

Planning Process

The nearly two and one-half year NLCNPA planning process began with background research and field work in preparation for the public kick-off event held on November 15, 2007. At subsequent meetings, neighborhood planning staff assisted NLCNPA stakeholders in the development of goals and objectives related to the five subject areas addressed by this neighborhood plan: quality of life, parks and trees, transportation, infrastructure, and land use.

Planning Process Objectives

Neighborhood planning staff strove to meet the following objectives in order to provide NLCNPA stakeholders with a clear, meaningful, and effective planning process:

- Build trust between the City of Austin and the stakeholders in the planning area.
- Establish points of contact with other City departments and organizations, such that their expertise may be utilized for stakeholder meetings and in creating feasible and practicable recommendations.
- Encourage the involvement of all stakeholders throughout the planning process.
- Provide educational materials (including web-based resources) to all stakeholders so to help them understand all parts of the planning process and its outcome(s).
- Build consensus among stakeholders regarding participation processes, goals, objectives, and recommendations.
- Create a sense of ownership and pride for the neighborhood plan.

Neighborhood Planning Process Overview

Once background research and initial outreach efforts were completed, planning staff invited all NLCNPA residents, businesses, and property owners to attend the November 2007 kick-off event. Stakeholders were also invited to participate in the neighborhood's initial survey to provide greater first-hand insight into the area's history, qualities, and characteristics. Staff also requested contact information of all interested parties as a means for communication throughout the planning process; neighborhood meeting information and all other process-related announcements were sent via the provided contact information.



Participants at the November 2007 Kick-Off Event

The framework for the NLCNPA planning process was then built around the information staff received at both the First Workshop (December 2007) and the Vision and Goals Workshop (January 2008). Subsequent neighborhood meetings focused on those important issues identified by area stakeholders in those earlier meetings; these topical meetings (including crime and code enforcement, transportation, parks, etc.) were held throughout 2008. All meeting materials were placed on the NLCNPA website for review by all interested parties. For a detailed summary of meetings held throughout this process, see Appendix A.

Using information received at the topical meetings, staff began to draft the neighborhood plan, including the objectives and recommendations for each of the five identified areas of concern. To close out the first half of the planning process, all NLCNPA stakeholders were given an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft plan at the Mid-Process Open House (January 2009).

The second half of the NLCNPA planning process shifted stakeholders' focus toward land use and zoning issues. The land use and zoning workshops are arguably the most important of the process; the recommendations formed at these workshops are those that guide the area's development for the foreseeable future. Land use discussions began with the identification of areas throughout the neighborhood that need change. Stakeholders were asked to decide if the current land uses of particular properties were appropriate or not. Planning staff arranged the discussions around the five main thoroughfares of the NLCNPA (North Lamar Boulevard, Braker Lane, I-35, US Highway 183, and Rundberg Lane) as it was anticipated that most land use changes would occur there.



Participants at the January 2009
Mid-Process Open House

Zoning workshops followed with zoning recommendations based on the land use decisions made by stakeholders. These recommendations focused mainly on prohibiting certain uses on various properties along those thoroughfares mentioned above or bringing properties with incorrect zoning into conformance.

With the completion of the NLCNPA neighborhood plan, all area stakeholders had an additional opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft plan at the Final Open House held on March 6, 2010; stakeholders were also invited to provide feedback through the final survey. Once all comments were reviewed and the plan document finalized, planning staff took the neighborhood plan before the Planning Commission and City Council in the Spring of 2010 for official approval and adoption. The NLCNPA plan was adopted on **May 27, 2010**.

Outreach and Participation

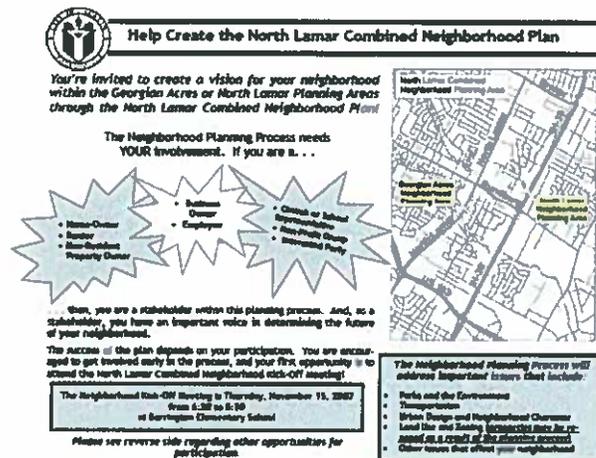
Planning staff utilized numerous outreach strategies to encourage continued involvement in the neighborhood planning process. For the NLCNPA plan, meeting notices were mailed to those on the interest list, posted online, and, on various occasions, were placed in public spaces or sent home with area elementary students. Several volunteers delivered meeting notices to their neighbors and area neighborhood associations announced NLCNPA meetings in their newsletters. On several occasions, planning staff coordinated outreach efforts with the North Creek/Georgian Acres and Mockingbird Hill neighborhood associations.

Upon the stakeholders' request, all mailed meeting notices were provided in both English and Spanish to accommodate the large Hispanic community living in the NLCNPA. When

necessary throughout the process, planning staff provided translation services for Spanish-speaking meeting participants.

It has been the goal of both planning staff and NLCNPA stakeholders to encourage increased participation of fellow residents and neighbors, including renters, low-income or Spanish-speaking residents, business owners, or developers. Despite the outreach efforts mentioned above, the participation level in the NLCNPA planning process was limited at best; an average of approximately 18 stakeholders attended neighborhood meetings.

Although meeting participation was low, those who were involved participated with great enthusiasm and with consideration towards the needs of the entire planning area, including those stakeholders not in attendance.



Example of a mail-out notice

Coordination with City Departments and Other Agencies

Planning staff worked closely with staff from other City departments (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Public Works) and other outside agencies (e.g., Capital Metro, Texas Transportation Institute) throughout the planning process. Representatives from these departments and agencies were invited to participate in the process and, on numerous occasions, attended neighborhood meetings to provide additional insight to neighborhood stakeholders regarding particular projects in their area. Their participation also helped frame some of the recommendations found throughout the NLCNPA plan.

Many of the objectives and recommendations in this plan fall under the scope of other City departments and outside agencies. Therefore, these departments or agencies are responsible for the implementation of those plan recommendations. Upon completion of the neighborhood plan, representatives of these departments and agencies reviewed the document and provided planning staff with invaluable input regarding the feasibility of implementing its recommendations.

It is the goal of planning staff that this substantial review will facilitate the successful implementation of the NLCNPA plan's recommendations given adequate funding and continued community support.

QUALITY of LIFE

The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area shall be a safe, healthy, and well-maintained neighborhood that promotes and preserves the quality of life for both residents and business owners.

The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) possesses several valuable assets that enhance the quality of life for area residents and property- and business owners. The NLCNPA is one of the few relatively affordable neighborhoods remaining in Austin's central city, attracting new homeowners and homeownership opportunities to the area. Recently, the area has also become more diverse, making the neighborhood a unique and interesting one in which to live, visit, or cultivate a business. Bounded by several major thoroughfares, the NLCNPA affords its residents and businesses great access to various points throughout the City of Austin and beyond.

Despite the assets mentioned above, several issues have compromised the quality of life of the NLCNPA in recent years. Through the planning process, neighborhood stakeholders expressed intent to address the general well-being of the NLCNPA and its citizens. Their concerns focused upon crime and public safety, code violations and enforcement, as well as health-related matters and sustainability.

Crime and Public Safety

The NLCNPA has been greatly affected by crime in recent years. Nearly two percent of the City of Austin's criminal activity has taken place within the NLCNPA between 2004 and 2008.¹¹ The rate of criminal activity has varied from year to year here; yet, the NLCNPA has become a hotbed of prostitution, drugs, and violent crimes for the City of Austin. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders strongly expressed the desire to improve the safety of their neighborhood while combating the crime that has affected the area for years.

Please note that several safety measures are related to specific topics and have been explicitly addressed in the respective, topical chapters within this plan.

❖ The NLCNPA should become a safe neighborhood.

The NLCNPA has steadfastly become a less desirable neighborhood due, in part, to the high volume of recent criminal activity. Rather than attracting quality, long-term residents and businesses, the NLCNPA has become an attractive area to an array of criminals (and to businesses that harbor them), making this once safe neighborhood into a high-crime area.

Since 2006, the north Austin community, including the NLCNPA, has been working closely with the Austin Police Department to deter crime and enhance public safety in

¹¹ Refer to the "Neighborhood in Context" chapter for a more detailed summary of crime statistics for the NLCNPA.

the area. Strong community organization and leadership are needed in an area of such high needs as the NLCNPA and the foundations of both have become present in recent years. Small successes have been made en route to becoming a safer neighborhood, yet much is left to be done to ensure safety throughout the NLCNPA.



Citizens and APD officers prepare for the December 1, 2007, March on Rundberg.
Photo courtesy of the Austin Police Department

Objective Q.1: Promote public safety through community organization.

- Recommendation 1** Encourage membership to and participation in area neighborhood associations.
- Recommendation 2** Ensure continued communication between area neighborhood associations and the Austin Police Department.
- Recommendation 3** Continue the community partnership with the North Austin Coalition of Neighborhoods (NACN).
- Recommendation 4** Create neighborhood watch and/or crime watch groups.

Objective Q.2: Ensure public safety throughout the NLCNPA.

- Recommendation 5** Increase Austin Police Department patrols throughout the NLCNPA.
- Recommendation 6** Study the feasibility of reinstating the Austin Police Department's Violent Crimes Task Force in north Austin, including the NLCNPA.
- Recommendation 7** Encourage area residents to report all criminal activities that occur in their neighborhood.
- Recommendation 8** Adopt and apply those principles set forth by the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

(CPTED) tool. Refer to the box below for information regarding CPTED.

Recommendation 9 Encourage the use of a CPTED Neighborhood Safety Audit similar to the one used in Phoenix, Arizona. See Appendix B for a sample audit form.

What is Crime Prevention through Environmental Design?

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an urban planning tool used to design a safe community. The designs incorporate the built environment and land use characteristics to deter criminal activities and behaviors while providing the ability to have "eyes on the street."

CPTED consists of four principles to help reduce the incidence of crime in an area. These principles are:

- 1) **Territoriality:** defining the ownership of a particular space (e.g., public vs. private space). Territorial control prevents the use of a space by unauthorized users.
- 2) **Access Control:** denial of access to specific crime targets by minimizing uncontrolled movement within a specific area.
- 3) **Natural Surveillance:** the ability to easily observe all users of a defined space, including potential criminals.
- 4) **Maintenance and Management:** effective upkeep of those items that support the intended purpose and use of specific spaces (e.g., lighting, landscaping).

The adoption of these principles does not necessarily guarantee a reduction in criminal activity; however, CPTED has been successful in many communities including Phoenix, Arizona; Sarasota, Florida; and, Toronto.

For more information regarding CPTED, read the National Crime Prevention Council's *Designing Safer Communities: A Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Handbook* (1997) or consult these websites:

- http://www.cptedsecurity.com/cpted_design_guidelines.htm
- <http://www.cpted-watch.com>
- <http://www.phoenix.gov/POLICE/cpted1.html>

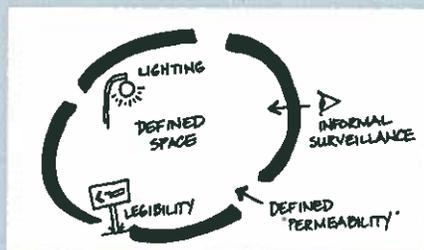


Diagram of CPTED

Source: <http://www.cityofvancouver.ca/calendar.asp?fbmenud=51950>

Code Enforcement

The City Code is a body of law that regulates certain activities within the City of Austin; its provisions are meant to provide all citizens with a safe, healthy city in which to live and work. In recent years, though, code violations have become increasingly prevalent within the NLCNPA. Issues related to poor property maintenance, improper parking of vehicles,

illegal businesses, overcrowded housing, and illegal dumping have been identified throughout the planning process.

❖ **The amount of code violations occurring within the NLCNPA should be reduced.**

Like the NLCNPA, areas with high amounts of code violations are often in some state of socioeconomic or demographic transition, with many residents seemingly unaware of the health and safety laws set forth in the City Code. A lack of awareness regarding these regulations oftentimes leads to unsafe or unsanitary conditions within which these residents may live. Education regarding the City Code should be provided to these citizens; however, adherence to and enforcement of its regulations will definitely improve the current conditions found within the NLCNPA neighborhoods.

Objective Q.3: Promote increased communication between NLCNPA neighbors and the City of Austin's Code Compliance Department.

Recommendation 10 Continue the distribution of the *Code Enforcement* and *Aplicación del Código* pamphlets throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 11 Develop and distribute additional educational materials regarding code enforcement in several Asian languages.

Properly Reporting Code Enforcement Issues to 311

1. Call 311 and then push prompt 2. You will be directed to City of Austin information.
 - Give the dispatcher the address and tell them you are reporting a code violation.
 - Ask the dispatcher to repeat back anything that might be unclear or confusing.
 - Write down the complaint number.
2. Seven business days later, call the Code Enforcement North District Program Specialist at 974-9036.
 - Give the Code Enforcement Program Specialist the address you reported. (Do not reference the complaint number given to you by the 311 operator; that number is for your personal records and the 311 database.)
 - Ask the North District Program Specialist for the case number, the investigator's name, and the investigator's contact information.
 - Call the investigator and ask for the status of the investigation. If you are unable to reach the assigned investigator, or if you are not satisfied with the status of the case, contact the North District Area District Manager.
 - Give any additional information that may help Code Enforcement's case (such as the day and time when the violation typically occurs, etc.).
 - Remember that a Code Enforcement completion may take up to 45 days.
 - If a problem recurs after having been corrected, please report it to 311 again.

Objective Q.4: Guarantee the correct and timely reporting of code violations within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 12 Provide all NLCNPA residents with information regarding the proper way to report code violations. Refer to the informational box above for this information.

Objective Q.5: Encourage neighbors to report code violations to the Code Compliance Department.

Recommendation 13 Guarantee the anonymity and safety of those neighbors reporting code violations.

Recommendation 14 Encourage area neighborhood associations to adopt a “volunteer policing” policy to notify those citizens violating any code regulations.

❖ **Properties within the NLCNPA should be properly maintained.**

Many code violations in the NLCNPA are oftentimes a result of a sheer lack of oversight to property maintenance; residents or owners may also not effectively maintain their property because they have no necessary means to do so. Whichever the case may be, poorly maintained properties (both residential and commercial) oftentimes misrepresent the neighborhood in which they are located: the absence of proper maintenance translates into a lack of pride in one’s property and overall neighborhood. Severely dilapidated areas also fail to attract visitors and future residents. Thus, proper maintenance is needed to provide a sense of place and pride for all citizens within the NLCNPA.



There are varying degrees of property maintenance throughout the NLCNPA. The home on the left is an example of poor property maintenance, while the home on the right exhibits excellent maintenance.

According to neighborhood stakeholders, much of the property maintenance issues occur on properties owned by absentee landlords. Absentee landlords own and rent out their property to tenants in a particular area but do not live in that same area. Because they cannot efficiently or effectively oversee their properties, absentee landlords

oftentimes allow them to fall into disrepair, creating a nuisance or blight within the neighborhood. Similar situations have risen in the NLCNPA in recent years; absentee landlords have failed to ensure proper maintenance on several properties throughout the neighborhood. Effective oversight and maintenance of absentee landlord-owned properties will certainly improve the overall appearance of the NLCNPA.



Property maintenance is lacking at the absentee landlord-owned 4-plexes on Brownie Drive.

Objective Q.6: Improve property maintenance within the NLCNPA.

- Recommendation 15** Support the idea of monthly “best landscaping” competitions for both residential and commercial properties within the NLCNPA.
- Recommendation 16** Sponsor regular recognition of attractive and well-maintained properties throughout the NLCNPA.
- Recommendation 17** Sponsor periodic neighborhood-wide cleanups.
- Recommendation 18** Report all substandard living conditions to the City’s Code Compliance Department via 311.
- Recommendation 19** Access various resources that support property maintenance. These resources include:
- City of Austin’s Neighborhood Support Program
 - Habitat for Humanity’s Habitat ReStore
 - Hands On Housing

Objective Q.7: Ensure proper maintenance on absentee landlord-owned properties throughout the NLCNPA.

- Recommendation 20** Encourage greater investment in those properties owned by absentee landlords.

Affordable Housing

The goal of many citizens is to achieve the proverbial “American Dream” of homeownership. Yet, cities are currently facing a crucial need to provide quality housing at an affordable rate to those citizens earning median or substandard incomes. Affordable neighborhoods are a vital part of any community, housing the workforce that sustains particular portions of that community’s economy.

❖ The NLCNPA should remain an affordable neighborhood.

Housing costs have risen considerably in recent years, especially throughout the City of Austin. However, the NLCNPA remains one of only a few affordable neighborhoods within the City. The affordable and quality entry-level housing found throughout the neighborhood is a key factor in attracting new residents (i.e., potential homeowners) to the area while retaining those residents already living within the NLCNPA. However, new housing developments could potentially threaten the affordability of the NLCNPA. Thus, stakeholders expressed the need to preserve the affordability of their neighborhood, especially within any new developments.¹²

What is “Affordable”?

According to the City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department's *City of Austin Fiscal Years 2009-14 Consolidated Plan* (p. 3-10), housing affordability is generally defined:

"... 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 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 or MFI. [The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] divides low- and moderate-income households into categories, based on their relationship to the [MFI]: extremely low-income (earning 30 percent or less of the MFI), very low-income (earning between 31 and 50 percent of the MFI), low-income (earning between 51 and 80 percent of the MFI) and moderate-income (earning between 81 and 95 percent of the MFI). The current [2009] MFI for the Austin area is \$73,300."

Objective Q.9: Preserve housing affordability throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 21 Encourage coordination between NLCNPA stakeholders and Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department staff to determine the best policies and practices for providing and preserving affordable housing in the neighborhood.

¹² Specific types of new development are discussed in the Land Use chapter.

Cultural Diversity

Since 1990, the NLCNPA has become a neighborhood rich in cultural diversity.¹³ The demographic changes can be seen and heard throughout the area: the NLCNPA has become a modern example of the proverbial melting pot, becoming an “immigrant gateway” to people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As immigrants have made the NLCNPA home in recent years so have businesses that cater to them, with the Chinatown Center being the greatest example. Thus, the NLCNPA has become an interesting and unique place to live, work, or visit with an ever-greater presence of an international community.

❖ **Cultural diversity within the NLCNPA should be acknowledged and welcomed.**

Many concerns addressed in this plan are shared by all NLCNPA residents, which necessitate community-wide cooperation. However, as the neighborhood becomes more diverse, this diversity poses difficult and interesting challenges throughout the area. Stakeholders cited language barriers and a difference of societal norms or traditions as potential threats to the area’s quality of life. The inability to communicate with one another and the lack of knowledge of cultural norms can oftentimes disrupt the characteristics, traditions, and daily operations within the NLCNPA.

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders acknowledged the fact that the NLCNPA has become a diverse neighborhood. There is also a need for long-time residents and businesses to welcome or embrace the area’s somewhat new cultural diversity. Engaging *all* stakeholders within their own neighborhood is a crucial step in creating a quality living environment for all.



The December 1, 2007, March on Rundberg attracted NLCNPA residents of diverse backgrounds (left). The store (at right) on Gessner Drive offers a variety of products and services to the neighborhood’s diverse population.
Photo at left courtesy of the Austin Police Department

Objective Q.10: Acknowledge the cultural diversity of the NLCNPA.

- Recommendation 22** Organize and promote neighborhood events with an emphasis on the cultural diversity found throughout the NLCNPA. These events could include:
- A music, arts, or other festival focused upon the area’s cultural influences

¹³ See the Neighborhood in Context Chapter for a broader explanation of the changes the neighborhood has seen in recent decades.

- Cultural awareness workshops

Recommendation 23 Encourage the location of minority-owned and -run businesses within the NLCNPA.

Objective Q.11: Foster greater communication among all area stakeholders.

Recommendation 24 Consider the continuation or expansion of AISD-related language-based adult educational classes in or near the NLCNPA.

Community Health

The health of a neighborhood’s residents is of utmost importance to its vitality and integrity. Several variables can factor into the overall health of a neighborhood: the availability of and access to healthy, nutritional food choices; the promotion of healthy behavior; and, the healthy offerings of the neighborhood’s environment, including parks and gardens. Once these options are available, however, the responsibility lies in the hands of all citizens to make healthful-minded decisions that will enhance their health and the health of their community. The health of a neighborhood is only as good as that of its citizens. Thus, a healthy population creates a vibrant, lively community.

❖ **The NLCNPA should be a neighborhood of healthy residents.**

Chronic illnesses such as diabetes and obesity have become prevalent in much of eastern and northeastern Travis County (including the NLCNPA) in recent years. See Appendix C for the map provided by the Health and Human Services Department for the affected areas. The adoption of healthier lifestyles could potentially eradicate these illnesses and create a healthier neighborhood. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders expressed great interest in a variety of activities that could reduce the occurrence of chronic disease and enhance the health of the NLCNPA, including recreational activities and healthier eating habits.

Several resources are identified in the objectives and recommendations below; to find their contact information, refer to Appendix D.

Objective Q.12: Promote healthy behaviors among NLCNPA residents.

Recommendation 25 Create a neighborhood walking group.

Recommendation 26 Partner with the Parks and Recreation Department to create organized sports leagues for area residents.

Recommendation 27 Explore additional opportunities for recreation in the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 28 Encourage attendance of the Happy Kitchen/La Cocina Alegre cooking classes as provided by the Sustainable Food Center.

Objective Q.13: Promote a healthy environment within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 29 Create and maintain a community garden, taking into consideration the following steps:

- Identify interested citizens or neighborhood representatives.
- Locate an appropriate plat of land to place the community garden upon.
- Obtain funding from various sources.
- Consult various agencies for technical assistance regarding community gardening construction, maintenance, and education. These agencies include:
 - Sustainable Food Center
 - Keep Austin Beautiful
 - Austin Parks Foundation

A detailed list of actions needed to create a community garden on City property can be found in Appendix E.



There are examples of community gardening throughout the NLCNPA. The beginnings of a community garden are located on a vacant lot near the dead-end of East Lola Drive (left) and community gardening has become a popular activity at the Santa Maria Village apartment complex.
Photo at right courtesy of Lisa Hinely

Objective Q.14: Improve the availability of healthy and nutritional food options throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 30 Encourage mobile food vendors throughout the NLCNPA to offer healthy food choices.

Recommendation 31 Limit the construction of new fast food restaurants throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 32 Encourage local grocery stores to offer a healthier variety of food options for their customers.

Recommendation 33 Examine the feasibility and support for a local farmers' market.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the ability to “[meet] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁴ Within recent years, rising transportation costs and an increased awareness of our impact on the earth have fostered an understanding that living a more sustainable lifestyle can secure a viable environment in the future. Human actions today will have a global impact tomorrow; we must realize that our current habits will affect future generations.

❖ **The NLCNPA should become a sustainable community.**

Our current (non-sustainable) habits will have a global impact with related, localized consequences; as such, the NLCNPA will not be exempt from the incurred consequences of our current impacts on the environment. Throughout the planning process, however, stakeholders developed several sustainability-related recommendations, keeping their community's future in mind. These recommendations include a variety of programs, rebates, and subsidized items available from the City of Austin to help aid those interested in living a more sustainable lifestyle. Other sustainability-related recommendations (e.g., alternate forms of transportation, trees, etc.) can be found throughout this plan.



The residents of a home on Elliott Street have already adopted a more sustainable lifestyle with the use of solar panels.

Objective Q.15: Promote sustainability throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 34 Participate in the Watershed Protection Department's Green Neighbor program.

Recommendation 35 Encourage residential and commercial participation in several energy efficiency programs sponsored by Austin Energy. These programs include:

- Green Building
- Power Saver
- Commercial Power Saver

¹⁴ As defined by the 1987 United Nations Brundtland Commission. Found in: Porter, Douglas R. "A Brief Introduction to Sustainable Development." *The Practice of Sustainable Development*. Ed. Douglas R. Porter. Washington: Urban Land Institute, 2000. 1-3.

- Solar for Schools
- Energy Efficiency Rebate programs

Recommendation 36 Encourage participation in all City of Austin recycling programs.

Recommendation 37 Actively enforce watering restrictions throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 38 Encourage the planting of hardy, native trees and plants that require less water.

A list of sustainability resources and programs available in the City of Austin is available in Appendix F.

DRAFT

PARKS and TREES

Achieve and maintain healthy, sustainable, functional, quality, safe and aesthetically-beautiful parks and green spaces that provide opportunities for cultural interactions within the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

Parks

Parks are the cornerstones of a city's neighborhoods; they foster a sense of community by offering the opportunity to congregate, interact, and recreate with one another. Parks can also provide healthy and natural alternatives to their surrounding built environments.

With only two parks within its boundaries, the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) is underserved; of the approximately 1,297 acres of the NLCNPA, only 0.67 percent (8.67 acres) are City parks. These two parks do not meet the current and future needs of the community as its population continues to grow.

❖ **The existing parks of the NLCNPA should better serve the community.**

The two existing parks in the NLCNPA, Barrington Park and Brownie Playground, should be improved in both their functionality and safety. See the *Area Parks* map on page 39 for the location of these parks within the NLCNPA.

Barrington Park is an approximately 8.35 acre, shared park facility with the Austin Independent School District (AISD) located at Barrington Elementary School. Current facilities at Barrington Park include a playground area, multi-purpose field, covered basketball court, dirt track, and several fitness machines. The park's facilities truly make it a public gathering place, utilized by schoolchildren, neighborhood residents, and area sports leagues.



Barrington Park offers its patrons a playground area (left) and a multi-purpose field for various recreational activities (right).

At approximately 0.32 acres, the Brownie Playground is a modest park containing a small playscape and picnic area. Located at the southern terminus of Brownie Drive, the playground is not easily accessible from many parts of the NLCNPA. In fact, the



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Area Parks

immediate neighborhood near the playground is perceived as being neither inviting nor safe for visitors; thus, the playground is used most by those families living within close proximity.



Brownie Playground's playscape and picnic area provide recreational opportunities to area residents.

Objective P.1: Improve Barrington Park facilities.

- Recommendation 39** Install additional drinking fountains at Barrington Park.
- Recommendation 40** Provide continual clearance of trash and debris found on the Barrington Park grounds.
- Recommendation 41** Develop a maintenance strategy to improve the quality of the park's multi-purpose field.

Objective P.2: Improve the access to and safety of Brownie Playground.

- Recommendation 42** Investigate ways to improve access to Brownie Playground.
- Recommendation 43** Examine strategies that will promote wider usage of the Brownie Playground. Such strategies could include:
- Improved lighting
 - The placement of emergency call boxes
- Recommendation 44** Encourage increased police patrols by the Austin Police Department at or near Brownie Playground.

❖ **Future parks should meet the needs of those living within the NLCNPA.**

The NLCNPA does not have a local-serving, neighborhood park that would allow its residents opportunity to recreate, gather, and interact. The NLCNPA also lacks a sufficient amount of City-owned land where a future City-run park could be located; refer to the *Area Parks and COA-Owned Land* map on page 42 for the location of these parcels. However, concurrent with the planning process, the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) was actively seeking land within the NLCNPA to provide another park in the immediate area. For a list of criteria PAR uses in determining the location and placement of future parks, refer to the Criteria for Parkland Acquisition informational box below.

If a new park is developed, it will be a local asset for the NLCNPA community and its diverse population. Neighborhood stakeholders explicitly stated their desire to incorporate amenities that would address the area's cultural diversity, climate change initiatives, and the overall health of their neighborhood. Stakeholders felt the new park should have a limited service area, serving only the NLCNPA and its immediate surroundings. They were concerned that a larger-scaled park would not foster a sense of community; consequently, they decided to limit the type and number of amenities that support large-group activities (e.g., baseball and softball fields, basketball courts) at a new neighborhood park.

Criteria for Parkland Acquisition

The Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) uses a gap analysis to identify areas throughout the City of Austin that are deficient of public parkland. According to PAR officials, in 2008, NLCNPA residents lacked adequate access to neighborhood parks and, therefore, PAR was actively seeking opportunities to provide a park within the area.

When analyzing land for future acquisition, PAR uses the following criteria:

- Current deficiency of parkland within the area
- Size of the land
- Road frontage
- Developable ability
- Present natural features
- Accessibility
- Connectivity
- Leverage opportunities with developers or the public
- Present cultural features



For more information, refer to PAR's "Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities" at:
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/history.htm>.

Objective P.3: A new park should be located within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 45 Find and allocate land for a new park within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 46 Examine opportunities for a public-private partnership to develop and manage community recreational facilities, including a new park, within the NLCNPA.



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Area Parks and City of Austin-Owned Land

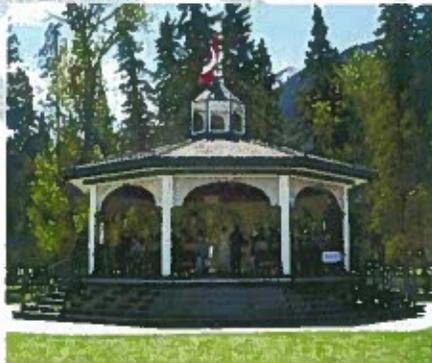
Objective P.4: The new park should become a neighborhood asset to the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 47 Consider the incorporation of the following amenities within the design of a new park:

- 47.A. Drinking fountains for both people and dogs
- 47.B. Interactive water fountain
- 47.C. Benches
- 47.D. Picnic tables
- 47.E. A pavilion and/or an area that can be reserved for various functions
- 47.F. Bar-B-Que pits and/or grills
- 47.G. Trash cans
- 47.H. “Mutt Mitt” stations with bags and receptacles for pet waste
- 47.I. Playground equipment
- 47.J. Walking trails
- 47.K. Exercise equipment similar to that found at Barrington Park
- 47.L. An area for a community garden
- 47.M. Large open space to allow for various activities, including football and kite-flying

Objective P.5: The new park should directly serve the NLCNPA community and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Recommendation 48 Examine the feasibility to limit the number of amenities within the new park so as not to attract large groups of people from outside the neighborhood.



A new neighborhood park should have a gazebo (left) and playscapes made from recycled materials (right).

Photo at left courtesy of <http://www.barrill.ca/facilities-residents/recreation/facilities/central-park.htm>

Photo at right courtesy of <http://www.learningstructures.com/>

Objective P.6: The new park should address the cultural diversity present within the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 49 Incorporate into the park’s design a gazebo or other performance-type venue that will allow for a variety of

culturally-related performances, including music and dance.

Objective P.7: *The design for a new park should include facilities that promote the safety, convenience, and comfort of its users.*

- Recommendation 50** Provide restroom facilities for park users.
- Recommendation 51** Provide adequate parking for park visitors.
- Recommendation 52** Investigate safety measures that will protect all park visitors. These measures could include:
- Emergency call boxes
 - Lighting
- Recommendation 53** Encourage Austin Police Department security patrols at or near the new park.

Objective P.8: *The design for a new park should include facilities and amenities that promote sustainability and climate protection.*

- Recommendation 54** Incorporate renewable energy sources into the design of the park's facilities. These sources could include:
- Rooftop wind turbines
 - Solar paneling
 - Electric car plug-in sites
- Recommendation 55** Use recycled and/or recyclable materials in the construction of the parks' facilities and amenities.



The landscaping of the area's new park should resemble that of the Cherrywood Green in east Austin with its native, low-growing plant species.

Objective P.9: *The new park's landscaping should provide function and safety to all visitors.*

- Recommendation 56** Place landscaping in areas where it will not interfere with activities that occur on the park's open spaces.

Recommendation 57 Plant those tree species that will, upon maturation, enhance the tree canopy of the new park. These species include:

- Pecan
- Live Oak
- Chinquapin Oak
- Bur Oak
- Cedar Elm

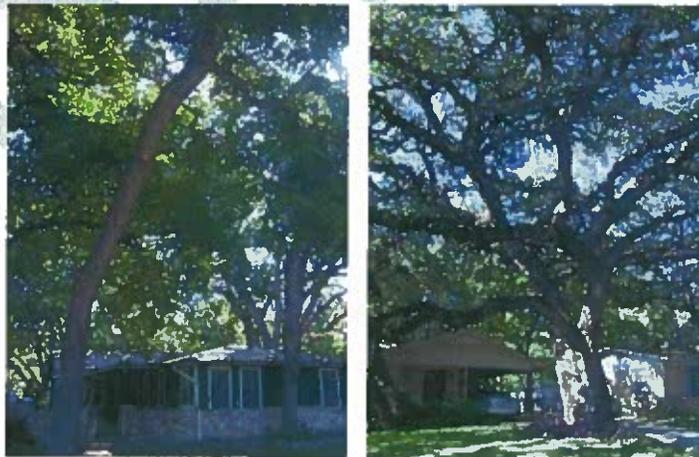
Recommendation 58 Plant low-growing, native shrubbery and/or greenery that promote natural surveillance¹⁵ among visitors of the new park. Certain species could include:

- Prickly pear cactus
- Yucca
- Agarita
- Naturalized rose species
- Other similar plant types

Recommendation 59 Provide regular maintenance of the park's landscaping.

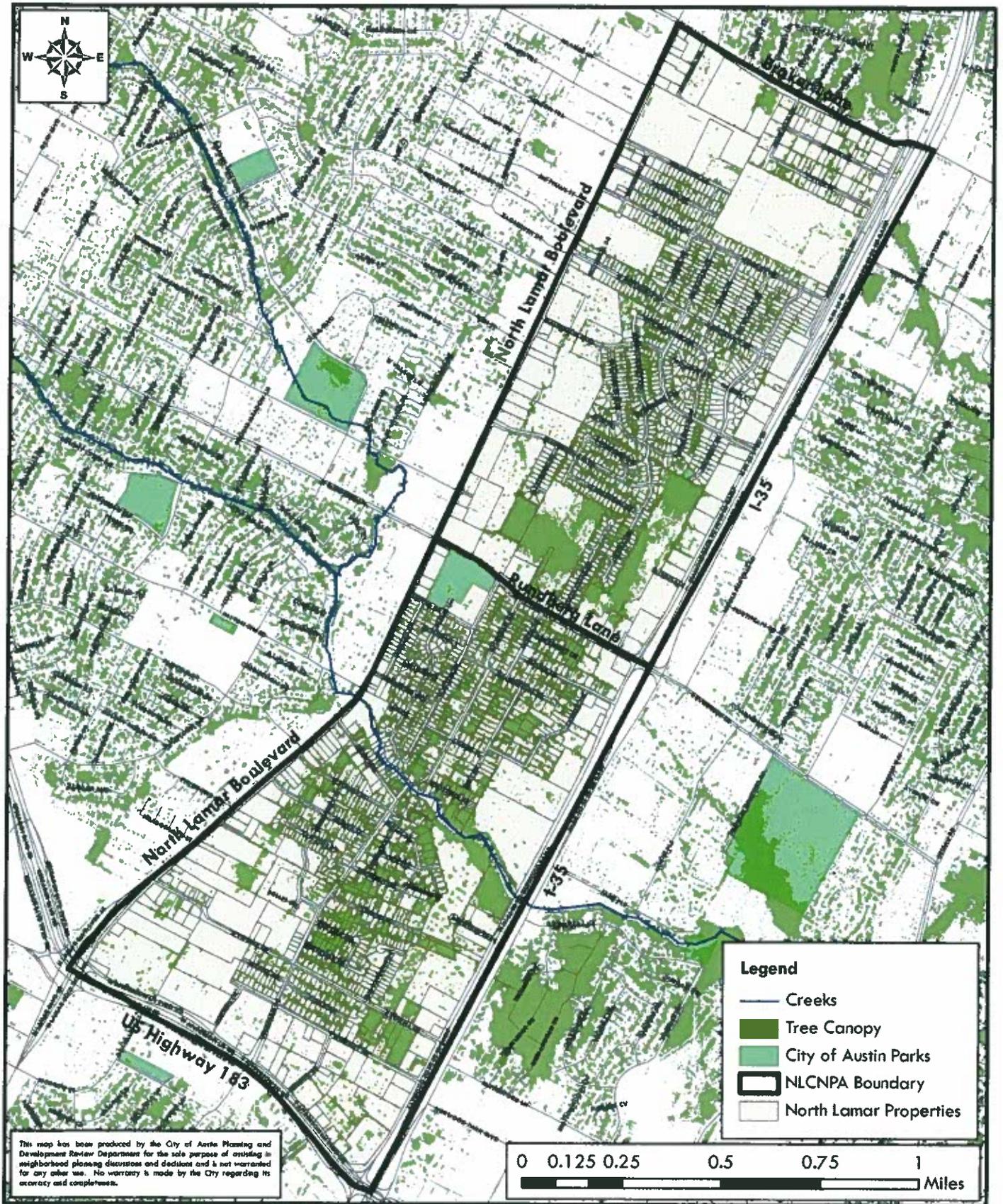
Trees

Trees are an asset to any neighborhood, providing economic, aesthetic, and environmental value. Areas with trees are generally more desirable and potentially more valuable than those without. Trees also improve the surrounding environment by absorbing carbon dioxide and other air pollutants, mitigating storm-water runoff, and acting as a passive heating and cooling mechanism for area homes and businesses.

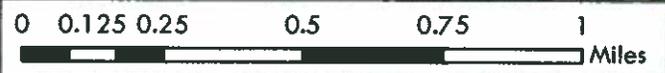


Large trees at homes on Georgian Drive (left) and Red Oak Circle (right) enhance the aesthetic quality of the NLCNPA

¹⁵ Refer to the *What is Crime Prevention through Environmental Design?* informational box on page 28 for a definition of “natural surveillance.”



This map has been produced by the City of Austin Planning and Development Review Department for the sole purpose of assisting in neighborhood planning discussions and decisions and is not warranted for any other use. No warranty is made by the City regarding its accuracy and completeness.



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Tree Canopy (2006)

❖ **The tree canopy should become a beneficial asset to the NLCNPA.**

The NLCNPA lacks an adequate tree canopy.¹⁶ Only 21 percent of the combined neighborhood was covered by tree canopy in 2008; the *Tree Canopy (2006)* map on page 46 displays the tree canopy for the area.

According to the *Tree Canopy (2006)* map, the majority of the NLCNPA's tree canopy is located in the interior, residential portions of the area. Many of the area's commercial and multi-family properties located along North Lamar Boulevard, I-35 and US Highway 183 are largely devoid of trees. Stakeholders expressed a desire to enhance the tree canopy in certain areas of the neighborhood, particularly along the aforementioned roadways, in order to beautify and improve the neighborhood.



Stakeholders expressed the need for tree plantings along major thoroughfares that are largely devoid of trees, including North Lamar Boulevard.

Objective P.10: Enhance the tree canopy of the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 60 Plant hardy, long-lasting, and drought-tolerant trees throughout the NLCNPA. Specific areas include:

- 60.A. North Lamar Boulevard, between Braker Lane and US Highway 183
- 60.B. I-35, between Braker Lane and Barwood Park
- 60.C. Rundberg Lane, between North Lamar Boulevard and IH-35
- 60.D. The Chinatown Center and the adjacent property to its east
- 60.E. The Crockett Center
- 60.F. The commercial and multi-family properties located along I-35, between Showplace Lane and Little Walnut Creek
- 60.G. The residential area bounded by Diamondback Trail to the north, Doc Holliday Trail to the

¹⁶ "Tree canopy" here refers to the overall coverage of a particular area by trees.

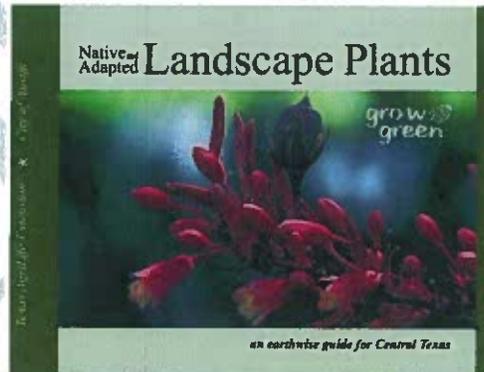
east, East Garrett Run to the south, and Derringer Trail to the west

Refer to the *Tree Planting and Preservation Recommendations* map on page 49 for the locations of these specific areas.

- Recommendation 61** Plant native species of trees throughout the NLCNPA, including:
- Monterey Oak
 - Pecan
 - Texas Persimmon
 - Texas Redbud
 - Texas Ash

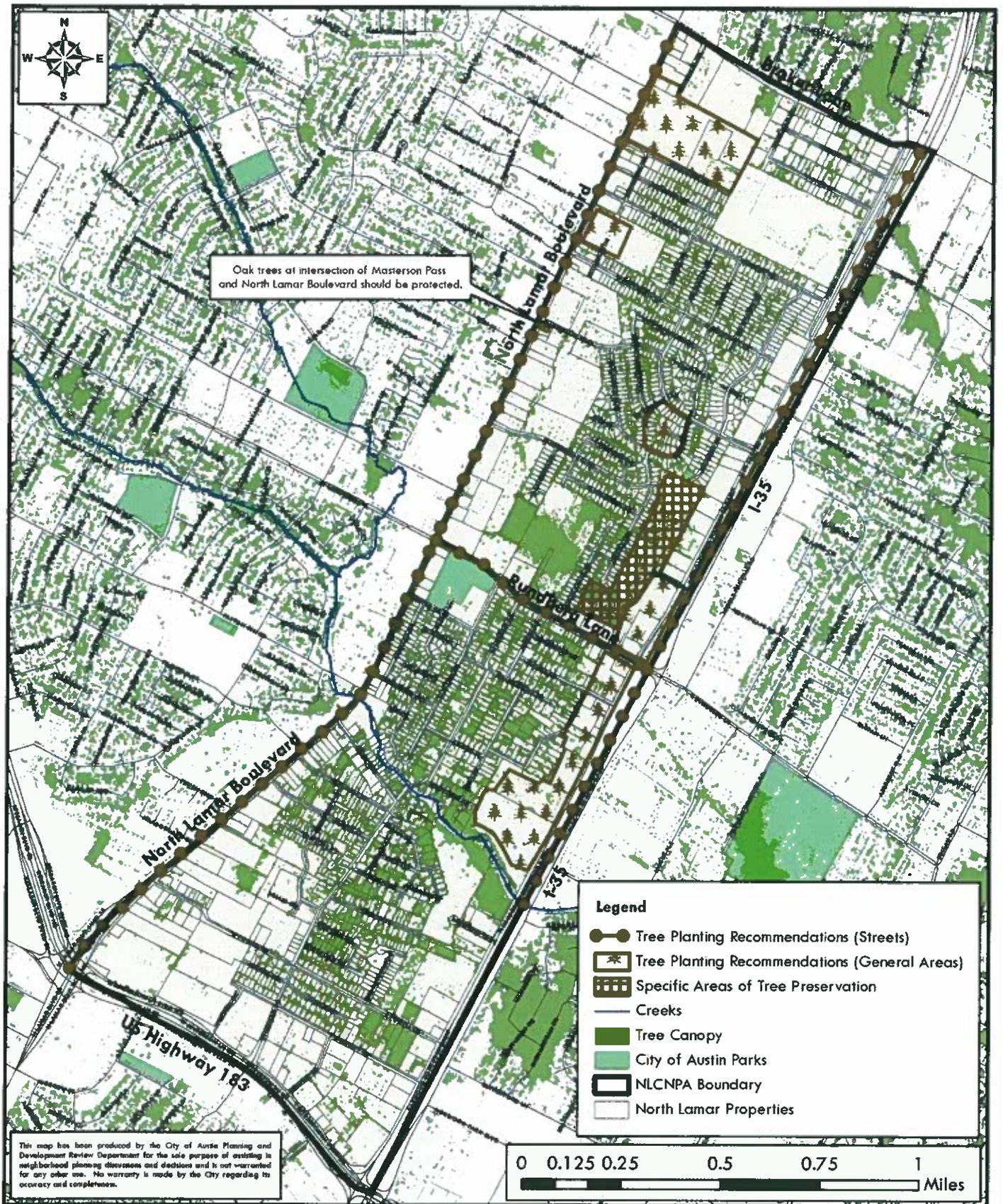
- Recommendation 62** Plant other species of trees throughout the NLCNPA, including:
- Mountain Laurel
 - Crape Myrtle
 - Eastern Red Cedar
 - Silver Leaf Maple
 - Wax Myrtle

- Recommendation 63** Encourage the use of the *Native and Adapted Landscape Plants* guidebook so to choose naturalized and proper tree species for the area.



To choose naturalized plant species for landscaping, stakeholders should use the *Native and Adapted Landscape Plants* guidebook provided by the City of Austin.

- ❖ **The NLCNPA tree canopy should become a protected asset for the community.** Not only should the existing tree canopy of the NLCNPA be enhanced, it should also be preserved and protected. Due to the current deficiency of trees, it is important to protect those trees already present throughout the NLCNPA.



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Tree Planting and Preservation Recommendations

Neighborhood stakeholders expressed specific concerns regarding illegal parking and the restriction to tree growth it poses. Trees throughout the NLCNPA are gravely impacted by the improper parking of vehicles on residents' front lawns. Over time, these vehicles could potentially compact and destroy trees' root systems or leak harmful materials into the soil, further restricting tree growth in the area.

Objective P.11: Protect the existing tree canopy of the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 64 Encourage the preservation of those trees already present throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 65 Protect specific areas of trees, paying special attention to:

65.A. The oak trees located on the median at the intersection of North Lamar Boulevard and Masterson Pass

65.B. Those trees located on the vacant properties located between North Creek and Oriole Drives, Brownie Drive, IH-35, and Rundberg Lane

Refer to the *Tree Planting and Preservation Recommendations* map on page 49 for the location of these specific areas.



Trees throughout the NLCNPA should be protected assets of the community. The oak trees at the intersection of Masterson Pass and North Lamar Boulevard (left) and trees along residential streets (Glenn Lane, right) should be protected.

Recommendation 66 Discourage parking on front or side lawns upon which trees are present.

❖ **Tree education should be offered to every NLCNPA stakeholder.**

In order to both enhance and protect the tree canopy of the NLCNPA, education regarding tree (and other landscaping) care must be made available to all neighborhood stakeholders. This education will increase awareness to those activities affecting the

area's trees: illegal parking, improper care, development, or the planting of invasive species. By correcting these issues through education, trees will become a beneficial and valuable asset to the NLCNPA community.

Several City-sponsored or -related programs, including Austin Community Trees (ACT), are valuable resources for information regarding trees. In fact, through an application process, the ACT program supplies trees to one neighborhood planning area (with an adopted neighborhood plan *and* low tree canopy percentage) each year.

Objective P.12: Provide tree education to all stakeholders of the NLCNPA.

- Recommendation 67** Provide tree education to all stakeholders of the NLCNPA including information regarding:
- Proper irrigation and care needed to sustain tree growth
 - Illegal (i.e., front yard) parking and its effects on trees and their critical root zones
 - Tree species that will provide large canopies
 - Native or adapted tree species
 - Types of fertilizers that pose little harm to the natural environment

- Recommendation 68** Distribute educational materials regarding proper tree care in the following manners:
- Public Service Announcements
 - Brochures
 - Leaflet insert in monthly Austin Energy bills

Objective P.13: Encourage the use of the tree-related resources available throughout the City.

- Recommendation 69** Participate in the Austin Community Trees tree planting program.

TRANSPORTATION

Pedestrians, motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and mobility-impaired neighbors should be able to safely and efficiently travel throughout the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area and to the rest of the City.

A network of roadways, sidewalks, and bike routes connects the neighborhoods of the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) to each other and to the City of Austin. However, a lack of improvements made to this network has reduced the mobility of motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.¹⁷

During the planning process, a number of transportation-related concerns were identified in the initial survey and at several neighborhood meetings.

❖ **The pedestrian and bicycle transportation networks should be improved.**

To efficiently and safely move within, out of, and through the NLCNPA, pedestrians and bicyclists need an interconnected and complete network of sidewalks and bicycle lanes. The lack of a complete sidewalk network impedes pedestrians' efficient access to specific areas within the NLCNPA, including the commercial areas located along North Lamar Boulevard; this is especially so within the Georgian Acres planning area. Also, the current bicycle infrastructure (including bicycle lanes, routes, and signage) within the NLCNPA does not promote increased usage. However, an improved, connected pedestrian and bicycle network in place will provide people with transportation options other than the automobile.

Objective T.1: Improve sidewalk connections throughout the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 70 Construct new sidewalks along:

- 70.A. the south side of Applegate Drive, between North Lamar Boulevard and Brownie Drive
- 70.B. North Lamar Boulevard (several locations)
- 70.C. the west side of Brownie Drive, between West Applegate Drive and East Grady Drive
- 70.D. the north side of West Grady Drive, between North Lamar Boulevard and Georgian Drive
- 70.E. the entire north side of Powell Lane
- 70.F. the south side of East Lola Drive
- 70.G. the entire north side of Deen Avenue
- 70.H. the entire north side of Carpenter Avenue

¹⁷ Throughout this chapter, the term "pedestrian" includes those with mobility impairments or handicaps.



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Sidewalk Recommendations

- 70.I. the south side of Diamondback Trail between Brownie Drive and the I-35 frontage road
- 70.J. either side of Turner Drive, between West Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
- 70.K. either side of Georgian Drive, between Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
- 70.L. either side of Jean Drive, between East Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
- 70.M. either side of McMillan Drive, between East Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
- 70.N. the south side of East Wonsley Drive, between Georgian Drive and the I-35 frontage road
- 70.O. the south side of Middle Lane, between North Drive and Capitol Drive

Refer to the *Sidewalk Recommendations* map on page 52.



Several main thoroughfares in the NLCNPA lack an improved sidewalk network. Areas near North Lamar Boulevard at Braker Lane (left) and Georgian Drive at Powell Lane (right) are examples of needed sidewalk construction or repair.

Recommendation 71 Repair or improve sidewalks along:

- 71.A. Georgian Drive, between US Highway 183 and Rundberg Lane
- 71.B. Oriole Drive
- 71.C. Slayton Drive

Recommendation 72 Explore the possibility of constructing a sidewalk or paved path from Ferguson Drive to Little Walnut Creek Elementary School to provide a safe route to school for students.

Objective T.2: Improve bicycle connections within, into, and through the neighborhoods of the NLCNPA.

Recommendation 73 Consider establishing bike lanes on Rundberg Lane to connect the NLCNPA to other areas of the City via Bicycle Route #14.¹⁸

Recommendation 74 Place signs along the existing bicycle routes to promote awareness to their existence and the possible presence of bicyclists.

Refer to the *Area Bicycle Routes* map on page 56.



Bicycle lanes are present throughout the NLCNPA. Route 47 (above) runs along Georgian Drive, south of Rundberg Lane.

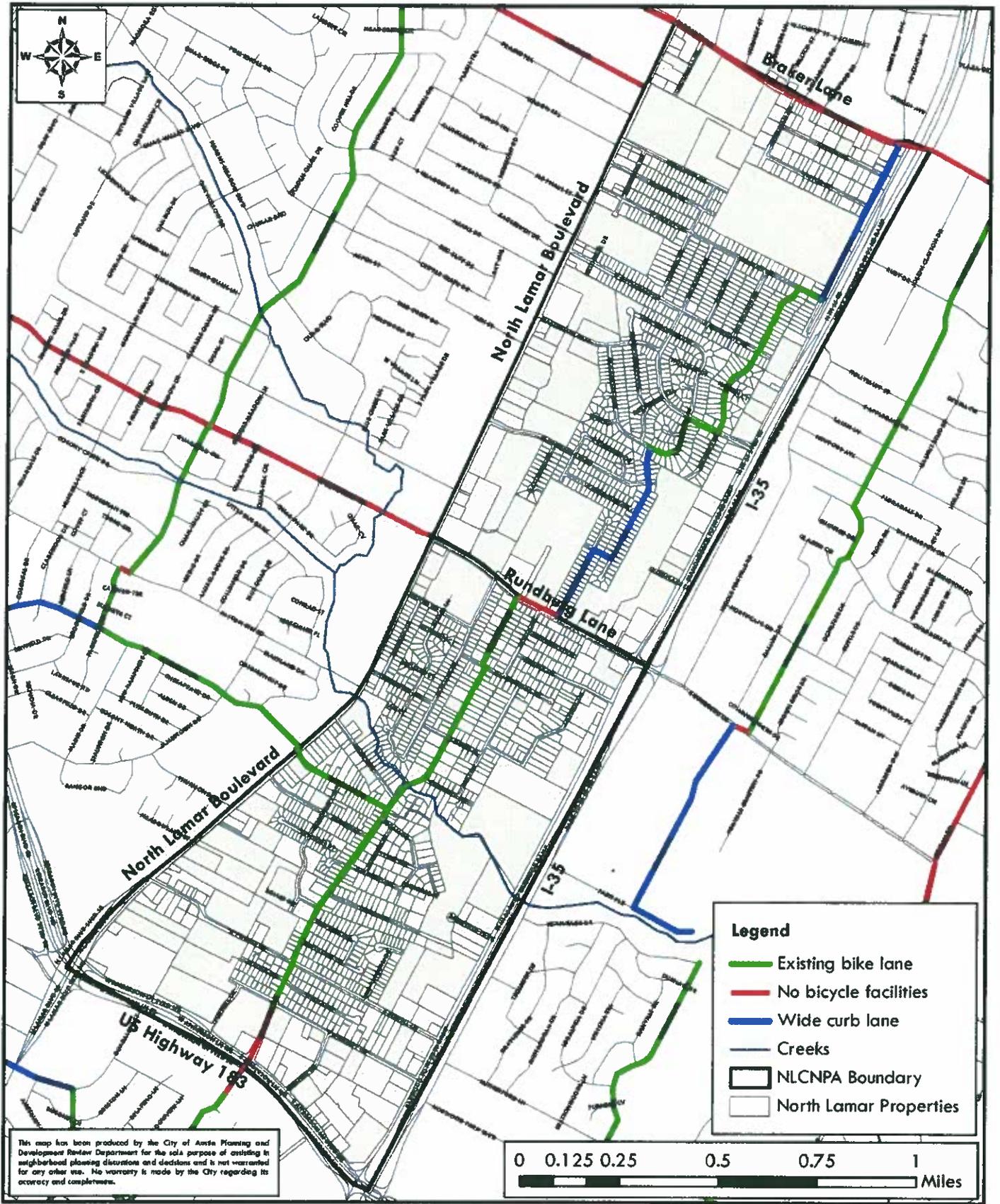
Objective T.3: Improve access to the NLCNPA pedestrian transportation network.

Recommendation 75 Construct Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant ramps at all intersections with sidewalks.

Objective T.4: Enhance the aesthetic quality of the NLCNPA pedestrian transportation network.

Recommendation 76 Add trees, shrubbery, and other greenery along sidewalks and other pedestrian pathways.

¹⁸ Be advised that specific bicycle route numbers may change after the adoption of this plan.



North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Area Bicycle Routes

Recommendation 77 Investigate the possibility of adding brick pavers, stamped concrete, or other decorative materials to sidewalks at significant intersections.

Recommendation 78 Where appropriate, place benches and/or shelters at Capital Metro bus stops throughout the NLCNPA.



Trees, streetlights, a sheltered bus stop, and decorative concrete add aesthetic value to the sidewalk along East 11th Street.

- ❖ **The safety of both pedestrians and motorists needs to be upheld and ensured.**
The NLCNPA is bounded by four major traffic corridors: North Lamar Boulevard, I-35, Braker Lane, and US Highway 183. Several neighborhood streets serve as cut-through routes, connecting these corridors to one another. These routes include Grady Drive, Masterson Pass/Diamondback Trail, Powell Lane, Beaver Street, and Georgian Drive (between US Highway 183 and Rundberg Lane). The accessibility and convenience of the major corridors has led to an increase in vehicular traffic and speed along the streets *within* the planning area, compromising the safety of those traveling throughout the NLNCPA.

Objective T.5: *The streets within the NLCNPA should be safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.*

Recommendation 79 Conduct a traffic-calming study to determine possible design changes to the NLCNPA street network to facilitate traffic flow and reduce hazards throughout the neighborhood. If warranted, implement the recommendation(s) from the traffic-calming study. Special emphasis should be placed on the following thoroughfares:

- Grady Drive
- Masterson Pass-Diamondback Trail
- Powell Lane
- Georgian Drive, between US Highway 183 and Rundberg Lane
- East Drive
- Beaver Street



Residents on Grady Drive have reported many traffic-related issues for this residential street in the NLCNPA. Its width and lack of lane striping create hazardous traveling conditions.

Recommendation 80 Communicate with the Austin Police Department regarding the enforcement of traffic regulations throughout the NLCNPA. These traffic regulations include:

- Speeding
- “No Through Trucks,” especially along Grady Drive
- Jaywalking

Recommendation 81 Consider reducing speed limits from 30 mph to 25 mph on appropriate neighborhood residential streets.

Recommendation 82 Identify intersections where stop signs may be appropriate, including:

- 82.A. Beaver Street at Guadalupe Street
- 82.B. Masterson Pass-Diamondback Trail at Doc Holliday Trail

Recommendation 83 To ensure appropriate driving conditions throughout the NLCNPA, consider adding lane striping to the following streets:

- 83.A. Brownie Drive
- 83.B. Masterson Pass-Diamondback Trail
- 83.C. Grady Drive

- ❖ **North Lamar Boulevard should be a safe route for both pedestrians and bicyclists.** North Lamar Boulevard is a primary north-south route through Austin. Serving as the NLCNPA’s western boundary, it is a wide five-lane roadway characterized by an almost continuous line of commercial establishments including the HEB, Chinatown, and Crockett shopping centers. Curb cuts dot the entire thoroughfare, increasing the number of access points to and from all of these establishments. The curb cuts, intense commercial uses, and high volume of vehicular and pedestrian traffic can create hazardous transit conditions for those traveling along North Lamar Boulevard. Long distances between signalized intersections (i.e., those with stoplights) further contribute to a transportation corridor suited to vehicular traffic and little else. All of these factors have contributed to a number of automobile collisions with both pedestrians and bicyclists along this route in recent years. Refer to the *Motor Vehicle Collisions with Pedestrians, 2003 - 2008*, map on page 60.



North Lamar Boulevard is a wide, highly traveled roadway with numerous commercial establishments and curb cuts along the western length of the NLCNPA (right side of picture).

Objective T.6: Improve the safety of pedestrians traveling along North Lamar Boulevard.

- Recommendation 84** Consider reducing speed limits along North Lamar Boulevard.
- Recommendation 85** Study the feasibility of placing signalized, mid-block crosswalks along North Lamar Boulevard.
- Recommendation 86** Study the feasibility of constructing pedestrian refuge islands, such as raised medians, along North Lamar Boulevard.