



NEWS RELEASE FOR INTERNAL REVIEW - NOT FOR EXTERNAL DISTRIBUTION

Media Contact:
Sarah Richardson
GCI Group
srichardson@gcigroup.com
Direct: 512-542- 2857; Cell 972-658-8503

**CITY OF AUSTIN, LOCAL RETAILERS AND KEEP AUSTIN BEAUTIFUL
ANNOUNCE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT TO REDUCE AND RECYCLE
PLASTIC BAGS AND PROMOTE REUSABLE BAGS**
New Reusable Bag Available for Austinites April 5

AUSTIN, Texas— April 2, 2008 — The City of Austin, local retailers and Keep Austin Beautiful today announced a new collaborative effort to reduce and recycle plastic bags and promote the use of reusable bags. Keep Austin Beautiful also launched an awareness campaign called “Austin’s Got a Brand New Bag” to support the initiative and unveiled a new reusable bag available for Austinites.

Austin City Council Member Lee Leffingwell and the Solid Waste Services Department are leading the City of Austin’s voluntary, 18-month plan to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags and ultimately reduce the number of plastic bags ending up in the city’s landfills by 50 percent.

"I appreciate the commitments that our partners have made to ensure we dramatically reduce the volume of plastic bags entering our landfill," said Council Member Leffingwell. "With additional recycling opportunities from the stores and at the curb, more reusable bags, and fewer plastic bags in circulation, we expect to see less plastic entering the waste stream and additional opportunities for new products produced by recycling. Our approach hopefully will set a precedent for other cities, states and nations to implement."

To support the recycling effort, the City of Austin’s Solid Waste Services Department (SWS) will launch a curbside plastic bag collection pilot program in May. The four-month program for about 5,000 residential customers will enable SWS to analyze the efficiency and feasibility of collecting plastic bags at the curbside.

“We hope the plastic bag education efforts will raise citizen awareness to the extent that we can exceed the goals established by the participating partners,” said City of Austin Solid Waste Services Director Willie Rhodes.

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Key collaborators in the initiative include the Texas Retailers Association and participating local retailers including H-E-B, Randalls Food Markets, Target, Walgreen's, Wal-Mart and Whole Foods Market. These retailers are working toward managing their operational procedures and influencing consumer behavior to reduce the use of plastic bags and encourage the recycling of plastic bags by prominently positioning reusable bags and plastic bag recycling bins in their stores.

"Significantly reducing the volume of plastic bags and plastic film is a goal we all share," said Texas Retailers Association President and CEO Ronnie Volkening. "This cooperative effort with retailers, the City of Austin and Keep Austin Beautiful is unique, and we believe is grounded in the recognition that our best solutions to this challenge can be achieved by working together to change our collective behavior as retailers, as consumers and as a city."

Keep Austin Beautiful is supporting the effort with an awareness and education campaign called "Austin's Got a Brand New Bag" and by making available a new reusable bag.

"Keep Austin Beautiful is dedicated to providing the education and resources the people of our community need so they are empowered to take personal actions that make a positive difference to our environment," said Keep Austin Beautiful Executive Director Brian Block. "The 'Austin's Got a Brand New Bag' campaign asks all Austinites to reduce their use of disposable bags, start using a reusable bag and reuse and recycle their paper or plastic bags."

The new reusable bags will be available to the public Saturday, April 5 at a campaign kick-off event from 12:30-2:30 p.m. at Waterloo Park (403 East 15th) following Keep Austin Beautiful's annual Clean Sweep event and volunteer party. Austin residents who bring five plastic bags for recycling will receive a free reusable bag.

More information on "Austin's Got a Brand New Bag", including details on where to buy reusable bags and recycle plastic bags, can be found at <http://www.abrandnewbag.org>.

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About Keep Austin Beautiful

Keep Austin Beautiful is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that inspires and educates individuals and our community towards greater environmental stewardship. Keep Austin Beautiful's goal is to clean, beautify and protect the Austin environment through physical improvements and hands-on education. The organization focuses on litter prevention, beautification and community improvement and waste reduction and resource conservation. More than 10,000 people volunteer their time each year, committing 40,000 hours to cleaning and beautifying Austin through Keep Austin Beautiful programs and events. For more information on Keep Austin Beautiful, visit www.KeepAustinBeautiful.org.