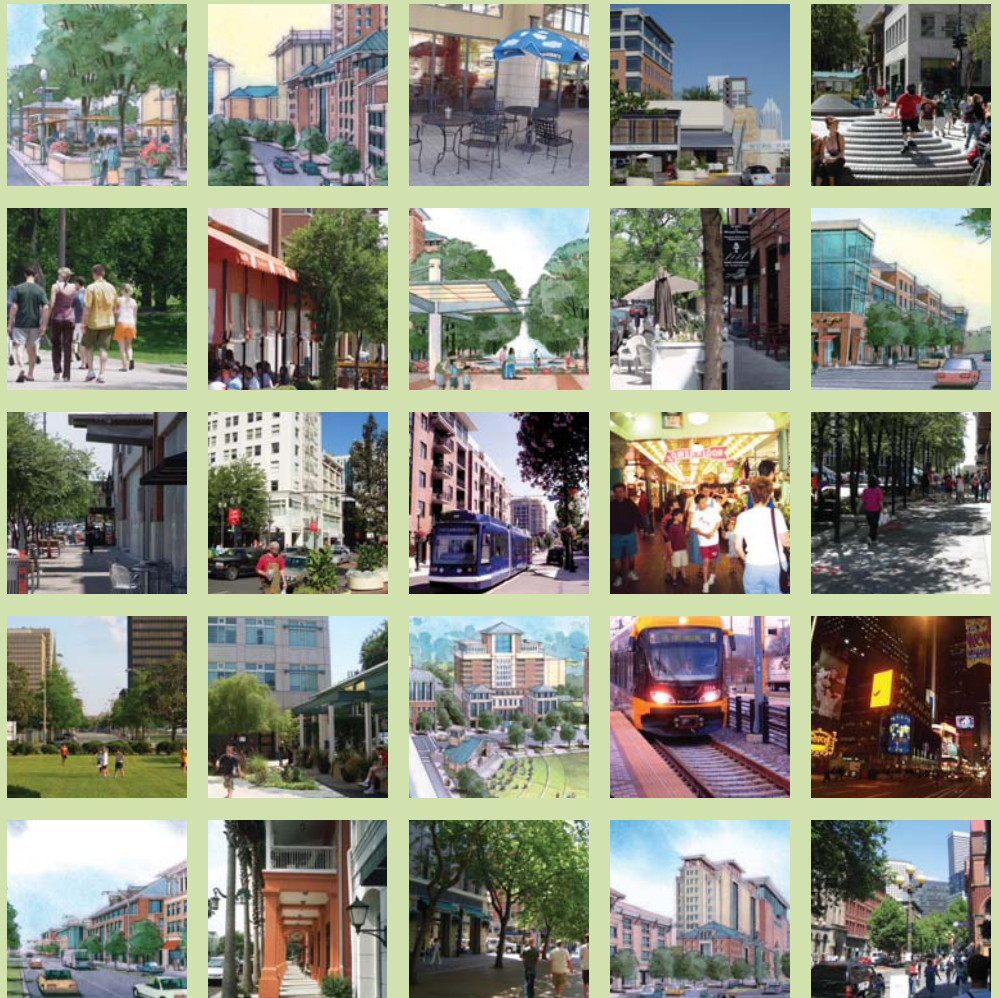


# NORTH BURNET G A T E W A Y



## 2035 MASTER PLAN DOCUMENT



City Of Austin  
Neighborhood Planning And Zoning Department  
August 2007

DRAFT



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Will Wynn	
Mayor Pro Tem Betty Dunkerley	Council Member Lee Leffingwell
Council Member Mike Martinez	Council Member Brewster McCracken
Council Member Jennifer Kim	Council Member Sheryl Cole

## LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Mayor Pro Tem Betty Dunkerley	
Council Member Brewster McCracken	Council Member Sheryl Cole

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Former Member – Chris Riley	

## CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

City Manager – Toby Hammett Futrell	Assistant City Manager – Laura Huffman
-------------------------------------	--

## NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

Director – Greg Guernsey	TOD Principal Planner – Sonya Lopez
Assistant Director – George Adams	Project Manager – Molly Scarbrough

## CONSULTANT TEAM

Carter & Burgess, Inc.	Land Design Studio
HDR WHM	HDR Engineering, Inc.
Raymond Chan & Associates, Inc.	Estilo Communications
GMSA Management	Diana McIver and Associates

## PUBLIC ADVISORY GROUP

Public Stakeholders	
<u>City of Austin</u>	
Sonya Lopez	Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Dept. (NPZD)
George Adams	NPZD - Urban Design
Jim Robertson	NPZD - Urban Design
Paul Frank	NPZD - GIS
Teri McManus	NPZD – Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan (AMATP)
Allan Purcell	NPZD - AMATP
Dave Sullivan	Planning Commission
Diane Covert	Austin Energy

# STAKEHOLDERS

Judy Fowler	Austin Energy
Jarrel Wallace	Austin Energy - Distribution Planning
Katie Jensen	Austin Energy Green Building Program
Shelly Comer	Austin Energy Green Building Program
Dong Nguyen	Austin Water Utility (AWU)
Jeff Fox	AWU
Charles Schoenig	AWU
Greg Kiloh	Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services (EGRS)
Heather Cooke	EMS
Antonio Gonzalez	Austin Fire Dept. (AFD) Planning & Research
Carl Wren	Austin Fire Dept. (AFD) Prevention
Michael Hendon	Fleet Services
Steve Barney	Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
Ricardo Soliz	Parks and Recreation Dept. (PARD)
Julie Lipton	PARD
Peter Marsh	Public Works (PW)
Colly Kreidler	PW - Bike and Pedestrian Program
Joe Almazan	Watershed Protection and Development Review (WPDR)
Jean Drew	WPDR
Matt Hollon	WPDR
Jose Guerrero	WPDR

## Other Public Agencies

Bill Mullane	Austin Community College (ACC)
Joey Crumley	Austin Independent School District (AISD)
Allison Schulze	Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District (ASAICRD)
Lucy Galbraith	Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro)
Rob Smith	Capital Metro
Randall Hume	Capital Metro
Terry McCoy	Texas Dept. of Transportation (TxDOT)
Walter Barfield	TxDOT
Barton Kleiman	University of Texas, Office of Campus Planning

## PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS

Bryan Smith	Endeavor Real Estate
Brian Gaston	Property owner - The Gaston Co.
Joe Stallsmith	Simon Property Group
Steve Shea	Simon Property Group
Andrew Swanson	Industrial Properties Corporation
Dustin Lanier	Millwood Neighborhood Group
Linda Moore	North Austin Civic Association (NACA)
Angela & Bob Baker	North Austin Civic Association (NACA)
Lisa Rose	Schlosser Development

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Austin Community College
ACWP	Austin Clean Water Program
AFD	Austin Fire Department
AISD	Austin Independent School District
AMATP	Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan
ASAICRD	Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District
AWU	Austin Water Utility
Capital Metro	Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
CI	Commercial Industrial
CMU	Commercial Mixed Use
CWO	Comprehensive Watershed Ordinance
EAPP	Edwards Aquifer Protection Program
ECT	Envision Central Texas
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
FAR	Floor-to-Area Ratio
HGL	Hydraulic Grade Line
LCRA	Lower Colorado River Authority
LUE	Living Unit Equivalent
MoPac	Loop 1
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
NMU	Neighborhood Mixed Use
NPZD	Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department (City of Austin)
NR	Neighborhood Residential
P.A.G.	Public Advisory Group
PARD	Parks and Recreation Department (City of Austin)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TCEQ	Texas Council on Environmental Quality
TOD	Transit Oriented Development
TPSD	Transportation, Planning and Sustainability Department
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
UT	University of Texas
WMU	Warehouse Mixed Use
WPDR	Watershed Protection and Development Review Department (City of Austin)



The North Burnet/Gateway Master Plan encourages development of

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 2006, the City of Austin commissioned the consulting firm Carter Burgess, in association with Land Design Studio, to prepare a Master Plan for the North Burnet/Gateway area. This approximately 2,300-acre area along MoPac, north of US 183 occupies a highly visible and strategic location between Downtown Austin and the high growth areas to the city's north and west. The Central Texas region has experienced sustained, strong growth over the past few decades with the North Burnet/Gateway area growing as a primarily industrial and retail district. While the area is advantaged by good highway access, it is hampered by poor internal street connectivity, a fragmented property ownership pattern, and the lack of a clear vision for its future.

The North Burnet/Gateway Master Plan is the result of a focused planning process, a key element of which is the involvement of area stakeholders. "Stakeholders" is a term that encompasses a wide range of individ-

uals with various interests in the planning area. It includes current property and business owners, people living and working in the area, as well as those who visit on an occasional basis, who travel through on the way to other destinations, or who live in neighboring areas. Stakeholder involvement was accomplished using different strategies including a community image survey, focus groups, and a week-long design charrette conducted in the summer of 2006, and continued through concept refinement with the plan's Public Advisory Group (P.A.G.) and presentation of Draft Plan concepts in March 2007.

Out of the planning process came a redevelopment vision for the North Burnet/Gateway area to transform the aging, auto-oriented commercial and industrial uses into a livelier mixed-use neighborhood that is more pedestrian- and transit-friendly and can accommodate a significant number of new residents. This should serve to boost property values for

the area, as well as introduce a model for a more sustainable, compact form of development in a region that is challenged by significant population growth.

## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan presents a long-term vision for the North Burnet/Gateway area. The Plan will serve as a framework for infrastructure improvements and changes in the City development codes that will guide future development proposals. Implementation of the plan will require ongoing coordination with several public departments and agencies, as well as the community's commitment to its fulfillment. Furthermore, many of the plan's key elements require private development investment for implementation. This plan will serve as a tool to enhance the area's character by encouraging redevelopment that reflects a vibrant, urban, mixed-use

# 2035 CONCEPTUAL MASTER PLAN

This map presents a potential redevelopment vision and does not constitute regulatory standards



neighborhood. It is a critical first step toward orchestrating the public agency and private development coordination necessary to make this vision a reality.

An illustrative view of the Master Plan is depicted on the previous page, which shows a 2035 long-range redevelopment concept for the area. Some of the plan's key elements include:

- Bringing a significant number of new residents into the area to begin to accommodate some of the Central Texas Region's expected population growth over the next 30 years.
- Introducing new, more dense housing types such as townhomes and condos above commercial space to help integrate the commercial uses into the neighborhood fabric, and to make a compatible transition to the neighboring residential areas.
- Establishing the North Burnet/Gateway district as a destination area, strategically located between downtown and northwest Austin, to serve as a focus for neighborhood services such as restaurants, smaller retailers, and small and local businesses to create a vibrant, around-the-clock activity center.
- Expanding street networks to improve the mobility and access within the study area, as well as enhanced connections to surrounding areas. This includes redesigning Burnet Road as a north-south "transit boulevard" connecting US 183 and MoPac, a new overpass over MoPac connecting the Gateway area to the North Burnet area, and improved traffic flow and access management along the frontage road of MoPac.
- Redeveloping City of Austin parcels to serve as catalyst sites for transit-oriented development.
- The addition of civic land uses such as civic squares, plazas and parks and new facilities for public schools, police, fire,

and EMS stations as well as other uses that could provide additional community services for the district.

- Encouraging multi-story, mixed use buildings whose primary orientation would be toward new multi-functional streets, and away from the highways and access roads.
- Capitalizing on the location and market position of the area by introducing residential uses, a well-developed public realm and direct pedestrian links to rail stations and other transit uses in the district.

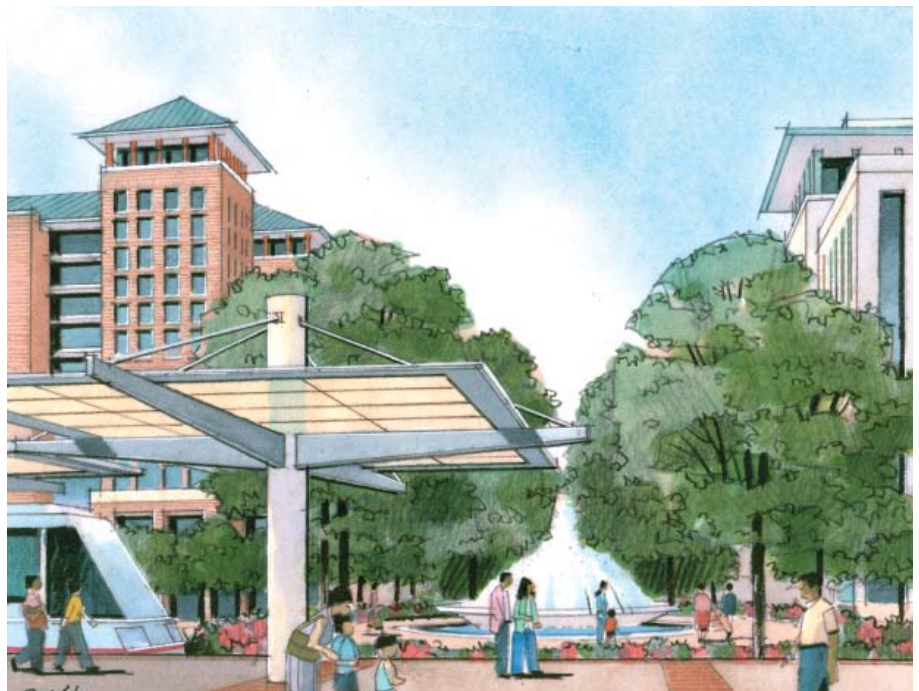
Overall, the 2035 North Burnet/Gateway Master Plan anticipates the area could accommodate the development of approximately 40,000 residential dwelling units, 12 to 13 million square feet of office and commercial space, 4 to 5 million square feet of retail space, 3,000 to 4,000 hotel rooms and 5 to 6 million square feet of industrial warehouse and service center space over the next 25 to 30 years.

A mixed-use development near transit. A transformation of this magnitude requires extensive coordination

## BENEFITS OF THE PLAN

The Central Texas Region is among the fastest growing areas in the state. Throughout the region, small town character is rapidly giving way to a more suburban sprawl landscape that erodes the natural beauty of the area while replacing it with a homogeneous development pattern that closely resembles other contemporary development all over America.

While the region's overwhelming conventional suburban development pattern is not likely to be stopped by the redevelopment and revitalization of areas like North Burnet/Gateway, such areas do provide an important alternative that offers a dense, sustainable pattern of development which mixes land-uses together and allows for a more urban, less auto-dependent lifestyle. Other similar developments in the United States have been well received by the public, with an attendant increase in property value. Since this is inherently a denser development pattern, it also bene-



fits the City by concentrating property values, providing increased property and sales taxes, while being more efficient for the provision of services.

Strategic implementation of this plan will result in transforming a largely homogenous area into a destination. The revitalized North Burnet/Gateway area will also serve as a fully functional neighborhood where it would be possible to live, work, shop, and be entertained, all in close walking proximity. Such urban lifestyle areas are essential to a growing city such as Austin where the majority of new housing starts are currently in suburban locations and require a significant commute to and from work and services. Traditional suburban development places a strain on city resources, as the costs to provide services to low density residential areas typically cost more to provide city services than they yield in tax revenues.

### KEY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The ultimate success of this Master Plan relies on the City taking an active role in promoting the redevelopment of the area, and taking certain key actions towards that end. Among the implementation strategies discussed are:

- Revising the land development code for the area to permit higher density, a mix of uses, and require better urban design.

- Coordinating with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to complete specific roadway improvements to enhance access and circulation in the area.

- Working with Austin Energy, Austin Water Utility and other City departments to relocate their service center operations from the area to another suitable site in order to make key city-owned property available for transit-oriented development. Relocation should be “revenue neutral” - revenues from the sale of land or partnership with private developers to redevelop the property should compensate for relocation of the city services.

- Ensuring the necessary infrastructure improvements needed for the implementation of the Master Plan are completed through private sector development and public investment.

- Engaging the private sector in redevelopment and implementation of the plan.

The redevelopment of the North Burnet/Gateway area has tremendous possibilities, but will not be realized without a focused and sustained effort.

# NORTH BURNET : MASTER PLAN G A T E W A Y



1

INTRODUCTION

DRAFT



Aerial view centered on Burnet Road and Braker Lane, circa 2004

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Like many other cities in the nation, Austin is experiencing rapid growth. The North Burnet/Gateway area is near the geographic center of the five county Central Texas region which, according to the 2000 US Census figures, was among the fastest growing regions in Texas. Austin has experienced persistent and significant growth for the past several decades. The United States Census Bureau estimates the 2006 population of the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was approximately 1,513,565 persons, up from 1,249,763 in 2000, which in turn was almost 48% higher than the 1990 population of about 846,227.

Figure 1.1

POPULATION ESTIMATES		
	City of Austin	Austin MSA
1990	465,622	846,227
2000	656,562	1,249,763
2006	709,893	1,513,565

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Envision Central Texas (ECT) estimates that the five county Central Texas region including Travis, Williamson, Hays, Bastrop and Caldwell Counties will grow at a similar pace and will reach a projected population of 2.8 million by 2030.

The City's Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department creates neighborhood plans with the objective to preserve and enhance the livability of Austin by suitably managing future growth. Citizens are given the opportunity to shape the neighborhoods where they live, work, own property, or manage a business.

The North Burnet/Gateway Plan area is located in north central Austin near the intersection of US 183 and Loop 1/MoPac. It covers approximately 2,300 acres and is comprised of two separate neighborhoods – the North Burnet Neighborhood and the Gateway Neighborhood. For the purpose of this neighborhood planning process, these areas are being planned

concurrently as one unit. The plan area is bounded by Metric Boulevard on the east, US 183 on the south and west, and Braker Lane, MoPac, and the Walnut Creek on the north and northwest (as shown on Figure 1.6).

The edge of the North Burnet/Gateway planning area is located approximately 8 miles from Downtown Austin (Figure 1.5).

The North Burnet/Gateway area is surrounded by a mix of uses from single-family neighborhoods to industrial property and retail development. The planning area itself contains commercial, regional big-box retail, office, industrial, higher education, and research facilities. This neighborhood planning area is unique in that there are no existing single-family homes in the study area and contains only a few apartment complexes.

Two railway lines, which are less than a mile apart from each other, pass through

this area. The Union Pacific railway line runs north-south on the western side of the plan area and the Capital Metro railway line runs north-south toward the eastern edge of the area (Figure 1.6). Additionally, the area is readily accessible via existing highways and arterial roadways.

An aerial photograph of the North Burnet/Gateway area circa 1951 is shown in Figure 1.2. This photo shows the Union Pacific Rail line running north to south through the area and the future corridor for US 183 running northwest to southeast. The urbanized area of the City of Austin itself is visible in the southern (bottom) portion of the photo. The area was predominantly farm and ranch land at this point in time.

The growth of the city since that time has moved steadily northward as shown in the 1980 aerial photo (Figure 1.3). Since the 1980's there has been strong growth in the northwestern direction along US 183 and Mopac. The urbanization of the North Burnet/Gateway area and contiguous areas is evident in the 2002 aerial (Figure 1.4.)

Rapid growth, while offering new economic opportunity, has also come with its attendant problems. Traffic has gradually increased to the point where many key areas are chronically congested. This is particularly true since much of the growth has occurred along conventional suburban patterns, with segregated land uses, very low densities, and a street hierarchy that concentrates traffic on just a few arterial roads. Residents are increasingly moving outward to find less expensive housing, commuting from Round Rock and beyond to Austin for work. At the same time, several major employers such as Dell Computer have located north of Austin, creating a "reverse commute" for people living in the city but commuting to the suburbs. More and more, the North Burnet/Gateway area is transitioning from its former "edge of town" position to being near the center of activity of the Central Texas region.

Figure 1.2 : Aerial view of the North Burnet/Gateway area, circa 1951.

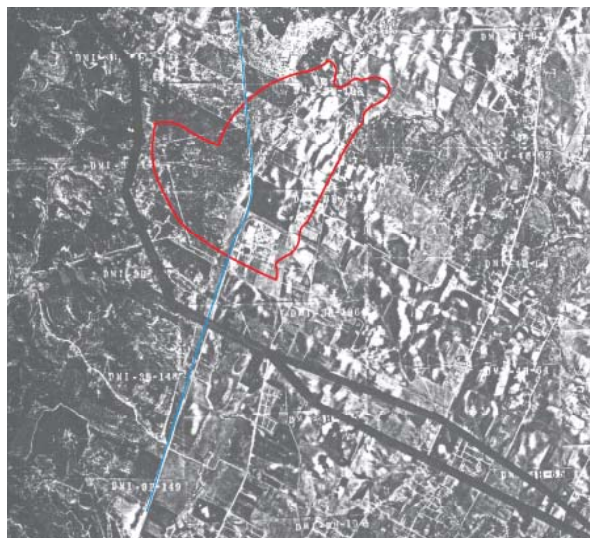


Figure 1.3 : Aerial view of the North Burnet/Gateway area, circa 1980.

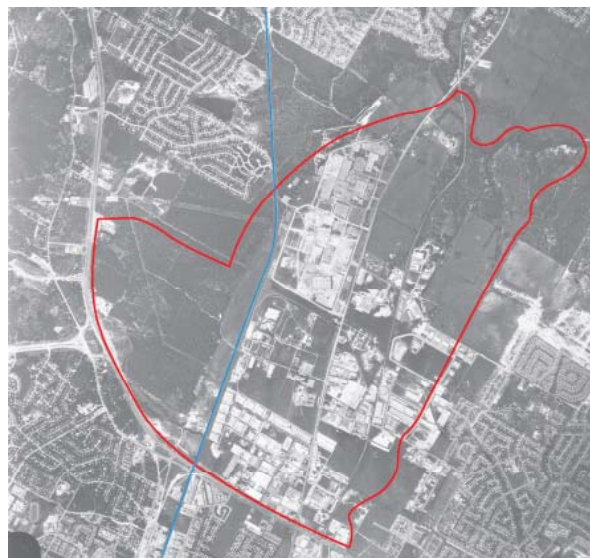


Figure 1.4 : Aerial view of the North Burnet/Gateway area, circa 2002



The development pattern in the North Burnet/Gateway area is a departure from the clear, regular grid of the original City of Austin plat and lacks the patterns present in most residential subdivisions, as well. While residential subdivisions tend to be fairly insular, with a limited number of entry points, commercial uses tend to congregate on the major collector streets, so that they are readily accessible to several nearby subdivisions. In the early stages of a development cycle, the arterial roads are generally two-lane rural roads that occur at wide intervals throughout the area. As the development fills in, these roads are eventually improved and widened. Unfortunately, these improvements typically come some time after the traffic has achieved an inconvenient level of congestion. Braker Lane, Burnet Road and Capital of Texas Highway (Highway 360) are prototypes of such roads.

This development pattern, evidenced in Figures 1.8, 1.9 & 1.10, demonstrates the dominance of industrial and commercial development pods. Typically on large lots, the commercial development is auto-oriented, with generous amounts of surface parking. This pattern of development favors dependency on private vehicles, for nearly any purpose. The typical floor-to-area ratio (FAR) for this development pattern is 0.18.

It is widely accepted that somewhere between one and two million people will be added to the Central Texas population within the next 20 to 30 years. Based on historical development patterns, it is likely that the great majority of this population growth will occur in the undeveloped “greenfields” outside the metropolitan core. While the general urban area will see the greatest growth in raw numbers, in percentage terms, the areas that are contiguous to the current urban boundary will see the most radical transformations. The North Burnet/Gateway Plan seeks to provide an opportunity and vision for an alternative more dense development pattern within the urban core of Austin.

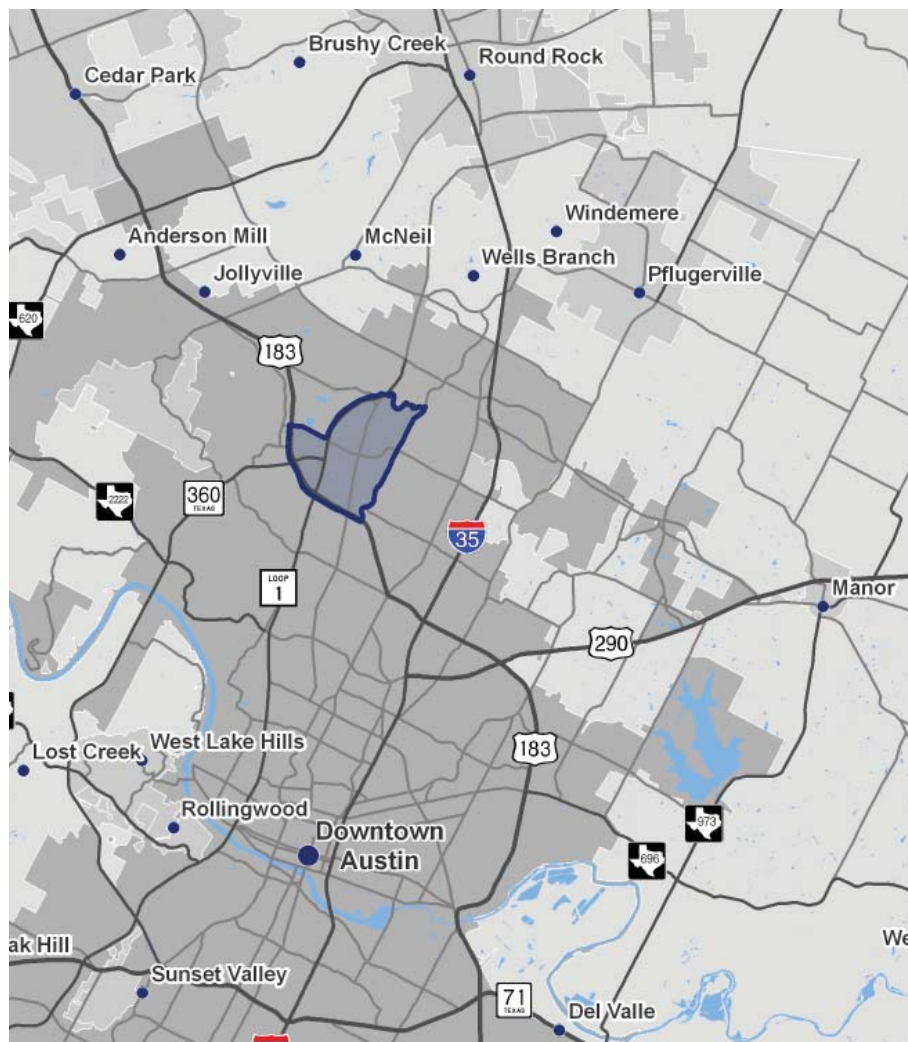


Figure 1.5 :Regional context of the study area

## PLANNING HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The North Burnet/Gateway Combined Neighborhood Plan was officially selected by the City Council to undergo neighborhood planning in 2002. Due to limited staff resources and a shifting of neighborhood planning priorities, the North Burnet/Gateway plan was put on hold. In the summer of 2003 planning staff were assigned to develop the plan and began holding stakeholder meetings; several meetings were held to discuss the neighborhood planning process, land use, zoning, and transportation issues.

Soon after the neighborhood planning process began in the North Burnet/Gateway area it became evident to planning staff that this area was changing and that the industrial trend of past years might not be the dominant form of development in the future. There were several major development projects being planned and articles published in local newspapers indicated that there was an interest in developing significant amounts of retail and housing in this part of Austin, the most prominent being: the Domain, the Shops at Arbor Walk, and the Gateway Shopping Center. The University of Texas (UT) was also in the process of developing a draft Campus Master Plan for the J.J. Pickle Research



# LOCATION PLAN

Figure 1.6

Campus. The magnitude and diversity of potential future development signaled to planning staff a need to evaluate whether the existing transportation network would be adequate to serve the new shoppers and residents of the area.

Neighborhood planning staff began to talk with high-level staff at the former City Transportation, Planning and Sustainability Department (TPSD) about the possibility of taking a more proactive and coordinated approach to planning in this area in response to the level and type of anticipated growth. TPSD staff shared similar transportation concerns and responded by recommending that a focused land use and transportation study be conducted to evaluate the impact that the combined planned projects would have on the overall transportation network and recommend infrastructure improvements to enhance traffic flow, mitigate congestion, and create a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists. The City Council responded by allocating \$500,000 of quarter-cent Capital Metro funds to this study.

The consulting firm Carter & Burgess, along with a number of subconsultants, were selected to perform the study. Based on input from the City Council, announcement of plans for Capital Metro's commuter rail linking northern suburbs with Downtown, the presence of the Union Pacific rail line (with potential for future commuter rail service and a stop in the North Burnet/Gateway area), and the on-going interest of development in the area, the scope of work evolved from a transportation study to a full-fledged master planning effort that would not only look at transportation but also land use, zoning, and urban design.

The consultant's final product will serve as the neighborhood plan for the area and establish development parameters and standards in accordance with the community's vision. The Master Plan will also examine opportunities for transit-

oriented development based on the presence of both the Capital Metro and the Union Pacific rail lines. The master planning process will direct the transformation of this area over the next 30 years to take advantage of the links to rail transit and create great places where people can live, work, shop, interact and recreate.

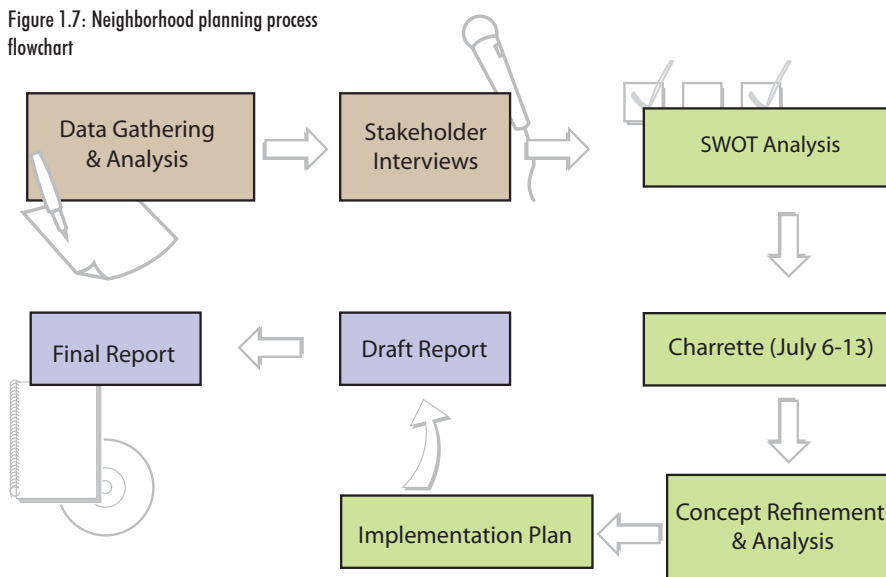
## PLANNING PROCESS

The North Burnet/Gateway consultant-led master planning process commenced with a kick-off meeting with City staff to discuss the project timeline and flowchart (Figure 1.7). The first step was to perform the data gathering and analysis of existing conditions. Concurrent with the data gathering, stakeholder interviews were held to discuss issues important to the identified stakeholder groups. Once all the stakeholder comments were compiled, they were organized into a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. More information regarding this analysis can be found in Section 3: Public Involvement. All the information up to

this point was presented to the Public Advisory Group (P.A.G.) along with a field trip to the site. The P.A.G. was assembled by the City and consisted of key City staff from various departments, local, regional and state agency staff with jurisdiction in the area, including Capital Metro, Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District (ASAIRCD), TxDOT, Austin Independent School District (AISD), Austin Community College (ACC) and UT, area business owners, landowners, and residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

The next major milestone in the project process was the week-long design charrette. The charrette was comprised of an introductory public meeting, an all-day public workshop, a week-long consultant led design session, and a closing public meeting. The consultants worked in a storefront studio near the planning area during the week and invited the public to view their work in progress and provide input. The purpose of the charrette was to obtain public input and formulate a vision for the area. During the week-

Figure 1.7: Neighborhood planning process flowchart



long design workshop, a second P.A.G. meeting was held to present preliminary concepts derived from the public input. Following the charrette, the concepts generated from the public meetings and workshops were further refined, additional input was received from the P.A.G. and numerous meetings were held with stakeholders to resolve any known issues. Draft Plan concepts were presented at a meeting in March 2007 where the public had the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments. Next the Draft Plan will be presented at a Planning Commission public hearing, followed by a City Council public hearing where the public will have additional opportunity to comment on the plan.

Figure 1.8: Aerial photo of the Capital Metro Red Line tracks north of Braker Lane



Figure 1.9: Aerial photo of the intersection of Braker Lane and Kramer Lane



Figure 1.10: Aerial photo of the intersection of Braker Lane and Metric Boulevard

