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CRESTVIEW NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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August 2025

SPECIAL EDITION - DON'T CLOSE THE BOOK ON RECYCLED READS! PEASE ACT!



A 5,000 sq. ft. bookstore like this



or

a few shelves at the branch libraries?



Is there really a question?



By Nancy Harris, CNA Treasurer

Let's get right to the point. If you use or value the services provided by Recycled Reads (RR), the city-owned used bookstore, it needs your help. Please send an email to the mayor and all the council members asking them to keep Recycled Reads open. You can send one email that will go to all their offices at <https://www.austintexas.gov/email/all-council-members>. You can also call the office of our District 7 Councilmember Mike Siegel at 512-978-2107 to let him know that RR is an important part of the community, and we want to keep it. Your action can make a difference.

Background

The latest proposed city budget once again is taking aim at Recycled Reads. Reminiscent of the 1990s budget cuts that targeted rental library facilities for closure, the latest \$6.3 billion city budget wants to save \$107,000 by closing RR. With the proposed cut, RR would no longer serve the community after the lease ends in the Spring of 2026. Since 2009 RR has kept TONS of books out of the landfill by offering books retired from the library shelves and from donations. The bookstore took the place of the annual Library Book Sale that Friends of the Austin Public Library once held.

RR has been a mainstay for inexpensive books for many children, parents, teachers and others who cannot afford to purchase new books or even books from regular bookstores. RR not only recycles all kinds of books from recent bestsellers to out-of-print volumes but all sorts of media - collectables, DVDs, VHS tapes, prints, sheet music, recorded material, games, puzzles, etc. RR also has a passport photo service and a tool lending library. In addition, it offers a much needed meeting place for musicians, crafters, bicycle repair sessions, poetry readings and other groups.

Staff says RR operates at a loss and that the plan is

to "expand" and "rebrand" the services offered at RR. Exactly what this would look like is unclear, but it appears to be the old argument that was used last time RR was under attack, that claim being that the 22 libraries could just add a few shelves to their existing tiny "for sale" sections. "Unwanted" items would then be sold to Better World Books.

Fallacies of the city's plan

We don't expect our recreation centers, parks, and libraries to be money makers. We don't base having a recycling program on whether it is profitable or not. Much of the work at RR is done by staff from libraries that are closed for renovation and by volunteers.

The libraries do not have room for, nor do they have the time to manage or the space for all the treasures one can find at RR. How efficient is it drive around to 22 different libraries to see if they have a copy of the book you are looking for? RR offers a well-organized (the materials are alphabetized and categorized), one-stop service that cannot be duplicated at the branches. Keeping RR would mean fewer books would be shipped out to a national bookseller where one would pay more and possibly also pay for shipping rather than keeping them affordable and in the local community.

It is a delight to visit RR and see young children counting out quarters for their own books and proudly leaving with them, to browse through the material never knowing what unexpected prize you might find all while listening to a group of people read their own poetry aloud. The services offered by RR represent what is good about Austin - fostering a love of books and reading, care for the environment by recycling material that is of value to many and a community space.

In the past, public outcry has managed to save RR from the city budget ax. Council will approve the budget in mid-August, so please let council hear from you ASAP.

(For questions please email cnacontactus751@gmail.com)