

City of Austin



**A Report to the
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AUDIT REPORT

Audit of Neighborhood Planning

November 2016



REPORT SUMMARY

The City of Austin has created a neighborhood planning program by which residents can engage in local planning efforts, but the majority of residents do not live in areas with a neighborhood plan. For areas that do have a neighborhood plan, the majority of plans have not been updated or aligned with the City's comprehensive plan. Nearly all of the plans were adopted with low levels of public participation. The City established contact teams to advocate for and implement the plans. However, residents seeking to engage with their contact team would find most of them inaccessible. Residents able to attend a contact team meeting would likely find obstacles to participation in their decision-making. The resulting neighborhood planning processes are inequitable, lack transparency, and may constitute a risk to fair housing choice.

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GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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November 2016



Report Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

We conducted this audit as part of the Office of the City Auditor's (OCA) Fiscal Year 2015 Strategic Audit Plan, adopted by the Austin City Council, based on stakeholder concerns and issues identified in prior audits.

What We Recommend

The Planning and Zoning Director should initiate a policy discussion to:

- ensure equitable treatment in land use regulations;
- increase representative public participation in small-area planning; and
- prioritize future planning

The Director should also:

- work to improve membership databases;
- review neighborhood plans and implementation schedules; and
- address impediments to fair housing in the neighborhood planning process.



For more information on this or any of our reports, email oca_auditor@austintexas.gov

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AUDIT

BACKGROUND

The City has engaged area stakeholders in participatory planning of neighborhoods since 1997. There are 30 neighborhood plans and each is included as an attachment to Imagine Austin, the City's comprehensive plan. The Planning and Zoning Department has organized involved stakeholders into neighborhood plan contact teams, which advocate for their plans and assist with implementation.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objective of this audit was to determine:

- whether the City's communication and governance structures are effective in supporting neighborhood planning efforts, and
- whether neighborhood planning efforts align with Imagine Austin.

The audit scope included the governance, outreach efforts, and process for developing and managing neighborhood plans since 1997.

WHAT WE FOUND

Planning efforts for Austin's neighborhoods are inequitable and have lacked robust and representative participation. Neighborhood plans cover 26% of the city's area and 45% of its population. Land use processes differ for areas with neighborhood plans than for the rest of the city. In addition, the plans were developed with low overall levels of public participation, and particularly low representation from renters. The current pace of planning efforts is unlikely to extend neighborhood plans to the remainder of the city in a timely manner.

As a plan approaches adoption, the City initiates the formation of a neighborhood plan contact team. The contact teams lack transparency, have inconsistent bylaws, and create barriers to public engagement and representative decision-making. The bylaws for all but one contact team create barriers to voting eligibility for neighborhood stakeholders. The maintenance of contact team information does not facilitate compliance with the City's Code or provide accurate, accessible, and complete information to the public. Community members seeking to attend contact team meetings would have difficulty doing so in 58% of neighborhoods tested.

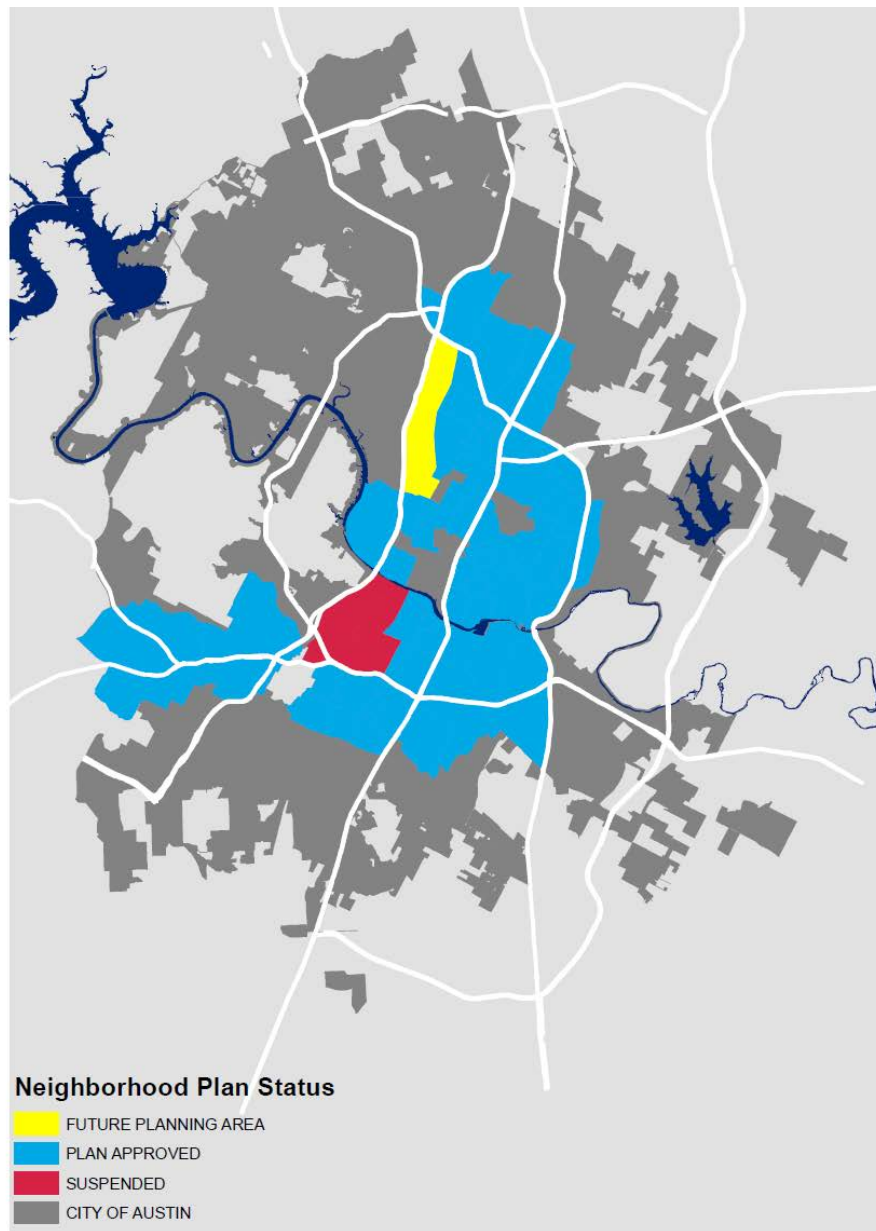
The City and the contact teams are not conducting periodic updates to ensure plans remain current. The median age of the plans is 14 years and all but one plan was adopted prior to the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan in 2012. No plans have been updated since, and 59% of plan recommendations are incomplete.

Fair housing choice has not been specifically considered in most neighborhood planning efforts. Only one neighborhood plan mentions fair housing and no current bylaws reference it. Planning and Zoning has not provided trainings on topics related to fair housing. Current land use policies and practices that do not incorporate fair housing concepts, if unaddressed, could create a risk of litigation against the City or a risk of losing federal grants.

BACKGROUND

Cities use a variety of planning efforts to prepare for the future, make efficient use of public resources, and align regulation. The state's Local Government Code and the City's Charter require the development of a comprehensive plan to address growth, development, and beautification. The City's current comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin, was adopted in 2012 and includes a number of small-area plans as attachments. Among these small-area plans are 30 adopted neighborhood plans that cover 53 distinct neighborhood areas, primarily in the city's urban core (see exhibit 1). Members of the community develop these neighborhood plans through a participatory process led by the City's Planning and Zoning Department.

Exhibit 1



SOURCE: Esri Business Analyst, Planning & Zoning GIS layer, OCA Analysis, August 2016

Neighborhood plans began under an at-large City Council system and they cover at least a portion of nine out of ten current City Council districts. One neighborhood plan also extends into part of the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction. Some plans cover multiple neighborhood areas and are referred to as "combined plans." The Department attempted planning in four additional areas, but indefinitely suspended these efforts. Three more identified areas remain for future planning, with the City recently initiating a neighborhood plan in one of these areas.

As a neighborhood plan approaches adoption by the City Council, the Planning and Zoning Department initiates the formation of a neighborhood plan contact team whose volunteers advocate for the plan. City staff draws initial contact teams from involved stakeholders who adopt bylaws by a neighborhood vote, and then operate independently.

Two neighborhood plans and parts of a third do not have an associated contact team. Meanwhile four combined plans are represented by two contact teams. The Planning and Zoning Department describes the general responsibilities for all of the 32 contact teams as follows:

- work with City staff towards the implementation of the plan recommendations,
- review and initiate plan amendments,
- serve as community points of contact, and
- work on behalf of other neighborhood stakeholders.

Neighborhood plans contain broad goals and specific recommendations that are non-binding on the City. Almost all plans also include a future land use map (FLUM), which can inform binding regulations.

Proposed zoning changes that do not align with a future land use map require a plan amendment, which is a narrow document change that does not involve the broad participatory planning efforts used to develop or update a plan. Zoning changes and plan amendments are reviewed together by the Planning Commission, while the Zoning and Platting Commission generally reviews zoning in areas without neighborhood plans.

In fiscal year (FY) 2016, the Planning and Zoning Department allocated \$2.2 million and 18 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees to support two groups within the Comprehensive Planning Division responsible for neighborhood planning. The long-range planning group develops small-area plans, including neighborhood plans, and updates to Imagine Austin. The Planning and Zoning Department also has an implementation group that works with neighborhood plans after they are completed. The Planning and Zoning Department produced zero neighborhood plans in FY 2016, which matched its performance target for the same period. The Planning and Zoning Department's performance targets do not anticipate the completion of new neighborhood plans in FY 2017.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Neighborhood Planning Audit was conducted as part of the Office of the City Auditor's (OCA) FY 2015 Strategic Audit Plan, as presented to the City Council Audit and Finance Committee.

Objectives

The objective of the audit was to determine whether:

- the City's communication and governance structures are effective in supporting neighborhood planning efforts, and
- the City's neighborhood planning efforts align with Imagine Austin.

Scope

The audit scope included the governance, outreach efforts, and process for developing and managing neighborhood plans since 1997.

The City is currently in the process of revising its land development code in an effort called CodeNEXT. While this effort directly relates to neighborhood planning, the process is still underway, so it was not included in the scope of this audit.

Methodology

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following steps:

- interviewed Planning and Zoning Department staff responsible for neighborhood planning;
- interviewed and solicited input from community groups engaged in neighborhood planning;
- interviewed Public Information Office staff responsible for the community registry;
- reviewed the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan and all existing neighborhood plans;
- reviewed other related or adopted internal plans as well as relevant external reports;
- reviewed prior audits of long-term planning;
- reviewed plan implementation recommendations and progress reports;
- reviewed applicable policies and procedures;
- reviewed the community registry and the Planning and Zoning Department database of record;
- reviewed all contact team bylaws and the bylaws template;
- reviewed training materials and training logs;
- reviewed all available affordability impact statements for neighborhood plans;
- reviewed department budgets, performance measures, organization charts, and operational plans;
- reviewed state law, City Charter and City Code requirements related to neighborhood planning;
- reviewed demographic information for neighborhood plan areas;
- observed neighborhood planning contact team meetings; and
- contacted neighborhood plan contact teams for meeting information.

WHAT WE FOUND

The City of Austin has created a neighborhood planning program by which residents can engage in local planning efforts, but the majority of residents do not live in areas with a neighborhood plan. For areas that do have a neighborhood plan, the majority of plans have not been updated or aligned with the City's comprehensive plan. Nearly all of the plans were adopted with low levels of public participation.

The City established contact teams to assist with the implementation of neighborhood plans. However, residents seeking to engage with their contact team would find most of them inaccessible. Residents able to attend a contact team meeting would likely find obstacles to participation in their decision-making. The resulting neighborhood planning processes are inequitable, lack transparency, and may constitute a risk to fair housing choice.

Finding 1: The City's neighborhood planning efforts are inequitable and have lacked robust and representative participation.

By design, Austin's neighborhood planning program should allow for broad participation in planning and implementation processes. However, the program does not have robust or representative participation, and the City has not established participation thresholds as criteria for approving plans. Neighborhood plan coverage and processes for land use review result in inequitable treatment.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING RESULTS IN INEQUITABLE LAND USE TREATMENT

The parts of Austin covered by a neighborhood plan follow a different process for land use decisions than the rest of the city. For example, the Zoning and Platting Commission reviews zoning requests for most areas without neighborhood plans while the Planning Commission reviews zoning requests in areas with neighborhood plans.¹

Most neighborhood plans include a future land use map (FLUM) that informs binding zoning regulations. A zoning request that does not conform to the future land use map requires a plan amendment approval and an associated community meeting. Code limits applications for plan amendments to one month of the year unless a contact team gives written approval. City Code has other provisions that allow for off-cycle amendments including correction of clerical errors, initiation by the City Council, and certification of a S.M.A.R.T.² housing project where 40% of units are reasonably priced.

The additional procedural step in Code for future land use map amendments gives residents of areas with neighborhood plans distinct and greater opportunities to influence land use decisions. It also causes land use decisions to proceed slower and with greater cost than in areas without neighborhood plans. The *Zucker Report* also noted inequity in the present condition (see exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2

"The focus on central city neighborhoods has created inequity among those areas with Neighborhood Plans and those without. The capacity of Comprehensive Planning staff to address this inequity by creating plans and forming contact teams for those unplanned areas has been hampered by resources and the time required to develop these plans. In addition, continuing the approaches used in earlier planning efforts will result in increased staff attrition and the loss of experienced and talented planners. Ultimately, the decision as whether and how to address this inequality will be a political one and resides with elected officials."

SOURCE: Zucker Systems Workflow Organizational Assessment, May 2015, Pg. 168

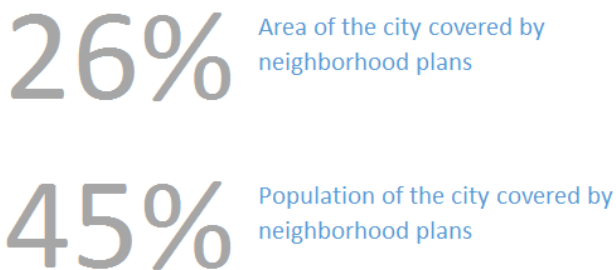
¹ In 2014, the Board and Commission Transition Task Force presented to City Council and recommended that the Planning Commission be responsible for planning citywide and the Zoning and Platting Commission should be responsible for zoning citywide. The City Council did not direct this transition, but a separate task force recommendation to form a joint small-area planning sub-committee of the two commissions has been implemented.

² SMART is a city program that seeks to produce safe, mixed-income, accessible, reasonably priced, transit-oriented housing.

As of 2015, based on OCA analysis, neighborhood plans covered only 26% of the City’s land area and only 45% of its population (see exhibit 3).³ The City has completed only one combined neighborhood plan since the adoption of Imagine Austin in 2012, and the Planning and Zoning Department’s performance measures do not anticipate finalizing any new neighborhood plans in fiscal year 2017.

Exhibit 3

Coverage of the City by Neighborhood Plans



SOURCE: OCA Analysis, August 2016 of 2015 Esri demographic data

In 1999, the City set a goal of completing 60 planning areas in less than 6 years. The time it takes to develop and adopt a neighborhood plan has slowed over time. Measuring from when a plan is *initiated* by the City Council to when it is *adopted* by the City Council, plans have taken as little as four months for earlier plans to nearly six years for more recent plans. At the pace of adoption for the last five years ending in 2015, and with no growth of the City’s land area, it would take an additional 81 years to complete neighborhood plans for the entire City. As the City annexes more areas and continues to grow in neighborhoods not covered by existing plans, the relative coverage of neighborhood plans will decline.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS LACKED ROBUST AND REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

In areas covered by neighborhood plans, there is low participation by area residents in the development of the plans. Only 13 of the 30 neighborhood plans were approved by greater than 1% of the affected neighborhood’s current residents participating in a vote, though Planning and Zoning could not provide voter counts for six plans when requested (see exhibit 4). Only 19 individuals participated in the vote of one neighborhood plan, which covers an area of nearly 13,000 residents. Although most plans include demographic information on their respective neighborhoods, some rely on data as old as the 1990 census and no one has updated this information in the plans since adoption (see appendix D).

Voting on neighborhood plans was not reflective of neighborhood demographics, with renters being disproportionately under-represented. More than half of all Austin residents rent their homes, but all plans that detailed this information had greater voter participation by homeowners. Rental units accounted for 82% of the housing stock of one area according to its neighborhood plan, but the two renters that voted on this plan made up only 10% of the participation in its approval. A separate plan received participation by only a single renter. As a result, neighborhood plans may not be a reliable reflection of current or historical community will.

Exhibit 4

Neighborhood Vote Participation		
Participation	Number of Plans	Percent
No vote record	6	20%
Less than 1%	11	37%
From 1% to 5%	8	27%
Greater than 5%	5	17%
Greater than 10%	0	0%

SOURCE: OCA Analysis, September 2016 of 2015 Esri demographic data

³ An analysis of Geographic Information System (GIS) data was performed by OCA using Esri Business Analyst, which combines public and private data sources to produce population estimates for non-census years.

Finding 2: Neighborhood plan contact teams create barriers to public engagement and representative decision-making.

The City's public engagement activities provide communities that are affected by decisions the opportunity to influence those decisions. The City has initiated the formation of neighborhood plan contact teams to engage the community and empowers each group to be advocates for their adopted neighborhood plan. The City provides notification mailings for residents, but does not provide other resources to contact teams. Decisions and recommendations made by contact teams affect a neighborhood's residents, property owners, and business owners. They may also affect the community as a whole. As a result, it is important that contact teams operate in a consistent and transparent way to ensure equal treatment across neighborhoods. It is also important to ensure neighborhood stakeholders have the information they need to participate.

MANY CONTACT TEAMS ARE INACCESSIBLE

Two neighborhood plans and parts of a third⁴ do not have an associated contact team. Furthermore, an Austin resident would not have the opportunity to know about or attend a meeting of a contact team in 18 of the 31 neighborhoods with contact teams that auditors tested (see exhibit 5). The City's community registry allows contact teams to provide information on meetings, but only 5 of 31 contact teams included complete information (i.e., date, time, and place) about upcoming meetings. Meeting information for one contact team was complete, but inaccurately directed interested community members to a public library for a meeting when the facility was closed. Information on some upcoming meetings was unavailable even when contact teams were contacted directly. The Task Force on Community Engagement⁵ recently recommended that the City develop an online platform for the public to give input in convenient and accessible ways other than in-person meetings.

City Code requires contact teams to submit their members' contact information and membership category to the Planning and Zoning Department each year, but there are no City-initiated sanctions for non-compliance. Auditors found only 14 contact teams had updated a minimum of one member contact in the last year (see exhibit 6). The median number of members listed in Planning and Zoning's spreadsheet is 15, but contact team sizes range from between 3 and 240 members.

⁴ A combined plan covering three neighborhood plan areas recently formed a contact team in one of the areas, after audit testing was completed.

⁵ A citizen task force that identified unmet needs and new opportunities to improve community engagement.

Exhibit 5

Accessibility of Communication with Contact Teams

42%

Neighborhood Plan Contact Teams with a meeting that a community member could possibly attend and participate

SOURCE: OCA Analysis, April 2016

Exhibit 6

Accessibility of Participation in Contact Teams

45%

Neighborhood Plan Contact Teams that had submitted an update of at least one contact in the last year, as required by Code

SOURCE: OCA Analysis, April 2016; Austin City Code § 25-1-805 (D)

Overall, contact teams updated entries for only 26% of members during the year ending March 2016, and only 9% of all entries were both current and included the required membership category (see exhibit 7). The oldest contact team entries include information that has not been updated in 15 years. In addition, we found that the spreadsheet contains duplicate entries, people no longer associated with a neighborhood, and City employees who do not qualify for contact team membership. City staff does not actively update the spreadsheet or consistently verify whether contacts submitted qualify for membership. City Code specifically requires contact teams to submit membership information, but does not direct staff to conduct this regular review.

Exhibit 7

Participation Categories for Contact Teams
<p>The neighborhood plan contact team shall to the greatest extent practicable include at least one representative from each of the following groups within a neighborhood plan area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) property owners; (2) residential renters; (3) business owners; and (4) neighborhood organization members owning or renting property within the neighborhood plan area <p style="text-align: center;">SOURCE: Austin City Code § 25-1-805 (B)</p>

Although Planning and Zoning maintains a spreadsheet of contact team members, this information is not accessible to the public. Instead, the City’s website and training materials direct community members to the community registry, which the City’s Public Information Office (PIO) maintains. However, the registry does not provide all of the entry fields necessary to comply with the requirements in Code and only two contacts may be listed per organization.

MOST CONTACT TEAM BYLAWS CREATE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

The Code establishes that contact teams are “a separate body apart from any other existing or future neighborhood organization,” yet 8 of the 31 contact teams reviewed have bylaws that transfer some governing authority to separate neighborhood organizations. Specific issues observed include the following:

- Four contact teams draw their executive team exclusively from specific area neighborhood organizations, and two draw their entire membership from these organizations.
- Five contact teams require membership in separate neighborhood organizations that do not have websites with information on how to become a member.
- At least five contact teams require membership in separate neighborhood organizations that may require a payment of dues, although the City prohibits contact teams from charging dues.

The bylaws for all but one contact team create barriers to voter eligibility. In some cases, residents would need to attend multiple meetings before they can vote. Some contact teams do not meet regularly, or information on when and where their meetings occur may not be easily accessible to the public. Other observed conditions that could create barriers to public engagement include:

- requirements that residents live in the neighborhood for a minimum of five years to vote;
- requirements that voters must be approved by an executive committee;
- an executive committee selects its own replacements with no vote of the membership; and
- no rules on the election of an executive committee, which has all decision-making authority.

SEVERAL CONTACT TEAM BYLAWS ARE INCONSISTENT AND LACK TRANSPARENCY

The City’s Code requires contact teams to adopt bylaws that are consistent with a standard template provided by the Planning and Zoning Department. However, several bylaws deviated from it.

Specifically:

- five contact team bylaws do not include rules on conflicts of interest; and
- four contact team bylaws do not require the recording of meeting minutes, including votes and attendance.

Contact teams are also required to submit bylaws changes to the City, but Planning and Zoning does not require any documentation of votes to adopt or amend bylaws. The bylaws template, as well as most adopted bylaws, states that meeting minutes and attendance sheets are available to the Planning and Zoning Department, but City staff has never requested this information. Consequently, it is unclear if contact teams follow these practices even when such requirements exist in the bylaws.

MOST CONTACT TEAMS ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE

Only 1 of 31 neighborhood contact teams reviewed by auditors documented the inclusion of at least one person from every member category described in the Land Development Code (see exhibit 7). In addition, only 253 out of 930 contacts listed in Planning and Zoning’s membership spreadsheet included this category information. For entries with category information:

- Forty two identified as business owners, though only 21 records representing six contact teams have been updated in the last year.
- Seven individuals identified as renters, of which six records representing three contact teams have been updated in the last year. No renters are listed as officers for any contact team.

CONTACT TEAMS ARE INCONSISTENTLY DEFINED

Planning and Zoning staff has interpreted the Code definition of a contact team to include anyone in a neighborhood who has requested to be contacted by the City. Some contact teams have defined their organization differently, requesting that the City share information only with contact team officers. These differing definitions may lead to different expectations regarding membership and the activities of contact teams.

Code requires the Planning and Zoning Department to notify contact teams of certain information, but there are no affirmative requirements that contact teams communicate with other neighborhood stakeholders.

Whether or not contact teams are consistently officers of the City of Austin is ambiguous, and it is unclear under what circumstances contact teams are subject to the transparency and integrity provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Texas Public Information Act, or the City of Austin Code of Ethics (see exhibit 8). The City is not requiring contact teams to observe these rules in a manner similar to City Boards and Commissions; contact team members are not required to attend any ethics training, nor is any provided to them.

Exhibit 8

Transparency and Integrity Regulations
Texas Open Meetings Act Requires notice of an assembly, accessibility to the public, and a record of the meeting published afterward
Texas Public Information Act Requires public access to official records and communication
City of Austin Code of Ethics and Financial Disclosure Establishes rules of conduct by public officials, oversight and, in some cases, financial disclosure
SOURCE: Texas Government Code §551; Texas Government Code §552; Austin City Code §2-7

Finding 3: Neighborhood plans are not regularly updated, implementation of plan recommendations is incomplete, and plans are not consistent with some elements of Imagine Austin.

The City is not working with neighborhood plan contact teams to ensure neighborhood plans remain current and aligned through periodic updates.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS ARE NOT UP-TO-DATE

As shown in exhibit 9, 70% of neighborhood plans are greater than 10 years old, with 20% more than 15 years old. While narrow amendments such as changes to individual properties on a future land use map have occurred, none of the 30 plans have received a broader review and update since their adoption. The Planning and Zoning Department’s training materials state that updates will not occur until planning in the “urban core neighborhoods” is complete. The City Charter, the City Code, and the neighborhood plans themselves provide varying guidance on how often plans should be updated, ranging from every three to seven years.

Exhibit 9

Age of Neighborhood Plans		
Age	Number of Plans	Percent
0-5 years	2	7%
5-10 years	7	23%
10-15 years	15	50%
15+ years	6	20%

SOURCE: OCA Analysis, September 2016

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS IS INCOMPLETE

In 2015, the Planning and Zoning Department reported that 59% of the 3,353 recommendations included in neighborhood plans are incomplete. Recommendations may overlap with other citywide plans and the responsibility for implementing recommendations can belong to the City, other government bodies, or the community itself. Only 8 out of 30 plans include recommendations that are more than 50% implemented, and the highest completion rate among all neighborhood plans is 65%. A recent analysis published by the City’s Financial Services Office estimated the cost to complete the remaining recommendations in neighborhood plans is over \$3.7 billion.

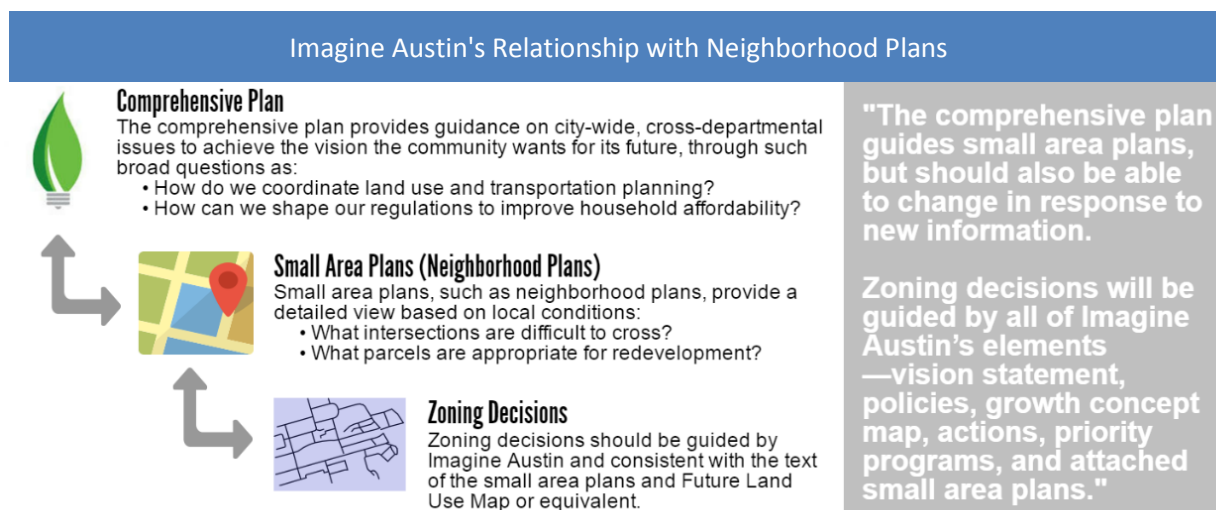
NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY ALIGNED WITH THE CITY’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A 2006 audit of the City of Austin’s long-term planning efforts found that neighborhood plans were neither consistent nor guided by a unified vision for the City. None of the plans reviewed in the 2006 audit have been updated in the subsequent 10 years or updated to reflect Imagine Austin. City staff, the Planning Commission, and neighborhood stakeholders provided input during the development of the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan regarding the inclusion of goals and other details of neighborhood plans. After the adoption of Imagine Austin, no similar review took place regarding the inclusion of goals and other details of the comprehensive plan into pre-existing neighborhood plans. As a result, the City’s neighborhood plans may not reflect the present-day needs and vision that stakeholders have for their neighborhoods or their city.

The City Charter requires that “the several elements of the comprehensive plan shall be coordinated and be internally consistent.” Imagine Austin includes a growth concept map that identifies activity centers and corridors where growth is either anticipated or desired. According to Imagine Austin, small-area plans, such as neighborhood plans, are how the City of Austin prepares for change and ensures complete communities as the city grows (see exhibit 10); however, future neighborhood planning areas are not currently identified based on Imagine Austin’s growth concept map or any other prioritization process.

The Imagine Austin comprehensive plan emphasizes affordability in its citywide vision, though only half of neighborhood plans include this goal. Analyses of 24 individual neighborhood plans conducted by the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Department found that four neighborhood plans would have a negative impact on affordability. An additional 10 analyses by NHCD offered alternative suggestions to maximize affordable housing opportunities, such as the adoption of additional infill tools. Infill tools are land use regulations intended to permit a greater diversity of housing types and to improve compatibility between existing neighborhoods and new development on vacant or underutilized parcels of

Exhibit 10



SOURCE: Imagine Austin comprehensive plan, June 2012, Pages 218-220

land. However, at least five neighborhood plans have not adopted neighborhood-wide infill tools, and the tools have been adopted sporadically in the areas of the other 25 plans.

Imagine Austin uses the City's Bicentennial in 2039 as its planning horizon and seven neighborhood plans also note a horizon that was used in their development. The documented planning horizons, though, are not consistent with each other or with Imagine Austin.

Finding 4: Fair housing choice has not been specifically considered in most neighborhood planning efforts.

As an annual recipient of approximately \$10 million in federal Housing and Urban Development funds, the City of Austin has a duty under the Fair Housing Act of 1968 to affirmatively further fair housing through its planning efforts. The City also has its own fair housing ordinance that expands the list of protected classes within Austin who may file a complaint.

The *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice* report, completed for the City in 2015 and submitted to the federal government, identifies several barriers to housing choice related to neighborhood planning and its associated zoning (see exhibit 11). The report recommends that the City work through the CodeNEXT process to modify land use and regulatory barriers.

Exhibit 11

"Overly complex land use regulations limit housing choice and create impediments to housing affordability. These include: minimum site area requirements for multifamily housing, limits on ADUs [accessory dwelling units], compatibility standards, overly restrictive neighborhood plans and excessive parking requirements."

SOURCE: *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice*, May 2015, Section V, Pg. 3

The *Code Diagnosis* report completed for the City as a part of the CodeNEXT process identified elements of the Code as being complex, causing delays directly connected to affordability. The diagnosis notes that the lack of transparency around neighborhoods opting in or out of some regulations in neighborhood plans contributes to this complexity.

Only one neighborhood plan mentions fair housing. In addition, the bylaws template of the Planning and Zoning Department does not include any language that stresses fair housing choice and no current bylaws reference it either. Planning and Zoning conducts optional quarterly training sessions for contact team members, but a review of training topics from 2010-2015 indicated that there were no trainings on topics related to fair housing.

Current land use policies and practices that do not incorporate fair housing concepts, if unaddressed, could create a risk of litigation against the City or a risk of losing federal grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address Finding 1, which noted the City’s neighborhood planning efforts are inequitable and have lacked robust and representative participation, we make the following recommendations.

1. **The Planning and Zoning Department Director should research practices and initiate a policy discussion that holistically re-evaluates small-area plans, including neighborhood plans, as they relate to an up-to-date comprehensive plan and a geographically based City Council system. The discussion should include:**
 - identifying and implementing strategies to ensure all Austin neighborhoods receive equitable land use regulation by the City;
 - providing equal standing to all applicants when petitioning the Planning Commission for plan amendments or updates; and
 - considering appropriate roles for the Planning Commission and the Zoning and Platting Commission.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

2. **The Planning and Zoning Department Director should:**
 - implement a criteria-based process for identifying and prioritizing future small-area planning efforts as recommended by the *Zucker Systems Workflow Organizational Assessment*; and
 - clearly identify for the public the elements of current and future small-area plans that are advisory or binding on the City’s land use decisions.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

To address Finding 2, which noted neighborhood plan contact teams create barriers to public engagement and representative decision-making, we make the following recommendations.

3. **The Planning and Zoning Department Director should initiate a policy discussion with contact teams and the City’s leadership to identify and implement strategies for increasing representative public participation in the development and ongoing decision making for small-area plans. This discussion regarding barriers to participation should include:**
 - a mechanism to encourage inclusive practices by neighborhood organizations and recognize those that have broad and diverse community participation;
 - a mechanism for City staff to enforce provisions in Code regarding contact teams, such as a lack of conflict of interest rules;
 - an online engagement platform to make it easier for people to give input in ways that are convenient, accessible, and appropriate for them during the development and ongoing decision making for small-area plans, as recommended by the Task Force on Community Engagement;
 - a clear definition of contact team membership, including status as officers of the City, appropriate standards of conduct, and what provisions of state law and City Code apply to these teams; and
 - a training program for contact teams that addresses ethics and integrity practices of the City.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

- 4. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should ensure that the department maintains an accurate, complete, and up-to-date list of contact team members.**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Do Not Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

- 5. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should work with the Chief Communications Director to make complete and accurate information on contact team membership and upcoming meetings available through the Community Registry.**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

To address Finding 3, which noted that neighborhood plans are not regularly updated, fully implemented, or consistent with some elements of Imagine Austin, we make the following recommendations.

- 6. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should ensure current and future neighborhood planning efforts implement a coordinated citywide vision. Specifically:**
 - identify where existing neighborhood plans do not reflect the goals of Imagine Austin and work with community stakeholders to improve alignment;
 - establish and communicate a regular review, update, and expiration cycle for small-area plans, such as neighborhood plans; and
 - align the selection of future small-area planning efforts with the Imagine Austin growth concept map.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Partially Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

- 7. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should communicate a timeline for completion of neighborhood plan recommendations.**

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.

To address Finding 4, which noted that fair housing choice has not been specifically considered in most neighborhood planning efforts, we make the following recommendations.

- 8. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should take proactive steps to address impediments to fair housing in the neighborhood planning process and work with the Director of the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department where appropriate. Steps to consider should include:**
 - ensuring the availability of fair housing information for the community and training for contact teams;
 - changing the model bylaws template to include a required non-discrimination clause;
 - including fair housing consideration in affordability impact statements on future small-area plans;
 - developing an approach to address existing plans and associated zoning where barriers to fair housing have been identified; and
 - working through the CodeNext process to modify or eliminate regulatory barriers to fair housing and housing choice as identified in the CodeNext Code Diagnosis.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: **Concur.** Refer to Appendix A for management response and action plan.


APPENDIX A

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



MEMORANDUM

TO: Corrie Stokes, City Auditor
Office of the Auditor

FROM: Gregory I. Guernsey, AICP Director 
Planning and Zoning Department

DATE: November 10, 2016

SUBJECT: Planning and Zoning Department response to the Audit of Neighborhood Planning

I have reviewed the City Auditor's Audit of Neighborhood Planning and concur with most of its recommendations. Please see attached document with the responses to each recommendation and sub-bullet.

cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager

ACTION PLAN

Audit of Neighborhood Planning

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>1. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should research practices and initiate a policy discussion that holistically re-evaluates neighborhood planning as it relates to an up to date comprehensive plan and a geographically based council system. The discussion should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identifying and implementing strategies to ensure all Austin neighborhoods receive equitable land use regulation by the City; ▪ providing equal standing to all applicants when petitioning the Planning Commission for plan amendments or updates; and 	<p>Concur Planning and Zoning Department staff are currently reevaluating the neighborhood planning program as it relates to a new comprehensive plan, a new council district system, and issues of equity and feasibility.</p> <p>While management concurs with this recommendation, a bullet-by-bullet review follows.</p>	Underway	Fall 2018
	<p>Bullet #1: Concur Planning and Zoning Department staff will work to ensure Austin neighborhoods receive equitable planning services as well as land use regulations.</p>	Planned	Fall 2018
	<p>Bullet #2: Concur Presently, under the code and under varying circumstances, only the neighborhood plan contact team, property owners, the director of the Planning and Zoning Department, the Planning Commission, and City Council can initiate a plan amendment. Under this recommendation, anybody could petition the Planning Commission for a plan amendment, regardless of their stakeholder status.</p> <p>We agree the City Code establishes Neighborhood Planning Contact Teams (NPCTs) with certain rights individuals and</p>	Implemented	

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider appropriate roles for the Planning Commission and the Zoning and Platting Commission. 	<p>neighborhood organizations do not have. NPCTs only exist in City Council directed Neighborhood Planning Areas with adopted neighborhood plans. To provide equal standing to all individuals or neighborhood organizations under the current process would require a community dialogue on the policy approaches and implications. Depending upon the results of stakeholder input, amendments to the land development code may be required.</p> <p>Bullet #3: Concur Staff agrees that the specific roles should be better defined; however, we disagree with the approach devised by the Board and Commission Transition Task Force. Instead of clarifying roles of the two land use commissions, staff is in favor of only having one land use commission.</p>		
<p>2. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a criteria-based process for identifying and prioritizing future small-area planning efforts as recommended by the <i>Zucker Systems Workflow Organizational Assessment</i>; and 	<p>Bullet #1: Concur Planning and Zoning staff have developed a draft method of selecting future planning areas based on a set of objective criteria. The concept has been endorsed by the Small Area Planning Committee of the Planning Commission and Zoning and Platting Commission as well as by the full Planning Commission. The process, as endorsed by the two groups, uses a geographic information system (GIS) model to identify an initial group of planning “hot spots.” The identified “hot spots” are</p>	Underway	Spring 2017

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clearly identify for the public the elements of current and future small-area plans that are advisory or binding on the City’s land use decisions. 	<p>further refined and analyzed using a matrix to prioritize the areas in greater need of planning services. The process needs further refinement to clarify the variables used in the GIS model as well as those used in the matrix.</p> <p>The “hot spot” model and matrix could also be used to identify other planning geographies for future planning efforts. These geographies could include <i>Imagine Austin</i> Activity Corridors and Activity Centers or stations along the MetroRail or MetroRapid lines with the greatest need of planning services. Focusing on these types of geographies would also advance the implementation of the comprehensive plan.</p> <p>Bullet #2: Concur The comprehensive plan is a document that guides decisions regarding land use, and adopted small area plans are considered elements (often referred to as attachments) of the comprehensive plan. Elements of current and future small-area plans are advisory on the City’s land use decisions.</p>	Implemented	
<p>3. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should initiate a policy discussion with contact teams and the City’s leadership to identify and implement strategies for increasing representative public participation in the development and ongoing decision making for small-area plans. This</p>	<p>Concur While management concurs with the general intent of this recommendation, a bullet-by-bullet response follows.</p>	Planned	Fall 2017

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>discussion regarding barriers to participation should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a mechanism to encourage inclusive practices by neighborhood organizations and recognize those that have broad and diverse community participation; ▪ a mechanism for City staff to enforce provisions in Code regarding contact teams, such as a lack of conflict of interest rules; ▪ an online engagement platform to make it easier for people to give input in ways that are convenient, accessible, and appropriate for them 	<p>Bullet #1: Concur Staff can research best practices for inclusivity and provide trainings and materials for neighborhood plan contact teams.</p> <p>Staff can review all neighborhood plan contact team bylaws for inclusivity language and recognize those that strive for broad and diverse community participation.</p> <p>Bullet #2: Concur Currently, the Planning and Zoning Department director can make a determination that a NPCT is out of compliance with the provisions of the LDC with regards to bylaw requirements. That determination can be appealed to the Planning Commission through the Dispute Resolution Process. To make this change, the City Council or the Planning Commission would need to initiate a code amendment. Staff will discuss with the Planning Commission and report outcomes to City Council.</p> <p>Bullet #3: Concur This is currently being done during the development of small area plans, usually in the form in multiple online surveys. Staff is currently looking into several types of online tools to capture</p>	<p>Planned</p> <p>Planned</p> <p>Planned</p>	<p>Fall 2017</p> <p>Fall 2017</p> <p>Fall 2017</p>

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>during the development and ongoing decision making for small area plans, as recommended by the Task Force on Community Engagement;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clear definition of contact team membership, including status as officers of the City, appropriate standards of conduct, and what provisions of state law and City Code apply to these teams; and ▪ a training program for contact teams that addresses ethics and integrity practices of the City. 	<p>additional types of information.</p> <p>Staff can research best practices for community organizing and communication tools and provide findings to all organized groups throughout the city.</p> <p>Bullet #4: Concur To make this change, the City Council or the Planning Commission would need to initiate a code amendment. Staff will discuss with the Planning Commission and report outcomes to City Council.</p> <p>Bullet #5: Concur Staff can develop training materials addressing ethics and integrity practices. Trainings can be on-line and/or in person as part of the existing quarterly neighborhood plan contact team training program.</p>	<p>Planned</p> <p>Planned</p>	<p>Summer 2017</p> <p>Summer 2017</p>
<p>4. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should ensure that the department maintains an accurate, complete and up to date list of contact team members.</p>	<p>Do Not Concur It is the responsibility of the neighborhood plan contact team to comply with the requirements established by the Land Development Code, which is to submit on an annual basis a list of its members, contact information and membership category. The code only speaks to Planning and Zoning Department’s staff role to receive the information and has no authority to enforce the accuracy of the list.</p>		

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>5. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should work with the Chief Communications Director to make complete and accurate information on contact team membership and upcoming meetings through the Community Registry.</p>	<p>Concur Staff can develop training materials and/or standard operating procedures for maintaining accurate records in the existing community registry format. Information can be shared electronically or as part of the existing quarterly neighborhood plan contact team training program.</p> <p>Staff can explore with the Chief Communications Director the possibility of developing features to the existing community registry to allow for additional membership information allowing for more complete and accurate information on contact team membership and upcoming meetings.</p>	<p>Planned</p>	<p>Spring 2017</p>
<p>6. The Planning and Zoning Department director should ensure current and future neighborhood planning efforts implement a coordinated citywide vision. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ identify where existing neighborhood plans do not reflect the goals of Imagine Austin and work with 	<p>Concur This has been the approach taken regarding small area plans since the adoption of Imagine Austin. The South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan (2014), Colony Park Master Plan (2014), and The South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan (2016) incorporate and reflect the goals and aspirations expressed in the comprehensive plan. The recently begun North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Plan process is using Imagine Austin’s central concept of complete communities as its organizing principle</p> <p>Bullet #1: Do Not Concur Staff would have to balance the value of this recommendation in regards to Rec #01. Planning and Zoning staff could undertake a review of the small area plans adopted prior to Imagine Austin</p>	<p>Implemented</p>	

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Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>community stakeholders to improve alignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ establish and communicate a regular review, update, and expiration cycle for small area plans, such as neighborhood plans ▪ align the selection of future small area planning efforts with the Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map. 	<p>and identify inconsistencies with the comprehensive plans goals.</p> <p>This process could begin with a review of these plans followed by a dialogue with community stakeholders.</p> <p>Bullet #2:Do Not Concur Staff would have to balance the value of this recommendation in regards to Rec #01. Initially staff could conduct a review of best practices across the country as well as a literature review as part of developing such a cycle. Once completed, staff would develop an approach and enter into a community conversation with community stakeholders that would include: contact teams, business interests, property owners, the development community, non-profits, and other interested members of the community.</p> <p>Bullet #3: Concur The approach to selecting future planning areas discussed in the response to Recommendation #2 incorporates Imagine Austin Activity Centers and Activity Corridors into the selection process. Although the approach has not been decided upon, developing plans based on those centers and corridors would be an effective way to further implement Imagine Austin. The method of selecting future planning areas could be adopted to prioritize these areas.</p>	<p>Planned</p>	<p>Spring 2017</p>

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Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<p>7. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should communicate a timeline for completion of neighborhood plan recommendations.</p>	<p>Concur Planning and Zoning staff, working with affected City of Austin Departments can develop such a timeline. The Planning and Zoning Department does not implement a majority of a plan's recommendations, there is no way to accurately estimate the implementation of a plan's recommendations. In some cases, a plan's recommendations may fall into a category that could not be practically implemented based on the typical departmental CIP process. This type of recommendation may require a successful bond package to fund. This may or may not happen, but it does not mean that it should not be included in the plan. Additionally, many plans contain recommendations that are the responsibility of community groups. There is not a way to ensure that these ever get implemented. One best practice would be to group a plan's recommendations into general implementation horizons such as short, intermediate, long-term, or ongoing.</p>	<p>Planned</p>	<p>Fall 2017</p>
<p>8. The Planning and Zoning Department Director should take proactive steps to address impediments to fair housing in the neighborhood planning process and work with the Director of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development where appropriate. Steps to consider should include:</p>	<p>Concur</p>	<p>Planned</p>	<p>Fall 2017</p>

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ensuring the availability of fair housing information for the community and training for contact teams; 	<p>Bullet #1: Concur This type of training could be conducted as part of the quarterly neighborhood plan contact team training program.</p> <p>Planning and Zoning staff will work with the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Department to make this type of information is available during the planning process. Additionally, discussions with regard to fair housing can be incorporated into the planning process to encourage a community dialogue. The substance of these discussions could be incorporated into the final plan.</p>	Planned	Fall 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ changing the model bylaws template to include a required non-discrimination clause; 	<p>Bullet #2: Concur The Planning Commission would need to initiate this code amendment. Staff can work with Planning Commission to explore initiating a code amendment. Staff can explore updating the 2 administrative documents; [model] Bylaws Template and Instructions and [model] Bylaws Template to include fair housing provision language</p>	Planned	Fall 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ including fair housing consideration in affordability impact statements on future small area plans; 	<p>Bullet#3: Concur Planning and Zoning staff will ask and assist Neighborhood Housing and Community Development to develop this process.</p>	Planned	Spring 2017
<p>developing an approach to address existing plans and associated zoning where barriers to fair housing have been identified;</p>	<p>Bullet #4: Concur As part of the review process identified in other recommendations suggested in this report, Planning and Zoning staff can review and identify impediments to fair housing. This</p>	Planned	Spring 2018

APPENDIX A

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ working through the CodeNext process to modify or eliminate regulatory barriers to fair housing and housing choice as identified in the CodeNext Code Diagnosis 	<p>finding of this review can be shared with contact teams and other interested parties.</p> <p>Bullet #5: Concur Via a resolution, the City Council directed the CodeNEXT process to address this issue as part of the revision process.</p> <p>The <i>Household Affordability Code Prescription</i> agreed with and referenced the findings of the Impediments to Fair Housing Choice report. To address the impediments created by the opt-in/opt-out zoning practices allowed by the Neighborhood Plan Combining District sections of the Code, the prescription recommended that code provisions regarding the choosing of which infill options would be allowed in a planning areas be eliminated through the CodeNEXT process.</p>	Underway	Spring 2018

KEY DATES IN NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING HISTORY

- 1979 - The *Austin Tomorrow* comprehensive plan was Austin's first comprehensive plan developed with citizen input and the first to call for the establishment of participatory planning by neighborhoods.
- 1984 - A citywide zoning ordinance was adopted, which was later combined with several other related ordinances to form today's land development code.
- 1996 - In response to the failure to adopt an updated comprehensive plan, called *Austinplan*, the City formed a Citizen Planning Committee (CPC). The committee found that there was no unified vision for the future of the City, and published its final report, *From Chaos to Common Ground: A Blueprint for Austin*. The report recommendations included coordinating comprehensive development regulation through neighborhood plans, a formal neighborhood association system, and associated registry.
- 1997 - The Austin City Council formally initiated City-led neighborhood planning efforts in the form of a pilot program on May 21, 1997.
- 1998 - The first neighborhood plan was adopted by the Austin City Council on August 28, 1998. After this initial application-based pilot, a City-led program was formally established and boundaries for several new neighborhood plan areas were set.
- 2000 - The City Council adopted neighborhood plan combining districts (denoted as "NP" on zoning maps.) Combining districts are an overlay that allows for base zoning district changes and the adoption of zoning tools or performance requirements. The combining district also established new infill options that planning areas can select on an opt-in/opt-out basis.
- 2006 - An audit of the City's long-term planning efforts noted that comprehensive planning in the City of Austin had strayed from the direct guidelines of the City Charter and moved into a fragmented planning process focused on neighborhood plans. The audit noted that the *Austin Tomorrow Plan* did not actively guide the City's decisions.
- 2012 - A new comprehensive plan, *Imagine Austin*, was adopted on June 14, 2012 and some pre-existing small-area plans, including all neighborhood plans, were attached as a part of the appendix. A priority program in the plan is to revise the land development code, which was initiated and became known as CodeNEXT.
- 2015 - A new, single-member district City Council was sworn in. The *Impediments to Fair Housing Choice* report as well as the *Zucker Report* were published, and Planning and Zoning was separated into its own department. The Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Area was ranked as the most economically segregated large city in the country.
- 2016 - A code amendment was made to allow for dispute resolution for neighborhood stakeholders regarding contact team code violations.

APPENDIX C

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

[Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice](#) (2015)

A report required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that incorporates data and information to describe the limited housing options available to low income residents of Austin.

[APA Policy Guide on Neighborhood Collaborative Planning](#) (1998)

A policy guide by the American Planning Association with specific recommendations for city, state and federal levels of government regarding neighborhood planning.

[Background on updates to the Neighborhood Planning Program](#) (2016)

A code amendment in January 2016 that outlines a citizen grievance process for disputes arising from a neighborhood plan contact team. Also includes a copy of the contact team bylaws template.

[Board and Commission Transition Taskforce](#) (2014)

A citizen task force reviewed the City of Austin's board and commission structure and made recommendations on their organization and operation to the City Council.

[City of Austin Long-Term Planning Audit](#) (2006)

An audit performed in 2006 of the City's long-term planning efforts that found that the city could benefit from a more comprehensive approach to planning.

[CodeNEXT Code Diagnosis](#) (2014)

A report that focuses on summarizing major issues identified by the public, City staff, and the CodeNEXT team within the existing land development code.

[CodeNEXT Code Diagnosis – Neighborhood Plan Assessment](#) (2014)

The CodeNEXT consultant team prepared an assessment of all adopted Neighborhood Plans. This assessment included a compilation of the goals of all neighborhood plans and categories for the goals.

[Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#) (Amended 2016)

Adopted in 2012, the City's current comprehensive plan provides core principles for action to achieve a sustainable future, and guidance on how the city will use those principles to turn the plan into reality.

[Roadmap for Building a Better Austin](#) (2015)

A detailed response by the Planning and Zoning Department and Development Services Department to the *Zucker Report* and a recommended implementation plan scheduled to be completed in two years.

[Small-Area Plan Implementation Report](#) (2015)

An annual report produced by Planning and Zoning that documents the progress in implementing the recommendations from small-area plans, including neighborhood plans.

[Task Force on Community Engagement](#) (2016)

A report by a citizen task force that identifies unmet needs as well as new opportunities to improve Austin's community engagement.

[Zucker Systems Workflow Organizational Assessment](#) (2015)

An organizational and operational analysis of the Planning and Zoning as well as Development Services Departments focusing on process efficiency, customer satisfaction, and delivery of accurate and timely services.

APPENDIX D

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

There are 60 neighborhood planning areas originally designated by the City of Austin. All but seven of these areas are covered by adopted neighborhood plans. Some “combined plans” cover multiple planning areas, resulting in only 30 adopted plan documents. Most plans have a contact team, though four plans have two contact teams. Two neighborhood plans and parts of a third are not represented by a contact team. This results in a total of 32 contact teams.

The process of developing a neighborhood plan begins with an understanding of demographic conditions and trends in a specific area. This information is frequently published within the neighborhood plan documents themselves. Depending on when a plan was adopted, it may rely on 1990, 2000, or 2010 census data. The following table includes the population of each neighborhood planning area for 2015 and 2000, as well as the percentage of housing units owned or rented. Percentages may not total 100% due to vacant units. Where available, final vote counts for neighborhood plan approval include total participation (both affirmative and negative votes) by neighborhood stakeholders (both resident and non-resident).

Adopted Neighborhood Plans					2015			2000		
Neighborhood Plan Area	Neighborhood Plan	Contact Team	Adoption Date	Final Vote Count	Total Population	% Rental Units	% Owner Occupied	Total Population	% Rental Units	% Owner Occupied
Dawson	Dawson	Dawson	Aug-98	219 ¹	2,935	60%	30%	3,466	65%	32%
East Cesar Chavez	East Cesar Chavez	East Cesar Chavez	May-99	217	3,488	58%	35%	3,856	61%	35%
Chestnut	Chestnut	Chestnut	Jul-99	100 ²	2,102	45%	44%	1,563	45%	47%
Hyde Park	Hyde Park	Hyde Park	Apr-00	287	5,871	71%	22%	5,841	73%	24%
Old West Austin	Old West Austin	Old West Austin	Jun-00	377	4,551	64%	23%	4,022	66%	28%
North Austin Civic Association	North Austin Civic Association	North Austin Civic Association	Jun-00	631	28,824	63%	23%	27,908	70%	28%
Montopolis	Montopolis	Montopolis	Sep-01	44	11,182	57%	38%	6,957	41%	55%
Rosewood	Rosewood	Rosewood	Nov-01	61	4,556	52%	36%	4,504	59%	35%
Central East Austin	Central East Austin	Central East Austin	Dec-01	111	5,204	59%	31%	4,711	52%	39%
Holly	Holly	N/A	Dec-01	?	3,914	46%	44%	4,302	42%	54%
Bouldin Creek	Bouldin Creek	Bouldin Creek	May-02	315	5,875	57%	35%	5,659	63%	33%
North Loop	North Loop	North Loop	May-02	260	5,331	68%	23%	5,379	68%	28%
Upper Boggy Creek	Upper Boggy Creek	Upper Boggy Creek	Aug-02	? ³	5,778	56%	37%	5,551	53%	44%
Franklin Park	Southeast Combined	Southeast Combined	Oct-02	64	17,766	55%	41%	15,176	46%	53%
McKinney					4,602	36%	60%	3,072	29%	68%
Southeast					2,870	23%	69%	1,304	20%	72%
MLK	East MLK Combined	East MLK Combined	Nov-02	173	5,188	45%	41%	5,017	50%	45%
MLK-183					7,799	47%	43%	6,327	32%	62%
Pecan Springs/Springdale					4,857	39%	46%	5,482	46%	51%
Govalle	Govalle-Johnson Terrace	Govalle-Johnson Terrace	Mar-03	74	4,188	47%	45%	4,347	35%	60%
Johnson Terrace					2,128	36%	57%	1,746	37%	59%
Crestview	Crestview-Wooten	Crestview	Apr-04	252	4,306	37%	49%	3,970	35%	63%
Wooten		Wooten			5,531	54%	36%	5,948	58%	40%
Brentwood	Brentwood-Highland	Brentwood	May-04	290	8,106	60%	35%	8,055	60%	37%
Highland		Highland			4,576	56%	37%	4,560	58%	39%
Hancock	Central Austin Combined	Central Austin Combined	Aug-04	? ⁴	5,132	73%	19%	5,029	72%	23%
North University					5,023	83%	11%	4,426	83%	13%
West University					18,078	89%	7%	12,342	89%	8%
East Congress	South Congress Combined	South Congress Combined	Aug-05	? ⁴	3,319	50%	47%	2,841	39%	57%
Sweetbriar					6,462	75%	24%	4,383	48%	48%
West Congress					2,449	52%	30%	2,980	64%	33%
South River City	Greater South River City	Greater South River City	Sep-05	109	6,590	59%	29%	6,380	62%	32%
St. Edwards					6,021	82%	11%	3,979	80%	17%
Parker Lane	East Riverside-Oltorf Combined	East Riverside-Oltorf Combined	Nov-06	122	10,179	78%	13%	8,278	81%	16%
Pleasant Valley					13,773	85%	6%	9,166	89%	9%
Riverside					13,222	70%	6%	16,258	90%	5%
University Hills	University Hills-Windsor Park	University Hills	Aug-07	115	5,121	43%	50%	5,292	39%	58%
Windsor Park		Windsor Park			16,195	53%	33%	16,726	59%	37%
North Burnet	North Burnet / Gateway	N/A	Nov-07	?	5,507	85%	1%	3,286	90%	1%
Gateway					1,146	93%	0%	1,004	79%	8%
East Oak Hill	Oak Hill Combined	Oak Hill Combined	Dec-08	157	14,766	57%	36%	12,884	48%	43%
West Oak Hill					18,058	30%	68%	11,128	14%	84%
Georgian Acres	North Lamar Combined	North Lamar Combined	Jun-10	21	9,604	73%	11%	8,630	83%	13%
North Lamar					6,875	67%	22%	5,888	71%	26%
West Austin Neighborhood Group	Central West Austin Combined	Central West Austin Combined	Sep-10	62	10,860	41%	51%	11,055	43%	52%
Windsor Road					3,118	23%	70%	2,917	22%	74%
Heritage Hills	Heritage Hills-Windsor Hills	Heritage Hills-Windsor Hills	Jan-11	67	6,382	61%	28%	5,128	62%	35%
Windsor Hills					7,203	47%	46%	6,335	45%	50%
St. Johns	St. Johns-Coronado Hills Combined	St. Johns	Apr-12	19	9,318	72%	12%	9,438	82%	15%
Coronado Hills		Coronado Hills			3,713	66%	26%	3,735	65%	31%
Garrison Park	South Austin Combined	N/A	Nov-14	? ⁴	12,289	49%	43%	12,285	48%	47%
South Manchaca		South Manchaca			6,740	46%	49%	7,187	45%	53%
Westgate		N/A			3,968	56%	36%	3,971	56%	41%
Count: 53	Count: 30	Count: 32		Total:	392,639			351,674		

7 Additional Plan Areas:
Suspended: Barton Hills, Galindo, South Lamar, Zilker
Approved to Begin: North Shoal Creek
Future Plan Areas: Allandale and Rosedale

Source: Neighborhood plans, OCA analysis and ESRI Business Analyst, which uses census data for 2000 figures and combines public and private data sources to produce population estimates for non-census years.

¹ Final vote counts were not published but were calculated by auditors based on the survey information included in the plan.

² This vote count is noteworthy for having more non-resident property owners (55 votes) than residents (45 votes).

³ Final vote response is reported as 7%, but it is unclear if that relates to the number of ballots, households or population.

⁴ Final vote counts or response rates were not published, nor available upon request..