



For immediate release

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Austin City Hall is Prime Real Estate for Wild Urban Dwellers

Downtown Austin is a hot spot for urban living and residents of the wild kind have found the City Hall to host an assortment of features making it prime real estate. Monday, July 21, 2008 at 10:30 a.m., the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) will declare Austin City Hall as a “certified wildlife habitat.”

NWF has found that City Hall provides songbirds, butterflies, and other wildlife an enjoyable haven of habitat amidst the condos and buildings of Austin’s urban center. The designation of exceptional merit by NWF will make Austin the first city hall in Texas to receive habitat certification from NWF. [Quote from Susan Kaderka with NWF]

The mostly native landscape has provided homes for local critters since the building was completed in 2004. The landscape was designed to showcase a variety of native Texas trees and plants. The diversity of plant life has created a desirable place for birds and butterflies to find tasty food sources like seeds and berries, as well as places for resting, hiding and raising their young. The water features offer the wildlife residents a refreshing drink and place to bath and cool off in the summer heat.

In addition to the NWF wildlife habitat designation, Austin City Hall boasts other environmental certifications, which have included the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. “This latest honor by the National Wildlife Federation reflects Austin’s leadership in demonstrating how city facilities and landscapes can reflect the sustainability goals of our city,” said Austin Mayor, Will Wynn.

The habitat certification of City Hall is part of the city’s effort to become the first city in Texas and the largest metropolitan area in the country to become certified by NWF as a “Community Wildlife Habitat.”

Wildlife Austin, a new program of the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), is charged with earning the community-wide habitat certification. This fall, PARD will unveil



a “habitat demonstration garden” that will also be certified as a wildlife habitat. [Quote from Acting Director, Stuart Strong about importance of leading by example]

Austin City Council Member Lee Leffingwell says, “It is important to create a landscape that is friendly to a downtown business district, residential living and natural wildlife.” Creating spaces for animals in the downtown area is as easy as planting some native plants for butterflies and hummingbirds, putting out a bird bath, and providing a nest box or dense shrubs for cover and raising young.

A NWF certified wildlife habitat also uses sustainable gardening practices such as reducing or eliminating chemical fertilizers and pesticides, conserving water, planting native plants, harvesting rainwater, and composting. Austin City Council Member Mike Martinez adds, “Sustainable gardens, like those featured at City Hall are a smart choice for the environment, while often being easier on the property owner.”

Austinites can also take an active role in providing habitat for wildlife by taking the Neighborhood Habitat Challenge. For more information about the challenge and the Wildlife Austin program please visit www.KeepAustinWild.com.