

BY CARMEN MORGAN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Training for the Future

The Construction Inspection Division is helping to build tomorrow's leaders one inspector at a time.



Recently, the Construction Inspection Division hired a new trainer that will perform a wide array of important functions. Namely, the position was created to help inspectors with technological advances in field collection and to promote consistency across the division. Enter Terry O'Connor.

Terry is an Engineering Associate and was hired to fill the new role. He began his career with the City in the Construction Inspection Division in 2006, then transferred to the Planning and Development Review Department in 2010. There, he worked in the Environmental Division. Now, the Construction Inspection Division is proud to welcome him back to the team.

One of the main functions of Terry's job will be assisting the supervisors and lead inspectors with inspector training courses. Examples include Advanced Soils, Duties and Responsibilities, and Basic Concrete. He will also be responsible for designing and putting in place new, exciting, and

creative ways to promote education by overhauling the division's training classes.

Terry is also responsible for helping new inspectors understand the division's policies and procedures. In addition, he oversees the inspector trainee program and tracks skill-based pay. He also ensures that inspectors receive all the required training and continuing education hours, professional licenses, and certifications.

As the Capital Delivery Program goes electronic, Terry will be on hand to form and carry out new processes. Terry certainly has a big job to do, and some very exciting projects ahead!

Inspiring Creative Pursuits and Artistic Vitality

A look into Austin's thriving creative economy and the City programs that foster its growth.

If downtown is Austin's heart, then creativity is its soul. Austin was built on the shoulders of creative giants, who laid the foundation for creative expression and brought the city to life with arts and culture. From entrepreneur Edwin Waller, who designed the downtown grid – to architect A.D. Stenger, whose modern buildings brought character to neighborhoods – to counterculture

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musicians Eddie Wilson and Jim Franklin who established the Armadillo World Headquarters and the birth of a music city, their contributions infused Austin with creativity and set the stage for future generations.

Today, Austin is still a powerhouse when it comes to attracting independent, creative thinkers, and more than ever, creativity gives Austin a competitive advantage over other cities. The 2012 Creative Sector Economic Impact Study rated Austin as one of the top leaders in arts-related occupations. In 2010, the creative sector accounted for just over \$4.35 billion in economic output and made up almost 49,000 permanent jobs. So who are the creatives? With the rise of the information age, the public defines creative jobs more broadly. "Creative" jobs include artists who work in music, theater, food, fashion, visual and performing arts; workers in the fields of technology, graphic and digital media, research and design; and business owners.

Attracting creative workers to Austin benefits all citizens by helping build a strong economy, fostering an exceptional quality of life, and helping improve city planning and building processes through innovation. The Imagine Austin Plan acknowledges that arts, culture, and creativity are essential to the city's unique and distinctive identity, and are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life and economy.

The "Creative Economy Priority Program" of Imagine Austin identifies action steps to ensure that Austin stays creative. The Cultural Arts Division (CAD) of the Economic Development Department is charged with carrying out this program, which provides the blueprint for the City's role in engaging the creative community in the development of city life. The mission of the Cultural Arts Division is to nurture, preserve and promote the arts, cultural and creative industries in order to strengthen and sustain Austin's dynamic cultural vitality.

As measured by The Urban Institute, cultural vitality is predicated by the presence of opportunities (spaces, places) to participate in the arts, participation and access to arts-making such as festivals and schools, and financial support systems for cultural participation. Recognizing the value of integrating art throughout the city, the Cultural Arts Division is committed to arts-based strategies and artist inclusion to support the work of city departments in planning and development, community engagement, infrastructure and redevelopment projects. Artists participating in these efforts produce a lasting and meaningful impact when given the ability to play out their original ideas in public spaces. Various Cultural Arts Division programs help ensure that arts, culture and creativity remain vital in Austin:

CREATIVE SPACE DEVELOPMENT

Through creative space development efforts, staff works with developers, business owners, nonprofits, foundations, and City of Austin departments to promote affordable new spaces where creative professionals may live and work, and where arts, culture, and businesses can thrive. To support this effort, CAD commissioned a report titled "Austin ArtSpace Market Survey for Individual Creatives, Arts and Cultural Organizations, and Creative Business" to supply City leadership, local developers and community members with valid statistics on Austin's space needs and market demand.

ART IN PUBLIC PLACES (AIPP)

Through the AIPP Program, artists are selected by professional citizen panels to participate on CIP project design teams. Working alongside architects and engineers in the conceptual design phase, artists are able to participate in the community engagement process and contribute to project goals, themes and designs for integrated public art opportunities.

In the case of two recent streetscape improvement projects, artists played a key role in the planning and design of the projects. Design team artists Barbara Grygutis and Jennifer Chenoweth provided artistic vision for the Second Street District



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Streetscape Improvement Project and Seventh Street Corridor Improvement Project, respectively. Their participation lent identity and cohesion to the corridors, orchestrating opportunities for site-specific artwork in concert with the streetscape improvement plans.

To further explore the “water” theme developed by the Second Street Design Team, nine artists travelled along the Texas rivers and met with scientists, environmentalists and residents to inform their work. Their research resulted in a two-sided coin both figuratively and literally as in the case of “Currency” by artist Jill Bedgood. Soon to be installed at the northeast corner of Second Street and San Jacinto will be hundreds of coins embedded into the sidewalk as if scattered on the ground, with images evoking the natural beauty of the rivers while also reminding us of the river’s fragile condition as a result of the shipping industry and urbanization.

Chenoweth’s involvement in the Seventh Street design team resulted in an art master plan with artworks inspired by the cultures and color themes of East Austin. The “obeliscos” incorporate hand-made panels by eight local artists whose works reflect the history and unique character of the neighboring East Austin community. In both cases, the artworks act as landmarks and informal wayfinding aides while providing the streetscapes with a tangible, memorable, pedestrian-scale experience.

TEMPO

Last year the Cultural Arts Division launched the temporary public art program TEMPO, named for the rhythmic timing of installations anticipated across the city. TEMPO commissions artists to create temporary public art in neighborhood parks with goals of attracting new and emerging artists to the field of public art, enriching the civic dialogue, and engaging public parks in a unique way.

Coordinated with the East Austin Studio Tour, “Below” by artists Jacob Villanueva and Jeff Clarke was installed in the Boggy Creek Greenbelt. Using simple materials and L.E.D. light technology, the artwork relays data on the Boggy Creek Watershed and neighborhood survey responses. The work invited the community to participate in the installation and communicated the important natural aspects of the neighborhood.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS & CULTURAL FUNDING

Through public programs such as Austin’s New Year and The People’s Gallery, which directly employ artists and arts organizations in the production of events, the City served over 14,000 residents in 2013 with unique Austin experiences. This year we will invest over \$7 million in cultural funding in partnerships with creative non-profit arts organizations and individual artists with a goal of serving over 7.25 million people with public performances. These activities range from Ballet Austin’s production of The Nutcracker to HONK, a festival of community bands that occur in streets and parks across the city.

With continued vision for a thriving creative economy, the City has an ever growing opportunity to more deeply engage creative individuals in conversations of how the arts can play a role in the future development of the city. Imagine a city infused with arts and culture – where art plays a role in civic dialogue to inspire social change, where artists contribute unifying visuals to strengthen urban connectivity, and where the community gathers to express their own creativity and celebrate diversity. As one of the most creative cities, where values are placed on technology, talent and tolerance, Austin is in a great position to fully use its creative sector to inspire continued greatness and pay tribute to those who came before us.

