CHAPTER 2
THE LAMAR/JUSTIN STATION AREA PLAN

The Vision for the Lamar/Justin Station Area in 2020...

The Lamar/Justin Station Area is a thriving urban center with a distinctly neighborhood feel that reflects the character of the surrounding community. Heavy traffic still travels through the area, but it does not overshadow the built environment and drivers know when they enter the TOD district they are traveling through a distinct place.

The intersection of Lamar and Airport Blvds. has been transformed. Even though Lamar and Airport Boulevards remain important routes from a regional perspective, drivers are aware that as they pass through the TOD the space is shared with pedestrians and bicyclists and that it is a place that people are enjoying and not just passing through. Gone is the wide "Y" intersection that allowed cars to travel north on Airport Boulevard at highway speeds. The intersection is shaped more like a "T" with raised crosswalks, signals at all appropriate locations for pedestrian and cyclists to safely cross, and narrower right turning lanes to calm speeds. Landscaping and district markers have been added, contributing greatly to the aesthetic appeal of the intersection.

New buildings on either side of the Lamar/Airport Blvd. intersection are built to frame the street and reach heights of five to six stories. The Highland Village site has been redeveloped with a new public street running through the center of the site and mixed-use buildings oriented to both the new street and Lamar Boulevard. Heights step down the further away one gets from the Lamar/Airport intersection, buildings relate well to the street, and off-street parking is screened from view.

Several improvements have been made to improve connectivity through the Station Area. Residents can now walk, bicycle, and drive to the rail station or a local coffee shop or restaurant in the center of the TOD without traveling on the major arterials. The secondary street network has been designed to accommodate these local trips while discouraging through-traffic with traffic calming and other streetscape improvements. Residents can also reach the station or just get some exercise by walking on a new multi-use path built along the rail corridor that connects to a larger trail network to the northwest and southeast of the area.

Pocket and linear parks, street trees, and other green elements are interspersed among the new development to soften the edges, to integrate the natural with the built environment, and to provide places for TOD and TOD-adjacent residents to recreate. The TOD contains an open space or plaza that is appropriate for community gatherings like a Farmer's Market. The area has a distinct urban feel without feeling too dense or crowded.

CREATING THE LAMAR/JUSTIN TOD STATION AREA PLAN

THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

Walking around the Lamar/Justin Station Area, one enormous design challenge is obvious to any observer. The area is bisected by two major arterials, Lamar and Airport Blvds., which act as urban speedways bisecting the district. Not only does the width of the two streets make it a challenge to create a thriving center, the speeds along some portions of the streets degrade pedestrian safety and inhibit any kind of street life.

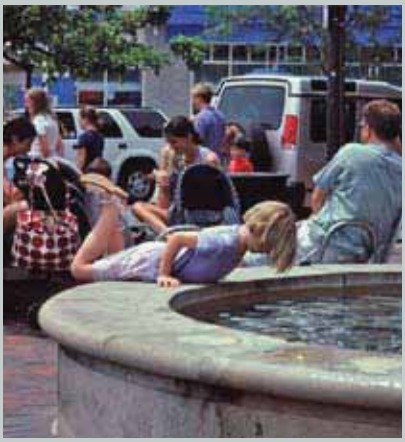
Another challenge related to the street network is the lack of local connectivity through the district for vehicular and pedestrian trips. This means that all trips – even very short local trips – must use Lamar and Airport Blvds. which further contributes to congestion problems in the area. There are virtually no connections that parallel Lamar and Airport Blvds., which would allow residents to walk, bicycle, or drive without navigating these major arterials.

The overwhelming design challenge is to repair the streets, unite both halves of the Station Area, and lay the foundation for better circulation throughout the TOD District. Without solving the traffic challenge, this TOD District as a whole will never become integrated and connected, and will develop into a series of commercial and residential pods adjacent to busy arterials without safe and convenient access to the rail station.

The other design challenge is the amount of commercial zoning already permitted along Lamar Blvd. that extends north and south of the station. It will be difficult to focus development at the area closest to the station and create a critical mass of activity to create a true center when the abundant commercial zoning bleeds energy away from the center.

THE VISION

The Lamar/Justin Station Area Plan will lay the foundation for achieving the Lamar/Justin Station Area vision and realize the mixed-use environment and atmosphere desired in neighborhood plans. The Vision Statement on the previous pages was crafted from the major themes discussed during the public workshops.



EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING

Currently, the majority of the Lamar/Justin Station Area is characterized by a variety of commercial and employment uses located along Airport and Lamar Blvds. with several warehouse and auto-oriented services along Lamar Blvd. There is very little residential development within the TOD District but there is some multifamily development east of Lamar and some lower density residential along the west side of Guadalupe and on the north side of W. St. Johns. The only sizable tract of land that is left undeveloped is the former Huntsman property occupying the triangle of land northeast of the Lamar/Airport intersection. This property is currently under development and will provide a variety of mixed-use and residential options oriented around the MetroRail station.

As a result of the various neighborhood planning processes that have occurred in the recent past, the vast majority of the properties within the Lamar/Justin TOD District have commercial mixed-use zoning. The majority of the land was also designated as mixed-use during neighborhood planning. Single-family residential is the predominant land use surrounding the TOD District. There is currently no public open space within or immediately around the TOD District.

STATION AREA PLAN SUMMARY

The Land Use and Design Concept Plan encourages the creation of a high activity mixed-use center around the MetroRail Station near the Lamar/Airport intersection. This area is intended to have the highest level of pedestrian orientation in the District, taking full advantage of the transit services offered by the MetroRail Station. Creating a higher density, mixed-use center near the station with improved circulation for all transportation modes throughout the Station Area are the key elements of the plan.

1. LAND USE AND DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN

Using TOD principles and public comments and ideas, TOD land use subdistricts were developed to define the basic land use and urban design character of the Lamar/Justin Station Area. Much of the District continues to be designated for mixed-use development to allow for a variety of uses to occur throughout. To complement the land uses within the Station Area, circulation and open space elements were also developed. These three basic components for this Station Area Plan are summarized on the following pages.

Land Use SubDistricts

The Land Use and Design Concept Plan consists of two types of zones – mixed-use and residential. Much of the land in the central portion surrounding the station is designated mixed-use with the intent of establishing a community center. This core area is intended to have the greatest density and mix of uses. Less intense commercial development is envisioned to the north and south of the station along Lamar Blvd. The remaining portion of the Station Area is comprised of live/work flex and residential zones, which are designed to provide a transition with the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Mixed-Use Designations

There are three types of mixed-use designations in the plan:

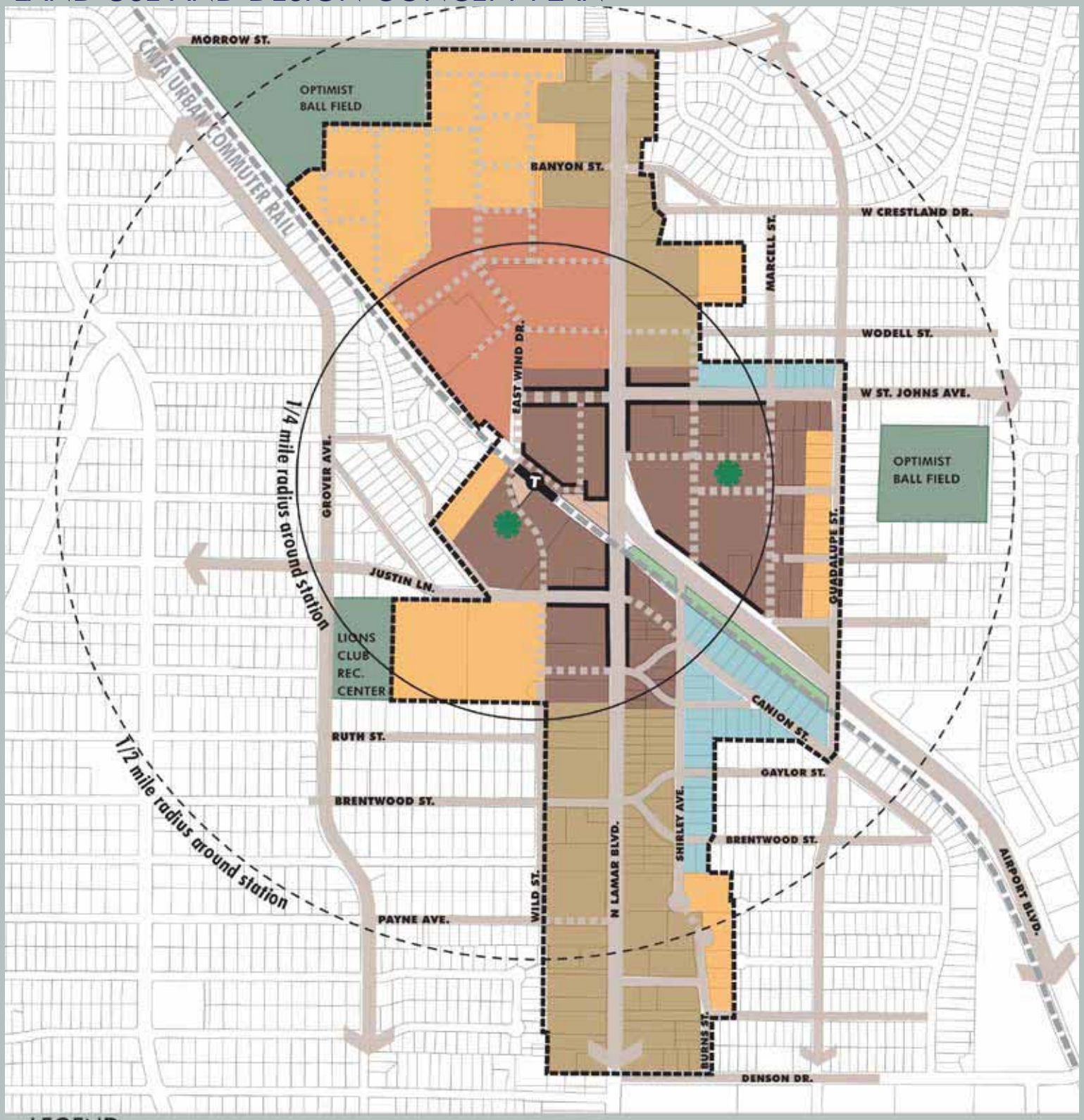
- TOD Mixed-Use
- Corridor Mixed-Use
- Live/Work Flex

Residential Designations

Residential uses are concentrated in the northwest portion of the Station Area and along some of its eastern and western edges. They are intended to provide needed housing and allow a better transition with bordering single family residential areas, and recognize that certain properties are located on lower activity streets that do not have the level of visibility generally desired by retail and commercial development. There are two types of residential designations in the plan:

- High Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential

LAND USE AND DESIGN CONCEPT PLAN



LEGEND

- MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- TOD MIXED USE (showing active frontages)
- CORRIDOR MIXED USE
- LIVE/WORK FLEX
- PRIVATE OPEN SPACE
- POTENTIAL PARKLAND
- EXISTING STREETS
- POTENTIAL STREETS / BIKE-PED CONNECTION
- TOD DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- METRORAIL STATION
- TRANSIT PLAZA

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1. TOD Mixed Use Zones
2. Corridor Mixed Use Zones
3. Live/Work Flex Zones

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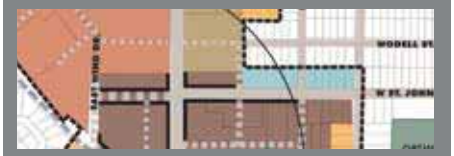

TOD Mixed-Use

TOD Mixed-Use is the most intensely developed land use subdistrict and will typically be expressed as high density residential over active ground floor uses, such as retail or office. This land use designation is concentrated near transit stations and along major streets, generally located near the center of a TOD and along major 'spines' that lead to it. In this Plan, TOD Mixed-Use is concentrated in the center of the TOD District near the rail station and the Lamar/Airport intersection. The intent of the land use plan is to focus most activity and building intensity at this location to create a distinct and active center in the Station Area.

Corridor Mixed-Use

Corridor Mixed-Use allows a similar, but slightly broader, mix of uses as the TOD Mixed-Use district. Active ground floor uses or a mix of uses in one development are encouraged, but not required. Retail, office, and higher density residential development are all permitted. This zone is located on major streets farther away from the transit station. In this Plan, Corridor Mixed-Use areas are located along Lamar Blvd. north and south of the TOD Mixed Use center. These areas already have extensive commercial activities. As sites redevelop, the Regulating Plan will require new buildings to build up to the sidewalk and orient to the Lamar and Airport corridors with parking located behind and/or to the sides of buildings.

Live/Work Flex

The plan includes Live/Work Flex, which is another form of mixed-use zoning. Ideally in a live/work zone, working and living activities are co-located so that they can be performed in the same building. The classic example of live/work is an artist loft where the code allows the resident to perform a light or custom manufacturing use on site with living space above. In this plan, the Live/Work Flex is concentrated in the southeast edge of the district along Canion Street and Shirley Avenue where commercial and industrial uses currently predominate. This Live/Work Flex subdistrict could retain some of the character of the current commercial uses while accommodating residential as well.

Live/Work Flex is also provided along the north side of W. St. Johns Avenue to recognize the mixed use character that was desired in the Highland Neighborhood Plan and to serve as a transition between the TOD Mixed-Use center to the south and the surrounding single family neighborhood to the north.

TOD Mixed-Use

Example: Three or four stories of residential units (condos or apartments) above ground floor retail (cafes, coffee shops, boutiques).

Corridor Mixed-Use

Example: A small-format grocery store that is built up to the sidewalk with parking located behind the building.

Live/Work Flex

Example: A three story rowhouse with the ground floor used as an artist studio and retail space.

1. High Density Residential Zones
2. Medium Density Residential Zones

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High Density Residential

High Density Residential is located north of the station and west of Lamar Blvd. It is generally consistent with the Crestview Station project just north of the MetroRail stop and with the TOD principle of locating the highest densities close (i.e., within ¼ mile) to transit. This subdistrict lies just outside of the TOD Mixed Use center to provide residential activity in close proximity to the rail stop and services that locate near it and along Lamar Blvd. This subdistrict is ideal for condominium and apartment type development.

Medium Density Residential

Medium Density Residential lies outside of the mixed-use areas (which are typically high density residential atop retail), and the medium density designation provides a wide range for many housing types including attached row houses, condominiums, and apartment buildings. Commercial uses are not permitted in this zone. It provides a transition between the higher density uses in the central portion of the station area and the low density neighborhoods surrounding it. In this Plan, Medium Density Residential is located in the northwest corner of the Crestview Station development beyond the higher density development occurring within the ¼ mile radius of the rail stop, and stepping down to the single-family residences on Morrow St. Medium Density Residential also applies to several other parcels located along the eastern and western edges of the TOD station planning area.

Planning for Families and Seniors

A desire was expressed by some charrette participants to provide senior and family housing within the Lamar/Justin Station Area. Future development can accommodate the needs of the elderly and households with children by thinking carefully about their space and recreational needs. Projects that provide a variety of unit types and sizes are more likely to attract families and seniors. Units with two or more bedrooms will be able to accommodate a family that desires to live in a more urban TOD community. Open space should be provided that can meet the needs of these different user groups. Projects that include day care services will potentially enable parents to walk to drop their children off or work in close proximity to their child's day care facility. The integration of residences, daily community services, and employment in a TOD, in addition to creating safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists, is essential to its success.

High Density Residential

Example: A four story wood-frame condo building built atop a concrete podium with tuck-under parking.

Medium Density Residential

Example: A three story apartment building with surface parking.

DENSITY AND BUILDING HEIGHTS

An important characteristic of transit-oriented development is a residential density that is greater than the community average. The residential density of the existing single family neighborhoods around the Lamar/Justin TOD District is approximately six units per acre and somewhat higher densities in areas with multi-family housing. This Station Area Plan assumes a higher density than the surrounding average with the highest intensity adjacent to the rail station.

The housing density of each of the land use zones includes a range with both minimum and maximum densities. The following table lists the density by land use zone.

HOUSING DENSITY BY LAND USE TYPE		
LAND USE ZONE	MINIMUM DENSITY	MAXIMUM DENSITY
TOD Mixed-Use	2 stories	45 units per acre*
Corridor Mixed-Use	none	45 units per acre*
Live/Work Flex	Depends on context**	45 units per acre*
High Density Residential	25 units per acre	45 units per acre*
Medium Density Residential	17 units per acre	45 units per acre

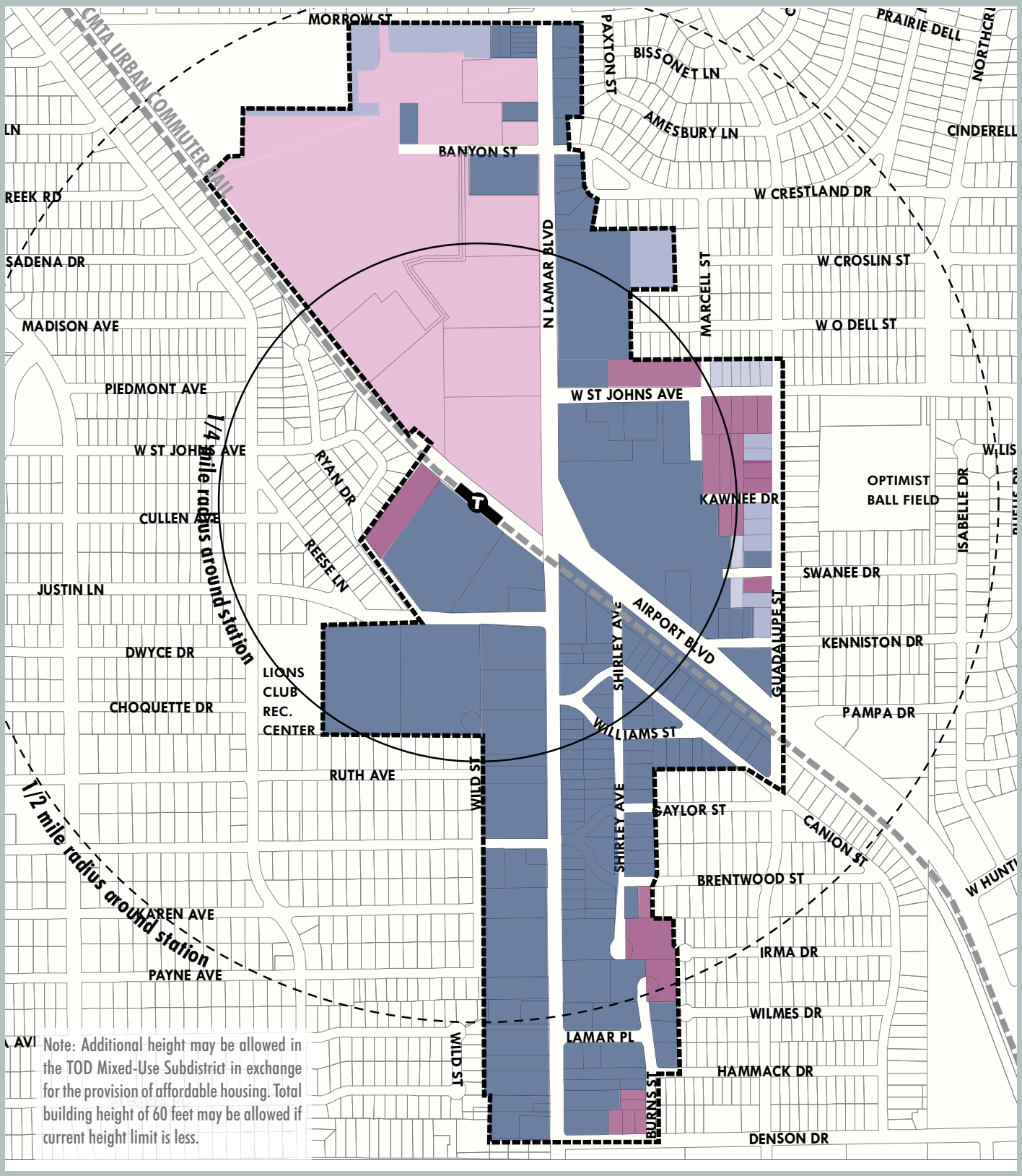
* Density limit may be removed in exchange for the provision of affordable housing.

**A minimum density of 17 units per acre applies to the live/work subdistrict along W. St. Johns Avenue but there is no minimum in the Canion/Shirley live/work subdistrict.

As a rule of thumb, a 40-foot height limit permits a three-story building and a 60-foot height limit permits a five-story building. As a base height entitlement, the Plan assumes existing height restrictions of 35, 40, and 60 feet will continue throughout the TOD District. The 60-foot height limit generally applies to the areas designated for mixed-use development and the 40-foot limit generally applies to Medium Density Residential areas along the edges of the TOD District. There was a range of public opinion expressed with respect to appropriate allowable building heights. Generally speaking, three-to-five story buildings were supported, throughout the TOD District. Input from the development community indicated that there was little interest in building heights greater than 60 feet as the cost of developing above that (i.e. using steel-frame construction) is not financially feasible in this area at this time.

Minimum densities or building heights have been established in this Plan for certain land use subdistricts. This is an effort to respond to the key principle of TOD, which is to create a higher density within the Station Area than the surrounding community average to encourage a concentration of activity (residential and commercial) around transit to promote its use. As a result, minimum densities are included in the primary residential categories: High and Medium Density Residential and Live/Work Flex. The TOD Mixed-Use Subdistrict contains a minimum height instead of a minimum residential density to enable a certain amount of flexibility in the type of activity that goes on in these locations, but at the same time, development must adhere to a certain level. A minimum height not only accommodates a traditional mixed-use development, which includes both a residential and non-residential component, but also pure commercial and/or office development to support and stimulate employment opportunities and the provision of services within the TOD District. Ultimately, the real

BASE MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHTS



Note: Additional height may be allowed in the TOD Mixed-Use Subdistrict in exchange for the provision of affordable housing. Total building height of 60 feet may be allowed if current height limit is less.

LEGEND

- 35 FEET
- 35 OR 60 FEET

35 FEET FOR SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, TOWNHOMES OR CONDOS

60 FEET FOR ALL OTHER RESIDENTIAL, NON-RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED USE PROJECTS

- 40 FEET
- 60 FEET
- TOD DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- METRORAIL STATION

0 200 400 800 FEET

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estate market will determine what developers build within the Station Area as any project must have a market to support it and be financially feasible. The flexibility inherent in the TOD Mixed-Use Subdistrict is designed to respond to a variety of market conditions. The Corridor Mixed-Use Subdistrict contains neither a minimum density nor a minimum height as these areas are further removed from the core of the Station Area where the highest level of residential and commercial activity is intended.

This Station Area Plan recommends that in specific areas of the TOD District, a density bonus, and in more select locations of the TOD, a height bonus, be allowed in exchange for the provision of affordable housing. The intent is to promote denser, mixed income projects to locate in the land use subdistricts designated for higher density development and to encourage the highest levels of activity in areas with good access to transit. As a first step, the density bonus would remove density restrictions, without changing the allowable height, in exchange for a certain level of affordable housing. This type of bonus is allowed in the TOD Mixed-Use, Corridor Mixed-Use, Live/Work Flex, and High Density Residential Subdistricts. In addition, a height bonus allowing total building height up to 60 feet is available within the TOD Mixed-Use Subdistrict for those properties that currently have a height limit less than 60 feet. The details of these bonuses and the required levels of affordable housingare established.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing is an important component of transit-oriented development. Inclusion of affordable housing in TOD areas can provide lower-income households with improved transportation access to employment and services. Reduced transportation costs can improve the ability of low income families to afford housing payments. In addition, economic diversity among TOD residents will benefit transit ridership.

However, due to land prices and construction costs, new market-rate developments in the TOD areas are not likely to be affordable to low-income households. Citywide, the median home price of $180,000 is well above what is considered affordable for a low-income family. The average rent in Austin is $831, which is not affordable to households at or below 50% of Austin's median family income.[1]

Housing Goals

To promote the development of affordable units in TOD areas, the TOD Ordinance and TOD Housing Resolution include a goal that 25% of the new housing units in each TOD area should be affordable. The overall affordability goal is as follows:

- Affordable owner-occupied units should be occupied by households with incomes at or below 80% of Median Family Income (MFI) as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and
- Affordable rental units should be occupied by households at or below 60% MFI.
- In addition, the Ordinance provides a specific breakdown of these targets. [2]

Affordable Housing Analysis

The TOD Ordinance includes a requirement that a Station Area Plan include a housing affordability analysis and feasibility review that describes potential strategies for achieving these goals. The Austin City Council selected the consulting firm Diana McIver and Associates (DMA) to conduct this analysis. DMA has provided several financial models for the achievement of the TOD goals, and has evaluated potential incentives and financing tools for creating housing affordability within the TOD areas. The Executive Summary can be found in Chapter 3 and the full report in the Appendix.

DMA's financial scenarios demonstrate that the achievement of the TOD affordability goals will be challenging and will require a substantial commitment of incentives and subsidies. While DMA has indicated that there is not one single solution to housing affordability in TOD areas, their analysis shows that a combination of tools can be used to achieve affordability in TOD districts.

1 Sources: Austin Board of Realtors; ALN Apartment Data.

2 For homeownership units, a goal of providing 10% of the units to households with income from 70-80% MFI; 10% of the units to households with income of 60-70% MFI; and 5% of the units to households with income of not more than 60% MFI. For rental units, a goal of providing 10% of the units to households with income from 40-60% MFI, 10% of the units to households with income of 30-40% MFI; and 5% of the units to households with income of less than 30% MFI.

1. Public gathering space
2. Retail activity on street
3. Urban residential street
4. Quieter neighborhood street

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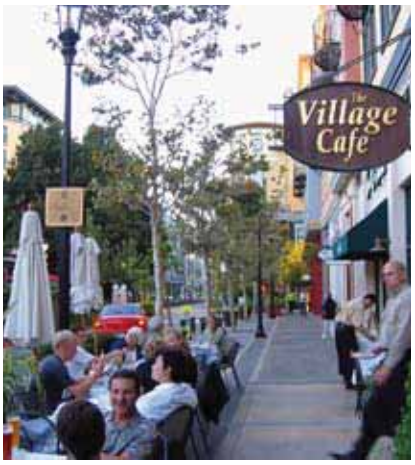

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URBAN DESIGN

In addition to the land use districts, there are several important urban design treatments that should accompany land development in the Station Area. The type of roadway that a property is on, in addition to the presence of an active edge, is the primary organizing tool for applying the TOD Design Standards in the Lamar/Justin Regulating Plan.

Roadway Types

Urban design elements are largely guided by three TOD street types – TOD Core Transit Corridor, TOD Pedestrian Priority Street, and TOD Local Street. This is modeled after the approach used in *Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use*, which categorizes all existing and future streets in the City, and then uses these designations as a basis for regulating streetscape, site, and building design. These three TOD street designations trigger specific streetscape and building design requirements within the Regulating Plan. The TOD Core Transit Corridors correspond to the existing and future Core Transit Corridors in Subchapter E. To address the unique issues related to the TOD station planning areas, two additional street designations apply. The three TOD street designations are described below and located in the Circulation Concept Plan:

TOD Core Transit Corridors. Citywide Core Transit Corridors are defined and listed in *Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use* of the Land Development Code. They correspond with many of the major city streets. A Core Transit Corridor within the boundary of the Lamar/Justin TOD District is labeled a TOD Core Transit Corridor, whose designation in this Plan was informed by the original Core Transit Corridors established in Subchapter E. In both this Station Area Plan and in Subchapter E, these Corridors indicate a roadway that has, or will have, sufficient population density and mix of uses to encourage and support transit use. TOD Core Transit Corridors are of primary importance as transit and pedestrian places, and therefore, it is essential to create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly places. In addition, design features must include buildings located adjacent to or near the street, parking to the rear or side of buildings, building facades and entrances that are oriented to the street, and amenities, such as shelter, plazas, and seating to create a pleasant environment. The TOD Core Transit Corridors in the Lamar/Justin Station Area are Lamar and Airport Blvds.

TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets. This designation applies to specific existing or future streets within a TOD, which are especially significant as pedestrian routes. TOD Pedestrian Priority Street designations are applied to critical pedestrian connections through the TOD and can provide direct access to transit. These streets complement the TOD Core Transit Corridors to form an interconnected pedestrian network. Because of their significance for pedestrian circulation, TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets are intended to have similar pedestrian facilities and amenities to the TOD Core Transit Corridors. Land uses are often less intense than those adjacent to TOD Core Transit Corridors, and requirements for locating buildings near the street

are more flexible. However, proper building orientation to the street and parking lot screening continue to be important. W. St. Johns Avenue, Easy Wind Drive, Justin Lane (between Easy Wind and Lamar), Canion Street, and Guadalupe Street are designated as TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets because they provide a network of routes that will provide an enhanced pedestrian environment and level of convenience.

TOD Local Streets. These include all other existing or future streets within the TOD District. While they are intended to provide comfortable, accessible, and pleasant accommodation for pedestrians, they do not represent the primary walking routes or pedestrian areas. Land uses are often less intense than those adjacent to TOD Core Transit Corridors and Pedestrian Priority Streets, and requirements for locating buildings near the street are more flexible. The remaining streets in the Lamar/Justin Station Area are TOD Local Streets.

Active Edges

Having a good pedestrian environment is a key element for important pedestrian and transit streets within the station area. Specific properties along these streets, which have a TOD Mixed-Use land use designation, are required to have active edges. This means that building must be next to the street and designed to accommodate retail, entertainment, and similarly active ground floor uses, which are directly accessible to the people walking by. Off-street surface parking may not abut active edge frontages, and driveways are only allowed when no other reasonable and sufficient access alternative is available. This activates the pedestrian zone, and it also improves safety by increasing the potential number of "eyes on the street" to deter crime and vandalism.

The central area surrounding the MetroRail station and the Lamar/Airport intersection is identified as being the core of the Station Area. As such, it is envisioned to have the highest density, greatest mix of uses, and a vibrant, urban character. While the design requirements summarized above will help shape such an environment, additional urban design standards are essential to establish this core area as an urban center. The active edge designation applies only to property design and development and does not affect adjoining public street and sidewalk design, which is determined by roadway type.

Active edges apply to critical street frontages for properties within this central area that are designated TOD Mixed-Use. Active edges are along Lamar Blvd. and portions of street frontages that intersect with Lamar. These include W. St. Johns Ave., Airport Blvd. and Justin Lane.

1. Mix of uses - office and retail
2. Active street
3. Mix of uses - residential and retail

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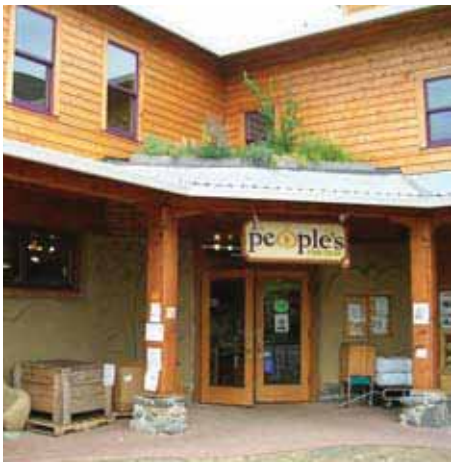


GREEN BUILDING AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Building

A primary goal of transit-oriented development within the City of Austin is the promotion of development and re-development in a manner that will help absorb some of the region's expected population growth in areas well-supported by transit. It is important that the development of the built environment involve goals favorable to achieving long-term sustainability. Achieving a sustainable future means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future, and in doing so helping to make more live-able communities. Sustainability in Austin's TOD areas involves taking active measures to protect against negative environmental impacts.

Recognizing the City of Austin has set specific goals in an effort to be a leader in green building, renewable energy, and sustainable technologies, this Station Area Plan includes the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. Improve air quality and public health by providing alternative transportation choices. Provide clear alternatives to auto-centric development patterns by providing an environment that is pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-friendly.
2. Encourage all new buildings to meet the goals of the Austin Climate Protection Plan in effect at the time they begin the permit process. Current goals are to make all new single-family homes zero net-energy capable by 2015 and increase energy efficiency in all other new construction by 75% by 2015. Zero net-energy capable means that a building provides enough energy efficiency that all of its energy needs could be accommodated by on-site energy sources such as roof-top solar panels.
   a. Reduce energy use of buildings through better design and choice of materials and systems. Green buildings can achieve significant energy savings.
      - Buildings should have their longer sides oriented south as much as possible, and should minimize exposure to the west. As much as possible, minimize unshaded glazing on east and west exposures to reduce heat gain. Encourage glazing systems on northern and southern facades that reduce glare and provide opportunities for daylight harvesting (utilizing daylight to provide quality light indoors to minimize electric lighting). Overhangs, balconies, porches etc. should be utilized to provide shading of windows.
      - Buildings should be well insulated and use high efficiency heating

and cooling systems. Systems should be sized and installed properly.

b. Encourage distributed energy generation (solar/thermal, wind power, etc.) within TODs and promote use of alternative energy sources through the Austin Energy Green Choices program.

3. Encourage roofing and paving design and materials that reduce the urban heat island effect (the tendency of urban areas to be several degrees warmer than the surrounding countryside). This includes using light colored roofing, siding and paving materials to reflect, rather than absorb the sun's heat and by maximizing planted areas and shading paved areas and dark surfaces. Green roofs (planted vegetation on roofs) are a good option to help reduce the heat island effect and also provide air quality benefits.

4. Encourage protection of existing trees and plant new trees where possible. Trees should be considered part of the neighborhood's infrastructure. Trees improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and other harmful pollutants and help reduce the urban heat island effect.

   a. Redevelopment should include a "street tree zone" to provide shade between the street and sidewalk.
   Near powerlines, smaller trees which do not grow more than 25 feet should be planted. Trees can cool neighborhoods by three to six degrees if planted to shade areas that absorb heat such as streets, sidewalks and parking lots.

   b. Trees should be planted in all parks and street medians.

5. Reduce solid waste production. Divert construction and demolition waste from the landfill to the fullest extent achievable and utilize existing infrastructure through adaptive reuse of buildings and building materials (developments in Austin have documented that more than 50% waste diversion is achievable). Design buildings to incorporate recycling collection areas and encourage tenants to recycle.

6. Promote the use of environmentally compatible building materials by selecting regional materials that are non-toxic, recycled and harvested in a sustainable manner.

7. Conserve water by installing low water use plumbing fixtures and appliances, using low water use native plants in landscaping, and utilizing rainwater harvesting, air conditioning condensate, or other recycled or non-potable water sources for irrigation.

Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure, when used in the context of stormwater management, uses smaller-scale decentralized treatment devices to mitigate the effects of urban development. Green Infrastructure often incorporates vegetation and landscaped areas into the treatment process, thereby allowing space to be used more effectively and aesthetically. Since they are individually smaller in scale, Green Infrastructure projects can be dispersed and integrated into the site and used to help meet landscaping requirements, allowing flexibility for water quality compliance for dense, urban projects. This contrasts with conventional "end-of-pipe" centralized controls which typically occupy a larger contiguous space and treat the entire developed area in one larger pond.

Recognizing that there are a limited number of TOD districts in Austin and that a central goal of TOD is to achieve dense, compact development, this plan supports the utilization of Green Infrastructure methods as a way to achieve both TOD and water quality goals. This plan encourages multiple uses of landscaped areas to maximize on-site storm water treatment, reduce needs for potable water irrigation of the landscape, and reduce reliance on traditional Best Management Practices (like storm water ponds) that decrease usable space. In order to reach these goals, development will comply with the regulatory strategy outlined in the Station Area Regulating Plan that combines newly adopted practices in the City of Austin Environmental Criteria Manual (ECM) with the Urban Watersheds Water Quality Fee-in-Lieu program and the Urban Watersheds Cost Recovery/Cost Participation Program.

Recently adopted criteria in ECM 1.6.7 provide direction on how to design vegetative filter strips, biofiltration ponds, rain gardens, porous pavement, rainwater harvesting and additional landscaping to meet Code-required water quality requirements per Section 25-8-213 of the Austin Land Development Code (LDC). These innovative controls rely on vegetative and landscape elements to treat storm water. The criteria specifically outline the standards for maintaining these native landscaped storm water controls in a sustainable manner (Refer to the Appendix for more information on specific Green Infrastructure methods).

Optimally, these controls will be integrated with landscaping areas already required of new development according to LDC Section 25-2-514 and Section 25-2 Divisions 2 and 3. This would reduce the need to construct a separate water quality facility; land that would have been used for separate water quality controls and landscaping is then available for other types of development. In addition, irrigation needs are minimized by having the ability to use storm water run-off to water plants and vegetation versus using potable City water. Specific Green Infrastructure requirements have been established in the Regulating Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As part of the Station Area planning process, the conditions of the water, wastewater, and storm water systems in and around the Lamar/Justin TOD District were evaluated. Consultant Raymond Chan and Associates examined the water and wastewater systems and potential impacts to this system from future TOD development. The full report is provided in the Appendix. The water service for the Lamar/Justin Station Area is provided by 24-, 30-, and 48-inch water mains, which supply water to the remainder of the system. The overall capacity of the system is sufficient to serve additional development in the area: however, some improvement to distribution lines may be necessary to provide adequate water supply for both domestic use and fire protection.

The wastewater system has sufficient overall capacity for existing development, which is provided by an interceptor system including 10- and 12-inch lines. Depending upon the density and character of new development in the area, some upgrading and improvement of the wastewater collection system may be necessary to support specific projects.

The Watershed Protection and Development Review Department documented existing conditions of the storm water drainage system and identified potential future needs and methods for addressing flood, water quality, and erosion issues. This information, in addition to Low Impact Development descriptions (a.k.a. Green Infrastructure) is detailed in the Appendix.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Timing of Projects & Financing Public Improvements

Bay Area Economics (BAE) was retained by the City to evaluate the financial feasibility of TOD and to provide a recommended financing strategy to help support this type of development in station areas. A summary of the BAE findings is presented in the following paragraphs, and the full reports are presented in the Appendix. In addition, several of the implementation techniques addressed in Chapter 3 reflect the BAE recommendations.

The timing of new development projects in the Lamar/Justin Station Area will be determined by the interaction of private sector market-based decisions with City decisions on public improvements and investments (along with zoning requirements) to set the stage for change. The factors shaping this interaction include:

- **Market Demand** – The level of market demand for various types of TOD, as well as the sale prices and lease rates for new development.
- **Project Financial Feasibility** – Whether the cost of new TOD, including land, construction, parking, and financing allow developers to make a profit based on market sales prices and level of demand.
- **Public Investment** – The timing and amount of public investments in new infrastructure, streetscape and open space improvements, as well as support for affordable housing and new TOD catalyst projects to attract and support widespread new private investment in TOD.

These factors are dynamic, meaning that they evolve over time, and the Station Area Plan needs to be flexible to respond to continuing change. Market conditions go through cycles, affecting the feasibility of uses and projects at any particular time. Success with new TOD in an unproven area can greatly increase other developers' interest in building TOD. Public investment, while essential, is always a challenge because of limited resources, and its timing is not necessarily tied to market cycles.

BAE evaluated the financial feasibility of various TOD projects to identify those that are feasible today, versus those that will likely await improvement in market conditions. The estimates also identified the financing needs for catalyst projects that have the potential to shift market conditions and attract other new development.

Based on the public investment needs for infrastructure, streetscape and open space improvements, affordable housing, as well as funding assistance for potential catalyst projects, BAE reviewed existing public finance tools and formulated new approaches to create a TOD financing strategy for making the necessary public investments.

Feasibility of Lamar/Justin TOD District Projects

BAE's estimates indicate that live/work development should be feasible at present in the Lamar/Justin Station Area. However, denser types of TOD, such as residential wrap buildings and mixed-use podium projects, are likely not feasible at this time. This is because sale prices and lease rates in the Lamar/Justin Station Area have not risen to sufficient levels. A planned project in the Station Area includes development at densities slightly less than live/work units. There are other large properties in the area, and redevelopment of these could occur in phases so that as market conditions improve later phases could develop denser TOD projects. A catalyst project could stimulate developer interest in denser TOD and also provide increased retail choices.

Enhancing the Feasibility of TOD Projects

TOD projects have higher construction costs than less dense projects, and a planning objective to create them in locations with moderate market conditions may require support to offset these higher costs. There are various public actions that can be taken to enhance the feasibility of TOD projects, including:

- Create Parking Districts or other solutions to more efficiently share high-cost structured parking.
- Assemble development sites and sell or lease them at a discount to developers.
- Assist catalyst TOD projects, including those to create more affordable housing, through support for infrastructure costs, parking, or modifications of planning requirements to enhance project revenues.
- Build denser TODs, which provide affordable housing, in order to stimulate developer interest in creating other mixed-income and market-rate residential TOD projects.

Public Financing Strategy

Depending on the extent of new TOD, the value of various types of investment in the Lamar/Justin Station Area along with the MLK and Plaza Saltillo Station Areas could range from $900 million to $1.6 billion or more. This level of new development would primarily be financed by private investment and would create substantial economic benefits, including new employment and property tax and other revenue for the City. However, public investment will be needed for infrastructure, streetscape and open space improvements, affordable housing, and catalyst projects to attract and support substantial levels of new private investment and realize the goals of the station area plans.

The recommended financing strategy for public investment is a multi-layered one that uses new financing sources to capture the value of new development, new grant and fee funding sources, along with existing City programs and incentives. Key objectives for the public financing strategy include:

- Phased implementation of the station area plans to match public investment to market interest and targeted opportunities;
- Minimal use of City General Fund or Capital Improvement Program funds to reduce competition with other priority projects;
- Shift public improvement costs, to the greatest extent possible, to new development projects; and
- Use all existing public finance tools authorized by law.

The largest potential source of funds would be through use of Tax Increment Finance (TIF), which uses the increase in property taxes resulting from new development to cover the costs of public improvements. TIF does not increase taxes for existing property owners. For the station areas, it is recommended that only a portion of available tax increment be used, with the remainder available for new public services and schools to support residents and businesses occupying new TOD.

Other potential public finance sources include use of a combination of: Developer Impact Fees; Austin Housing Finance Corporation programs for affordable housing; Federal and State grants; and Public Improvement Districts.

There is a range of issues that must be addressed in a future Financing Implementation Plan. The Plan would be created as more detailed development plans are prepared and total public financing needs can be estimated and matched with potential sources. The Plan should provide for a wide range of creative public/private partnerships to stimulate TOD projects, utilizing existing City departments as well as new staff resources.

2. CIRCULATION CONCEPT PLAN

Successful and functional community centers and transit service both rely on pedestrian environments that are safe and convenient with short walking distances, and have comfortable and stimulating surroundings. In addition to the design of development adjacent to the street (as noted), this environment is also shaped by the design of the public realm, including public streets, sidewalks, and gathering places.

TOD streetscapes serve as walkable corridors that concurrently facilitate multi-modal transportation, including rail and bus travel, private auto traffic, walking, and bicycling. Where existing street design often regards roadways as simple conduits for the efficient movement of cars, station area streets are refocused on the need to provide a sense of place and pleasant environments for people. The Circulation Concept Plan is intended to complement the Land Use and Design Concept Plan by providing pleasant and convenient walking facilities, appropriate on-street parking, and amenities within the public street right-of-way and public places, such as street trees, landscaping, and plazas.

Multi-modal Connectivity

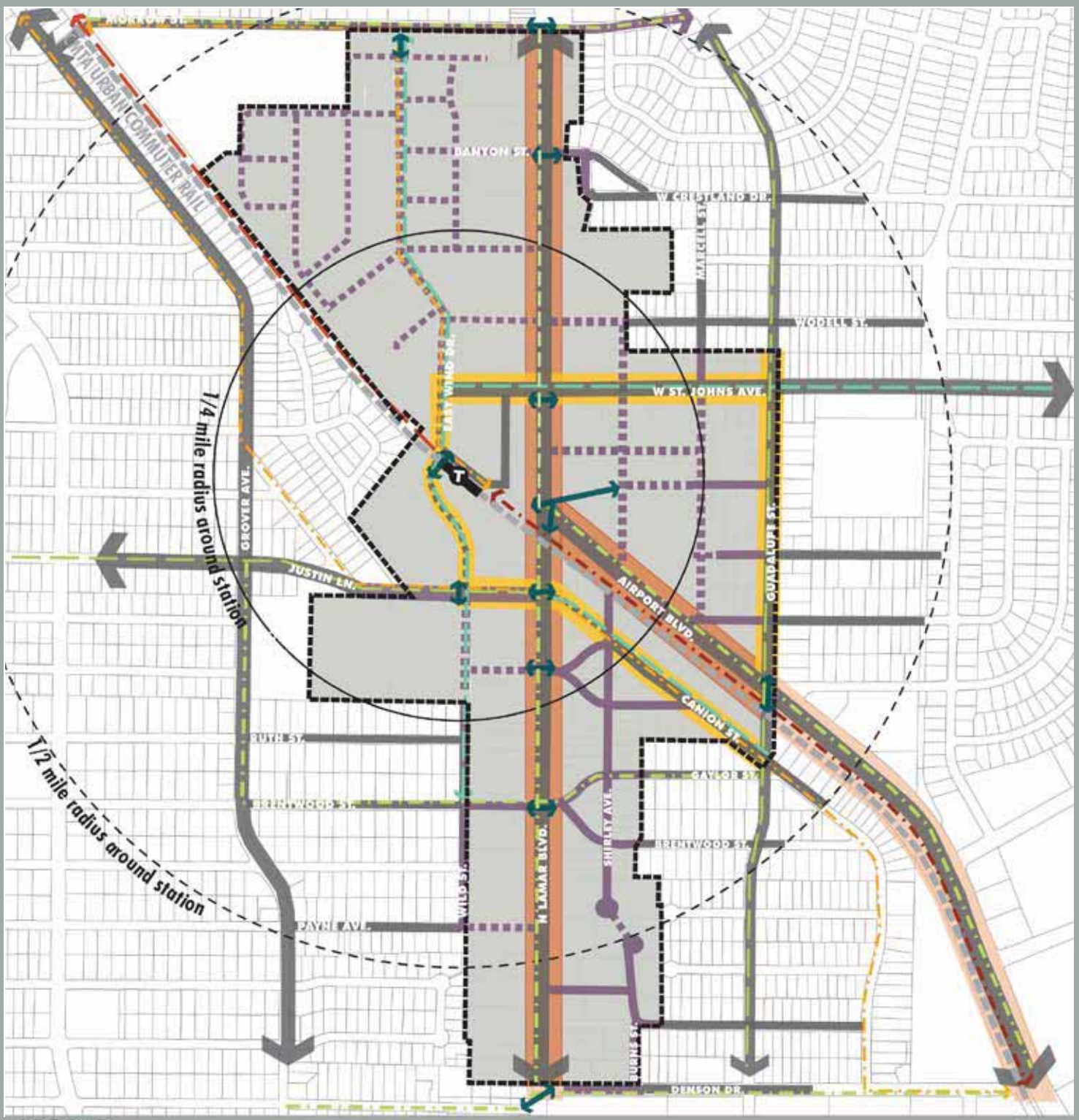
Walking rates are always higher when block sizes are smaller and connections between destinations are more numerous. The Circulation Concept Plan indicates the types of new connections that should be made to enhance vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle circulation throughout the area, but there are undoubtedly several alternatives by which this goal could be achieved. Potential new streets, trails, and pedestrian connections shown on the Circulation Concept Plan do not indicate that they must be built in that exact location or alignment. While new streets must be integrated with the existing street network, blocks are generally intended to be less than 660 feet per side, and where possible smaller block sizes are encouraged.

For large sites, an interconnected street network must be created, but depending on individual site conditions and constraints, the street alignment may deviate from what is depicted, as long as the block standards in the Regulating Plan are met. Similarly, the exact location of trails and pedestrian connections will not be known until development begins to occur and/or public projects are initiated. Some of the potential improvements in the Circulation Concept Plan represent projects that would most likely need to be implemented by the City as they may not be part of any particular private development project. This plan does not imply that proposed streets will be publicly built and maintained. Certainly, public access must be protected to the transit station, and the City should strive for direct and convenient pedestrian connections, but this could be done with a private street network and public easements.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access

A number of important pedestrian connections are noted in the Circulation Concept Plan showing where improvements should be made to create safer and more convenient connections. The enhanced sidewalk treatments associated with the TOD Core Transit Corridors and Pedestrian Priority Streets will mark a significant improvement over the current conditions along the major streets in the Station Area. However, the Circulation Concept Plan emphasizes the importance of creating safe and convenient crossing opportunities along Lamar and Airport Blvds. for pedestrians and cyclists. These roadways are large and dominated by automobile traffic with minimal accommodation for other transportation modes. If access is not improved across these major roadways, the TOD District may develop with distinct quadrants that will not have safe and efficient access to the transit station and services within the TOD District. North-south and east-west improvements are necessary to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are able to navigate through the TOD District comfortably and safely.

CIRCULATION CONCEPT PLAN



LEGEND

- STREETS
- TOD CORE TRANSIT STREETS
- TOD PEDESTRIAN PRIORITY STREETS
- TOD LOCAL STREETS
- POTENTIAL TOD LOCAL STREETS
- DESIGN STANDARDS CORE TRANSIT/ FUTURE CORE TRANSIT STREETS
- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- EXISTING BIKE LANES
- RECOMMENDED BIKE FACILITY IN AUSTIN BIKE PLAN
- RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL BIKE FACILITY
- PLANNED OFF-STREET BIKE FACILITY
- POTENTIAL 'RAILS WITH TRAILS' ROUTE
  - (Easement Required)
  - (Alternate on-street aligments)
- TOD DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- METRORAIL STATION

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Consistent with these needs, the following improvements are identified:

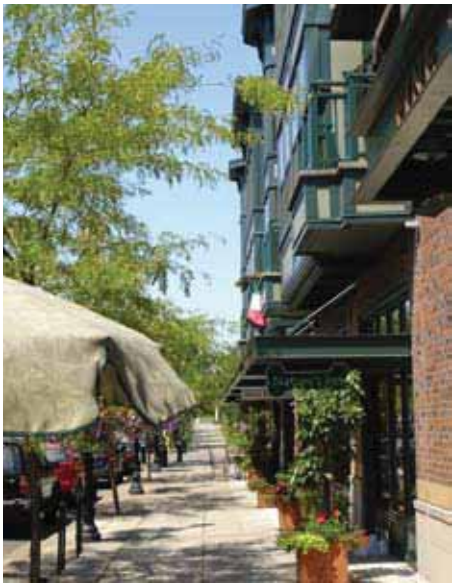
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossings and/or connections on Lamar Blvd. at Morrow Street, Banyon Street, W. St. Johns Avenue, Airport Boulevard, Justin Lane/Canion Street, Brentwood Street, and Denson Drive.
- North-south pedestrian connections along Easy Wind Drive and Wild Street, across Lamar Blvd. at the intersection with Airport Blvd., and Guadalupe Street at Airport Boulevard.
- Bicycle facilities on Lamar Blvd., Easy Wind Drive, Wild Street, W. St. Johns Avenue, and Canion Street to complement the bicycle facilities recommended in the Austin Bicycle Plan, which are Morrow Street, Guadalupe Street, Grover Avenue, Justin Lane, Brentwood Street, and Denson Drive. Six-foot wide on-street bike lanes are recommended, but other appropriate treatments identified in the Austin Bicycle Plan may be used such as wide lanes or pavements marking called "sharrows", which emphasize that the road is shared between cyclists and car drivers. Currently as part of the Crestview Station development, a southbound off-street bicycle facility is planned, generally running along the length of Lamar Blvd. (west side) from Morrow Street to Airport Blvd. This will complement the pedestrian amenities planned along this section as part of the development.
- A Rails with Trails pathway, which is discussed in more detail in the following Open Space and Trails Concept Plan, is proposed along the Capital Metro rail line. Currently, sufficient right-of-way is only available along the tracks to the southeast of the station. The pedestrian and bicycle facility recommendations for Easy Wind Drive and Morrow Street would provide an alternative on-street route for this pathway.

Vehicular Circulation

In addition to improving access and circulation within and through the TOD District, this Plan recommends that key improvements be made to the street network to help improve traffic flow for automobiles. Currently the majority of vehicular traffic in the TOD District is forced to access Lamar and Airport Blvds. as there are few alternate options for getting around (in particular due to the barrier that the rail line presents on the west side of the TOD District), which worsens the back-up and congestion along these roads, especially at the intersection of Lamar and Airport Blvds. Few route alternatives means that there are few ways to disperse traffic around the TOD District and getting around is inconvenient and inefficient.

This Plan recommends that Canion Street be extended westward to connect-up with Lamar Blvd. and that Easy Wind Drive be extended south across the railroad tracks to connect with the property on the other side of the station. This would create a secondary local street network that

nests within the larger street framework provided by the TOD Core Transit Corridors, Lamar and Airport Blvds. While Lamar and Airport Blvds. are designed and will continue to carry heavy volumes of traffic as they serve regional transportation needs, these secondary streets are intended to facilitate local traffic so that it can move around and through the TOD District more efficiently without having to access Lamar or Airport Blvds. or traverse their intersection. Creating a functional secondary street network is a very important element of a healthy TOD.



The proposed extensions of Canion St. and Easy Wind Dr. have not been designed or engineered and are conceptual recommendations in this Plan. They may be moderate or long-term solutions as the improvements would most likely require Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funding and the proposals would need to be further analyzed. It is important to note that an extension of Easy Wind Dr. across the railroad tracks would need to be approved by Capital Metro as the extension could not negatively impact rail or bus operations and would need to meet any federal regulations that might apply to such a crossing. At a minimum, a pedestrian and bicycle crossing should be provided to link the southwest portion of the community with the northern part of the Station Area.

Sidewalk Standards Based on Roadway Type

As described previously, there are three roadway types within the Station Area – TOD Core Transit Corridors, TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets, and TOD Local Streets. This Station Area Plan applies many of the street design standards (sidewalk widths, clear zones, parking zones, etc.) from Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use and tailors them to the TOD Core Transit Corridors, TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets, and TOD Local Streets designated in this Plan. These requirements call for sidewalk widths of 5 to 15 feet, street trees, and a certain level of building frontage brought up to the sidewalk. Specific requirements for each roadway type are provided in the Regulating Plan.

Streetscape Prototypes

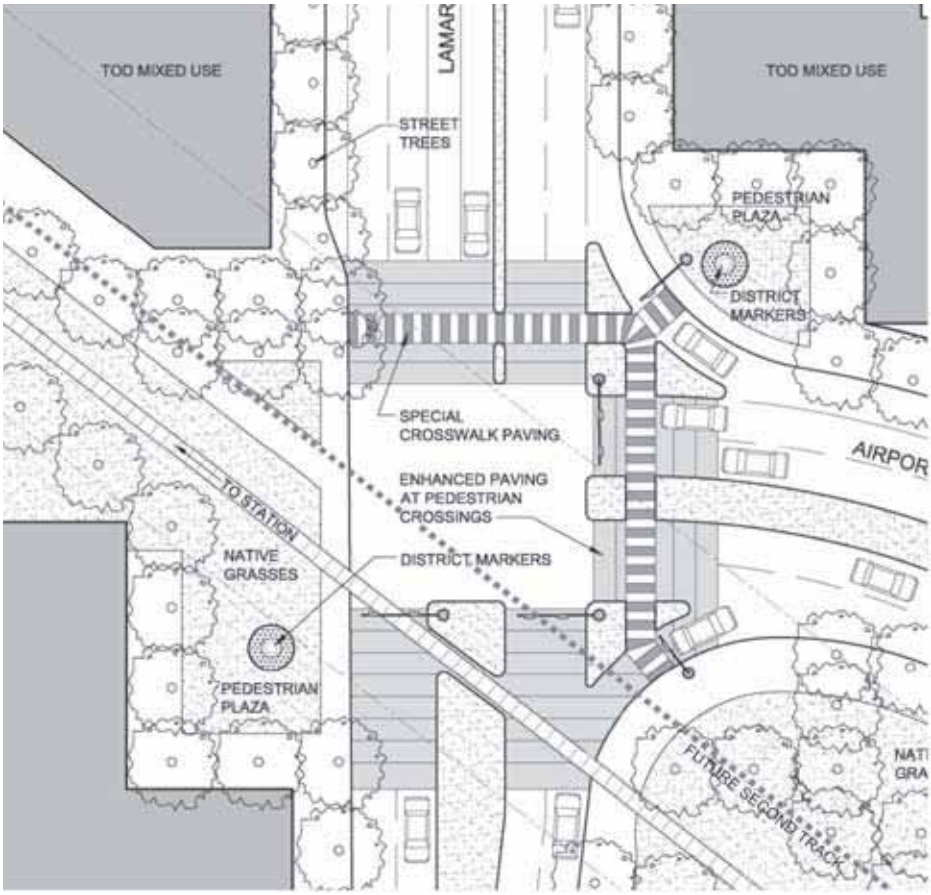
The project team chose to focus on providing street cross section prototypes for Lamar Boulevard and the secondary street grid associated with Canion Street, Easy Wind Dr., Guadalupe St., and W. St. Johns Ave. as sample designs for streetscape improvements that are consistent with their designation as either a TOD Core Transit Corridor or TOD Pedestrian Priority street. The curb-to-curb widths vary according to the existing and anticipated traffic volumes, and they have 15- or 12-foot wide sidewalks respectively. A prototypical street cross section for a TOD Local Street is also provided. These sections are further described in Chapter 3.

Lamar Blvd./Airport Blvd. Intersection

The intersection of Airport and Lamar Blvds. was a major topic of concern among the participants in this planning process. It is an extremely busy intersection because it serves regional traffic from all directions. The intersection was designed several decades ago to efficiently serve automobiles and move them through the area quickly, with meager thought for pedestrians and cyclists. It is extremely important to remedy the barrier that this intersection presents to non-auto users to connect the four quadrants of the TOD District, in particular properties on the east side of Lamar Blvd. with the transit and services on the west side.

As such, this Plan recommends that the intersection be "condensed" and converted into a modified "T" design with sharper turning lanes so that the size of the intersection is smaller, which makes it easier to cross as a pedestrian or cyclist, and auto traffic is forced to slow down as it navigates through the intersection. This design presents much more of an urban street solution than the current configuration and combined with improvements like pedestrian activated signals at the northeast and southeast corners where free-right turns are present, would create a much friendlier atmosphere so that crossing the road as a pedestrian or cyclist would not seem a challenge. In addition, this Plan recommends that the proposed intersection redesign include significant pavement detail to indicate crosswalk areas, landscape medians where appropriate, landscaping on corners to improve the appearance of the area, and district markers to indicate to people that this is a special place that deserves attention, and is not merely an intersection to pass through as quickly as possible.

As with the Canion and Easy Wind proposed extensions discussed above, the proposed redesign of the Airport/Lamar intersection is at a conceptual stage and would need much more analysis to determine an actual design, and clearly a funding source would need to be identified. Capital Metro is very interested in a redesign of this intersection to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the MetroRail stop and also to improve bus operations along Lamar Blvd. During this planning process, they contracted a transportation engineering firm to examine options for the redesign of this intersection and some preliminarily engineered designs were produced. More information on this work is presented in Chapter 3 along with next steps for realizing some short and long-term improvements to the intersection.



*A second rail track will likely be implemented by Capital Metro that will need to be addressed in any future improvements made to the intersection.

3. OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CONCEPT PLAN

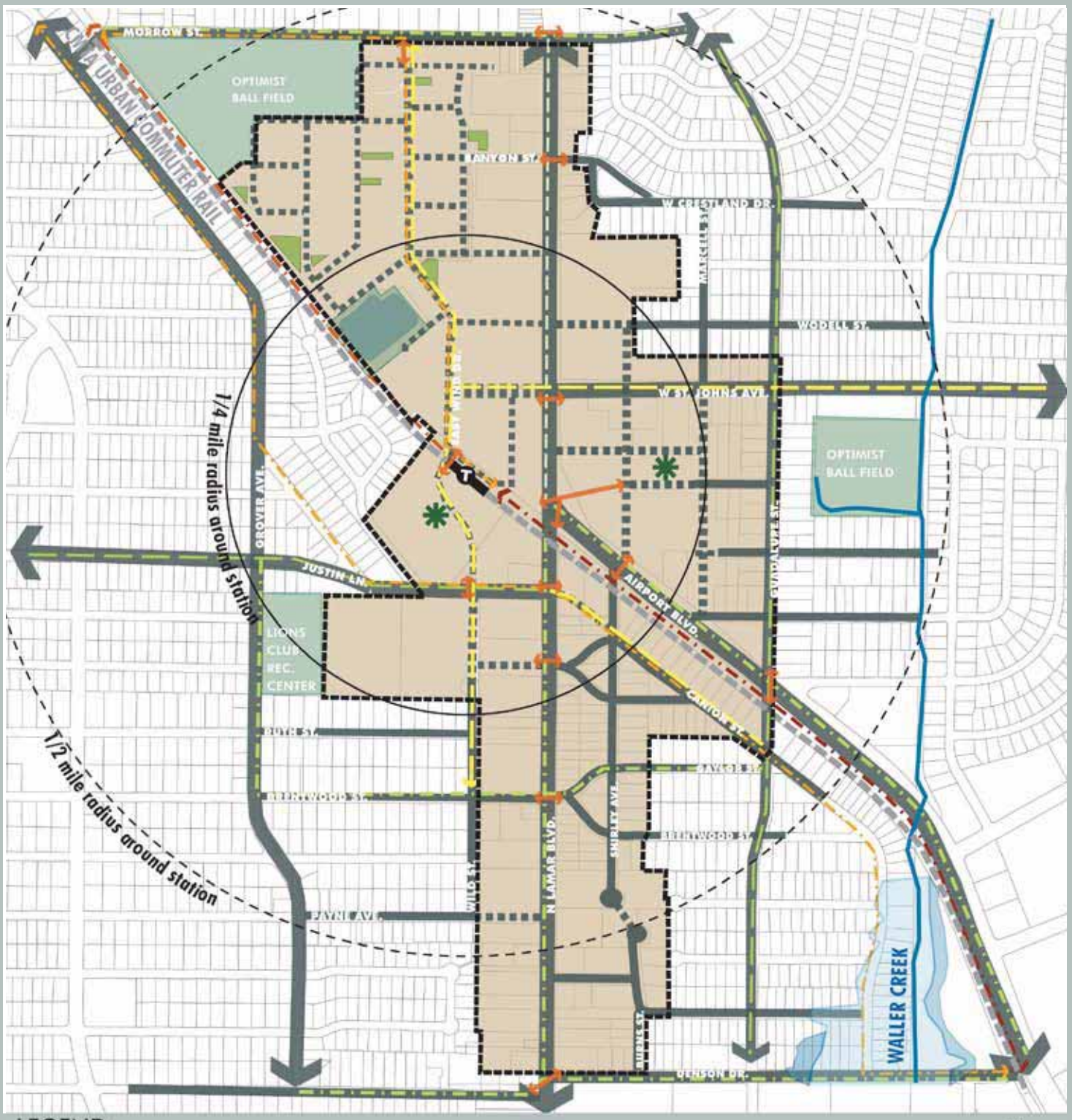
Well designed, accessible, and integrated open space and urban landscape systems are critical to the success of the station area plans. The higher density and compact character inherent of TOD calls for an open space approach that recognizes the importance of open space to TOD inhabitants, employees, and visitors and surrounding residents alike. TOD mixed-use and commercial uses should include: plazas and private open space, storm water gardens and landscapes, landscape methods to reduce urban heat island effects, water efficient landscapes, and on-site renewable energy systems, all conveniently accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. Likewise, residential districts should be in close proximity to open space with pocket parks or community greens to serve the various open space needs at a local level and soften the edges of the built environment. Depending on the TOD context and environmental conditions, a more significant, broader reaching open space element such as a community park, garden, or trail network could be very appropriate. It is important to include open space near the most intensely developed portion of the TOD District to complement the higher density development in addition to providing safe and convenient access for the surrounding neighborhoods. Many of the participants in the planning process were extremely passionate about the need for open space in the area and the desire for parkland was a recurring theme throughout the process.

Existing and Planned Facilities

The Station Area currently does not have any public parks or open spaces. The privately-used Optimist ball fields located on Morrow Street and east of Guadalupe Street are the two most significant open areas in the vicinity. A Lions Club greenspace on Grover Avenue also provides some recreational opportunities for the area; however, they are private fields and not available for general use of the public. The Crestview Station development plan illustrates several small open spaces interspersed throughout the site in addition to a trail loop around a detention pond located adjacent to the railroad tracks.

Recently, Capital Metro hired a consultant to conduct a Rail-with-Trail Feasibility Study along its 32-mile commuter rail line from Leander to downtown Austin. The consultant produced a document that outlined where Capital Metro has adequate space for such a trail within its rail right-of-way, identified environmental and other constraints to a trail in certain locations, and proposed potential alignments (both within rail right-of-way and on-street connections) that could be the focus of future Rails with Trails implementation efforts. The trail would provide connections to all rail stations and adjacent and intersecting trails. The total cost without the purchase of rights-of-way or property easements is estimated to be $50-$60 million. Capital Metro is and will be looking for funding partners to help pay for the overall project, which could take up to 15 years to complete.

OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS CONCEPT PLAN



LEGEND

- EXISTING STREETS
- POTENTIAL STREETS
- PRIVATE OPEN SPACE
- POTENTIAL PARK/OPEN SPACE
- 100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN
- 500 YEAR FLOODPLAIN
- EXISTING BIKE LANES
- PLANNED OFF-STREET BIKE FACILITY
- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS
- RECOMMENDED BIKE FACILITY IN AUSTIN BIKE PLAN
- ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED BIKE FACILITY
- POTENTIAL 'RAILS WITH TRAILS' ROUTE
  - Easement Required
  - Alternate on-street aligments
- TOD DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- METRORAIL STATION

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Open Space Concept

Overall Strategy

The open spaces designated on the Open Space and Trails Concept Plan do not indicate the exact location, type, or amount of open space that must be provided as part of a private development. Until development begins to occur and/or public projects are initiated, the exact details on type, location, and amount of open space cannot be defined. Depending on individual site conditions and constraints, open space may deviate from what is depicted in the Open Space and Trails Concept Plan. The City of Austin Parkland Dedication Ordinance ensures that all private development residential projects required to submit a site plan contribute to park needs either on-site or by paying a fee into a parks fund. Some of the potential open space elements represent projects that would most likely need to be implemented by the City as they may not be part of any particular private development project.

The potential open space represented on the Open Space and Trails Concept Plan illustrates promising locations for some types of open space given the size of properties, their proximity to the MetroRail stop, and likelihood of redevelopment. It does not preclude the creation of open space in other parts of the TOD District; depending upon the character of future development, there may be other open spaces, parks, and trails in locations not indicated on the concept plan that are appropriate for the type and size of development planned. As a way to encourage the provision of on-site open space, the Regulating Plan requires a certain amount of private open space on larger development sites and allows for a transfer of development rights to the remainder of a site when public open space is provided.

Open Space Concept Elements

Pocket Parks

The Lamar/Justin Station Area Plan specifically calls out locations for two pocket parks where the level of public activity and development densities are envisioned to be the greatest. The two pocket parks, with a recommended minimum size of half an acre, are depicted on both sides of Lamar Blvd. Ideally, one should be located on the Austin Energy property immediately southwest of the MetroRail station. The second park is proposed to the northeast of the Lamar/Airport intersection on what is known as the Highland Village Shopping Center. The current lack of public recreational land is a significant deficiency for this area, making the provisions of these new parks critical to the overall livability of the area.

The MetroRail station, and the adjacent transit plaza that is part of the Crestview Station development, is envisioned to become the center of the community. A pocket park on the south side of the tracks with access via Easy Wind Drive and Justin Lane will provide a recreation opportunity for residents in the Station Area and surrounding neighborhoods. The open atmosphere near the station and the additional level of activity it will encourage, will contribute toward making the station a lively focal point of the community. During the planning process, several participants expressed a desire for an open space near the station that would serve as a community gathering space and house such events as a Farmer's Market.

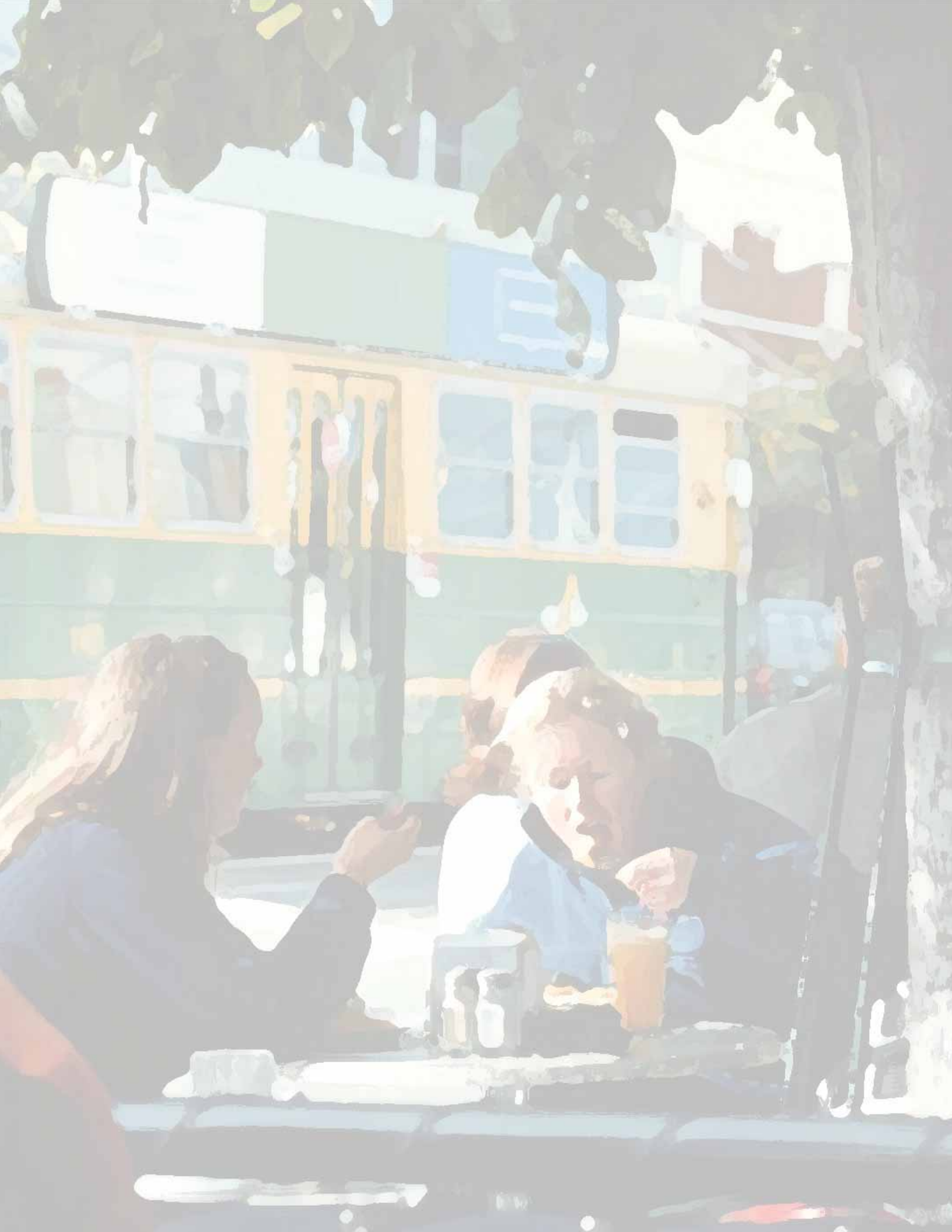
As the Highland Village Shopping Center site redevelops, the second pocket park should be provided as part of the development program. Although Lamar Blvd. is proposed to become more pedestrian-friendly, it will continue to be somewhat of a barrier, especially for the very young or old. Small, neighborhood-scale parks should always be within easy walking distance of the residents they are to serve. This park will help fill the recreation void on the east side of Lamar Boulevard.

The location of the pocket parks may change as the development programs for the properties are more specifically defined. However, the parks should have the following attributes:

- A minimum size of a half acre;
- Configuration and design for active recreation, especially for children, in addition to space for more passive reaction needs; and
- Locations on either side of Lamar Blvd.

Rails with Trails

The Rail-with-Trail concept was enthusiastically supported by planning participants, in particular a trail alignment running directly along the rail line was highly desired for both recreational and connectivity purposes. The Rail-with-Trail feasibility study mentioned above indicates that Capital Metro does not own sufficient right-of-way for a trail through the northwestern portion of the Lamar/Justin TOD District along the railroad tracks. In addition, there are constraints due to the presence of adjacent drainage channels and property ownership agreements. As such, the Open Space and Trails Concept Plan includes an alternative on-street alignment proposed by the Study that runs along neighborhood streets parallel to the rail line to the southwest of the tracks, in addition to an alternative alignment that runs through the Crestview Station development. If property or trail easements were granted by private property owners along the rail line, it is possible that a trail adjacent to the rail line could be realized.



CHAPTER 3
IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTING THE JUSTIN/LAMAR TOD STATION AREA PLAN

MAKING THE PLAN REAL

The adoption of the Lamar/Justin Station Area Plan (SAP) will not automatically implement the Vision articulated in Chapter 2. It is the first of many coordinated steps, which will need to be made over several years. The implementation of this plan along with other transit-oriented developments surrounding the proposed Capital MetroRail stations are expected to support ridership on Capital MetroRail and take full advantage of this public transit investment and the development potential of the station area. Successful implementation of the plan will require a strong partnership between Capital Metro, the City, other government agencies, the private sector, and the community.

UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET

Assessment

To better understand market trends, Capital Metro retained Economics Research Associates (ERA) to conduct an assessment of economic trends, land values, and real estate markets in the Austin area. This assessment also considered the transit-oriented development potential of three transit station locations including Plaza Saltillo, North Lamar/Justin, and MLK. An initial evaluation was completed in 2006, and an updated analysis was completed in 2007 to respond more fully to station area planning activities. Conducting a market assessment is an important step in creating the station area plan because it helps frame the planning discussion by focusing on possible development scenarios which are plausible for the station area. It helps the public and the City understand how to focus their collective planning energies in a direction that has a good chance of being realized.

The assessment indicated that the regional economy is strong and is expected to remain so. A diverse employment base, talented labor pool, and quality of life in the region receive much of the credit for the city's prosperity and popularity.

Development Potential in the Lamar/Justin Station Area

The Lamar/Justin Station Area is located in the center of neighborhoods consisting predominantly of single family homes, with predominantly office and commercial uses along the major arterials of Lamar and Airport Blvds. As part of its analysis, ERA identified the Lamar/Justin Station Area's strengths and opportunities along with challenges and constraints for transit-oriented development, which include:

Strengths & Opportunities

- **Location** – The Station Area is located within four miles of the University of Texas, allowing it to capture some of the real estate demand generated from students and faculty. Moreover, the area is well located near US Hwy 183, I-35 and Hwy 290. As a result, it is also attractive for young professionals working north of the urban core.
- **High Growth in Surrounding Area** – Though the Station Area has not seen a great deal of development in recent years, the adjacent areas to the north and northeast are some of the fastest growing areas in the city. Moreover, there is a growing trend for students to locate more and more north of campus as seen by the popularity of the Triangle Project and the opening of several new condominium developments. Lamar Blvd. is positioned to capture some of the spillover of activity occurring in those high-growth areas.

- **Transportation** – Lamar Blvd. is a major arterial that connects the site to Downtown Austin. There are several existing bus lines offering service to North and South Austin. Access will be enhanced once the MetroRail station is completed, as it will be a transfer point for several bus lines as well as commuter rail.
- **Amenities** – Private playing fields and open space totaling 17 acres will be preserved in the Station Area, creating a family-friendly environment.
- **Developer support for transit-oriented development** – Developers are undergoing a master planning process that will incorporate some of the key features of transit-oriented development, including linkages to transit facilities, a mix of land uses, pedestrian-friendly design, and higher densities. The 73-acre development site is large enough to create a high-quality example of transit-oriented development.
- **Community Involvement** – The community appears to be generally supportive of development that provides greater retail and housing opportunities. The charrette for the Lamar/Justin Station Area was the most well attended of any other area.

Challenges & Constraints

- Due to the large amount of young professionals and college students in the area, median household income in the neighborhood is well below the metropolitan area median. Housing and retail must be tailored for these populations.
- Environmental cleanup is required on the former Huntsman site due to previous industrial uses, which will add cost and delay the redevelopment process.
- Currently, the area suffers from traffic congestion and access problems for vehicles and pedestrians. Lamar Blvd. narrows from a six-lane arterial to a four-lane road just 200 feet north of Airport Blvd., causing backup and congestion at peak times. Development opportunities will rely upon the ability to reduce traffic problems at the Airport/Lamar intersection and the ability to improve connectivity of the transit station to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Potential opposition to density from surrounding single family neighborhoods, especially the perceived traffic impacts on neighborhood streets.

Development Program

Based upon the regional economy and the characteristics of the Lamar Station Area, the ERA analysis yielded a summary of its development potential.

LAMAR/JUSTIN STATION AREA DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL SUMMARY 2007 TO 2025

LAND USE	LOW	HIGH
Residential		
Condominiums, Flats & Live/Work Lofts	324	515
Apartments	401	639
Townhomes & Duplexes	287	500
Total Units	1,012	1,654
Office Space (sq.ft.)	120,126	256,242
Retail Space (sq.ft.)	39,012	66,255
Hotel (units)	47	162

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN ELEMENTS

Creating a TOD plan for the Lamar/Justin Station Area is the starting point for realizing the Vision expressed in the Station Area Plan. Experience from successful planning programs consistently demonstrates the importance of strong partnerships between all levels of government, the transit agency, the private sector, and the community. Working together helps bring about quality development and strong neighborhoods. In addition, the ERA findings and other market information will be important to acknowledge as the implementation work moves forward.

I. Form a TOD Working Group

The City of Austin should form a "Working Group" including various City departments, Capital Metro, neighborhood representatives, and key members of the private sector. The working group's primary focus should be to span jurisdictional and agency boundaries to facilitate collaboration and guide the implementation of transit-oriented development in the Lamar/Justin Station Area and other station areas along the Capital MetroRail line. Ideally, the members of the committee should have the authority to speak on behalf of their respective organizations and make decisions.

This group should meet regularly, with support from a technical committee of agency staff responsible for day-to-day management of the implementation strategy and individual tasks and projects. Other interests or subcommittees for individual station areas could also be included and formed depending upon the desires of the participants. What is of the utmost importance is to have a focused and organized framework for implementing the plans for the station areas.

II. Prioritize and Implement Action Items

The first order of business for the working group should be to evaluate and prioritize specific action items for implementation, which will be based upon the recommended projects and activities in this section pertaining to:

- Planning and Administration
- Transit-Oriented Development Catalyst Projects
- Circulation and Streets
- Open Space and Trails
- Supporting Infrastructure

Recommended activities and projects are presented for each of the five facets of the implementation program noted above followed by a description of what should be done along with the lead party responsible for accomplishing the identified task. The recommendations are intended to provide a "checklist" of a series of tasks that will move the Station Area Plan from concept to reality.

TOD catalyst project in Beaverton

Mixed use boulevard street

Open space with water feature

ACTION ITEMS

Planning and Administration

PA1 Adopt the Lamar/Justin TOD Station Area Plan and TOD Regulating Plan.
The Station Area Plan vision and key plan elements are described and depicted on the plan maps for land use and design, circulation, and open space. These should be adopted along with the Lamar Station Area Regulating Plan. The Regulating Plan will replace the current zoning in the Station Area and *Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed-Use*.

PA2-3 Amend affected Neighborhood Plans. Each neighborhood plan that overlaps the Lamar/Justin Station Area should be amended to include a TOD designation on the future land use map and include the Lamar/Justin TOD Station Area Plan as the most recently adopted plan and regulating strategy for the properties within the TOD District.

PA4 Formation of a TOD Working Group. Formation of the Working Group described above will be a critical element for the plan's success. Because implementation of the Station Area Plan will require synchronized public agency and private sector actions, the development of strong working relationships, enhanced coordination, and community involvement will be essential. Many of the Plan's activities should be managed by this group to promote efficiency and timely progress on implementation.

PA5 Dedicated Staff. A City staff position should be created to work exclusively on implementation of the station area plans. Duties could include:

- Informing property owners about the Lamar/Justin Station Area Plan, TOD zoning regulations, and opportunities for redevelopment.
- Identifying property owners interested in redevelopment and facilitate information exchange between property owners regarding such issues as property assembly.
- Pursuing funding opportunities for implementation of the Station Area Plan recommendations and infrastructure improvements.
- Reviewing TOD projects that are seeking alternative equivalent compliance.
- Reviewing and approving Project Circulation Plans.
- Aiding Rails with Trails project implementation by proactively working with property owners to seek trail easements in areas where the Capital Metro right-of-way is inadequate.
- Assisting property owners in providing affordable housing as part of their development and providing funding information.
- Coordinating the TOD Working Group.

PA6 Urban Design Division in the Development Review Process. Development review of TOD projects should include Urban Design Division staff to review and approve Project Circulation Plans and address any requests for alternative equivalent compliance.

PA7 Prioritization of TOD Projects. This Station Area Plan recommends prioritizing projects in and around the TOD on the General Obligation Bond CIP list, for grant funding, and/or for the potential establishment of special financing districts to respond to the higher level of development desired in the area. Sidewalk, bicycle and street/intersection improvements in and around the TOD are especially important to provide safe and efficient access to and through the area.

PA8 TOD Financing Strategy and Tools. The plan for this Station Area is designed to leverage the Capital Metro transit investment by encouraging supportive development surrounding the station. The benefits of TOD have been documented, however, creating successful TOD is not without significant challenges, which require public action and investment before the desired urban development may be realized. Bay Area Economics (BAE) prepared a report that describes TOD financial feasibility and financing strategies and tools that are the most promising for the Austin station areas, which is summarized in Chapter 2 and located in the Appendix. BAE advises that public investment will probably be necessary to stimulate the much larger investment expected by the private sector. Public attention regarding affordable housing, public infrastructure, and catalyst projects should be considered as outlined in the BAE memorandum. Several of the implementation actions in the following sections are included in response to the BAE recommendations. An important assignment for the Working Group will be to review the BAE information and recommendations to develop a financing strategy and set of supporting tools.

Financing elements recommended by BAE include:

- Adopt a phased implementation strategy for the TOD Plan that matches public investment to targeted areas and market interest in new development;
- Minimize reliance upon City General Fund or Capital Improvement Program funds to reduce competition with other priority projects;
- Make new development cover, to the extent feasible, a significant portion of the costs of public capital improvements, including upgrades to water and wastewater systems; and
- Utilize all existing public finance tools as currently authorized by law.

Specific public financing tools recommended in the BAE report to foster the implementation of TOD include:

- Homestead Preservation District
- Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Bonds
- Developer Impact Fees
- Austin Housing Finance Corporation
- Federal/State Grants
- Public Improvement Districts

PA9 Monitor Implementation Effectiveness. The Working Group should monitor the effectiveness of the implementation elements of this station area plan and recommend changes to them as appropriate. This could include amendments to the plan itself, amending the Regulating Plan to make it more effective, and the financing strategy and tools employed. A review should occur at least annually.

LAMAR/JUSTIN SAP ACTION CHART 1: PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION							
NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10 YEARS	11 TO 15 YEARS	
PA1	Adopt the Lamar/Justin Station Area Plan	X					City of Austin
PA2	Amend the Crestview/Wooten Neighborhood Plan	X					City of Austin
PA3	Amend the Brentwood/Highland Neighborhood Plan	X					City of Austin
PA4	Create an interdepartmental and interagency TOD working group whose mission is to facilitate development in TOD districts.			X			City of Austin, Capital Metro, private sector & public
PA5	Create dedicated staff position for SAP implementation			X			City of Austin
PA6	Integrate UD Division into development review process			X			City of Austin
PA7	Evaluate and prioritize projects within TOD Districts			X			City of Austin, and Capital Metro
PA8	TOD financing strategy and tools to be developed by the Working Group to stimulate TOD in the station areas.			X			CoA, Capital Metro & private sector
PA9	Monitor implementation effectiveness conducted by the Working Group.		X				CoA, Capital Metro, private sector & public

Active mixed-use street

Intimate public space

Festival public space

Transit-Oriented Development Catalyst Projects

TOD1 Catalyst Site Owners. The Working Group should establish a cooperative relationship with the owners of potential catalyst sites. The objective should be to identify how the parties can provide mutual assistance to initiate these critical first development projects. In particular, public assistance that would be beneficial to catalyst projects and the community generally should be identified and evaluated.

TOD2 Apply Finance Strategy and Tools. The Working Group should determine which specific financing strategy elements and tools (PA9 above) should be utilized to advance TOD catalyst projects with the goal of stimulating interest in overall TOD. This should be done with developers, property owners, and government agencies to develop the correct mix of incentives to promote TOD in the station areas.

TOD3 Create a TOD Catalyst Project. Developing a TOD pilot project will be an important way to create development interest in the station area. To the extent possible, such a project should include housing types not commonly found in Austin, but appropriate for the station area (such as higher density single family or mixed-use residential). It should include affordable housing. A catalyst project could also include the implementation of a key infrastructure or streetscape project, as described on subsequent pages.

LAMAR/JUSTIN SAP ACTION CHART 2: TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10	11 TO 15 YEARS	
TOD1	Meet with owners of catalyst sites.			X			Working Group
TOD2	Apply finance strategy and tools for TOD implementation.			X			CoA, Capital Metro & private sector
TOD3	Create a TOD catalyst project.			X			Working Group & private sector

Streetscape improvements

Bike lanes

Streetcar on main road

Circulation and Streets

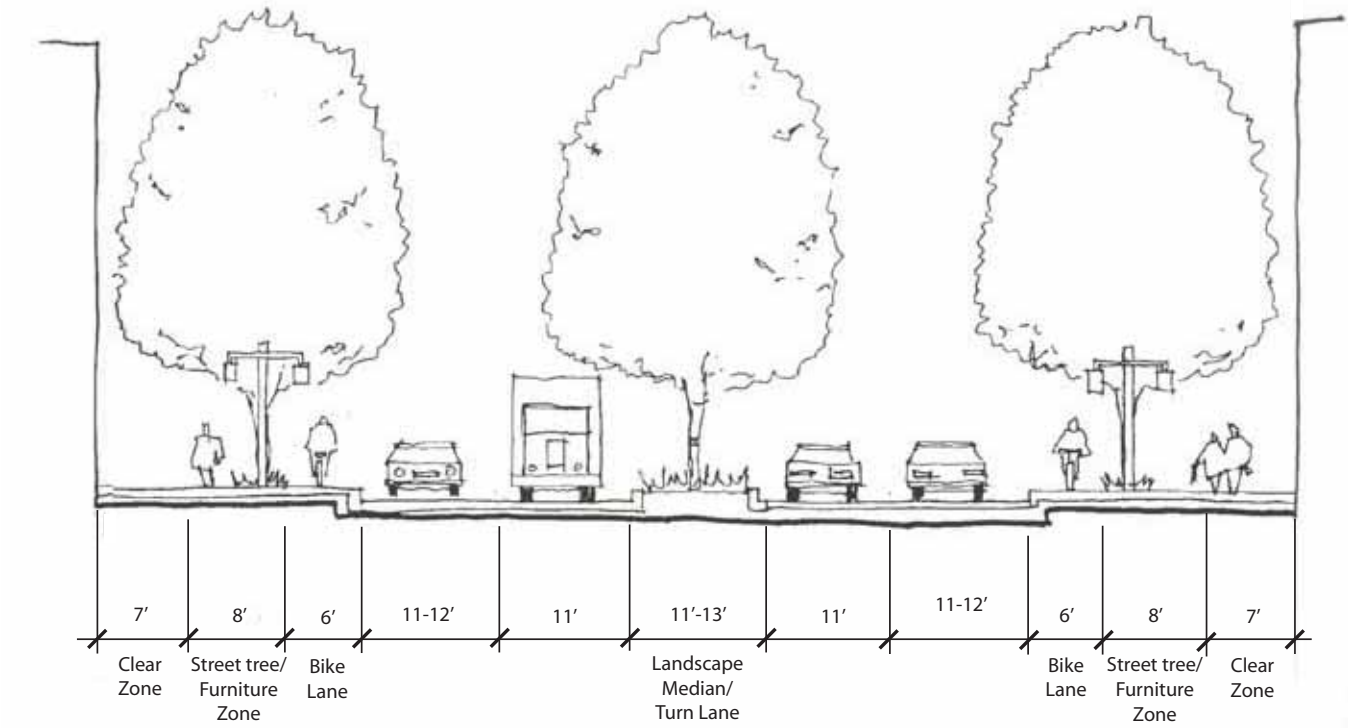
CS1 Lamar Boulevard Street Improvements.
A project to improve safety, pedestrian and bicycle activity, and general neighborhood appearance will typically encourage private investment on adjoining properties. Lamar Boulevard should be improved to create a positive change to the character of the street and encourage private investment, while continuing to provide an important route than traverses the area. Because properties along the street will redevelop over time, the only realistic way to create a meaningful change to the street's appearance will be to sponsor an improvement for the entire street section within the Station Area.

Lamar Boulevard is designated as a TOD Core Transit Corridor. Figure 3.1 illustrates a fully developed streetscape consistent with this designation, including the following elements:

- Four vehicular travel lanes (wide enough to support bus operations)
- North/ south travel ways separated by a landscape median with street trees
- Bike lanes (potentially off-street at a back of curb location)
- Street trees behind the curb
- District markers
- Plantings at street edge and within private and public plaza spaces
- Minimum 15-foot wide sidewalk with a 7-foot clear zone
- Enhanced and/or new pedestrian crosswalks and signals
- Street lighting
- Street furniture and other pedestrian amenities

To reduce the excessive number of curb cuts along Lamar Boulevard and create a center landscaped median along some segments of the street, the City will need to initiate an access management program to gradually eliminate separate driveway access points along the street.

FIGURE 3.1 CROSS SECTION OF LAMAR BOULEVARD

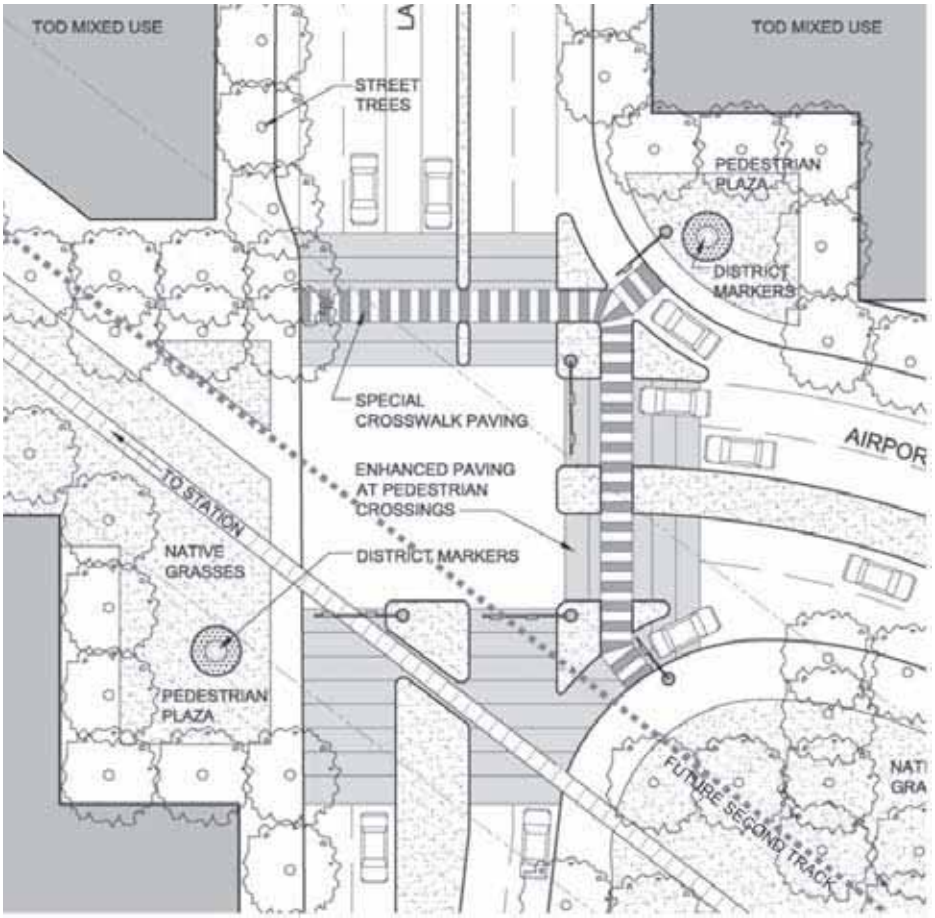


CS2 Lamar/Airport Intersection. The high-speed traffic flow on Lamar and Airport Boulevards currently divides the Station Area. Because the intersection is very wide with negligible pedestrian accommodation, the walking and bicycling environment is extremely hostile and unpleasant. However, Lamar and Airport Blvds. can be converted into more inviting and welcoming urban streets for pedestrians and cyclists with a reconfiguration of the intersection and the inclusion of crosswalk enhancements, pedestrian activated signalization, and streetscape improvements. Figure 3.2 illustrates a possible concept reconfiguration of the intersection that may better accommodate additional modes of travel.

Lamar/Airport Intersection Engineering Analysis Contracted by Capital Metro

In coordination with the Lamar/Justin Lane Station Area Transit Oriented Design Planning process, at the end of 2007 Capital Metro hired Klotz Associates and Fehr & Peers, engineering and transportation consultants, to take a specific look at the redesign of the Lamar/Airport intersection in an effort to find a solution to meet the Agency's long-term bus transit needs and enhance pedestrian activity. The consultants produced a report Crestview Station Transit Access Study - Final Technical Memorandum, February 2008) that outlines one short-term and three longer term strategies. The short-term scheme consists of specific intersection improvements (e.g. installation of new sidewalks, pedestrian activated signals, safety luminaries, signage, island extensions, and the addition of a right turn bay) that are intended to be relatively minor and could be implemented before or soon after the Crestview Station rail stop is operational, to transform the current intersection configuration into a more safe and accessible pedestrian environment, while improving the efficiency of transit and vehicular operations.

FIGURE 3.2 CONCEPT OF LAMAR AND AIRPORT BOULEVARD INTERSECTION



*A second rail track will likely be implemented by Capital Metro that will need to be addressed in any future improvements made to the intersection.

The longer-term schemes developed illustrate a few options for redesigning and reengineering the current condition of the intersection and near-by areas, which predominantly facilitate car movement, into something that better accommodates all modes of travel, especially pedestrians and bicyclists. The long term alternatives include preliminarily engineered concepts that propose significant changes to the design of the Lamar/Airport intersection and propose changes to the circulation and flow of traffic in and around the intersection. Their work was presented to city staff from the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning and Public Works Departments for review and comment. It will serve as an important input into any future discussions of improvements to the Lamar/Airport intersection and area-wide circulation. At this time the future strategies have not been reviewed by the public or area residents.

This Station Area Plan recommends that as a first implementation step, short-term improvements be made to the Lamar/Airport intersection to improve the pedestrian environment. The improvements suggested in the Capital Metro study will be the basis of the discussion. Steps include:

1. Communicating with the director of Public Works (PW) on the short and long term options
2. Getting approval from the PW director to proceed with identifying specific improvements for a short-term strategy and feedback regarding funding initial engineering documents and future improvements
3. Coming to agreement on the necessary short-term improvements (involving the City, Capital Metro, and surrounding neighborhoods)
4. Producing 30% engineering documents (either with City in-house staff or consultants off an existing engineering rotation list)
5. With a better understanding of costs and level of complexity, determining which implementation elements could technically be done by in-house construction crews and which would need to be contracted-out
6. Engaging in a dialogue with the Public Works director and Capital Metro regarding the improvements, how much they would cost, who can best implement them, and how they will be funded
7. Constructing the short-term improvements

This Station Area Plan also recommends that long-term improvements be made to the Lamar/Airport intersection and surrounding area to improve the pedestrian and cycling environment, accommodate transit needs, and enhance the circulation of automobile traffic; all necessary to a well functioning TOD. Long-term improvements would realistically not be realized for at least a decade given the likely high-cost of such a project and 5-year average bond cycles. The information presented in this plan in addition to the intersection and area concept alternatives presented in the Capital Metro study will serve as the starting point of the discussion. Steps include:

1. Getting direction from the City Council on the long term direction of the area. Coordination of the effort with surrounding area land use plans.
2. Engaging in detailed discussions (Capital Metro and Public Works, and area stakeholders) to identify and agree on a preferred strategy for the redesign of the intersection and corresponding infrastructure and area circulation" improvements that would need to be made around the intersection
3. Communicating with the public regarding the identified strategy and soliciting feedback
4. Making revisions to the strategy as necessary
5. Listing out the multiple improvements involved with the strategy and ordering them appropriately in terms of sequence
6. Identifying any amendments needed to the AMATP and communicating with appropriate staff to complete the amendment process
7. Identifying funding for preliminary engineering for the various elements of the project
8. Producing 30% engineering documents (either in-house or off the rotation list) for each of the elements
9. With a better understanding of costs and level of complexity, determining what could technically be done by in-house construction crews and what would need to be contracted-out
10. Engaging in a dialogue with the Public Works director Capital Metro, and adjacent property owners and other area stakeholders regarding the improvements, how much they'll cost, who can do them, and how they will be funded.
11. Apply for appropriate funding, grants, bond programs, etc.
12. Constructing the long-term improvements

CS3-CS6: Secondary Local Street Network (TOD Pedestrian Priority Streets)
The following items outline key improvements necessary to create a safe, efficient, multi-modal, secondary local circulation network in the Lamar/Justin TOD Station Area.

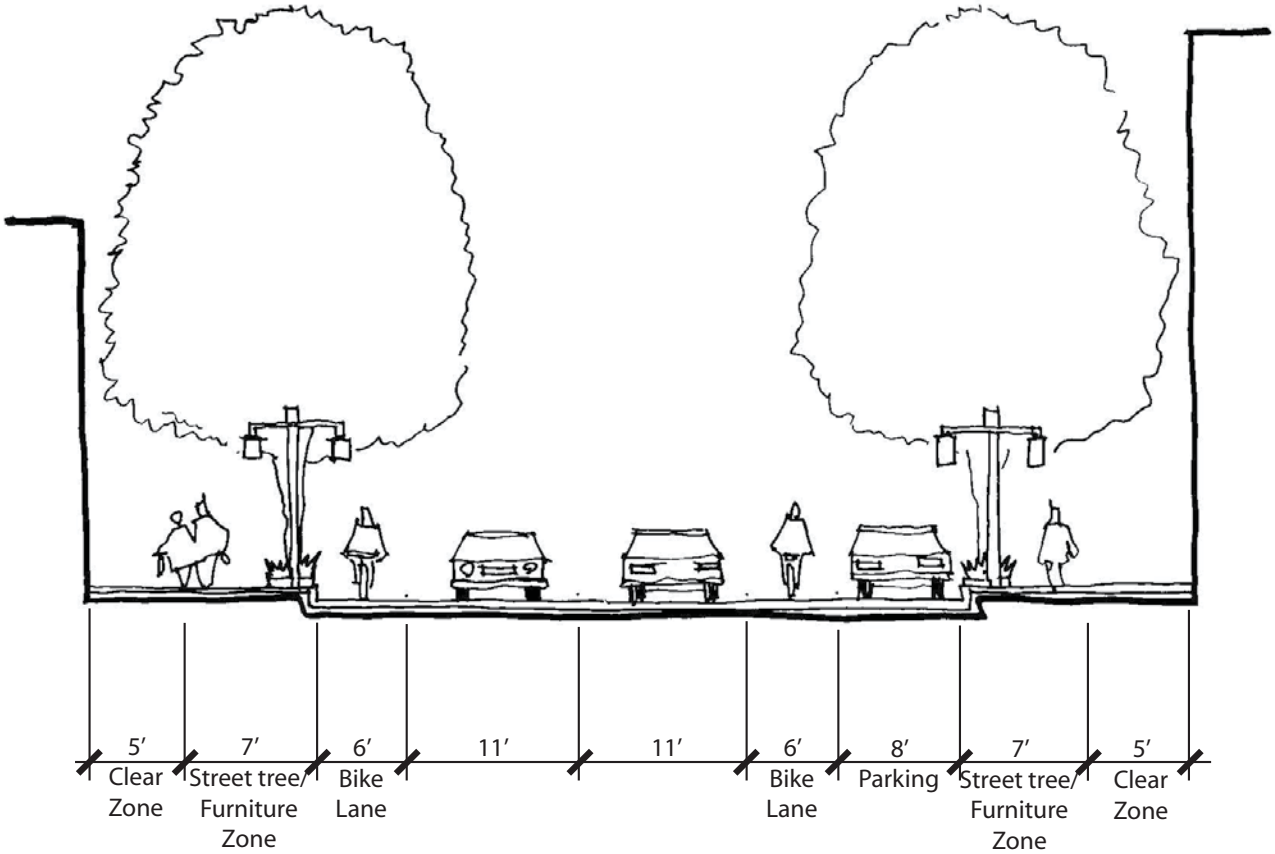
CS3 Canion Street Connection and Improvements. An extension of Canion Street one block west to connect with Lamar Boulevard and align with Justin Lane is an important part of the overall circulation strategy. This would allow for more efficient local access to Lamar Boulevard and Justin Lane without having to navigate through the Lamar/Airport intersection. The streetscape should be improved to provide a pleasant and safe pedestrian/bicycle route to the Capital MetroRail station from the east side of Lamar Boulevard. The creation of a positive character of the street will encourage private investment on adjoining properties.

This connection would also facilitate Capital Metro bus operations in the area by providing a more efficient route for Airport Blvd. buses (note: in order for this alternative route to function for Capital Metro, the intersection of Airport and Guadalupe would need to be slightly reconfigured to reduce the turning angle so that buses could make the left-hand turn from Airport onto Guadalupe).

Canion Street is designated as a TOD Pedestrian Priority Street. Figure 3.3 illustrates a fully developed streetscape consistent with this designation, including the following elements:

- Two vehicular travel lanes
- On-street parking on one or both sides of the street
- Minimum 12-foot wide sidewalk with a 7-foot clear zone
- Street trees at back-of-curb locations
- Moveable planters

FIGURE 3.3 CROSS SECTION OF CANION STREET

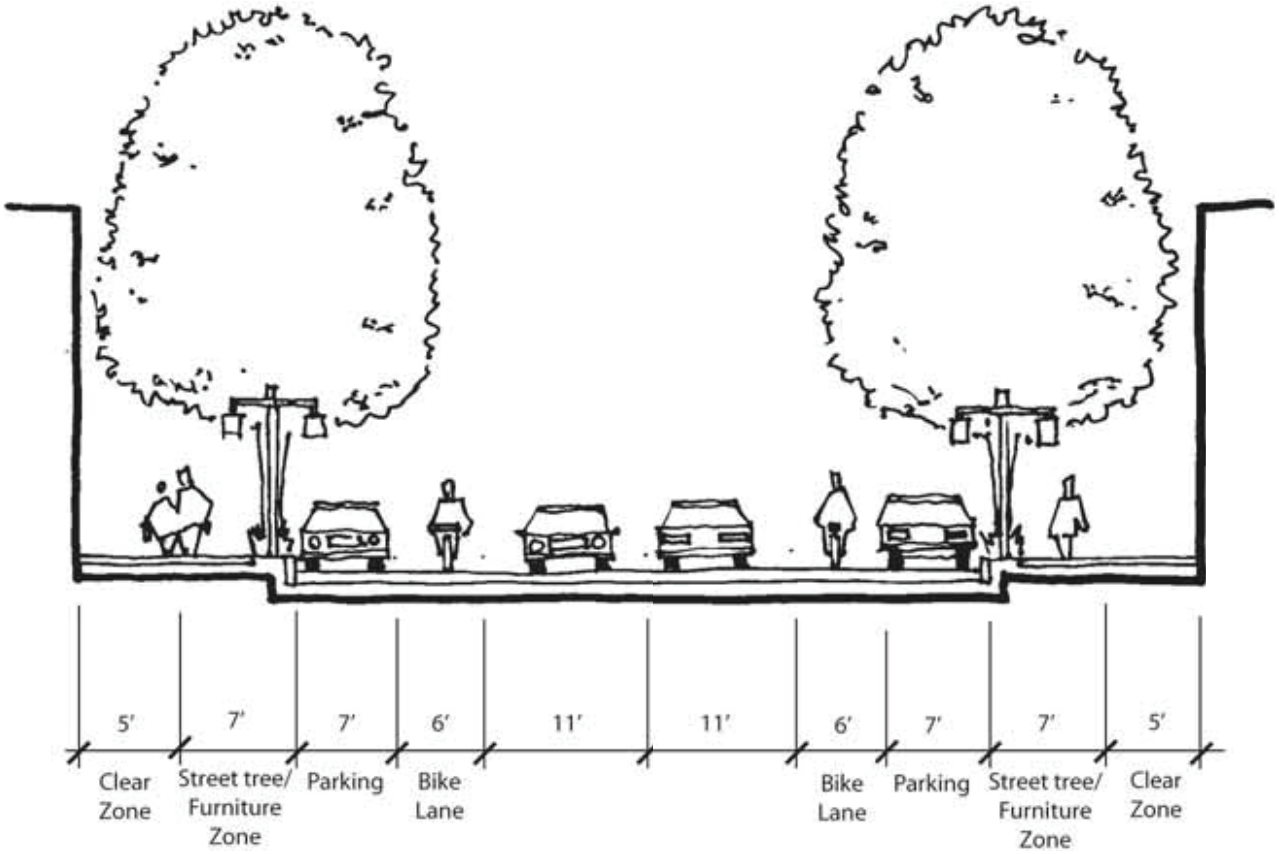


- Pedestrian crosswalks and signals
- Street lighting
- Street furniture and other pedestrian amenities
- Bike lanes (street markings called "sharrows" could be used in lieu of a bike lane indicating the travel lane is a shared space for bicyclists and motorists).

CS4 Easy Wind Drive Extension. The extension of Easy Wind Drive south across the tracks to Justin Lane forms an important connection in the circulation plan as it would allow for alternate routes, dispersing traffic, and will allow more efficient connections to other streets without traveling through the Lamar/Airport intersection. This street should have ample sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities to provide neighborhood access to the MetroRail station (Figure 3.4). This street should also have bike lanes or another type of bicycle facility and/or street markings/signage to connect the recommended bicycle routes on Morrow Street and Justin Lane. This extension, since it would entail crossing the railroad tracks, would require Capital Metro approval Due to the use of Easy Wind Drive north of the railroad tracks as the primary bus access roadway through the Crestview Station development site, Capital Metro recommends that unimpeded bus access to the station be preserved due to their concerns that a vehicular crossing of the tracks could slow down bus travel. The implementation of a pedestrian/bicycle crossing is a consideration by Capital Metro.

CS5 W. St. Johns Avenue Improvements. W. St. Johns Avenue will provide an important east-west connection across Lamar Blvd. to the rail stop. This connection is a key component of the interconnected local street system for the Station Area. As such, convenient pedestrian and bicycle access across Lamar Blvd. is critical. This street is designated as a TOD Pedestrian Priority street, which should also have bike lanes or another type of bike facility and/or street marking/signage to provide a connection between Guadalupe Street and the station (Figure 3.4).

FIGURE 3.4 CROSS SECTION OF EASY WIND, W. ST. JOHNS AND GUADALUPE STREETS

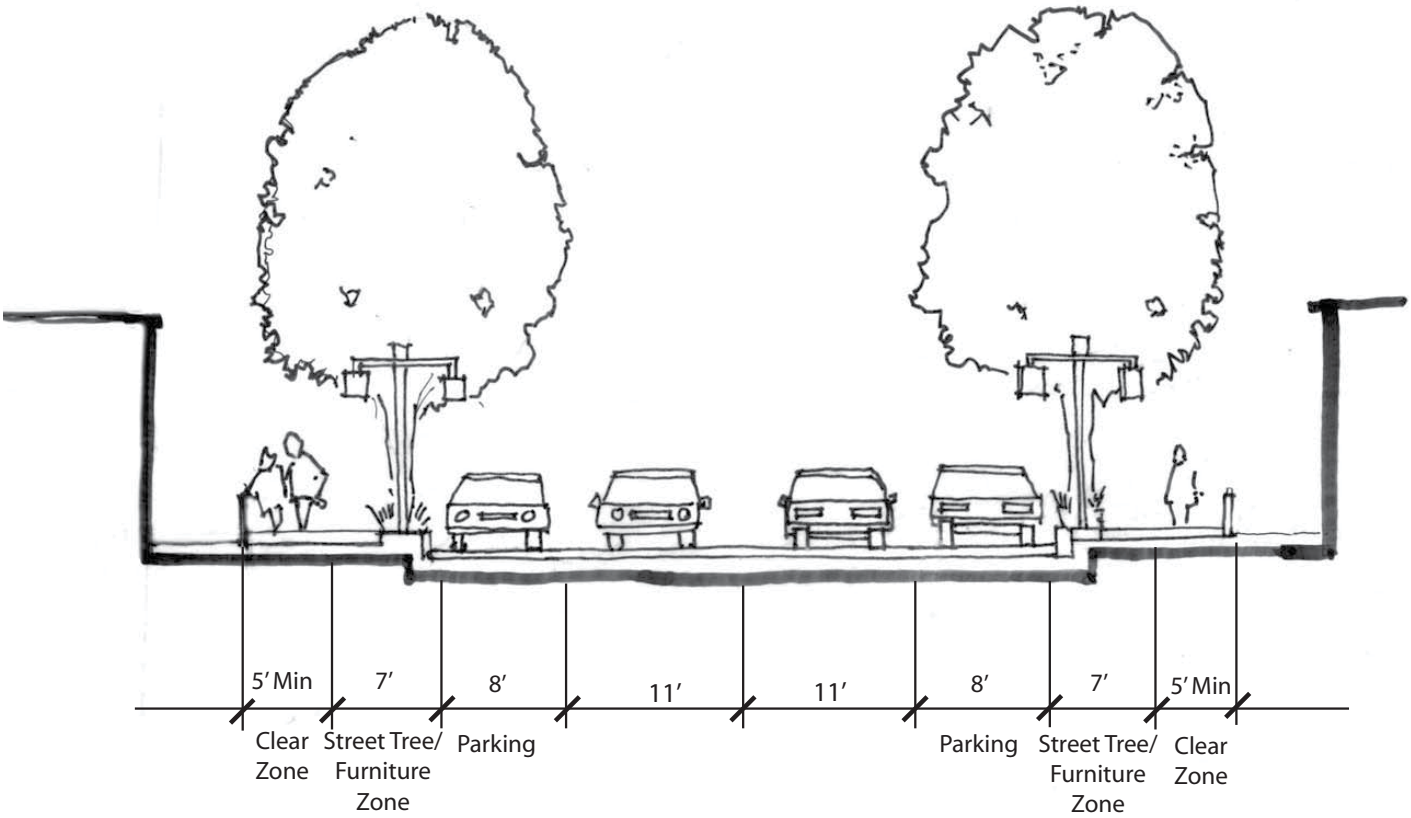


CS6 Guadalupe Street Improvements. Guadalupe Street provides a key north-south connection across Airport Boulevard as it parallels Lamar Blvd. and allows for an alternative to this busy roadway. This route is envisioned to be pedestrian-friendly forming part of the interconnected local street system and enabling safe and efficient access through the eastern portion of the TOD District. This portion of the street is also designated as a TOD Pedestrian Priority Street and needs to follow the guidelines for the level of pedestrian amenities required. The existing bike lanes along Guadalupe should be maintained and potentially enhanced (Figure 3.4).

CS7 Augment and Increase Connectivity of the Local Street System. The new street connections shown in the Circulation Concept Plan will be provided as development and redevelopment occurs, predominantly on larger sites such as Highland Village. A typical TOD Local Street cross section that would provide for adequate vehicular travel and accommodate pedestrian activity is provided in Figure 3.5.

CS8 Additional Pedestrian Connections. Some key connections shown on the Circulation Concept Plan should be provided as development and redevelopment occurs. Neighborhoods east of Lamar Blvd., south of Airport Boulevard, and south of the tracks to the west of Lamar Blvd., all face access obstacles. New and/or improved pedestrian/bike crossings and multi-use paths in the right locations would provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the station and larger Station Area.

FIGURE 3.5 CROSS SECTION OF TOD LOCAL STREET



CS9 Addition of Bicycle Connections. The bike facilities recommended in the Austin Bicycle Plan and others designated in this Plan should be provided so that the Station Area supports bicycle travel to and within the TOD District. This would include: Morrow Street, Lamar Blvd., Airport Blvd., Easy Wind Drive, Wild Street, Brentwood St., Gaylor Street, W. St. Johns Avenue, Canion Street, and Denson Drive.

CS10 Parking and Traffic Management Strategy. The Lamar/Justin Station Area is designed for transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and kiss-and-ride access, but no park-and-ride facilities will be provided. Due to concerns that people will drive to the station and park in surrounding neighborhoods, a monitoring system to assess the parking situation should be implemented, possibly by the Working Group. If study determines that a problem exists, a management plan will need to be developed, which addresses the situation. The plan could allow for local residents and visitors to park during the day, while discouraging commuters from parking on neighborhood streets. Likewise, concerns regarding cut-through traffic to adjacent neighborhoods should be monitored and improvements identified if a problem exists. Circulation system improvement projects noted in this section will complement these efforts by making walking and bicycling a more attractive option than driving.

CS11 TOD Projects as part of TIA Improvements. As part of the current evaluation of the Austin Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) program, this plan recommends an amendment to Section 2.3.5 of the Transportation Criteria Manual, "Recommendation on Roadway Improvements and Traffic Control Modifications", to allow for infrastructure projects (including bicycle, trail, pedestrian, and street/intersection improvements) in an adopted station area plan to qualify for required improvements through the TIA process.

LAMAR/JUSTIN SAP ACTION CHART 3: CIRCULATION AND STREETS							
NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10 YEARS	11 TO 15 YEARS	
CS1	Implement improvements on Lamar Boulevard.			X			City of Austin
CS2	Implement Airport/Lamar intersection redesign/short and long term improvements.			X	X	X	City of Austin & Capital Metro and public
CS3	Implement improvements to and extension of Canion Street.			X			City of Austin & private sector
CS4	Implement Easy Wind Drive extension and improvements			X	X		City of Austin, Capital Metro & private sector
CS5	Implement improvements to St. Johns Avenue.			X			City of Austin & private sector
CS6	Implement improvements to Guadalupe Street.			X			City of Austin & private sector
CS7	Make local street improvements.				X		Private sector
CS8	Make additional pedestrian connections.		X				City of Austin & private sector
CS9	Make additional bicycle connections.			X			City of Austin & private sector
CS10	Parking and traffic management strategy.			X			TOD Working Group
CS11	Recommended amendment to the TCM to include projects in an adopted SAP			X			City of Austin

Open Space and Trails

OS1 Provision and Funding of Parks and Open Space. As part of this implementation program, the envisioned park and open space improvements are generally expected to be provided via existing parkland dedication requirements. Because open space is such an important element of compact, high density development areas, on-site open space provision generally in the form of pocket and/or linear parks, trails, and plazas are recommended. If it is either impossible or unrealistic that parkland be provided on-site, parkland dedication fees generated in a TOD are recommended to be spent within the TOD District or in the immediate vicinity with the Open Space and Trails Concept used as a guide.

OS2 Pocket Parks. As illustrated on the Open Space and Trails Concept, pocket parks are specifically recommended on the Austin Energy and Highland Village sites. The key consideration is providing parks with sufficient area to allow active recreation, especially for children, in addition to some space for passive recreational needs. The designated implementation staff person and the Parks and Recreation Department should work with the property owners in determining the location and improvement program for the parks as development plans move forward. The parks are especially critical because they represent two opportunity sites that could actually yield usable park sites.

OS3 Rails with Trails. In the Lamar/Justin Station Area, Capital Metro does not have sufficient rail right-of-way to accommodate a continuous trail along the tracks. Implementation staff and possibly the Working Group should work with property owners to acquire easements for the future provision of a trail and/or seek funding solutions. In addition, this plan recommends that the feasibility of including Rails with Trails alignments (in accordance with Capital Metro's Rails with Trails Report) in the Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan be studied so that upon subdivision, land may be required on the front end for the trail through the right-of-way dedication process.

OS4 PARD Integration. Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) staff should be formally integrated into the development review process of all subdivision and site plan applications that fall within the boundaries of the Lamar/Justin TOD Station Area so that open space opportunities may be analyzed and explored early on.

LAMAR/JUSTIN SAP ACTION CHART 4: OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS							
NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10 YEARS	11 TO 15 YEARS	
OS1	Provision and funding of open space in the TOD District.	X					City of Austin & Private Sector
OS2	Pocket parks located on the east and west sides of Lamar Boulevard.			X			Private Sector and City of Austin
OS3	Rails with Trails		X				Capital Metro, City of Austin, & Private Sector
OS4	PARD Integration		X				CoA Planning and PARD staff

Neighborhood park

Paseo or pedestrian street

Park with pedestrian path

INFRASTRUCTURE

I1 Comprehensive Utility Upgrades. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) should be accomplished in a comprehensive manner that coordinates street reconstruction projects with other utility upgrades. A process should be established that examines all future public infrastructure needs when planning Capital Improvement Projects within and around the Lamar/Justin Station Area. An example would be the replacement of undersized or old water or wastewater lines in conjunction with a street improvement project.

I2 Water System Improvements. To help stimulate development in the Lamar/Justin Station Area, localized low pressure and/or low fire flow areas should be identified and prioritized for improvement to meet anticipated future demand.

I3 Wastewater System Improvements. To the extent possible, the Austin Clean Water Program (AWCP) should give high priority to wastewater improvements of strategic importance to enable development of key sites in the Lamar/Justin Station Area. Special attention should be given to determining the wastewater impact of future development, and whether system upgrades will be necessary.

LAMAR/JUSTIN SAP ACTION CHART 5: INFRASTRUCTURE

NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10	11 TO 15 YEARS	
I1	Make comprehensive utility upgrades.		X				City of Austin
I2	Implement water system improvements.		X				City of Austin
I3	Implement wastewater system improvements.		X				City of Austin

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As part of the Station Area Planning process, consultant Diana McIver and Associates (DMA) prepared a report evaluating the feasibility of achieving the TOD affordable housing goals. The implementation items below are based on DMA's final report (an executive summary of the report is on the following pages).

AH1 Encourage affordability via development bonuses.
Development bonuses are an appropriate tool for encouraging the development of affordable units in TOD areas, while also encouraging transit-supporting density levels. Development bonuses with affordability requirements are recommended for waivers of both density and height requirements.

AH2 Provide gap financing with General Obligation Bonds and other sources.
DMA has indicated that affordable housing developments located in TOD areas will require City subsidies in order to reach the TOD affordability goal, including those developments which utilize other public subsidies. The DMA Report has identified potential sources of gap financing that may be available to applicants on a case-by-case basis, which include City of Austin General Obligation (G.O.) bond funds. Projects within TODs submitting applications for G.O. bond funding should receive additional points as part of the scoring process.

AH3 Allow fees in-lieu of building on-site affordable housing in limited circumstances.
Allowing developers to pay a fee in-lieu of providing affordable housing on-site can be a useful tool in some instances, especially for non-residential projects that would like to take advantage of a development bonus. Any fee-in-lieu funds paid to fulfill an affordable housing requirement in a TOD development should be utilized for the financing or production of affordable units located within or near the TOD area.

AH4 Encourage and support Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects.
DMA's analysis indicates Low Income Housing Tax Credit developments would require the lowest level of City subsidy per unit and offer the most costs-effective use of public subsidies. A competitive tax credit proposal could substantially contribute to achievement of the affordability goals for a TOD area and would provide a large number of units near transit. This Plan recommends that the City of Austin provide gap financing for Tax Credit developments on a case-by-case basis.

AH5 Develop a catalyst project on City-owned property.
City-owned property in the TODs may present an opportunity to realize the TOD vision on these sites and encourage similar development elsewhere in the TODs. This Plan recommends the City of Austin evaluate the potential for housing development on City-owned land within TOD Districts.

AH6 Provide a menu of incentives for projects that provide affordable housing.
This Plan recommends that the City establish a package of incentives for TOD developments that provide affordable units on-site. The incentives could be scaled based on the level of affordability and the percentage of affordable units provided. Incentives could include development review fee waivers and an expedited review process beyond what is currently provided by the City's S.M.A.R.T. Housing initiative.

Plaza Saltillo SAP Action Chart 4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

NO.	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME					IMPLEMENTER
		ADOPT WITH PLAN	ON-GOING	FIRST 5 YEARS	6 TO 10 YEARS	11 TO 15 YEARS	
AH1	Encourage affordability via development bonuses.	X					COA
AH2	Provide gap financing with General Obligation Bonds and other sources.		X				COA
AH3	Allow fees in-lieu of building on-site affordable housing in limited circumstances.	X					COA
AH4	Encourage and support Low Income Housing Tax Credit projects.		X				COA, Private and Public Sector
AH5	Develop a catalyst project on City-owned property.			X			COA
AH6	Provide a menu of incentives for projects that provide affordable housing.			X			COA

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) DISTRICTS STATION AREA PLANS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The City of Austin's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Ordinance is intended to promote pedestrian-friendly, dense, mixed-use development surrounding the future commuter rail stations on the Capital MetroRail line. The TOD Ordinance, approved in May 2005, established six Transit Oriented Districts (TODs) and a Station Area Planning (SAP) process for the TODs, defined specific affordable housing goals for the TODS, and required an analysis of the feasibility of achieving the affordable housing goals.

The TOD Ordinance includes a goal that 25 percent of the new housing units in each Transit Oriented District should be affordable. For owner-occupied developments, the goal is for the affordable units to be sold to households with incomes at or below 80 percent of Median Family Income (MFI) . For rental developments, the goal is for the affordable units to be occupied by households at or below 60 percent of MFI. To be considered affordable, a homeownership or rental unit must serve a household at each of the corresponding income levels paying no more than 30 percent of its adjusted gross income toward housing costs, including utilities.

The TOD Ordinance also establishes goals targeting lower levels of affordability for Transit Oriented Districts located in the Community Preservation and Revitalization Zone (CP&R Zone). Table 1 below details the affordability goals of the TOD Ordinance.

TOD AFFORDABILITY GOALS		
TOD STATION	OWNER-OCCUPIED	RENTAL
General Affordability Goal	25% of new housing units affordable	
	Affordable units at or below 80% MFI	Affordable units at or below 60% MFI
CP&R Zone (Plaza Saltillo and MLK)	Affordable units at or below 60% MFI	Affordable units at or below 50% MFI 5% units at or below 30% MFI 10% units at or below 40% MFI 10% units at or below 50% MFI

The affordability goals are ambitious. Due to significant development costs, land availability issues, legal limitations, development restrictions, and other challenges described below, there is a significant gap between the cost of developing rental and/or homeownership units and the income derived from either the rental or sale of those units to qualified low- and moderate-income residents.

This report identifies challenges to achieving the ambitious affordable housing goals specified in the TOD Ordinance, examines potential development scenarios, and provides recommendations for strategies to achieve the affordable housing goals. In order to achieve the goals, the City will need to implement multiple strategies which will require a significant amount of public subsidy and/or incentives. In addition, the City will need significant participation from external entities in order to create affordable housing in the TOD areas. Potential partners include affordable housing developers and housing authorities, as well as the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). Through a combination of incentives, funding sources, and other tools, the TOD affordability goals can be achieved.

TOD HOUSING POTENTIAL

As part of the overall TOD planning effort, Economic Research Associates (ERA) provided market data and demand projections in the TOD Districts through the year 2025 ("ERA Station Area Market Analysis"). Assuming that the TOD Districts are built out to those full projections and that 25% of the residential units are designated affordable, DMA determined the following maximum potential yield for affordable housing in each of the three TOD Districts:

TOD DISTRICT	ERA HOUSING POTENTIAL ESTIMATE THROUGH 2025 ("HIGH" SCENARIO)	POTENTIAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNIT YIELD THROUGH 2025 (ASSUMES HOUSING GOALS ARE MET)
Plaza Saltillo	2,116 units	529 units
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.	1,521 units	380 units
Lamar Boulevard/Justin Lane	1,654 units	414 units

It should be noted that the above affordable unit yields are based solely on a calculation of 25% of the ERA Housing Potential Estimate. These figures are not intended to describe the financial feasibility of a particular number of affordable units.

IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES

There are a variety of challenges to providing affordable housing within the Transit Oriented Districts. These issues include the following:

- Legal Limitations – The City has limited ability to compel the creation of affordable housing. State law limits the use of inclusionary zoning, which is a tool that requires inclusion of a certain percentage of affordable housing in new developments. This prohibition applies to homeownership units as well as to the use of rent control. Accordingly, an incentive-based approach is the primary strategy available to the City to compel developers to include affordable units in new developments.

- Multiple Goals and Limited Resources – There are multiple public goals for the Transit Oriented Districts, including increased development and higher density to support transit, affordable housing, open space, increased economic development opportunities, and high quality pedestrian improvements to create a walkable environment. All of these components are necessary for a successful TOD but can only be partially addressed by the private sector. Accordingly, there will be significant competition for limited public resources. Identification of available resources and clear definition of priorities will be crucial to the success of the TODs and the realization of the affordable housing goals.

- Limited Public Land – Offering public land for the development of affordable housing can be a powerful tool. However, there is a limited amount of publicly-owned land within the three TOD areas currently in the Station Area Planning process, and few of these publicly-owned properties are undeveloped. There are no publicly-owned sites within the MLK TOD.

- Land and Construction Costs – Both land costs and construction costs are high, making provision of affordable housing challenging. In particular, the cost associated with high-rise development (six stories and up) is significantly higher than mid-rise (five stories and below). In fact, the per-unit cost of mid-rise development is estimated to be approximately 60% of high-rise development. Because of this reality, height increases beyond a certain level have limited benefit for affordable housing.

- TOD Ordinance Development Regulations and Restrictions – The TOD Ordinance establishes height restrictions for the Saltillo and MLK TODs, thus limiting the tools available to achieve the goals of the ordinance. These restrictions make even modest increases in height difficult to achieve. It should also be noted that the community feedback received during the Station Area Planning process was not supportive of significant height increases.

- Infrastructure Needs – The first three TODs under consideration are located in central Austin, in older, established areas of the city. Much of the infrastructure, including water, wastewater, and storm water drainage, will require upgrades or replacement in order to support new development. Accordingly, the infrastructure needs will add development costs to affordable housing projects within the TODs.

IDENTIFICATION OF COSTS

In order to capture the true cost of affordability, DMA developed financial scenarios for both rental and homeownership developments in the three TOD areas. Utilizing current market data for a variety of factors, including mid-rise construction costs, land prices, and sales prices, DMA was able to identify the public subsidy required to make affordability feasible.

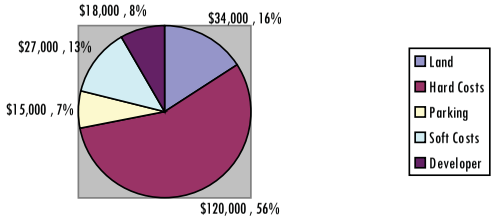
As a result of DMA's financial analysis, it became apparent that every project (even those that were sponsored by nonprofit developers and included donated land and property tax exemption) would require some sort of public subsidy. Required per-unit subsidies for homeownership units ranged from $83,131 to $149,951 per unit, depending on the TOD. Required subsidies for rental units ranged from $75,870 per unit in the Lamar TOD to $127,623 per unit in the Saltillo and MLK TODs.

Even when a project is infused with tax credit equity (as in the 9% and 4% LIHTC with bonds models), there is additional subsidy required. For example, in order to make a rental project utilizing 4% tax credits and private-activity bonds financially feasible, the additional subsidy required would range from $41,350 to $56,800 per unit.

As discussed previously, high-rise development is significantly more expensive than mid-rise development. Public comments throughout the Station Area Planning process expressed desire to limit maximum height caps. Accordingly, DMA utilized cost data for mid-rise type development (two- to five-story) throughout its financial modeling.

Using cost data for the Saltillo TOD District, the following pie chart illustrates the cost of condominium development:

Plaza Saltillo Mid-Rise Condo Development
Cost Breakdown



As demonstrated above, actual construction costs constitute the vast majority of development costs. In fact, hard costs, soft costs, and parking account for 86% of the total project costs. These costs would be the same whether the developer were for-profit or nonprofit. While nonprofit developers may have access to free or reduced-cost land, or may be able to limit their developer profit, they are still subject to the same market construction costs.

ANALYSIS OF DENSITY BONUS

A density bonus program allows a developer to increase the number of units that could be developed on a parcel of land in exchange for public benefit, such as affordable housing. The increased density would be the result of either relaxed development standards (e.g., Floor to Area Ratio, building coverage, and setback requirements, etc.) or height increase (e.g., above the current height restriction). A density bonus program is widely viewed as an important tool to achieve some portion of the TOD goals. However, there are a number of factors that must be taken into consideration in order to maximize the effectiveness of a density bonus program.

Construction costs per square foot rise with taller building heights, thereby limiting the benefit of incremental height increases. Mid-rise development utilizes lightweight steel or stick (e.g., wood) structural systems. High-rise developments require significant investment in elevators and core components, fireproofing, and multi-level structured parking, all of which contribute to increased development costs.

In addition, concerns regarding density and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods were expressed in public meetings held during the Station Area Planning process. Although some participants in the Station Area Planning process voiced support for increased density (including height bonuses in exchange for affordable units), many participants were concerned with increased regarding density, especially as related to height. Several Saltillo participants were concerned about the neighborhood becoming too urban and densely developed. In addition, several participants in the Lamar Station Area Plan presentation were adamant about limiting density, with maximum TOD development height of two or three stories.

In order to reach the TOD Ordinance goal of 25% affordability in a new development, a density bonus would need to offer significant benefit to a developer. Only by doubling the density of a development (100% increase in FAR or height) and requiring that 50% of the bonus area be affordable, would a single development begin to meet the 25% affordability goal set in the TOD Ordinance.

In order to incentivize developers to take advantage of the density bonus, the program must be calibrated to provide a developer with a net financial benefit (e.g., a sufficiently higher profit). A developer will lose revenue on the affordable units, so the benefit gained from the additional units must outweigh the loss.

Keeping in mind public concerns regarding density and height limitations, DMA modeled a theoretical mid-rise development, with and without a density bonus. The following table profiles a 100-unit market rate condominium development on a 2.5-acre site (without any density bonus) and that same development with a 25% density bonus. The cost and sales assumptions are based on market data from the Saltillo TOD District.

In the case of the 25% density bonus, the developer is granted relaxed FAR or additional height in exchange for 25% affordability in the additional ("bonus") area.

	100-UNIT DEVELOPMENT	25% DENSITY BONUS 125-UNIT DEVELOPMENT
Market Rate Units	100	119
Affordable Units	0	6
Total Land Cost	$3,702,600	$3,702,600
Total Project Cost	$19,039,350	$22,901,000
Additional Cost	n/a	$3,861,650
Market Rate Sales	$22,324,500	$26,494,200
Additional Sales	n/a	$4,169,700 (market rate)
Affordable Sales (60% MFI)	n/a	$684,890
Total Sales Less Cost	$3,285,150	$4,278,090

In this scenario, the community gains six units of affordable housing, or 5% of the total new units built. The private developer increases his return on investment, and there is no additional public subsidy. The only "cost" to the public is the additional FAR or height granted.

Considering the ambitious TOD affordability goals, the six-unit gain in affordability is modest. Even if every new development within the TOD District took advantage of a density bonus, there would need to more than 6,000 new units within the Plaza Saltillo TOD to provide 300 affordable units (which represent 25% of the estimated market demand, according to the ERA Station Area Market Analysis). Clearly, the density bonus needs to be combined with additional tools in order to make a substantial impact on affordability.

It is important to note that the 125-unit density bonus example only includes 25% affordability in the bonus area, rather than 25% of the total area. As currently written, the TOD Ordinance prohibits any increase in residential building heights in the CP&R Zone over the current maximum heights unless 25% of the total development is affordable. In order to develop the same 2.5-acre site and incentivize affordability in at least 25% of the total units, the density bonus would need to be significant.

In the scenario below, the developer is granted a 100% density bonus (from 40 units per acre to 80 units per acre). Accordingly, the site now accommodates 200 units, 50 of which will be designated affordable (25% of the total units). The basic assumptions, including land cost and the development costs, remain the same as in the previous model.

	100-UNIT DEVELOPMENT	100% DENSITY BONUS 200-UNIT DEVELOPMENT 25% TOTAL AFFORDABILITY
Market Rate Units	100	150
Affordable Units	0	50
Total Land Cost	$3,702,600	$3,702,600
Total Project Cost	$19,039,350	$34,376,100
Additional Cost	n/a	$15,336,750
Market Rate Sales	$22,324,500	$33,517,500
Additional Sales	n/a	$11,193,000
Affordable Sales (60% MFI)	n/a	$5,483,235
Total Sales Less Cost	$3,285,150	$4,624,635

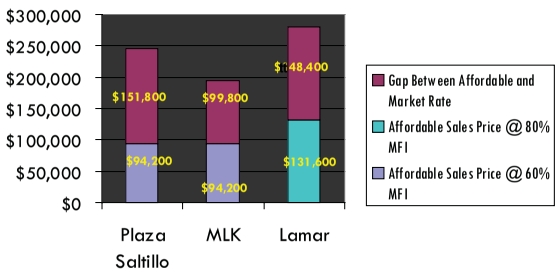
In this scenario, the developer is sufficiently incentivized to develop a project that designates 25% of its units as affordable. However, there are limitations to the density and height bonus model. Development costs increase disproportionately once the building transitions from a mid-rise to a high-rise structure. In addition, increased risk accompanies the increased number of units. The developer has to market and sell the additional units (both market-rate and affordable) in order to realize the substantial return on investment. Considering the disproportionate costs associated with significant increases in density, as well as concerns voiced by neighboring residents, a two-tier density bonus program is recommended below.

PROJECT SCENARIOS THAT SHOW SUCCESS IN MEETING TOD GOALS

There is a significant affordability gap that can be closed by utilizing a variety of regulatory and financial incentives. Using current market data for all three TOD areas under consideration, DMA developed the following affordability gap profile:

Based on current market data, the sales price for a two-bedroom, 1,000 square foot unit in the Plaza Saltillo TOD District is $246,000. The maximum price affordable to a three-person household at or below 60% MFI (the Plaza Saltillo TOD affordability goal for homeownership) is $94,200. This leaves a gap of $151,800. Because the market price for a two-bedroom condo in the MLK TOD area is slightly less ($194,000), the gap between the market rate and the affordable price is less ($99,800). However, the market rate in the Lamar TOD is significantly higher, $280,000. In this case, the TOD affordability target is higher (80% MFI), leaving a gap of $148,400. In order to fill this gap, multiple sources of incentives and subsidies will be required.

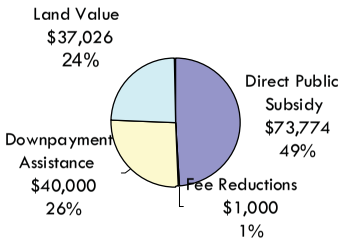
Two-Bedroom Condo
Affordability Gap



Homeownership Scenario

The graph below illustrates the financial gap for the development of hypothetical owner-occupied, affordable condominium developments in the Saltillo, MLK, and Lamar TOD areas. This example shows the most likely sources of subsidy or assistance that could bridge the gap.

Bridging the Affordability Gap:
$151,800 at Plaza Saltillo



If the developer utilized the City's S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ program, in addition to expedited plan review, the average per-unit fee reduction would be approximately $1,000 (in addition to financial benefits from expedited plan review). If the developer participated in a Community Land Trust model (or the City purchased the land and leased it to the developer at a nominal rate), that would represent additional savings, ranging from $18,513 to $37,026 per unit depending on the TOD area.

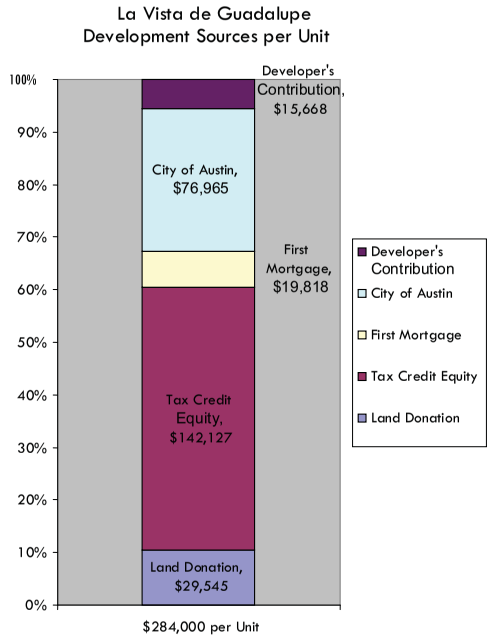
Even utilizing fee waivers and removing land costs, however, is not sufficient to reach even the upper range of the TOD affordability goals. In the examples above, the affordability gap is closed through a combination of fee reductions, elimination of land costs, waivers, and public subsidy, including City of Austin Down Payment Assistance and GO Bond funding.

It is important to note that any developer — nonprofit or for-profit — will face this affordability gap. While nonprofit developers are motivated by their mission to provide affordable housing and may have access to some funds that are not available to for-profit developers, they still have to pay to construct the units and oftentimes have to sell at fair market value.

Rental Scenario

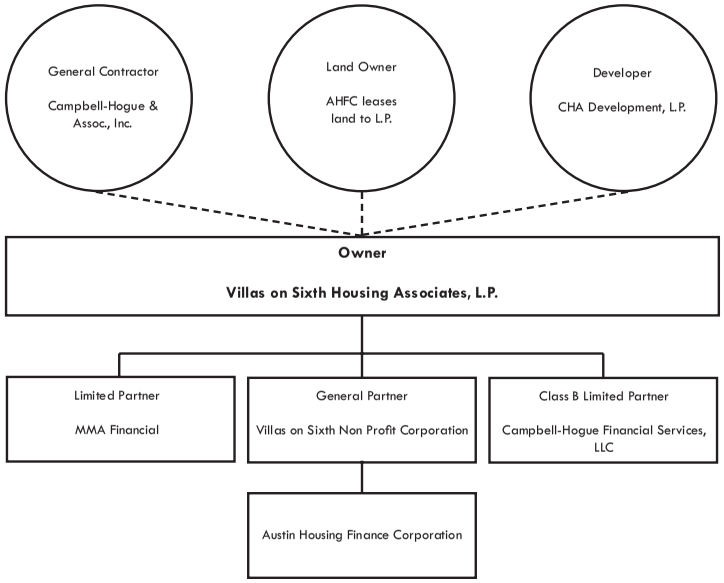
Although the sources and uses in a rental model are slightly different, these developments also require significant subsidy. The following is an example of a rental development currently under construction one block from the Plaza Saltillo TOD. Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation (GNDC) is the nonprofit sponsor of this 22-unit rental development.

Although the La Vista de Guadalupe project is not technically in the TOD district, the construction type and the density (44 units per acre) are similar to the type of building that would be appropriate in the TOD. The development is 100% affordable with very low rents. Approximately 30% of the units will have rents affordable to families at 30% MFI; 15% of the units will have rents affordable at 40% MFI; and 55% affordable at 50% MFI.



The largest source of funds for this development is the equity from Low Income Housing Tax Credits, but several other sources are critical to making the project work. The land for this development is valued at $650,000 (nearly $30,000/unit) but was donated to the project by the nonprofit sponsor. (GNDC purchased the land more than 20 years ago at a very low price.) Another important source of financing for this development is the developer's contribution of deferred fee. Although GNDC is earning a fee of $650,000, the developer must forgo $344,000 of the fee (identified as "Developer's Contribution" in the bar chart) in order to make the project financially feasible. In addition, the City of Austin has committed almost $1.7 million, or $77,000 per unit, to this development.

The City can also participate directly in housing development through the Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). For example, in 2003 AHFC partnered with a private developer/builder to develop Villas on Sixth Street using Housing Tax Credits. Villas on Sixth Housing Associates, L.P. , the entity that owns the development, is a true partnership between public and private interests. AHFC created a new nonprofit corporation, Villas on Sixth Non Profit Corporation, to be the general partner of this limited partnership. The tax credits were sold to MMA Financial, and one of its entities is the limited partner. An entity of Campbell-Hogue's, Campbell-Hogue Financial Services, LLC, owns a minority share of the project and acts as a guarantor, since the nonprofit cannot.



In addition to its role in the ownership, AHFC purchased the land for the development and leases is back to the partnership, which allows the property to be exempt from property taxes. Campbell-Hogue & Associates, Inc. was the general contractor who built the property, and its development arm, CHA Development, L.P., was the developer.

This creative partnership allowed the City to work with an experienced developer who knows and understand this type of development and the complicated financing mechanisms involved, while at the same time ensuring long-term affordability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to achieve the affordability goals established in the TOD Ordinance, the City must utilize a multifaceted approach. In addition, the policies implemented to achieve housing affordability within the TOD areas should be reviewed and analyzed after a period of time to determine success in meeting affordability goals and to make recommendations for adjustments to the policies.

DMA recommends the following:

Recommendation #1: Implement Density and Height Bonus Program

Density
The City Council has adopted a Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) density bonus with affordability requirements, as part of the Design Standards and Mixed Use ordinance. Although it is too early to determine the success of the VMU density bonus incentives, a similar strategy should be established for the TOD Districts, which are intended to have a mixed-use character similar to that envisioned for VMU developments.

To incentivize the development of affordable housing in the TOD Districts, the City should exempt properties from Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR), maximum densities, building coverage limits, and setback requirements, in exchange for 10% of the total residential square footage being designated affordable. As in the VMU Ordinance, the affordability period for owner-occupied units should be a minimum of 99 years and rental units should be 40 years. (It should be noted that this bonus does not include a height bonus. A height increase entails a different affordability requirement as discussed below.)

The calculation for the designated affordable units is based on habitable square footage, rather than number of units. For example, a 30,000 square foot project that receives an additional 15,000 square feet (due to FAR and other exemptions), will be required to set aside 10% of the total square footage (10% of 45,000 square feet or 4,500 square feet) for affordable units.

There are multiple reasons for calculating based on habitable square footage versus number of units. The square footage requirement gives the developer greater flexibility in determining the allocation of unit sizes and thus enables the developer to better respond to market needs. If the requirement is calculated based on number of units, the result will most likely be smaller one-bedroom units. However, if the developer is given the freedom to apportion unit mixes (and is simply required to make a certain total square footage affordable), there is greater likelihood that family units will be incorporated into the unit mix.

Since the density bonus will offer a similar benefit as that offer in the VMU Ordinance, the income limits on the affordable units should also be the same—a maximum of 80% MFI for homeownership units and 60% for rental units. In order to reach the affordability targets set in the TOD Ordinance; however, the City will need to employ additional incentives or subsidies.

In order to "buy down" the affordability of a unit (e.g., reduce the affordability level from 80% MFI to 70% MFI), it is estimated that the present value cost is $25,000 per 10% increment. Accordingly, each 10% incremental reduction in MFI will cost $25,000 per unit in subsidy to offset the lost income to a developer. The TOD affordability goals are more ambitious than the VMU goals. Therefore, the density bonus alone is insufficient to incentive a developer to incorporate affordable units into a residential project.

Because the density bonus alone will not achieve the affordability targets, the approach will need to be coupled with additional incentives and public subsidies. As in the case with VMU policy, the City must have the option to subsidize additional affordable units within the development. The effectiveness of this density bonus and its affordability requirements should be reviewed within one year of implementation.

DMA recommends that density bonuses be available to any type of development within the TOD Districts, including residential, non-residential, and mixed-use. In the case of projects that utilize the bonus but do not include residential units, the developer would be required to pay a fee-in-lieu (rather than develop on-site affordable units) as described further below.

Height
DMA recommends that the City of Austin institute a height bonus to achieve up to a total building height of 60 feet in the TOD Mixed Use Subdistrict of the Lamar, Saltillo, and MLK TODs. Only those properties that currently have a height entitlement of less than 60 feet are eligible for the height bonus. In order to access the height bonus, a developer would need to commit to 25% affordability of the **bonus area (square footage)** to be reserved for households meeting the affordability goals established for each TOD (or for development that does not contain residential units, the relevant fee-in-lieu must be paid). As an example, a developer seeking additional height equal to 100,000 square feet would need to provide affordable units within the development totaling 25,000 square feet. Again, as discussed above, the calculation is based on habitable square footage, rather than number of units.

Because of community concerns related to compatibility and due to limited financial benefit accompanying density bonuses with affordability requirements in high-rise construction, DMA recommends that height bonuses should be limited to mid-rise heights. Throughout most of the three TOD Districts, current zoning restricts development to 40 or 60 feet. As discussed previously, a height bonus from five stories to six- or more stories may have limited value because of the corresponding increase in costs between mid-rise and high-rise development. In addition, because of neighborhood concerns regarding compatibility with surrounding single-family neighborhoods, significant increases in height are not broadly supported. The City's approach to height bonuses should focus any additional height entitlements in defined locations around the transit stops where the highest densities are appropriate.

In certain cases, a developer may request both the density bonus and the height bonus. In this situation, the project would need to include 10% affordability in the total project (pre- height increase), as well as an additional 25% affordability in the bonus height area.

Currently, the TOD Ordinance limits the City's ability to increase heights in the part of the Saltillo TOD that is designated as TOD Mixed Use but falls outside of the 11-acre Capital Metro property. In addition, the TOD Ordinance requires stringent affordability requirements for a height bonus in the CP&R Zone. Specifically, the TOD Ordinance requires that 25% of the total development meet affordability targets (rather than 25% of the bonus area, as DMA recommends). Accordingly, in order to implement DMA's height bonus recommendations, the TOD Ordinance will need to be amended.

Fee-In-Lieu
DMA recommends a fee-in-lieu payment in the amount of $10 per square foot of additional benefit. This amount conforms to the fee-in-lieu recommendation of the Affordable Housing Incentive Task Force and the amount recommended to the City Council during the process of adopting a downtown density bonus ordinance. The fee-in-lieu amount should be reviewed and adjusted annually. Any funds captured through the fee-in-lieu program should be

utilized for affordable housing within the TOD Districts.

Typically, a fee-in-lieu option is offered to residential developers who opt to not provide on-site affordable units, or to developers of commercial properties. The fee-in-lieu for the TODs should be required of commercial developments that utilize a height bonus and/or density bonus, as well as to residential or mixed-use developments on a more limited basis.

Because the intent of the TOD Ordinance is to develop affordable housing within the TOD Districts and those districts are relatively small, residential developers should be encouraged to develop on-site affordable units. A residential developer seeking fee-in-lieu should have a compelling economic basis for not providing on-site affordable units. A compelling reason might include that the funds will be directed to a stand-alone 100% affordable development in the TOD District.

Recommendation #2: Encourage HTC Developments and Dedicate Appropriate Resources

Based strictly on financial realities, the most cost-effective use of public subsidies is the traditional Housing Tax Credit (HTC) development. According to DMA's financial models, the public subsidy required for a 4% tax credit with private activity bonds project is estimated to be $56,800 per unit. In this scenario, 100% of the units would be affordable to households at or below 60% MFI, thereby meeting or exceeding the TOD affordability goals. A competitive tax credit proposal could exceed the identified TOD affordability goals and provide a large number of units in one location. Accordingly, the City should develop partnerships with qualified developers of affordable housing to explore tax credit development within the TODs.

The most likely source of the public subsidy is the $55 million Affordable Housing General Obligation Bonds. Approved in November 2006, the bond funds will be allocated over a period of seven years. DMA recommends that the City consider dedicating a substantial portion of the funds to affordable housing projects developed within the first three TOD Districts.

However, with estimated rental subsidies ranging from approximately $50,000 to more than $100,000 per unit, and homeownership subsidies significantly higher, **the City would have to dedicate the vast majority of the GO Bonds in order to meet all the goals specified in the TOD Ordinance** and would have limited ability to provide funding for projects outside of TOD areas. Given the funding gap in each TOD District, it is unlikely that GO Bonds alone will achieve the affordability goals.

Recommendation #3: Identify and Utilize Publicly-Owned Land

The City should review and prioritize publicly-owned land to identify those most likely to accommodate residential uses. Eleven of the approximate 130 acres within the Plaza Saltillo TOD are owned by Capital Metro. In addition, the City of Austin owns two parcels immediately adjacent to the TOD District. One parcel is less than one-half acre and could be an opportunity for small-scale infill residential development. In addition, the other parcel — currently operating as a City mail room and uniform services facility — is under consideration for inclusion in the District and would be zoned as Live/Work/Flex. At 3.07 acres and current zoning of 45 units per acre, the site could potentially accommodate 138 units. The City should evaluate parcels such as these to determine their "highest and best use," taking into consideration compatibility with the TOD development standards.

The City could solicit proposals for residential development on the sites it owns and require a baseline level of affordability that conforms to the TOD Ordinance. If the sites are not owned by the City but rather by an affiliated public entity, the City should take the lead in negotiations to ensure that those sites are developed in accordance with demonstrated public need.

The ROMA Design Group's Saltillo District Redevelopment Master Plan (yet to be adopted by the City Council or the Capital Metro Board) estimates that the 11-acre Capital Metro property could accommodate a proposed 590-675 housing units, 25% of which would be designated affordable (147 – 169 units). The affordability targets in the ROMA plan were established with the assumption that a portion of the land with frontage on IH-35 could be utilized for dense, high-rise, market-rate commercial construction. This component of the plan has not received broad community support.

However, a more modest increase to a 60 foot height limit on the 11-acre property would help to meet the ambitious affordability goals within the Plaza Saltillo TOD District, without compromising the neighborhood's concerns regarding compatibility and density in the remainder of the TOD.

The City of Austin owns a 5.8-acre tract in the approximate 200-acre N. Lamar/Justin Lane TOD District. The 5.8-acre tract could accommodate 261 housing units if it were to be developed at medium density (e.g., 45 units per acre). The City could solicit proposals for residential development on that site and require a baseline level of affordability that conforms to the TOD Ordinance.

In the alternative, the City could solicit proposals from tax credit developers to undertake a 100% affordable development. A 2007 ERA Market Study estimated the potential market demand for affordable housing in the Lamar TOD to be between 325 and 414 units. A 261-unit affordable housing development would make a substantial impact on the market demand and help to meet the 25% TOD affordability goal.

Recommendation #4: Provide Menu of Incentives Within TODs

The City should adopt a policy that offers developers within the TOD Districts a package of incentives in exchange for affordable units on-site. The incentives could be scaled based on the level of affordability and the percentage of affordable units provided. Incentives could include additional fee waivers and expedited review beyond what the S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ program currently provides. The incentives should be available to developments throughout the entire TOD District, not just a designated area.

Fee Waivers. The City already waives certain development fees through its S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ program. In addition to existing S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ fee waivers, additional fee waivers for affordable housing in TOD areas could include the following:

- Drainage
- Electrical meters
- Street lighting
- Water meters
- Sewer taps
- Street closure fee
- License agreements
- Austin Energy fees
- Any and all other City fees and/or extractions

Expedited Review. Building on the recommendations of the City's Affordable Housing Incentives Taskforce, the

City should offer a reliable and consistent expedited review and approval process. This fast-track review and approval would expand upon the existing S.M.A.R.T. Housing™ process. Expedited development review and inspection processes should encompass the following:

- Legal review of easements, covenants, and other instruments
- Austin Water Utility technical review of site plans and subdivisions
- Service extension request review
- License agreement review
- Utility construction plan review
- Right-of-Way management plan review
- Utility inspection
- Utility connections
- Street light installation
- Expedited zoning and platting review

Maximize Public Tax Exemptions. Through creative public-private partnerships, the City of Austin can foster affordability via tax exemptions. The City of Austin (through Austin Housing Finance Corporation) can purchase a vacant and/or underutilized parcel of land and lease it back to a developer for affordable housing. With a long-term land lease, the developer creates, owns, and/or manages the affordable housing. However, because the land is owned by a public entity, it is 100% tax exempt.

The benefits of this type of partnership are two-fold. First, the tax exemption lowers the overall operating costs of the property. Depending on the appraised value of the property, the benefit is equivalent to $7,000-$10,000 per unit in up-front, direct subsidy. Second, locating the property on City-owned land can guarantee long-term or permanent affordability. The City has facilitated this type of arrangement with organizations, such as the nonprofit Foundation Communities and for-profit developer Campbell-Hogue (Villas on Sixth). This type of public-private partnership is probably best suited for multifamily rental developments where the majority of the units are rent-restricted.

While tax exemption is technically a form of subsidy, it may be seen as more palatable than direct subsidy it represents foregone income, rather than cash outflow. The current appraised value of many of the properties in question is negligible compared with their potential as fully improved properties. Accordingly, the assessing entity is not necessarily losing existing income but forgoing future income.

Recommendation #5: Utilize Homestead Preservation District Tools

In early 2007, the City of Austin adopted a Homestead Preservation District, which gives the City some additional tools to help create and preserve affordable housing. This district includes the Plaza Saltillo and the majority of the MLK TOD areas but does not extend to the Lamar TOD.

DMA recommends that the City of Austin maximize the use of the tools available in the Homestead Preservation District. Within the TOD District, the City has the ability to create a TIF district, to create a land bank, and to create a Community Land Trust. The Homestead Preservation District is also the only area in the state that is exempt from the prohibition against mandatory inclusionary housing programs. However, in order to implement a mandatory program, the City must conduct a nexus study to justify any affordable housing requirements.

The revenues collected in a TIF district established under the Homestead Preservation Act must be used for the development, construction, and preservation of affordable housing. The City is currently exploring the creation of such a TIF and is looking for participation by Travis County, as the City's share of tax revenue is a relatively small portion of taxes collected in the area. The City is also working to develop a citywide Community Land Trust that would allow for the long-term preservation of affordable units. The land trust could also be used as a land bank to acquire and assemble parcels of land for future affordable housing developments, which could be especially important for the MLK TOD, where there are no publicly-owned properties within the TOD boundaries.

NEXT STEPS

Planning for the TOD Districts has been a lengthy and complex process. It has involved numerous stakeholder groups, including the City, private developers, and affordable housing advocates. DMA's recommendations are the result of careful consideration of all interested parties with an eye toward the creation of a vibrant, diverse, and affordable community.

In November 2006, the community came together and voted overwhelmingly to approve $55 million for affordable housing development. In order to create affordability in the TOD Districts, it will be important for the community — including developers, advocates, neighborhood representatives, and citizens — to work together to ensure diversity and affordability within the Transit Oriented Development Districts.