



City of Austin

Comprehensive Plan Consultant Finalists — Comment Card

Which consultant(s) are you commenting on? (circle as appropriate)

ACP Visioning+Planning

HNTB

WRT

Your name: Steve Beers (anonymous comments will not be accepted)

Please print legibly. This page will be scanned and provided electronically to City Council, the Mayor, and the public.

Your comment about the consultant finalists:

None of them should be selected until more information about the planning process is disseminated.

We need an assessment of the existing master planning, its strengths & shortcomings.

Once we have assessed what is good & bad about the last 30 years of "Austin Tomorrow," then we can move forward on the next iteration.

Other comments:

Comments can also be submitted by email

through the end of the day on Tuesday, February 17.

Send your thoughts to: Mark.Walters@ci.austin.tx.us

Please include the name or names of the consultants you are commenting on in the subject line.



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Your name: CHRIS JACKSON (anonymous comments will not be accepted)
Please print legibly. This page will be scanned and provided electronically to City Council, the Mayor, and the public.

Your comment about the consultant finalists:

THE ACP TEAM LOOKS TO HAVE THE MOST THOROUGH
EXPLANATION FOR A PLAN → RESEARCH, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT,
EXISTING CONDITIONS, ANALYSIS ETC.

THIS FOUNDATION IS NECESSARY... AND AS THE POPULATION OF
AUSTIN IS EXTREMELY PASSIONATE AND EDUCATED, TWO QUALITIES
THAT CAN BE THE DRIVING FORCE OF A QUALITY CITY
GROWTH PLAN.

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Your name: JAN ADLER (anonymous comments will not be accepted)
Please print legibly. This page will be scanned and provided electronically to City Council, the Mayor, and the public.

Your comment about the consultant finalists:

- HIGHEST PRIORITY - TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION/CLEAN AIR
- THE PLAN MUST INCLUDE RAPID TRANSIT/LIGHT RAIL.
- THE PLAN MUST INCLUDE PURCHASE/ACQUISITION OF NEW PARK LANDS/GREEN SPACE
- THE PLAN MUST PRIORITIZE THE ENVIRONMENT & DISCOURAGE NEW DEVELOPMENT ON THE RECHARGE ZONE/AQUIFER.
- THE PLAN SHOULD RESPECT NEIGHBORHOODS & NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS THAT ARE BOTH IN PLACE & IN PROCESS.
- THE PLAN SHOULD EMPHASIZE DENSITY ONLY IN CERTAIN AREAS/NOT ENCOURAGE GROWTH WITHIN THE WATERFRONT OVERLAY/ON THE AQUIFER OR IN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD ZONES.
- HEAR THE CITIZENS FIRST / BUSINESS-2ND.

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ACP Visioning+Planning

HNTB

WRT

Your name: Kirk D. Cleman (anonymous comments will not be accepted)

Please print legibly. This page will be scanned and provided electronically to City Council, the Mayor, and the public.

Your comment about the consultant finalists:

Representatives of the ACP Visioning+Planning Team have familiarity w/ Leader's Transit Oriented Development (TOD). This may serve Austin well during the Comp. Plan process.

Other comments:

Comments can also be submitted by email

through the end of the day on Tuesday, February 17.

Send your thoughts to: Mark.Walters@ci.austin.tx.us

Please include the name or names of the consultants you are commenting on in the subject line.

Walters, Mark

From: David Kobierowski [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 12, 2009 10:51 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Feedback on Comprehensive Plan Consultants

Hello,

Overall, none of the applicants hit a home-run with what I was looking for. But after hearing the three consultants present today regarding their strategies for the Comprehensive Plan RFP, it was clear that **ACP Visionary and Planning group was the best of the three.**

ACP clearly was most in touch with the "inclusively" community layer, which is arguably the most challenging, most critical, and most beneficial element of this overall exercise in front of them.

I was also impressed that ACP has worked with cities similar to Austin recently, notably Columbus, OH, which is similar to Austin in population and is also a large college town like Austin. ACP also worked on a project in Amhurst, MA recently, another college town.

ACP also seemed most qualified to answer questions without adding a ton of "consultant-speak" like HNTB did. I would steer very far from HNTB based on what I saw today.

The only info I have to base my decision is watching these three presentations today. I don't know any of these groups and don't have any previous knowledge of their work beyond the content presented today.

Best,
David Kobierowski

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, February 13, 2009 5:09 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: City of Austin Comprehensive Plan Consultant Finalists

After hearing last evenings presentations and comments and reading each of their websites regarding the projects they have completed, I have come to the conclusion that the **ACP Visioning+Planning Team** is the most qualified. Their experience and qualifications touch every area from planning to environmental sustainability and having chosen Clarion and TBG, I am confident they will be successful in working together for the future of Austin's growth while maintaining Austin's outstanding quality of life and retaining the assets that make Austin special. I also appreciate that ACP welcomes and involves public participation as well....

Helene Mandras

Nothing says I love you like flowers! **Find a florist near you now.**

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Patricia Buchholtz [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 9:49 AM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mark,

Let me first start by saying that I applaud Austin for taking the initiative to pull together a team to create a new comprehensive plan for the city. I have been long disappointed in smaller towns that at one time had been charming, interesting, walkable places, and through the years have only shown sprawl, car-oriented, and hodge-podge development. Fredricksburg is one example – there is a heart to the town, but its so very obvious where the heart stops and where folks stopped caring about how the town grew. Austin is an interesting city with districts blooming. This isn't such a bad thing, as long as each district is celebrated. Paris has a similar layout via the arrondissements. Each one seems to have a unique personality and identity, but all of them have charm, are walkable, are connected – all of the important factors when creating a world-class city. Our districts seem to grow a bit more organically – East Austin, Downtown, South Austin, UT, and even the neighborhoods within them – Clarksville, Rosedale, Great Hills, Arboretum. Each very unique in their offerings, but also beautiful.

There are areas of Austin that need some attention such as Burnet and Lamar – particularly in North Austin. The traffic is terrible; there is virtually no connectivity to the neighborhoods adjacent to these retail-busy areas.

A comprehensive plan should work on all levels to address how the city will interact as a whole, how each district will develop within its own area and then how traffic patterns, transportation, and place-making will occur ongoing.

My team preference to the comprehensive plan is ACP. They have a strong “outside of Austin” visioning team with a strong “inside of Austin” visioning team. Having grown up in Austin, but with an International Business background, I appreciate Austin's strengths – and love them – and realize that if we plan with only Austin eyes, we will get only Austin results – this could be limiting. Austin is quickly becoming a world-class city; however, its heart is local and small town in feel. A team that integrates with Austin's community, its current leaders (and not just city council leaders – but also area business, neighborhood, and simple strong voices) will be critical in building a comprehensive plan that Austin can get behind. A team that also pulls experience from other cities will be key in utilizing that experience to take the best of the successes and mitigate the areas that didn't work. ACP has the components to build bridges while developing the comprehensive plan.

patricia buchholtz
partner/marketing strategist
lookthinkmake, llc
dir. 512.740.4156
fax. 512.672.6112

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: William Mandras [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 4:29 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: City of Austin Comprehensive Plan Consultant Finalists

I would respectfully like to recommend the appointment of **The ACP Visioning+Planning Team** for the Austin project. I base this recommendation upon the following:

1. Having attended and then recorded the entire meeting, it is my opinion that ACP directly answered every question posed by the City Council. Representatives from the other two firms at times were rambling in their answers and did not directly address the questions.
2. Before the meeting, I walked up to each of the group's tables in the Lobby and read their poster board displays. The ACP Team was the only group that came up to me and asked me if I had any questions. At the WRT booth I had to approach them and at the HNTB booth, I was totally ignored. One of the key points in a successful plan is going to be the input from the diverse populous of Austin's citizens. If the actions of the three teams are a precursor as to how they relate to people, my money would be on ACP.
3. Having visited the websites of all three groups, I do not feel that HNTB is really qualified for the Austin project based upon the size and scope of the success stories outlined on their website.

At both their presentation and information from their website, WRT touts the Baltimore inner harbor project as being one of their best. Before moving to Austin my job took me to calling on a number of customers in and around the Baltimore area. The inner harbor is a great tourist attraction, however, if you travel two to three blocks in just about any direction you would experience a blighted and unfriendly City.

Having lived in the New York area for most of my 62 years, the ACP success at the World Trade Center site speaks volumes of their ability to communicate and include a large and diverse variety of groups in its final solution.

Respectfully,

William A. Mandras

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Mindy Cooper [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 4:40 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Austin Comprehensive Plan - ACP team

Hi Mark,

I finally had the opportunity to see the video of the Austin Comprehensive Plan finalists presenting and wanted to send a few of my thoughts your direction in support of the ACP team.

Of the 3 teams interviewing, ACP seemed to be most aligned with the kind of public involvement that Austinites want and need to have their voices heard. I liked that they had plenty of national experience but clearly had plenty of local experience as well. They also seemed to understand our need for help developing zoning code that compliments the comp plan, and I appreciated the fact that they said rather than just giving us a big comprehensive plan at the end of their project and saying, "Good luck, here you go" ... they'll be developing the zoning code with us so that Austin will have an enforceable set of codes to put the plan into practice.

ACP stood out to me as the clear choice for developing Austin's comprehensive plan. I'm looking forward to hearing which team is chosen by Council.

Thanks for allowing our input!
Mindy

--
"Only those who risk going too far can possibly know how far they can really go." T.S. Eliot
"Listen to your heart. Because, wherever your heart is, that is where you'll find your treasure." Paulo Coelho
"Don't ask yourself what the world needs; ask yourself what makes you come alive. And then go and do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Harold Whitman
"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover." Mark Twain

<http://cooperella.wordpress.com>

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Robert Pilgrim [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 4:58 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Comp Plan

Mark:

I thought the presentations were very good by all teams. However, the ACP team stood out above the other two. What sent The ACP Visioning+Planning Team over the edge for me were the answers to Mike Martinez about the Code Re-write after the Comp Plan is finished. There is a strong need and desire after the Comp Plan is finished to have a code re-write and this should be a big push item for the city during the days ahead. I think that the development community and hopefully our elected officials understand that a code re-write is inevitable.

Thanks - Robert

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Elliott Doerle [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 9:28 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Austin Comp Plan

Dear Mr. Walters,

Upon watching all three presentations and the Q and A session that followed, I felt the ACP Visioning Team was the most qualified candidate to create the framework for Austin's Comprehensive Plan. In my opinion they were the most qualified having successfully completed several comp plans for very similar cities and they also seemed to have a good balance of national experience coupled with local knowledge. I felt that the Q and A session gave us a good preview of how the candidates would react under the pressure of the public forum and again I was most impressed with this team.

Sincerely,

David

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: juli ott [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 10:20 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: austin comp plan

Mr. Walters,

I just wanted to write and express comments regarding the Austin Comp Plan presentations from last week. All of the finalists were well qualified and the city should be commended for their work to bring this level of talent to such an complex project.

Having watched all three finalists present, I wanted to go on record for recommending the team of ACP Vision + Planning. I feel that their balance of local experts along with national experts make them the best qualified team to work through this difficult process.

Having lived here most of my life, I know that the public process, and inclusion of the community is one of the most difficult and but most rewarding tasks that design teams face, and I believe this is the team that can accomplish it best.

In addition, I felt they understand best what it will take to not only craft the vision of the plan, but also understand the steps it takes to implement this into strategies that the City can take forward and make zoning, code and financial decisions.

Thanks again for allowing public participation in this exciting step in Austin's future.

Juli Ott

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2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: samueltperkins [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 11:51 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: comprehensive plan

I applaud the city for this breathtaking, needed and effort.

I am however taken aback by the size and the complexity of the teams.

I have real concerns about their complexity given Austin's dynamicism and complexity.

And I have real concerns that the people who do the presentations are the ones doing the sale,

but the people who will be outsourced to work on this for the city may in fact be students (as in the case of

Johnathan Barnett) or new hires or people simply collecting frequent flyer miles.

You all need to realize that Austin's planning history is layer upon layer of patch work.

I think only the most committed people will truly address this issue.

It may be in fact why in a time where the profession is reeling from the loss of work that you all shockingly

only received 5 qualified RFPs.

I would suggest reformatting the RFP, maintaining an organizational oversight (after all it will be staff;s plan) and soliticiing the best for the sustainability, transit and mobility and energy issues.

The invisible grunt work is best done by those on staff who are committed.

Thanks

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2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: sara partridge [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 9:03 AM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Austin Comp Plan

I just wanted to weigh in on which team I believe brings the best national talent while also best represents Austin's interests and attitudes. WRT has proven talent as seen in projects throughout the country, however the most important value expressed was that of sustainability. This is something that cannot be overlooked and I know the other two firms have very little experience. As an Austinite I want to be known for living in a city that is as sustainable as possible and I feel that WRT is the right choice.

Good luck!

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Ryan Parr [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 10:15 AM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: ACP Visioning + Planning

Dear Mr. Walters,

As a citizen of the City of Austin who cares greatly about our collective future, I am using this valuable opportunity to submit my thoughts for consideration by the City Council with regard to selecting a team to work with the community to create a new Comprehensive Plan.

The development of a far-sighted and enduring Comprehensive Plan is critical to the smart growth of the greater Austin metro area. Accordingly, the team charged with developing such a plan ought to be well in tune with the local culture and politics while simultaneously having the experience and wherewithal of a preeminent national entity.

The ACP Visioning + Planning team uniquely meets these qualities through its fusion of national experience and local knowledge/investment. Moreover, the assembled ACP team has demonstrated, through its presentation to the Council, a sagacious approach that considers not merely planning for the future, but establishing a vision through public input, which represents a critical component of any comprehensive municipal plan of merit.

The ACP team has distinguished itself from its very worthy and illustrious competition, and it is my hope that the Council will have the keen judgment to select the team that best represents the City of Austin's future – and that team is ACP Visioning + Planning.

Sincerely,

David Parr

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Tyler Anthony [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 10:58 AM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Austin Comprehensive Plan - team comments

Mr. Walters,

I wanted to offer some quick comments regarding what I saw during last Thursday's comprehensive plan presentation.

While all 3 firms vying for the CoA comprehensive plan appear to have the necessary background and appropriate credentials, Thursday night's public vetting process began to highlight ACP staff qualifications and their extremely approachable demeanor. It appeared quite clear that they made the strongest connection with the audience on a number of occasions. Given the large stake that the public will no doubt play in this process, I feel that this helps me distinguish ACP from HNTB or WRT.

One of the speakers for ACP, Mr. Longo (don't know if I have the spelling correct) provided an excellent first hand account of a similar planning process conducted for Chattanooga, TN. His description of the positive change from pre-plan to post-plan and his specific example of an excited taxi driver as the new tour guide in a revitalized community really stood out among the other stories I heard.

Good luck with the final decision!

Best regards,

Tyler Anthony

2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Ron Thrower [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 12:58 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Comp Plan

Mark,

I stayed for most of the presentations to council and the subsequent Q/A from the 3 finalists about the Comp Plan. All three were good and informative. After talking with all three companies and re-watching the presentation I believe that one team stands out more than any others. Obviously, this is my opinion and the city has far more data than what is being made public. None the less, the team that I would prefer is ACP Visioning & Planning Team. They seem to have the better aptitude, skill sets, and team members to pursue this daunting task. They also seem better fit to carry us to the next step with the eventual outcome of the Comp Plan being the code re-write.

You and I both know that the existing code is archaic and anti-new urbanism. The outcome of the Comp Plan is inevitable to support sustainable development for Austin. Therefore, the code re-write is inevitable. I'm deeply interested in the Comp Plan and the code re-write and it would seem fitting that a single team ultimately be responsible for making both of these happen. I understand that the current proposal is solely for the Comp Plan but if the chosen team went forward with the single biggest outcome of the Comp Plan being the code re-write, then a lot of discussion can be formulated to that end.

Thanks for the opportunity to express my opinion about the choice for the team to be awarded with the contract for the Comp Plan.

Ron Thrower

Thrower Design

4608-A South Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78745
512/476-4456
512/476-4454 fax

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2/17/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Carrie Schnoor [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 3:02 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: ACP Visioning + Planning

Dear Mr. Walters,

I would like to see the city council choose ACP Visioning + Planning team as the group hired to help the City of Austin with their new comprehensive growth plan.

Carrie Schnoor

2/17/2009

February 17th, 2009

City of Austin Council Members and Staff,

On behalf of the nearly 800 members of AIA Austin (American Institute of Architects – Austin Chapter) and the design community that it serves, I applaud Council for the range and depth of questions directed to the three very qualified planning teams who presented last week as part of the Comprehensive Plan RFQ.

AIA Austin has been and will continue to be an interested stakeholder in the development of the new Comprehensive Plan. We look forward to being able to participate and provide valuable resources to the team ultimately selected. In watching HNTB, ACP and WRT present their qualifications and values, it was apparent that all three teams support the impact of mixed-use urban infill development, measures for sustainability – both environmental and economic, and growth management. Council Members, Staff and other stakeholders have stated in the past that they too share in these values which are also supported by the stated policies of the AIA membership.

It will be critical in moving into the planning process that we understand the importance of Council Member Martinez's comments regarding the alignment between vision, policies, and codes as a key instrument in the early stages. In order to meet our goals, it is vital that we keep the vision and the codes aligned and properly tuned together.

All three presentations were impressive in scope and quality and obviously there will be difficult decisions to be made in the upcoming weeks. In making such a decision, I believe it is important, when the teams are so close in skill sets, that we consider two important issues:

- Staff's recommendation, particularly in how we can best work with the culture of the team to maximize efficiency of the process
- During these difficult economic times, we consider how key local firms are involved in the process and utilize the teams who are best at bringing to the table local talent.

Thank you for your time and AIA Austin welcomes the beginning of a new Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,



Stephen Oliver, AIA | LEED AP
AIA Austin President 2009
OPA Design Studio | Principal

Walters, Mark

From: Jack Williams [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 5:22 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Gianni Longo & ACP Visioning and Planning

Mark,

In regards to last Thursday's presentation of the Austin Comprehensive Plan, it appears that ACP Visioning is the right fit for this endeavor. Their background and past projects, both nationally and locally, show that Mr. Longo and his team are suitable and worthy of this undertaking.

Their team also has a local influence and understands the spirit of what Austin is and what its future should hold. I hope the City of Austin makes the right choice when selecting a team. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jack Williams

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2/18/2009

Walters, Mark

From: Susan Moffat [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2009 10:32 PM
To: Walters, Mark
Subject: Comments on Comprehensive Plan Finalists/Process

Dear Mr. Walters,

I strongly support the effort to produce a new Comprehensive Plan for Austin, but have a several reservations about the timing and process regarding the selection of a team to lead this effort.

For a comprehensive plan to be successful, several critical factors must be in place, including (1) a top-tier planning team who can approach the project without bias or conflicts of interest; (2) sufficient funds to implement the plan in a timely fashion; (3) full public buy-in for the plan. These factors do not seem to be in place at this time.

CONCERNS ABOUT FINALISTS

Regarding the three finalists, I have several questions/concerns:

1. Austin is a popular city and many top-flight teams have worked here or have connections here - yet none of them applied to do the Comprehensive Plan. Why did we have so few applicants? Did we offer too little? Did they not think the plan would be implemented? Was the RFP drafted in a way that might have inadvertently discouraged them? Were there other concerns? At this point, I'd say WRT is best bet, but I'm frankly surprised and a bit dismayed that we don't have a better crop of finalists from which to choose.
2. The public has had only five days (two of which fell over the weekend) to vet the finalists and give input. For a project that requires substantial public buy-in to succeed, this does not seem like an auspicious start. Even two weeks would have been better than five days.
3. Some of the finalist teams seem to have acquired local members who may bring their own biases to the plan or who may be involved in subsequent projects that could benefit from aspects of the plan. Though I'm normally a huge fan of buying locally, conflicts of interest are much more apt to arise when you have local players crafting rules for areas in which they may later have financial interests.

FUNDING CONCERNS

1. Absent funds for timely implementation, any new comprehensive plan is likely to wind up in the same cycle as its predecessors - being shelved until it has become obsolete, at which time a new plan is then commissioned. Do we really want to spend \$1+ million for another plan that sits on a shelf?
2. As currently proposed, this project will require over \$1 million just to craft, at a time when the City is facing budget cuts in essential services due to the most severe economic crisis of that

last seventy years. Under the circumstances, I believe it would be prudent to defer any spending for this project at least until after the fall budget cycle. By then, the full extent of this year's budget cuts will be known and we may have more clarity regarding the nation's economic outlook. We can re-evaluate at that time - ideally, with some new outreach to a few of the top flight teams.

PUBLIC BUY-IN

As noted above, public buy-in would be enhanced by: providing adequate time to vet prospective teams; an explanation as to why better teams did not apply and/or effort to recruit better teams; deferring this expenditure to be reevaluated after the fall budget cycle.

Please note that this does not mean we can't move forward in the meantime. Austin knows how to do public process. A well-designed task force comprising members of the Planning Commission, city staff and community leaders could begin public outreach to build consensus for the community's visions and goals. This could be accomplished without the expense of hiring an outside firm and we would have an important piece of the process already in place when and if the budget picture is brighter.

In short, this project is too important to risk doing poorly. Many thanks for your consideration of these suggestions.

Best,
Susan Moffat
4112 Speedway
Austin TX 78751
barbaro@bga.com

I really think this effort is too important to risk doing poorly. Again, I urge the city to defer any decisions or expenses and reevaluate after the fall budget cycle.