

Late Backup

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Presentation to Council Oct 6 2011

Mayor, council, good afternoon. My name is Frank Harren. I am here both in my individual capacity and as a part of a group that was asked to speak on the resolution before you. As I've told 4 of you already, I do not support the entirety of the resolution, but I do support the position that we need an extension of the current schedule. I believe that 90 days will be sufficient, so long as we use the time productively.

The process is incomplete because we have not had the opportunity to engage in informed discussions about the major issues dealt with in the plan, which include a compact, connected city, affordability, transportation policy and environmental, water and energy policy.

On affordability, I am authorized on Ora Houston's behalf to let you know she is also dissatisfied with the lack of substantive discussion about the issue, and believes that plan is not based in reality. She does not believe that we have dealt in a realistic way with the ability of lower income citizens to afford decent, basic housing. And I wholeheartedly agree.

On the issue of a compact, connected city, each of you should have received an email yesterday from Jeb Boyt expressing a similar viewpoint that we need an extension of the schedule in order to adequately deal with that and other issues. I wholeheartedly agree with Jeb.

In fact, "compact connected city" is listed as one of 5 major guiding principles in the plan, but there's no plan or program for implementing the principle. You need look no further than the plan summary distributed at Saturday's big party. Of the 5 major guiding principles, 4 of them have at least one priority program for achieving the goal. Compact, connected city does not. The principle simply disappears into the ether. What the plan does talk about is compact "nodes" but says nothing about bringing those "nodes" together into a compact city. In fact, the map sends those nodes out into a pattern that directly contradicts the guiding principle.

The idea seems to be "Let's say it, and then ignore it." That's what we did 30 years ago, and that's what we vowed not to do this time around.

I am asking that the council extend the schedule by 90 days, and direct staff, consultants, task force, and planning commission to spend that 90 extra days having informed, substantive, serious, face to face discussions about at least the 4 broad issues that I just mentioned. Everyone can use the current draft of the plan as a jumping off point for those discussions. Nothing will have been wasted; we can be forward-looking and efficient, and by talking openly about where the plan needs significant improvement, we can arrive at a vastly superior comprehensive plan that will result in a vastly superior future for this community.

Thank you all for your time, and for your serious consideration of this request.

Vision

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all.

Austin's greatest asset is its people: passionate about our city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see this vision become a reality. Imagine Austin envisions a complete community that is:

Livable

Mobile & Interconnected

Natural & Sustainable

Prospere

Prospere

Prospere

5 Guiding Principles

- Grow as a compact, connected city.
- Integrate nature into the city.
- Provide paths to prosperity for all.
- Develop as an affordable and healthy community.
- Sustainably manage water and other environmental resources.

8 Priority Programs

- Affordable housing throughout Austin
- Education and talented workforce
- Network of parks, trails, waterways & natural areas
- Manage long-term water resources
- Grow and invest in creative economy
- Improved transportation options for cars, transit, bikes & walking
- Update City rules for land uses
- Healthy Austin program

View the full draft plan and set your priorities at ImagineAustin.net

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Vibrant. Livable. Connected.