

GREEN CHOICE

**AUSTIN ENERGY** 

## MEET THE TEAM



Carson Lindauer

STRATEGY DIRECTOR



Bri Zlmmerman

CREATIVE



Abby Buretz

MEDIA DIRECTOR



Pedrum Roasouli

STRATEGY DIRECTOR



Rissa Broudy

ICM DIRECTOR

Here at Invisible Creative we strive to create meaningful and strategic messaging and integrated campaigns to empower our clients and their brands.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES

RESEARCH

STRATEGY

CAMPAIGN

PLAN AND BUDGET

EVALUATION

APPENDIX

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Austin Energy has worked to meet the energy needs of Austin residents and companies since 1895. The non-profit enterprise is customer-driven and community-focused. Invisible Creative is prepared to maximize Austin Energy's efforts, specifically pertaining to their GreenChoice program, a subscription-based service providing 100 percent Texas wind energy. This campaign will ultimately strive to build residential customer awareness of GreenChoice and generate enough subscriptions to meet the goal set by Austin City Council: to power Austin using 65 percent renewable energy by 2027.

Through primary and secondary research, we gathered consumer insights that explained customer sentiment about environmentally-friendly products and the GreenChoice program. By engaging in in-depth conversations with homeowners around Austin, we found that individuals (regardless of their income) would pay a slight premium for products and services that better their environment. Despite this shared belief, Austinites lack a deep understanding and awareness of renewable energy sources and product offerings. This insight informed our campaign goal of increasing this awareness among Austin residents.

In today's environment, messages command the attention of consumers from every angle. In order to build awareness for GreenChoice, Invisible Creative must first identify how to gain the attention of consumers in the first place. We have crafted a light-hearted, relatable campaign that positions GreenChoice as a simple choice to better the city our audience calls home. The messaging lends consumers the perspective that the cost of the program is virtually the same as what they typically spend during their daily lives in Austin. Our campaign will share this message using a variety of traditional and experiential advertising vehicles. By the end of our campaign, we will have everyone encouraging others to KEEP AUSTIN WINDY.



## COMPANY OVERVIEW

As a community-owned utility, Austin Energy is a non-for-profit enterprise of the City of Austin. It was established in 1895 and has since returned its profits to the city's general fund to finance other city services. Austin Energy uses innovative technology to supply clean, affordable energy to residents with the goal of building a better Austin. To further this effort, Austin Energy launched the GreenChoice program in 2000. This gives customers the opportunity to pay a monthly premium (averaging around \$7) to meet their needs using strictly renewable Texas wind energy. The program is part of the pathway to reach the Austin City Council goal of 65 percent renewable energy by 2027. GreenChoice currently has more than 19,000 subscribers, ranking Austin Energy as one of the leaders in renewable energy sales, outperforming more than 850 utilitysponsored programs in the country. However, there is significant room for growth in renewable energy usage by Austin residents. To reach the goal set by Austin City Council, nearly 617,000 consumers would need to opt-in to GreenChoice by 2027.

## INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Though Austin Energy does not compete for market share as a government utility, the community they serve is often overrun with green messaging. Furthermore, when competing for consumer attention, Austin Energy often has multiple messages that need to reach the same audience. For example, consumers cannot opt-in to GreenChoice and use solar panels simultaneously.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the renewable energy sector is steadily expanding across the country. Providers are offering energy services sourced from wind, solar, water, thermal and nuclear power. The Department also notes that, as of 2017, three of every four customers are served by investor-owned utility companies (IOU). The two largest IOUs are located in California. As California residents are increasingly moving to Texas, they are served by publicly-owned utility companies (POU) for the first time.



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Spread knowledge of Austin Energy's GreenChoice
- Accumulate new subscribers, maintain existing clients
- Find the touch points to customers and create a lasting message
- Create a GreenChoice campaign that forms an alliance with our existing brand/message

## PROBLEM

Residents of the Greater Austin area are unaware of Austin Energy's GreenChoice program offering.

#### STRENTHS

- Consumers have no obligation with the GreenChoice program, can opt-out at any time without penalty
  - Lends a unique opportunity to renters to use Texas wind energy without absorbing an up-front cost for solar panels
- Austin Energy already has the contact information of their target audience
- No direct competition as a communityowned utility

#### WEAKNESSES

- Awareness among consumers of GreenChoice program offering
- The program requires an extra cost
- Customers only contact when they have a problem (inconsistent contact points
- Limited opportunity for PR/earned media because people don't want to follow/share about their energy company
- Print advertising options are limited to ensure an environmentally-friendly campaign

#### **OPPORTUNITIES**

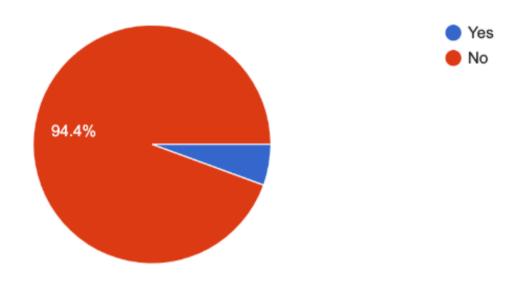
- Current subscriber count is nearly 20,000 which means room for growth
- Spread awareness about renewable energy and GreenChoice program
- Tangible, sharable goal of 65% renewable energy in Austin by 2027 (617,000 subscribers)
- Earth Day is April 22, aligning with the opportunity period to recruit subscribers before energy bills and usage increase in the summer months

#### THREATS

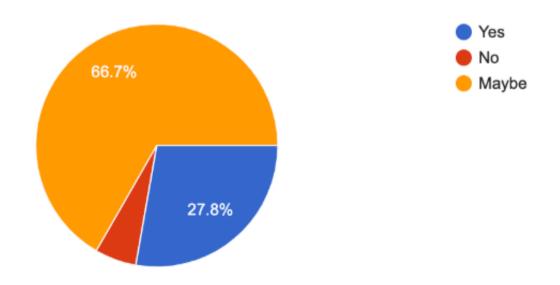
- Consumers in Austin are often met with an overhaul of 'Green' messaging
- Other renewable energy options offered by Austin Energy, can't use both (ex. solar panels)
- Consumers lack understanding of the benefits of renewable wind energy, could underestimate value of opting-in
- The summer months typically carry higher energy bills, opt-ins are uncommon during this time



## Have you ever heard of the Austin Energy service Greenchoice?



If you knew that Greenchoice was a 100% renewable energy from Texas winds and only cost \$7 per month would you opt in?



## KEY FINDINGS

"I understand that it is a renewable resource that is being harnessed in west texas. I know that though it is a great and probably an ultimate choice in the future, the turbines are unsightly

"not a whole lot (aka practically nothing)

"More expensive than other options but provides a sustainable option"

"Not much either than the obvious role of wind in it"

"I know that it is an alternative source of energy and that much of it is produced in the Great Plains along midwestern farmlands."

## PARTICIPANT 1 FEMALE EARLY 40'S INCOME ABOVE 150K



## InDepth Interviews

Our first participant had not heard of Green Choice until our original survey. She attempts to participate in eco-friendly activities when possible but does not go looking for them. She hears about similar options mostly through word of mouth from neighbors and friends. She says "It definitely gives a product or service more credibility when I hear those around me are using it too". She also says that what motivates her to make a purchase is fully understanding what she is purchasing and knowing how her extra money is making a difference. She compared opting into Green choice to donating at the grocery store check out. She is more likely to donate when she understands where her money is going. She also appreciates an easy process. Overall, participant 1 would like to opt into GreenChoice after speaking with me. Talking to someone and understanding the product helped show her the benefits and she could see that helping with others

"Dealing with Austin Utilities has never been a fun activity in my mind so would opting into this service require a lot of time and hoops to jump throug

#### PARTICIPANT 2 MALE LATE 50'S INCOME ABOVE 150K



## InDepth Interviews

Additionally, our second participant had never heard of GreenChoice. He. however, was less inclined to care about it. He says that he is overall satisfied with his current utilities and to make a change to the system he has been dealing with for over 30 years would take a lot of convincing. He works in an eco-friendly office in downtown Austin that makes an effort to keep the world green ei. not using straws, turning off lights, and no plastic. He says that in general as a citizen of Austin, you can't help but be eco-friendly but at his age he is pretty set in his ways. Price point is important for him but he is willing to pay a little extra if he knows it is doing good for the environment. However, he is very cognizant of his monthly payments versus a one time spend so decisions regarding repeat costs would take a lot more thought and convincing.

"It may be too late for me but I know my children and their children will be looking at those options"



## CUSTOMER TYPOLOGY

As understood from the given project scope, GreenChoice's primary target market consists of well-educated, homeowners and renters in their 30's and 40's. The primary group is single and lives in a non-family household. The secondary group is married. Women are targeted more than men, as they are often careful researchers and informed purchasers. The target consumer is already a buyer of natural and environmentally-friendly/safe products and is overall socially responsible. They are highly-connected to the latest technology and also enjoy online shopping. They frequently use public transportation and live close to work. Overall, they are goal-oriented risk takers who love music, food, activity and traveling.

After analyzing this description and conducting our own primary research, we have created a campaign that fully caters to this group of "Metro Renters, "Emerald City", and "Young and Restless" consumers. We have carefully researched what it means to be a home-owner in Austin and to create a difference in this community. These insights have guided the overall strategy of our campaign to generate measurable, meaningful results.



# AUSTIN

## OVERALL MESSAGE

Austin Energy has powered-up the city of Austin, Texas since 1895. They are leaders in innovation and create ways for each resident to become a bigger and more sustainable part of their community. The primary goal of our campaign is to create overwhelming awareness of Austin Energy's GreenChoice program offering. 'Keep Austin Windy', a play on the beloved saying 'Keep Austin Weird', is an awareness campaign that is unique to Austin and differentiated from other sustainable advertising. The campaign we have created is local, relatable and light-hearted. We believe that by positioning the monetary investment for GreenChoice in terms of familiar products and service Austinites enjoy, the target audience will assume the intended perspective of GreenChoice subscribers. They will understand that for a minimal cost each month, they can do their part in protecting and furthering the city that they call home.







## MARKETING OBJECTIVES



Increase consumer awareness of Austin Energy's GreenChoice program offering.



Position GreenChoice as a simple, affordable choice consumers can better the Austin environment.



Position incurred costs from opting-in in terms of products and services common in Austin using a light-hearted tone.

 Further personal connections to the cause by using hyperfocused, localized messaging.



Focus promotional efforts during periods commonly experiencing low opt-in rates, such as summer.



Ensure all promotional efforts are environmentally-friendly to maintain integrity of campaign.

## KEEP AUSTIN WINDY

out-of-home





## BILLBOARDS

We suggest purchasing a digital billboard to continue promoting the 'Keep Austin Windy' campaign. Our team believes the location would be best off of I-35 near 6th street due to the high vehicle traffic in this area.

#### **METRICS:**

Track website visits via unique QR code







## METRO

We recommend Austin Energy install interior bus advertisements and full-back bus advertisements during the 'Keep Austin Windy' campaign. The average age of the CapMetro user is 35 years old, falling within the age range of the target audience. These installations will be eye-catching and simply understood, with catch phrases that are meant to be very relatable for Austin residents. The target audience lives close to work and frequently uses public transportation.

#### **METRICS:**

Track website visits via unique QR code





#### SUMMER EVENT!

CHOOSE GREEN CHOICE FOR FREE ENTRACE TO BARTON CREEK!





#### BARTON SPRINGS

We have conceived a fun and interactive event that meets our target audience on their local turf. It will take place on the first day of summer, June 21st. Austin Energy employees will be stationed outside of Barton Springs Pool, a favorite among Austinites. They will have prepurchased 200 entrance tickets and will be offering them to Barton Springs customers on a first-come, first-serve basis. Customers will receive these tickets in exchange for opting in to GreenChoice upon arrival. There will be a booth and tent set up near the entrance to explain the purpose of GreenChoice. Austin Energy employees will be at the booth with iPads to facilitate the opt-in process. We suggest posting this event on the City Hall event calendar as well as creating City of Austin web banners prior to.

#### **METRICS:**

Tracking the number of people that come that day (contact Barton Springs) and then tracking the number who sign up.

## KEEP AUSTIN WINDY

## promotional





## EARTH DAY

April 22, 2021. We suggest partnering with El Arrovo to create a clever slogan\* for their famous sign on West 5th street. Additionally, we would partner with the Austin Motel to post a similar message using their sign on South Congress. These installments would supplement our largest Earth Day promotion, an interactive mural in Zilker Park. We will commission famous muralist Mike Jonhston to paint a large canvas in Zilker Park with the 'Keep Austin Windy' slogan on it. We would then have Austin Energy employees on site with iPads giving park-goers the opportunity to opt-in to Green Choice. If they opt in they will get the opportunity to sign the mural and receive a Pinwheel. All three of these installments will be placed in areas with heavy foot traffic to increase visibility. They will further generate buzz as people take photos of them and share them on social media. After Earth Day, the mural will be hung outside the Austin Energy office located on Barton Springs Road near heavy vehicle traffic.

#### **METRICS:**

Track opt-ins on Earth day, track social media mentions/tags



## PINWHEEL

We know that Austin Energy currently gives subscribers a window cling and other merchandise upon opting-in, but we would like to propose a different and/or additional hand-out. Through our research, we know that many consumers will make decisions based on the efforts their peers are making to better their community. Yard pinwheels made from recycled plastic are an affordable, attention-grabbing alternative that will generate word-ofmouth buzz. We believe these pinwheels will ignite conversation among consumers and drive awareness of GreenChoice.

#### **METRICS:**

Track number of remaining pinwheels

## KEEP AUSTIN WINDY

## media



HI BRI!
YOU ARE
MAKING THE
WORLD A
BETTER PLACE



## EMAIL

While we know GreenChoice is already active in the Austin Utilities Now customer newsletter, we suggest adding a monthly email blast. As observed from focus group responses, people want to understand the effect their participation in GreenChoice has on the environment. This email would include a digital meter representing how many customers have opted in to GreenChoice in hopes of reaching the goal set by Austin City Council. We will also include facts to represent how the amount of subscriptions are helping the environment, such as the equivalent number of trees conserved. The email list will be pulled from the Austin Utilities database. This will allow current subscribers see the difference they are making while showing non-subscribers how they too can make an impact by opting-in.

#### **METRICS:**

Track click-through-rate from monthly email

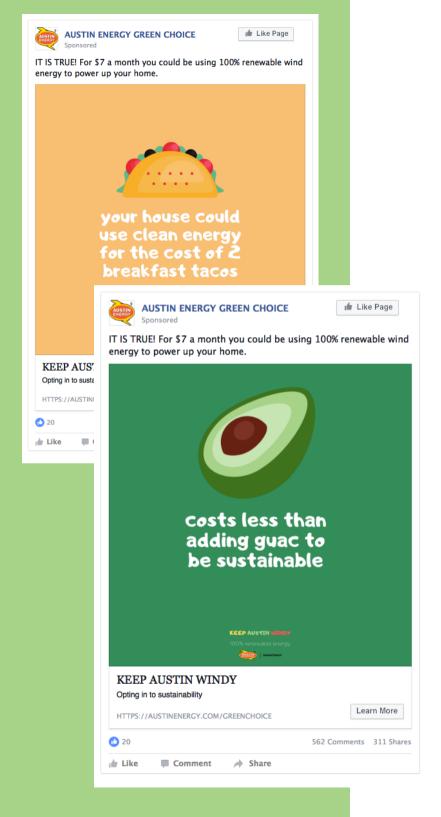


### PODCAST

Austin is the fastest-growing city in America by population. Additionally, it's role as a tech hub has furthered its reputation as being trendy and progressive. While various forms of media are used to reach customers. Austinites are typically drawn to new media. Podcasts are a perfect example, as the well-known KUT 90.5 podcast in Austin attracts 400,000 monthly viewers. The Austin demographic is intrinsically drawn to this form of media. This form of media attracts consumers because it engages with them on a personal level. Austin Energy's existing partnership with KUT 90.5 has proved beneficial, and we recommend maintaining this partnership to further audience engagement.

#### **METRICS:**

Track podcast impressions



## FACEBOOK

To bolster awareness and generate subscriptions for the GreenChoice program, we suggest using Facebook ads during the first flight of the campaign. The Facebook ads will encourage opt-ins in celebration of Earth Day on April 22, 2021. These will include light-hearted graphics that illuminate GreenChoice and it's effort to better Austin through renewable wind energy. These ads will also include a link to the GreenChoice information page. The ads will reach the target audience of residents and homeowners in their 30s-40s, as they are highly connected to the web and frequent Facebook users.

#### **METRICS:**

Click-through-rate to GreenChoice url



## MEDIA PLAN

Invisible Creative suggests Austin Energy build stronger awareness of the GreenChoice program among Austin residents through traditional media and experiential approaches.

We recommend allocating the campaign budget to ensure maximum exposure during optimal periods from April-September. Our campaign consists of a mix of continuous and flighted insertions. The three flights are meant to engage with the target market in different ways throughout the campaign, all while tying into the overall campaign identity of 'Keep Austin Windy.'

- Bus interior
- Marquee signs

#### Media

- Facebook ads
- Podcastsponsorship

#### **Promotional**

Pinwheel kickoff

## Flight I April I-30 Austin Earth Day

This heavy-up period is intended to kick-start the 'Keep Austin Windy' campaign by reminding the target market that Earth Day is approaching on April 22, 2021. The goal is to generate audience awareness while sustainability is top of mind. They should be made aware that GreenChoice is an easy, effortless way to make an impact on Austin's long-term sustainability efforts. The advertising and PR efforts included in this flight will reach the target audience at multiple touchpoints, including their commute to work, weekly Austin podcast update and daily Facebook check-up.

Bus interior

#### Media

- Event pressrelease
- Podcast advertisement

#### **Promotional**

- City Hall event calendar
- City of Austin web banners

# Flight 2 June 10-21, 2021 Opt-In for Barton Springs

The strategies outlined in this flight employ experiential, locally-focused mediums. After increasing awareness among the target market in flight one, this flight focuses on driving immediate subscriptions. To do this, the media plan allocates budget for a Barton Creek opt-in event. This event offers Austin residents the opportunity to opt-in immediately for free access to Barton Springs Pool, immediately driving GreenChoice subscriptions. Additionally, this event offers a unique, in-person way to interact with community members about GreenChoice. In result, this will drive awareness and increase buzz for Austin Energy.

- Billboard
- Bus full-back

#### Media

Facebook ads

## Flight 3 September 1-30, 2021 Fall for GreenChoice

This heavy-up period is intended to further drive awareness at the beginning of fall. This strategy takes place at a time when many residents' energy bills begin to decrease after the summer heat. We understand that this change in energy use will make more residents willing to pay the additional \$7 subscription price. Therefore, this final push will engage remaining target audience members to make the initial opt-in decision.

Mural

#### Media

Email campaign

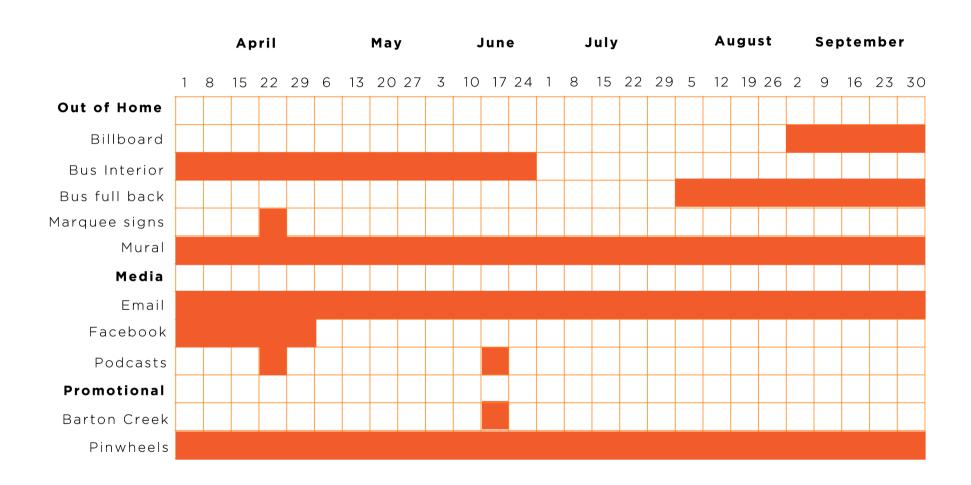
#### **Promotional**

Pinwheels

## Continuous April I- September 30, 2021 'Keep Austin Windy'

We recommend continuous mediums that focus on overall brand awareness and education among Austin homeowners and renters eligible for Austin Energy GreenChoice.

## TIMELINE



## BUDGET

Item	Units	Cost per unit	Total Cost	% of Budget	Average impressions	Total Impressions
Advertising						
Digital Billboard	1	\$5,500	\$5,500	22%	780000/month	780,000
Bus interior	20	\$33	\$1,980	8%	3,000 per ad/day	5,400,000
Bus full back	4	\$1,047	\$8,376	34%	15,000 per ad/day	1,800,000
Restaurant banner	2	\$0	\$0	0.00%	10,000/day	70,000
Mural	1	\$3,000	\$3,000	12%		
Media						
Email	1	\$0	\$0	0%	470,000	470,000
Facebook	2	\$7.19	\$1,438	5.75%	100,000/month	200,000
Podcasts	2	\$1,500	\$3,000	12.00%	10000/podcast	20,000
Promotional/Other						
Barton Springs opt-in Event	200	\$5	\$1,000	4.00%	2,000	2,000
Pinwheels	800	\$0.25	\$200	0.80%	6,000	6,000
Contingency						
			\$500	2%		_
Total			24994	100%		

Total Expenditures 24,994

Total Impressions 8,748,000



For this campaign, Invisible Creative strategically selected vehicles that will enable Austin Energy's GreenChoice to reach the target audience of Austin homeowners and renters.

The GreenChoice target customer is socially responsible and buys green, environmentally-friendly products and services. They are highly connected to technology and actively use the web. Therefore, we have allocated part of our budget toward digital and out-of-home tactics during the month of Earth Day (April 22, 2021). This part of the budget will cover the Austin mural and Facebook ads. These efforts will kick-start the beginning of our campaign.

Since the target market frequently uses public transportation, we have devoted a substantial portion of our budget toward bus advertisements. From our research, the Austin MetroBus is the most frequently used public transportation for the workforce in Austin, Texas. We strategically chose bus interior and full-back bus advertisements because Austin residents will see the campaign at multiple touchpoints, both while riding the bus and while buses circulate the city center. Additionally, a billboard will further drive awareness among Austin residents.

We know that GreenChoice opt-in numbers decrease during the summer due to residents' already-high energy bills. However, we allocated part of the budget to increase awareness during the first day of summer in June. This part of the budget includes the Barton Creek opt-in event, including 200 pre-purchased Barton Creek admission tickets.

The 2% contingency budget will account for the possible costs of the local Austin restaurant marquee signs at El Arroyo and The Austin Motel.

Finally, we understand that driving awareness is difficult in a saturated advertising environment. However, engaging with the audience in a consistent manner at multiple touch points will help the audience become educated and more likely to opt-in to GreenChoice. Therefore, we have allocated a sufficient amount of our budget to continuous efforts.



#### Objective 1: Spread knowledge of Austin Energy's GreenChoice

By measuring the impressions on our bus, billboard and social media promotions, we can understand how many people are seeing our message. The projected overall impressions totals around 8,000,000 over the course of the 6-month campaign. We believe this strategy will allow our message to effectively reach the target audience.

#### Objective 2: Accumulate new subscribers, maintain existing clients

By measuring the amount of opt-ins at the customer-focused events, we will be able to track the change in number of physical subscribers. Both the Barton Springs and Zilker Park events accumulate immediate participation and will result in word-of-mouth recommendations to boost awareness.

#### Objective 3: Find the touchpoints to customers and create a lasting message

By measuring the click-through rates on our social media promotions and the QR codes scanned from OOH promotions, we will effectively measure the viewers who saw our message and actively sought more information about it. The 'Keep Austin Windy' campaign is simple, yet memorable and connects to viewers on a personal level. By creating touch points that reference \$7 costs incurred during everyday life in Austin, the campaign peaks audience interest and encourages them to participate in GreenChoice for merely \$7 per month.

## Objective 4: Create a GreenChoice campaign that forms an alliance with our existing brand/message

By measuring the amount of recycled pinwheels around the City of Austin, we can understand the amount of customers aware of GreenChoice and Austin Energy overall. We have intentionally created a sustainable campaign to align with Austin Energy's current values. Specifically, we have relied on web platforms, such as email and Facebook, rather than print messaging.



Invisible Creative is excited to help Austin Energy spread their message and generate new subscribers for the GreenChoice program. Our strategy is rooted in in-depth research and we are confident that it will best meet your overall goals.

Ultimately, our campaign strives to make the GreenChoice message as recognizable as the beloved slogan, 'Keep Austin Weird'. We have thoroughly enjoyed learning more about Austin Energy and the values upheld by the GreenChoice program. We are excited to see the city we call home run on affordable, sustainable and reliable energy.

Thank you Austin Energy!



Interview transcripts

Participant 1: Why have you not opted into green choice?

Because I had not heard of it until now. I try to participate in eco-friendly activities when possible but do not go seeking the opportunities rather participate when asked to. Where have you heard of similar options?

Mostly word of mouth, I have a friend that uses a hybrid car and he really loves it. I also have some friends that use solar panels. It definitely gives a product or service more credibility when I hear those around me are using it too. What messaging motivates you to make purchase decisions?

Why not?

I would first and foremost say truly understanding what I am purchasing. Lot's of times when giving extra money at the grocery store to a charity when the cashier doesn't explain where it's going I am skeptical. I'd say green choice is very similar. How is my extra money making a difference?

I would also say an easy process to obtain the service. Dealing with Austin Utilities has never been a fun activity in my mind so would opting into this service require a lot of time and hoops to jump through? Participant 2:Why have you not opted into green choice?

I haven't heard of it until now and I have been pretty satisfied with my Austin utilities up until now. To make a change like that with a system ive been using for over 30 years would take a lot of convincing.

Where have you heard of similar options?

- one american center\* - gold building I work in an eco-friendly office that makes an effort to keep the world green - not using straws, turning off lights, no plastic. In general as a citizen of Austin, you can't help but be eco-friendly. I am old enough to be set in my ways but you can't help but change if the cities are changing and doing my part. For example I realize an electric car might make sense but I just enjoy driving my current car which i'm embarrassed to say is an SUV. It may be too late for me but I know my children and their children will be looking at those options

What messaging motivates you to make purchase decisions?

Why not?

Price point is important for me but i'm willing to pay a little extra if i know it is doing good for the environment. I'm very cognizant of monthly payments versus a one time spend on a good. People can lose track of how much they're giving away each month so my decisions when it comes to subscriptions take a lot more thought.

#### PRIMARY RESEARCH

