

4/21/2020

# 2019 Sustainability Report



Travis County, Texas

Prepared By: Travis County Sustainability Team  
PREPARED FOR: TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

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## Introduction

Welcome to the new Travis County Sustainability Report.

This year's report marks a significant step in the evolution of our annual report. What used to be a report on materials handled under the County's Comprehensive Waste Management Program is now developing into a more comprehensive and encompassing approach to sustainability. With this new approach we are coalescing a diverse range of environmental quality programs into a coordinated view of sustainability. It is our intent to report on sustainability efforts and performance across all County operations. This change reflects the progression of our programmatic perspective over the years from an emphasis on waste management to consideration of environmental issues associated with energy and water usage, waste diversion and recycling, transportation, and other County policies and practices.



Sustainability for us represents our capacity to manage, maintain, and improve current environmental, economic, and social structures over time. Sustainability is also a critical element in developing resiliency in the face of climate change.

We have a number of challenges confronting us in developing our Sustainability Program. Two trials worth mentioning are:

1. **Reliable and appropriate data.** Effective analysis of sustainability requires a lot of data. Much of what we are reporting here relies on data collected from disparate sources throughout the County. In many cases we are using data that were never intended to be used for the purposes for which we are using them. Usage, financial, and collection data – all were developed for a specific purposes but not for sustainability analyses. It will take time and countywide collaboration for us to develop new data collection and compilation processes to give us the specific information we need. It will also take and dedicated work hours for staff.
2. **China's National Sword Policy.** For decades the US and other western nations profited from a growing reliance on China (and other developing nations) to accept and process recyclable materials generated in the West. While some material was recycled, and provided valuable resources for Chinese industry, much of it was contaminated beyond recyclability, or it included hazardous wastes, or it was just plain garbage. Environmental contamination in China and other receiving sites rose to disastrous levels. In the meantime, recycling infrastructure in North America and Europe languished. Beginning in 2017, China invoked a ban on most recyclable material imports. Many developing nations followed suit. Loss of markets accepting recyclable material has thrown the economics of recycling into chaos resulting in historically low prices for many materials. This has seriously damaged recycling programs across the US. While many waste management companies are investing in new recycling facilities in North America and Europe, it will be years before they come on line and recycled material markets recover.

Despite these and other challenges, the Sustainability Program is making significant strides in developing new policies, new data collection processes, and presenting a more holistic view of County operations. The Report is also closely tied to another new effort, the Travis County Climate Action Plan, which we expect to present for formal adoption later this year.

I wish to extend my thanks to the entire NREQ Sustainability team and all the stakeholders in TNR and elsewhere who have contributed to developing our new sustainability-related policies, plans, and projects.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon A. White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon A. White

Director, Natural Resources & Environmental Quality Division

Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources Department

## Executive Summary and GHG Inventory

Sustainability highlights and major accomplishments:

### Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy Passed

- The Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Task Force, which began meeting in February 2019, cooperatively developed a policy which was formally adopted in October 2019 (FY20) by the Commissioners Court. The policy adoption made Travis County the second county in the state of Texas with an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy.

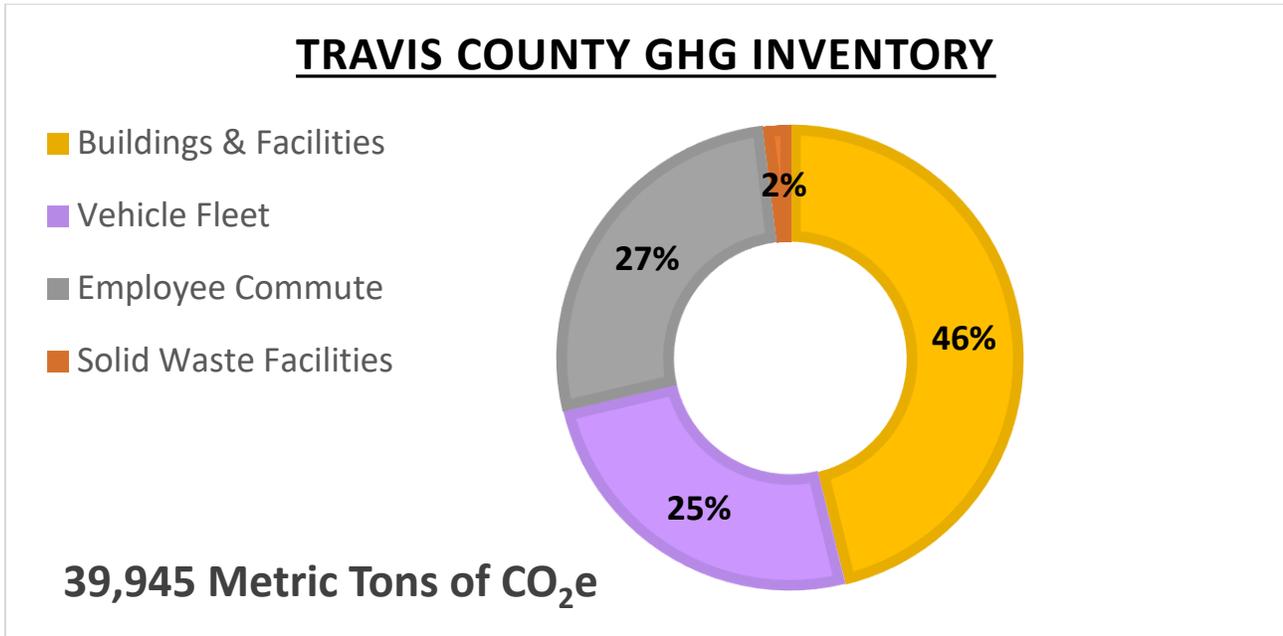
### Partnerships and collaborations

- Partnered with the Travis County Jail to encourage sustainability within the jail system. One such initiative was the creation of an aquaponics pond. There is also an organic vegetable garden, where roughly 9,250 pounds of vegetables have been produced since 2018. Additionally, the Jail is currently undergoing an energy efficiency upgrade through a \$27 million Energy Savings Performance Contract with Schneider Electric. The upgrades at the Jail, are projected to provide more than \$42 million in savings over 20 years, as well as a significant reduction in emissions.
- Collaborated with the Human Resources Management Department to develop, complete, and launch two new training courses: Environmentally Preferable Purchasing and Travis County Sustainability for online New Employee Orientation.
- Convened the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Task Force which was made up of representatives from across the County including Justice Planning, Purchasing, Planning and Budget, two Commissioners, the County Attorney's, and the Auditors Offices.

### Greenhouse Gas Inventory Developed

- Completed a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory to determine the sources and magnitude of emissions produced by County operations and staff. The inventory was completed using ClearPath, a leading online software platform for greenhouse gas inventories, climate action plans, and monitoring. The inventory helps us better understand areas we can focus to reduce the impact we have as an organization.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory:



Sector	CO <sub>2</sub> e
Buildings & Facilities	18,444
Employee Commute	10,693
Vehicle Fleet	10,045
Solid Waste	763

The County’s largest sources of Greenhouse Gas emissions are buildings and employee commutes.

The EPA’s [Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator](#) translates abstract measurements into more relatable terms. Below are the equivalents of the County’s emissions, as well as how emissions could be avoided or offset.

**CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from**



**Greenhouse gas emissions avoided by**



## Sustainability Report Format

This report has undergone a number of changes to reflect a paradigm shift within the TNR-Environmental Quality team. What used to be a report on the recycling activities and diversion efforts of the County will now be a comprehensive overview of sustainability efforts and performance across all County operations. The focus of the team has been expanded from recycling and waste diversion to sustainability, resource efficiency, and process improvement.

Within this report you will find the following headers to indicate different sustainability focus areas:

1. Energy
2. Water
3. Waste Diversion and Recycling
4. Transportation
5. Purchasing and Procurement
6. Organizational Culture and Process Improvement
7. Resiliency

These focus areas mirror the key focus areas in the Climate Action Plan, so that implementation of items from the Climate Action Plan can be included, and the results from those efforts will be reflected in annual updates provided in the Sustainability Report. Each focus area is explained below:

#1 Energy– reducing energy consumption by Travis County buildings and operations.

#2 Water – reducing potable water consumption by Travis County buildings and operations.

#3 Waste Diversion and Recycling – reducing the amount of waste produced by County operations as well as cost-savings or revenue generation created by diversion activities. Waste reduction also includes reduction and proper management of universal and hazardous wastes.

#4 Transportation – reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips taken by County employees either commuting to work or traveling in County vehicles. Transportation also includes reducing Travis County-related fossil fuel consumption by the County vehicle fleet and by County employee commuting.

#5 Purchasing/Procurement – continuing progress towards court-adopted Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) goals. Goals include 50% or more of office supply purchases rated as environmentally preferable, staff education and training, incorporating sustainability and EPP into contracts, and leveraging County dollars to encourage more sustainability efforts from vendors and contracts.

#6 Organizational Culture and Process Improvement– adopting or revising policies that encourage or advance sustainability, employee engagement, and/or more efficient business practices.

#7 Resiliency Efforts – preparing for the impacts of climate change that are already happening as well as being better prepared for future events. Travis County is projected to see increases in the annual and seasonal average temperatures with more frequent high temperature extremes. Due to the hotter weather, more frequent drought conditions in the summer are projected. While the annual average precipitation is projected to change little, our region can expect more frequent extreme precipitation.

## Energy

Buildings and facilities comprise the majority of Travis County’s emissions, and those emissions stem from energy and water consumption by the buildings and by the occupants of those buildings.

Below is the energy usage (electricity and natural gas) used by Travis County over the last three years. Also included is usage per capita (per employee) and cost per employee. These numbers were included because every Travis County employee uses energy, therefore every employee can contribute to conserving these resources and helping to reduce costs.

Electricity (kWh)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Usage	59,954,586.44	63,853,911.68	62,088,938.85
Cost	\$5,445,977.01	\$5,889,885.40	\$5,752,758.48
Usage Per Capita	11,556	12,027	11,445
Cost Per Employee	\$1,049.73	\$1,109.42	\$1,060.42

While Travis County has a number of energy suppliers, far and away the County’s utility spend is with Austin Energy (85%) and Texas Gas Service (5%).

Gas (ccf)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Usage	2,755,956.22	1,037,172.84	1,078,062.80
Cost	\$583,000.75	\$597,592.51	\$579,977.34
Usage Per Capita	531	195	199
Cost Per Employee	\$112.37	\$112.56	\$106.91

**Success Story:** Facilities Management’s Green Building Policy and the Jail’s Energy Savings Performance Contract both exemplify how the County views buildings as assets that should be invested in and maintained to ensure peak performance. Despite a growth in employees and operations the County saw decreases in electricity usage and costs from FY18 to FY19.

Water

Water Utilities (Gal.)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Usage	169,423,522.78	160,596,570.06	173,605,659.40
Cost	\$2,803,173.43	\$2,355,346.69	\$2,531,298.60
Usage Per Capita	32,657	30,250	32,001
Cost Per Employee	\$540.32	\$443.65	\$466.60

**Success Story:** Favorable media coverage, anticipated cost-savings, and potable water consumption reduction are all successes associated with Travis County’s switch to treated wastewater for air-conditioning in five downtown buildings. The five connected buildings are 700 Lavaca, Heman Marion Sweatt Courthouse, Ned Granger, Blackwell–Thurman Criminal Justice Center, and Gault buildings.



“Most people don’t realize that the major use of water for large commercial buildings is for air conditioning,” Shea said. “So, we are swapping out the water source from using treated water for air conditioning to the treated wastewater. That will save the county and the community 10 million gallons of water a year forever.”

“The water savings is equivalent to taking 150 homes off of city water permanently, Shea said. All the engineering work and construction it took to build the connection will be paid for in a little over 8 years. She said the plan will also help save over \$136,000 a year in taxpayer money.”

[Community Impact Purple Pipe Story](#)

## Recycling & Waste Diversion

According to the [US EPA](#) the United States national diversion rate (amount of material recycled or composted divided by the total generation of waste, recyclables, and compostables) was 35.2%. The [City of Austin](#) registered a diversion rate of 42% when last measured in 2015. Based on contracted service capacity (the amount and size of dumpsters multiplied by collection frequency), Travis County’s diversion rate for the collection services is less than 29%, falling below the national and local average.

Measure	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
<b>Capacity Diversion Rate<sup>1</sup></b>	N/A	N/A	28.57%
<b>Per Capita Disposal<sup>2</sup></b>	N/A	N/A	1,183 lbs recycled 2,822 lbs landfilled
<b>Landfill Dumpster Services Cost<sup>3</sup></b>	\$193,012	\$186,253	\$192,600
<b>Total Landfill Cost<sup>4</sup></b>	N/A	N/A	\$364,896.13
<b>Single-Stream Recycling Services Cost</b>	\$72,460	\$102,348	\$121,836
<b>Recycling Revenue<sup>5</sup></b>	\$70,330.50	\$56,340.00	\$21,327
<b>Jail Garden Composting</b>	300 lbs.	13,500 lbs.	36,907 lbs.
<b>Animal Composting</b>	127,660 lbs.	0	39,380 lbs.

1 – Capacity diversion rate is calculated by multiplying the quantity, size, and collection frequency of recycling dumpsters/collection containers divided by the total quantity, size, and collection frequency of recycling and trash dumpsters/collection containers

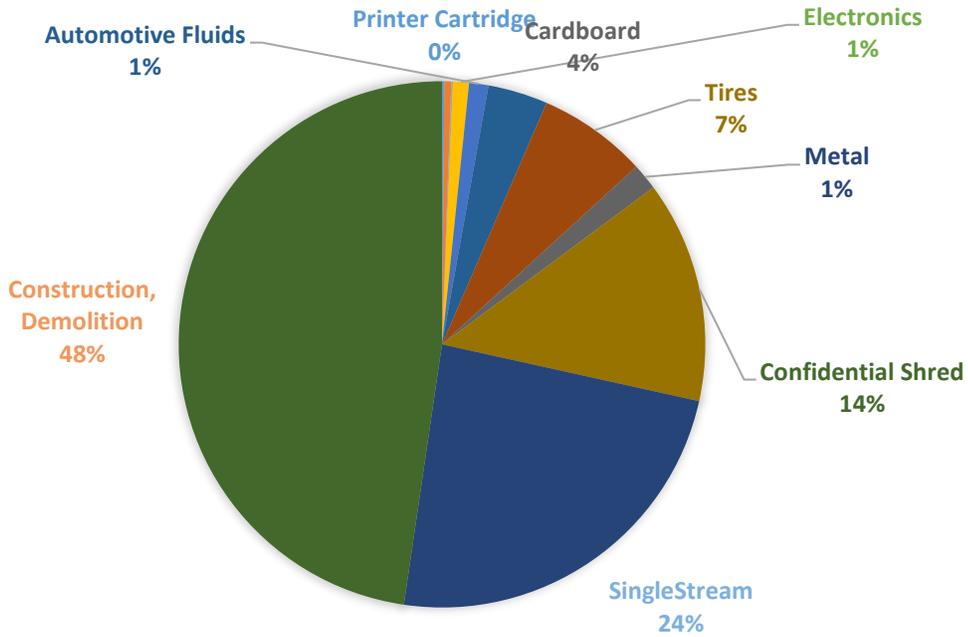
2 – Per capita disposal is calculated using the EPA’s volume to weight conversion factors for recyclables and landfill trash and converting collection capacity (dumpster service) to weight estimates and then dividing that amount by the number of County employees

3 – Landfill dumpster services cost is the cost of regularly scheduled landfill trash dumpster pick-ups from County facilities

4 – Total landfill cost is all costs associated with having items landfilled including dumpster services costs, landfill trash roll-off collection, tipping fees paid at the landfill, service fees for landfilling items, and any other costs or fees paid for sending an item to be landfilled

5 – Recycling revenue has been significantly impacted by national and global changes to recycling markets associated with China’s National Sword Policy. However, recycling continues to generate revenue and in addition to revenue generated, recycling activities are responsible for approximately \$175,495 in landfill avoidance costs – money saved by not paying landfill tipping fees

### FY2019 PERCENTAGE WEIGHT OF RECYCLED MATERIALS BY COMMODITY CLASS



While construction debris and single-stream recycling comprise the bulk of the County’s recycling by weight, metal recycling provides more than three quarters of recycling revenue. In previous years electronics recycling and cardboard were significant revenue generators. However, Travis County no longer receives revenue from recycling of electronics. Recycling revenue has been significantly impacted by national and global changes to recycling markets due to China’s National Sword policy.

Recycling Revenue			
Commodity	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Printer Cartridge	\$ 853.75	\$ 666.00	\$ 661.00
Electronics	\$ 73,082.00	\$ 26,752.00	\$ 0.00
Cardboard	\$ 10,045.00	\$ 7,956.00	\$ 2,898
Metal	\$ 19,187.83	\$ 20,117.00	\$ 16,412.34
Pallets	\$ 1,112.00	\$ 849.00	\$ 1,357
<b>Revenue Total</b>	<b>\$ 104,280.58</b>	<b>\$ 56,340.00</b>	<b>\$ 21,328.34</b>

**Success Stories:**

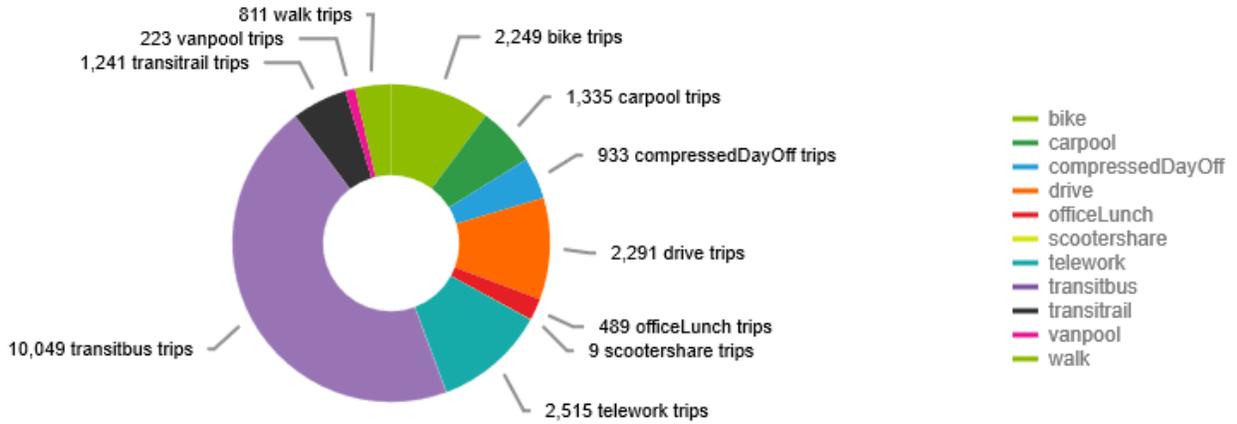
- Facilities Management committed to reducing landfill dumpsters at all facilities in an effort to right-size service levels. This year’s reduction contributed to a cost savings of **\$6,759**.
- Recycling Coordinator Max Morales collaborated with the Travis County Sheriff’s Office Finance Team and the Employee Health Clinic to arrange a swap of medical lab coats from the Sheriff’s Office to the Health Clinic resulting in waste diverted and about **\$2,550** in savings.
- Recycling Coordinator Max Morales met with Facilities Management mechanics to offer universal waste collection and recycling assistance to perform a clean out to collect all used universal waste items and provide mechanics with new collection containers, so the mechanics can start fresh, stay safe, and stay organized. After a clean out at the HMS Courthouse, Max collected **over 400** used lamps among other items (image below).



Commodity	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Fluorescent Lamps	3,630 units	1,008 units	2,966 units
Lamp Ballasts	95 lbs.	28 lbs.	416 lbs.
Dry Cell Batteries	2,876 lbs.	2,913 lbs.	3,024 lbs.
Rechargeable Batteries	300 lbs.	358 lbs.	22 lbs.

## Transportation

### Commute Solutions – Employee Participation



The Commuter Leave Incentive Program (CLIP) program, which began in October 2019, has led to an increase in employee participation on the Commute Solutions online platform for commuter resources. The CLIP program offer employees administrative leave for sustainable commutes which include public transit, walking, working a compressed schedule or teleworking. As additional resources and incentives are provided, more County employees are taking part in sustainable commuting.

	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
<b>Transit Pass Distribution</b>	764	811	879
<b>Telecommute Participants</b>	307	379	514
<b>Telecommute Hours</b>	40534.50	66473.50	90995.40

Results from CLIP will be included in the FY20 Sustainability Report, but preliminary reports indicate employees are taking advantage of this benefit, and the County is encouraging meaningful emissions and single occupancy vehicle trip reductions.

In addition to encouraging sustainable commutes, Travis County has supported the transition to vehicle electrification by providing access to electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Currently the County has three EV charging stations: two charging stations at 700 Lavaca and a third at the East Service Center.



Above county resident Esme West is using the new EV station at 700 Lavaca St.

**Success Story:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic more County employees are teleworking than ever before. While Travis County staff from Health and Human Services and Emergency Management are on the front lines of the crisis, ITS and Human Resources staff have enabled thousands of County employees with the technology, resources, and training to continue working and keep the County operating remotely, and support our front line and emergency operations teams. This crisis has highlighted the ability of County employees to get the job done without always traveling to the office.

## Purchasing

As an organization with a \$1.2 billion budget Travis County has a significant amount of purchasing power. The County has the opportunity to make meaningful impacts in areas such as environmentally preferable purchasing which is purchasing and procuring products and services that have the least adverse effect on human health and the quality of the environment when compared to similar products and services and also taking into account factors such as the Product Life Cycle. Basically, it means purchasing with a purpose and being intentional to find the right products and services to get the job done, and finding vendors and products that align with County values.

The County saw a steep drop in green spend on office products from FY18 to FY19. The 11% spend on office products is far from the EPP goal of 50% green spend for office products. Fortunately, as of March 2020 the EPP training course is available in the Learning Management System, so that all shoppers, Purchasing Office staff, and interested employees can learn how to practice environmentally preferable purchasing.

Green Spend	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Total Spend	\$832,980	\$953,398	\$964,265
Total Green Spend	\$185,867	\$266,936	\$102,077
Percent of Total Purchases	22%	28%	11%

Another area ripe for improvement is paper consumption. While Travis County consumption levels are not unreasonably high, the type of paper being consumed be improved.

Paper Consumption (cases purchased)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Virgin Paper	5771	5915	5779
Recycled Content*	0	0	0
Per Capita	1.07	1.08	1.05 case per person

In FY19 County employees used just over one case of paper per person for the year – which means the average employee used 5250 sheets of paper. The Travis County Print Shop ,which contracts and

procures for paper for the entire County to use, negotiated a contract for 30% recycled content paper near the end of FY19. Departments can now request recycled content copy paper from the print shop.

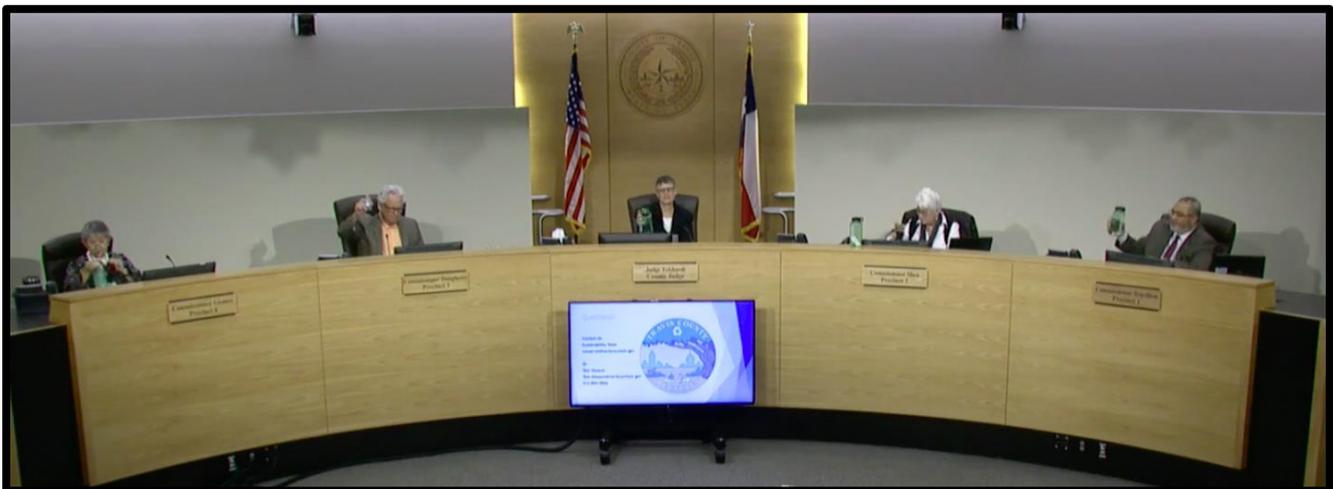
According to the [Environmental Paper Network's Environmental Impacts Calculator](#), by switching to 30% recycled content paper exclusively, Travis County would save 411 trees, and the energy equivalent of 1,550 residential refrigerators. By reducing overall paper consumption or switching to more recycled content in paper, the County would achieve even greater impact reductions. Additionally, if Travis County is not buying recycled content paper, then we are not actually recycling. We cannot send our used paper to recyclers and hope that someone else creates demand for recycled content products that demand should come from the users of the products. If we want to recycle paper, then we need to buy recycled content paper.

Environmental impact estimates were made using the Environmental Paper Network Paper Calculator Version 4.0. For more information visit [www.papercalculator.org](http://www.papercalculator.org).

Success Story: In FY19 the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) Task Force was developed with the purpose of creating an EPP Policy for Travis County. On October 29, 2019 (FY20) the Commissioners Court adopted an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy, making Travis County the second county in the state of Texas with such a policy. The goals of the policy include:

1. Strive for a minimum of 50% of office supply purchases to be environmentally preferable products
2. Continue existing EPP practices such as working with technology vendors to ensure takeback of computers and other electronics and achieving LEED silver or better certification for new buildings
3. Influence vendor behavior by requesting information on vendor EPP and sustainability practices
4. Develop and utilize internal reuse networks such as an office supply Reuse Store and the Purchasing Assets Warehouse to shop Travis County before buying products that are available internally

All Travis County shoppers and Purchasing Office staff are required to take an annual Environmentally Preferable Purchasing training course to ensure awareness of the policy, goals, and the resources available to help them find environmentally preferable products and services.



*Commissioners Court passing the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy*

## Organizational Culture and Process Improvement

There are less than half a dozen individuals who comprise the Sustainability Team. In order to multiply Sustainability staff efforts and scale across the entire county organization, sustainability will need to be a part of the organizational culture of Travis County – the way things are done around here. In order to drive systemic change, we’ll need all employees to buy-in and reinforce a culture of conservation, from being mindful about printing, to turning lights off, to not idling in vehicles, creating a culture of conservation could have a drastic impact on County resource consumption.

### Green Team Highlights:

Programs	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
<b>T-shirts for Hunger Bags Created</b>	8,564	954	7,300
<b>3 Rings for Learning (binders donated)</b>	N/A	519	1,636

Green Team members serve as liaisons between the Sustainability Team and offices across the County. Green Team members share training or engagement event opportunities with their office, are a source of sustainability information for their peers, and help lead the sustainability charge in their work area.

Two programs created and run by Green Team members are T-shirts for Hunger, where reusable bags are made from unwanted t-shirts. The bags are then distributed to food pantry clients. Another Green Team programs is 3 Rings for Learning which collects surplus binders from across the County and redistributes these binders to AISD students and teachers in need.



**Employee Engagement:**

Engagement Programs (employees engaged)	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Healthy People Healthy Planet Attendees	N/A	N/A	350
Toner Ambassadors	83	95	95
New Employee Orientation	-	589	641
Recycling Training	-	-	95

The Sustainability Team provides year-round opportunities as well as specific events for employees to take part in sustainability at Travis County. FY19 saw the Healthy People, Healthy Planet event which was an Earth Day celebration event put on by the CARE Program, Commissioner Shea’s office, and the Sustainability Team to promote healthy living and a healthy environment.

Other engagement opportunities included toner ambassadors where employees help lead toner recycling efforts in their office to generate revenue and reduce waste. The Sustainability Team also provides training at New Employee Orientation and recycling/sustainability training upon request, and through those avenues our team engaged more than 700 employees. Recycling training and new employee orientation presentations were not previously tracked where numbers are not offered.

Going forward, we will continue to track staff reached through trainings as well as providing online content to engage employees all across the County. The Sustainability Team partnered with HRMD to create an online Sustainability Training for online New Employee Orientation.



## Public Engagement

Travis County offers a number of services and engagement opportunities for residents to participate in sustainability efforts. From lunchtime learning events with guest speakers to takeback and recycling events, resident engagement continues to rise.

### Lake Travis Cleanup:

This year marked the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Lake Travis Cleanup. To celebrate to 25 years the Cleanup featured a brand new logo, a record number of volunteers, and a video recording of the stories of long-time participants and volunteers who were encouraged to share how they first became involved and what this effort means to them. While there was a decrease in the amount of recycled material, largely due to contamination caused by zebra mussels, the event was a roaring success in terms of engagement, litter collected, and participation by County residents and staff.

Event	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Number of Volunteers	887	734	1,200
Litter Removed	1.54 tons	1.78 tons	3.69 tons
Litter Recycled	1,211 lbs.	4,320 lbs.	894 lbs.

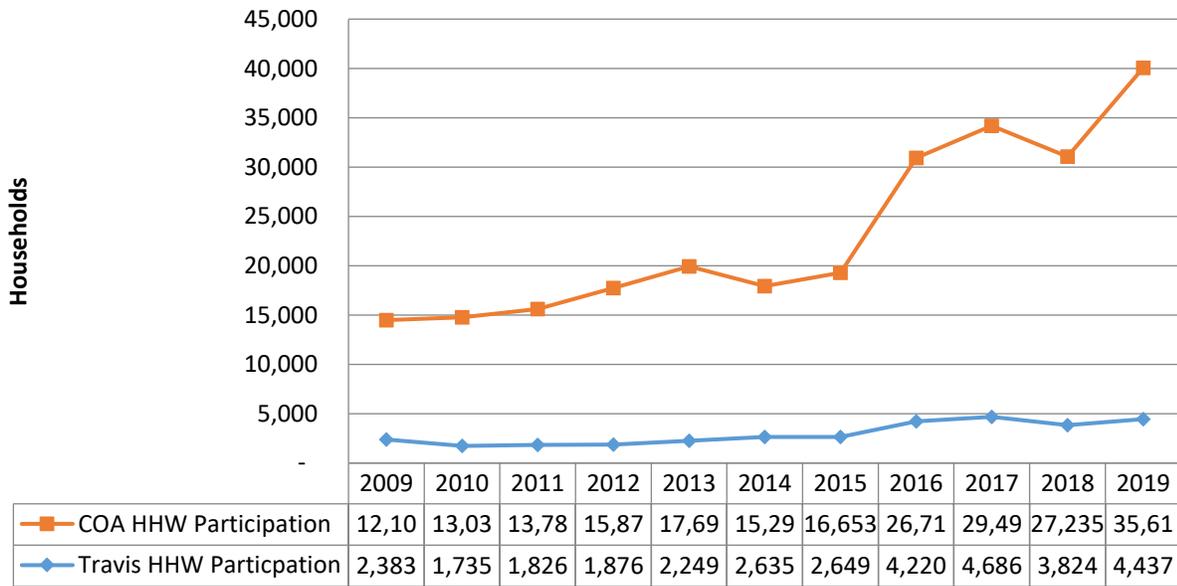


**Recycle and Reuse Drop-Off Center Interlocal Agreement:**

Travis County has an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Austin’s Resource Recovery Department where the County pays for all Travis County residents to have access to Austin’s Recycle and Reuse Drop-Off Center for household hazardous waste disposal and special recycling for items like plastic bags, Styrofoam, and electronics. Through this Interlocal Agreement, the County ensures that residents have access to proper disposal for harmful and toxic chemicals. Also through cost-sharing with the City of Austin, the County realizes significant savings rather than independently operating our own household hazardous waste collection center.

	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
<b>County Households Served</b>	4,686	3,824	4,437
<b>Cost</b>	\$143,037	\$135,567	\$141,605
<b>Amount Diverted</b>	50%	47%	47%

**Household Hazardous Waste Participation**



**Pharmaceutical Takeback Events:**

The Travis County Constable Offices and the Sustainability Team join forces with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) for a twice per year pharmaceutical takeback event to collect expired or unwanted medications or drugs. This is a no-questions-asked event with drop-off locations across the County. The purpose of the event is to ensure proper disposal of these items, so that they don't end up in the wrong hands or down the drain.

Pharmaceutical Takeback	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Amount Collected from Events	863 lbs.	1,734 lbs.	1,291 lbs.
Takeback Kiosk	612 lbs.	564 lbs.	666 lbs.



**Conserve Lunch and Learns:**

In FY19 the Conserve Lunch and Learn series took a deep dive into specific recyclable materials to understand what happens with items after they enter the recycling bin.

**LUNCH & LEARN**  
The Recycling Journey of a Can  
Wednesday January 20th 12-1 PM

**CONSERVE TRAVIS COUNTY**

**BALCONES RESOURCES**

**hops & grain brewing**

Bob McGivney, Balcones Recycling  
Austin Sales Director

Josh, Hops and Grains  
Founder and CEO

Companies are switching to aluminum cans for their beverages needs. Bring your lunch and hear from our experts what they think about aluminum containers.

Multipurpose Room B      700 Lavaca Street  
1st Floor                      Austin, TX 78701

Bob McGivney from Balcones Resources, a local recycler, generously shared his recycling expertise with attendees about how products are made, the recycling process at Balcones Resources, where recyclables are sold, and how the recyclables are made into new products. The series examined plastic bottles, as well as cardboard and paper. The series also featured perspectives from both the recycler, and a business representative who used products that contained recycled materials to give greater insight into the journey of the recyclables. By far, the most popular event in the series was the Lunch and Learn about plastic bottles.

In January (FY20), the team successfully live-streamed the “Recycling Journey of a Can” presentation. The Sustainability Team hopes to continue to offer live-streaming for Lunch and Learns in order to allow for even greater attendance and reach.

Conserve Lunch and Learn	Date	# of Attendees	Presenters
Cardboard and Paper Recycling	7/25/19	28	Balcones Resources
Journey of a Plastic Bottle	9/12/19	40	Balcones Resources and Whole Earth Provision Co.

**Christmas Tree Recycling:**

Event	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Number of Trees Collected	772	67	1,508
Collection Sites	3	2	4

Christmas Tree recycling saw a record-breaking year where we collected more trees than ever before. This tremendous result would not have been possible without the collaboration and efforts of TNR-Parks and Road and Bridge staff who managed the collection sites. All trees were mulched and reused in County operations- turning waste products into a resource for the County.



## Resiliency

This section has been added for future expansion. Resiliency is preparing for the impacts of climate change that are already happening as well as being better prepared for future events. Travis County is projected to see increases in the annual and seasonal average temperatures with more frequent high temperature extremes. Due to the hotter weather, more frequent drought conditions in the summer are projected. While the annual average precipitation is projected to change little, this area can expect more frequent extreme precipitation (> 2 inches of rain in 24 hours).

While 2019 was not filled with resiliency-focused projects, resiliency is an area Travis County will need to embrace and allocate resources towards. Resiliency is preparing for the impacts of climate change that are already happening as well as being better prepared for future events.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has challenged the resilience of County operations by testing the capacity of the County's computer network and employees' ability to work remotely. There will be other shocks in the form of extreme weather events, and through proper planning and preparation County employees, facilities, and processes can be adapted to absorb the shock and respond.

As future resiliency projects are developed and implemented, they will be included in this section of the Annual Sustainability Report to show Travis County's proactive approach to adapting to the impacts of climate change.



*Photo credit Russell Hughes*

## Looking Ahead

As we look to the future we will look to the Commissioners Court and County leadership to push for high-level organizational goals for the entire County to adopt and work towards. Many organizations such as Microsoft, Amazon, JetBlue, and Starbucks have all made commitments to be carbon neutral or even carbon negative. Other organizations set goals to increase the amount of renewable energy purchased or created, another approach is adopting science-based targets to meaningfully and measurably reduce emissions. The Sustainability Team advocates that Travis County adopt high-level sustainability goals for the entire organization to pursue.

Additionally, sustainability should be a value shared by all County employees and not just the sustainability team. Including sustainability and process improvement as a performance measure across the organization would keep sustainability on the minds of all employees and create an incentive for employees to find ways to innovate, improve processes, and conserve resources.

There should also be defined processes for data collection, sharing, and reporting in future Sustainability Reports to ensure information is available and accurate and that this is a collaborative process.

There are immediate changes that could be made such as exclusively using recycled content copy paper and encouraging managers to allow all applicable employees to telecommute at least once per week that could help to shift the County's everyday operations in ways that reduce our impact.

There are longer-term changes that could be made such as changing encouraging and attracting businesses with zero waste operations, or encourage more renewable power generation to Travis County. Also related to renewable power, the County could combine forces with other buyers in an aggregated power purchasing agreement (PPA) to develop additional clean energy capacity in the region.



The opportunities are as bountiful as the funding and support that the Commissioners Court provides. Climate leaders across the globe agree that 2020 is the decade that cannot be wasted with climate change inaction.

## Acknowledgements

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*Photo credit Heather Valey*