

Brooke Outdoor Leadership and Nature Therapy School Alternate Proposal – November 2019

Brooke Elementary – Outdoor Leadership and Nature Therapy School Background

Brooke Elementary is a National Wildlife Federation Green Flag Eco ESTEAM school in Central East Austin with academic distinctions in math and science, and robust after school programs including fine arts, 4H and robotics. It is an urban school in close proximity to community resources like a grocery store, the Cepeda Library, the #300 bus route, and two major bike lanes along East 5th and Tillery. It provides a 21st Century learning equitable environment with classrooms full of natural light, a well-established and used Green School Park/Outdoor classroom, and a focus on providing support for each student's unique needs.

The inclusive and nurturing environment created for its high percentage of special education students benefits everyone on the campus. The Special Education Life Skills class do tasks like mulch the 85 beautiful trees on campus and harvest hyper local eggs from the Brooke flock of chickens and ducks. Students who are autistic, have experienced trauma or are under stress benefit from nature therapy. Time in nature helps children release adrenaline¹² and regain impulse control¹³, so faculty has an opportunity to identify the root cause of the issue and address it.

Brooke Outdoor Leadership and Nature Therapy School

Brooke Elementary will become a district-wide model campus for urban outdoor leadership and nature-based therapy. The program will build off the robust green school grounds that have been created over two decades and the existing innovative multi-disciplinary E STEAM curriculum. By actively sharing the knowledge and lessons learned with other campuses, Brooke can facilitate other schools in pursuing the Green Flag status.



A student holds a duck for other students to pet during Fall Fest 2019. Students care for the school's ducks and chickens. The Life Skills class gathers the flock's eggs to sell at events like a pop-up Farmer's Market during the East Austin Studio Tour.

¹ Hartin et al. (2014). Nature and health. *Annu Rev Pub Health*, 35, 207-208.

² Christian et al. (2015). The influence of the neighborhood physical environment on early child health and development: A review and call for research. *Health Place* 33, 25-36.

³ Faber Taylor et al. (2002). Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner-city children. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 22, 49-63.

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Students in the urban core will continue to learn in beautiful outdoor spaces while embarking on a leadership pathway as they help mentor other campuses like Martin Middle School and the first three Mayor’s Initiative Cities Connecting Children to Nature pilot sites: Barrington, Wooldridge, and Sanchez Elementary Schools.

The campus will be used as a facility for expanded AISD faculty development with events and classes on topics including the AISD Mindfulness Retreat, Garden to Café, and using outdoor learning space for education and behavioral therapy.

Strengthen Eastside Memorial Vertical Team

- Brooke Elementary was the second East Austin school to achieve the distinguished National Wildlife Federation Green Flag status in the District, following in the vertical step pathway of Eastside Memorial. In addition to the social, emotional, and academic benefits this nature focus has provided it also created positive media opportunities.
- Martin Middle School is the Eastside Memorial Vertical Team’s middle school option. Its Innovation Academy has the goal of providing a diverse and rigorous learning environment, with an emphasis in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) careers, ensuring every student will be able to design, create, and communicate solutions to real world challenges. Principal Monica de la Garza-Conness is enthusiastic about developing a plan with Brooke’s Principal Vargas and Eastside Memorial’s Principal Garcia to gain Green Flag Eco School status, too.
- Eastside Memorial Early College High School was the first National Wildlife Federation Green Flag school in the District. Its campus curriculum and culture integrate green pathways and promote sustainable practices. This culture will be an integral part of the school’s new location and can dovetail with programming at Austin Community College.



The creation of the first Vertical Team in the District with a National Wildlife Federation Green Flag Status will strengthen the ESTEAM pathway for Brooke Elementary students and prepare East Austin students for careers in green jobs. It will also serve as a unifying theme for the vertical team, which can garner community pride, as well as, media attention.

The Brooke Lions will commit to mentoring the Martin Eagles through their Green Flag journey.

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Additionally, the City of Austin has begun talks with Austin Community College about offering the nationally recognized Green Infrastructure Certification program. Students who move through the Green Flag vertical team will be well positioned to receive the certification before they even graduate high school.

Preparing Our Kids to Succeed By

- Continuing to increase time outdoors, which leads to multiple positive improvements in [health](#) and well-being, [cognitive and academic abilities](#), and mental, physical and emotional states.
- Celebrating and promoting the Brooke inclusive campus culture, which benefits all but especially the special education population.
- Providing opportunities for students to participate in outdoor discovery and leadership curriculum.
- Serving as an outdoor learning model that can be replicated at any campus in the District, infusing nature onto campuses instead of viewing it as something removed from daily life.
- Continuing to engage students in multidisciplinary projects in green spaces.
- Raising students who are [Earth stewards](#), regardless of their ultimate career selection.
- Connecting children with behavioral, cognitive and physical therapy needs to nature.
- Provide access to support that families need with our “sharing shelf” of food and clothing donated by other parents, and access to a washer and dryer to clean clothes which studies have shown can increase attendance and thus academic success.

Campuses in this Scenario

- Vertical Team: Brooke Elementary School, Martin Middle School, Eastside Memorial High School
- Additional mentees include:
 - The Mayor’s Cities Connecting Children to Nature Initiative pilot sites
 - Barrington Elementary
 - Wooldridge Elementary
 - Sanchez Elementary
 - East Austin Schools that express interest in a mentorship. Maplewood Elementary has reached out already, and we anticipate more interest once we publicize this offering. Brooke has capacity to mentor two to four schools per year.

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Create an Official Green School Park

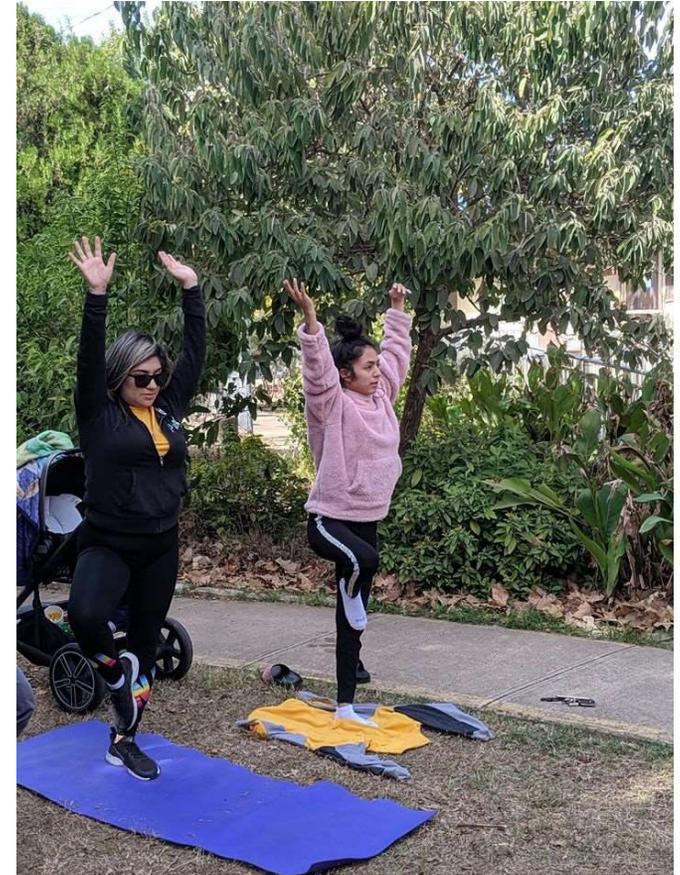
Brooke Elementary proposes development of a Joint Use Agreement with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC), so Brooke could remain open to the community as a Green School Park during non-school hours. The campus does not currently provide access to the grounds for neighbors.

- **Benefits to the Surrounding Community**

- Fulfill the Govalle-Johnston Terrace Combined Neighborhood Association need, as stated in their Combined Neighborhood Plan and Future Use Land Map, for walkable park access.
- Help the City of Austin meet its 10 Minute Walk goal, in which everyone – existing neighbors and those anticipated with increased density - in the urban core has safe, easy access to a park within a quarter mile.
- Support the City of Austin and AISD in realizing their pledges and resolutions as stated in the [Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights](#).
- **Additional options to explore with PARC include:**
 - Renting the facilities like the stage and gym in non-school hours
 - Running after school rec center programming out of the school
 - Keeping the goats used for Integrated Pest Management at Brooke for the 4-H to help take care of
 - Coordinating Brooke use of PARC centralized materials library with items like bouncy houses and carnival games

- **Benefits to Brooke Elementary and AISD**

- Community members who visit the school grounds on a regular basis become invested in the success of the school. They could be more likely to become mentors, make donations, participate in events like It's My Park Day, and report any issues that might arise in non-school hours.
- Community members who form a relationship with a green school park will be more likely to consider that school as an option when they have children, they want to enroll in school themselves or they are asked for school recommendations.



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Marketing

Brooke serves as an example of a school that can be a strong competitor against charter schools and draw Hispanic, African American, Special Education, and low socioeconomic students back to the District.

Target Audiences

- Parents of young children getting ready to enter preK3 & preK4
- Charter school attendees' families
- Real estate agents

Points of Pride to Highlight

- ½ day PreK3 & full day PreK4 are offered at no cost (if certain qualifications are met) and on a fee-for-service basis
- Academic Distinctions in math and science
- ESTEAM
- National Wildlife Federation Green Flag School
- Students learn responsibility and compassion by caring for chickens, ducks, bunnies and bees
- Free after school programming including: robotics club, 4-H, ballet folklórico, yoga, soccer, bicycle club, arts and crafts, and storytelling. After school programs reinforce the school's ESTEAM culture
- Free breakfast, lunch and after school snack
- School uniform: minimizes social stigmas associated with clothing choices; a relaxed policy so nobody is penalized for not wearing one
- Family support services: Parent Support Specialist classes and connections to community resources, a "sharing shelf" with food and clothes, complimentary access to a washer and dryer
- Serves multiple generations. We have families where grandparents and parents are proud alumni.



Our kindergarten teachers are knowledgeable about the latest innovative education techniques and incorporate play into their literacy, engineering and other lessons. Learning can be fun!

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Methods for Marketing

- Existing
 - Yard signs
 - Banner
 - Tabling at events
 - Call outs on Spanish language radio
- Additions
 - Social media marketing using AISD branded hashtags
 - Maintain high quality timely content on www.twitter.com/brookelions and www.facebook.com/brookeelementarypta
 - Post school events that are open to the public on NextDoor
 - Open the school grounds during non-school hours as a Green School Park
 - Banners hung on the East 5th St fence
 - Flyers to all daycares between IH-35 (W), Airport (E), the Colorado River/Lady Bird Lake (S) and East 12th (N) + emails to those organizations to share with their families about community events open to the public
 - Requests sent quarterly to all service providers at the school to share a message promoting Brooke Elementary on social media and in newsletters
 - Media releases submitted to tv, radio, and print news stations for community events at Brooke and when awards are received
 - Invitations for dignitaries to participate in special events



Raasin McIntosh, Olympian and Executive Director of Raasin in the Sun, presented Principal Vargas with a City of Austin proclamation declaring November 2, 2019 as, "Brooke Academic Distinction Day."

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Appendix A - www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CNN_NatureImprove_16-10-27_O_newlogo.pdf

NATURE CAN IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Spending time in nature provides children with a wide range of health benefits.

HEALTHY BABIES
 Nature exposure for mothers can promote:

- BETTER FETAL GROWTH¹
- HEALTHIER BIRTH WEIGHTS^{2,3}

HEALTHY EYES AND VITAMIN D LEVELS
 Time spent in bright sunlight can:

- REDUCE NEARSIGHTEDNESS^{4,5,6}
- INCREASE VITAMIN D LEVELS⁷

NATURE CONTACT IS
 especially beneficial for mothers of lower education and socio-economic levels^{8,9}

INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
 Access to parks and greenspace can foster:

- INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY^{10,11}
- REDUCED RISK OF OBESITY¹²

OUTDOOR PLAY
 increases the likelihood that girls will remain active into adolescence¹³

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLBEING
 Learning in nature can support:

- IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP SKILLS^{14,15}
- REDUCED STRESS¹⁶, ANGER^{17,18} AND AGGRESSION^{19,20}

Children are better able to cope with stress when they live near trees and other greenery.^{21,22}

children nature NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES JJB 1 16 2019

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF NATURE AVAILABLE AT childrenandnature.org/research

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Chudek et al. (2014). Association between residential greenspace and birth weight: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Urban For (Urban Green)*, 10(4), 407-408. *Hartley et al. (2014). Summering greenspace and birth weight: Results from the UK's Air and Physical Health in Schools. *Health Place*, 30, 33-40. *Owen et al. (2014). Frequent use of green spaces and pregnant women: Risk of obesity and individual and neighbourhood socioeconomic status. *Environment*, 11, 104-108. *Appel et al. (2014). Green spaces and adverse pregnancy outcomes. *Obstet Gynecol*, 118(6), 1401-1407. *Forsyth et al. (2013). Trees, children and the generation of equity. *Exp Eye Res*, 114, 18-24. *Yu et al. (2013). Effect of tree spatial patterns at school on the development of myopia among children in China. *PLoS One*, 8(12), e82161. *Dodge (2013). The impact of green schoolyards on reaching academic competencies: Some evidence from three large urban centers in Chicago. 318, 119-128. *McGruddy et al. (2013). Using nature and outdoor activity to improve children's health. *Can J Public Health*, 104(1), 10-15. *Papp et al. (2013). A randomized measurement study investigating the impact of school outdoor environment upon physical activity at one year and seasons in Swedish second, 180 and eighth graders. *BMC Public Health*, 13(1), 100. *Mansueti et al. (2013). A study of community design, greenspace, and physical activity in children using satellite, GPS and accelerometer data. *Health Place*, 19(1), 10-14. *Hartig et al. (2013). Nature and health. *Annu Rev Public Health*, 34, 207-228. *Owen et al. (2010). The influence of the neighbourhood physical environment on early child health and development: A review and policy research. *Health Place*, 16, 359-374. *Waller et al. (2010). Outdoor play and proximity to urban parks and recreational resources: A longitudinal cohort study. *Health Place*, 16(1), 30-37. *Davies et al. (2010). The effect of green exercise on blood pressure, heart rate and mood state in primary school children. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*, 7(4), 3009-3016. *Vogel & Green (2010). Healthy nature: A buffer of life stress among rural children. *Environ Behav*, 42(3), 39-59. *Carroll et al. (2010). Nature as a moderator of stress in urban children. *Preventive Med*, 51, 38, 433-438. *Chanda et al. (2010). Green schoolyards as buffers from stress and resources for resilience in childhood and adolescence. *Health Place*, 16, 115. *Lee & Barton (2010). The restorative outcomes of forest school and conventional school young people with good and poor behavior. *Urban For Urban Green*, 9, 30-39. *Yuan et al. (2010). Environmental determinants of aggression in adolescents: Role of neighborhood green space. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*, 49(2), 160-168. *Chen (2010). Benefits of nature contact for children. *J Urban For*, 7(4), 300-310.

CNN recognizes that not all studies support equal statements.

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Appendix B – www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CNN_AcademicOutcomes_16-10-27_O_newlogo.pdf

NATURE CAN IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Spending time in nature enhances educational outcomes by improving children's academic performance, focus, behavior and love of learning.

BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
 Learning in natural environments can:

- BOOST PERFORMANCE** in reading, writing, math, science and social studies ^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5}
- ENHANCE** creativity, critical thinking and problem solving ⁷

Seeing nature from school buildings can foster academic success ^{6, 7, 8}

ENHANCED ATTENTION
 Spending time in nature can help children focus their attention:

- ↑ FOCUS AND ATTENTION** ^{10, 11, 12, 13}
- ↓ ADHD SYMPTOMS** ^{14, 15}

The greener the setting, the better the focus ^{16, 17}

INCREASED ENGAGEMENT & ENTHUSIASM
 Exploration and discovery through outdoor experiences can promote motivation to learn:

- ↑ INCREASED ENTHUSIASM FOR LEARNING** ^{1, 18}
- ↑ GREATER ENGAGEMENT WITH LEARNING** ⁷

IMPROVED BEHAVIOR
 Nature-based learning is associated with reduced aggression and fewer discipline problems: ^{18, 19}

- +** MORE IMPULSE CONTROL ²⁰
- LESS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR ²⁰

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SUPPORTING RESEARCH

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Appendix C - www.childrenandnature.org/wp-content/uploads/NaturePlayInfographic.pdf

NATURE PLAY CAN ENCOURAGE CARE FOR THE EARTH

THE ISSUE

Childhood has moved indoors, leaving kids disconnected from the natural world.

MEANINGFUL OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES BENEFIT CHILDREN AND INSPIRE THEM TO LOVE AND CARE FOR NATURE.

Children who are connected to nature have better health, higher satisfaction with life, and pro-environment behaviors.^{2,13}

HOW TO CREATE NATURE CHAMPIONS:

- Provide fun, hands-on nature experiences⁹
- Take learning outside^{10,11}
- Have kids note 3 good things in nature everyday to improve their connection to nature¹²
- Repeat!^{4,7}
- Share your love of the outdoors with children^{4,5}

Meaningful, positive experiences in nature guide children, youth and adults toward care for nature.⁴

Time in nature during childhood and role models who care for nature are the two biggest factors that contribute to environmental stewardship in adulthood.^{4,5}

THE BENEFITS OF TIME IN NATURE:

Time outdoors in nature contributes to children's care for nature while supporting their healthy development.^{2,10,13}

- BETTER SOCIAL SKILLS^{2,13}
- ENHANCED HEALTH^{2,13}
- INCREASED SELF ESTEEM^{2,13}
- IMPROVED GRADES^{10,11}
- PRO-ENVIRONMENT BEHAVIORS^{1,2,3,4,5,10,13}
- STRONGER EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS TO PEOPLE AND NATURE^{6,7,8,12}

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ADDITIONAL RESEARCH ON THE BENEFITS OF NATURE AVAILABLE AT childrenandnature.org/research

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Studies cited here are from the report www.childrenandnature.org and www.nature.org.
 1. Children & Nature Network (2018). *Children & Nature Network and its summary: Connecting with Nature to Care for Ourselves and the Earth*.
 2. Children & Nature Network (2018). *Children & Nature Network and its summary: Connecting with Nature to Care for Ourselves and the Earth*.
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Appendix D - www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/COBOR_Resolution.pdf

AUSTIN CHILDREN'S
**OUTDOOR
BILL *of* RIGHTS**

WHEREAS: Studies show that children who learn and play in nature are healthier, happier and perform better in school.

WHEREAS: Children who have safe access to parks, zoos, nature centers, lakes and rivers, and other public outdoor spaces are more resilient, have higher self-esteem, are more confident, are better problem solvers and are more creative.

WHEREAS: All children should feel welcome at all of Austin's parks, pools, trails, waterways and open spaces.

WHEREAS: Communities in disadvantaged areas with access to nature benefit from greater health equity with lower rates of mortality and disease.

WHEREAS: Children who develop a positive relationship with nature are more likely to become tomorrow's stewards of our natural heritage.

WHEREAS: Through its parks, trails, waterways, open spaces, and other natural spaces, Austin provides a wide variety of quality outdoor opportunities.

THEREFORE: We support this Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights
in which every child has the right to:

Climb a tree • Catch a fish • Picnic in a park • Hike a trail • Ride a bike
Splash in the creek or river • Discover plants and wildlife
Play in the sand and mud • Gaze at the night sky • Chase a firefly
Plant a seed and watch it grow • Harvest and eat a fruit or vegetable



Children in Nature
Collaborative of Austin

Learn more at www.austintexas.gov/cccn

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Appendix E - Programs at Brooke

We have marketed the school as an Entrepreneurial Science Technology Engineering Arts & Math School (CAC and PTA have helped with changing STEM to STEAM to ESTEAM).

CAMPUS Programs (during school)

- Creative Learning Initiative Campus
- Social Emotional Learning Campus/No Place for Hate
- Kindness Campaign (2nd year-National Program)
- Zachary Scott partnered with STEM program with 4th
- Zachary Scott partnered with Story Wranglers with 3rd
- Zachary Scott partnered with 2nd grade for Arts Across the Curriculum
- Paramount Pictures partnered with 4th & 5th
- Ed Exchange in partnership with Thinkery is partnered with 2nd Grade
- Computer Literacy and Coding (PreK through 5th) during library time
- MakerSpace (PreK through 5th) during library time
- Schlitterbahn Waves of Pages Reading Challenge
- Six Flags Read to Succeed Reading Challenge
- Bluebonnet Award Reading Club
- Texas 2X2 Reading Club for Primary grade students
- Texas Farm Bureau Education Workshop -Agri Farm
- Partnered with PEAS Garden
- Texas General Attorney Office Drug and Drinking Prevention Program
- Texas Capital Red Ribbon Rally
- Girls Outdoor Program for 3rd through 5th with West Cave Outdoor Discovery Center
- Athletes for Hope
- Participants in International Dot Day
- Participants in National Punctuation Day
- Austin Jazz Workshop
- Marathon Kids
- National Wildlife Federation -Silver Eco School (Silver & Bronze Awards seeking Green Flag Award) Applied for Green Ribbon Award from Federal Department of Education

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- PreK 4 program

Prime Time (After School Programs)

- Robotics/Engineering is Elementary
- Arts & Crafts
- Acoustic Guitar Class
- Coding after school
- Ballet Folklorico
- Boy Scouts
- Karate
- Texas Nutrition Cooking Class with Kids
- Choir
- Zumba for Children
- MakerSpace
- Destination Imagination
- Ballet
- Homework Lab/Tutoring
- Math Pentathlon
- 4H Travis County
- PALS
- Latinitas
- Theatre
- Baseball
- Butterfly Club
- Film Kids
- Bee Wranglers Club
- Forklift Dance – Creative Movement Class

We partner with Zaragoza Recreation Center and Metz Recreation Center for after care.

Community Partners (help with funds or donate materials)

- PALS – Literacy Coalition Center

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- Austin Partners in Education
- Seedling Foundation
- ACE
- Capital Metro
- Meals on Wheels
- Toys for Tots
- Sendero Health Plan
- Water Tank Storage
- EcoRise
- Buzzmill
- Camp Gladiator
- Luster Pearl
- East Austin Environment Initiative Committee – City of Austin
- Environmental Sustainability Association Committee (ESAC)
- HEB
- Rivera Welding Auto Mechanic
- Dohnvan Millworks
- Fiesta Tortilla Factory
- Hop Daddy Burger Bar
- Juan in a Million
- Sams Club (annual donation)
- Walmart
- Antic Screening
- Viva 313 Pizza
- Flitch Coffee
- Harvest Lumber
- Southside Flying Pizza
- Smokey Denmark Sausage Company