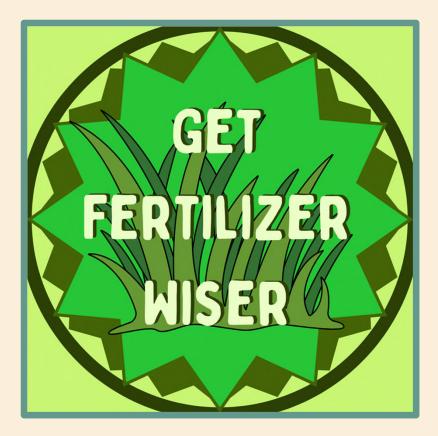
# ST. EDWARDS UNIVERSITY

#### 2024 CIVICS LAB



## What's the problem?

water



### fertilizer



plants



Austin groundwater is being degraded by phosphorus load from fertilizer carried in stormwater runoff

The overapplication of nitrogen fertilizers can put too many nutrients in water systems, leading to harmful algal blooms. The current utilization of non-native plants/ grasses requires more inputs, creating a greater strain on ecosystems and local resources.

### Get Fertilizer Wiser Initiative

Step III

#### **Voucher Program**

Implement a voucher program that provides homeowners who follow this process with a voucher to replace non-native plants with native ones.

Step I

#### **Educational Video and Survey**

An at home 30 min video for home-owners to educate on fertilizer use. It will further educate on native plants versus non-native plants. Pre-Program Survey would be administered on their planting, watering, and fertilizer habits.

#### \$100 Vouchers

These vouchers would be validated in local nurseries, supporting coverage of the expenses required for homeowners to make the switch to native and adaptive plants.

### Get Fertilizer Wiser Initiative

Step VI

#### **Use Vouchers at Local Nurseries**

Vouchers will be redeemable at a variety of Austin's local nurseries. We would get in contact with these nurseries to ensure participants are getting the appropriate materials for the change!

Step V

Step IV

#### 6 Months Later Follow-Up Survey

A survey would be conducted with similar questions to the survey taken at the beginning of the program.

#### **1** Year Later Last Survey

This survey would truly evaluate the effects of Get Fertilizer Wiser and how people's habits change when educated and incentivized to act.

### Get Fertilizer Wiser Campaign

#### Canvassing

Begin with St. Ed's neighborhoods, spread awareness of fertilizer overuse and the available rebates. Leave yard signs in their yards. Have them take a questionnaire.

Step II

Step I

#### Partnerships

Build partnerships with Local Business that are willing to support the campaign, and offer an incentive completing the educational content. Doing the same thing with Advocacy agencies, local city departments, and State departments.

#### **Educational Content**

Publish education content on Algal Bloom, water dependency due to over fertilisations, drought in lake travis, native and adaptive landscaping practices, and information on City of Austin incentives.

Step III

## Get Fertilizer Wiser Campaign

Step VI

#### **Roll out Partnership Incentives**

Step IV

Once a good educational structure is in place, and given some businesses have offered to partner and offer an incentive, we will reach out to initial homeowners with the opportunity to complete the education content on the website, and obtain the incentive.

Step V

#### **Further Canvassing**

At this point, we will begin targeting other neighborhoods, expanding the program, and gain more petitions.

**Homeowner Follow Up** 

We will follow up with the homeowners and see if they have taken any action due to the campaign.

#### Where we are now:

 Council Member José Velásquez intends to sponsor a resolution directing the city manager to implement the voucher program, or a similar pilot program.



- Our external relations team is working with local nurseries to build the network of partners where the voucher could be used.
- We are also working on expanding our current sponsor list, which currently includes:
  - Environment Texas
  - Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
  - Tillery Street Plant Company
  - The Watershed Association

