



Prayer Walk

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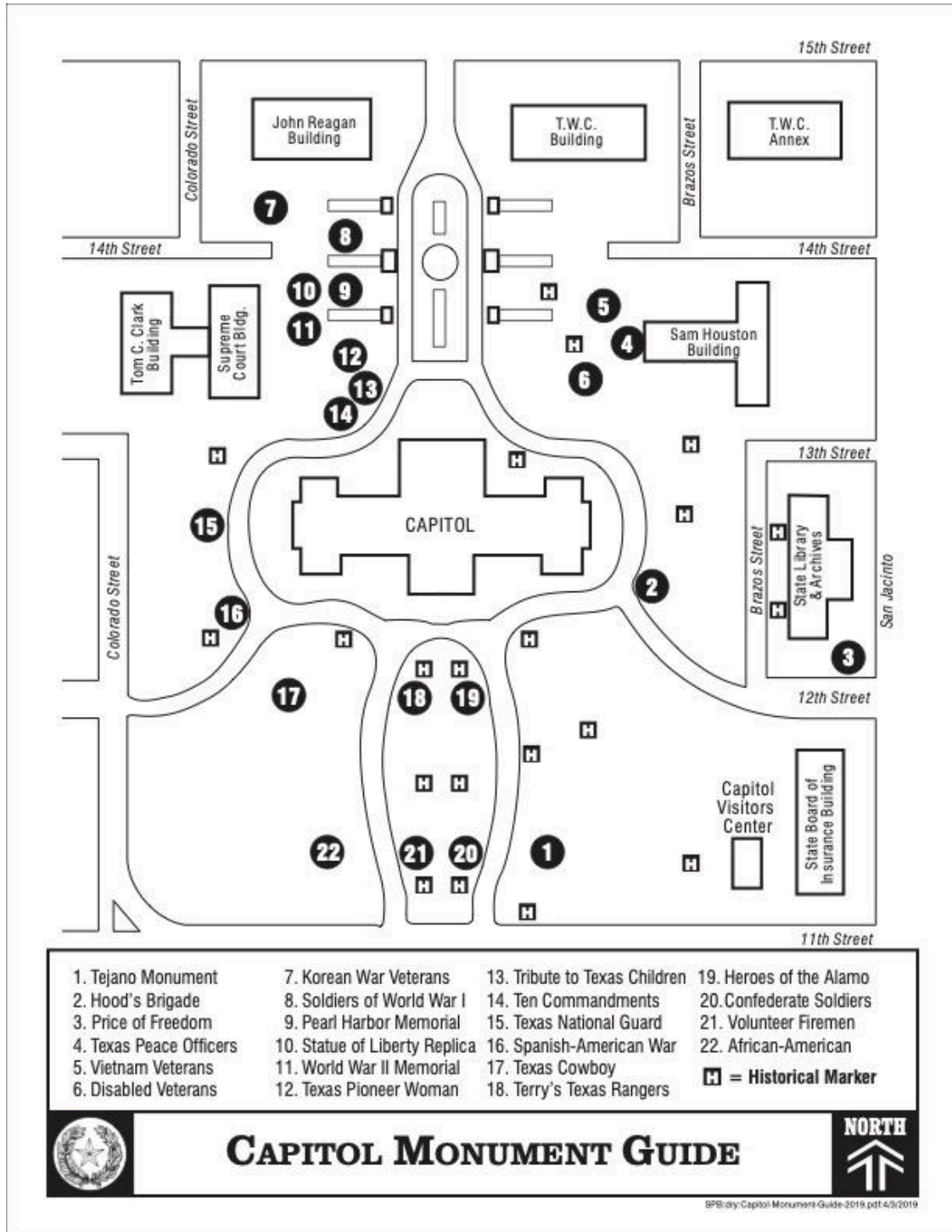
Austin Overview

The Texas State Capitol, located in Downtown Austin, is the fourth building to house the state government of Texas. The capitol building contains the chambers of the Texas Legislature and the office of the governor. Originally designed in 1881 by architect Elijah E. Myers, it was constructed from 1882 to 1888 under the direction of civil engineer Reuben Lindsay Walker. A \$75 million underground extension was completed in 1993. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1986. The Texas State Capitol is 308 ft (94 m) tall, making it the sixth tallest state capitol and one of several taller than the U.S. capitol in Washington, D.C.

Located four blocks south of the University of Texas at Austin, the Texas Capitol building is surrounded by 22 acres of grounds and monuments. There are 22 monuments that surround the Texas Capitol. William Munro Johnson, civil engineer, was hired in 1888 to improve the appearance of the grounds. By the time the first monument, commemorating the Heroes of the Alamo, was installed in 1891, the major components of Johnson's plan were in place. These included a "Great Walk" of black and white diamond-patterned pavement shaded by trees. The four oldest monuments are the Heroes of the Alamo, Volunteer Firemen, Confederate Soldiers and Terry's Texas Rangers, and flank the tree-lined Great Walk. In the spring of 2013, ground was broken for the Texas Capitol Vietnam Veterans Monument; dedication is scheduled for March 29, 2014.

Map of Austin

Begin the walk at the Ten Commandments Monument (#14 on the map)!



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Monuments to Visit

Ten Commandments

This monument was the subject of a 2005 U.S. Supreme Court case (*Van Orden v. Perry*) about whether or not its presence violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. On June 27, 2005, the court ruled that the display was constitutional, on the grounds that the monument conveyed a message that was both religious and secular. The Texas monument itself was given to the state in 1961 by the Fraternal Order of Eagles and Cecil B. DeMille, who directed the film *The Ten Commandments*.

What does every commandment essentially say?

- “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength...and your neighbor as yourself.”

What is a Prayer Walk?

One of our YES Trip traditions is doing a Prayer Walk, or Prayer Tour, of the city. As you follow this guide, you will be able to learn more about the story of the city and the experiences of the people residing in Austin. You will not only get to know Austin, but be able to do our first and greatest ministry for the city - to pray for it. Try and keep a prayerful atmosphere as you walk around the monuments within the grounds of the Capitol Building. After each stop, you will have the opportunity to pray for the city. There is no specific prayer to pray, whatever words you use are just fine.

As you continue on into the Prayer Tour, follow any path you would like around the Capitol. When you arrive at one of the monuments listed in this document, you can click on the title listed in the Table of Contents to access its story. If you are at a monument not listed here, take the opportunity to think beyond what the historical event the monument represents and more into the people who are currently living similar realities.



*Will someone pray for our journey?
That God allows us to see how we can best love our neighbors in Austin and our own cities?*

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Tribute to Texas Children

This monument depicts six children on a field trip to the Capitol. School children in more than 600 Texas schools raised the funds necessary to complete the statues. The monument was dedicated in June 1998. The monument honors and celebrates the youth of Texas.

- Field trips for impoverished children→ kids often end up sitting at school.
- An annual report on the status of Texas children and youth revealed that Texas now ranks 45th in overall child well-being and 20% of children in the state are living in poverty with Black and Hispanic children accounting for the highest rates.
- The state's children also rank in the bottom half of the economic, education, health, and family and community categories, according to the 2022 Texas Kids Count report.
- 1 in 5 households in the Austin area is considered low-income.
- 2 in 7 children under six in Travis County live in households with low income.
- 4 in 5 single-parent families with low income are working hard, either full or part time, and are still unable to meet their basic needs.
- 3 in 5 of children from families with low income in our community are not school-ready when they enter Kindergarten.
- 1 in 8 adults in Travis County report poor physical health, which not only affects them but also their children.

Effects of poverty on children:

- Growing up in poverty has serious consequences for children, especially in education. Children who grow up in poverty consistently perform worse than high-income children. This is due to a variety of factors.
 - Poor children are more likely to live in “extremely poor neighborhoods characterized by social disorganization and few resources for child development.”
 - The effects are the worst for young children. Children who are poor in preschool or early elementary school have the lowest rates of school completion—worse than children who face poverty in later childhood or adolescence.
- Children who grow up in poverty also face serious health consequences. An NYU study found that poverty is associated with much higher infant mortality rates. Poor children also are at higher risk for asthma and injuries from abuse/neglect. Their early cognitive development is often impaired due to poor nutrition, and that sticks with them for life.
- Childhood obesity is a growing problem nationwide, especially in Texas.
 - The National Survey of Children's Health says 32.2 percent of Texas children are overweight or obese. That is higher than the national average. Now, organizations like the YMCA are responding with programs aimed to make children make healthier choices.

Questions to consider/discuss

- What are some ways we can help families experiencing extreme poverty?
- Imagine your child's field trip costs \$15. This will cut into your grocery budget. If your child doesn't go, they have to sit in the principal's office all day. What do you do?

Texas Peace Officers Memorial

Erected 1999 by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in cooperation with the State Preservation Board. The memorial was authorized by the 71st Legislature in 1989 to honor law enforcement officers and corrections personnel whose lives have been lost in the line of duty since August 5, 1823, the date when Stephen F. Austin commissioned the first Texas Peace Officers, the first ten Texas Rangers.

CRIME IN AUSTIN

- Recent crime has looked like 6 murders around all of Austin, 40 men wanted for domestic violence, and several drinking while intoxicated charges, all happening in October 2023 alone.
- Unfortunately, this is not an anomaly for the city of Austin. The city of Austin has been rated safer than only 5% of neighborhoods in Austin.
- Austin reports that there are 5,042 violent crimes and 34,579 property crimes per year.

NEW AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT CHIEF

- Amidst the crime in Austin, Police Chief Joseph Chacon announced his abrupt retirement after 25 years of service. Now, the police force has an interim Chief, Robin Henderson, to oversee all the operations of nearly 2,200 Sworn and Civilian personnel, becoming the first African American Woman Chief.
- With all the struggles the people of Austin are facing, Chief Henderson's main objective is to “improve our community relations, really work hard to improve those bonds we have.”
- The people supporting her in this mission, Assistant Chief Gizette Gaslin, whose purpose for becoming a police officer, shares

“This was a great career choice for me because this job has allowed me to make a difference in the lives of those I came into contact with over the last 23 years. I’ve worked hard to make an impact not only with the community but with the officers that I’ve worked with. When I was growing up, I always wanted to be a teacher. Being an instructor at the Academy enabled me to follow my dream and teach our cadets. I enjoyed sharing my experiences and the mistakes I made along the way in my career. There is a motto I always try to live by not only personally but professionally, and that is: “Always treat people the way you would want to be treated.”

Assistant Chief Gizette Gaslin

Through this transition of leadership in the police force and the hope of a lower crime rate in the city.

Questions to consider/discuss

- How do we play a part in making the community safer for all people?
- What do you hope the relationship between the police and the community will be like?

Texas Pioneer Woman

The Texas Pioneer Woman Monument is a memorial commemorating the pioneer women of Texas, installed on the Texas State Capitol grounds in Austin, Texas, United States. Honoring the pioneer women of early Texas, a life-sized bronze figure by Linda Sioux Henley depicts a young pioneer mother with a baby on her arm. The statue stands atop a Texas Sunset Red granite pedestal.

- A recent survey ranks Texas as one of the worst states for women in terms of economy and well-being. The report from WalletHub, surveyed 50 states, including D.C., across 25 key metrics, including median earnings by state, education and homicide rates. Texas is ranked 45th overall, according to the report.

ECONOMIC:

- Texas women earn an average of \$12,475 per year less than white Texas men.
- But as in the rest of the nation, the size of the gender wage gap varies widely by race.
- Black women in Texas average almost \$27,000 less than white men each year, and Asian American women earn about \$21,000 less. For Native American Texans, the gap is nearly \$34,000. The gap is largest for Texas Latinas, at almost \$36,000.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- 1 in 3 Texans will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.
- A recent meta-analysis has shown that "domestic violence incidents increased 8.1% after pandemic-related lockdown orders."
- There are 146 organizations in Texas that provide domestic violence services at some level. A total of 129 organizations have provided complete information about their program to this site for a statewide completion rate of 88%. These programs can be found in 99 different cities.
<https://www.domesticshelters.org/help/tx>

HEALTHCARE:

- Texas came last in births without prenatal care in the first trimester, with nearly 30% of women receiving no early prenatal care.
- Pregnant women without early prenatal care often don't catch medical complications until later in their pregnancy, which can cause problems for the mother and the baby.
- More than 30% of the state's women do not get regular preventative cancer tests.
- Texas' high uninsured rate contributes to the problem. The state consistently ranks last in health insurance. At least 12% of Texas children are uninsured, while nearly one-quarter of adults lack coverage. Hispanic Texans were even less likely to have insurance, with nearly 40% of Hispanic adults lacking coverage.

Questions to consider/discuss

- If insurance costs \$275 a month, would you opt out to be able to afford regular bills? Think about other urgent needs that the \$275 would cover.
- What statistics stood out to you? Based on what stood out to you, if you were a person dealing with that reality, what would you do first?

Disabled American Veterans

Erected 1980 by the membership of the Disabled American Veterans and Auxiliary, Department of Texas. The monument is dedicated to all Texan veterans who have been disabled while serving in the U.S. military services.

The Challenges Veterans Face

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, in September 2023, the veteran unemployment rate was 3.6%, unchanged from 3.6% the previous month and up from 2.7% the prior year.

About one in five homeless residents in Austin is a veteran. That rate is higher than that of other large Texas metro areas and higher than the rate in the state and the nation as a whole, according to a new federal report.

The reasons are familiar to social service providers: addiction, mental illness and economic hardship — all common causes of homelessness among the general population, as well. But many veterans served in Iraq or Afghanistan and are battling post-traumatic stress disorder and dealing with the challenge of returning to the U.S. during an economic downturn, spurring the need for specialized services.

"There are issues for veterans with longer-term disabilities who will always have to have some sort of supports," said Frank Fernandez, executive director of Green Doors, an Austin group that provides transitional and permanent housing options for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. Several of its programs focus on veterans. "We've also started to see an increase in (homeless) female veterans and veteran families," Fernandez said.

Officials from the Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, the group that conducts the annual HUD count in Austin, said the count probably underestimates the homeless population. Homeless people living in cars, staying on a friend's couch or hiding in abandoned buildings, for example, wouldn't get counted.

How is the city helping veterans?

When Mayor Steve Adler took office, one of his biggest projects was to end veteran homelessness in Austin. In 2015, Adler took the challenge of finding homes for about 200 homeless veterans.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that once our veterans have served their nation, they have a safe, stable place to call home. Austin today has proven that ending veteran homelessness isn't just aspirational — it's achievable. I'm so proud to congratulate the city and its partners on working tirelessly to give our veterans a dignified home, setting an example for communities across the nation," said Adler in a statement.

As of 2021, Adler reports a 90-95% success rate with veterans being reintegrated back into society and sustaining themselves in positive ways if they can receive a home and adequate resources.

Questions to consider/discuss

- What do you hope for the veterans of Austin and in America in general?
- What can we do to support veterans in reintegrating themselves back into society?

Texas African American History Memorial

The Texas African American History Memorial was erected in 2016 and built by Ed Dwight. The memorial follows the history of African Americans and their contributions from the 1500s to the present. The tallest, middle portion of the memorial commemorates the end of slavery in Texas on June 19, 1865.

One of the seven plaques on the front of the monument reads:

African-American Texans have contributed to the state's culture, and have gained prominence in a host of fields. Despite the tremendous challenges posed by the institution of slavery, Jim Crow segregation and discrimination, African-Americans overcame and continue to overcome great obstacles to make a place for themselves in the Lone Star State, and are an essential part of Texas history, life and culture.

Racial Disparity in Austin

According to the City of Austin Equity Office, in 1928, Austin launched a Master Plan which divided the City along racial lines by moving community services for African American and Hispanic/Latino residents to East Austin. African-American and Hispanic Austinites who tried to settle in areas outside of the designated district were often denied access services such as utilities and public schools. Despite these challenges, communities of color in Austin thrived and developed strong, close knit, and vibrant communities. Nevertheless, this created intense economic isolation, resulting in disparities and lack of resources.

Here are some eye-opening statistics from Soulcity (a Black Austin news site) on the racial wealth divide in Austin:

- Among households with no net worth, Black families accounted for 34% and Latinos accounted for 29%, while White families made up 18% of the total.
- The homeownership rate is 32% for Black Austinites, 35% for Latino, and 52% for White Austinites.
- The median household income is over \$72,000 for White households but just \$40,000 for Black households, and \$44,000 for Latino households.
- Property values for Black and Latino homeowners are valued at approximately \$170K, in comparison to \$320K for White homeowners.

According to a section II of “Demographic Patterns” written by the city of Austin, “Overall, African American and Hispanic families have much higher rates of family poverty than Non-Hispanic White and Asian families. The disparity is largest in Austin, Taylor, and Travis County, where African American and Hispanic families have poverty rates averaging 17 percentage points greater than Non-Hispanic White and Asian families—a very significant difference.”

In an effort to address racial inequity in Austin, City Council passed Resolution No. 20150507-027 in 2015, which directed the City Manager to evaluate the impact of existing city policies and practices on racial equity and develop an Equity Assessment Tool that can be used across City departments during the budget process.

Questions to consider/discuss

- We began with the reminder to love God and neighbor as yourself. What can we do to make Austin/our own city, a city that embodies that?