

SECTION 5

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION
OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS
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SECTION 5: URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

Introduction

The quality and character of buildings, their relationship to sidewalks, streets and public spaces, and provisions for pedestrian comfort such as wide shaded sidewalks all significantly contribute to the character and feel of a place. The location, design and treatment of parking also plays a significant role in shaping our perception and experience of an area. This section provides urban design guidelines that will help to create an environment that is of high quality and is pedestrian-friendly. The guidelines should apply to all buildings and parking within the East Riverside Corridor planning area boundaries. These recommendations should be combined with the land use and height recommendations set forth in Section 4 – Land Use and Density - and used as the basis for the City of Austin to develop a Regulating Plan (zoning and urban design standards) that would be applied to all properties in the East Riverside Corridor planning area.

The City of Austin's Design Commission Urban Design Guidelines, that are recommendations for the higher density areas throughout the city, have informed many of the guidelines in this section. Throughout this section, photos are used to illustrate the recommendations, as well as the visual and spatial characteristics that are envisioned for the planning area.



Overall Design Recommendations

Build to the Street

Buildings give shape and form to the space around our city streets. They provide interest, activity, a sense of safety through “eyes on the street” and protection for pedestrians from harsh weather. In contrast a street fronted by surface parking lots, cars, and tall fences can be unwelcoming and uncomfortable for pedestrians. The pedestrian can feel isolated, out of place and unwelcome due to the lack of activity and inhospitable environment. A street that is fairly consistently lined with buildings at the street edge signifies a place for

people and invites pedestrian activity. A street that is lined with surface parking lots signifies a place for cars and can discourage pedestrian activity.

In commercial, mixed use, and multi-family areas along East Riverside Drive and other major roadways in the planning area, buildings should be built to the street and parking should be to the rear or side of buildings to create the most conducive environment possible for pedestrian activity.



Establish Building Height Stepbacks from the Street

Buildings taller than three stories should have a building stepback above the third floor in order to maintain human scale at the level of the pedestrian and to create wider areas for views above the third floor. Stepbacks enhance the pedestrian experience at the ground level as well as diminish the visual impact of a building as it becomes more vertical. The recommended minimum depth of front building stepbacks is 10 feet.

Provide Wide Sidewalks and an Improved Streetscape

Wide sidewalks provide the room necessary to accommodate amenities such as street trees, bollards, street furniture, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and shade that make pedestrians feel safe and comfortable when walking. In general, wider sidewalks should be adjacent to wider roadways. Sidewalk width (including areas for street trees, landscaping and street furniture) should be at least 15 feet wide for arterial roadways and commercial areas, and at least 12 feet wide for more local streets to accommodate projected pedestrian flow.

The City of Austin has several approaches to creating a high quality streetscape network and pedestrian environment. The Design Standards and Vertical Mixed Use Subchapter of the Land Development Code stresses the importance of a high quality streetscape and the Downtown Great Streets Master Plan defines specific streetscape standards for downtown. Both documents should be considered when developing streetscape regulations for the East Riverside Corridor.

Provide Shade and Comfort for the Pedestrian at the Street Level

Austin has many months of hot and humid weather and can also have cold and wet winters. These climatic

conditions can discourage pedestrian activity especially during the summer. The comfort of the pedestrian is crucial to pedestrian activity and the viability of any mixed use, higher density development.

Overhead cover, offering adequate pedestrian protection from the sun and rain should be provided along the right-of-way where buildings meet the street or on internal roadways. Cover may take the form of either a projection from the building, an arcade, or a combination of the two. There are multiple recommended sidewalk coverings including but not limited to: retractable canvas awnings, fixed awnings, pergolas, and arcades.

Street trees are another important element that increases pedestrian comfort. Existing citywide design standards (Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use) specifies street tree requirements for Core Transit Corridors and Internal Circulation Routes. The East Riverside Corridor Master Plan should carry these standards forward and

encourage installation of street trees along all other streets and pedestrian corridors.

Provide Generous Street Level Windows and Doors

Blank or featureless walls prohibit a visual connection between the inside of the building and the sidewalk. People inside cannot see those on the street and people on the street cannot see inside the building. This can contribute to the sense that the area is unpopulated



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and possibly unsafe. This lack of visual connection and feeling of inactivity can provide yet another disincentive for pedestrians. Windows and doors not only create a feeling of connection and activity, they also instill in people on the street the feeling they could be assisted if in danger. This can increase comfort and safety and help reduce crime by increasing the potential that offenders would be seen.

- The lower two levels of buildings, where they face the street or internal roadways, should be made highly transparent, through the use of windows, doors or fixed glass panels.
- A minimum area of glass, meeting the most restrictive percentage described in the Design Standards, Subchapter E should be required for the first two floors of the building.
- The use of reflective or highly tinted glass is discouraged.

Accentuate Primary Building Entrances

Buildings or individual uses within a building should place their primary entrance facing the principle street frontage or plaza/park frontage, with additional secondary entrances permitted. Primary entrances should be clearly identifiable as the main entry to the building and should include design elements that highlight the entry point to the building.

Façade Articulation

Breaking down a large building facade into smaller components is referred to as façade articulation. Façade articulation is recommended in order to create a more human-scaled building and to provide a visually interesting streetwall.

This can be achieved by changes in material, colors, window and door treatment, masonry pattern, and cornice treatments. Common elements that can enhance the expression of different building segments in residential buildings include: projected window bays, stoops, balconies, patios, and portico treatments. These elements help larger buildings achieve a more human-scaled appearance. For buildings in the East Riverside Corridor area, façade articulation is recommended for any building façade 60 feet or longer facing a street, park or plaza.

Create Active Outdoor Space

Buildings should incorporate outdoor spaces such as balconies, patios, courtyards or similar areas to provide additional open space and amenities, and to activate and provide architectural interest.

New Buildings should respect the Scale and Character of Neighborhood Edges

Existing neighborhoods contribute to the overall vitality and quality of the city. They are an important part of the community in the East Riverside corridor. Where



proposed areas of greater density are in close proximity to existing neighborhoods, special care should be taken in the design and location of new buildings, parking and vehicular access.

The height, setback, scale, massing and detailing of adjacent commercial, residential or mixed use buildings should respond to existing homes in the following ways:

- Building heights should not be out of scale with adjacent single-family residential and should include setbacks and stepbacks to transition from lower to higher buildings/structures.
- Open spaces can be used as a buffer and to link residential neighborhoods to commercial development through expanded streetscapes, linear greenways, or neighborhood parks and plazas or on-site open space at their interface.

Screen Mechanical and Utility Equipment

Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use specifies standards for screening of mechanical and utility equipment. These standards should be incorporated into the Regulating Plan for the East Riverside Corridor.

Incorporate Signage that Enhances the Pedestrian Character of the Corridor

Signage can have a significant positive or negative impact on the visual character of an area. When large, overpowering signs become the focus of an area the impact can be negative, diminishing the visual quality and public nature of the area. Parts of the East Riverside Corridor have these characteristics at present. When signage is human-scaled and complements the architectural design and character of the buildings, streets and uses it serves, the impact can be positive. Parts of South Congress Ave. and Downtown have these characteristics.

The following recommendations are provided for the design and size of signage in the East Riverside Corridor:

- The number and prominence of billboards in the Corridor should be reduced as permitted by City standards over time, until, ideally, billboards no longer exist.
- Develop and institute sign standards to control commercial signage characteristics including appropriate size, shape, height, color and lighting designed for a pedestrian scale, rather than an automobile scale;
- Limit commercial signage in the Hub areas to include: signs mounted on building fronts, small hanging signage, awning signage, window signage, and signage mounted on transoms;
- Enforce code violations to ensure conformity to design standards and maintenance;
- Develop way-finding signage throughout the Corridor to maintain consistency and clarity. Way-finding signage should be distinctive, highly visible and easy-to-read;
- Gateway signage should be located at gateway entrances to the Corridor.

Lighting

Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use specifies standards for lighting. These standards should be carried forward when developing the Regulating Plan for the East Riverside Corridor.

Create Landmark Buildings in Prominent Locations

Exhibit 4.1 identifies desired locations for landmarks throughout the planning area. Landmark buildings can provide architectural interest and focus, creating memorable places in a neighborhood. Landmark



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buildings can provide focal points for both pedestrians and drivers within the neighborhood. Buildings which are major architectural landmarks should have additional height or architectural embellishments that distinguish the building from surrounding buildings. Such expression should include but not be limited to projections, towers, roof forms, height increases, or other architectural features.

Sustainability

Designing with the environment in mind was an objective reiterated throughout the East Riverside Corridor planning process. New development and redevelopment within this Corridor should strive to become one of the “greenest” in the City, establishing a new standard for future development in other parts of Austin. To accomplish such lofty goals, several green building and sustainable development recommendations are provided for the East Riverside Corridor.

Sustainability Recommendations:

Create an incentive program for Green Building and LEED

An incentive system should be developed to encourage green building as part of a development bonus program. All buildings should strive to meet either 1) Austin’s Green Building Program, or 2) be LEED Certified as defined by the US Green Building Council or another nationally recognized green building certification system. A development bonus program could include the inclusion of sustainable building design and practices as a potential way for developers to be granted additional height or density for a project.

Provide property owners with information to encourage green practices in private development

Buildings in the Corridor should be designed to maximize energy performance. Property owners should be offered information and provided an opportunity to learn about sustainability, and be given information about the City of Austin Green Building program, and any rebates or incentives for which they might qualify.

Consider the potential for alternative energy sources in all projects

Consideration should be made for assessing projects for energy saving devices and non-polluting and renewable energy strategies. All buildings, new and existing, and public projects, should be encouraged to install alternative energy generators, such as solar panels, small scale windmills, etc.

Material recycling and reuse should be encouraged and accommodated in project designs

The use of reusable and recycled materials in construction creates development that is pro-active in terms of sustainability. In addition, buildings in the planning area should coordinate the size and functionality of refuse areas with the anticipated recycling collection services

for glass, plastic, office paper, newspaper, cardboard, and organic wastes to maximize the effectiveness of the dedicated areas. Projects should be designed to adhere to the City’s Zero Waste Guidelines.

Additional sustainable practices can be found in the infrastructure section of the plan, Section 6, and on Austin Energy’s Green Building web page.



Landmark Building



Parking

At present, there is an abundance of surface parking lots in the East Riverside Corridor area that are under-utilized and contribute to an auto-dominated environment that discourages and inhibits pedestrian activity. Future redevelopment that is less auto-dependent can create value in these undervalued areas, enhance the livability of the area and provide adequate and attractive parking for new uses. It is important to get the parking right to improve the pedestrian environment, encourage alternate forms of transportation such as walking, biking or transit-use, but provide enough auto parking to ensure economic viability of the development.

Parking Recommendations:

Reduce Parking Requirements

Residents and employees who live and work in more compact mixed use areas with access to transit can reduce their need for a car. Excessive parking requirements add significantly to a project's cost and thus can act as a deterrent to redevelopment. To change this pattern, minimum parking requirements for the East Riverside Corridor should be reduced and maximum parking limits should be established.

Future standards for off-street parking in the Corridor should follow the parking standards of Austin's Transit-Oriented Development districts, which are:

- Minimum parking requirement: 60% of the requirements in Appendix A, Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements in the Austin Land Development Code (LDC) Section 25-6, unless other conditions are met to reduce the minimum to 50% of what is currently required.

- Maximum parking limit: 100% of the requirements in Appendix A, Tables of Off-Street Parking and Loading Requirements in LDC Section 25-6.

Further reductions in both the allowed and maximum parking requirements should be considered over time as the transit system grows and the area becomes the multi-modal activity center envisioned in this plan.

Require Better Parking Design

The placement and treatment of parking greatly influences an area's appearance and walkability. Large surface parking lots in front of buildings create an unattractive and unappealing pedestrian environment and lengthen the distance one must walk from the sidewalk and transit to the building. As properties in the East Riverside Corridor develop or redevelop, parking should incorporate the following design guidelines:

- New parking lots should be prohibited in front of buildings. Parking should be structured or surface parking should be behind buildings and/or not visible from primary streets.
- Substantial screening should be provided for off-street surface parking that is visible from the street.
- New buildings should include embedded or wrapped structured parking where possible.
- Where exposed to public view parking structures should have façades that screen the view of cars, break down the façade into smaller increments, place ramps internal to the structure, and have usable retail or service uses on the 1st floor lining all public rights of way and/or parks and plazas.

Over time, the existing surface parking lots should be replaced with structured parking and additional buildings. Properties to the north of Riverside Drive and west of Pleasant Valley have a great opportunity to utilize



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the existing slope to provide underground parking and enable buildings to front onto the sidewalk on Riverside. This change would significantly improve the urban design character of the area.

Provide On-Street Short-term Parking

On-street parallel parking should be provided where possible on all streets in the planning area to allow for short-term, high-turnover parking. On-street parking spaces should not be attached to any specific use or fulfill any specific parking requirement, but should instead be used for guest and short term retail and office parking. In commercial areas, on-street parking should be priced and metered at market rates. The revenues could be used to fund streetscape improvements and maintenance within the East Riverside Corridor area.

Continue to Allow and Encourage Shared Parking and Community Parking Facilities

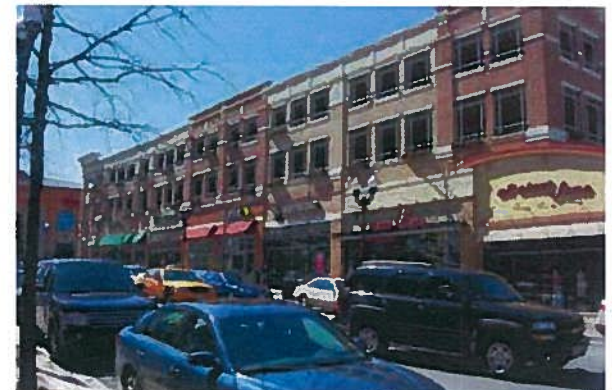
Shared parking is parking which is available to more than one building or land use. In general, different types of land uses may create different demand for parking throughout the day. For example, restaurants may require more parking in evenings while office buildings need parking during the day.

Shared parking should be encouraged within the planning area in order to promote more efficient use of parking facilities. Shared parking arrangements in which a dedicated parking space may count towards the parking requirement of two or more uses are currently allowed by city code upon submission of a parking plan by the developer demonstrating that such an alternative parking arrangement is appropriate.

Structured parking is more expensive to build, especially for smaller properties. As redevelopment occurs and replaces the excess surface parking in the area, private development may provide additional parking to be used

as shared community parking facilities. This would likely take place if or when there is an unfulfilled demand for parking in the area.

In order to better manage parking city-wide, the City has recently established a parking enterprise which has the ability to issue bonds to build and manage parking. The City could build and manage parking facilities in the area by charging market rates (for contract parking and hourly parking) to pay for the parking facilities over a number of years. If a rail line is built along East Riverside Drive, shared community parking facilities should be evaluated for potential inclusion as part of the rail project. A shared parking facility to serve a transit line is recommended near the E. Riverside Dr./SH 71 intersection. Funding for this facility should be investigated as part of the rail initiative.



SECTION 6

INFRASTRUCTURE

WATER & WASTEWATER
STORMWATER MANAGEMENT/
WATER QUALITY
WATER CONSERVATION
ELECTRIC & NATURAL GAS

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Analysis

The ANA Consultant Team worked with the Austin Water Utility (AWU) to use computer analysis to model the effect on the water and wastewater distribution systems of future development that could result from the changes in the Corridor area as outlined in this plan. The models provided insight into upgrades necessary to water and wastewater mains and the related infrastructure needed to accommodate future development along the Corridor. The modeling was based on the proposed Corridor maximum build-out and a very conservative estimate of water and wastewater demand was used (conservative in this context means greater water and wastewater demand was assumed).

Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Recommendations:

Upgrade water infrastructure in coordination with the rail project and as redevelopment occurs

AWU has indicated that a series of water infrastructure system upgrades would need to be made over the next 20 years or more in this area due to a number of factors:

1. The age of the existing water system infrastructure serving the Corridor ranges from 40 to 60 years and is nearing the end of its projected useful life. In addition, commercial fire flow requirements have increased and now are often considered the controlling factor for determining the need for new water system upgrades to serve any new development with a commercial land use component.
2. The existing water distribution system and supporting infrastructure serving the East Riverside Corridor area is capable of supporting some additional development, however, additional water distribution system

improvements would be required to adequately serve and support the maximum build out that could occur based on the land use and development concepts in this plan. Based on the results of the hydraulic water model, it is anticipated that an additional 36-inch transmission line would be needed along the entire length of East Riverside Drive (assuming the existing 24-inch remains in service), if the area were to develop to its maximum capacity envisioned in this plan. Also, for ultimate build-out additional 16 and 24-inch water system improvements would be required to distribute water north and south of Riverside Drive.

3. Many of the existing water distribution mains serving the Riverside Drive Corridor currently are located under the driving lanes of the roadway and may conflict with the proposed light rail/street car system and roadway improvements. Portions of the existing 24-inch water main along East Riverside Drive will likely need to be relocated to accommodate the roadway and rail improvements. The exact extent of these water system improvements will be determined as the Corridor redevelops and the route for the rail line is established.

4. Due to the age of the infrastructure and to satisfy AWU's maximum daily demand plus fire flow requirements, all pipes 6 inches and smaller will need to be retired and replaced with new water mains. This new pipe network will need to be 12 and 16-inch distribution lines to satisfy the demand loads.

5. The water mains running under Riverside Drive also serve development to the east and could require upsizing in the future to accommodate growth outside the Corridor Plan boundaries.

The City of Austin has a program to partner with private developers to install larger water mains and infrastructure than what is immediately required for the specific development being proposed to serve future additional adjacent development areas. This is a means to provide additional water distribution capacity to the Riverside Corridor and adjacent areas as new development occurs.

Austin Water Utility's future long range plans for the Corridor area include a proposed new water treatment plant (approximately 2040 timeframe) which would serve the area and a large transmission main network to connect the existing 60-inch transmission main in Pleasant Valley to Pilot Knob Reservoir (no timeframe or alignment has been determined). These two major projects may require adjustment to the sizes currently modeled and proposed in this study, but could also act as a means for providing additional water to the East Riverside Corridor.

The analysis conducted as part of this study can be used as a tool for Austin Water Utility's Systems Planning group, in conjunction with analysis of current development, future rail plans, changes to fire flow requirements, and changes to development conditions outside of the planning area to determine the need for system upgrades over time and to appropriately budget for Capital Improvement Projects.

Upgrade wastewater infrastructure in coordination with the rail project and as redevelopment occurs

The existing wastewater infrastructure serving the East Riverside Corridor is presently at capacity and is of concern to the City of Austin. However, the City is implementing a pending Capital Improvements Program (CIP) project (Downtown Wastewater Tunnel) for the construction of

new wastewater lines that will divert some wastewater that currently flows through the Riverside Drive Corridor wastewater collection system, thus making available additional wastewater capacity to better meet the needs of potential Riverside Corridor redevelopment. Based on the results of the hydraulic wastewater model, some sections of the Carson Creek Interceptor will need to be replaced with 18, 24, and 30-inch lines. Also, a number of new 12 to 15-inch wastewater lines would be required throughout the planning area to accommodate the wastewater demands of the future development that could occur in the Riverside Corridor.

In addition, the existing wastewater infrastructure located in the Riverside Drive Corridor is old (installed in the 1950's and 60's) and is in need of replacement in some locations. AWU reports that wet weather flows through the wastewater collection system are four (4) times those of average daily dry weather flows due to infiltration and inflow (I/I) in the aging wastewater collection lines, manholes, and services.

Also, as reported above for the water infrastructure, much of the existing wastewater collection system serving the Riverside Drive Corridor is currently located under the driving lanes of the roadway and may conflict with the proposed light rail/street car system and roadway improvements. Combined with the age of the system and the inflow/infiltration issues, much of the sanitary sewer system will need to be replaced or relocated throughout the Riverside Drive Corridor. The exact extent of these wastewater system improvements will be determined as the Corridor develops and if a light rail/streetcar line is built.

Due to the age of the existing wastewater infrastructure,

the City should work with developers in the planning phases of private development approval to reimburse a portion of the upsizing or replacing the existing sewer mains to serve adjacent development areas. Upgrading the sanitary sewer network to reduce the current infiltration problems from the older wastewater mains serving the Corridor area would act to reduce the amount of inflow and infiltration and reduce the wet weather flows in the system. Austin Water Utility systems planning group can use the analysis conducted as part of this plan to anticipate the potential changes from the historical development pattern in the area and be prepared to look for opportunities to work with private developers to upsize the infrastructure or to appropriately budget for future Capital Improvement Projects.

Stormwater Management/ Water Quality

A majority of the existing development in the East Riverside Corridor Planning Area was constructed prior to the City of Austin's current stormwater management and stormwater quality regulations. As a result, there are some localized flooding and erosion problems within the East Riverside Drive Corridor. The older developments in the Corridor were built with few or no stormwater detention and stormwater quality treatment facilities on site.

All proposed new development and redevelopment in the area will be required to meet the City's current water quality and detention standards, as prescribed by the City of Austin Land Development Code (LDC), the Environmental Criteria Manual (ECM) and the

Drainage Criteria Manual (DCM). These stormwater facilities can also serve the community by providing additional landscape and open space. Shared or regional stormwater treatment facilities, where feasible, are encouraged to be developed within the Corridor to create a more sustainable development pattern. Stormwater facilities and the conveyance of stormwater can include wet ponds, detention ponds, biofiltration ponds, vegetative swales, xeriscaping, bioswales, rain gardens, re-irrigation ponds, rain water harvesting and sedimentation/filtration ponds. The use of stormwater controls within the landscape is the preferred method of water quality treatment.

The Riverside Drive Corridor Master Plan includes proposals for additional streets, roadways, buildings, and other impervious structures, but also recommends additional greenspace. The stormwater conveyance (storm drain) system that currently exists within the Corridor is undersized or non-existent. Consequently, significant upgrades will be required to serve the proposed street grid system and address some localized flooding problems that currently exist in the Corridor.

Stormwater Management Recommendations:

Evaluate overall drainage system condition and capacity and establish short term and long term priorities

Consistent with the process outlined in the City's Watershed Protection Master Plan to identify and prioritize watershed problems, the City should identify short term strategic improvements to storm drains, facilities and inlet construction, as well as long term improvements in the planning area and downstream to more closely meet current standards.

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The City should look for opportunities to partner with private development to upgrade the drainage system infrastructure as redevelopment occurs, as the City's budget allows. Drainage improvements should also be coordinated with the rail project and the redesign/reconstruction of Riverside Drive.

Evaluate the potential for participation in the Regional Stormwater Management Program

The Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) is available in the Country Club watershed. Private developers may participate in this program in lieu of constructing on-site storm water detention if the proposed development will produce no identifiable adverse impact to other properties due to increased runoff from the proposed development.

Encourage shared stormwater detention and water quality facilities

Where possible, the City should pursue public/private partnerships in the planning area to make available the option for regional stormwater detention and stormwater quality treatment for the development and redevelopment of the Corridor. As new development occurs, the City should look for opportunities to partner with developers to create regional detention facilities to serve greater areas, rather than each project having on-site detention. The current City Code only requires redevelopment to mitigate for stormwater detention for increases in impervious cover. Therefore, most if not all the cost for regional stormwater detention will require funding by the City.

It is not feasible for all properties in the Corridor to participate in regional detention (by participation in the RSMP for the Country Club watershed or through the construction of a regional facility) and treatment,

nor would all property developers or owners choose to participate even if it is feasible. Per the City's current policy, those sites will be required to provide on-site stormwater quality control and detention facilities if they cannot or choose not to participate in a regional option. New development or redevelopment is encouraged to enter into cooperative agreements with surrounding properties to provide detention or other stormwater management facilities that serve multiple properties.

Developers should consider coordinating and co-locating detention facilities with locations identified for open space or pocket parks. Where feasible, new parks should be designed to include flood control and water quality facilities. All properties purchased or dedicated for public buildings should also be evaluated to include potential sites for additional regional water quality and stormwater detention facilities.

Development should incorporate green infrastructure for stormwater quality management

The use of smaller "green infrastructure" – innovative water quality within the landscape – at multiple locations throughout a site can increase the efficiency of treating stormwater for more frequent, smaller storm events. The smaller facilities (i.e. series of facilities) can also provide preliminary treatment for larger infrequent storm events. The smaller stormwater facilities should be designed as part of the landscape and open space network. The size of stormwater facilities is directly related to the size of the facility watershed. The amount of impervious cover within the watershed and the speed of conveyance through the watershed to the facility outfall also contribute to the required size of the stormwater facility.

To reduce the size of stormwater quality treatment

Water & Stormwater Options for the Corridor





facilities, smaller green infrastructure facilities, including biofiltration ponds, vegetative filter strips, xeriscaping, bioswales, rain gardens, re-irrigation ponds, and rain water harvesting, among others, can also be used to reduce the rate and volume, including the speed of conveyance, for stormwater. Approved green infrastructure methods that contribute towards water quality development requirements are outlined in the ECM. Although pervious pavement is not permitted within the LDC for reductions in impervious cover for vehicular areas, it is allowed for impervious cover reductions for pedestrian areas. Pervious pavement including asphalt, concrete and unit pavers can be used throughout the Corridor to reduce impervious cover. Infiltration rates of pervious pavement can be calculated to determine the rate and volume for stormwater, though its long-term effectiveness is impacted significantly by maintenance practices and clogging sediment.

Green roofs can be used to reduce the effect of heat island and to create a more sustainable city. Unfortunately, preliminary studies performed by the City of Austin have demonstrated the use of green roofs for water quality control has been unsuccessful for improving stormwater management; as such, green roofs are currently not included as a permitted City of Austin method for stormwater management. Initial findings indicate that the fertilization and maintenance of green roof landscapes have actually worsened water quality. Integrated pest management (IPM) programs, which should include guidelines for landscape fertilization, as well as programs for testing and enforcement of IPM programs, may present opportunities for green roofs.

The City should continue evaluating and monitoring alternative stormwater quality management practices including green roofs. The City has an accepted approach of evaluating new and emerging technologies. These evaluations could lead to future regulations to allow additional alternative water quality practices.

Design new streets with green stormwater quality treatment infrastructure

Consideration should be given in the design of all new streets to incorporate vegetative filter strips, and/or biofiltration systems in the medians and/or on the perimeter of streets to treat stormwater. Street tree zones located between the sidewalk and the street provide an opportunity to include site specific stormwater quality controls while also taking advantage of the stormwater to irrigate the trees and other vegetation. The inclusion of green storm water quality treatment is in addition to the requirement to convey stormwater off the street and not cause flooding of any infrastructure. Placement of trees should be compatible with existing and/or proposed storm drain infrastructure.

Preserve natural streambeds to better manage stormwater

Natural landscape buffers to creeks and tributaries allow stormwater to infiltrate into the groundwater more slowly before entering the streambed, which results in improving water quality and decreasing the velocity of the stormwater flowing through easily erosive soil areas.

Natural streambeds should be preserved, buffers maintained and existing concrete lined channels should be evaluated for their ability to be returned to a "natural state". This may require additional easement acquisition, as necessary, to maintain or increase the current capacity of the channels. There are existing standards in LDC Section 25-8 for suburban watershed standards and regulations to ensure the streams and creeks in the watersheds are preserved. These standards could be strengthened to better regulate and maintain stream buffers.

Water Conservation

As much as 60% of potable water consumption is attributable to landscape irrigation during summer months. There are many options to reduce potable water demand. Some of these options include using reclaimed water, gray water and stormwater in place of potable water, where feasible. Reclaimed water is created by reusing treated wastewater effluent that is normally discharged to a natural system (i.e. Colorado River). Gray water is typically any water that has been used, except water from toilets. Stormwater is water created by rain fall that is typically collected from roofs, but can also be collected from parking lots or other impervious surfaces.

The City of Austin currently has a Water Reclamation Program, in which highly treated effluent from the City's wastewater treatment plant is skimmed off, or reclaimed, placed in tanks, and piped to customers for use for irrigation, cooling, and manufacturing, instead of being discharged to the Colorado River. The City has a construction project, almost ready to bid, that will reactivate an abandoned force main and bring reclaimed water to within 1.5 miles of the East Riverside Corridor. Another construction project, in the late planning stage, will bring reclaimed water to Guerrero Park and the periphery of the Corridor. In addition to these mains, master plans call for reclaimed water mains along East Riverside Drive and Pleasant Valley Road. To support this network of mains, an elevated storage tank will be needed on high ground south of East Riverside Drive.

The City of Austin currently uses reclaimed water for golf course irrigation and irrigation at Sand Hill Energy Center. The City is engaged in preliminary planning to provide reclaimed water to the Robert Mueller Airport redevelopment and the University of Texas, the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, and the Onion Creek Soccer Complex. Other Texas cities also use reclaimed

water for various purposes. For example, San Antonio uses reclaimed water to supplement stream flows in its famed River Walk. El Paso uses reclaimed water for irrigation throughout the city and many Texas cities such as Amarillo, Georgetown, Lakeway, Las Colinas, Lubbock and Odessa use reclaimed water for irrigation of golf courses, ball fields, and landscaping.

Water Conservation Recommendations:

The City should make reclaimed water available for redevelopment in the East Riverside Corridor area

The City should continue to make progress in implementing the Reclaimed Water master plan to install water mains along East Riverside Drive and Pleasant Valley Road in order to provide reclaimed water infrastructure to facilitate redevelopment in and around the Corridor. When the reclaimed water system is completed in the East Riverside Corridor area, it should be able to provide a significant amount of irrigation water for landscape and open space for the entire Corridor. Further, a non-potable irrigation system should significantly reduce the need for potable water infrastructure and produce a revenue stream for the Water Reclamation Program. The City should provide information to developers in the area about how to design for inclusion of reclaimed water infrastructure and use in their developments.

Incorporate water conservation measures early in project design

Water conservation measures should be incorporated early in the design of all new development. The need for irrigation should be minimized by using xeriscaping. Water efficient irrigation systems (drip irrigation, microsprays, etc) should be used where irrigation is provided. Where possible, stormwater should be captured and redirected for irrigation purposes through

rainwater harvesting, rain gardens and other innovative stormwater controls. Parks, open space, and other areas where large spaces require irrigation should be designed so that it can connect to the reclaimed water infrastructure in the future.

Electric & Natural Gas

No capacity analysis or studies were conducted for electric and natural gas service in the East Riverside Corridor Planning Area. The electrical services adequacy will need to be determined by Austin Energy. Natural gas is provided by private companies. Capacity and availability will be determined by the individual private companies.

Electric Infrastructure Recommendations:

Place power lines underground

This Plan recommends that existing overhead power lines be placed or relocated underground to the extent possible along the Corridor. While this is an expensive proposition, this practice promotes the plan's vision of a pedestrian-friendly streetscape and overall aesthetic enhancement of the Corridor. New development and redevelopment should place power lines underground from the building to the property line. The benefits of placing the electrical lines underground also include a greater ability to place trees in the streetscape without interference with the overhead lines and the ability to build sidewalks without undesirable obstructions.

SECTION 7

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

INTRODUCTION
AUSTIN'S HOUSING NEED
ERC HOUSING INVENTORY
HOUSING RESOURCES
PRESERVATION OF AFF. HOUSING
POLICY CHALLENGES
TOOLS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Introduction

Housing affordability has become a significant issue in the City of Austin, especially in areas located in close proximity to downtown, such as the East Riverside area. In order to maintain a robust economy and diverse community, Austin residents need housing that accommodates all types of living situations. A thriving community includes a variety of housing types – single-family homes, duplexes, apartments (from small to large complexes), and condominiums – that serve a variety of people – single adults, couples, families, elderly people, and people with disabilities – at a variety of income levels. This chapter outlines the housing needs in the City, highlights the specific needs for the East Riverside Corridor, and identifies affordable housing initiatives and tools the City can utilize to create and maintain affordable housing.

Austin's Housing Needs

Housing costs in Austin have risen by 85 percent in the past 10 years. The median value of a single family home in Austin was \$129,900 in 1998. By 2008, the median had increased almost 90 percent to \$240,000. This is a dramatic change from the previous decades. According to a 1998 study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), from 1970 to 1990, Austin was one of the most affordable places to live in the country. Today homeowners who have lived for generations in one neighborhood can no longer afford increasing property taxes. In some areas, rising values are encouraging multifamily property owners to sell their properties or convert to condominium ownership.

Austin is a majority-renter city. Fifty-four percent of Austin households rent, while the balance own the home in which they reside. The City's homeownership rate is likely to stabilize and possibly decrease modestly

with the current slowdown in mortgage lending. Even if the homeownership rate increases, rental property will continue to play a large part in housing Austin's residents.

Increasing moderately priced housing stock in Austin is crucial to recruit and keep entry-level workers and sustain economic growth in the urban core. In addition, increasing the supply of affordable housing in Austin's urban core improves the quality of life for all residents as they face shorter commutes, less pollution, fully-funded essential public services, and more equal tax burdens.

The federal government defines housing affordability in terms of the proportion of household income that is used to pay housing costs. Housing is "affordable" if no more than 30 percent of a household's monthly income is needed for rent, mortgage payments and utilities. When the proportion of household income needed to

Exhibit 7.1: Austin Area Median Family Income Chart, 2009

MSA: Austin – Round Rock, TX.

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30% Median Income <i>(30% of median defined by HUD)</i>	15,400	17,600	19,800	22,000	23,750	25,550	27,300	29,050
40% Median Income*	20,500	23,450	26,400	29,300	31,650	34,000	36,350	38,700
50% Median Income <i>(very low income defined by HUD)</i>	25,650	29,300	33,000	36,650	39,600	42,500	45,450	48,400
60% Median Income*	30,800	35,200	39,600	44,000	47,500	51,000	54,550	58,050
65% Median Income*	33,350	38,100	42,900	47,650	51,450	55,250	59,100	62,900
80% Median Income <i>(low-income defined by HUD)</i>	41,050	46,900	52,800	58,650	63,350	68,050	72,750	77,400
100% Median Income	51,300	58,650	65,950	73,300	79,150	85,050	90,900	96,750
120% Median Income	61,550	70,350	79,150	87,950	95,000	102,050	109,050	116,100

* MFI figures were internally calculated and not defined directly by HUD, to be used for other program purposes only

pay housing costs exceeds 30 percent, a household is considered “cost burdened.”

Housing costs are also examined in the context of the median family income (MFI). Federal housing programs divide low and moderate income households into categories, based on their relationship to the MFI: very low-income (earning 30 percent or less of the MFI), low-income (earning between 31 and 50 percent of the MFI), and moderate-income (earning between 51 and 80 percent of the MFI). The current MFI for the Austin area is \$73,300. See Exhibit 7.1.

The 2008 Housing Market Study demonstrates Austin’s need for affordable housing stock for both renters and homeowners. With more growth occurring on the outskirts of Austin, there has been an increase of affordable stock in the far southern and northern portions of the region; however, the supply of affordable housing has decreased in central, west and northwest Austin. Addressing the need for affordable housing now and in the future will require the community’s commitment to increase affordable housing stock for both rental and ownership units.

Rental Needs

Austin has a significant need for affordable rental housing. The city’s rental market is narrowly priced, with 79 percent of units priced between \$550 and \$1,150 per month. The need for affordable rental housing is particularly concentrated for those earning 0-30 percent of the area’s median family income—just one in six renters earning less than \$20,000 can find affordable housing in Austin. In 2008, Austin’s renters earning less than \$20,000 per year – 44,700 renters – had about 7,000 affordable units in the market from which to choose. This means that there are approximately 38,000 more

renters earning less than \$20,000 per year than there are affordable units in the market available to them. This total includes subsidized units and vouchers available through the Housing Choice Voucher program, a federally funded program administered locally by the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and the Housing Authority of Travis County, that helps families pay their rent. In order to reduce the existing gap of low-cost rental units (priced at \$425 and less) by 10 percent by 2020, 16,500 units, or 1,370 units each year should be created.

Homeownership Needs

Those earning less than \$50,000 who want to buy a home in Austin would have found 16% of the market affordable to them in 2008. Austin has a need for homes priced between \$113,000 and \$240,000 to enable its renter population earning between \$35,000 and \$75,000 per year to become homeowners. In many cities, this demand for affordable homes is partially fulfilled through attached housing (duplex/condos/townhomes); however, in Austin, this ownership product is currently limited.

The median home price of all homes in Austin as of October 2008 was \$240,000. The median price for detached single family homes was \$260,000 and the median price for a single family attached home was \$199,000. The Riverside, Pleasant Valley, and Montopolis neighborhoods surround the East Riverside Corridor planning area. The average home price in the Riverside neighborhood (\$177,820) is significantly higher than in Montopolis (\$153,525) and Pleasant Valley (\$152,559). It should be noted that the stock of owner-occupied housing is only 1/5 the size of rental stock. See Exhibit 7.2 for more detailed information on home prices in the area.

Exhibit 7.2: Average Listing Prices

Area	Multifamily	Single Family Attached	Single Family Detached	Average Home Price
Pleasant Valley	\$204,975.00	\$115,234.00	\$222,018.00	\$152,559.00
Riverside	\$198,089.00	\$102,172.00	\$322,444.00	\$177,820.00
Montopolis	\$158,844.00	\$162,157.00	\$148,598.00	\$153,525.00

Source: City of Austin Comprehensive Housing Market Study (2009)

East Riverside Corridor (ERC) Housing Inventory

The general East Riverside area currently provides more affordable rents than the city average. In the third quarter of 2009, the average rent for the Southeast quadrant of the city, which is larger than the East Riverside Corridor and encompasses the East Riverside/Oltorf, Montopolis, and Southeast Planning Areas, is \$666; while the average rent in Travis County is \$793 and the average rent in the Austin MSA is \$787. To afford the average rent in the Southeast area, a household needs to earn \$26,640 (36% of Median Family Income). The area also has a high number of units under construction. According to Austin Investor Interests, 15% of the units currently under construction in Austin in the third quarter of 2009 were located in the Southeast quadrant.

The area contains affordable rental housing for families and students located relatively close to the central business district, and includes amenities such as public transit and neighborhood level retail. Some of this affordable housing stock has been impacted by redevelopment over the last several years. While this trend is likely to continue, the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan serves to offer a framework by which redevelopment can occur that is responsive to community values and stakeholder input, while managing to address the needs of all citizens living in the area, now and in the future.

In September 2009, the City of Austin conducted a housing inventory of multi-family properties with more than 50 units as part of its analysis of affordable housing preservation in Austin. In the defined East Riverside Corridor planning area, there are a total of 32 multifamily properties with more than 50 units. These include subsidized properties as well as market-rate properties. While none of the 32 properties are affordable to individuals making below 30 percent MFI, the majority

Exhibit 7.3: Housing Inventory for the East Riverside Corridor

Market-Rate Housing Inventory In East Riverside Corridor

(Apartment Complexes with 50+ units)

Type*	# of Properties	# of Units	Total Units in COA	% of COA
Affordable to 0-30% MFI	0	0	565	0%
Affordable to 31-50% MFI	17	3,685	58,204	6%
Affordable to 51% MFI and above	7	2,045	248,231	1%
Total	24	5,730	307,000	2%

* Units are affordable if estimated cost of combined rent and utilities are no more than 30% of monthly income

Subsidized Housing In East Riverside Corridor

Type	# of Properties	# of Affordable Units	Total Units in COA	% of COA
City of Austin Funded (does not include any LIHTC)	1	284	3,448	8%
TDHCA Tax Credits (LIHTC)	7	1,440	8,842	16%
Project Based Section 8	0	0	1,967	0%
HACA - Public Housing	0	0	1,928	0
Total	8	1,724	16,185	11%

Source: Austin Investor Interests (2nd Quarter 2009), Austin Comprehensive Housing Market Study, City of Austin Affordable Housing Inventory

are affordable to those making between 30 percent to 50 percent MFI (see Exhibit 7.3). The rest of the properties are affordable only to those making above 50 percent MFI, or they are currently under construction. The Housing Market Study found that among market-rate properties with more than 50 units in Austin, there are only nine properties with 565 units in Austin that provide units affordable to those making 30% MFI or below. The majority of these apartments are located in north Austin. The market-rate multifamily housing inventory in the East Riverside corridor comprises about 2% of the total housing inventory of multi-family housing units with more than 50 units in the City of Austin.

Of the 32 multifamily properties with more than 50 units in the Corridor, eight received public subsidies, providing 1,724 units (23% of total units in the Corridor). The subsidized multifamily housing in the East Riverside Corridor comprises approximately 11% of the total subsidized multifamily housing in the City of Austin, while the estimated population in the same area is 1% of the population of the City of Austin. The Corridor contains 16% of the units in Austin created through the Housing Tax Credit program (administered through the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs), a total of 1,440 units.

Exhibit 7.4: Housing Inventory for Zip Code 78741

Market-Rate Housing Inventory in Zip Code 78741

(Apartment Complexes with 50+ units)

Type*	# of Units	Total Units in COA	% of COA
Affordable to 0-30% MFI	0	565	0%
Affordable to 31-51% MFI	8,249	58,204	14%
Affordable to 51% MFI and above	8,586	248,231	3%
Total	16,835	307,000	5%

* Units are affordable if estimated cost of combined rent and utilities are no more than 30% of monthly income

Subsidized Housing Inventory in Zip Code 78741

Type	# of Affordable Units	Total Units in COA	% of COA
City of Austin Funded (does not include any LIHTC)	646	3448	19%
TDHCA Tax Credits (LIHTC)	2261	8842	26%
Project Based Section 8	228	1967	12%
HACA - Public Housing	0	1928	0%
Total	3135	16,185	19%

Source: Austin Investor Interests (2nd Quarter 2009), Austin Comprehensive Housing Market Study, City of Austin Affordable Housing Inventory

SECTION 7: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Exhibit 7.5: Subsidized Affordable Housing in the East Riverside Corridor

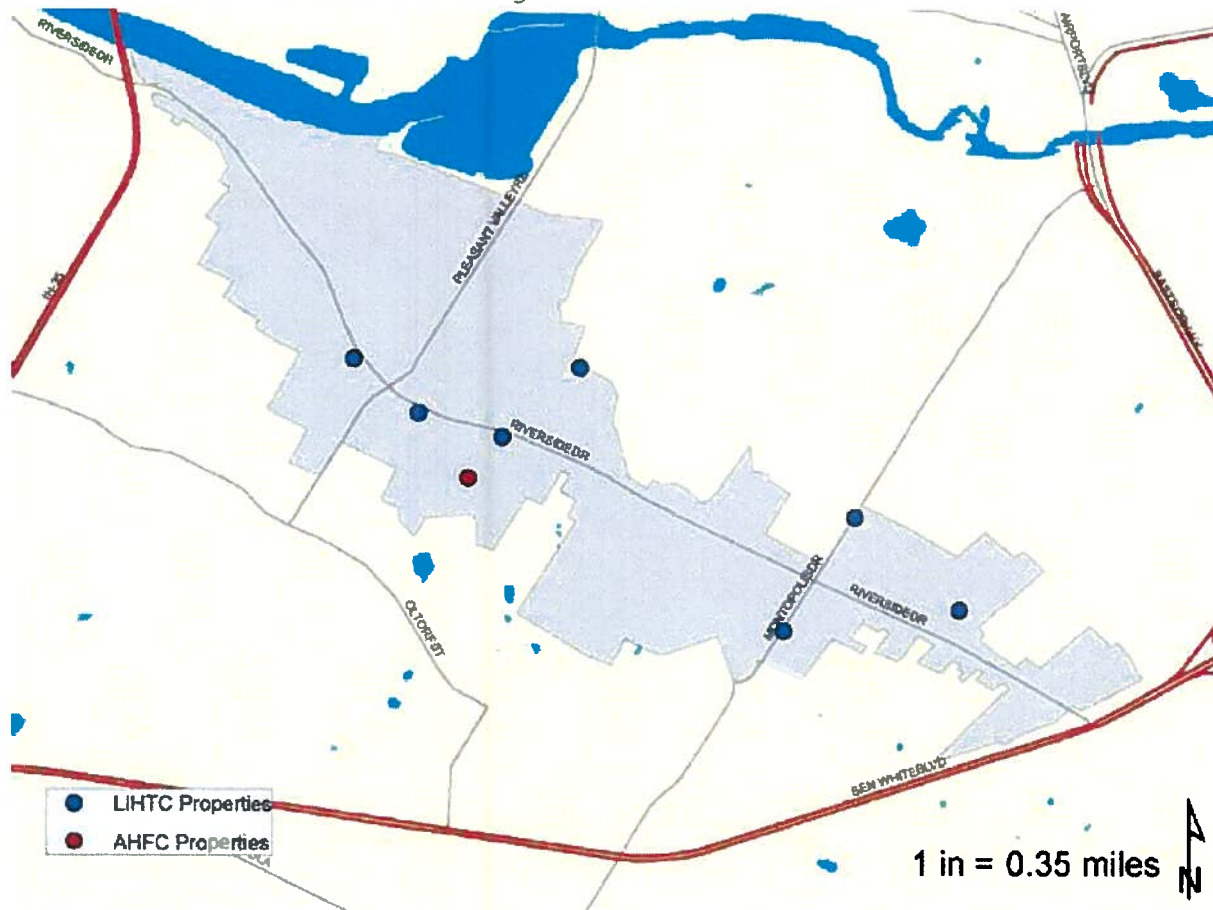


Exhibit 7.5 shows the locations of subsidized affordable housing in the East Riverside Corridor planning area. Properties subsidized by Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) are shown in blue and properties subsidized by the Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) are shown in red.

Exhibit 7.6 illustrates the number of rental units by class in the Austin MSA, Southeast Quadrant, and the East Riverside Corridor. Class C properties are generally more affordable than Class A and B properties. Looking at the characteristics of the properties within the Corridor, approximately half of the properties are designated as Class C properties. The other half are about evenly split between Class A and B.

Source: City of Austin Affordable Housing Inventory

Exhibit 7.6: Number of Rental Units by Class*

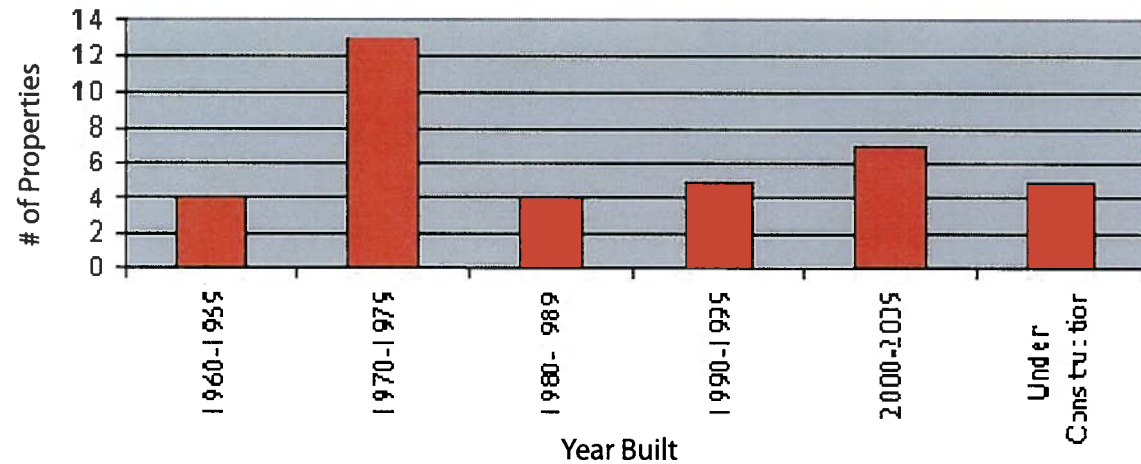
Location	Class A	Class B	Class C	Total Units
East Riverside Corridor	932 (13%)	2697 (37%)	3679 (50%)	7,308
Southeast	4,308 (23%)	4,908 (26%)	9,766 (51%)	18,982
Austin MSA	28,674 (23%)	39,770 (31%)	57,899 (46%)	126,383

Source: Austin Investor Interests (2nd Quarter, 2009)

* Unit numbers do not include those currently/proposed to be under construction

Exhibit 7.7: Year Built of Properties in the East Riverside Corridor

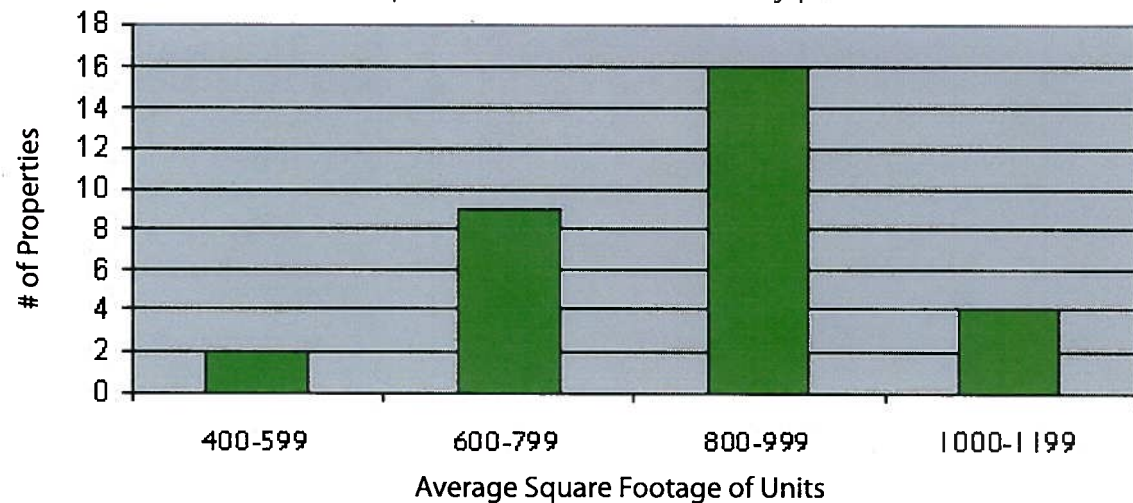
The median year in which the 32 multifamily properties with more than 50 units in the corridor were built is 1985, using estimated completion dates for the properties under construction. Excluding those under construction, the median square footage of the units in the corridor is 845 square feet.



Source: Austin Investor Interests (2nd Quarter, 2009)

Exhibit 7.8: Average Square Footage of Units in East Riverside Properties*

*Properties under construction were excluded from graph



Source: Austin Investor Interests (2nd Quarter, 2009)

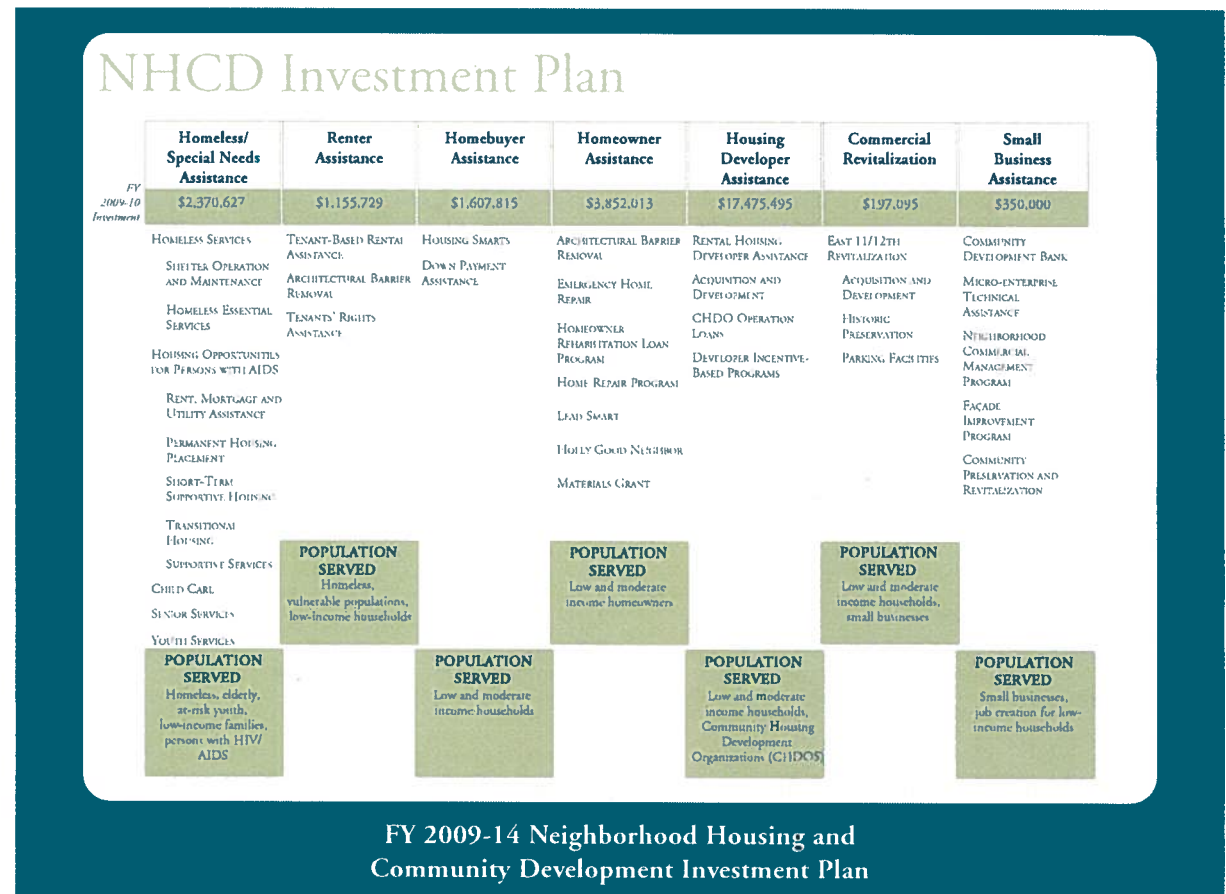
SECTION 7: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing Resources

The City of Austin provides housing and services to help meet the need for affordable housing for both renters and homeowners, and especially for very-low income households. Neighborhood Housing and Community Development's (NHCD) mission is to provide housing, community development, and small business development services to benefit eligible residents so they can have access to livable neighborhoods and increase their opportunities for self-sufficiency. To accomplish this mission, NHCD directly administers a variety of programs to serve the community's housing, community development, and economic development needs in addition to providing grant funding to various agencies and non-profit organizations.

In 2009, as a part of the federally-mandated five year Consolidated Planning process, NHCD created an investment plan to highlight programs offered by the City of Austin and the City's investment in each program area, which reflects stakeholder feedback and community participation. The plan provides a snapshot of services and activities made possible by federal and local funding. The investment plan outlines housing and community development activities in seven categories, each category highlighting populations served and activities funded.

Exhibit 7.9: NHCD Investment Plan



The Investment Plan categories are: (1) Homeless/Special Needs; (2) Renter Assistance; (3) Homebuyer Assistance; (4) Homeowner Assistance; (5) Housing Developer Assistance; (6) Commercial Revitalization; (7) Small Business Assistance. More information about each of these categories is below.

Homeless/Special Needs Assistance provides services to the City's most vulnerable populations. This includes programs funded with Emergency Shelter Grants to serve the homeless population and operate the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH). This category also includes housing services for persons with HIV/AIDS, as well as public services, such as youth services, child care, and senior services, funded from the federal Community Development Block Grant program.

Renter Assistance provides assistance to renters so that rent is more affordable as well as provides tenants' rights services to equip renters with information that may resolve conflicts and improve relationships. It also provides financial assistance for necessary rehabilitations to make homes accessible to elderly and disabled renters.

Homebuyer Assistance provides counseling to renters who wish to become homebuyers and provides financial counseling to current and potential homeowners to assist households to stay in their homes. This category includes the Down Payment Assistance Program, which offers loans to qualifying low- and moderate-income homebuyers to help them buy their first homes.

Homeowner Assistance provides services for low- and moderate-income individuals who own their homes, but need assistance to make their homes safe, functional, and/or accessible.

Housing Developer Assistance includes NHCD programs that offer assistance to for-profit and non-profit developers to build or renovate affordable housing. NHCD provides gap financing to assist developers to build rental and homebuyer housing for low- and moderate-income households. To assure the success of the City's non-profit partners, the City also provides operating expenses grants to certified housing development organizations to help increase their capacity to develop affordable housing. In this category,

the City also continues to explore ways to encourage the development of affordable housing through developer incentives. These developer incentives include S.M.A.R.T. Housing™, incentives for development in priority areas, and private developer agreements.

Commercial Revitalization includes programs related to the revitalization of the East 11th/12th street corridors. These programs include commercial acquisition and development, loan development assistance, job creation, and historic preservation efforts related to the Hamilton-Dietrich House as well as parking facilities within the corridor.

Small Business Assistance provides a range of services for small business, from technical assistance to gap financing, to ensure the success of growing small business in the community, and encourage the creation of jobs for low- and moderate-income households.

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Exhibit 7.10: FY 2009-2010 NHCD Housing Programs in 78741

Program	Activity	Description	Eligible Households
Housing Programs			
Homebuyer Assistance	Down Payment Assistance	Provides deferred and forgivable, zero-interest loans to low and moderate income first time homebuyers. Option 1: recaptured loan up to \$10,000 per HH (or \$15,000 to persons with disabilities.) Option 2: shared-equity, non-forgivable, loan up to \$40,000 for down payment.	<80% MFI
	Housing Smarts	Provides pre-purchase, post-purchase, and one-on-one housing counseling in English and Spanish	< 80% MFI
Homeowner Assistance	Architectural Barrier Removal	Modifies or retrofits the living quarters of eligible, low-income elderly and severely disabled homeowners to make their housing more accessible.	<80% MFI
	Emergency Home Repair	Makes repairs to alleviate life-threatening living conditions and health and safety hazards for low and moderate income homeowners.	<80% MFI
	Homeowner Rehabilitation Loan	Assists income-eligible homeowners with substantial repairs through deferred interest loans up to \$50,000. Necessary reconstructs up to \$100,000.	<60% MFI
	Home Repair Program	Provides grants to local non-profits to assist low- and moderate-income homeowners to address substandard housing conditions.	<80% MFI
	Lead Hazard Control Grant	Provides lead hazard control services to owners and renters in units built prior to 1978 with children under age 6.	<80% MFI
	Materials Grants Program	Provides eligible non-profit organizations with assistance to recover the cost of materials used to repair the homes of low-income families.	<60% MFI
Renter Assistance	Tenant Based Rental Assistance	Provides rental housing subsidies deposits to eligible families who would otherwise be homeless through the Passages Program.	< 50% MFI
	Tenant's Rights	Provides mediation, counseling, public information and addresses fair housing complaints for renters.	N/A
	Architectural Barrier Removal	Modifies or retrofits the living quarters of eligible, low-income elderly and severely disabled renters to make their housing more accessible.	<80% MFI
Housing Developer Assistance	Rental Housing Development Assistance	Provides below market rate gap financing to for-profit and non-profit developers for the acquisition, new construction, or rehabilitation of affordable rental housing.	< 50% MFI
	Acquisition and Development	City and federal funds for: 1) acquisition and development of lots, and 2) acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of new homes.	<80% MFI
	CHDO Operations	Provides technical assistance and training to Community Housing Development Organizations to increase organizational capacity.	N/A
	Developer Incentives Program	Provides incentives for housing developer to develop affordable rental and homebuyer housing in market rate developments. Currently includes, S.M.A.R.T. HousingTM, Vertical Mixed Use, Downtown Density Bonus, North Burnet/Gateway, and Transit Oriented Developments.	<80% MFI or <120% MFI in the CBD

Residents of the East Riverside corridor are eligible for and currently utilize many of these types of assistance. See Exhibit 7.10 for a list of City housing programs that serve residents in Zip Code 78741, which includes the East Riverside Corridor.

Preservation of Affordable Housing

Several studies commissioned by the City pinpoint the loss of existing affordable rental housing as a mounting problem in Austin. These include the Comprehensive Housing Market Study (March 2009), the ROMA/HR&A Affordable Housing Strategy Report (July 2009) and the City of Austin report, Preserving Affordable Housing in Austin, A Platform for Action (April 2008). In addition, HousingWorks' efforts and stakeholders at public hearings for the Consolidated Plan identified preservation as a priority for Austin's affordable housing efforts.

The City's 2008 preservation report highlights several facts regarding affordability in Austin including:

- **Subsidized units are at risk.** Austin has almost 1,350 of project-based Section 8 units with mortgages that will expire by 2011, with about 73 percent of those expiring in 2010. In addition, developments financed with federal housing tax credits reach the end of their affordability requirements after 15 years. Therefore, affordability in tax credit developments completed after 1994 will begin to expire, and owners will no longer be required to offer affordable units. The number of units financed with tax credits in Austin is currently more than 8,000.
- **Most of Austin affordable housing is privately-owned and not subsidized.** Austin has more than 156,000 multifamily housing units; and 79 percent (123,678) are in small complexes with 2 to 49 units.
- **Most multifamily stock is old but occupied.** More than 55 percent of duplexes and 79 percent of small and medium-sized apartment buildings throughout the city were built before 1980. These apartments typically have high-occupancy rates.

- **Redevelopment is underway.** From 1995-2007, there was a 30 percent increase in the number of multifamily units built. More than 2,000 rental units were converted to condominiums in 2007 and 2008.

- **Collecting data on housing inventory posed a significant challenge.** Data regarding the condition of Austin's housing units is largely unavailable. In addition, reliable data sources have conflicting unit counts for subsidized properties.

In response to these conditions, the City of Austin Preservation Report released in April 2008 included the following recommendations:

- (1) Develop and share data and strengthen intergovernmental coordination to increase opportunities for preservation in high opportunity areas;
- (2) Maximize use of partnerships by promoting existing programs and services to affordable housing targeted for preservation;
- (3) Explore education and outreach initiatives to help ensure low income residents have reasonable avenues through education to remain in affordable housing;
- (4) Pursue new strategies to bring forward alternative resources and incentives, expanding on efforts to increase long-term, permanent affordability; and
- (5) Create a preservation funding pool, making available crucial revenue streams to developers in need of new resources.

NHCD offers a number of programs including Rental Housing Developer Assistance program, Acquisition and Development and Tenants' Rights Assistance, as well as home repair and rehabilitation programs, which position

the department to contribute toward preservation efforts in Austin. See Exhibit 7.9, NHCD's fiscal years 2009-14 Investment Plan, for a list of NHCD's affordable housing and community development programs. In addition, several other affordable housing preservation initiatives that are already underway are identified below:

- **Develop and share data/Expand intergovernmental coordination.**

- **Maintaining Subsidized Apartments.** The City of Austin works closely with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) that founded the Southwest Housing Compliance Corporation (SHCC) in 2000 to oversee project-based Section 8 properties. HACA has won competitive contracts to administer all such properties in Texas and Arkansas. Nationwide this program is administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Property owners must notify oversight agencies if they wish to "opt out" of the program one year in advance of the expiration of their subsidies. The City of Austin/Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) will continue to offer its assistance in preserving Austin project-based Section 8 properties by working closely with key agencies that can be instrumental in preservation efforts.

- **Intergovernmental coordination also is underway** through the Community Action Network, specifically to develop an Issue Area Group focused on housing. The Group will bring together representatives from city, county, state, and federal housing agencies among other housing experts to identify actions needed to address housing issues locally and regionally. These experts with diverse funding resources are well positioned to elevate best practices and further the community's preservation efforts.

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Other groups that have been developed that have strengthened housing coordination efforts in the last year are the Intergovernmental Stimulus committee, the Joint Subcommittee School Mobility-Housing Assistance working group, and HousingWorks' partnership with the Real Estate Council of Austin, the Urban Land Institute, and the Austin Area Research Organization.

- The City of Austin has developed a research framework to identify geographic areas located near employment centers, services, schools and transit corridors, and then to identify affordable apartment complexes – subsidized and market-rate – in and near those areas. The goal is twofold – (1) to offer financial incentives to existing property owners who commit to maintaining affordable rents and (2) to enable affordable housing providers to acquire properties to secure permanent affordability in these prime locations.

- **Partnerships.** In addition to the partnerships described above with HACA, FHA's Region IV Office, and HousingWorks, the Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office has strengthened its collaborations with other City departments to leverage resources. NHCD is working with Austin Energy's Weatherization program staff to coordinate AE services with NHCD's home repair and rehabilitation programs so that eligible clients can receive maximum benefit from the City. Cross promotion of programs can help reduce utility costs for property owners and ease certain ongoing maintenance issues.

NHCD also hosts quarterly Affordable Housing Forums providing regular educational outreach to the community about affordable housing. The Forums attract industry experts and members of the public and serve to address barriers and solutions to affordable housing. The issue of

preservation of Austin's affordable housing stock is one of several focuses of these community conversations. For more information about the Affordable Housing Forums, please visit www.cityofaustin.org/housing.

- **Tenant and consumer protections.** The 2009 Impediments to Fair Housing report, a statutory requirement for the City of Austin's Consolidated Plan, cites affordability and discrimination as significant fair housing problems in Austin. The lack of affordable housing means that many low-income persons are living in substandard housing or tolerating discriminatory situations, such as apartments with little to no accessibility, for fear of not finding another affordable unit. The report also highlighted mortgage discrimination against Austin minorities. Of the nearly 36,000 loan applications submitted by Travis County residents in 2007, 12 percent were considered subprime. African American and Hispanic applicants were more likely to receive a subprime loan product. A survey completed for the 2009 Housing Market Study also revealed housing discrimination as a key concern of residents. To further address these issues, NHCD increased funding in 2009 for homebuyer education to include foreclosure prevention and counseling and increase funding for fair housing and tenant protections. NHCD is working with the City of Austin Fair Housing Office and the Austin Tenants' Council to enhance current programs that will continue to address this issue.

- **New Strategies: Alternate resources/incentives.** Discussions with the Community Development Commission (CDC), the housing department's policy advisory body, will continue to include housing program priorities and goals. Future policy recommendations are expected in several key issue areas, such as increasing the allocation of funds between rental and ownership from 60-40 percent to 75-25 percent, prioritizing

preservation/rehabilitation projects, etc. These policy recommendations will help yield administrative changes to programs that steer funds toward affordable housing efforts including preservation initiatives.

- **Preservation funding pool.** Identifying new financial resources and partners with capital will be essential to the success of Austin's preservation efforts; however, it remains a challenge. NHCD has engaged national experts in the field of preservation in order to develop a loan pool, an essential tool to further the City's preservation strategy. A preservation funding pool will offer financial incentives to existing property owners who commit to maintaining affordable rents and enable affordable housing providers to acquire properties to secure permanent affordability in prime locations.

Policy Challenges

As indicated previously, the East Riverside Corridor contains more affordable options than other areas of the City, both in terms of subsidized housing and affordable market-rate housing. However, in recent years the area has seen significant redevelopment activity due to its proximity to Downtown and Lady Bird Lake. There is a concern that redevelopment could have a negative impact on existing low- and moderate- income residents and small businesses that currently benefit from the relatively low property values and rents. This presents challenges for decision-makers and the community.

The challenge of planning for the future of the East Riverside area while also retaining affordable housing stock is especially complex because the existing supply of privately-owned market rate affordable housing in the area is largely aging, Class C stock. In addition, there is development interest and pressure due to market forces to rehabilitate or replace older, existing units. Preservation and creation of affordable housing in the Corridor will be vital to provide housing options for households that wish to remain in the area as well as to provide a variety of housing options for future residents. To achieve a diverse, mixed-income community, housing should accommodate a variety of household sizes and types, including units designed for families with children.

Tools for Affordable Housing

The importance of housing that is affordable to a range of incomes in fostering diversity, contributing to the success of schools and supporting a jobs-housing balance, is well documented. Housing is important infrastructure for a successful community. Like other infrastructure needs identified in this plan, such as sidewalks, interconnected streets, and parks, the provision of affordable housing will be implemented through both public and private actions.

While there is a desire for existing residents and small businesses in the Corridor and surrounding areas to be able to afford to remain in the area as it improves, the redevelopment that is already occurring as well as rising property values in this area make this a challenge without significant public funding and intervention. Plans for other transit-oriented development areas in the City set goals for 25% affordable housing, which is to be achieved through both public and private-sector investments. A key difference between the Corridor and other TOD planning areas is that the others encompassed mostly commercial properties, and so the 25% goal would apply to the new supply of housing that is now permitted on properties previously zoned for commercial use.

In the East Riverside Corridor, although most of the properties immediately adjacent to Riverside Drive are commercially zoned, there are currently over 7,500 housing units, 1,724 of which are subsidized. Over 70% of existing housing units in the Corridor area are currently affordable to households at or below 50% MFI.

The goal and challenge in the East Riverside area is to ensure that as the area improves, housing is available to a range of incomes so that residents of all income levels, including existing low and moderate income residents,

will be able to enjoy the benefits outlined in the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. A key concern is to ensure that redevelopment promotes and allows for a mix of income levels, which can help to ameliorate potential issues in areas with disproportionate poverty rates. These can include a lack of amenities, few employment opportunities, and high crime rates; the challenge is to ensure that an income mix remains, rather than the Corridor becoming a place for only higher income residents to live.

The City of Austin must work with a number of other public/private agencies in order to address affordable housing needs throughout Austin. The implementation chapter of this document outlines both public investment opportunities and private development responsibilities to ensure affordable housing strategies can be achieved. To learn more about the City's affordable housing strategies for Austin, see the City of Austin fiscal year 2009-10 Action Plan, which is also available on the City's Web site at www.cityofaustin.org/housing. Key affordable housing strategies outlined in the Action Plan include continued public investment in the preservation and creation of affordable housing as well as policies to encourage development of affordable housing by the private sector.

For these reasons, this plan presents the following approaches to address the affordable housing challenges of the area:

- ***Maintain and renew existing subsidized affordable housing.*** The City of Austin through the Austin Housing Finance Corporation has invested more than \$25 million to support affordable housing in the 78741 zip code. A portion of those funds were invested in affordable housing within the East Riverside Corridor

boundaries; subsidized housing currently accounts for 23% of existing housing supply within the Corridor boundaries. The City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development office will continue to work with other housing agencies to ensure that when possible, federally subsidized contracts are renewed providing for the preservation of affordable housing. None of the existing subsidized housing units in the Corridor are located in the potential development bonus areas recommended by the East Riverside Corridor Plan, and thus would not receive any extra entitlements or other direct incentives to redevelop.

- **Preserve existing non-subsidized affordable housing.** Austin should consider additional preservation strategies that have proven to be successful in other urban areas. Specific initiatives might include initiating an assessment of at-risk properties and developing an early warning system; creating loan programs and/or providing tax abatements and exemptions to assist landlords with rehabilitation costs; using in-lieu-of fees to subsidize existing market-rate affordable complexes; and developing or expanding loan programs that help current renters purchase homes in the area.

- **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.** As described in the Land Use chapter of this plan, it is recommended that the City change development regulations based on the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan to allow development of housing near transit, especially attached housing units such as duplexes, condos, and townhouses that provide opportunities for affordable homeownership. The planning area includes commercial properties and undeveloped land that can

accommodate many new residents without displacing current residents. This change can accommodate some of the city's expected population growth and help to combat the central city housing supply problem. A density bonus program could also potentially provide homeownership opportunities.

Although it is unlikely that new market rate units constructed in the western end of the planning area (closer to downtown) will be affordable to families making less than 80% median family income, as shown by recent developments, some new market-rate units constructed closer to Hwy 71 may address this need. Increasing the supply of housing throughout the Corridor could reduce market pressure on prices and rents for older housing stock. Since existing properties in the East Riverside Corridor Planning Area will likely redevelop at different times, this would provide mixed housing products, as well as a range of housing prices.

- **Encourage private sector funding and/or construction of affordable housing through the provision of Development Bonuses.** The details of the affordable housing requirements in exchange for a development bonus will be prescribed in the Regulating Plan in the next phase following adoption of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. In limited areas closest to primary transit hubs, development bonuses could be granted to developers who agree to provide rental or ownership affordable housing in exchange for increased building entitlements. In order to reduce the incentive to redevelop existing affordable multi-family properties, policy makers could decide that only properties without existing residential developments would be eligible for development bonuses. Where allowed, the development bonuses would result in the inclusion of affordable housing units mixed with market-rate units in

a single development, or developers could pay a fee-in-lieu and provide a dedicated funding source for the City's Housing Assistance Fund to use to create and preserve affordable housing. While it is recognized that this option will only provide a limited number of affordable units, it creates a new source of affordable housing and/or funds without resulting in displacement of existing affordable units.

- **Expand public sector funding of affordable housing.** The City will continue to apply affordable housing strategies that promote the affordable housing core values developed by the City of Austin Affordable Housing Incentives Task Force, which prescribes action that will promote deeper affordability targets, long-term affordability, and geographic dispersion, as well as zoning incentives.

The geographic distribution and prioritization of public funding for affordable housing is determined through a citywide affordable housing preservation strategy. As stated previously, 11% of the total subsidized multi-family housing in the city is located in the East Riverside Corridor planning area. Several key factors that drive public investment for the creation and preservation of affordable housing are:

- Promotion of the City of Austin's affordable housing core values: deeper affordability targets, long-term affordability, and geographic dispersion of affordable housing.
- Areas of town with existing affordable housing stock that is in appropriate condition for rehabilitation.
- Areas undergoing intense redevelopment pressure where displacement of low-income residents is likely.
- Areas with existing and planned proximity to transit and services.
- Areas where the City is making other public investments

and can incorporate affordable housing to further the investment in important community benefits.

Similarly, decision-makers can consider other dedicated funding sources to support additional affordable housing, either citywide or specifically in this Corridor.

- **Explore feasibility of a TOD catalyst project on the City-owned land at the East Riverside Drive/Pleasant Valley Blvd. intersection.** If existing utility, slope and drainage issues can be overcome, the City should explore reconfiguring the East Riverside Drive/Pleasant Valley Blvd. intersection during rail planning to utilize the existing large City-owned median for development of a TOD catalyst project and a true neighborhood center for the area. Developing a TOD pilot project will be an important way to set an example of the type of development and community benefits envisioned in this plan, and spur employment interest in the Corridor. To the extent possible, such a project should support an employment center to improve local job opportunities for existing and future residents in the immediate area and also include housing affordable to a mix of incomes. The integration of residences, daily community services and employment, in addition to creating safe routes for pedestrian and cyclists will be essential to its success.

- **Promote community-based housing development organizations.** The City allocates financing for non-profit housing developers, or Certified Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs), to build affordable housing, recognizing that nonprofits are important partners in providing and preserving affordable housing in Austin. A new or existing non-profit CHDO focused on the East Riverside community could assist in the creation of affordable housing in the Corridor.

- **Support Asset Creation.** Gentrification often affects minority groups and immigrants disproportionately, especially populations that have lower incomes and less education. Increasing household earning capacity and building assets are ways to address a mismatch between wages and housing affordability, enabling longtime residents to continue to afford housing in the neighborhood. Community programs to promote education, employment attainment, skills development, and provide homeownership counseling and financial literacy education are opportunities to increase the resources of households and deter the risk of displacement. Local programs and initiatives that focus on these issues are NHCD's Housing Counseling and Down Payment Assistance programs, as well as the Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas and Bank on Central Texas. For more information about these programs and initiatives, see Appendix A: Asset Creation Programs and Initiatives.

- **Coordinate City services to mitigate effects of potential displacement.** While this plan identifies options for preserving and creating affordable housing in the Corridor, it also recognizes that privately-owned older market-rate multi-family complexes may continue to be redeveloped, as is already occurring in the area. For this reason, the City should continue to invest in programs to assist low- and moderate-income families throughout the city. The City recognizes the market-induced trend of people moving to outer areas to find affordable housing and should evaluate the placement of city social services, clinics, and other city services in relation to this trend.

Housing affordability is an integral component of the East Riverside Corridor plan. A key challenge relating to current and future revitalization in the East Riverside

Corridor area is to identify strategies that maximize the benefits of the revitalization process while also minimizing adverse social and economic hardships for low- and moderate-income residents.

SECTION 7: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

SECTION 8

IMPLEMENTATION

MAKING THE PLAN REAL
PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION
CATALYST PROJECTS/
INITIAL INVESTMENTS
ANTICIPATE INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS & COMMUNITY NEEDS
FINANCIAL STRATEGIES & TOOLS

Making the Plan Real

The purpose of the East Riverside Corridor Plan is to articulate a vision and provide a framework to guide the future change, development, and City investment in the East Riverside Corridor Area. Adoption of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan will not automatically implement the vision articulated by the plan. It is only the first of many coordinated steps which will need to be taken over the years in order to realize the vision identified through the planning process. The implementation of this plan will help to create an area where a balanced mix of housing types for all income levels, commercial, retail, and employment uses support a more varied and sustainable transportation system including walking, bicycling, driving and transit use, potentially including a proposed streetcar/light rail line along East Riverside Drive. Successful implementation of the plan will require a strong partnership between the community, the City of Austin, other government agencies, and the private sector.

This section presents an overall strategy for implementing the East Riverside Corridor Plan. It articulates public and private actions needed to achieve the vision over time. The prioritization of action items should be viewed as a fluid and dynamic process; therefore, the priority of items may change over time as opportunities arise, circumstances change, and funding becomes available. Recommended actions and projects are presented below. The recommendations are intended to provide a "checklist" of a series of tasks that will move the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan from concept to reality.

Planning and Administration

The following describes recommended steps to establish the regulatory framework for the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan and mechanisms to encourage on-going implementation efforts.

Adopt the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan

The first important implementation step is for the Austin City Council to adopt the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. Adoption of the Master Plan will signal to community members, property owners, business owners, the development community, City staff, and other stakeholders that the City Council embraces the vision outlined in the plan to encourage transformation of the existing single-use, auto-dependent pattern of development into a moderately higher density mixed-use neighborhood that is pedestrian-friendly and is supportive of potential future rail transit. The goal is to leverage private redevelopment that is already starting to occur to improve the area and create economic and societal opportunities for existing and nearby residents, while simultaneously welcoming new residents and businesses to the area. Adopting the Master Plan for the East Riverside Corridor is the starting point for realizing the vision expressed in the Master Plan. Once adopted, various City departments can move forward with integrating the Plan's recommendations into their departmental work plans.

Revise Land Development Regulations

In order to achieve the Master Plan's vision for a more walkable mixed-use neighborhood, it is recommended that zoning and development regulations be tailored for this special corridor. The intention is to create a development environment that will be supportive of the existing high level of bus service, and in anticipation of future rail transit along East Riverside. A "design-based" zoning ordinance similar to those used in other special

planning areas such as the North Burnet/Gateway neighborhood and the Transit Oriented District Station Area Plans would allow a mix of land uses and density in accordance with the subdistricts envisioned in the plan and regulate such elements as the character of the street frontage, sidewalks, block sizes, building placement, height, and setbacks to create human-scaled amenities and an environment that supports pedestrian, bicycle and transit use. The land use and density recommendations and design guidelines presented in the Master Plan (see Section 4 and 5) should be used as the basis for creating an area-wide Regulating Plan that will specifically allow and encourage the type of development envisioned in the Master Plan. The new urban design regulations would apply to new construction and redevelopment. Existing businesses would be "grandfathered" and would not be required to upgrade to the new urban design standards (buildings closer to the street, wider sidewalks, street trees, etc.) unless they submit development permit applications proposing redevelopment of their property. The Regulating Plan should be written in a way that is clear and understandable by property owners, the neighborhood, and the development community, with graphics illustrating key concepts.

Based on public feedback during the planning process, existing zoning overlay districts including the waterfront overlay, scenic roadway overlay and airport-related overlays should continue to apply when new regulations are developed.

Implement Interim Urban Design Regulations

New development regulations for the area will take some time for city staff to create, so it is recommended that some basic interim urban design regulations be put in place at the time of the Master Plan's adoption, in furtherance of Master Plan goals.

East Riverside Drive is currently designated as a Core Transit Corridor (CTC) from IH 35 to Pleasant Valley Road, but not further east. In order to ensure that the entire length of East Riverside Drive within the area of the Master Plan is required to meet consistent urban design standards, the portion of the drive from Pleasant Valley Road to SH 71 should also be designated as a Core Transit Corridor for application of standards in Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use. This will ensure that any development occurring along East Riverside Drive prior to the adoption of revised area-specific land development regulations will provide 15-foot sidewalks and place buildings closer to the street, creating a more pedestrian-oriented corridor.

Create a Development Bonus System

Based on the feedback received during the public planning process, a development bonus system should be developed in concert with changes to zoning and development regulations for the Corridor Area to help provide amenities in the area that might otherwise be difficult to fund such as additional open space. This system will ensure community benefits are received in exchange for allowing greater heights or densities.

Development bonuses are incentives that can be used both to shape the growth of the East Riverside Corridor and encourage developers to meet community goals. The East Riverside Corridor Plan supports a moderate increase in building height and density around proposed future transit Hubs surrounding primary transit stops as a means of alleviating sprawl, encouraging transit usage, and creating a vibrant district. Various stakeholders have identified other community goals or “public benefits” that are important to achieve as the East Riverside Corridor evolves over time, including: provision of well-maintained publicly accessible parks and open space;

provision of pedestrian amenities and streetscaping; construction of bicycle facilities; and green building/sustainability. These public benefits were identified in the public planning as important for creating a sustainable, multi-modal, pedestrian-friendly area. Stakeholders have also identified other potential community benefits for inclusion in a development bonus program, including providing homeownership opportunities, providing office uses, and transit facilities. In addition, maintaining the current amount of affordable housing in the Area was identified as a priority through the planning process, and as such affordable housing should also be considered as a potential community benefit for development bonuses. A development bonus system could be used to assist in the provision of these community benefits by requiring developers to provide or contribute to these community benefits in exchange for increased development entitlements.

Amend Affected Neighborhood Plans When New Land Development Regulations are Adopted

The two neighborhood plans that overlap the East Riverside Corridor Area (East Riverside/Oltorf and Montopolis) should be amended to incorporate the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan when new land development regulations are adopted. The Neighborhood Plan future land use map (FLUM) designations should be amended as necessary to be consistent with the East Riverside Corridor Plan and regulations. When the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan is adopted, it will be the most recent guiding document and long-term planning tool for the area. However, the FLUM of the neighborhood plans will still control with respect to short-term zoning until the East Riverside Corridor land development regulations are created and adopted.

Engage the Private Sector in Redevelopment

Because most of the land in the Riverside Corridor is privately-owned, one of the keys to implementation of the East Riverside Corridor Plan vision is private sector economic investment and reinvestment in the area. The implementation strategy relative to private sector investment is to create the right regulatory environment that balances community benefits and incentives for private-sector development and redevelopment that result in the form of development envisioned in the plan. Redevelopment will not occur overnight. Although the desire to replace some of the large sprawling parking lots and strip mall development in the area with more human-scaled pedestrian-friendly development was expressed during the planning process, new development must generate enough revenue to make replacing the existing low-density, but revenue-generating strip malls worthwhile. The demand for new products (housing, retail, office, etc.) must exceed the current supply of these products. The demand for housing and associated stores and businesses is expected to increase in conjunction with the region's projected population growth. Furthermore, success of near-term catalyst projects, including the introduction of rail transit, should also increase demand for these uses and for the urban form of development and community amenities envisioned by the Master Plan.

Dedicate Staff to Implementation

City staff resources should be allocated for work on implementation of the East Riverside Corridor Plan. Duties could include:

- Facilitating the public input process and developing the design based regulations and development bonus system for the East Riverside Corridor Regulating Plan.

- Pursuing funding opportunities for implementation of the Master Plan recommendations and infrastructure improvements.
- Coordinating implementation projects with various city departments and agencies.
- Informing property owners about the East Riverside Corridor Plan and opportunities for development or redevelopment.
- Identifying property owners interested in development or redevelopment and facilitating information exchange between property owners regarding issues such as property assembly.
- Assisting with urban design review of development proposals submitted to the City.
- Communicating with the community about implementation progress.

Monitor Implementation Effectiveness

Staff should monitor the effectiveness of the implementation elements of this plan and recommend changes to them as appropriate. A review should occur at least annually with a summary report provided to the Planning Commission and City Council, and available to the public.

Catalyst Projects/Initial Investments

The term “Catalyst Project” refers to one or more high profile projects that can transform an area and translate the vision identified in the Master Plan into reality. A catalyst project can demonstrate commitment to realizing the plan; it provides a tangible example of the vision and encourages similar efforts on the part of other public and private entities.

A series of recommended initial catalyst projects for the East Riverside Corridor emerged during the visioning process. These specific investment opportunities have been identified due to their potential to spur additional investment and redevelopment. The timing of these investments is flexible, but the long-term success of the Master Plan may depend on strategic investments. The projects described below vary in type and scale and will likely require a variety of financing techniques, as well as cooperation with both the City of Austin and the private sector.

Implement Streetcar/Light Rail Transit Line and Primary Transit Stops

Public feedback ranked the installation of a light rail or street car line along the length of East Riverside Drive as a high priority for implementation of the Master Plan. Introduction of a fixed rail transit line is the most significant opportunity to reinvigorate and provide community benefits within the Corridor. The rail can increase mobility to, from and within the area and can foster redevelopment. The rail stations would be catalysts for the transit-oriented development envisioned for the area, particularly when combined with higher permitted densities around rail stations and lower minimum parking requirements.

The City of Austin should move forward with preliminary engineering and environmental studies to identify

alignment, station location, right-of-way, potential pedestrian and bicycle improvements, potential environmental issues and refined cost estimates for the proposed rail project.

Improve pedestrian crossings of Riverside Drive

Improving pedestrians’ ability to cross East Riverside Drive safely and conveniently will enhance the vision of East Riverside Drive as a unified corridor. The addition of traffic signals, improved crosswalks and pedestrian crossing signage would signal the City’s commitment to facilitating the creation of a pedestrian-friendly, walkable corridor.

Installation of bicycle lanes along East Riverside Drive

A bicycle network for the Corridor was identified as a priority by the community. Clearly visible bicycle lanes along both sides of East Riverside Drive would contribute to the regional bicycle network and are essential for the transformation of the current auto-dominated roadway into a multi-modal street.

Continue to Implement Country Club Creek Trail Plan

Completion of the Country Club Creek hike and bike trail, including an underpass at Riverside Drive, would be a simple way to begin to create a series of green connections from surrounding neighborhoods, through the Corridor to the regional parkland and trails along Lady Bird Lake.

Targeted public and private improvements within the development Hubs

Focusing initial improvements at the Hubs around potential future transit stops creates efficiencies and synergy between projects to create positive change. In many cases, these areas were identified as susceptible

to change during the public visioning process and serve strategic urban design purposes as they are located near key intersections and potential rail stops. Economic and practical concerns also influenced the selection of these sites. Development at these prominent locations can spur additional investment while facilitating and supporting the implementation of a light rail or streetcar system and other community goals throughout the corridor. Some key improvements may include:

- Providing tree-lined/covered wide sidewalks starting in hubs, either in concert with private development or coordinated with construction of the rail line.
- Encouraging strategic private development projects that could serve as a model for the type of urban form, desired commercial uses, and community amenities envisioned by the plan (e.g. a farmer's market in the Lakeshore Hub, or an urban-style grocery store with office or residential uses also on the site, potentially with structured parking, or a small urban pocket park created in concert with new development.)
- Providing public art, landscaping or special benches or lighting to enhance and distinguish the Hubs.
- Private development of commercial space on the ground floor of mixed use buildings to support retail activity and create interest at the pedestrian level.
- Development of landmark and gateway features to create a neighborhood focal point for community and commercial activity.

Pleasant Valley Transit Plaza & Development

The intersection of E. Riverside Drive and S. Pleasant Valley Road is a key location within the corridor. Pleasant Valley Road is the major north-south arterial within the planning area, and the intersection is unique due to the extremely wide median that was originally designed to accommodate an interchange of a major freeway. The Master Plan identifies the opportunity to create new

developable parcels if East Riverside Drive is realigned so that all traffic lanes are shifted to the south side of the existing median at this intersection. The potential development of City-owned land in the existing median, if utility, slope and drainage obstacles can be overcome, could embody many elements of the East Riverside Corridor vision and provide a good example of a well-designed transit-oriented development that includes community gathering spaces, employment opportunities and housing affordable to a mix of incomes. The development of public plaza space and amenities with improved interface of transit modes in combination with this realignment would transform this area and provide new opportunities for local and subregional commercial activity. The creation of a market in the Pleasant Valley Transit Plaza could provide a space for small retailers to benefit from large numbers of pedestrians in the area.

Reduce Crime in the East Riverside Corridor Area

Throughout the planning process, crime was raised as a concern by business owners, property owners and surrounding neighborhood residents. Crime, both real and perceived, was highlighted by potential developers as a limitation on future investment in the area. Although not a typical "catalyst project," the reduction of crime would have a significant positive effect on redevelopment and revitalization of the Corridor area.

In some cases, redevelopment itself will help reduce crime, by removing buildings in disrepair that have become locations of criminal activity. Housing that is integrated with the neighborhood, rather than fenced off from it, can provide more security through greater connections to streets and public spaces. Through design standards regulating building placement, the plan encourages housing that is connected to the

neighborhood and public streets, rather than walled off from them. New design standards bringing buildings up to the street and improving the pedestrian environment would provide more "eyes on the street," which could reduce criminal activity as well. However, in some areas of the Corridor, where there is currently a higher frequency of incidents, crime needs to be addressed before significant redevelopment will occur.

Anticipate Infrastructure Improvements and Community Needs

In addition to the catalyst projects listed above, a number of infrastructure improvements and community facilities are recommended in the Corridor Plan. Implementation of these improvements will necessitate coordination with various City departments and regional and state agencies, and in some cases, regulatory or policy changes to ensure adequate funding.

Responsible City of Austin Departments should coordinate when developing long-term Capital Improvement Project (CIP) plans to provide infrastructure upgrades and community facilities necessary to implement the vision described in the Master Plan. Major infrastructure projects (street, stormwater, water, wastewater, electric, streetscape and rail) should be planned, designed and constructed in a coordinated and comprehensive manner to minimize disturbance to area residents and businesses, reduce overall costs and maximize benefits to the corridor and the larger community. For example, if the proposed rail line moves forward, utility improvements should be coordinated and included in the funding for the redesign of East Riverside Drive. In addition, if designed appropriately, civic facilities such as libraries, parks, stormwater management facilities, etc. could be co-located to improve efficiencies and manage costs. Dedicated implementation staff could assist in the coordination of these efforts.

Interconnecting Streets

Providing interconnecting streets as the area redevelops is important to disperse traffic and allow for more direct pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections. The City Design Standards require properties that are five-acres or larger to create internal blocks with connecting streets or driveways. However, at present, there are some large

stretches of undivided land with multiple property owners that may not be required to create internal blocks or to provide a connecting street network under existing regulations.

It is recommended that City staff create an East Riverside Collector Plan to be adopted by City Council. This plan would require new development and redevelopment to provide right-of-way and to construct collector streets shown in the East Riverside Collector Plan. These requirements could potentially be incentivized through development bonus programs.

Sidewalks/Streetscape

A key element of the vision for the future of the East Riverside Corridor area is the creation of high-quality pedestrian environments along East Riverside Drive and in the rest of the planning area. Implementing these streetscape improvements is contingent upon both private-sector investments through development and redevelopment, and public sector capital improvements, requiring a long-term commitment to fully realize.

Enhanced streetscape standards are necessary to ensure new development improves the aesthetics and function of sidewalks, street trees and other pedestrian amenities for all users. Standards should be created based on the design guidelines outlined in the Master Plan, applicable to different street types, and modeled on streetscape standards defined in the Land Development Code Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use, the North Burnet/Gateway Master Plan, and the Station Area Plans.

If the proposed rail project moves forward, coordinated improvements to the streetscape should be included

as part of the funding for the redesign of East Riverside Drive. Wide sidewalks in good condition that allow for safe and comfortable pedestrian access to and from the transit stops are imperative for a successful transit line.

Improve Existing Boulevards and Build New

In order to add additional green space to the area, make roadways more pedestrian friendly, and to connect open space and parks in the area, the East Riverside Corridor Plan recommends adding new boulevards in some locations and altering existing streets to become boulevards in other locations. (See Exhibit 3.2) Boulevard construction could be implemented in conjunction with road reconstruction. A special funding source would be necessary because boulevards are not typical roadway reconstruction. On roadways in primarily residential areas, it might be possible to look for grant opportunities to help pay for boulevard construction.

Bicycle Facilities

Bicycle facilities are recommended on several existing roadways. These improvements are needed to ensure safe bicycle travel in the area. Bicycle facilities on existing roadways are typically funded through grants or City General Obligation Bonds. In addition, the City could solicit federal funds from CAMPO for pedestrian and bicycle improvements on existing roads. All new collector streets should be designed to accommodate bicycle facilities.

Utilities

An analysis of the water and wastewater infrastructure in the East Riverside corridor identified a number of potential limitations in the current system. Typically developers pay for water and wastewater service extension to and within their developments, while the City pays for main line upgrades to the transmission

system as needed, funded by rate revenues. The analysis conducted as part of this planning process provides an initial indicator to Austin Water Utility (AWU) of upgrades to include in their long-range planning. AWU also monitors development service extension requests to evaluate the extent and timing of development within sectors of Austin, to inform their CIP Spending Plan. As the area continues to develop over time, the CIP Spending Plan will need evaluation and adjustment.

Reclaimed water master plans call for reclaimed water mains along E. Riverside Drive and S. Pleasant Valley Road. To support this network of mains, an elevated storage tank will be needed on high ground south of East Riverside Drive. The City should continue with plans to bring reclaimed water to the Riverside area and provide information to future developers about the ability to tap into the system.

As described in Section 6 Infrastructure, the City should identify improvements needed to storm drains to more closely meet current standards and then partner with private development to upgrade the drainage system infrastructure as redevelopment occurs. Improvements to address existing flooding should be included in the CIP budgeting process. The City should also evaluate opportunities for additional regional detention and water quality facilities, including partnering with private development to oversize detention ponds.

Parks and Open Space Development

The addition of parks and open space is a high priority for the Corridor. This includes creating new open space and neighborhood parks, providing linkages to the lake, hike and bike trail, and regional parks, and creating combined facilities with new parks and shallow detention for stormwater management. Typically new parks are funded

through General Obligation Bonds and by Parkland Dedication Ordinance requirements. Endowments should be created for newly acquired parkland or open space to assure adequate resources to fund planning and construction and to perpetually endow operations and maintenance. Other mechanisms to create open space in the area are City Design Standards requirements for private common open space. A development bonus could provide an incentive for new development to provide additional land or revenues for parkland.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) should look for parkland acquisition opportunities, especially south of East Riverside Drive which has less access to existing neighborhood and regional parks. PARC staff should also be formally integrated into the development review process of all subdivision and site plan applications that fall within the boundaries of the East Riverside Corridor Area so that open space opportunities may be analyzed and explored early on in the project development stage.

The City should develop open space standards that regulate the design and provision of open space on-site through the creation of the Regulating Plan for the Area. As much as possible, parkland dedication requirements and private common open space requirements should be fulfilled on-site in the form of well-designed pocket and/or linear parks, trails, and plazas within a 5-minute walk of residential properties. Project open space requirements could potentially be met through public access easements for trails connecting to Lady Bird Lake or other neighborhood or regional parks and open space. If it is either impossible or unrealistic that parkland be provided on-site, parkland dedication fees generated in the area are recommended to be spent in the immediate vicinity.

Schools and Community Facilities

Additional civic facilities may be needed in the future to serve the increased residential and employment population in the area, potentially including police, fire, and emergency medical services (EMS) stations, and schools. Expansion of community services are typically funded by property and sales tax revenue. However, some of the costs associated with land acquisition, facility construction, staff hiring and training may have to be funded before significant increases in tax revenues have been realized. As redevelopment increases in the area, so will attendant property and sales tax revenue. Facility locations should be determined by the appropriate department or school district based on community needs, resources and plans. From a cost perspective, acquisition of civic sites in the early stages of plan implementation could provide greater flexibility in site selection and lower land costs. Various departments and agencies participated in the creation and review of this plan, and should continue to monitor the needs in the area as it redevelops and look for opportunities. Facilities should be built in an urban form, in concert with the Master Plan design guidelines. In addition, existing community facilities need to be maintained and upgraded to prepare for and accommodate greater use that may result from an increasing number of people living and working in the area.

Austin Fire Department Expected Future Service Needs

Successful implementation of the proposed plan would increase the population and activity levels in the plan area. This will increase the number of incidents requiring fire protection and emergency service response and that will require additional Fire Department resources and/or facilities.

The current population and activity levels along and adjacent to the East Riverside Corridor area have generated so much incident activity that the Austin Fire Department determined it was necessary to locate a second engine company at Station 22, which is located near the corner of East Riverside Drive and Faro Drive. Engine 22 and Engine 35 have responded to more than 2,300 incidents in the first seven months of 2009 and are expected to exceed a total of 4,000 incident responses by the end of the year.

Although a full and successful implementation of the E. Riverside Corridor Master Plan would result in increased property and sales tax revenues, no analysis has been conducted to determine what percentage of the funding required for additional facilities and staffing could be provided via the increased tax revenues. Some of the costs associated with land acquisition, facility construction, staff hiring and training may have to be funded before significant increases in tax revenues have been realized.

Fire Department Recommendations:

1. AFD Station 22 now houses two Engine companies with 8 personnel and an EMS unit with 2 personnel. The station has limited living space and inadequate locker room facilities to support this level of staffing.

Expansion of the Station 22 facilities should, ideally, occur prior to significant development or redevelopment, but the most efficient expansion of the existing facilities could involve a stand alone EMS facility. That configuration would require utilization of the entire site and relocation of the facility currently located on the southernmost portion of the site.

2. Acquire a Fire/EMS Station site closer to the intersection of E. Riverside Drive and IH 35. The site should be acquired a minimum of three years prior to the projected operational date of the Station. From a cost perspective, acquisition of the site in the early stages of plan implementation should provide greater flexibility in site selection and lower land costs.

The Stations located to the north and west (1, 6 and 7) of the East Riverside Corridor area have high incident counts which will only increase in the future. The Stations located to the south and east (15, 24, 35 and 42) of the East Riverside Corridor area do not currently have the same level of incident counts, but the expectation is that future growth and annexations will significantly increase service demand for those Stations as well.

The new station would become the primary first-in responder to the northernmost portion of the East Riverside Corridor area, and along with the units at Station 22 will provide additional response resources to all of the adjacent station areas that will also be experiencing increased service demands.

3. AFD and other public safety facilities may request Alternative Equivalent Compliance to specific Corridor design guidelines as necessary for the provision of emergency services.

Affordable Housing

Maintaining affordable housing in the East Riverside Corridor will be a challenge, as Austin continues to grow and the demand for housing in Austin's urban core increases, driving up the cost of land. 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. In addition, the City should continue to explore opportunities for preservation of existing low-income rental housing in the corridor. It will also be important to create zoning regulations that allow the development of attached housing (duplex/condos/townhomes) to increase the supply of these affordable homeownership options. This issue is discussed in greater detail in the Affordable Housing section of the Master Plan.

Maintaining Improvements

In order for the area to preserve its value following improvements and investment, those improvements must be well managed and maintained. This may require higher level of maintenance than traditionally provided by the City, necessitating the use of both public and private resources. Appropriate City departments should update their budget requests, staffing patterns, and equipment orders based on area improvements. Second, the City should promote the development of a public improvement district, or similar quasi-governmental organization, to provide service levels above that which the various City agencies are able to provide. The City and business owners should work together to identify other potential public/private partnerships to fund the maintenance of improvements.

Financial Strategies & Tools

The actions listed above are intended to implement the East Riverside Corridor Vision. It will take a variety of financing mechanisms and involvement from both the private and public sector to complete the various projects. There are several tools the City may employ to finance the implementation actions outlined in this document:

- Private development requirements/responsibilities
- Development bonuses
- Public Improvement Districts
- Public/Private partnerships
- General Fund
- General Obligation Bonds
- Utility Rate Revenues
- Federal/State Grants
- Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Bonds
- Parking Meter Revenues

Private Sector Investment

Private sector redevelopment and reinvestment in the area is a key component of realizing the vision for the East Riverside Corridor. One of the most efficient means, from a taxpayer standpoint, to achieve the physical urban design goals outlined in the plan is to require or encourage developers to make site specific improvements in accordance with the physical guidelines without financial assistance from the City. This could be achieved by revising the land development regulations and/or creating a development bonus structure as a mechanism for achieving public benefits.

Private development also typically pays for infrastructure improvements to and within their site, including water, wastewater, drainage, and roadways. The City may fund water and wastewater upgrades in concert with private development infrastructure improvements as needed to support cumulative development needs in the

area. Private development will also contribute to parks, open space and other amenities in the area through existing parkland dedication and private common open space requirements. Funds generated from parkland dedication fee-in-lieu payments must be spent within one mile of the development that paid the fee. Thus, as more development occurs in the area, additional funding for parks will be generated, or parks will be provided on site as part of the development.

Property owners in the Corridor area that are interested in seeing various aspects of the Corridor Plan come to fruition in a faster or more coordinated way than would occur through various public funding processes, may also choose to identify sources of private funding to accomplish certain projects. One option is for property owners to organize a Public Improvement District (PID). A PID is a quasi-governmental authority with special assessment powers. In a PID, property owners choose to levy an additional assessment on themselves, to fund very specific projects in the area. This requires a simple majority of landowners by both value and area. Typically the projects chosen are those that property owners feel would enhance the value of their properties in the long-run, and the assessment may vary by proximity to a particular amenity. A PID may be used for ongoing operating requirements, such as managing the streetscapes, plantings, special lighting, signage, marketing efforts, or general maintenance at a higher level than would typically be maintained by the City.

The private sector may also enter into public/private partnerships to meet community goals. Partnerships could include private maintenance of publicly-accessible parkland, private development on leased publicly-owned land, public subsidy of affordable housing units within a private development project, the oversizing

of detention ponds for shared use, or numerous other coordinated efforts between the public and private sector.

The neighborhood or property owners could also seek funding available from other outside sources such as other government or private grant opportunities to supplement the City's public investment in the area. Grants could support the provision of trails, landscaping and boulevards, community gardens, tree-plantings, or public art, among other opportunities.

Public Sector Investment

Local government has the ability to make limited but targeted public investments that may leverage much larger private investments. A number of implementation items outlined in the preceding sections could fall within the purview of a government agency to enact. For some elements, such as new community facilities like police stations and schools, and water and wastewater utility upgrades, there are already City or school district procedures and budgeting processes in place, and this plan simply helps clarify and prioritize the community's needs for the responsible departments so that they can include it in their work program. For other elements, different financing mechanisms may need to be employed by the public sector to make the vision a reality.

Central to the vision of the Corridor Plan is the construction of a rail line along Riverside Drive. In other cities, the introduction of a fixed rail line has spurred additional development alongside it. The City of Austin and other regional agencies have presented the proposed Austin Urban Rail project, which includes the Riverside Drive rail, to the CAMPO Transit Working Group (TWG). The TWG has recommended that the Urban Rail

project develop more detailed information regarding the alignment, operation and cost of the project. The City of Austin anticipates moving forward with preliminary engineering and environmental studies to refine this information and continue gathering public input on the proposed rail project. One aspect of this Corridor Master Plan is to leverage the future transit investment by encouraging supportive development surrounding the transit stops. The additional development can then contribute to funding public infrastructure needs in the area, including the investment in rail itself, through the increased property taxes, sales taxes, and employment opportunities likely to be generated by the new development.

A number of the public investments suggested for the area could be funded through typical City processes establishing priorities for City General Fund or Capital Improvement Program funds. These include bicycle facilities, trails, roadway connections, pedestrian crossings, and community facilities. However, because these projects must compete with other priority projects in the city through the typical budgeting processes, it is recommended that the City also consider other funding tools to fund some initial investment catalyst projects and other high priority implementation actions.

The City is strongly encouraged to seek Federal funding sources in implementing the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan and rail initiative.

In terms of key capital expenditures that could facilitate private investment in the area, tax increment financing (TIF) should also be considered as a funding mechanism. Tax increment financing draws upon the increase in area retail sales taxes and property values as a revenue source for key public investments in the area. It is also

sensitive to the timing in which the retail sale growth and property values increase. As such, given the nature of the sources upon which TIFs draw, it is most readily matched to projects with large payoffs, such as the rail initiative, redesign of East Riverside Drive, streetscape improvements, and a transit plaza. TIF sources may also be used judiciously in lieu of general obligation debt for items such as wastewater system improvements. Because TIFs divert tax revenue to a specific area instead of the City's General Fund, it is most appropriately used when the projects funded by a TIF are needed to spur initial development that would not otherwise occur and will be catalysts for additional private development and investment that will contribute additional future tax revenue to the city at large.

No single financing method or source will provide the resources necessary to implement all aspects of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. Implementation will occur incrementally as funding opportunities arise and with ongoing community involvement, with the Master Plan serving as a guide.