it will be replaced within two hours. Street signs and information signs are inspected within two days. Other replacement may take four to six weeks. For more information, call 457-4851.

My neighborhood needs a stop sign installed—where do we call?

To determine if a stop sign is needed, at least one of the following conditions must be met

- Heavy traffic
- Poor visibility
- A pattern of accidents

- A location near a school.

Residents can call the Transportation, Planning, and Sustainability Department for a service representative to monitor the location. If the location poses imminent danger, a sign will be installed quickly; otherwise, it takes approximately three (3) weeks. For more information, call 974-7129.

How can we have a 'Children at Play' sign installed in our neighborhood?

Studies show that many types of signs attempting to warn of “normal” conditions in residential areas do not achieve the desired safety benefits. Although some agencies have posted such signs in residential areas, there is no indication that these signs reduce accidents or slow drivers. If such signs encourage parents and children to believe there is an added degree of protection—the public safety is not being served. As a practical consideration, children should not be encouraged to play in the street. This signage has been rejected since it is a direct and open suggestion that this behavior is safe.

Because of these serious considerations, State and Federal standards prohibit the use of "Children at Play" signs. Specific warnings for schools, playgrounds, parks and other recreational facilities are available where clearly justified.

Who do I call to repair a pothole on my street?

Anyone can report potholes to the Department of Public Works and Transportation. Once the call is received, an inspector will be sent to look at the pothole and evaluate the urgency of the repair. The pothole is then put on a repair list in order of priority.

Citizens can also report when street surfaces or conditions are considered dangerous and a possible threat to public safety. Hazardous conditions are

- Items in the roadway
- Oil spills
- Guard/bridge rail damage of any kind
- Excessive rocks and debris on the street.

An inspector will check the site and estimate when the hazard will be removed. Minor repairs are usually completed within five days. Major repairs may take months—depending on the situation. To report potholes or other hazardous conditions call 440-8444.

What can be done when plants or trees block the visibility at an intersection or are hanging in the street?

The City Code prohibits the owner or occupant of any corner lot from planting a bush, shrubbery, or any other plant taller than two feet on any street corner. A corner includes all property within ten feet of the curbline, for a distance of forty (40) feet from the street corner. If there is a location where visibility is obstructed due to plants or trees, contact the owner or occupant of the property and request that the plants or trees be trimmed back. If this does not work or does not apply to your situation, report blind corners, mid-block obstructions, weeds on the right-of-way or in the median to the Parks and Recreation Department at 440-5150.

NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

How can I start a Neighborhood Watch group?

Participation in a Neighborhood Watch Program can help reduce crime in your area. The Austin Police Department (APD) will meet with your neighborhood group or organization and provide information on personal and property crime. This information also includes how to reduce your chances of becoming a crime victim. For more information, contact the APD's Community Liaison at 459-1877.

What can our neighborhood do about graffiti?

The Austin Police Department's Gang Suppression Unit defines graffiti as "gang advertisement." Graffiti should not be taken lightly and must be removed immediately.

The Austin City Council passed a graffiti ordinance to encourage the community to work in partnership with the City to clean up and prevent graffiti. Graffiti has less chance of reappearing if removed quickly. When graffiti appears, the ordinance requires that the owner remove the graffiti quickly or call the City's graffiti coordinator for assistance. The City also is responsible for removing graffiti from its property (public buildings, signs, utility boxes). Keep in mind that graffiti must be removed in a way that does not create polluting discharges of paint or cleaning agents.

To report graffiti or to become involved in the community effort in Austin, call the Graffiti Hotline at 854-4125. To report gang activity, call the Gang Hotline at 974-5261.

How can our neighborhood get more streetlights?

Good street lighting is often a deterrent to crime. If more light is needed to make the roadways, alleyways, and sidewalks in your neighborhood safer, you can request streetlights from Austin Energy. Anyone living inside the Austin City limits may request streetlights by their property. Austin Energy will survey the area to determine if additional street or alley lighting is required and the best location for such lighting. For a premium upgrade, Austin Energy offers ten different styles of decorative post-top lighting. In addition, Austin Energy can provide Nightwatchman lights. These lights are similar to streetlights, but can be installed for lighting your property or business. Nightwatchman lights can also be used for lighting public or private areas that are outside the city limits but inside the Austin Energy service area.

For more information or requests for new streetlights or Nightwatchman lights, or billing inquiries, call the Austin Energy Illumination Section at 505-7602 or 505-7543. To report a problem with streetlights or Nightwatchman lights please call 505-7617 or send us an e-mail at

lightingrepair@austinenergy.com.

Please include your name, address, daytime telephone number and the location of the streetlight in need of repair. Repairs are completed in five working days or less.

Who do I call to trim the tree growing into my power line?

The Electric Utility Department offers a tree-trimming program that reduces the number of power outages in its service area due to fallen tree limbs. The system operates in four-year cycles. It is designed to trim limbs that can damage critical electrical equipment and cause service interruptions for you and your neighbors. In addition to the regular tree-trimming program, the Electric Utility Department accepts special requests for trimming tree limbs away from power lines. If you have trees on your property that are growing over or into electrical equipment, call the Electric Utility Department at 494-9400 for assistance.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT AND APPEARANCE

How can our neighborhood organize a neighborhood clean-up?

Neighborhoods can contact **Keep Austin Beautiful** for assistance in organizing a neighborhood clean-up. They provide education to neighborhood groups and organizations about keeping their communities clean. They provide residents with a **Keep Austin Beautiful Clean-Up Kit** that includes trash bags and gloves. Advance planning and coordination is recommended in order to ensure successful clean-ups. For more information call 974-3577.

The Environmental Health Services Division of the Health and Human Services Department also provides neighborhood clean-up assistance if pests are involved. For more information on these services, call the Rodent and Vector Control Program at 972-2015.

Who do I call to have a vacant lot or my neighbor's yard cleaned up?

The fastest way to have vacant property cleaned up is for you or the neighborhood to clean it up. Sometimes a vacant lot just needs mowing and a neighbor can take care of it faster than the City.

Residents can report high weeds or trash on vacant or occupied property to the Solid Waste Services Code Compliance at 494-9400. The City requires that an owner, tenant, resident or person in charge of any property within the City keep that property free from

"...stagnant water, weeds and grass over 12 inches high, rubbish, garbage, brush, trash or any other objectionable, unsightly or unsanitary matter of whatsoever nature."

After a complaint is made, Solid Waste Services begins the process by sending an inspector to investigate possible Code violations. If problems are found, the property owner is informed by a "Notice of Violation" and given seven days to resolve the problem. Usually owners will respond and no further action is required, but sometimes the violation is not corrected.

When this happens on vacant property, the City will clean it at the owner's expense. If the property is occupied, criminal charges are filed in Municipal Court. Fines can vary between \$50 and \$2000. The length of time before the problem is taken care of can vary.

If a problem reoccurs, you may report the property again.

How do I get a junk car removed from my neighbor's property?

A junk car parked on private property and visible from the street is considered a "public nuisance." A junk car is defined as having an expired license plate or inspection sticker and is wrecked, dismantled or otherwise visually inoperative.

If junk cars are a problem, the first step should always be a friendly request to your neighbor to remove the car(s). If this does not work, report junk cars by calling the Austin Police Department (APD) at 837-6078. A "ten-day notice" is placed on the vehicle giving the property owner a specified time limit to move the vehicle, correct the vehicle's condition, or request a hearing through Municipal Court. If the owner does not respond, the vehicle will be impounded by APD within 20 to 30 days.

The Police Department also will haul away abandoned vehicles from your own private property when left there without your consent. You, or the property owner, must sign an affidavit stating that the vehicle has been on the property for more than seventy-two (72) hours and give the Police Department permission to tow the vehicle. It normally takes about three (3) to five (5) days before the vehicle is removed. There is no charge for this service.

How do I get an abandoned car removed from my street?

Residents can call the Austin Police Department at 837-6078 to report an abandoned vehicle parked in the street or on other public property. An abandoned vehicle is:

- Inoperative, over five (5) years old and left unattended on public property for more than seventy-two (72) hours
- Illegally left on public property for more than seventy-two (72) hours
- Parked on private property without consent for more than seventy-two (72) hours.

APD will place a ticket and a notice of abandonment sticker on the vehicle. If the car is not removed within forty-eight (48) hours, it is put on a list to be towed. Once listed, the car will be removed within three to four days.

Where can I dispose of car oil and household chemicals?

Residents can dispose of household chemicals at the City of Austin's Household Hazardous Waste Facility located at 2514 Business Center Drive. The facility is open every Tuesday and Wednesday from noon to 7:00 PM, with very few exceptions. You must be a City of Austin or Travis County resident to use the facility. For more information and directions, call the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility at 974-4343.

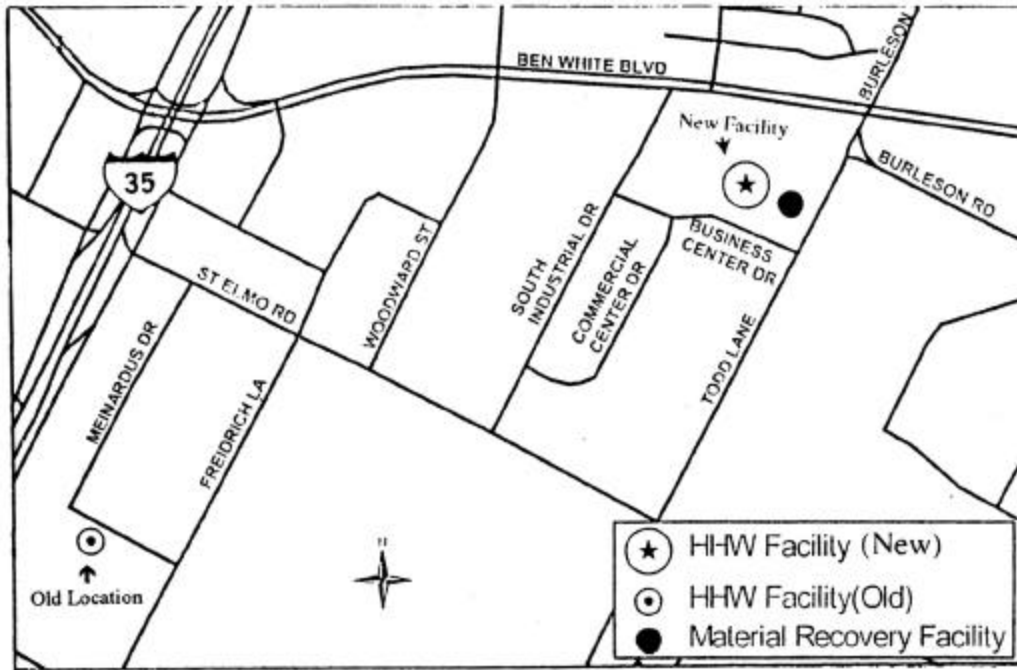
The Facility accepts HOUSEHOLD quantities of

- Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers
- Paints and thinners
- Gasoline, antifreeze, motor oil, oil filters and other automotive products
- Household and car batteries
- Cleaners
- Aerosol cans
- Pool chemicals
- Photographic chemicals
- Fluorescent bulbs
- Propane tanks.

Small quantities of wastes generated by small businesses may be accepted by appointment only. For more information or to make an appointment call 974-4334.

The Facility **WILL NOT** accept

- Unlabeled or unidentified materials
- Radioactive or biologically active materials
- Explosives and ammunition
- Pressurized gas cylinders



- Waste generated by businesses or industry.

How to get to the New Household Hazardous Waste Facility

Where do I call to report a chemical spill?

If you witness a chemical spill or chemicals being dumped onto the ground or into a creek, call the Spill and Complaint Response team. Inspectors are on-call twenty-four (24) hours a day to respond to complaints about potentially hazardous chemical spills.

If the spill possibly constitutes an immediate health or safety risk, please call **911**. The Austin Fire Department hazardous materials team responds to calls involving spills that may pose health or safety risks.

To report dumping or a spill of non-hazardous materials, call the Watershed Protection Department's twenty-four (24) hour hotline at 974-2550.

Who do I call to report pollution, flooding, or drainage problems in the creek in my neighborhood?

To report pollution problems contact the Watershed Protection Department's twenty-four (24) hour environmental hotline at 974-2550.

To report flooding or drainage problems in your neighborhood, contact the Watershed Protection and Development Review Department at 974-3366.

What is the East Austin Environmental Initiative?

The East Austin Environmental Initiative (EAEI) is a City of Austin program that provides information about East Austin environmental issues, projects the Initiative is working on, and how the City of Austin can work with you to protect your environment. It publishes the newsletter

Eastside Environmental News. Call Chuck Lesniak at 974-2699 for more information or to request a copy of the current issue.

What is my solid waste service pick-up day?

Garbage, recycling and yard trimmings are collected on the same day. The collection schedule varies across the City. To find out the collection schedule for your neighborhood, call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

Place your garbage cart at the curb or on the edge of the street by 7:30 AM on the morning of your weekly garbage collection day. Please remove your cart from the curb by 10:00 PM on collection day. It is helpful to collection crews if you position your cart with the handle towards the street. To prevent damage to your property, place your cart about five (5) feet away from all possible obstacles, including your recycling bin, yard trimmings, parked cars, walls, fences, mail boxes, telephone connection boxes, water meters, and low hanging tree limbs or power lines. The automatic trucks need 14 feet of overhead clearance.

Any garbage that does not fit in your City of Austin garbage cart must be bagged and tagged with an "Extra Garbage" Sticker. If the cart lid will not close completely, you will need to bag the extra garbage and use the "Extra Garbage" Stickers. The Stickers cost \$2.00 each, plus tax, and are available in many grocery and convenience stores. The garbage bags can be no larger than forty (40) gallons and cannot weigh more than fifty (50) pounds. "Extra Garbage" Stickers are not required for recyclable material placed at the curb for recycling collection or for yard trimmings that are put in Kraft paper grass and leaf bags or a small reusable container less than 33 gallons.

Who can I call to begin curbside recycling?

The City of Austin provides curbside recycling service to all its residential garbage customers. Approximately 141,000 residences are serviced each week. If you do not have a recycling bin, you can get one at any City of Austin Fire Station. Fire station hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Remember to bring along a current City of Austin utility statement to receive your recycling bin. To find out the collection schedule for your neighborhood, call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

What can I recycle?

Many household items that once went into landfills can be recycled.

- Newspapers
- Magazines and shopping catalogs
- Junk mail and home office paper
- Tin/steel cans, glass bottles and jars
- Aluminum cans
- Flattened plastic bottles with a # 1 or # 2 on the bottom
- Corrugated cardboard.

Recycling is easy! Here's how.

Plastic, Metal Cans

- Fill your recycling bin with rinsed aluminum & tin/steel food cans, glass bottles and jars, and flattened plastic bottles with a # 1 or # 2 on the bottom. To avoid foul odors and insect problems, rinse your containers before depositing them in the recycling bin. This is especially important during the warm weather months.
- Rinse and remove lids and caps from containers—labels do not need to be removed.
- Place your full recycling container at the curb (separate from garbage and yard trimmings) by 7:30 AM on your designated Solid Waste Services pickup day.

Newspaper, Magazines, Catalogs, Home Office Paper, Junk Mail

- Place newspaper (including inserts), magazines, shopping catalogs, junk mail and home office paper into a brown paper grocery bag.
- Set the paper bag next to your recycling bin.

Corrugated Cardboard

- Flatten boxes to less than three (3) feet on any side.
- Bundle cardboard with a string or tape and place next to your recycling bin.
- Brown paper grocery bags will be collected if bagged separately or bundled with cardboard.
- The City is not able to recycle pizza boxes, cereal boxes, or similar containers at this time.

Watch for rainy weather. If rain is forecasted, keep all paper recycling indoors until your next *dry* recycling pick-up day.

For more information on collection days and other ways to reduce the amount of garbage you are sending to the landfill call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

I live in an apartment and want to recycle. Where is my nearest recycling drop-off location?

The City of Austin does not collect solid waste or recycling from apartment buildings. However, apartments with over 100 units are required to provide recycling for their residents. For more information, contact your apartment manager or Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

Ecology Action runs a free recycling drop off location at Ninth Street & IH-35. Call 322-0000 for details.

What are yard trimmings and when are they collected?

Yard trimmings are

- Grass clippings
- Leaves
- Branches that are no longer than five (5) feet and no larger than three (3) inches in diameter.

Yard trimmings are **not**

- Garbage
- Lumber

- Logs and large tree limbs longer than five (5) feet or larger than three (3) inches in diameter
- Old garden hoses
- Broken flowerpots
- Dirt, soil, or rocks.

Yard trimmings are recyclable, so please do not contaminate them with garbage, or dump them in a drainage way or creek. Solid Waste Services collects yard trimmings on the same day as your garbage and recycling. Like the other two, trimmings must be at your curb by 7:30 AM. To assist in their pickup, please set your yard trimmings, garbage and recycling about five (5) feet apart.

How should yard trimmings be prepared for collection?

Place yard trimmings, such as grass clippings and leaves, in an old garbage can (no more than 33 gallons) or other small reusable container without sharp edges! You can use Kraft paper grass and leaf bags as well. These bags are available at local discount, grocery and hardware stores. Grass and leaf bags are large, brown, water-resistant paper bags that easily compost. Compost is a mixture consisting of decayed organic matter that is used for fertilizing or soil conditioning.

Do not use plastic bags for yard trimmings. They cannot be composted and will be charged extra for their collection as though they were extra garbage.

Place branches in bundles no larger than two (2) feet in diameter, and tie with string, rope or twine. Please do not use wire. If you place them in a reusable container, make sure the ends do not protrude by more than a foot.

Thorny yard trimmings are difficult for City crews to handle safely. Please wrap thorny branches in several layers of newspaper and label the bundles clearly as “thorns”.

When using an old garbage can, make sure the lid is tightly secured during rainy weather. Please do not use garbage containers larger than a thirty-five (33) gallon can and make sure it weighs no more than fifty (50) pounds when full. Limbs must not protrude over the top of the container by more than a foot.

The City composts yard trimmings into ‘**Dillo Dirt** and mulch. ‘**Dillo Dirt** is a natural soil enhancer used in landscaping City parks and sold to the public through local nurseries. It is made from composted sewage sludge and yard trimmings.

What else can I do with my yard trimmings?

Instead of bagging your grass when you mow, leave the clippings on the lawn. Your lawn recycles the clippings, returning natural moisture and nutrients to the soil. Backyard composting is another practical way to recycle yard trimmings into a good soil enhancer. For more information on composting, call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

What can be collected and how should I prepare for large brush collection?

Prior to large brush collection days, you will receive advance notice. Brush and tree limbs that are too large for regular yard trimming collection can be set out at the curb—not in the alley—

during special brush collections. The brush collection is for branches and brush only. This pick-up does not include yard trimmings, garbage or bulky objects.

Please note: The City is unable to collect bamboo, cactus, vines, rose bushes, or thorny vegetation, during brush collection because it interferes with the composting of brush into **'Dillo Dirt**.

Whenever possible, you should cut brush small enough to be included in your weekly yard trimming pick-up.

Brush should be between five (5) and fifteen (15) feet long and between three (3) and eight (8) inches in diameter. Any brush larger than this should be placed out during scheduled bulky item collection times. Please stack brush loosely in one row along the curb no more than 4 feet high or 15 feet long. The cut ends should face the street. Make sure your brush does not extend into the street. Do not tie or bind the brush together.

Do not set brush underneath low hanging branches or electrical wires and do not cover your water meter or obstruct your telephone connection box.

When is my neighborhood scheduled for bulky item collection and what can I set out at the curb for collection?

Bulky items are collected every seven (7) months and you will receive advanced notice of these special collections. Items must be properly separated and prepared for collection and set at your curb—not in the alley—by 7:30 AM. To find out when your neighborhood is scheduled, call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400.

Bulky items include

- Furniture
- Appliances
- Lawn mowers
- Passenger car tires removed from the rims (no more than 8 per household)
- Doors
- Pallets
- Rolled fencing
- Tree trunks larger than eight inches in diameter
- Railroad ties and utility poles cut down to two feet in length
- Lumber that is nail-free and tightly bound.

During the bulky item collection, the City **cannot** pick up

- Automotive chassis and bodies
- Motorcycles
- Trailers
- Boats
- Tires that are still mounted on rims
- Truck or tractor tires

- Hazardous materials
- Household trash
- Brush
- Construction and remodeling debris (this includes plywood, bricks, rocks, aggregate, cinder blocks, stone, concrete, mortar, sand, sheetrock/wall board, insulation, flooring, shingles, siding, steel roofing, sheet glass and mirrors); and
- Sheet glass

Sort your items into separate stacks: tires (off the rims), appliances, metal and non-metal objects. This allows these items to be recycled more easily. It may take more than a single day to collect these materials. Do not set items to be picked up under electrical wires or low-hanging trees. Do not block your mailbox, cover your water meter or lean objects against your telephone connection box.

Where can I take bulky items and other solid waste between pickups?

Most landfills will accept your bulky and household materials for disposal. Look in the phone book under landfills for the closest private landfill near you. The City of Austin landfill on FM 812 in southeast Austin accepts most bulky items as well as construction and demolition debris. The City of Austin landfill does not accept household garbage. For more information call 243-1200.

When is my street going to be swept?

Residential streets are swept regularly by the City's street cleaning crews. Curbed residential streets are swept on a rotational basis. Currently this is done six (6) times per year. Street sweepers operate Monday through Thursday between 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM. For information on the street sweeping schedule for your neighborhood, call 494-9400.

There are several things you can do to help the street sweepers be more effective.

- The street sweeping trucks need at least fourteen (14) feet of clearance above the street. Make sure limbs in your front yard that overhang the street are trimmed to this height or greater.
- Do not rake or blow leaves, grass or other trash into the streets.
- Street sweepers cannot pick up limbs or branches—do not stack yard trimmings in the roadway.
- Avoid parking on the street during scheduled street sweeping days.
- Remove other obstacles from the curbside and roadway. These items include empty garbage and recycling bins, basketball goals, and other athletic equipment.

What are the dead animal pick-up procedures?

The City of Austin Solid Waste Services will remove dead animals if they are on public streets or if they are removed from private property, and placed on the public right-of-way (curb) for pickup. To have these animals removed, call 494-9400. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM and on Saturday between 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM. The office is not open on Sunday.

NEIGHBORHOODS, PLANNING, AND ZONING

What is neighborhood planning?

Neighborhood planning is an opportunity for citizens to take an active role in the planning process for their community. The neighborhood planning process involves citizens, local stakeholders, City departments, community organizations and institutions working together to address land use, planning, transportation, and urban design issues. The goal is to promote mutual responsibility and joint problem solving.

A neighborhood plan

- Represents all of the groups that make a community
- Identifies neighborhood strengths, assets, needs and concerns
- Establishes goals for improving the neighborhood
- Provides recommendations for how to reach those goals
- Guides future development
- Directs the policy and financial decisions of local government.

For more information on the City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning Program, call 974-7695. You may also visit our web site at

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighborhood>.

What is zoning?

Zoning is the method used by cities to promote compatible land use patterns. Tracts of land within a city's corporate limits are divided into different districts or zones. Zoning helps to ensure that a factory is not located in the middle of a residential neighborhood or that a bar is not located next to an elementary school. In Austin, there are a number of different zoning districts commonly found in and around neighborhoods.

Distinct zoning districts exist for residential, office, retail and industrial uses. Some of these zoning districts are

- **SF-1:** Single Family Residence (Large Lot)
- **MF-2:** Multi-Family Residence (Low Density)
- **LR** Neighborhood Commercial
- **NO:** Neighborhood Office.

Furthermore, specific use restrictions, site development regulations or performance standards may apply to zoning districts combined with special overlay or combining districts.

Zoning changes may be required for a change of land use or alteration of a building or site within the City limits. Within ten (10) days of a request for a zoning change, all property owners and registered neighborhood organizations within 300 feet are notified of the proposed change. Signs are placed on all properties under zoning review. All zoning requests are heard by the Planning Commission approximately six (6) to seven (7) weeks after a neighborhood is notified of the request for a zoning change. The City Council acts on the request the following month after the

Planning Commission hearing. To obtain a copy of adopted City ordinances, contact the City Clerk's office at 974-2210.

For information on zoning issues, contact the Development Assistance Center (DAC) at 974-6370. You can also ask questions concerning the Land Development Code (LDC) and zoning in person at the DAC office at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road, first floor, between 10:00 AM and 12:00 PM. Free surface parking is available in the parking lot west of the main building. The LDC and zoning ordinances can be accessed online at the City's **City Connection** Web site at

www.ci.austin.tx.us.

How can I find out what the zoning is on my property?

To find out the zoning on any property you can contact the Map Sales Department of the City of Austin. To determine what the zoning is for a parcel of land you must have two pieces of information.

The first is the parcel identification number or PIN. This can be obtained from Travis Central Appraisal District by calling 834-9138. The same information can be found on the Web at

www.traviscad.org.

The second is the property address.

Map Sales may be reached at 974-2213, 974-3347 or 974-2297.

The City of Austin also provides as a public service a free, on-line geographic information system or GIS. A GIS is a computer program that allows the user to create maps that display a variety of different types of information, including the zoning of different parcels of land. You can reach the on-line GIS by going to the Web site at

<http://malford.ci.austin.tx.us/gisstart.htm>.

What is a nonconforming use?

A nonconforming use is the use of any land, building or structure that does not conform with current regulations but did comply, or was not under requirements to comply, at the time the use was established or the building was constructed. Specific requirements govern the discontinuance of nonconforming uses. In addition, specific code requirements address the ability to make major substantial changes to structures designated as nonconforming uses.

What is code enforcement?

Code enforcement is the investigation of complaints concerning the possibility of work done without proper permits or licenses, possible violations of household occupancy regulations, land use violations, substandard and dangerous building complaints, and right-of-way use complaints. For more information, contact the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department at 974-2875.

Does the City enforce homeowner covenants or deed restrictions?

The City of Austin, as with most local governments, has no power to enforce restrictive covenants. Restrictive covenants (also know as covenants, homeowner covenants or deed restrictions) are private land use controls included as part of the property title. A covenant restricts the property use and is enforceable by civil litigation. Homeowners associations or other property owners in the same subdivision who have similar restrictions on their property usually undertake these actions. If you have questions concerning restrictive covenants contact a real estate attorney.

Can manufactured homes be built in my neighborhood?

In the City of Austin's Land Development Code (LDC), manufactured homes are treated like any other single-family residence and can be built in any zoning category in which single-family homes can be built. Manufactured homes must have a permanent foundation (slab, concrete bars, or pier and beam). A mobile home with a permanent foundation is considered to be a manufactured home.

A mobile home without a permanent foundation can only be installed on property that is zoned to allow mobile homes (zoning category MH).

A neighborhood may be able to use deed restrictions to specify design standards for new homes. However, property owners must agree to the deed restrictions that affect their property; deed restrictions cannot be imposed against the property owners' desire. In addition, Texas laws protecting manufactured homes may also make such deed restrictions illegal.

A real estate attorney should be consulted when establishing deed restrictions. The City of Austin does not establish or enforce deed restrictions. For more information on deed restrictions, contact the Travis County Clerk's office at 473-9188, extension six (6).

How do I find out if my property is zoned historic or located in a historic district?

You can find out if your property is designated as a city historic landmark (historically zoned) or is located within one of the city's thirteen (13) National Register Historic Districts by contacting the City Historic Preservation Office at 974-3530. If your property is zoned historic, the zoning designation for the site will include an "H" (or historic) suffix in addition to the base zoning designation. For example, SF-3-H would designate a property zoned single-family-historic. The zoning designation for your property as well as the boundaries of the historic districts are all delineated on city zoning maps. You can view or purchase a city zoning map at the City Map Sales at One Texas Center, 505 Barton Springs Road on the first floor. These designations are also shown on the Geographic Information System Maps available on the city Web at

<http://malford.ci.austin.tx.us/gisstart.htm>

How do I obtain a building permit if my property is designated a city historic landmark (historically-zoned) or is in a historic district?

The City of Austin requires a property owner to go through a design review process and obtain a "Certificate of Appropriateness" from the City Historic Landmark Commission for all exterior alterations (other than routine maintenance) proposed for a designated city historic landmark property. The Historic Landmark Commission also performs design reviews for proposed exterior demolition, relocation, and building permits within the City's thirteen (13) National Register Historic Districts. The Historic Landmark Commission has adopted design guidelines for performing these design reviews. Questions concerning the historic review and approval process should be addressed to the Historic Preservation Office at 974-3530.

Can I operate a business from my home?

Residents of the City of Austin can operate a business from their home as an accessory use. This means that the primary use of the building must be residential. Home occupations are subject to several limitations:

- The home occupation must be conducted entirely within a dwelling unit that is the true residence of the practitioner(s) or entirely within only one accessory garage building (not to include a carport).
- No person, other than a family member who resides in the dwelling unit, may participate in the home occupation on the premises, unless the home occupation is a medical, professional, administrative, or business office. If the home occupation is an office, one non-family member can participate in the home occupation.
- The residential character of the lot and dwelling must be maintained. The interior and the exterior of the dwelling cannot be altered to accommodate the home occupation unless the alteration is necessary to comply with the accessibility law. No additional buildings can be added on the property to accommodate the home occupation.
- The home occupation must not generate customer-related vehicular traffic in excess of three (3) vehicles per twenty-four (24) hour day in the residential neighborhood.
- No direct selling of merchandise on the premises.
- Equipment or materials associated with the home occupation cannot be displayed or stored where visible from anywhere off the premises.
- The occupation must not produce external noise, vibration, smoke, dust, odor, heat, glare, fumes, electrical interference or waste runoff outside the dwelling unit or on the property surrounding the dwelling unit.
- Vehicles used for the home occupation that require a commercial driver's license to operate cannot be parked on the premises or on any street adjacent to the residentially zoned property.

- Any signs on the premises cannot advertise the home occupation. The street address of the home occupation cannot be advertised through signs, billboards, television, radio or newspapers.
- A person **may not** engage in the following businesses as a home occupation:
 - ❑ Animal hospitals
 - ❑ Animal breeding
 - ❑ Clinics; hospitals
 - ❑ Hospital services
 - ❑ Contractors' yards
 - ❑ Dancing studios
 - ❑ Scrap or salvage yards
 - ❑ Lodginghouse residential uses
 - ❑ Massage parlors
 - ❑ Restaurants
 - ❑ Cocktail lounges
 - ❑ Rental outlets
 - ❑ Equipment sales
 - ❑ Adult-oriented businesses
 - ❑ Recycling centers or collection facilities
 - ❑ Vehicle repair shops.

My neighbor operates a business from her home and the traffic is causing problems.

The home occupation ordinance states that customer-related vehicular traffic should not exceed three vehicles per twenty-four (24) hour day in a residential neighborhood. If you believe the traffic violates the existing ordinance, contact the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department at 974-2875.

What is a building permit?

The building permit is a piece of paper which documents that the City has reviewed your building plans and has determined that they meet the requirements of the Building Code. Specific building code issues include

- Health concerns
- Tapping into water and sewer lines
- Extension of electrical service.

Specific aspects of a building plan review are

- Building
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Mechanical
- Energy code.

The building plan is reviewed for construction safeguards and compliance with zoning and other land use issues. The proposed occupancy of a building, access and exiting, structural integrity, and mechanical, electrical, plumbing, energy, and fire aspects of the building are also reviewed. If needed, signs, barricades and underground tanks are reviewed at the building plan stage. If the plans meet the building code's criteria, the Development Review and Inspection Department approves the building plans.

When do I need a building permit?

If your property is within the city limits (full purpose annexation) and you are

- Erecting
- Constructing
- Enlarging
- Altering
- Repairing
- Improving
- Removing
- Converting
- Moving
- Demolishing

any building or structure, you are required to obtain a City of Austin Building Permit and a site plan approval or site plan exemption.

Depending on the extent of your work, you may be required to obtain one or more of the following permits

- Building
- Electrical
- Mechanical (heating/air conditioning)
- Plumbing
- Concrete
- Development.

If you are inside the city limits in a limited-purpose annexation area, the same rules above apply to requirements for building permits and site plan and/or development permit approvals and exemptions for the City. City of Austin plumbing, electrical, concrete and mechanical permits are also required. In addition to the City permits, Travis County requires development permits, building permits and driveway permits.

If your property is located in the City's Extra-territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) other rules apply. The ETJ is that area extending five (5) miles outside the City of Austin corporate limits. All development in the ETJ is required to obtain site plan (development permit) approvals or site plan exemptions from the City. In addition, plumbing and/or electrical permits may be required if the project is served by City utilities (ETJ fees will be assessed in addition to the permit fees). Travis County and Hays County require development and driveway permits.

Areas inside the city limits and /or the ETJ may require other approvals.

- If the project requires a septic system, or is a sanitary landfill or salvage yard, permits from Austin/Travis County Health Department are required.
- The Lower Colorado River Authority has jurisdiction for permits for septic tanks adjacent to Lake Travis.
- The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission issues permits for projects over the Edwards Aquifer.
- If the project is within an endangered species habitat, a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may be required.
- Permission from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may be required for projects involving drainage modifications.

Projects involving single family boat docks, earthwork, site clearing, utilities, and street and drainage improvements require a site plan (development permit) or site plan exemption. Boat docks also require building and electrical (if lighted) permits along Lake Austin. For more information, contact the Development Assistance Center at 974-6370.

What size fence can I build?

Unless otherwise stated in the Land Development Code, fences are permitted as accessory uses in all districts. However, they are subject to several restrictions.

- A solid fence or enclosure wall constructed on property lines cannot exceed an average height of six (6) feet or a maximum height of seven (7) feet at any point.
- Any fence, hedge or enclosure wall located within twenty (20) feet of the intersection of the two street lines shall not exceed a height of three (3) feet.
- In some cases, a solid fence or enclosure wall may be constructed to a maximum height of eight (8) feet, however, it will be subject to additional restrictions.

For more information, contact the Development Assistance Center at 974-6370.

How can I find out if my property is within the city limits?

You can find out if your property is located within the city limits by contacting the Address Information Program at 974-2797. This information can be obtained by providing the address, parcel identification number or legal description of the property.

How can I find out the address of a particular property?

Address information for property located within the City limits or the City's Extra-territorial Jurisdiction can be obtained by contacting the Address Information Program at 974-2797. You will need to provide them with the parcel identification number or legal description of the property.

Information for property located outside the City limits or ETJ can be obtained from Travis Central Appraisal District at 834-9138 or at their Web site at

www.traviscad.org.

Where can I call to find out the dimensions of my property?

Property dimensions and tax parcel identification numbers can be obtained by contacting the Travis Central Appraisal District at 834-9138.

I need a map of my neighborhood. Where can I get maps?

You can purchase the following maps from the Map Sales Department

- Zoning maps
- Extra-territorial Jurisdiction maps
- Aerial maps (1966-1984)
- Tax plats.

For more information, call 974-2213, 974-3347 or 974-2297.

The City of Austin's free, on-line geographic information system or GIS allows users to generate maps of their neighborhood. A GIS is a computer program that allows the user to create maps that display a variety of different types of information, including the streets. You can reach the on-line GIS by going to the Web site at

<http://malford.ci.austin.tx.us/gisstart.htm>.

I have a question that you did not answer. How can I get it answered now or where can I send it so that it can be included next time?

You can telephone, fax, mail or e-mail your questions or comments to the following:

Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

Telephone: 974-7695
Fax: 974-2269
E-mail: neighborhood.planning@ci.austin.tx.us

You can write to any department within the City of Austin. Include the name of the department and send it to:

**P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767**

INDEX OF HELPFUL NUMBERS

A

Agendas (City Council meetings).....	974-2210
Animals:	
Animal Control (loose dogs).....	972-6060
Dead Animal Collection	494-9400
Arts / Cultural Programs.....	397-1468
Athletic Programs and Games	445-6003
Game Rainout	480-3019

B

Barton Springs Pool Hotline	867-3080
Bat Conservation International.....	327-9721
Catalog Sales Order.....	800/538-2287
Bid Hotline (Purchasing Office)	974-BIDS
Building Regulations:	
Building Inspection/Code Enforcement	974-2875
Building Permit/License	974-2380

C

CPR Classes.....	972-2071
Cable TV Complaints.....	974-2999
Cars: Junked and abandoned.....	837-6078
Channel 6	974-2460
Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention	854-4274
City of Austin, Main Switchboard	974-2000
(TDD)	974-2249
City Clerk	974-2210
City Council:	
Mayor Gus Garcia	974-2250
Mayor Pro Tem Jackie Goodman.....	974-2255
Council Member Raul Alvarez	974-2264
Council Member Daryl Slusher.....	974-2260
Council Member Beverly Griffith.....	974-2258
Council Member Will Wynn.....	974-2256
Council Member Danny Thomas	974-2266
City Manager.....	974-2200
Management Services (TDD).....	974-2412
Coliseum / Palmer	472-5111
(TDD).....	320-4470
Coming Events	404-4404
Construction Work:	
On Private Property.....	974-2217
On City Streets & Sidewalks	974-7180
Traffic Control	974-2217
Convention Center.....	476-5461
(TDD)	404-4077
Coming Events	404-4404
Court, Municipal	974-4800
(TDD)	974-4899

D

Development Assistance Center.....	974-6370
Discrimination Complaints.....	974-3251
Dumping	
To Report Possible Violations	494-9400
Illegal Dumping Hotline	972-2100
Storm Drains/ Creek Concerns	974-2550
Drainage Utility Information	974-9400
Drainage/Storm Water Complaints.....	974-3355
Drug Hotline (To report illegal drug activity).....	454-3784
DWI Awareness Program	972-2050

E

EMS, Administration	972-2050
(TDD)	320-2017
Election (City).....	974-2210
Emergency Management Office	370-8800
24-Hours	370-2609
Employment, Dial A Job Number	974-3301
Energy Conservation	
Multi-Family Housing.....	505-3710
Single-family Housing.....	505-3707
Environmental Hotline	974-2550

F

Family Health.....	854-4272
Fire Department (Administration)	974-4100
Code Compliance	448-2455
Public Information/Education	448-8302
First Aid Classes	972-2071
Flooding and Drainage Complaints.....	974-3366
Food Handling & Food Poisoning Complaints.....	972-2015
Franchise Information (Cable, Gas, Phones).....	974-2999

G

Gang Hotline.....	974-5261
Gang Suppression Unit.....	385-7742
Garbage Collection.....	494-9400
Garden Center, Austin Area	477-8672
Golf Courses	
Bergstrom Golf Course.....	530-4653
Hancock Golf Course	453-0276
Jimmy Clay Golf Course.....	444-0999
Lions Municipal Golf Course	477-6963
Morris Williams Golf Course.....	926-1298
Roy Kizer Golf Course.....	444-0999
Green Building Program.....	505-3700
Graffiti Hotline	854-4125

H

Hazardous Materials (Storage Permits).....	448-8336
Home Chemical Collection Facility.....	462-4343
Health Services:	
Administration.....	707-3200
Communicable Disease Prevention Services	972-2144
Communicable Disease Clinic.....	972-2070
Health Centers.....	972-2133
Dental Clinics	972-2133
General Information	707-3200
Neighborhood Centers	854-4100
Sexually Transmitted Diseases	972-2070
History Center	974-7480
HIV/AIDS Services	380-4380
Hospital, Brackenridge	324-7000
Hospital, Children's Of Austin	324-8000
Housing Codes (Residential).....	974-2875
Housing Programs.....	974-3100
Human Rights Commission (Austin).....	974-3251

I

Inspection Services:	
Building Inspection Request Line	974-2875
Electric.....	974-6476
Internet Address.....	www.ci.austin.tx.us

J

Jail:	
Central Booking Facility.....	974-5090
Booking Information (24-hrs).....	974-5090
Jobs (City Employment).....	974-3301

K

Keep Austin Beautiful	974-3577
-----------------------------	----------

L

Law Department	974-2268
Library:	
Administration.....	974-7449
Children's Programs.....	974-7599
History Center.....	974-7480
Hours	974-7301
Information and Reference	974-7599

M

Mosquito Control	972-2015
Municipal Court	433-4800
(TDD).....	433-4899
Museums	397-1462

N

Neighborhood Centers, Health/Human Services	854-4100
Emergency Basic Needs Assistance	854-4120
Neighborhood Academy.....	974-7671
Neighborhood Planning Program	974-7695

O

"One Call" Before you Dig (Utility lines located)	(800)545-6005
Oak Wilt.....	440-5195

P

Palmer Auditorium	472-5111
Coming Events	404-4404
Parks and Recreation	
Administration (TDD* 974-6731)	974-6700
Aquatics	476-4521
Athletics`	445-6003
Calendar Information.....	974-6710
Nature and Science Center.....	327-8181
Parks Maintenance	440-5167
Park Police.....	974-7707
Playground & Summer Programs	480-3043
Recreation Center Programs	974-6738
Reservations	474-9692
Senior Programs	480-3000
Swim Lessons	480-3030
Youth Sports.....	480-3043
Pedestrian Program.....	974-7240
Permits:	
Alarm (Security Alarms).....	974-5730
Alcoholic Beverages	974-2527
Blasting	974-7151
Building	974-2380
Food	469-2015
Hazardous Materials (Storage)	972-8336
Septic Systems.....	469-2015
Signs.....	974-3345
Sidewalks/ROW blocking, for construction.....	974-7024
Sidewalks/ROW blocking, non-construction	974-7023
Stormwater Discharge	974-2550
Street, Sidewalk, Curb & Gutter Cuts.....	974-7161
TAPS (Water/Wastewater connection).....	322-2730
Tree Removal.....	974-1846
Vending: Concession in Parks	974-6723
Vending: In Right of Way	974-7023
Wrecker	974-5590
Pioneer Farm	837-1215
Police Department:	
Police Emergencies.....	911
Reporting Non-Emergencies	974-5750
Administration (TDD* 480-2922)	974-5000
Paroles.....	974-5050
Child Abuse Unit (APD)	834-3890
Crime Stoppers	472-8477

Police District Commands	
Northwest	834-7991
Northeast	834-7959
Central West.....	974-5253
Central East.....	385-7727
Southwest.....	385-7721
Southeast	385-7707
Victim Services (TDD* 974-5475).....	974-5470
Pothole Complaints	440-8444
Public Information Office	974-2220
Public Works Information Center	974-7058
TDD	480-9713

R

Rat/Rodent Control	972-2015
Recycling	494-9400

S

School/Pedestrian Safety (Crossing Guard Program).....	974-7013
Senior Activity Centers & Program	480-3000
Site Plans:	
Inside City Limits.....	974-6370
Outside City Limits.....	974-6370
Environmental Questions	974-6370
Small & Minority Business Resources	974-7600
Smoking Ordinance	972-2015
Solid Waste Services	494-9400
Garbage Collection	494-9400
Recycling.....	494-9400
Waste Reduction Program.....	707-5470
Street and Alley, Hazards & Repairs	440-8444
Street and Lane Closures.....	974-7024
Street Light (New) Requests	505-7602
Street Light Malfunction (Not Traffic Lights).....	505-7617
Street Marking.....	457-4889
Street Signs	457-4850
Swimming Pools Information (Summers).....	476-4521

T

Tennis Centers	480-3020
Traffic Signal	
Installation.....	457-4850
Repairs	457-4850
Tree Trimming in City right-of-way	440-5150
Tree Trimming on Electric Power Lines	494-9400
Tourist and Visitor Information Center.....	478-0098
Town Lake Animal Center	708-6000

U

Utilities Services	494-9400
Electric & Water Service Turn On.....	494-9400
(TDD*)	477-3663
Electric Utility Consumer Relations.....	322-6300
Electric Dept, Trouble Reports (24Hrs).....	322-9100
(TDD*).....	477-3663
Water & Wastewater Consumer Service.....	494-9400
(TDD*).....	477-3663
Water & Wastewater Emergencies (24Hrs).....	912-6000
(TDD*).....	912-6298

V

Visitor Information Center.....	478-0098
---------------------------------	----------

W

Water Conservation.....	974-2199
Water Pollutants/Pollution	974-2550
Water & Waste Water Problems (24 hours).....	912-6000
Water Trouble Reports.....	912-6000
Weed & Litter Control	494-4900

Y

Youth Services:

Summer Youth Employment.....	708-4590
Community Services Division	473-9004
Early Child Care & Education.....	707-3277
Gang Hotline	480-5261
Gang Suppression Unit	385-7742
Youth Services Office (Austin Public Library)	854-4109

Z

Zilker Park:

Barton Springs Pool Hotline.....	867-3080
Canoe Rental	478-3852
Garden Center.....	477-8672
Umlauf Sculpture Garden & Museum	445-5582
Zilker Zephyr	478-8286

Zoning:

Changes & Review (Development Assistance Center).....	974-6370
Code Enforcement	974-2875
Verification	974-2213

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