

EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

DRAFT - JANUARY 2010

PREPARED BY
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EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

CITY OF AUSTIN

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VISION STATEMENT

East Riverside Drive has been transformed; gone is the wide space dominated by automobiles that allowed cars to travel along at highway speeds. Even though East Riverside Drive remains an important route from a regional perspective, drivers are aware that the space is shared with pedestrians and bicyclists and that it is a place that people are enjoying and not just passing through. Landscaping, landmarks and gateway features have been added at the intersections along East Riverside Drive, contributing greatly to the aesthetic appeal as one enters, exits, and traverses the Area. A diverse group of new and long-time residents are able to enjoy the safer, more attractive and vibrant streets and public spaces in the area.

The East Riverside Drive Area is comprised of active urban centers along a rail transit line that connects area residents, employees, and visitors with the airport, downtown, the University of Texas, and the Mueller Redevelopment, in addition to providing local service to amenities along East Riverside Drive itself. Long-time and new residents mix in public spaces created to meet the needs of a diverse population. Significant automobile traffic still travels through the Area, but it does not overshadow the built environment and drivers know when they enter the Area that they are traveling through a distinct and special place. In addition to rail, local and express bus service provides frequent and efficient travel options, making it easy to get around without use of a car. A designated bicycle lane on East Riverside Drive enables cyclists to travel safely through the area and to destinations along the way.

People walk all along East Riverside Drive, with street trees and landscaping providing beauty and shelter and acting as a natural buffer between the pedestrian and car environments. People are working, shopping, and entertaining themselves in new buildings on either side of East Riverside Drive that frame the street with large shop windows engaging passers-by. Taller buildings are concentrated around the main transit stops along the road and contain a mix of uses. Buildings further removed from transit stops and located off of East Riverside Drive offer a range of housing options for a diversity of ages and incomes and provide small-scale neighborhood services so that people can walk and bike to things in their immediate neighborhood. Opportunities for home ownership abound creating stable neighborhoods both along and just off of East Riverside Drive. Higher density development provides additional housing options and opportunities to create affordable housing through development bonuses so that the area continues to be socially and economically diverse. Neighborhoods are well-lit and maintained, with regular activity at the street level providing a natural safety mechanism.

The large surface parking lots along East Riverside Drive are long gone. Off-street parking no longer dominates the street scene and is located in parking structures, behind buildings, or screened from view. Tall and unattractive signage has been replaced with signs attached to a particular building space that is in-line with pedestrian views. A pedestrian-scale is created as taller buildings stair-step away from the roadway above the 3rd story and the buildings and streetscape combine to form an interesting and inviting public space.



VISION STATEMENT



The East Riverside Drive/Pleasant Valley Road intersection is no longer a barren space that serves only to move cars through the Area and collect stormwater, but is instead a major center of transit, pedestrian, and business activity. The new Pleasant Valley Transit Plaza is an area with shade trees lining the transit stop with space for accessing transit and area businesses, and open space. This is the primary focal point of activity on East Riverside Drive, on weekdays full of lunchtime employees and on weekends occupied with area residents and visitors shopping, milling around, and socializing. A market in the plaza provides opportunities for small businesses to have visibility in this area with large numbers of pedestrians.

Street connectivity throughout the Area has been improved, providing more options for traveling by foot, bicycle, or car. Large blocks are broken-up, allowing residents to efficiently walk, bike, or drive to the rail and bus stops, coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, and civic facilities without having to travel on major arterials. The secondary street network accommodates local trips within the Area but also enables more options for traveling outside 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 residents, employees, and visitors to recreate or simply enjoy the space. Public plazas are dispersed throughout development along East Riverside Drive, providing space for small gatherings, taking in the sun, and eating lunch. A recreational trail system along Country Club Creek provides links to the Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park and the Lady Bird Lake trail system, maintaining balance between the natural and built environments. Xeriscaping is used in open spaces throughout the Area and amenities for

kids are provided in offering neighborhood recreation space to families with children.

New buildings embody the principles of green building and utilize solar panels and mini wind turbines to produce energy rather than relying entirely on the City electric grid system. Green infrastructure strategies such as bioswales, rainwater harvesting, pervious paving, green roofs, and landscape beds are utilized to capture and treat water run-off instead of discharging immediately into the stormdrain system.

The East Riverside Drive transformation has resulted in a cleaner, greener, safer, and welcoming environment for long-time and new residents, as well as visitors, to work, play, and have their daily service needs met. Environmentally sound building practices, the development of walkable, mixed use neighborhoods, and the integration of a more robust transit system with area redevelopment have all contributed to a more sustainable situation, making the East Riverside Area an example of central city redevelopment that other parts of Austin and other cities desire to emulate.

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY
EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

East Riverside Drive is important as a commercial center to an economically and socially diverse group of residents living in proximity to the roadway, in addition to serving as a gateway to downtown. It is an important commercial and residential corridor located a few minutes from downtown. The Corridor is one of the few direct connections from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) to Downtown Austin and has tremendous potential for redevelopment and renewal, some of which is already beginning to occur. The Corridor currently contains a high percentage of market-rate affordable housing, which unfortunately is affordable in part due to aging multi-family housing stock and a history of economic disinvestment and crime in the area. Private investment and redevelopment is beginning to occur on the edge of the Corridor close to downtown. The challenge for planning in the East Riverside Corridor area is to offer a framework by which public investment and private redevelopment can occur to reinvigorate the area, making it attractive for further investment as a local employment center and transit-supportive neighborhood, while managing to address the needs of all citizens living in the area, now and in the future.

The purpose of the East Riverside Corridor (ERC) Master Plan is to guide this redevelopment so that it is in line with the community's vision for the area. The Corridor Plan was initially called for in the East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Neighborhood Plan, and was later spurred-on by active city-wide discussions of introducing streetcar/light rail service to Austin's core neighborhoods and centers of activity, including along East Riverside Drive. This document, the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan, represents one of the crucial first steps in ensuring that the area is transformed into the vision established through the public planning process.

Existing Neighborhood Plans

The East Riverside Corridor Planning Study Area incorporates two Neighborhood Planning Areas. The East Riverside/Oltorf Neighborhood Planning Area extends from Interstate Highway 35 (IH-35) to Grove Blvd. and east of this point, is the Montopolis Neighborhood Planning Area, from Grove Blvd. to State Highway 71 (SH 71) / Ben White Boulevard. The Neighborhood Plans for these areas provided valuable information from stakeholders in these areas regarding the present state of E. Riverside Drive, its functionality from a land use, transportation, and urban design standpoint, and the desired future of the roadway and areas surrounding it.

The Planning Process and Plan Goals

The goals of the Master Plan, as well as the strategies recommended to achieve them, resulted from the efforts of the people who live, work, and visit the East Riverside Corridor, the City of Austin Planning and Development Review Department (formerly known as the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department), Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, a Technical Advisory Group, and consultants hired to lead the planning process. This Plan is the direct result of months of community involvement and planning and describes a long-term vision for the East Riverside Corridor. The planning process that was conducted gathered feedback from many different individuals and groups with an interest in the East Riverside Area. This area is important for local businesses and residents but also serves a broader purpose as a route to and from the airport and downtown Austin.

While there were many significant points identified and issues outlined during the planning process, most fall within the following key topic areas:

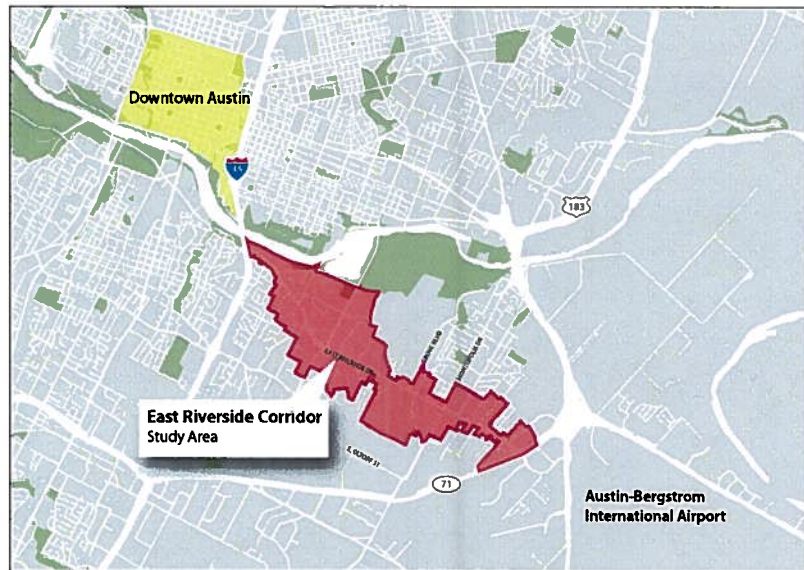
- Making East Riverside Drive an attractive, people-

friendly roadway with local destinations;

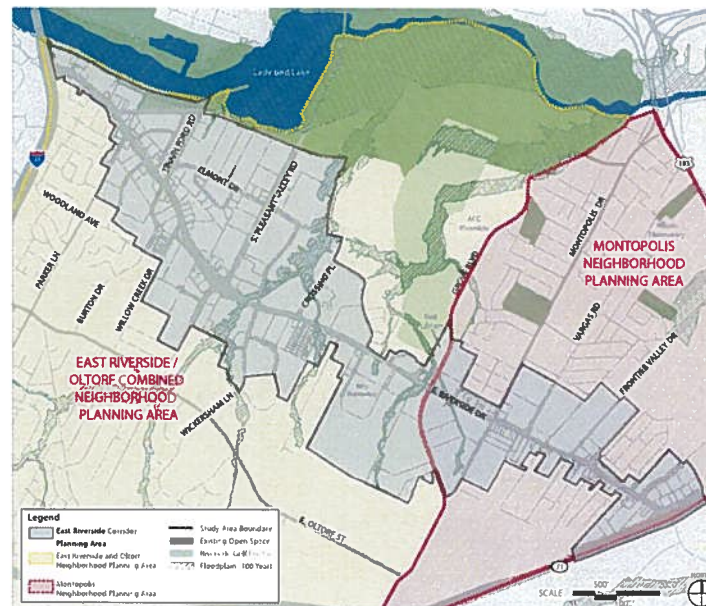
- Enabling safe pedestrian flow across East Riverside Drive;
- Introducing efficient and frequent rail and bus transit service within and beyond the East Riverside Area;
- Creating unique and memorable places in the Area;
- Enabling transit-supportive redevelopment that supports higher levels of development around primary transit stops;
- Improving the appearance of the Area and reducing criminal activity;
- Safely and comfortably accommodating pedestrian, bike, transit and automobile traffic; and
- Providing parks and open space serving local and regional needs and to balance the built environment with open space and plazas.
- Maintaining a mix of housing options in the area for a range of incomes, including options for low- and mid-income populations.

The Master Plan

As a result of the visioning process, a plan has been developed which encourages the transformation of the East Riverside Drive Corridor area, emphasizing the importance of transit-oriented and walkable development and sustainable practices throughout the Corridor, while also maintaining housing options for people with a range of incomes. The East Riverside Corridor Master Plan is intended to be both a record of the public planning process and a guide for the future change and development within the Corridor area. It contains a compilation of maps, diagrams, images and text describing recommendations on a broad range of topics including urban design character, proposed land use districts, and transportation concepts, and affordable housing tools for the Planning Area and emphasizes the need for such things as well designed buildings and streetscapes, parks and open space, slower traffic, and safer bicycle routes.



East Riverside Drive Context Map



Study Area Map

The Master Plan also includes a proposed rail line that is recommended to be located in the center median of East Riverside Drive throughout the length of the Planning Area, connecting the airport to downtown Austin and beyond. Introduction of a fixed rail transit line is the most significant opportunity to reinvigorate and provide community benefits within the Corridor Area. The East Riverside Corridor Master Plan will serve as the foundation for future zoning and design standards to be written specifically for the East Riverside Corridor and will guide future decisions regarding public infrastructure investments and private sector development and redevelopment.

Study Area Information

- Includes property along East Riverside Drive and some property near the roadway that has potential to redevelop
- Area extends from IH-35 to Ben White Blvd./SH 71
- Study Area is approximately 1,000 acres
- Includes two Neighborhood Planning Areas: East Riverside/Oltorf Combined and Montopolis
- Predominant existing land uses include: commercial, multifamily apartments, multifamily condominiums, undeveloped land
- Public facilities in and around the Study Area include: Baty Elementary School, Fire Station #22, East Riverside Campus of the Austin Community College, Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park, Lady Bird Lake and trail, and the Riverside Golf Course.

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Key Concepts and Recommendations in the Master Plan

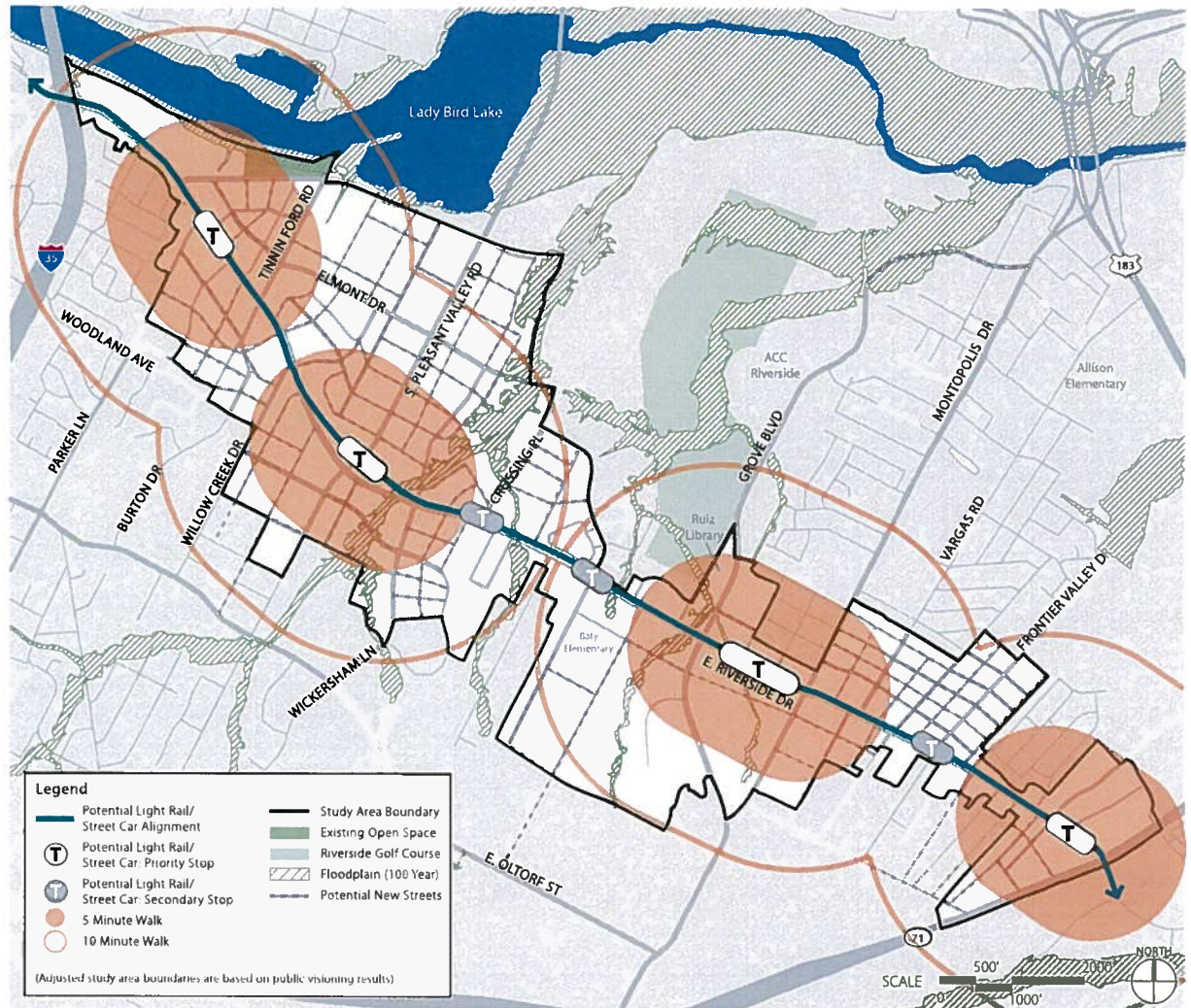
Transit

Rail proposal

- Streetcar/light rail line running down East Riverside Drive
- Four primary stops identified; secondary stops conceptually represent the desire for frequent stops along East Riverside Drive; location of all stops to be determined during rail planning.
- Identifiable places, or Hubs, should be created along East Riverside Drive around the primary transit stops. The Hubs would provide distinct destinations where housing, shops and offices would be located within a 5-minute walk of the stop.

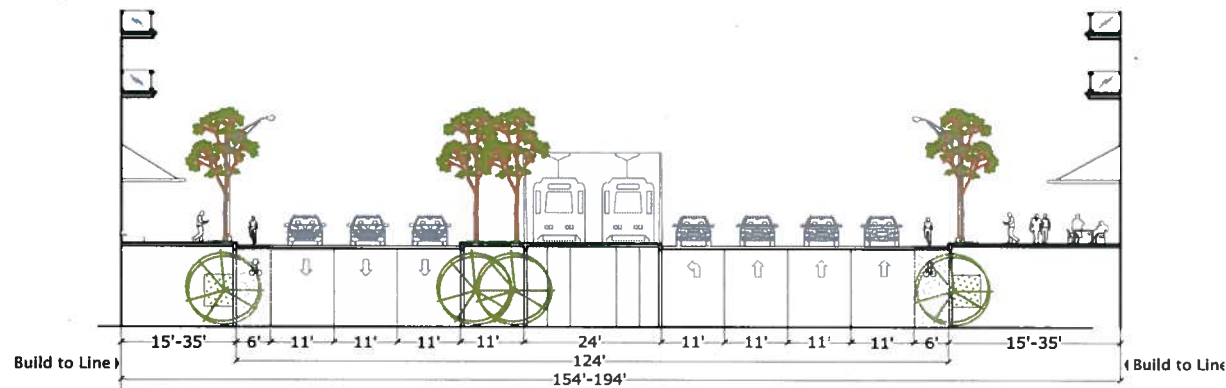
Bus Service

- Existing and additional bus service should be coordinated with rail service to create a unified transit network
- If rail transit is not implemented along the corridor, there is potential for Bus Rapid Transit to be put in place, instead. Bus Rapid Transit is a form of bus service with fewer stops and predictable, on time schedules that was recommended for East Riverside Drive as part of Capital Metro's "All Systems Go" Long Range Transit Plan before rail transit was recommended for the corridor.



Rail Transit Route Map

East Riverside Drive Typical Section



(This cross-section is conceptual and could be refined as part of rail planning and design.
Necessary Right-of-Way based on final design will be determined.)

East Riverside Drive Typical Street Section

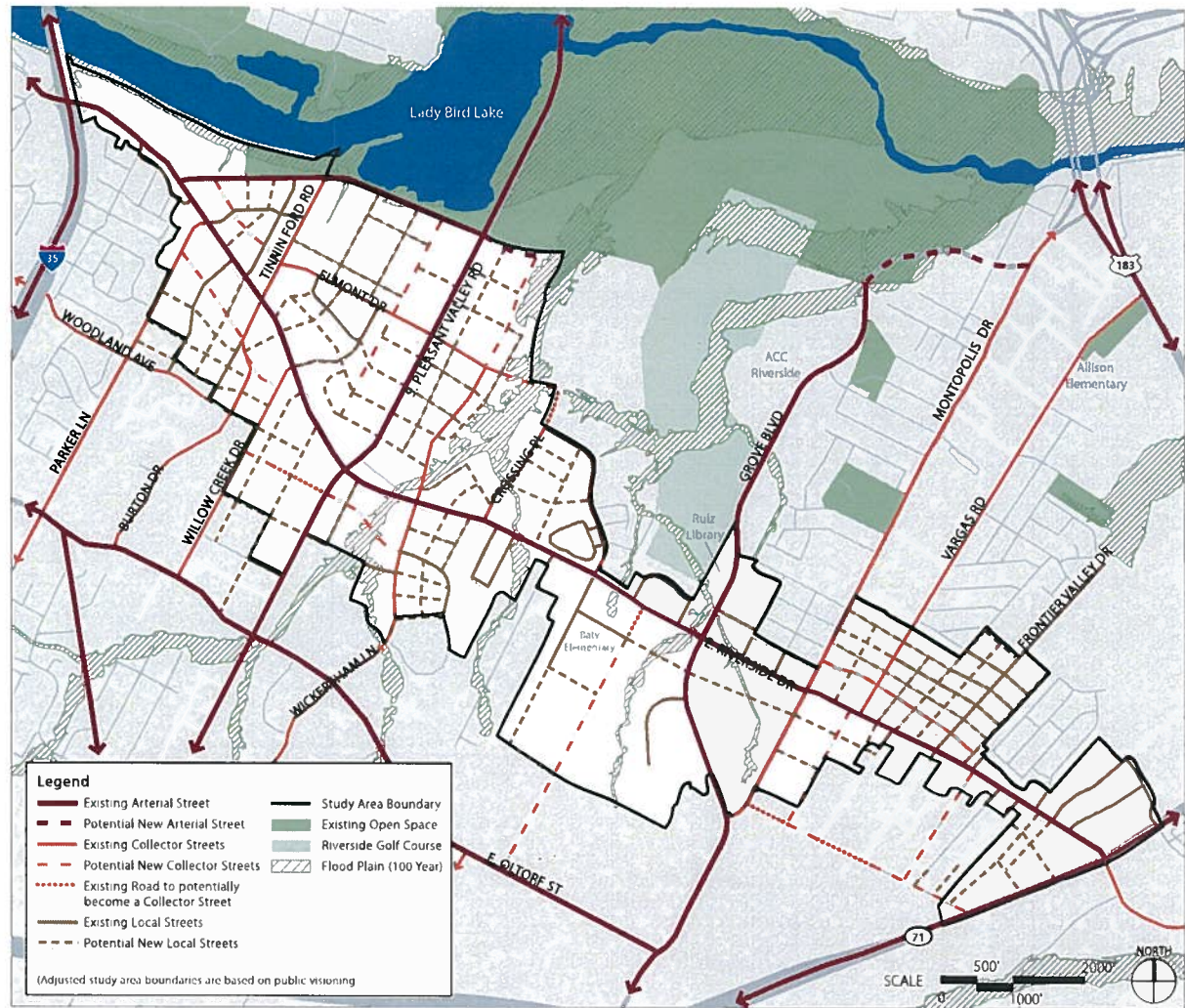
East Riverside Drive

- East Riverside Drive should be re-designed to be a multi-modal corridor that allows for safe and efficient movement of all transportation modes, including transit vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- No reduction in the number of automobile lanes proposed but outside lane could convert to on-street parking during off-peak hours to support local business and new residential activity and provide a buffer between pedestrian/bicyclist activity and automobile traffic.
- A designated bicycle lane along East Riverside Drive with special pavement treatment to highlight the cycling environment.
- Safety improvements to allow for pedestrian flow across E. Riverside Drive such as: special paving in crosswalks; additional traffic signals, lighting, and crosswalks; improved signage; pedestrian refuge islands; pedestrian underpass at Country Club Creek.
- Wide sidewalks with large landscaped street tree/furniture zone to provide a buffer between pedestrian and automobile traffic.
- Buildings brought-up to the street with display windows to activate the streetscape, or pedestrian environment, by creating an interesting and engaging walking experience.

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Street Network Improvements

- As redevelopments occurs, create an interconnected network of streets and walkable blocks. The street network should provide a clear hierarchy of streets: arterials, collector streets, local streets
- Create new and smaller blocks that make the area much more efficient to navigate for pedestrians and cyclists
- Provide additional street options so that all traffic is not forced onto major streets and already overcrowded intersections.



Street Network Map

Pleasant Valley Transit Plaza

- Evaluate the opportunity to realign East Riverside Drive to create a prominent transit plaza and new developable parcels in the large existing median at the Pleasant Valley intersection
- Focal point of Corridor with opportunities for socializing, shopping, people-watching, and accessing multiple transit modes
- Hardscaped plaza in front of transit stop featuring trees, open space, and street furniture
- A market in the plaza could provide an opportunity for small retailers to benefit from high levels of pedestrian traffic
- Development frames the transit plaza
- Potential development in the area between the rail and relocated westbound lanes of Riverside Drive is framed by trees to maintain the feeling of open space as autos approach
- Local automobile access provided to transit plaza
- Frequent and convenient bus/rail transfers



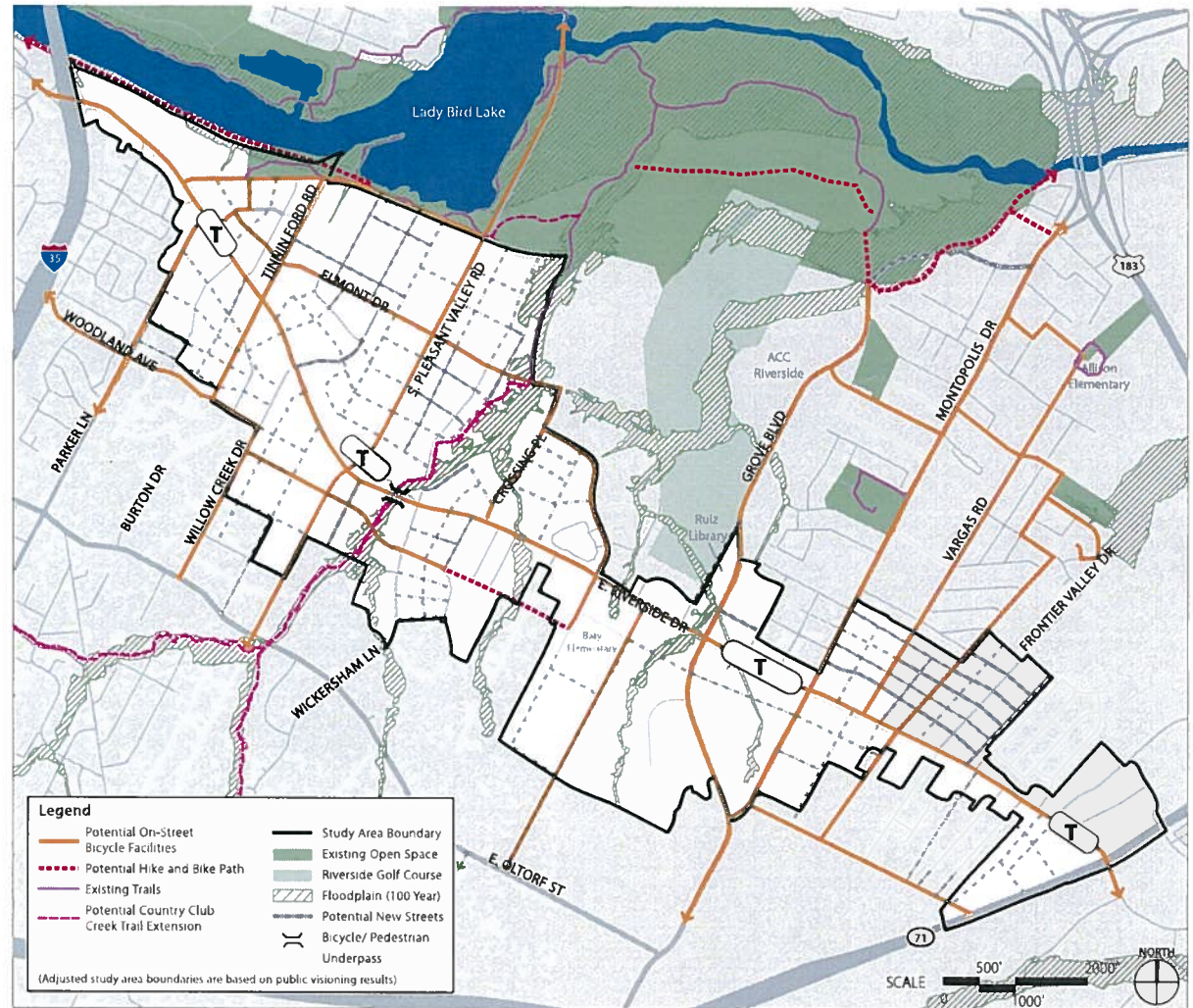
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Bicycle Circulation

- Include a mix of striped bicycle lanes and off-street bicycle paths to serve multiple needs and levels of bicycling experience
- Bike lanes and paths should complement and link to existing and proposed trails and parks
- Provide adequate bicycle parking and shower facilities

The Pedestrian Environment

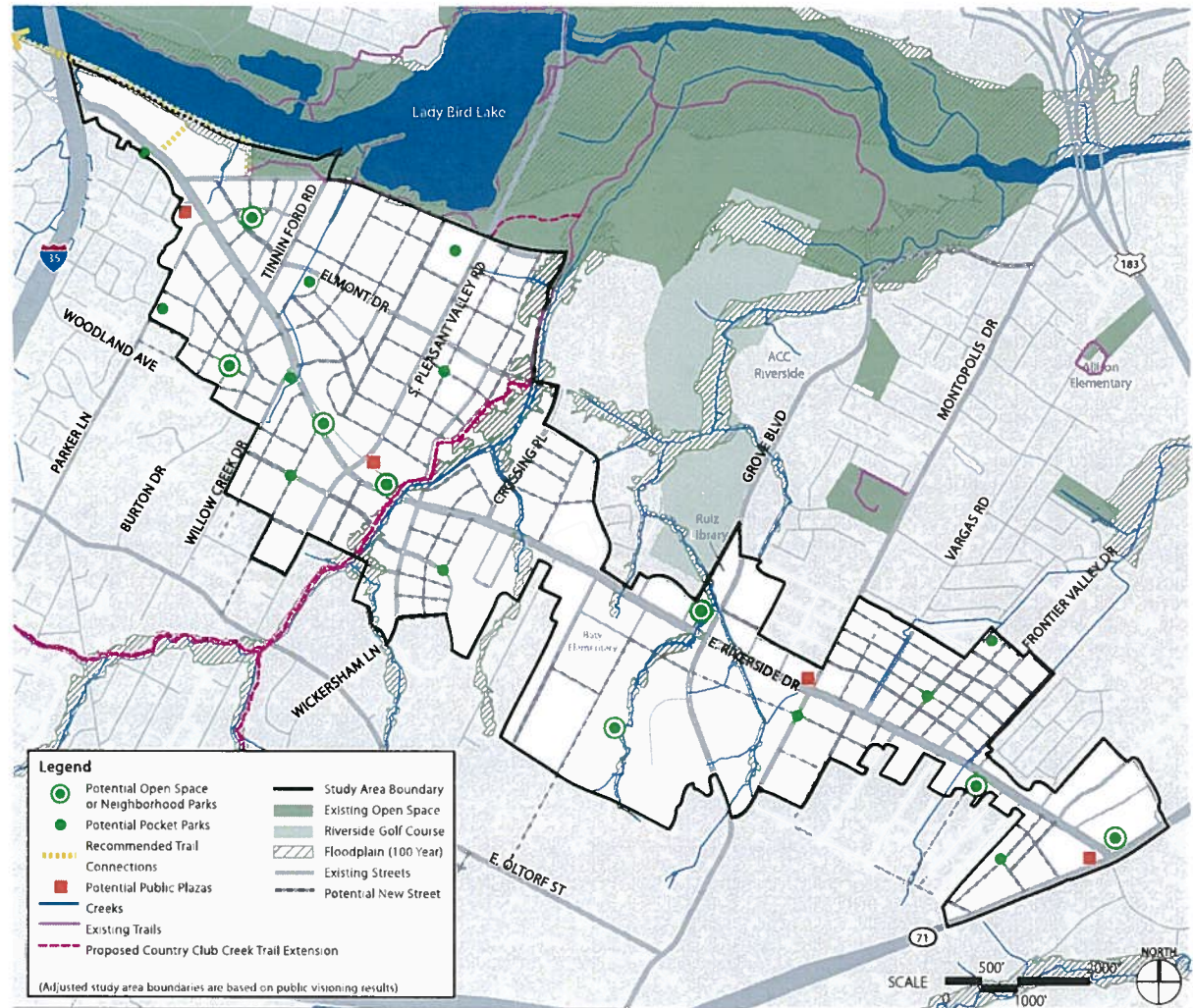
- Improve the streetscape to make walking safe, comfortable and interesting
- Initially focus streetscape improvements in Hubs and commercial areas on Riverside Drive.
- Provide continuous and ample sidewalks on all streets with the level of amenity based on size of roadway and amount of auto traffic
- Enhance key transit stops
- Provide protection from cars
- Minimize driveway curb cuts
- Provide ample safe pedestrian crossings of roadways



Bicycle Circulation Map

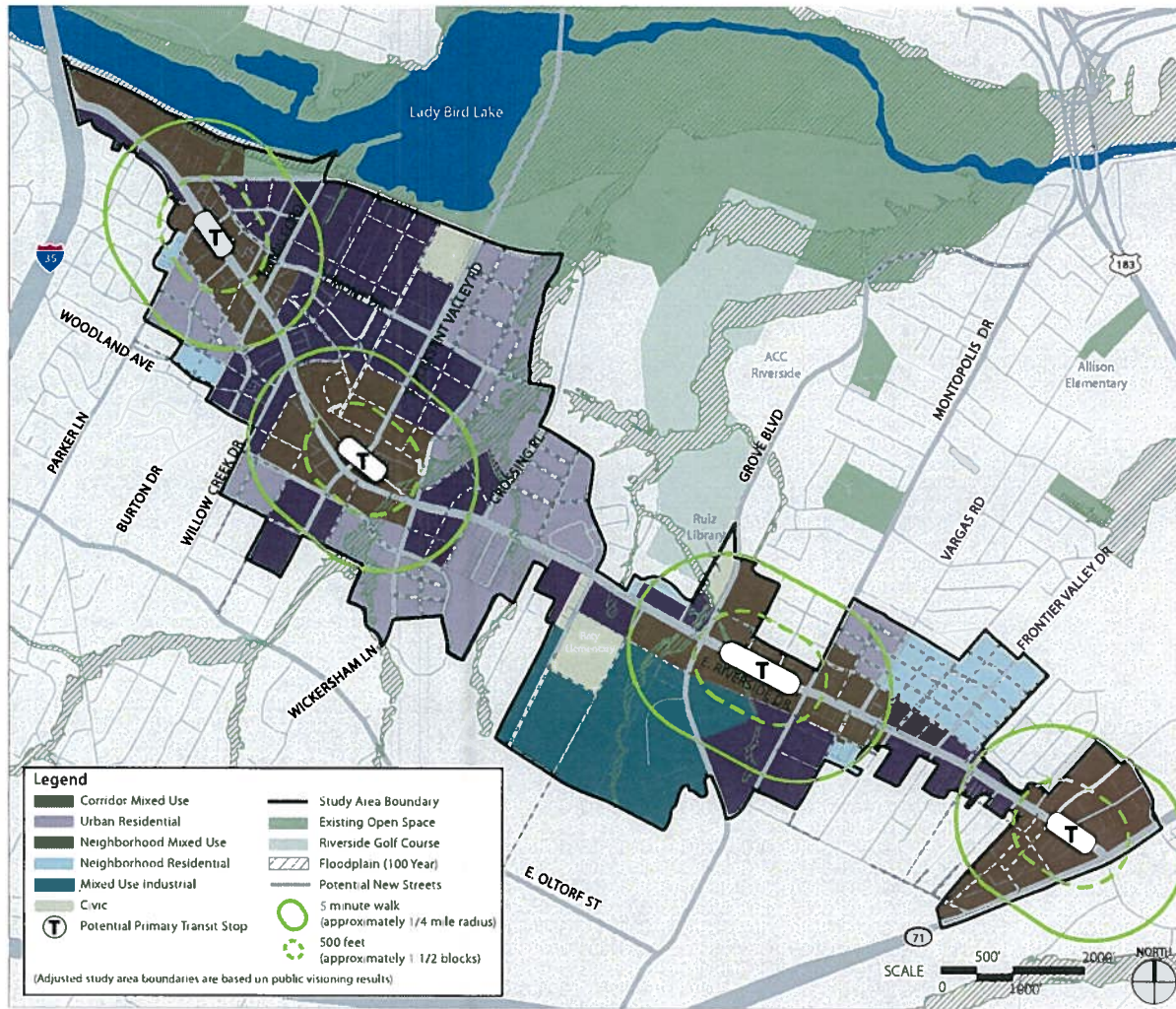
Open Space

- Incorporate a range of types and sizes of open space within the area
- Provide improved connections between Lady Bird Lake and Roy G. Guerro Park to the East Riverside Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods
- Increase open space in the area south of East Riverside Drive
- Prioritize preservation of existing natural areas and trees
- Establish a network of shaded streetscapes, bikeways and boulevards to connect open space, major activity centers and transit stops
- As redevelopment and public improvements occur, require well designed on-site open space. Establish standards to ensure that this open space is of high-quality and part of an overall system rather than remnant areas of private development or public infrastructure projects
- Integrate open space with green infrastructure/sustainable stormwater facilities



Open Space Map

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Land Use District Map

Note: This Corridor Plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

Land Use

- Activity "Hubs" are identified within 1/4 mile (5 minute walk) around primary rail stops and indicate areas with greatest potential for retail, mixed use, and general redevelopment activity. Each hub will have a distinct character shaped by its context. The four Hubs include:
 - *Lakeshore Center*: Proximity to Downtown, Lady Bird Lake and natural areas; melding nature with urban center
 - *Pleasant Valley Transit Plaza*: Center of commercial, residential and transit activity; pedestrian-focused streets; major destination; commercial and residential node ; local market location
 - *Montopolis Gateway*: Local commercial center; reminiscent of Hispanic influence in surrounding neighborhoods; gateway from surrounding neighborhoods
 - *East Riverside Gateway*: Gateway and landmark features to highlight area especially for visitors coming from airport; mixed use with commercial/ office focus; regional transportation center with potential parking structure

Proposed Land Use Districts

Land use districts identify a range of appropriate development possibilities on properties in the Planning Area as well as general scale of development. Key considerations for the placement of land use districts are proximity to a proposed rail stop, relative location to East Riverside Drive, and proximity to existing single family neighborhoods outside the Planning Area:

Corridor Mixed Use – centered around primary transit stops along East Riverside Drive and generally coincides with the central core of the Hubs; highest density district designation within the Corridor and ideally will contain buildings with multiple uses; mixed use development is key in this district; potential for height and density bonuses within the hubs.

Neighborhood Mixed Use – generally occupies the areas at edge and outside of a Corridor Mixed Use District; convenient access to neighborhood services and adjacent to the commercial mixed use Hubs surrounding the transit stops; opportunity for residential and smaller-scale commercial uses; more dense than the predominantly residential districts described below; potential for height and density bonuses within the hubs.

Urban Residential – contains only residential development in the form of townhouses, condos and multifamily dwellings; more dense than a standard single-family neighborhood; convenient access to services provided in adjacent Land Use Districts; properties in close proximity to primary transit stations have potential for height and density bonuses within the hubs.

Neighborhood Residential – contains only residential development; generally for properties located off of East Riverside Drive; provides a transition from existing single family neighborhoods to the more active, urban development of the core of East Riverside Drive; residential units may be in the form of detached single family homes, duplexes, townhouses, and smaller scale multi-family buildings. No height or density bonuses would be allowed in this district.

Industrial Mixed Use – specifically tailored to the properties owned by Tokyo Electron and Austin Energy; low impact industrial uses are still envisioned with added options for retail, office, and attached multi-family residential development; ; area in close proximity to transit stations would have potential for height and density bonuses within the hubs.

Civic Spaces – Existing civic facilities in the Study Area are identified by a civic designation on the Land Use

Districts map. As the East Riverside area changes and more people make it a place to live, work, and visit, additional civic amenities and services will be necessary to serve the community. Civic facilities could potentially be located anywhere within the Study Area and are not limited to the locations identified as Civic on the map.

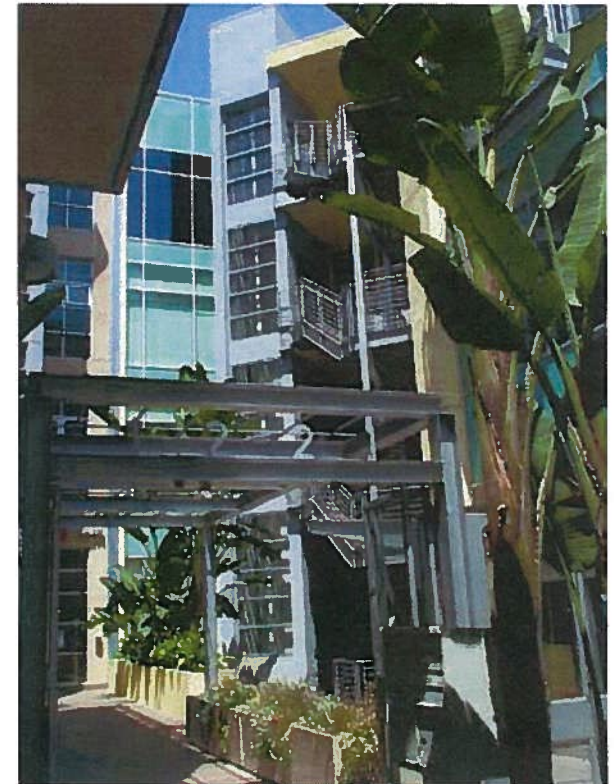
Other land use elements

- Commercial frontages are identified where ground floor non-residential development is desired; the key factors for placement of commercial frontages are proximity to a proposed rail stop and direct access to East Riverside Drive or other busy streets.
- Mixed use encouraged around primary rail stops
- In general, smaller scale residential is recommended on property adjacent to single family neighborhoods outside of Planning Area

Building Heights and Development Bonuses

- General Area proposed height limits without height bonuses range from three to five stories.
- To create an additional source of funding and an incentive to provide a higher level of community benefits in the area, it is recommended that a development bonus system be created that could allow additional building height or density in exchange for the provision of community benefits.
- The specific requirements for provision of community benefits that would need to be provided in order to receive additional entitlements will be established with public input following adoption of this Master Plan, during the creation of the Regulating Plan. It will not be a negotiated exchange, but rather a set ratio between the community benefits must be provided in exchange for a specified increase in building floor area or height.
- Development and height bonuses are only available for properties within both the planning area boundaries and a 5-minute walking distance of the primary rail stops (approximately ¼ mile radius from the rail stop).

- Buildings over three stories step back from the street to allow more air, light, space, and views.
- Tallest buildings are located in hubs around primary transit stops.
- Compatibility standards regulating the height of buildings in close proximity to single family residences will apply, creating a transition between single family properties and other types and sizes of buildings.
- In a development bonus program, developers seeking increases in height, FAR, or parking relief would



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be required to provide community benefits in exchange for the increased entitlements.

- Priorities for public benefits include: provision of open space, streetscaping, construction of bicycle facilities, and green building. In public meetings, neighborhood representatives also identified the preservation of affordable housing in the area as important and expressed concern about gentrification, making affordable housing a potential community benefit for development bonuses.
- Precise parcels in the planning area that fall within development bonus areas and the community benefit trade-offs for additional height and/or density will be determined with public input during development of the Regulating Plan and Development Bonus system for the area, following adoption of the Corridor Master Plan.

Design Guidelines

- Provide wide sidewalks and an improved streetscape
- Build to the street; create a continuous building presence at the sidewalk edge along streets
- Provide shade and comfort for the pedestrian at the street level



- Establish building height setbacks from the street to maintain a human scale at the level of the pedestrian
- Provide generous street level windows and doors
- Accentuate primary building entrances
- Encourage façade articulation to decrease perceived scale of large buildings
- Design buildings with active outdoor space through the use of balconies, patios, courtyards or similar areas
- New buildings should respect the scale and character of neighborhood edges
- Screen mechanical and utility equipment
- Incorporate signage that enhances the pedestrian character of the corridor
- Establish lighting standards that provide safety and enable nighttime activity, using fixtures that prevent light from interrupting adjacent properties
- Create landmark buildings in prominent locations to create identifiable and memorable places along the Corridor

Sustainability

- Create an incentive program for Green Building and LEED
- Provide property owners with information to encourage green practices in private development
- Consider the potential for alternative energy sources in all projects
- Material recycling and reuse should be encouraged and accommodated in project designs

Parking

- Reduce off-street parking requirements to prevent "over parking"
- Require better off-street parking design; screening parking that is visible from the street and encouraging structured parking "wrapped" by a building
- Provide on-street short-term parking
- Continue to allow and encourage shared parking and community parking facilities

Infrastructure

- Upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure in coordination with the rail project and as redevelopment occurs
- Evaluate overall drainage system condition and capacity
- Encourage shared stormwater detention and water quality facilities
- Development should incorporate green infrastructure for stormwater management
- Design new streets with green stormwater infrastructure
- Preserve natural streambeds to better manage stormwater
- Place power lines underground

Water Conservation

- The City should make reclaimed water available for redevelopment in the East Riverside Corridor area
- Incorporate water conservation measures early in project design

Affordable Housing

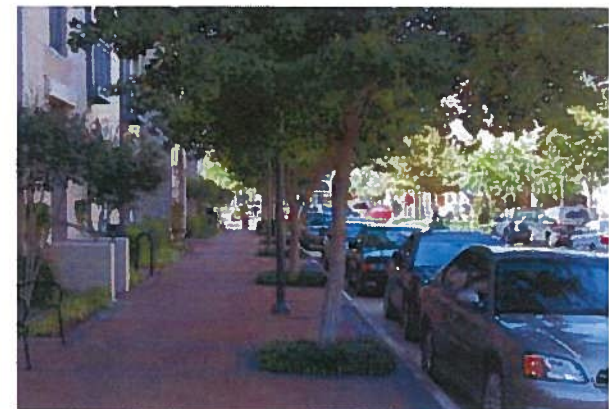
The East Riverside Corridor has traditionally provided more affordable housing options than other parts of the City, but maintaining affordability in the area will be a challenge as Austin continues to grow and the demand for housing in Austin's urban core increases, increasing the cost of land.

Preservation and creation of affordable housing in the corridor will be vital to provide housing options for households that wish to remain in the corridor as well as to provide a variety of housing options for future residents. Housing should accommodate a variety of household sizes, including families with children. A development bonus could provide an incentive for new development to provide affordable housing or contribute funds to an affordable housing trust fund. The City should also continue to administer programs and

incentives to assist in the retention and development of affordable housing, as well as explore opportunities for preservation of existing low-income rental housing in the corridor. It is important to create zoning regulations that allow the development of attached housing (duplex/condos/townhomes) to increase the supply of affordable homeownership options.

Tools for affordable housing include:

- Maintain and renew existing subsidized affordable housing.
- Preserve existing non-subsidized affordable housing.
- Increase supply of housing - especially attached affordable homeownership housing products - to address the limited product of this type available in the Corridor area in conjunction with high demand.
- Encourage private sector funding and/or construction of affordable housing through the provision of Development Bonuses.
- Expand public sector funding of affordable housing.
- Explore feasibility of a TOD catalyst project on the City-owned land at the East Riverside Drive/Pleasant Valley Blvd. intersection.
- Promote community-based housing development organizations.
- Support Asset Creation.
- Coordinate City services to mitigate effects of potential displacement.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Implementation

The Master Plan describes a variety of important steps the City, regional and state agencies, private development and the community should take to realize the vision for the East Riverside Corridor. The Master Plan recommends implementation items that fall within the following categories:

Planning and Administration

- Describes recommended steps to establish the regulatory framework for the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan and mechanisms to encourage on-going



implementation efforts.

- Recommends designating the portion of East Riverside Dr. from Pleasant Valley Blvd. to Hwy. 71 as a Core transit Corridor per application of standards in LDC Subchapter: Design Standards and Mixed use and an interim step when the Corridor Master Plan is adopted.
- Recommends creating new zoning and development standards tailored for the corridor to implement the land use and urban design recommendations of the master Plan.
- The two neighborhood plans that overlap the East Riverside Corridor area should be amended to incorporate the East Riverside Master Plan when the new zoning and development standards are adopted.



Catalyst Projects/Initial Investments

- Identifies suggested initial investments and catalyst projects with the potential to spur additional private investment and redevelopment, including the following:
- Implement streetcar/light rail transit line and primary transit stops
- Improve pedestrian crossings of East Riverside Drive
- Installation of bicycle lanes along East Riverside Drive
- Continue to implement Country Club Creek trail plan with an underpass at Riverside Drive
- Targeted public and private improvements within the development hubs
- Pleasant Valley transit plaza & development
- Reduce crime in the East Riverside Corridor area

Anticipate Infrastructure Improvements and Community Needs

- Describes key public and private investments that will need to be made to support the Corridor Plan vision. In addition to the catalyst projects listed above, a number of infrastructure improvements and community facilities are recommended.

Financial Strategies and Tools

- Identifies several tools the City may employ to finance the implementation actions outlined in this document. It will take a variety of financing mechanisms and involvement from both the private and public sector to complete the various projects recommended in the Corridor Plan.