

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

# IMAGINE AUSTIN

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Vibrant. Livable. Connected.



September 7, 2011

# DRAFT

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## THE ROADMAP AND THE ROAD AHEAD

A Comprehensive Plan for the 21st Century

Thinking Big: The Beauty of a Comprehensive Plan

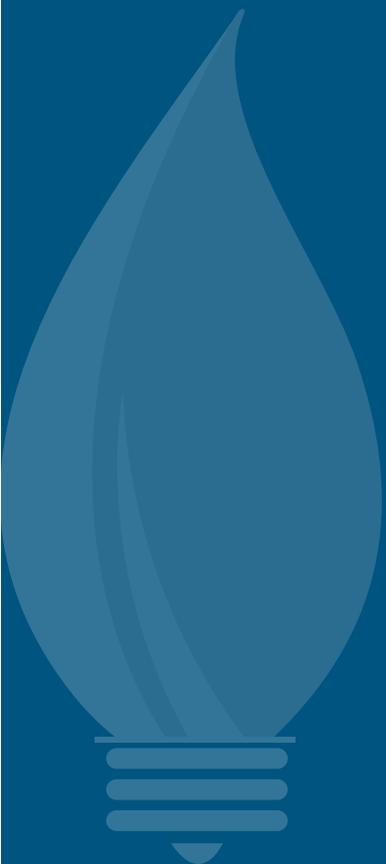
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## THE ROADMAP AND THE ROAD AHEAD

There are two primary choices in life: to accept conditions as they exist, or accept the responsibility for changing them.

- Dennis Waitley

### A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Austin today is model of livability, widely acclaimed as one of the top metropolitan areas in the country. We have a distinctive and appealing vibe, a resilient economy, a national profile, good job and business opportunities, a fun and relaxed way of life, a beautiful natural setting for outdoor recreation, a thriving arts and live music scene, and a reasonable cost of living for a big city. In fact, we're so attractive that we draw over one million visitors and many thousands of new residents annually.

Known as a "smart" city, we are also too smart to rest on our laurels. To maintain our enviable economy and quality of life, we know Austin must continually adapt as the world evolves around us. As a fast-growing city whose population is projected to nearly double over the next three decades, we are becoming more urban and diverse each year. Our attractiveness brings a central challenge: accommodating more people well, in a sustainable fashion, so that we get better not just bigger.

Many of the changes Austin has seen are positive. Growth in recent decades has brought more employers and varied job opportunities; more interesting people with whom to meet and connect; a broader population base to support the arts, culture, and our many non-profits; a revitalized downtown, new transportation options, and greater tolerance and diversity. We have gained public parkland, a wealth of entertainment and dining choices, and many other amenities to enjoy with family and friends.

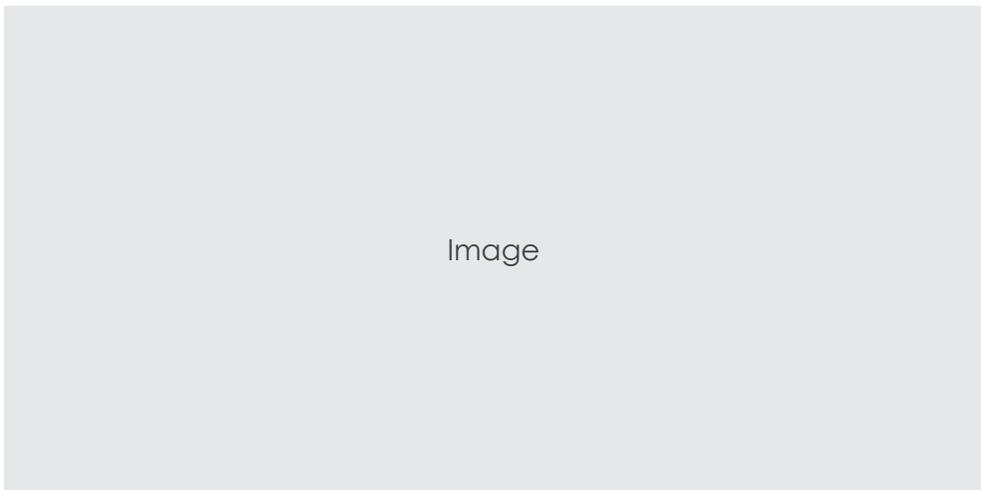


Image Caption

Austin has a true sense of place and culture. To be from Austin means something to people, conjuring images of Barton Springs, music, food, outdoor recreation, ... open-mindedness. It's a little grungy, a little hippie, and a little country all rolled into one.

- Imagine Austin participant

But other changes are negatives. We now suffer from serious traffic congestion, long commutes on clogged freeways, Central Austin housing that is increasingly unaffordable for individuals and families, a sense of loss about a simpler Austin of the past, and too many low-wage jobs that lag behind Austin's cost of living. Most troubling, at least 20 percent of our children live in poverty, lack food security, go without health insurance and adequate healthcare, and/or fail to graduate from high school.

The challenge now before us – in shaping the Austin of the 21st century – is to energetically capitalize on our positives as we grow, while turning around the negatives. The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan provides the roadmap.

The stakes are high. We must embrace the future that we want and work to make it happen.

### THINKING BIG: THE BEAUTY OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

We are not lacking in the dynamic forces needed to create the future. We live immersed in a sea of energy beyond all comprehension.

- Thomas Berr

The distinctive benefit of a comprehensive plan is that it tackles big issues in a big-picture way. Other city plans consider single needs – parks, transportation, water – or single neighborhoods or small groups of neighborhoods. But only a comprehensive plan fully considers how the whole community's values, needs, people, and places are interrelated and interdependent. In creating this plan, we tackled the defining issues that go to the core identity of Austin as a city.

Today, Austin tops numerous "Best City in the Country" lists. This national visibility is accelerating our attractiveness and population growth. As we grow and evolve, how can we preserve and amplify the special things we value about Austin? How can we face our more difficult problems, improve the city, and meet our challenges head-on?

## 6 KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Preserving Our Livability

Austin is a great place to live. We have a wealth of natural resources and recreational opportunities, friendly neighborhoods, a robust economy, and a thriving arts scene. As we welcome the next generation of Austinites, how can we best expand and share all of these amenities? We want to preserve our character and history, remember Austin's soul as we evolve with the times. How will we increase the housing and transportation choices available to different types of households? How will we keep Austin healthy, safe, beautiful, and affordable?

## Expanding Transportation Choices

Austin is a big city, so it's time to build a "big-city" transportation system. We need good roads, and we need to help people get around the city and the region conveniently and safely, with or without a car. How can we offer more transportation choices? How can we encourage use of transit, bicycles, and walking? How can we build the kind of transportation network we'll need for sustainable growth?

## Tackling the Racial Divide

Austinites of color are now the majority, and our city is quickly becoming more diverse. Yet we are still dealing with the legacy of segregation and racism. Austinites living east of Interstate 35 are, overall, poorer, less healthy, lag academically, and share less equally in Austin's celebrated quality of life. How can we improve their lives while also protecting longtime Eastside residents from displacement? Poverty and people of color both are concentrated east of the Interstate. As a city, we want to tackle this divide and close the opportunity gaps. How can we help all Austinites have a voice, material comforts, and reason to believe in a brighter future?

## Protecting Our Natural Resources

Austinites enjoy an easy connection with nature and have a strong environmental ethos. We get out on our trails and greenbelts, lakes and rivers, parks and natural lands, and consider them a core part of what makes Austin special. But suburban growth is pushing Austin outward and encroaching upon these resources. How can we protect our waterways and watersheds, other natural resources and agricultural lands? How can we better connect our urban fabric with healthy, natural open spaces? How can we ensure an ample water supply for the Austin of 2050 and 2100?

## Promoting Prosperity for All

Austin is an innovation leader, known for its high-tech strengths, colleges and universities, youth culture, attractiveness to the "creative class," support for local independent businesses, and unique music and arts community. We need a strong business climate. How do we help all Austinites find good jobs in our high-skill economy? How do we ensure that musicians, young families, and hourly workers aren't "priced out" of living in Austin? How can we help wage growth catch up to the rising costs of living to close the "affordability gap"? How can we expand job opportunities and enhance the skills of our labor force?

## Collaborating Regionally

As the biggest city in Central Texas, Austin has a duty to provide regional leadership and invite its regional partners to collaborate on solutions. Transportation systems linking homes with jobs, water resources, development patterns, environmental protection, climate change, economic prosperity, and many other issues are regional in scale and scope. We need a platform for regional governance and coordinated comprehensive planning for our collective future. How can Austin lead the way to forge a productive regional dialogue and set of agreements?



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**To address these challenges and opportunities, we need to actively prepare for change.**

Austin is a big, fast-growing, twenty-first century city. We could sit back and simply let change happen to us, in ways we may or may not like. Or we can energetically shape our own destiny using this Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan as a common playbook. By being unified in vision and proactive about solutions, we can capitalize on our strengths, carry forward our values, and channel growth as a positive force.

Preparing actively for change and an uncertain future can feel uncomfortable. It will require doing some things differently. Sometimes embracing a better way isn't easy. But having imagined a better Austin, it's incumbent upon us to meet the challenge of bringing that vision to life.

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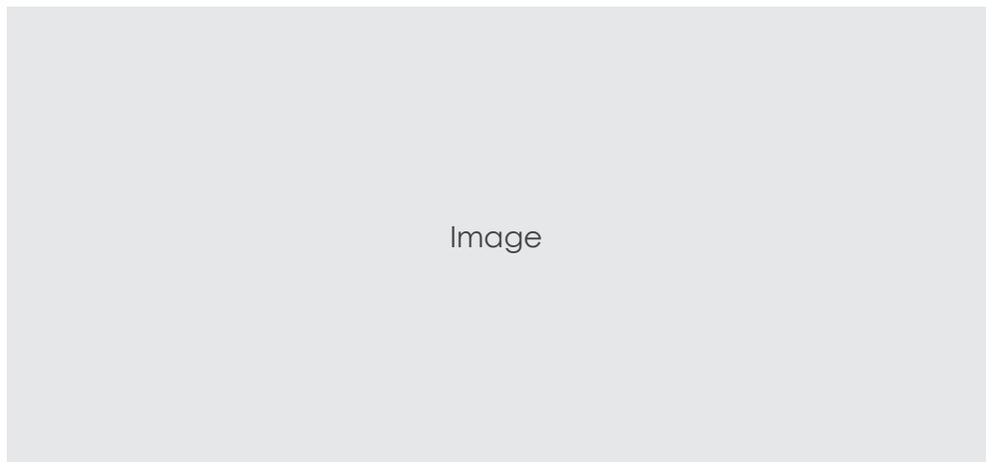
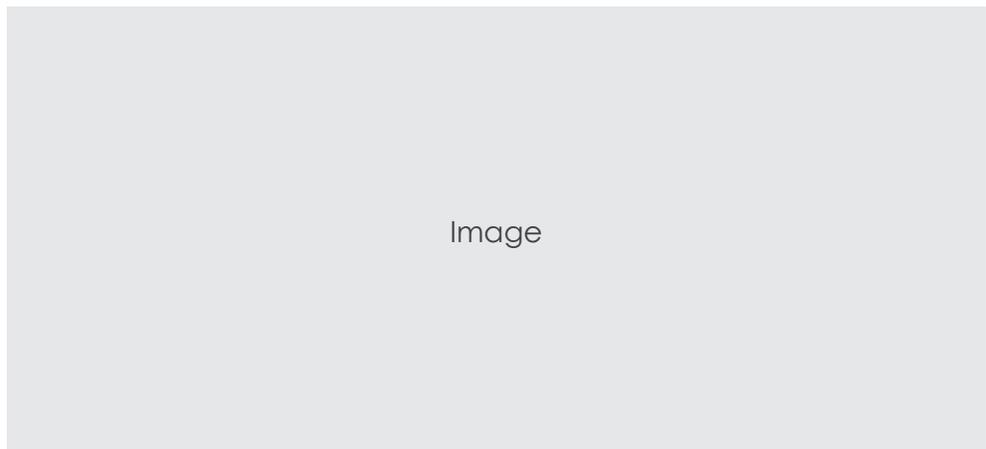


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## SECURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Right now over 70 percent of the world population is convinced that something serious has to be done about the dangers facing the planet.... Most of humanity wants to know how to make the change. It's one of those tipping-point times where things can change unbelievably fast.

- Paul H. Ray and Sherry Ruth Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives*

The Austin City Council established "sustainability" as the central policy direction of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

Sustainability means considering not only the needs of today, but also whether these needs are being met in ways that conserve resources for future generations. Prioritizing sustainability requires that we consider the way we grow: our people (equity), our planet (environment), and our prosperity (economy).

This comprehensive plan focuses on shifting Austin toward more sustainable growth patterns for the future. We have come to realize that the way Austin has grown for more than 60 years – through largely automobile-dependent development – comes at a troubling price in terms of air and water quality, public health, loss of natural open space and agricultural lands, and climate change. Sprawling development drives up the public costs for roads, water lines, and other infrastructure that must be continually extended to far-flung new development. Austin simply can't afford to ignore the costs associated with these development trends; the patterns of the past decades are neither environmentally nor fiscally sustainable.

Growing in accordance with this comprehensive plan offers Austin a way to do it better. It offers us more choices for where and how to live. It can reduce the distances that people must drive to get to work, or to find an affordable home. A more compact, connected city can reduce the stressful hours that we spend stuck in traffic and commuting alone, and free up precious time for more pleasant and productive pursuits. It also allows more people to live closer to the Austin amenities and services available in downtown and the central city.

Austin today is threatened by the consequences of its past development patterns: increased air pollution and traffic congestion, loss of agricultural land and open space, rising housing and transportation costs, increasing infrastructure costs, and social segregation and isolation. In the last half-century, most new homes, shopping centers, and employment sites sprang up in the city's suburban fringes, accessible only by automobile. We expanded the city to accommodate them, making costly infrastructure and service extensions to outlying areas.

Image Caption



As we look to the future and follow this comprehensive plan, we have an important opportunity to be more intentional about the next chapters in Austin's growth.

A critical period in our development is upon us. The magnitude of our population growth, in a time of constrained resources and climate change, has the potential to amplify existing problems within city limits and the larger region. That's why we need to make some shifts. Growth can have tremendous benefits for Austin, but not if we repeat past patterns and continue to incur their environmental, fiscal, and social costs.

We all want Austin to prosper, innovate, and lead. Toward that end, we must be wise stewards of our natural world and its resources – the original “infrastructure.” This comprehensive plan promotes the sustainable growth patterns and conservation required to protect Austin's character and livability for future generations.



Image Source: City of Austin  
Office of Sustainability

## IMAGINE AUSTIN CORE PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community.... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.

- Cesar Chavez

Sustainability is the basis of the Imagine Austin vision statement and the hundreds of policies and actions, developed through the input of thousands of community members, contained in this plan. These policies and actions express five core principles for action to make the future Austin we imagine a reality.

### **Grow as a compact, connected city.**

Austin's long-term sustainability requires a fresh focus on redevelopment and infill within the city's developed areas. Favoring compact growth now provides a balance to earlier decades of sprawling, low-density development. It contains costs and limits the need for tax increases by capitalizing on the land and infrastructure already in the city. It also enhances human connections, innovation, and urban vibrancy. Creating a more compact and efficient city is critical to our ability to connect homes, jobs, schools, and other destinations with a more complete transportation system that is affordable to build, operate, and maintain.

### **Integrate nature into the city.**

A beautiful, world-class system of outdoor places for recreation and environmental protection will define the stature of Austin as a world-class city in 20 or 30 years. We need to develop our natural assets into a complete network of connected greenways and waterways. By strengthening our "green infrastructure" – parks, the urban forest, trails and greenbelts, rivers, creeks, lakes, gardens, urban agriculture, open spaces, and wildlife habitat – Austin can protect the natural environment and enhance recreational opportunities. At the same time, we will solidify our commitment to environmental protection, conservation, and sustainability. This dual emphasis will sustain Austin's livability as it grows.

### **Provide paths to prosperity for all.**

Austin can harness its strong economy to expand opportunity and social equity for all residents. Developing economic sectors through partnerships between the business community, city government, and institutions will help employ a diverse workforce and expand opportunities for young and old. To ensure our economic strength, it is critical to preserve Austin's mix of local entrepreneurs, major employers, clean industries, and education and government jobs. We can maintain resiliency by staying attuned to global trends and emerging technologies. Prosperity for all means reducing the number of families living in poverty by providing workforce training and helping residents attain living-wage jobs, as well as capitalizing on the city's "creative class" vibe to provide jobs and career paths for workers at all educational and skill levels.



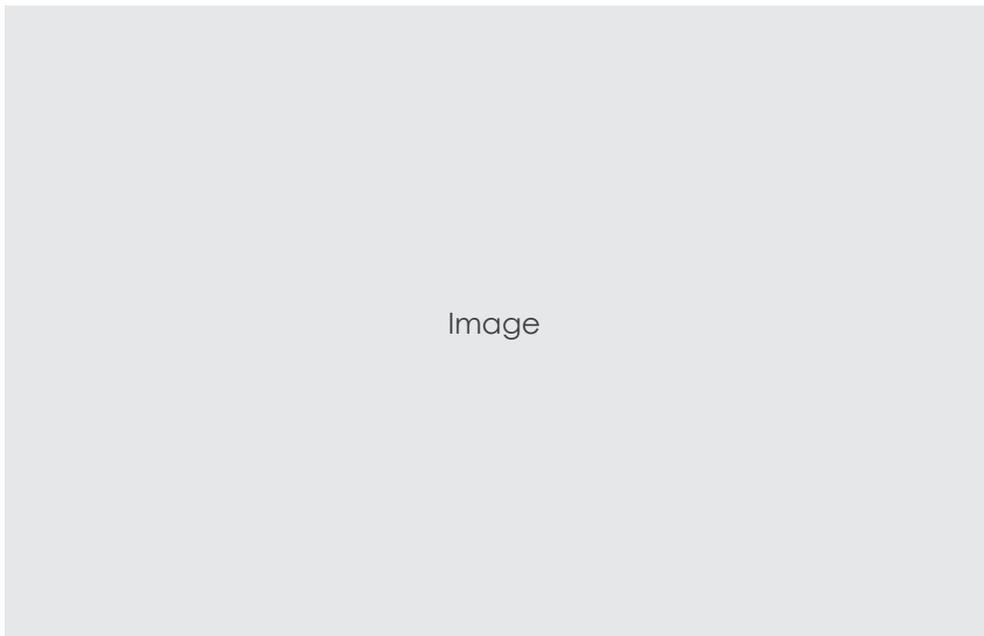
### **Develop as an affordable and healthy community.**

As development and change occurs, we must strive to contain Austin's cost of living, while increasing wages and good jobs. An affordable community can only exist if we make sure that the people who work in Austin can afford to live in Austin, and vice versa. Through incentives and partnerships, the city can encourage homes at lower price points distributed throughout Austin. New mixed-use areas need to have attainably priced housing, be walkable and bikable, and be linked by transit to employment and commercial centers, so that residents can choose to avoid the costs of car ownership. Healthy communities depend on easy, safe access to walking, biking, and recreation, as well as to quality healthcare, schools, police, and other community services. We can strive to deliver high public value for city taxes and maintain low-cost amenities that all Austinites can enjoy.



### **Sustainably manage water and other environmental resources.**

Sustainability is about considering the needs of present and future generations. As a city, we need to respect our natural constraints, mitigate and adapt to climate change, and conserve water, energy, land, and other natural resources. The city will enact public policies and make choices on the basis of long-term costs and consequences. Austin can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by promoting community health, encouraging walking, biking, and other daily exercise, and making fresh, local food accessible. We have a responsibility to future generations to "go green", encourage energy independence, reduce water use, and protect clean air and water. By respecting our natural resources, we can build a sustainable foundation for Austin's enduring prosperity.



Image

## THE ROAD AHEAD

We meet tonight at a crossroads, a point of decision. Shall we expand, be inclusive, find unity and power? Or suffer division and impotence.

— Jesse Jackson, *Common Ground and Common Sense*

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan provides a platform for moving forward. It clearly defines where we are today and where we want to go. It defines policies and actions for each building block of the plan. It contains a wealth of community-defined priorities for sustainability, livability, mobility, equity, and prosperity. Now, Austinites and their city government must work collaboratively to make the plan bear fruit. Four action steps are required as we move forward:

### Get to work

Austinites are united by their desire to see the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan yield results. We all want to see completed projects that make Austin better. In adopting this plan, the City of Austin is inviting everyone – residents, local companies and business groups, philanthropists, governmental agencies, and others – to partner with it to realize the plan. Whose job is it to get to work on the plan? Look in the mirror. A collaborative commitment to realizing the plan is essential. The action plan must start strong and be sustained in the years ahead.

### Set priorities

The Austin of our dreams won't be built in a day. This plan contains hundreds of transformational ideas for our future. From them, we must prioritize an achievable handful at a time and execute them well. Seeing visible results steadily emerge from this comprehensive plan will be important. Which goals within the plan most merit our immediate attention and can be translated into relatively quick, inspiring wins? How can public-private partnerships advance big, exciting projects that achieve multiple objectives at once?

### Agree to work together

The greatest benefit of a comprehensive plan is that it is a single playbook from which everyone works. Austinites can accomplish far more by pulling together in the same direction. The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan sets the stage for a new era defined by advancing common objectives. When challenging issues and choices arise, the plan guides both the municipality and the community in thinking about the good of the whole.

Leadership will be important moving forward. The plan needs leaders – within the community and city government – who are committed to realizing its potential and power, and are skilled at the coalition-building required to move forward together.

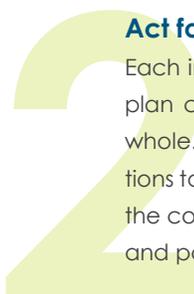
### **Commit to action**

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan lays a strong foundation for taking action. Grounded in community values and needs, it has been crafted to positively shape Austin over the next five to 30 years. But its impact will only be as strong as the actions and programs that Austinites undertake to realize it.

The City Charter requires that elected officials and city government use the comprehensive plan as a guide for policies and practices. The City of Austin is already committed to action, as it references this long-term plan to set annual budget, program, and project priorities. But the aspirations of the comprehensive plan are far bigger and deeper than what municipal government can accomplish alone. To fully realize the community benefits it outlines, visionary individuals and groups across the city will need to commit to action as well. The whole community must sustain the work that enacts the plan, through projects small and large.

Set priorities. Tackle transformational projects. Repeat.

### **Act for the whole.**



Each individual, group, and neighborhood in Austin has self-interests. The comprehensive plan challenges all of us to rise above these self-interests and act for the good of the whole. To think of the whole pie, not just our own slice of it. To be good stewards for generations to come. To understand single elements – parks, transportation, water housing – within the context of a larger system. To remember and protect those who lack a voice, money, and power.

When we think long-term and work to make the city as a whole better, everyone stands to benefit.

### **Think big-picture**

Considering Austin as a whole means seeing all of its different pieces and identities and how they all fit together. We must understand Austin on a number of levels: as a collection of distinctive yet interconnected neighborhoods; an educational and technological innovator; a system of homes and jobs that need to be connected by more transportation choices; a government center, a cultural leader, and the economic heart of Central Texas.

In using this plan to guide individual projects over time, it will be important to cross-reference ideas contained in its different sections. Before making improvements to a single park, for example, consider how it might meet the needs of people across the entire city. Could a network of connected bike lanes make it more accessible? Could more trees help cool the urban environment?

Comprehensive thinking requires that we consider small areas in the context of how they fit together and how they fit into the whole. Reading this plan in full creates the opportunity to understand what the whole is. As Austin continues to grow, it will take a big-picture view to bring everything together.

### **Think holistically**

This comprehensive plan is holistic in its consideration of big themes like livability, sustainability, and complete communities. In addition to planning for land use, transportation, and other physical issues, it considers the provision of services, economic development, cultural needs, public health, resource efficiency, and equity. It provides a framework for how the physical, economic, and social pieces of the city interconnect.

### **Think of the less fortunate**

The faces and voices of Austin are widely varied and growing more diverse each day. Social and economic gaps are widening between many segments of our population. Austinites are compassionate; we hope to bring everyone along as we move ahead into a bright future. This comprehensive plan provides direction for actions that will benefit not just a fortunate few, but all people of Austin.

## **Expand the growth-shaping toolkit.**

### **Pair regulatory tools with this plan**

This comprehensive plan is a positive tool: It defines what Austinites want and how that can be realized in the fabric of the city. It proposes to harness redevelopment to advance many goals. In that sense, it provides a counterpoint to many governmental regulations, which tends to focus on prohibiting things we don't want. Updated comprehensive plans typically need to be supported with updated land-use regulations. We can respect property rights while also making it the path of least resistance to "do the right thing." Land-use regulations will be needed that make it easier and less expensive to do sustainable development and projects that promote livability.

### **Use both zoning and incentives**

Zoning is an important tool to guide land use, but it is best used in combination with other tools and a realistic understanding of market forces. New approaches that utilize both zoning and incentives will be needed to implement this plan. Offering incentives in the form of grants, loans, infrastructure investments, or innovative regulatory approaches is a way Austin can encourage good projects that deliver numerous community benefits. These can include affordable housing, great design that beautifies our city and creates lively public spaces, operational improvements, mobility options, pocket parks, low-impact development, new jobs, an expanded tax base, and so on. Incentives matter to people who want to improve our community, and they can generate goodwill while helping us reach our goals.

### Look to peer cities

Austin appears on many national and even international “Top 10” and “Top 20” lists; on those lists, its closest peers are other resilient, progressive large cities. All are having similar debates about growth, resource conservation, linking jobs and homes with transportation choices, and preserving community character. We’re in a class with the most innovative of our peers; however, Austin is growing much faster than many long-established cities. As we seek to maintain and improve Austin’s position as a sustainable, “most livable” city, we can greatly benefit by studying and sharing best practices with peer cities around the nation and the world.

### Focus on urban design

In the past, Austin debates were often simplistically framed as developers versus neighborhoods or the environment. Increasingly, we have a more sophisticated understanding. Sustainability requires redeveloping the central city in “green” ways that advance multiple environmental, economic, and community goals. Well-designed new development can create community amenities and make the city more beautiful. City codes can create certainty and shape projects so they fit sensitively into neighborhood contexts. By establishing high sustainability standards – for locating projects, green building practices, site design and landscaping, and multi-modal transportation corridors – Austin can harness the positive, transformative power of redevelopment.

### Partner up!

City government will work to advance the strategies in this plan, but it will need many partners to achieve its comprehensive vision. Austin has a strong private sector, institutions, and non-profit organizations that share responsibility for shaping Austin’s future. These groups have significant resources and relationships, and can do many things city government cannot. Where the right entity does not exist, a new one may need to be created. Implementing this plan will require strong partnerships among government, institutions, businesses, and community groups.

## 4 Measure progress and adapt.

### Be transparent

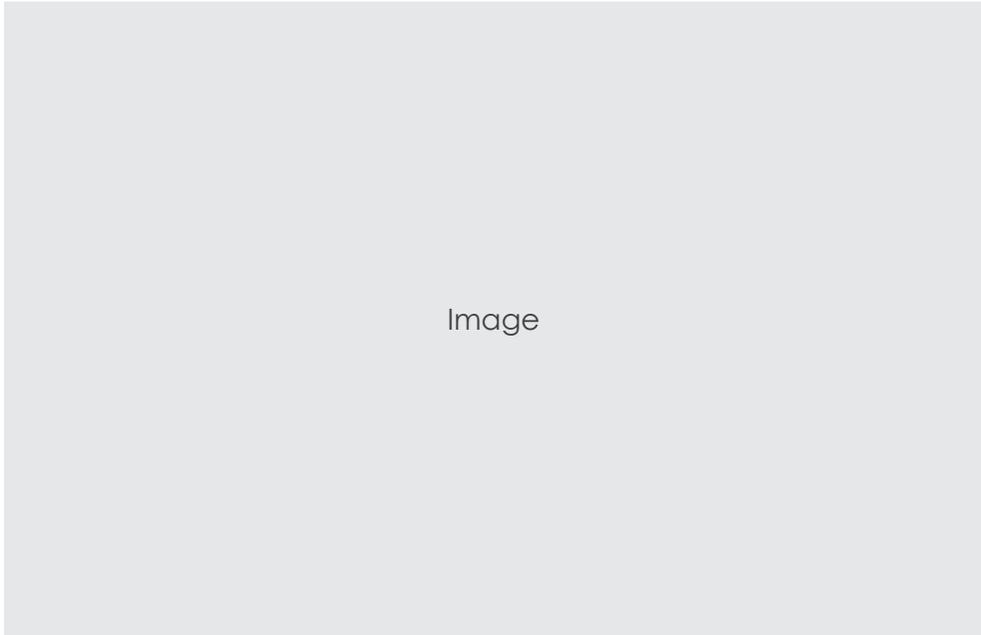
As required by City Charter, the City of Austin will review progress on the plan annually and assess the plan every five years. It will consider updates based on those reviews. Austinites also need to engage in community “how are we doing?” evaluations. It will be helpful to adopt a set of easily understood tools to measure and report on progress, and to assess the results of policies, programs, and projects. The measures and reporting should be highly visible to promote accountability. Ideally, we can all reference an ongoing community report card to see how we’re doing with plan implementation.

### Practice continuous learning

In implementing this comprehensive plan, Austin is embarking upon an exciting and visionary project. By definition, implementation will involve a learning curve. Where our “report card” doesn’t show the progress we had hoped for, we will need to make adjustments — perhaps to the actions or even to the goals themselves. As circumstances change, we’ll need to update the plan accordingly.

A long-range comprehensive plan typically must be followed for at least five years to see clear results. At the same time, the plan is a living, evolving document. As adopted, the plan provides a strong framework to guide city actions at all levels. The vision and principles of the plan need to be respected. But over time, the community should expect to revisit and refine individual policies.

Be steadfast, but be flexible.



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## WHAT'S IN THE PLAN: IMAGINE AUSTIN AT A GLANCE

The comprehensive plan is organized into five chapters:

**Chapter One (The Roadmap and the Road Ahead)** describes the need for a comprehensive plan providing a roadmap for Austin to navigate the challenges of the 21st century; core principles for action to achieve a sustainable future; and how we will use those principles to turn the plan into reality. It is useful for those who may not wish to read the plan “cover to cover.”

**Chapter Two (Experiencing Austin: Who Are We Today?)** contains information on the current state of Austin and what it means for the city's future (e.g., how affordable it is to live here, how people are getting around, and how our parks and city services are performing).

**Chapter Three (Imagining Austin: Our Vision of a Complete Community)** presents the Imagine Austin vision statement, developed with the input of thousands of residents. It describes the Austin we aspire to be in 2039, the two hundredth anniversary of the city's founding: a “Complete Community” that is natural and sustainable, prosperous, livable, mobile and interconnected, educated, creative, and which values and respects all Austinites. The vision statement defines the destination that the plan policies, actions, and programs are designed to reach.

**Chapter Four (Shaping Austin: Building the Complete Community)** sets a two-part framework for action to realize our vision of a Complete Community. The Growth Concept Map shows in general terms where new development over the next 30 years should be located to support the vision. The Building Blocks define specific policies to guide decisions on topics ranging from Land Use and Transportation to Economy to Culture. These policies are the foundation of the action ideas and programs contained in Chapter Five.

**Chapter Five (Implementation and Measuring Success)** addresses how the Imagine Austin vision and framework will be implemented. It identifies eight priority action programs based on hundreds of ideas for action developed by citizen working groups, provides guidance for decision-making, and defines the ongoing process that will be used to monitor implementation progress.

# IMAGINE AU

## Chapter 1: The Roadmap and The Road Ahead

Five core principles for action to make the future Austin we imagine a reality.



Grow as a compact, connected city.



Integrate nature into the city.



Provide paths to prosperity to all.



Develop as an affordable and healthy community.



Sustainably manage water and other environmental resources.

## Chapter 2: Experiencing Austin: Who Are We Today?

A summary of current conditions and trends for many aspects of life in Austin (e.g., housing, environment, city services).

### Sample Key Facts/Trends

- Austin added an estimated 21,635 people between 2010 and 2011 to reach a total population of 812,025, making it the 14th most populous city in the US.
- Austin is a younger city. In 2009, over 58 percent of the population was under 35 years old, and over 73 percent was under age 45.

## Growth Concept Map

Created through a public scenario-building process, the Growth Concept Map applies the vision to the city's physical development pattern. Building Blocks set the policies to implement Imagine Austin and are linked back to the vision.

# AUSTIN AT A GLANCE

## Chapter 3: Imagining Austin: Our Vision Of a Complete Community

Thousands of residents helped craft our vision for shaping Austin over the next thirty years.

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

## Chapter 5: IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURING SUCCESS

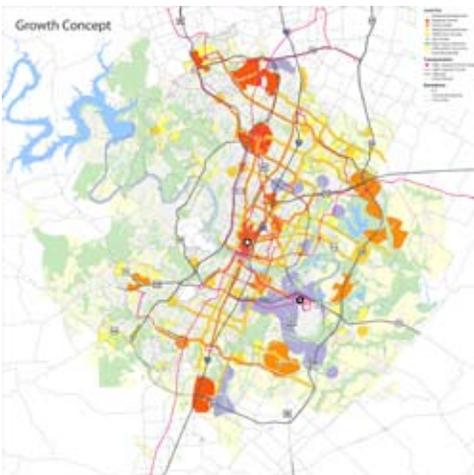
Working groups generated over 3,000 ideas for actions. To address the core principles for action and begin to implement the working group ideas, the plan includes eight priority action program.

- Change Austin's development regulations.
- Invest in a compact and connected Austin.
- Create a green infrastructure program.
- Create a program to sustainably manage our water resources.
- Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.
- Maintain and develop affordable housing throughout Austin.
- Grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce and education system.
- Create a "healthy Austin" program.

## Chapter 4: Shaping Austin: Building The Complete Community

**LUT 1.** Align land use and transportation planning and decision-making to achieve the Growth Concept Map. (See also WPD 1; EN 1)

**LUT 2.** Promote regional planning and increased coordination between municipalities to address major land use and transportation challenges. (See also CER 16; ECO 4)





## EXPERIENCING AUSTIN: WHO ARE WE TODAY?

### We Are a Unique Community

Population And Households

Housing And Neighborhoods

Land Use

Transportation

Economy

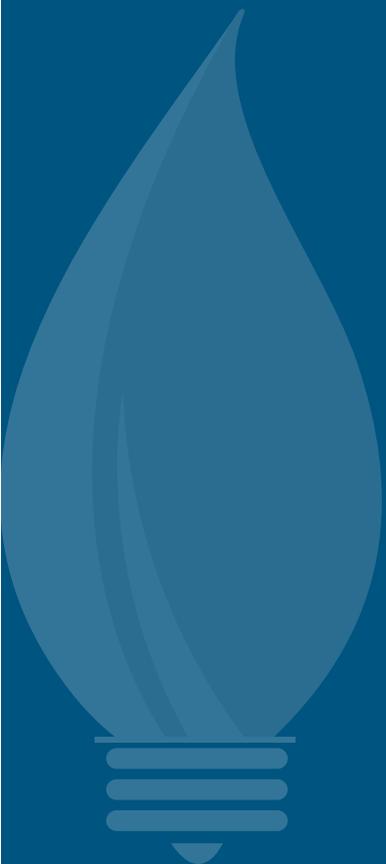
Environmental Resources

City Facilities & Services

Society And Health

Arts & Culture

### Developing a Regional Perspective





## EXPERIENCING AUSTIN: WHO ARE WE TODAY?

# CHAPTER 2

Austin is an exemplary city. We are a state and regional leader. A city filled with entrepreneurs and innovators. A funky, offbeat destination. A city of compassion and environmental responsibility. A beautiful, accepting community.

We also know that we face real challenges and we have to define and measure our current successes and deficiencies. What are we getting right? Where are we falling short? Through a detailed look at the city as it exists today, we can decide what works and what can be done better. This analysis will identify gaps and lead to questions resulting in new solutions. The Austin of 2011 will be the baseline against which our success in achieving the plan's vision will be measured.

### WE ARE A UNIQUE COMMUNITY

Austin is different from other Texas cities. Our progressive spirit, environmental ideals, and innovative culture distinguish us from other metropolitan areas such as Houston and Dallas. Many of the city's policy choices show an early understanding of growth and economic issues that many Texas cities only recently have begun to address. This contrast has enhanced Austin's community identity, creating a strong sense of our uniqueness in relation to the rest of Texas (and the nation).

Image - State Capitol or Aerial Image of the City

### THE AUSTIN SPIRIT

There's a spirit that animates Austin's people and special places. Something both laid back and passionate, that seems built on unlikely pairings. Sometimes these happen in brief, beautiful moments, like the coming together of hippies and cowboys at Threadgill's Tavern and later at the Armadillo World Headquarters. Sometimes it's a generations-long courtship, the way Austin's most substantial pro-development effort, rural electrification, later led to the creation of one of Austin's defining and beloved environmental features, the Highland Lakes, and then to the country's premiere efforts in green energy and green building. Even the land brings together the Hill Country to the west and the Blackland Prairie to the east.

While no city program is ever going to be responsible for this spirit, nurturing it in whatever forms it takes in the future is as important to Austin's success as anything else in this plan.

## Austin's Historical Context

In 1839 Austin became the capital of the Republic of Texas and later the State of Texas because of its central location within the state and available water supply from the Colorado River. Already the seat of state government, Austin became an educational center in the 1880s with the establishment of the University of Texas. The government and educational sectors became mainstays of the local economy and began attracting people from across the state. Unfortunately our history also includes a story typical of many American cities: slavery followed by legally-enforced racial inequalities. Past land use planning contributed to the divide within Austin: the city's 1928 *A City Plan for Austin, Texas* strongly reinforced racial segregation by designating an official "Negro District," which was one of the only areas of the city in which African-Americans could receive municipal services. Almost fifty years after the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, we still have reminders of our segregated past in our residential patterns and economic landscape.

The city we know today had its beginnings in the last half of the twentieth century. Confronted with serious economic and environmental problems, the choices made to address these difficult issues transformed the city. In the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, Austin experienced a population boom, growing over 35 percent each decade. However, the city's economy did not grow at the same pace. To address this disparity, Austin's leaders strategized on how to expand the economy. This resulted in new directions that leveraged the city's role as an educational center to attract high-tech employers such as IBM. Our new economic identity was a progressive one, dependent upon innovation and a highly-skilled and educated workforce.

During the early 1970s, an overtaxed electrical grid caused a series of major brownouts in the city. These brownouts, coupled with the rising price of natural gas and the national energy crisis pointed to the need for new electricity supplies. To supply the needed electricity, coal-fired energy plants were constructed as an alternative to natural gas. The City of Austin also entered into a partnership to construct a new nuclear power plant, the South Texas Nuclear Project. Major cost overruns and project delays, nuclear energy issues generally, and pollution caused by coal-fired power plants proved highly divisive. The conflict over these, colored by Austin's "green" sensibility, has led to the development of alternative energy sources and increased energy efficiency programs.

Austin's pursuit of economic transformation and its reaction to the local energy crisis catalyzed a new civic consciousness. Rapid population growth during the 1970s also created new transportation and environmental pressures as Austin struggled with the stresses of a growing city. We emerged from the decade with a new environmental focus and economic direction that form the cornerstones of our current sustainability principles. Well before most Texas cities recognized connections between livability and sustainability, we were at the vanguard of the "green" movement. Celebrating our creativity (by branding Austin as "The Live Music Capital of the World," for example) has attracted talented, artistic, and entrepreneurial individuals, contributing to our eclectic small business community and the growth of the culture and technology sectors. We have confronted difficult issues and taken risks that have set us apart.

Austin is also a place where the funky and offbeat are accepted and celebrated. These qualities attract people from across the country who are looking for a place where they feel comfortable and one that provides opportunities not readily available in most other cities. The spirit of acceptance extends across the spectrum to include people of all faiths, ethnicities and races, sexual orientations, political leanings, and personal interests. The spirit of creativity and acceptance has created a place where people want to be and has set the stage for our current and future economic success.



Image Caption

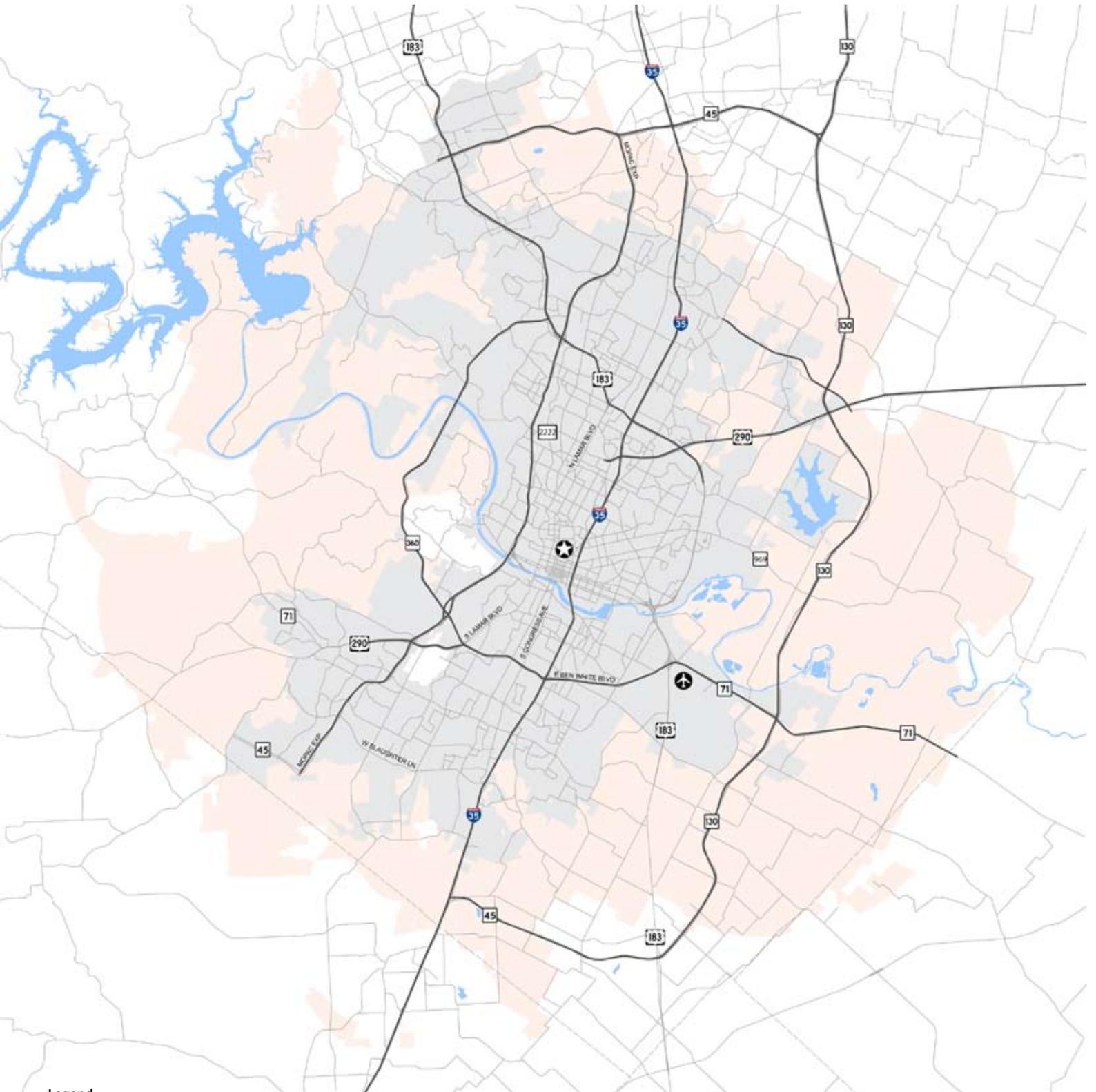
Image - Barton Springs, Highland Lakes or Live Music Venue



Image Caption

Image - Barton Springs, Highland Lakes or Live Music Venue

Fig. 2.1 - THE PLANNING AREA IN 2011: CITY AND ETJ BOUNDARIES



**Legend**

- Boundaries**
- Austin City Limits
  - Austin Extrajurisdictional Jurisdiction
  - County Boundaries
  - Roadways

The geographic scope of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan is Austin's current city limits and its extrajurisdictional jurisdiction (ETJ), mostly located in Travis County but also encompassing parts of Bastrop, Hays, and Williamson counties.

## POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

**We are a growing city, becoming more diverse, older, and urban.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### Population

- Austin's population grew by 20 percent between 2000 and 2010. About two-thirds of this growth is attributable to natural expansion (more births than deaths) and new residents moving into Austin, while about one-third of the new population was added through annexation.
- Austin added an estimated 21,635 people between 2010 and 2011 to reach a total population of 812,025, making it the 14th most populous city in the US.
- Austin's percentage of the region's population has been declining. In 1960, 65 percent of the region's population lived within the Austin city limits; however, by 2000, this had dropped to 52.5 percent, and by 2010 it dropped to 46 percent.
- Austin's planning area (city limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction; see Figure 2.1) is projected to add approximately 750,000 more people by 2039.

Change in Population, 1960 - 2010		
Year	Population	Percent Change
1960	186,545	--
1970	253,539	35.9
1980	341,665	34.8
1990	465,622	36.3
2000	656,562	41
2010	790,390	20.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

#### Households

- Proportionally, Austin has far fewer family households than Texas as a whole, but a similar percentage of married-couples-with-children households. In 2009, only 54 percent of Austin households were family households, and of these, 36 percent were married with children. In comparison, in 2009, 70 percent of Texas households were family households; 37 percent were married with children.
- In 2009, over 46 percent of Austin households were non-family households. Seventy-four percent of these were single-person households.

### **Age distribution**

- Austin is a younger city. In 2009, over 58 percent of the population was under 35 years old, and over 73 percent was under age 45. The largest age group is 25-34 year olds, which comprised one quarter of Austin's population.
- The "baby boom" generation reaching retirement age is having an impact on Austin. The largest rate of growth since 2000 has been in those age groups of 55 and older. In the past decade, Austin saw an 84 percent increase in residents aged 55-59, a 97 percent increase in residents aged 60-64, and a 52 percent increase in residents aged 65-69.
- Significant growth has occurred in other age groups. Austin's youth and senior populations have grown since 2000. In the past decade, Austin has experienced a 22 percent increase in children under age 10; a 26 percent increase in residents aged 80-84; and a 31 percent increase in residents aged 85 and above.

### **Racial/ethnic composition**

Table/Graphs

- The racial and ethnic composition of the city has changed over the past decade. In 2010, non-Hispanic whites comprised a smaller proportion of the population, 48.7 percent compared with 52.9 percent in 2000. The proportion of Asians increased from 4.7 to 6.3 percent and the proportion of African-Americans decreased from 9.8 to 7.7 percent over ten years.
- The Hispanic/Latino population increased, rising from 30.5 percent in 2000 to more than 35 percent in 2010. Eighty-three percent of these residents were of Mexican origin.

### **Median incomes**

- Median incomes in Austin are higher than most other Texas cities. In 2009, Austin's median household income was \$50,132 and the median family income was \$62,153; while for the state, the median household income was \$48,259 and the median family income was \$56,607.
- Austin has one of the highest costs of living in Texas; however when compared to peer cities across the country, the cost of living is more affordable. For example, in 2010 Austin had an estimated cost of living index of 106 (compared to a national average of 100), while comparable cities such as Portland, Oregon (125), Seattle, Washington (143), and San Diego, California (133) had higher indexes.

### **Poverty**

- In 2009, more than 18 percent of Austin's residents live below the poverty line. Almost one-third of all children under the age of five lived in poverty. Nearly ten percent of the city's residents over the age of 65 lived in poverty.
- Twenty-seven percent of the individuals in poverty in 2009 were foreign-born. Almost 48 percent of individuals living in poverty resided in households where the household head had not received a high-school diploma.

### **Educational attainment**

- Austin's population is well-educated. In 2009, forty-four percent of residents aged 25 and older had at least a bachelor's degree, and almost 16 percent had a graduate or professional degree. These rates are much higher than the state as a whole: in 2009, only 27 percent of all Texans 25 and over had at least a bachelor's degree, and nine percent had a graduate or professional degree.
- In 2009, 16 percent of Austin residents aged 25 and older did not have a high-school diploma.



Image

Image Caption



Image

Image Caption

## What Does It Mean?

- Population projections show that Austin will almost double in population in thirty years. This will place heavy demands on infrastructure, resources, and services. Some of this growth will occur through annexation of unincorporated areas, but much of the growth will need to be accommodated through development within the city.
- Austin still has strong patterns of racial, ethnic, and income segregation.
- The increase in the number of older residents, aged 55 and above, has generated greater demand for services, different housing options, and amenities.
- The increase in the number of young children will affect Austin's school districts over the next decade.
- The large number of younger, educated residents such as married couples without children and single-person households, may signal increasing demand for housing products other than single-family detached units. Many of these people already live in the urban core, and an increased demand for urban living may be met with redevelopment that includes townhouses, condominiums, and apartments.
- Services to address poverty and limited job skills are needed in Austin.
- Median household and family incomes may be higher than those of the rest of the state, but Austin's high housing and transportation costs may consume greater proportions of household budgets (relative to other Texas cities).

Data sources: 2009 American Community Survey, 2010 Census, City of Austin Community Inventory

## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

**We have a variety of neighborhoods but limited housing choices, and our housing costs are growing.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### *Housing units*

- In 2010, Austin had an estimated 354,241 housing units. Total housing units increased by 28% from 2000 to 2010.
- Single-family detached housing units made up about 47 percent of total housing stock in 2009. Between 2000 and 2009, the proportion of single-family detached remained about the same, while the percentage of multi-family housing in 10-19 unit buildings increased and the percentage in 20 or more unit buildings decreased.

#### *Home Ownership*

- Austin has lower rates of homeownership than Texas: in 2009, 64 percent of Texans owned their own homes while 46 percent of Austinites were homeowners.
- Hispanic and African-American households have lower homeownership rates than White and Asian households. In 2009, 51 percent of White households and 44 percent of Asian households were homeowners, but only 32 percent of Hispanic households and 31 percent of African-American households owned their homes.
- Sixty-nine percent of Austin's married households own their home, compared with 34 percent of single-person households in 2009. Younger singles under age 35 were much more likely to rent.

#### *Housing values/affordability*

- Over the last ten years, median housing costs have risen by 85 percent, while household incomes have grown at a much lower rate. Between 1998 and 2008, the median single-family house price increased by almost 90 percent (\$129,900 to \$240,000) while the percentage of all single-family houses considered affordable declined from 42 to 28 percent. During the same period, Austin's median family income increased by 36 percent. When adjusted for inflation, this equals little growth in the median family income.
- Assessed property values have generally increased in Austin between 1995 and 2010, with declines in 2004 and 2011. As property values have increased, property tax rates have generally decreased over the same period.



Image

Image Caption

### **Rents**

- In 2009, Austin's median rent was \$883. This is higher than the 2009 Texas median of \$788 and a 22 percent increase since 2000. Due to tighter capital markets due to the recent recession, the current supply of apartments has not kept up with demand causing a marked increase in rents which is expected to continue into the middle of this decade.
- Many of the affordable apartment rentals have been converted to condominium use, contributing to a shortage of units in the rental housing market, especially for households with incomes less than \$20,000.

Table/Graphs



Image

Image Caption

### **Housing cost burden**

- Rising housing prices impose higher monthly costs on Austin's households. Among homeowners in 2009, 28 percent paid more than 30 percent of their incomes in housing costs and 10 percent paid more than 50 percent.
- Austin's renter population is particularly affected by rising housing costs. In 2009, 48 percent of renter households were paying 30 percent or more of their incomes in rent. Almost one quarter were paying 50 percent or more for rent. This is an increase from 2000, when 42 percent of renter households paid more than 30 percent of income in rent and 20 percent paid 50 percent or more for rent. This cost burden strongly affects households with incomes below \$50,000.

### **Neighborhoods**

- Austin's neighborhoods built prior to World War II are characterized by mixed housing and lot sizes, interconnected streets, diverse architectural styles, and compact character. These neighborhoods typically have a school and park within their boundaries.
- Neighborhoods built since the 1950s are more uniform in size and character, supporting an auto-oriented lifestyle that is typical of suburban development.
- There are a growing number of neighborhoods throughout Austin where immigrants, largely from Latin America, are increasingly settling. This has resulted in these areas becoming linguistically, socially, and economically isolated from the larger city. Some of these neighborhoods are experiencing a deterioration of the built environment.

- In the last ten years, neighborhoods in east and south Austin where market values have been historically lower than other Austin neighborhoods have seen new development, reinvestment, and revitalization. This trend has raised the issue of long-time, often less affluent residents being displaced by more affluent residents.
- Residents are concerned about the real and perceived effects of new development on the character of older, inner-city Austin neighborhoods.
- In 1997, the City initiated a neighborhood planning program; to date, 48 neighborhood planning areas have completed the process and adopted neighborhood plans (see Appendix). These plans cover approximately 16 percent of the land area and XX percent of the population in the planning area.

## What Does It Mean?

- Housing costs are rising in many close-in neighborhoods. As a result many long-time residents of Austin, particularly renters, are finding that they no longer can afford to stay.
- As the Austin housing market has become more expensive, the geographic distribution of units affordable to households earning 80 percent MFI or less has changed. Housing options for moderate and low-income households have moved to increasingly distant suburban areas of Austin, which in turn increase transportation expenditures.
- Austin is a majority renter city due, in large part, to the significant numbers of college and university students, recent graduates, and other young people who continue to move to Austin. This demographic bulge, as well as the needs of other Austinites of more modest means, highlights the need for more affordable rental housing.
- Higher housing costs and slower-growing household incomes may prompt many families to rent rather than purchase a home.
- High demand for rental units translates into demand for housing products other than single-family detached homes.
- To accommodate the increasing diversity of Austin area households, more housing options will be needed to address our demographic changes.
- Infill development and redevelopment along major roadways will be needed to meet the growing demand for higher-density, closer-in affordable housing. Compatibility with existing neighborhood design is an important component of the development process.

## LAND USE

**We continue to rapidly urbanize, largely developing outward on lower-cost land in lower-density suburban patterns.**

### Key Facts/Trends

- Over the last sixty years, the growth dynamic in Austin and the surrounding region has been characterized by increasing population, rapid urbanization of land, and outward expansion. Between 2000 and 2010, Austin's land area grew by more than 19 percent.
- During the past decade there has been a modest trend of infill development and redevelopment in established areas of Austin; however, the pace of urban core development lags far behind new development in suburban and exurban areas.
- In 2000, Austin was comparatively less dense than other major cities in Texas and national comparable cities.

Change in Land Area, 1950 - 2011		
Year	Land Area (in sq miles)	Percent Change
1950	37.5	--
1960	55.1	45
1970	80.1	45
1980	123.9	55
1990	225.6	82
2000	257.9	14
2010	307.8	19

Source: City of Austin (NOTE: CONVERT THIS TABLE TO A MAP)

Average Density in Austin and Comparable Cities (2010)	
City	Density (people per square mile) in 2010
<b>Austin, TX</b>	<b>2,653</b>
Raleigh, NC	2,826
San Antonio, TX	2,880
Dallas, TX	3,517
San Diego, CA	4,020
Portland, OR	4,376
Seattle, WA	7,254
Minneapolis, MN	7,084

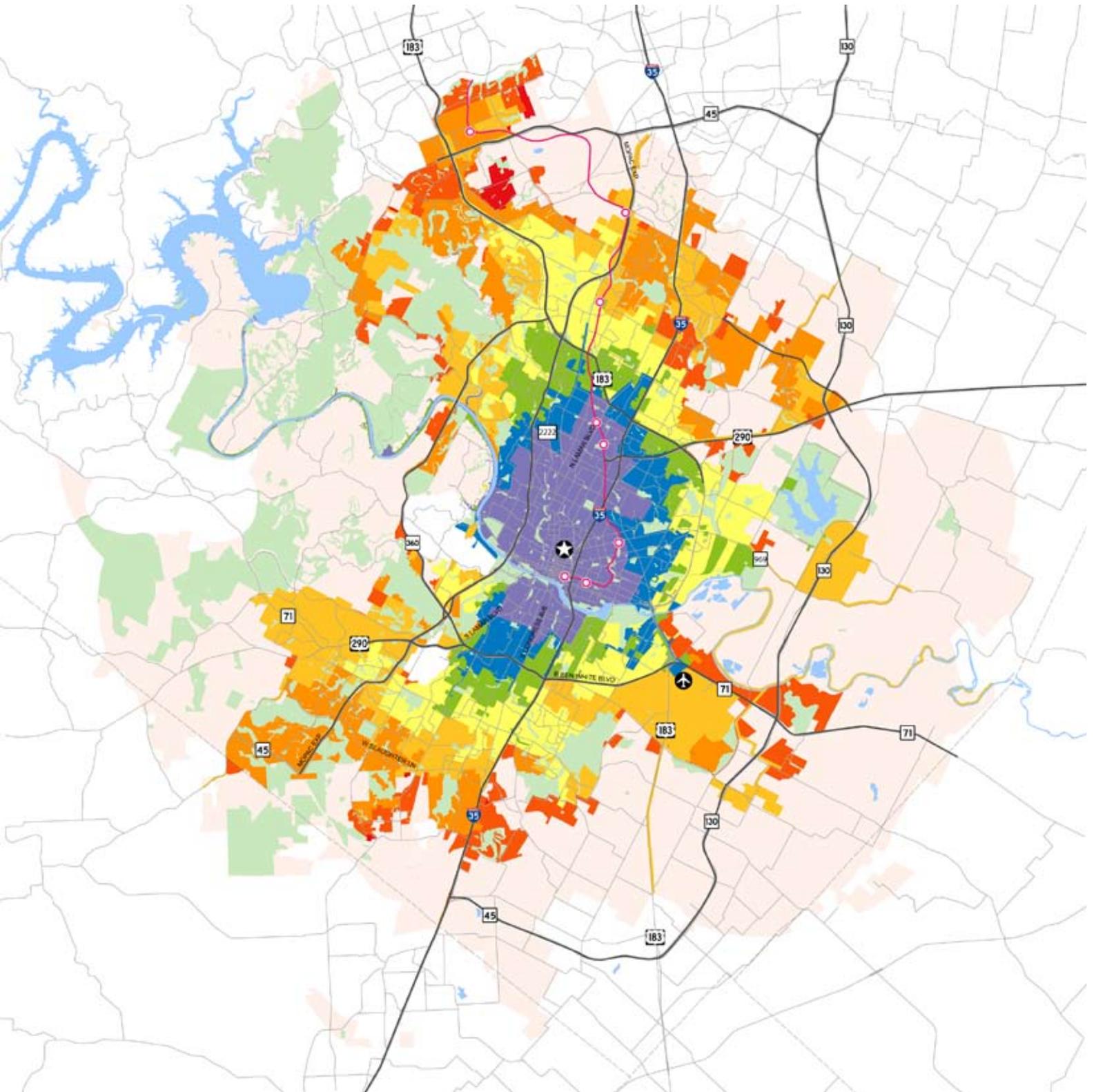
Source: Census Data, 2010

Land Use in Austin and the ETJ (2003 - 2010)					
Use	Acres in 2003	Acres in 2010	Percent Change	Percentage of Total Land Area in 2003	Percentage of Total Land Area in 2010
Single-Family	61,703	69,011	11%	15%	17%
Multi-Family	9,013	10,777	16%	2%	3%
Mobile Homes	6,478	7,000	7%	2%	2%
<b>Residential Subtotal</b>	<b>77,194</b>	<b>86,788</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Commercial	8,031	10,317	22%	2%	3%
Office	6,174	6,618	7%	2%	2%
Industrial	9,662	13,624	29%	2%	3%
Mixed-Use	n/a	102	n/a	0%	0%
<b>Commercial Subtotal</b>	<b>23,868</b>	<b>30,660</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Civic	9,496	10,994	14%	2%	3%
Utilities	6,117	2,766	-121%	2%	1%
Open Space	55,104	69,292	20%	14%	17%
Resource Extraction	5,419	6,687	19%	1%	2%
<b>Institutional/Utility Subtotal</b>	<b>76,136</b>	<b>89,739</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Transportation	4,770	5,533	14%	1%	1%
Streets and Roads	32,224	44,254	27%	8%	11%
<b>Transportation Subtotal</b>	<b>36,994</b>	<b>49,788</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>TOTAL DEVELOPED AREA</b>	<b>214,192</b>	<b>256,975</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>64%</b>
Undeveloped	145,437	118,679	-23%	36%	29%
Large-Lot Single-Family	31,836	17,782	-79%	8%	4%
<b>TOTAL UNDEVELOPED AREA</b>	<b>177,273</b>	<b>136,462</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>
Water	10,521	10,137	-4%	3%	3%
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	<b>401,985</b>	<b>403,574</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: City of Austin, Note that the mixed-use category was added after 2003.

- The percentage of total developed area increased from 53 percent in 2003 to 64 percent in 2010, while the total percentage of undeveloped and large-lot single-family land decreased. Total land area increased as a result of annexation during this period.
- Although 38 percent of Austin's land area is classified as "undeveloped," much of it has environmental constraints (e.g., floodplains or steep slopes) or is in large-lot single-family use. In 2009, approximately 73,000 acres were identified as undeveloped and having no environmental constraints. However, of this undeveloped acreage, only 1,581 acres were located in urban watersheds. Over 50,000 acres of undeveloped land with no environmental constraints are located in suburban watersheds in the eastern part of the city.

Fig. 2.2 - ANNEXATION BY DECADE



### **Historic Preservation**

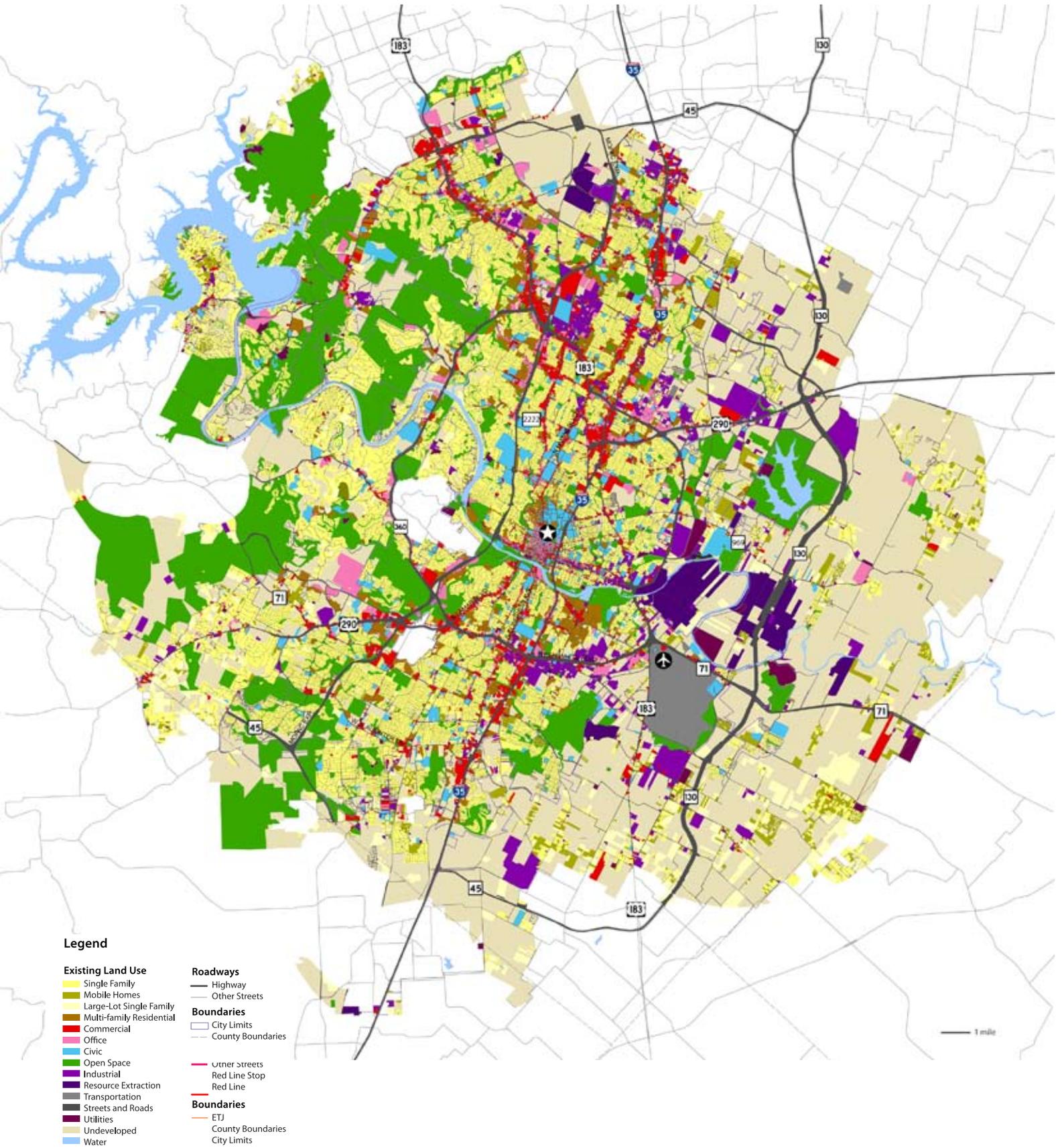
- Austin has designated over 550 local Historic Landmarks, properties which have architectural, historical, archaeological, or cultural significance. This designation rewards property owners with a tax exemption in exchange for regulation of the property. Owners must maintain the property's architectural integrity and are required to apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior changes.
- In 2007, Austin amended the Land Development Code to allow Local Historic Districts. These districts include groups of related architecturally and historically significant properties. Property owners within a district must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness to make exterior changes to these properties. To establish a district, more than 50 percent of the affected property owners must agree. The City has designated three local historic districts: the Harthan Street Historic District, the Castle Hill Historic District, and the Hyde Park Historic District.
- Austin contains 164 historic properties and 15 historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is an honorary designation recognizing properties of greater-than-local significance. The city, however, adopted regulations preventing National Register properties from being demolished without an approved permit.
- Austin is home to a number of history-related museums that include the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, the Republic of Texas Museum, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum, the French Legation Museum, and the Austin History Center. Two University of Texas facilities operate as historic research centers: the Harry Ransom Center and the Center for American History.

### **Susceptibility to Change Analysis**

Given the city's population and employment projections for the next three decades, it is clear that Austin's existing land use pattern must change to accommodate this growth in a more sustainable manner. To inform the comprehensive planning process, an analysis was conducted to determine which areas of the city have the greatest likelihood of developing or redeveloping (Figure 2.4). The analysis considered a number of factors, such as zoning, pending development cases, road access, availability of other infrastructure, and other indicators of redevelopment potential. In general, the analysis found that:

- Areas most likely to change are concentrated in a north-south axis, particularly from downtown Austin north to Williamson County.
- In general, areas in the eastern and southern portions of the city and its extraterritorial jurisdiction are moderately susceptible to change.
- In general, areas in the western portion of the city and its extra-territorial jurisdiction are least susceptible to change.

Fig. 2.3 - EXISTING LAND USE



## What Does It Mean?

- Very little undeveloped land is available within the city's urban core. In the absence of policy or regulatory changes, new growth will continue to occur in outlying areas where land values are lower.
- Total developed land is increasing. As land values in suburban areas are rising, owners are selling undeveloped or agricultural land as a result of higher property taxes or returns.
- Growth within the city's urban core will involve redevelopment and increases in density.
- As a governmental and educational center, Austin has a large percentage of institutional uses. These uses are not likely to change.
- Austin has an active historic preservation program.
- The city has a substantial amount of agricultural land that may be converted to other uses as land values rise.
- Generally, less intensive land use changes will occur in the western part of the city due to environmental constraints.

Data sources: 2009 American Community Survey, City of Austin Community Inventory, City of Austin GIS

## TRANSPORTATION

**We are experiencing increasing traffic congestion and transportation costs. There is a renewed interest in creating a system incorporating all transportation choices.**

### Key Facts/Trends

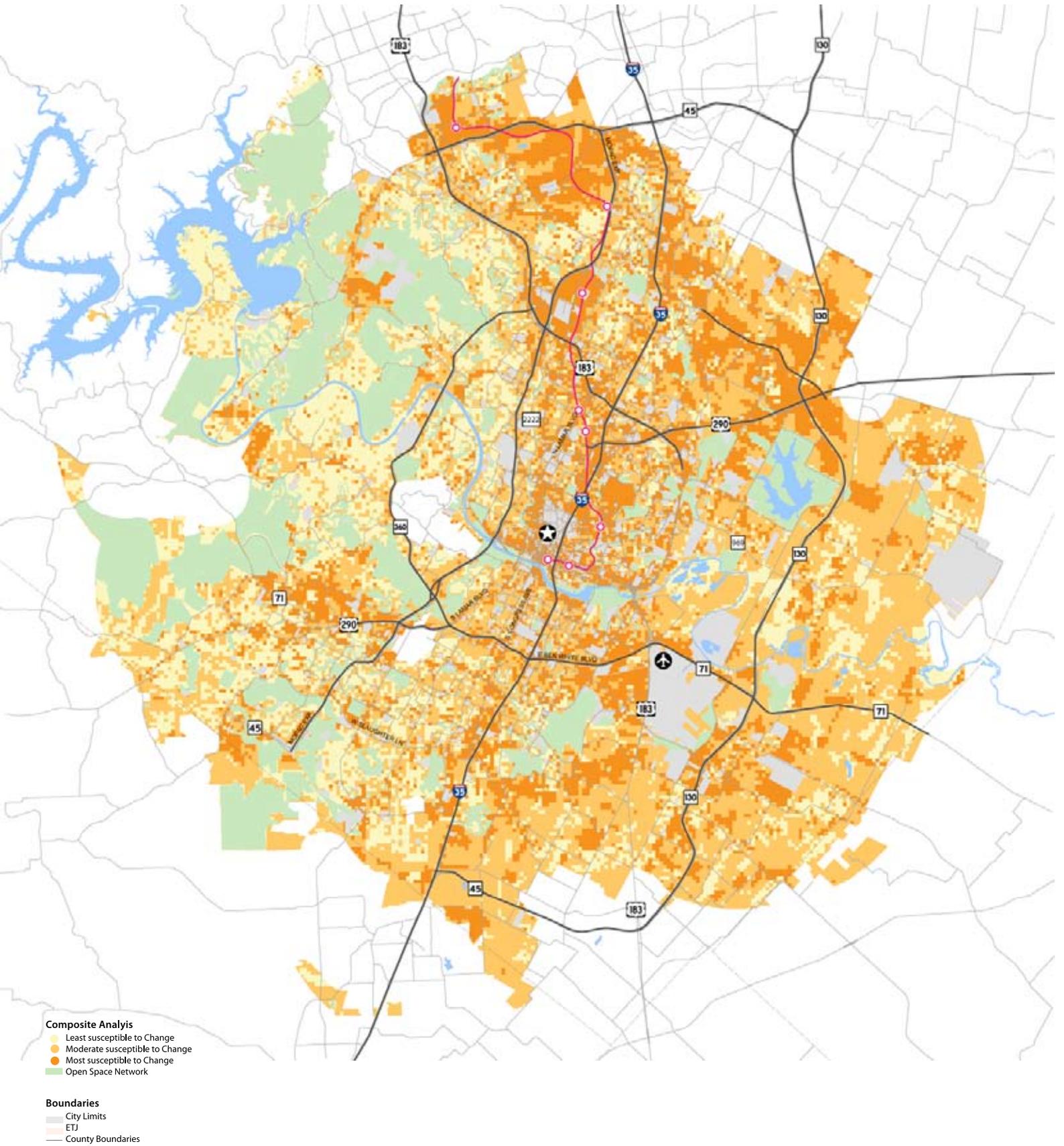
#### *Transportation Costs*

- The average household in the Austin-San Marcos region spends 23.3 percent of income on transportation costs. Austin's transportation expenditure falls within the range of comparable cities such as Dallas (22.6), San Diego (22.9), Portland (23.7), Nashville (25.4), and Seattle (25).

#### *Transportation Modes and Travel Time*

- In 2009, 73 percent of Austin's working population drove alone to work and 10 percent carpooled. This rate of car usage, however, was less than Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and the state of Texas as a whole. Motorists in Austin who drove alone to work earned approximately 1.2 times Austin's median household income.

Fig. 2.4 - SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE ANALYSIS



- During the same year, five percent of Austin's working population rode a bus to work, one percent bicycled, and 2.3 percent walked. Workers choosing these modes of transportation earned approximately 60 percent of Austin's median household income.
- In 2009, the majority of Austin's workers had commutes of 30 minutes or less which changed very little over the decade. These commutes are generally shorter than those in Houston or Dallas.
- A 2008 Brookings Institution study found that between 2002 and 2006 Austin led the nation's largest metropolitan areas in reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled. During this period, Austin's vehicle miles traveled per capita decreased more than 12 percent. In 2006 the city's vehicle miles traveled per capita (4,974 miles) ranked 77th out of 100, which was much less than that of San Antonio (23rd), Dallas (28th), and Houston (51st).

NOTE: Insert travel time chart/graph comparing Austin with other Texas cities and national comparables

### **Roads/Highways**

- Austin's major highways have shaped growth patterns in the city and the ETJ. Interstate 35 facilitated Austin's north-south development orientation and also created a physical barrier between east and west Austin. Other freeways and arterials that are part of the highway pattern, such as the Loop 1 (Mopac Expressway), Loop 360, U.S. 290, U.S. 183, and State Highway 71, led to lower density development spreading away from Austin's urban core.
- Older freeways, including Interstate 35 and Loop 1, have reached their capacity.

### **Transit**

- Capital Metro operated 79 bus routes in 2008, including regular, commuter/express, university, and late night buses. Weekday ridership averaged 130,560 boardings.
- Opened in 2010, Capital Metro's MetroRail line (the Red Line) has nine stations and extends from downtown Austin to the City of Leander. Ridership in early 2011 was approximately 1,300 daily passengers.

### **Bicycle/Pedestrian**

- The Bicycle Master Plan recommends 900 miles of bicycle lanes (130 miles exist) and 350 miles of multi-use trails (50 miles exist).
- Since adopting the Bicycle Master Plan in 2009, the Bicycle Program has installed about 15 new and improved miles per year.

- The Sidewalk Master Plan indicated that there were approximately 3,500 linear miles of absent sidewalks. About 10 percent of these gaps in the sidewalk network are along arterials with the remaining 90 percent are along collectors or residential streets.

#### **Recommended Improvements in Existing Plans**

- The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan recommends \$3.6 billion in regionally funded roadway projects, \$2.9 billion in public transportation projects, and \$444 million in bicycle and pedestrian projects. Projects are prioritized based on funding availability.
- Prompted by the inability of the gas tax to provide sufficient revenue to support expansion of the freeway system, recommended highway improvements in Texas center on toll roads. In the Austin area, these include the northern Loop 1 extension, State Highway 45, State Highway 130, and the U.S. 183A Expressway.
- The Lone Star Rail District proposes a regional commuter rail line paralleling Interstate 35 between San Antonio and Georgetown. An additional commuter rail line (the Green Line) is planned to provide service between downtown Austin and Elgin.

Data sources: 2009 American Community Survey; City of Austin Community Inventory; Capital Area Metropolitan Transportation Organization; Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Brookings Institution, "The Road . . . Less Traveled: An Analysis of Vehicle Miles Traveled Trends in the U.S." (2008); CNT Housing and Transportation Affordability Index (2010).

## **What Does It Mean?**

- Transportation infrastructure responds to and shapes growth. Austin's sprawling development away from the urban core is partially the result of transportation decisions that prioritized highway construction. As a result, the city and region has been slow to develop a comprehensive transit system. The lack of commuter rail and limited bus service to suburban areas has stressed the area's highway system, due to few transportation options beyond the car.
- The absence of a strong transit system makes it more difficult for Austin to encourage efficient land use patterns.
- Despite Austinites' limited transportation options, residents and workers are less auto-dependent than those in other major Texas cities.
- Many Austin residents have little or no access to automobiles. Transit provides a lower-cost way for them to travel, but limited transit options and limited routes reduce their access to jobs and services throughout the greater Austin area.
- In the past decade, Austin has worked to change the focus of its transportation policies and can point to significant impacts made by its growing transit system.

## ECONOMY

**We have a thriving economy, resilient due to its diversity and entrepreneurial spirit; however, we need to prepare our entire workforce to adapt to structural and technological changes.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### Labor Force

- Between 1990 and 2010, Austin's labor force grew by more than 50 percent – or more than double the national rate during the same time period.
- In 2010, Austin experienced a 7.1 percent unemployment rate, the highest in twenty years. However, this was lower than the Texas rate of 8.2 percent or the US rate of 9.6 percent during 2010. By April 2011, Austin's unemployment rate had decreased to 6.5 percent.
- In 2009, over 75 percent of Austin's population aged 16 and over was in the workforce.
- Among the working adult population,, African-Americans had the highest levels of unemployment with a rate of 13.3 percent.
- The percentage of Austin's workers with college degrees continues to rise and is far above the rest of the state.
- Young professionals aged 25-44 comprises 34 percent of Austin's population. This group is recognized as a vital part of the city's "creative class" and as a strong driver of innovation and a significant consumer of urban amenities.
- The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) projects that Travis County will have over one million jobs by 2035. Most of these will be located in Austin, and Austin's downtown will still be a regional employment center, but many employers will locate in outlying areas along major highways.

Add graph/table for unemployment

Add average wage table



Image

Image Caption



Image

Image Caption

### **Employers/Business Sectors**

- Business formation was strong between 2001 and 2009.
- The largest employers in the greater Austin area in 2009 include government, universities, and technology, distribution, and health care firms.
- Since 2000, Austin has experienced significant increases in multiple job sectors: health care; professional and management; and arts, entertainment, and food. During the same period, the number of manufacturing jobs decreased by over five percent.
- Austin's traditional high-tech base is being forced to move into other sectors. As "off-shoring" continues to effect the city's manufacturing and electronics base, the city is refocusing on other high-tech industries such as medical and life sciences, clean energy (e.g., sustainable design and building, smart grid technologies, solar energy), creative industries (e.g., gaming, digital media, film, post-production), data centers, and professional services and corporate headquarters.
- The clean energy sector presents a key growth and job creation opportunity. The city has emerged as a center for clean energy technologies, with a supportive local utility and forward-thinking public policies focused on sustainability.
- The majority of employment growth within in the City of Austin over the next twenty years is projected to occur in the eastern part of the city (extending out to SH-130).
- Add bullet on economic output

Add employment by industry sector pie chart

Add chart showing job growth by industry sector

<b>Selected Major Employers</b>		
<b>Employing 6,000 or more</b>	<b>Employing 2,000-5,999</b>	<b>Employing 1,000-1,999</b>
Austin School District	Advanced Micro Devices (AMD)	3M
City of Austin	Texas State University-San Marcos	ACS State Healthcare
Federal Government	National Instruments	Lower Colorado River Authority
IBM	Austin Community College	Austin American-Statesman
Dell	Travis County	Capital Metro Transportation Authority
State of Texas	AT&T	Emerson Process Management
University of Texas at Austin	Applied Materials	Harte-Hanks Response Management
Seton Healthcare Network	Freescale Semiconductor	Hospira
	St. David's Healthcare Partnership	Girling Healthcare
	Round Rock School District	Cisco Systems
		Apple

Source: City of Austin, Community Inventory

### **Wages**

- Average salaries for Austin workers indicate the existence of high-wage industries in the city. However, Austin's wages do not compete with those of east and west coast metropolitan areas.
- A household's "living wage" depends on the size of the household. In Travis County, a household with one adult and one child must earn an hourly rate of about \$13.81 to support their family.

### **Commercial Real Estate Market**

- A significant amount of office space has come online since 2006, and the Austin area has high office vacancy rates. In Downtown in 2009, Class A office space had a 15 percent vacancy rate, and almost nine percent of Class B office space was vacant. These rates were higher in outlying locations. In 2009, Austin's Class A suburban office space vacancy rate was over 21 percent, and over 22 percent of Class B space was vacant.
- Austin's percentage of the region's office space has dropped as more suburban spaces have been constructed.

- Most of Austin's retail growth since 2000 has occurred in areas outside the Central Business District.
- Austin's share of regional retail sales has been declining over the past decade. In 2002, 63 percent of all retail sales occurred in the city; however, by 2010, this figure had dropped to 54 percent.

## What Does It Mean?

- Suburban commercial and office development is diminishing Austin's position as the regional economic leader.
- The government, technology, medical, and institutional sectors form the base of Austin's economy.
- Austin's highly-educated workforce makes the city attractive to high-growth companies seeking to relocate or establish operations in the greater Austin area.
- Austin's economy continues to produce professional and skilled service jobs. However, access to these jobs is limited for many minorities and individuals with lower educational attainment.
- Austin's "creative class" workers are a key to continued growth in many economic sectors.
- Austin's lower wages (relative to other major U.S. cities) creates an impediment to attracting talented workers who perceive that they can secure better pay elsewhere.
- Entrepreneurship and the ability of existing businesses to adapt to new technologies will continue to drive Austin's economy.

Data sources: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University, City of Austin Community Inventory, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, 2009 American Community Survey; The Living Wage Project.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

**We are rich in natural resources, but the effects of development and climate change put them at risk.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### **Biodiversity**

- Austin lies at the boundary of four physical geographic regions: the Edwards Plateau ("Hill Country"), the Rolling Prairie, the Blackland Prairie, and the Colorado River Terraces. The city contains a variety of terrains, soils, habitats, flora, and fauna due to its location within numerous transition zones.
- The region has diverse plant and animal habitats that transition from east to west. The karst landscapes of the Balcones Escarpment and Edwards Plateau are home to many unique, endangered species of birds, salamanders, and invertebrates. Austin is also located beneath the Central Flyway for North American bird migration.

#### **Water Resources**

- Austin is known for its creeks, rivers, lakes, and springs (e.g., Barton Creek, Bull Creek, Lady Bird Lake, Lake Austin, and the Colorado River). The planning area is situated within 76 watersheds within the Colorado River basin, the Brazos River basin, and the Guadalupe River basin.
- The planning area encompasses 396,395 acres out of the 983,001 total acres of the 76 area watersheds.
- The Colorado River provides the majority of Austin's water supply. The City has contracts for a "firm" supply of raw water (i.e., available even during dry periods or drought) from this source to meet demand at least through 2050.
- The Edwards Aquifer, one of the most important and sensitive aquifers in Texas, feeds a number of springs in Austin, including Barton Springs and its pool. Portions of its 500-square mile recharge zone extend on a north-south axis through the western part of the city and underlie approximately 42 percent of the city's land area.
- Austin has a decades-long history of regulations to protect its water supply. Current regulation includes the Drinking Water Protection Zones ordinance (approved in 1997) for watersheds that drain to Lake Travis, Lake Austin, and Barton Springs. Nearly 37 percent of the city's land area is included in one of the three drinking water protection zones.
- Central Texas is often called "Flash Flood Alley" because of its frequent, intense storms and hilly topography with numerous creeks and wet-weather streams. During almost every decade over the past 100 years the city has experienced significant flood events.

- Impervious surfaces are very restricted in the Drinking Water Protection Zone. Land in the Barton Springs portion of the Drinking Water Protection Zone is limited to 15-25 percent surface coverage, and impervious surfaces are limited to 20 percent in the Water Supply Rural watershed. In addition, regulations differ in Austin's urban and suburban watershed zone areas (i.e., impervious surface coverage is regulated by zoning districts in the urban watersheds zone and ranges from 45 percent to 90 percent in the suburban watersheds).
- Climate scientists predict that the Central Texas region could become warmer and drier.

#### ***Air Quality***

- Central Texas is in compliance with all federal air quality standards. However, the region is in danger of exceeding ground-level ozone due to stricter federal standards. Air quality programs in Austin have focused almost entirely on the reduction of ozone levels.

#### ***Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions***

- In 2007, the City passed the Austin Climate Protection Plan resolution. Since then, Austin has completed a greenhouse gas inventory and update, reduced electricity output by the equivalent of 26,100 homes per year, and continues to focus on collaboration, education, mitigation, and innovation.
- Transportation and vehicle emissions are a major factor in carbon-dioxide pollution and other smog-forming air pollution. Continued outward expansion and reliance on vehicles for the majority of transportation trips will increase emissions.
- Regional cooperation is needed to more completely implement climate change solutions.

#### ***Open Space and Green Infrastructure***

- While much of the planning area is urbanized, prime farmland soils are located throughout the Blackland Prairie and Colorado River Terrace regions. In particular, agricultural soils are prevalent along and south of the Colorado River.
- There were over 1,200 farms in Travis County in 2007, 57 percent of which were used for pasture. Farming in Travis County was not highly profitable, suggesting that many owners operate them as residential or "hobby" farms. The amount of farmland in the county decreased by 12 percent from 2002-2007, a loss that is likely attributable to both urbanization and farmland being taken out of production.
- Austin's urban forest—its tree canopy—is vital to water and air quality and helps mitigate the urban heat island effect. In 2006, Austin's tree canopy cover was estimated at 30 percent of its total land area. Areas with the highest coverage were found in the western part of the city near Barton Creek.

- The City of Austin is engaged in several programs to preserve sensitive lands. In 1998, Austin began purchasing land for water quality protection.

## What Does It Mean?

- Water supply and quality will be two of the most critical issues facing Austin during the next three decades of population growth.
- Austin controls a large portion of the land within area watersheds, which gives it some control over development within these sensitive areas.
- Potential impacts of climate change in Central Texas include increased drought and severe weather events, elevated temperatures, and worsening air pollution. The likelihood of drought and storms adds to the vulnerability of the region's arid climate and reliance on rainwater to recharge the aquifer and to refill the Highland Lakes reservoirs. Higher temperatures may result in an increase in energy use to cool homes and businesses, resulting in more air pollution. Health risks and their related costs could also be associated with these potential impacts.

Data source: City of Austin  
Community Inventory

## CITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

**We have invested in high-quality facilities and services throughout the city; however new development and a changing population are placing pressures on service delivery.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### **Public Safety and Emergency Services**

- The Austin Police Department has over 1,620 sworn officers, 617 civilian positions, and a Fiscal Year 2009-2010 operating budget of \$240 million. The City's full purpose jurisdiction is divided into three Police bureaus (North, Central, and South) and Headquarters. Specialty divisions offer additional department-wide support.
- The average response time to high-priority calls in 2008 was just over eight minutes.
- In 2008 Austin had one of the lowest violent crime rates of all U.S. cities with populations exceeding 500,000.
- The Austin Fire Department has over 1,000 firefighter and 67 civilian positions operating from 44 fire stations throughout the city and at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.

Image

Image Caption

- The Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services serves the entire county and is jointly funded by the City of Austin and Travis County. It operates under a “third service” public safety model, separate from police and fire.
- Thirty paramedic stations with almost 400 state-licensed paramedics are located throughout Austin and Travis County.

**Parks and Preserves**

- Austin has over 17,000 acres of parks and preserves. At 24 acres of parkland per thousand people, Austin exceeds national guidelines for acres of parkland per person.
- Austin’s park area has doubled in size over the past two decades, but funding and maintenance has not kept pace with growth.
- Austin has more than 115 miles of trails, including a 30-mile network of trails in the Downtown area.
- There is a need for more parkland within walking distance of homes in Austin’s urban core neighborhoods and developing areas in the southwestern, northern, northeastern, and northwestern parts of the city.

Image

Image Caption

<b>Parks and Recreation Facilities in Austin (2009)</b>			
<b>Type of Facility</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Type of Facility</b>	<b>Number</b>
District park	13	Greenway	29
Neighborhood park	74	Golf course	5
Pocket park	19	Senior activity center	3
School park	22	Tennis center	4
Metropolitan park	12	Special park	28
Nature preserve	13	<b>TOTAL FACILITIES</b>	<b>222</b>

**Library System**

- The Austin Public Library System has 20 branch libraries, the John Henry Faulk Central Library, and the Austin History Center. In 2006, voters approved bonds for a new 250,000 square foot central library that is scheduled to open in 2014.
- The current system employs over 300 people and operates with a budget of approximately \$25 million per year.
- Over 3.2 million people used the library system in Fiscal Year 2007-2008, including more than 900,000 computer login users.

**Potable Water**

- The Austin Water Utility directly provides treated water to approximately 850,000 people and 45,000 additional people through wholesale water sales, for a total service population of approximately 895,000.

- Austin Water owns and operates two water treatment plants that draw from Lake Austin with a combined treatment capacity of 285 million gallons per day, 46 pump stations, 38 treated water storage reservoirs, 3,651 miles of water main lines, and 25,300 public fire hydrants.
- A new water treatment plant, Water Treatment Plant #4, and transmission main project is under construction. This plant will draw its supply from Lake Travis.
- On average, Austin Water customers use approximately 143 million gallons per day. Peak summer day demand has reached 247 million gallons per day in 2005 and 227 million gallons per day in 2008.
- Austin's current five-year rolling average is 163 gallons per capita per day. Through water conservation, Austin Water Utility has a goal of 140 gallons per capita per day or less.
- Austin's water demand is projected to reach its current Lower Colorado River Authority firm water supply contract amount by 2050.
- The City's top water conservation successes, in order of ten-year estimated savings, include: water restrictions (6.16 million gallons per day), reclaimed water use (5.95 million gallons per day), utility water rates structuring (5.0 million gallons per day), reducing water losses (4.8 million gallons per day), and mandatory toilet retrofit program (2.1 million gallons per day).

### **Wastewater**

- Austin Water manages approximately 195,000 wastewater service connections. In 2008 this represented service to about 803,000 people.
- AWU owns and operates two central wastewater treatment plants: the South Austin Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Walnut Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. These two plants have a combined treatment capacity of 150 million gallons per day (MGD).
- In a typical year, three percent of the wastewater received at the City's wastewater treatment plants is treated and reused for non-potable uses. During 2009, Austin Water Utility reclaimed and used almost 2 billion gallons of treated wastewater from its two central wastewater treatment plants and three smaller satellite treatment plants.
- The Austin Clean Water Program was completed in April 2009 and resulted in reducing sewer overflows from 13 million gallons in 2002 to less than 301,800 gallons in 2008, and the removal of 20 miles of sewer lines from creek beds.

### **Solid Waste**

- Austin's Solid Waste Services Department is responsible for city-wide litter abatement and collection of discarded materials from approximately 164,000 residential customers, 235,000 anti-litter customers, and 2,600 commercial customers.

- Austin's residential and workforce populations discard about 1.4 to 1.5 million tons of materials per year. These discarded materials are either disposed of at landfills (about one million tons) or are diverted from the landfills for reuse or recycling.
- The City of Austin closed its landfill and is now part of a regional system of four municipal solid waste landfills, two construction and demolition debris landfills, and fifteen transfer and citizen collection stations.
- The City offers bi-weekly curbside recycling to its customers. Nearly 70 percent of Austin residents living in single-family dwellings participate in curbside recycling. Most multi-family residences, business, and institutions must contract with private haulers to collect and process discarded materials.
- The primary sources of recyclable and organic resources are curbside recycling (46 percent), collection of yard trimmings and brush (38 percent), and private users of the City's materials recovery facility (17 percent). Compostable organics comprise over half of the total material discarded. It is estimated that the value of the materials currently sent to the landfill and lost to the local economy is over \$40 million annually.

## What Does It Mean?

- Continued low-density suburban development can strain the city's public safety budget, as more development on the city's fringes will require additional police and fire stations to ensure adequate response times.
- Low-density suburban development requires costly water and sewer infrastructure extensions.
- Despite the fact that the city has an above-average amount of parkland, more attention needs to be paid to creating smaller parks that are within walking distance or in neighborhoods. The absence of these smaller parks means that many areas of the city are not adequately served by the park system.
- Austin's existing parks and trail system are amenities that should be considered in planning for infill in and redevelopment of urban core areas.
- Austin is a regional leader in conservation strategies, but it must be proactive in planning for supplying water and other municipal services to its rapidly-growing population.
- More residents and businesses need to be encouraged to recycle to reduce the amount of solid waste sent to regional landfills.

## SOCIETY AND HEALTH

### **Rising housing costs, school quality, and access to healthcare and social services are major considerations for families and residents living in Austin.**

#### **Families and Households**

- Families make up a slim majority of Austin households (52 percent), compared with 62 percent in the Austin-Round Rock metropolitan area and 67 percent in the nation.
- Households with children declined substantially from 1970 to 1990. Since 1990, the proportion of households with children has held steady (slightly declining from 30.2% in 1990 to 29.5% in 2009).
- Households with children make up a smaller part of the population in the urban core, compared with the edge of the city and the extra-territorial jurisdiction.
- Austin's non-Hispanic White population is composed of fewer households with children (20 percent), compared with African-American (36 percent), Asian-American (35 percent), and Hispanic/Latino (45 percent) households. However, in absolute numbers, the total number of White and Hispanic households with children is about the same.

#### **Education**

- The Austin Independent School District is the primary educational provider for students grades K-12. Students also attend other schools in 11 other districts in the region.
- Colleges and universities are essential to Austin's identity. The city is home to the University of Texas (one of the largest universities in the nation), St. Edwards University, Huston-Tillotson University, Concordia University, and Austin Community College. There are 100,000 college or university students in Austin.

Independent School Districts	Service Area		Enrollment	
	Total (Sq Mi)	Within Austin's ETJ (Sq Mi)	Total	At schools within Austin's ETJ
Austin	229.8	226.2	81,763	81,686
Bastrop	427.6	3.9	8,538	0
Del Valle	171.2	138.4	9,234	8618
Dripping Springs	199	3.8	4,023	0
Eanes	33.3	28.4	7,325	3342
Hays Consolidated	225.5	20.3	13,047	0
Lago Vista	35	3	1,239	0
Lake Travis	117.6	23.2	5,871	695
Leander	198.3	51.6	26,551	4,909
Manor	89.2	57.7	5,828	2,371
Pflugerville	76.6	21.9	20,807	7,901
Round Rock	98.2	41.4	40,448	14,870

### **Health and Healthcare**

- Diabetes, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease result in about 29 percent of deaths in Travis County. Higher rates of physical activity (e.g., walking, bicycling) can reduce the rates of these diseases.
- The Austin region is served by three major hospital systems: Seton Family of Hospitals (based in Austin), St. David's Health Care (based in Austin), and the Scott and White network (northern Central Texas region).
- The Travis County Healthcare District (created in 2004) provides publicly funded health-care services to the county's medically needy residents. Comprehensive benefits are available to families at or below poverty level through a limited provider network.
- The University Medical Center at Brackenridge also provides hospital-based services when necessary. Integration of these services is conducted through Integrated Care Collaboration, a collaborative safety net non-profit.
- Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas is the only dedicated freestanding pediatric facility in the region. It has an array of specialty centers and services including neonatal intensive care, pediatric intensive care, emergency services, a comprehensive pediatric trauma program, and a plastic and reconstructive surgery center.

### **Social Services**

- The Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) provides public health, social, and environmental health services for Austin and Travis County and serves

nearly one million residents. HHSD operates six neighborhood centers that provide social services for low- and moderate-income families. Services include child care programs, homeless assistance, day labor and employment programs, mental health/substance abuse services, programs for at-risk youth, and basic needs services.

- Austin's Animal Services manages one of the largest animal shelters in Central Texas, caring for more than 23,000 animals each year. A new animal shelter will shift animal services from the Town Lake Animal Center and help Austin transition to a "no-kill" city.

## What Does It Mean?

- Families with children are not necessarily staying in Austin. Rising housing costs, school quality, and educational costs are concerns for families. Blue ribbon and other high-ranking public schools are attracting upper-income families.
- The two school districts serving the largest area in the extraterritorial jurisdiction (Austin ISD and Del Valle ISD) are facing challenges related population growth, immigration/language needs, poverty, and transient families.
- Higher educational institutions are a major part of Austin's identity, history, and economy.
- Austin has a very active social service network. The Community Action Network is developing a set of priority indicators for children and youth to measure progress.
- Design of the physical environment affects public health. Ensuring that new

Data sources: City of Austin Community Inventory, Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project

## ARTS & CULTURE

**We are a creative leader and recognize the value of our cultural amenities, but rising costs of living and working in Austin may affect the long-term viability of the arts community.**

### Key Facts/Trends

#### Arts/Cultural Events

- Austin is nationally renowned for its arts scene and has earned the nickname "The Live Music Capital of the World." The city is home to over 100 live music venues, multiple music festivals, 1,543 music-related businesses, and over 1,900 music acts.
- Austin also has a growing film industry, incubators for artists, and numerous museums and

galleries such as the Elisabeth Ney Museum and the Jack S. Blanton Museum.

- There are over 35 museums in the Austin Museum Partnership, including arts, sciences, history, nature preserves, music, and government museums. The Partnership promotes collaboration between museums.
- In 2006, Austin ranked second in major cities in terms of the number of non-profit community celebrations, festivals, fairs, and parades per 1,000 persons.
- Austin has been commissioning public art projects through the Art in Public Places project since 1985; however, many of the projects are not well-known to residents and visitors.
- Theater and dance are significant contributors to Austin's cultural economy (over \$330 million in 2005). The city has over 32 theater venues, with many more theater companies and playwrights.

#### ***Economic Impact & Funding***

- According to CreateAustin (Austin's community cultural plan), in 2004 the economic impact of the creative sector was more than \$2.2 billion in annual economic activity, 44,000 permanent jobs, and over \$48 million in tax revenue for the City of Austin.
- Austin's music festivals are important to the city's economy. The 2011 SXSW contributed \$1 million to the local economy; the 2010 Austin City Limits Festival contributed \$34.5 million.
- The city's film, television, sports, and animation industries generate approximately \$113 million annually and provides over 3,500 jobs.
- Austin has a long history of supporting funding for its cultural facilities. In 2006, residents approved a \$31.5 million bond measure to support construction and renovation of seven of the City-owned cultural facilities.
- The City of Austin allocates approximately \$5 million annually from the Hotel and Occupancy Tax to non-profit arts and cultural groups.

#### ***Arts Education Programs***

- The Austin Independent School District, other school districts, and private schools operate arts education programs as an integral part of student learning and development. Nevertheless, students in all areas of the city do not have equal access to cultural programming.
- While arts, film, and music education is strong in area universities and colleges, technol-

ogy education is somewhat limited.

## What Does It Mean?

- Austin's live music and arts scene are a cornerstone of the city's identity.
- Creative industries are an important element of the city's economy and can be leveraged for additional economic growth.
- The arts and cultural community struggles with issues of funding, affordable and appropriately sized performance and practice space, and health and quality of life issues.
- City and private funding for local arts facilities and programs is critical to the ongoing strength of the arts in Austin.
- Lower-income communities may not have adequate opportunities to participate in Austin's arts programs and events.
- Workforce development programs need to provide job training for technologi-

Data sources: City of Austin Community Inventory, CreateAustin

## DEVELOPING A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Austin has long been the hub of the Central Texas region. It was the “Downtown of Central Texas,” and the principal place where jobs and necessary goods, services, entertainment, and amenities were concentrated. Its role as the predominant regional center has changed as increased suburban development has pulled against this identity, reducing the city’s regional share of employment, services, and housing.

This does not mean, however, that we are losing our central position in the region. All roads still lead to Austin. As the employment, educational, medical, and retail hub of the Central Texas region, we are attracting thousands of commuters, patients, shoppers, and visitors each day. Other communities may be gaining new retail centers, offices, and housing, but Austin’s unique assets—our educational institutions, government facilities, hospital centers, airport, downtown, independent businesses, arts and entertainment offerings, and natural amenities—ensure that we will remain a regional leader for years to come. In many regards, the success and growth of the surrounding suburban communities is directly tied to Austin’s past and continued regional role as economic and cultural center.

At an even larger scale, Austin is part of the dynamic, fast-growing Dallas/Fort Worth-San Antonio-Houston Texas Triangle “mega-region.” We are responsible for working with our neighboring governments, and larger cities like Dallas and San Antonio, to understand the complexity of regional issues, develop coordinated strategies, and ensure that, as a

region, we have the capacity to move forward.

## CENTRAL TEXAS REGION IN 2011

### Regional Issues.

Being a regional leader means more than just having the most people or assets; we must understand that our actions affect nearby communities, and vice versa. Austin's problems are, by and large, the region's problems, and because we are closely connected to our neighbors, our solutions must be mutually beneficial. There are several key issues facing our region that need to be tackled in a collaborative manner across municipal boundaries.

#### Conversion of agricultural land and fragmented development.

Much of the land on Austin's periphery and in its extra-territorial jurisdiction is agricultural or undeveloped. Development has been happening in these areas as parcels are converted to residential subdivisions or commercial centers, particularly along or near major roadways. The U.S. Census of Agriculture reports that from 2002 to 2007, nine percent of the region's agricultural land was taken out of production, with the highest rate of loss occurring in Hays and Travis counties. This coincides with an increase in land values throughout the Austin area and a decline in the profitability of small farms. Fragmented pattern of low-density development outside the region's municipalities is more costly to serve with infrastructure and services, requires residents to depend exclusively on auto travel, and encroaches upon the region's open spaces.

#### Limited water supply and water systems.

Some new development is occurring in outlying areas that have limited or no water systems to support moderate or concentrated growth. Many area communities do not have resources to extend existing infrastructure or do not have contracts for long-term water supply. Some of those that do have contracts are already exceeding their yearly allocations. Limited availability of public water infrastructure reinforces scattered, inefficient development patterns, and new draws on groundwater sources could impact the region's water supply.

#### Housing-jobs imbalance.

Half the working-age populations of all the counties in the region, except Travis, commute to another county for work. Most of this travel moves toward Austin, but jobs increasingly are located along highways at the city's periphery and in some smaller municipalities. Even Austin has seen its share of residents commuting out of the city grow, rising over nine percent between 2002 and 2009. This work-related travel points to a mismatch between the location of residences and jobs throughout the region. Some of this may be attributable to lifestyle preferences (e.g., some individuals prefer to live in small towns or rural areas), but it also may be the result of rising housing costs throughout the region. Prospective homeowners must "drive until they qualify" to find affordable housing that meets their

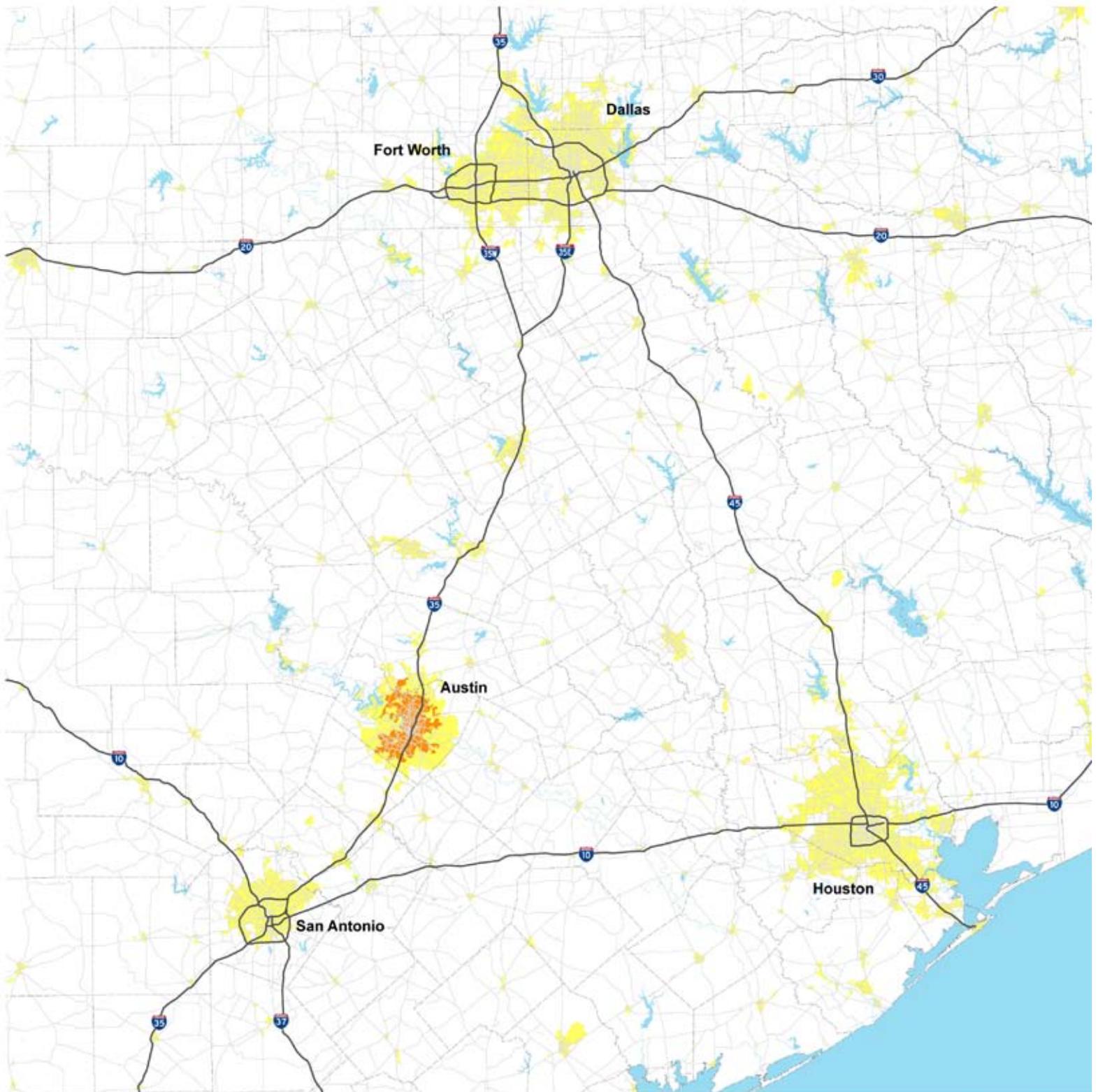


Image Caption



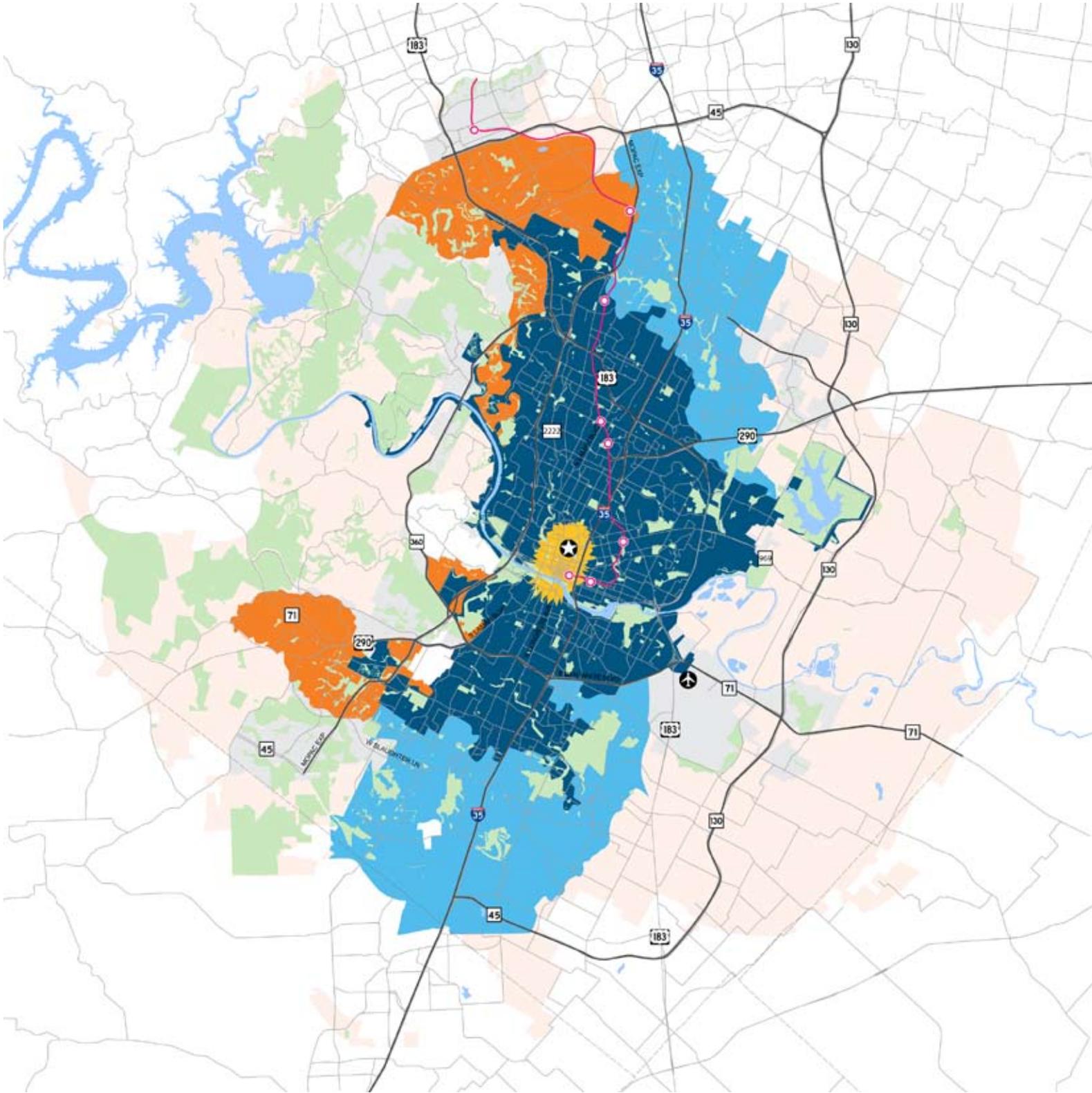
Image Caption

Fig. 2.5 - AUSTIN'S LOCATION WITHIN THE REGION



The comprehensive plan includes a regional component developed through coordination with surrounding county and municipal jurisdictions, the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization [CAMPO], and the Capital Area Council of Governments [CAPCOG]. For the purposes of the issues identified in this section, the "region" includes Travis, Hays, Caldwell, Williamson, and Bastrop counties, except where noted otherwise. Many of these issues are extensions of those affecting Austin, especially at the edges of our corporate boundary and in the ETJ.

Fig. 2.6 - AUSTIN TOMORROW MAP



Insert legend and caption explaining Austin Tomorrow Map, when adopted, what the growth shows, and that the Charter was updated after its adoption.

needs, and many of these affordable units are found in distant residential subdivisions with limited transportation options.

#### **Rising costs of housing and transportation.**

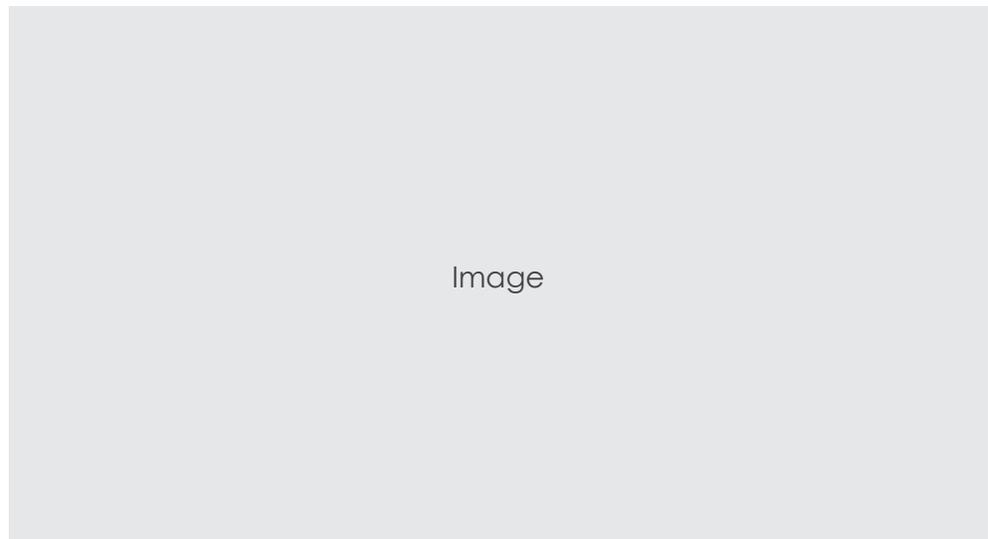
Land values and housing costs are increasing throughout the region. Some of this is due to funding delays for new infrastructure (i.e., new residential developments have been approved, but construction must wait until adequate infrastructure can be built to serve them; in the interim, costs rise for existing units because fewer new units are being built). Prices for infill units (new housing built in already developed areas) are increasing for different reasons, most of which relate to limited supply and growing land values in more developed areas. Many of the region's residents find themselves in the position of having to live where they can afford to, no matter how convenient this location is to their workplaces, commercial centers, or medical services. Affordable housing choices for non-traditional households (e.g., single-person households or married couples without children) other than single-family houses may be even more limited.

Transportation costs have been rising steadily over the past decade due to increased gas prices. This has created financial burdens for many households who moved outward to secure affordable housing, but now find themselves farther away from jobs and needed services and able only to travel by car. In a 2010 report, the Capital Area Council of Governments found that more than half of the region's households spend at least 45 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation costs.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Few regional transportation options.**

As the region's population struggles with rising costs, the shortcomings of the regional transportation system become even more pronounced. The regional transportation network is built for cars, and the growing congestion we see is the direct result of outward growth and limited transportation options. Too many people live and work in places where densi-

Image Caption



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<sup>1</sup> This figure represents the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA, which includes Burnet County in addition to Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, and Bastrop counties.

ties are too low to support regular transit service or which are outside of a transit agency's service area. In many places that have transit, routes and the frequency of service are so limited that people do not view it as a viable alternative to driving.

#### **Regional job growth mostly in lower-wage positions.**

The Central Texas economy has continued to grow through the current national recession, although growth has slowed in high-tech, higher-skilled sectors. Much of the region's recent job creation has been directly related to its rapid population growth over the past few decades. As Central Texas has welcomed new residents from all parts of the country and the world, demand has increased for service-oriented jobs, such as leisure/hospitality services and business and professional services. These jobs typically require fewer skills, pay lower wages than professional and high-tech jobs, and offer fewer benefits. Households faced with lower-paying jobs and increasing housing and transportation costs are experiencing greater economic stresses. In a 2009 report, the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project estimated that approximately 40 percent of the region's families live "at the edge of their means" due to the widening gap between household incomes and household expenses.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Different legal powers to regulate development.**

The Central Texas region contains two types of governments: counties and municipalities with land-use authority. The State of Texas enables municipalities to regulate development comprehensively within their corporate boundaries and on a more limited basis within their extraterritorial jurisdictions to ensure that the built environment meets minimum standards, works in conjunction with infrastructure investments, and minimizes impacts on natural resources. Counties have fewer controls over development, mostly due to the assumption that their jurisdictions will not contain large areas of urbanized land. Today, Texas counties have only the ability to regulate subdivisions, on-site sewage systems, floodplain development, and water supply. A few, such as Travis County, have the power to require storm-water management, impose fire codes, and develop standards for water wells to prevent groundwater contamination. Unlike cities, counties do not have the authority to enact building codes, a zoning ordinance, or impact fees. As a large percentage of the region's growth is occurring outside municipal boundaries, the limited power of the counties provides little control over the location, quality, and impacts of development. This has resulted in low-density, piecemeal development throughout the region and makes it difficult for jurisdictions to work together to implement regional growth management strategies.

Finding and implementing solutions to these issues only can be achieved if we adopt a regional perspective. This perspective should be "Austin with our partners." We are the leader of Central Texas and through Imagine Austin and other regional projects we will work with our neighbors to improve the future of the region.

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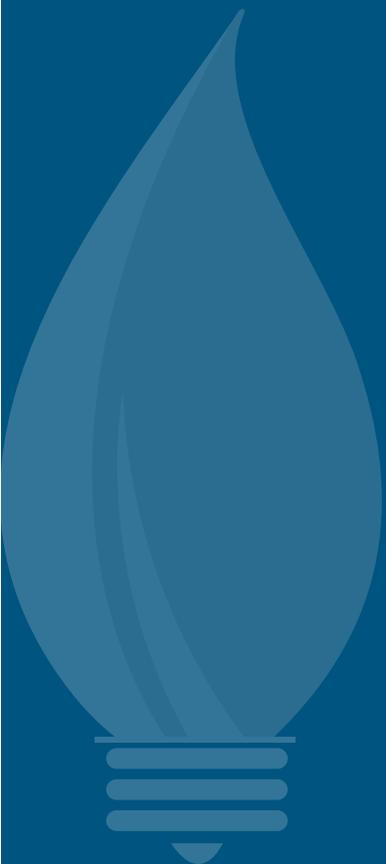
<sup>2</sup> The "region" referenced here includes Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, Bastrop, and Burnet counties.



# IMAGINING AUSTIN: OUR VISION OF A COMPLETE COMMUNITY

Imagine Austin Vision Statement

We Will Become a Complete Community





## IMAGINING AUSTIN: OUR VISION OF A COMPLETE COMMUNITY

For many years our community vision was “to be the most livable city in the country.” Many measures show we came close to achieving this vision, while others suggest we did not. However, defining “livability” is difficult, and a simple statement cannot sum up all that we are or could be. When we imagine the Austin of the future, our vision must be more detailed, comprehensive, and integrated with our community context. Austin is a big city and we are growing larger and more complex, and we need a vision that addresses this complexity. We can begin by saying “the most livable,” but it’s only a first step. Our new community vision must point toward the complete city we want to become over the next three decades.

### IMAGINE AUSTIN VISION STATEMENT

The process to develop a new vision for Austin engaged thousands of residents over a nine-month period beginning with the kickoff of the Imagine Austin planning process in October 2009. Through community forums, social media, surveys, focus groups, small meetings between neighbors and friends, and special events, residents described their ideas for Austin in 2039—our bicentennial.

The Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force, appointed by City Council to guide and champion the process, worked directly from the public input to develop a draft vision statement. The public reviewed and rated each component of the vision; the revised vision was then reviewed and endorsed by the Planning Commission and City Council. More details about these meetings and the entire planning process can be found in Appendix B and online.

The Imagine Austin Vision Statement embodies our commitment to preserving the best of Austin and changing those things that will not move us forward. The vision statement answers the question, “What do we want Austin to be?” with a series of principles that address the physical development of the city and the overall well-being of its residents. The importance of Austin’s people lies at the heart of the vision statement, which acknowledges that the city is a place for people and that broad inclusion and community leadership will be critical to realizing our long-term goals.

The importance of Austin's people lies at the heart of the vision statement.

## **A Vision for Austin's Future**

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.

Image

# LIVABLE

## AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

- Development occurs in connected and pedestrian-friendly patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles and reducing sprawl, while protecting and enhancing neighborhoods.
- Downtown offers a safe, vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Development occurs across the city in a manner friendly to families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.
- Austin's unique character and local businesses are recognized as a vital part of our community.
- Clear guidelines support both quality development and preservation that sustain and improve Austin's character and provide certainty for residents and the business community.
- Austin's diverse population is active and healthy, with access to locally-grown, nourishing foods, and affordable healthcare.



# NATURAL

## **AUSTIN IS NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE:**

Austin is a green city. We are environmentally aware and ensure the long-term health and quality of our community through responsible resource use as citizens at the local, regional, and global level. Growth and infrastructure systems are well-managed to respect the limitations of our natural resources.

- We enjoy an accessible, well-maintained network of parks throughout our city.
- We protect the beauty of the Colorado River watershed, Hill Country and Blackland Prairie and value our farmland that nurtures local food production.
- Our open spaces and preserves shape city planning, reduce infrastructure costs, and provide us with recreation, clean air and water, local food, cooler temperatures, and biodiversity.
- We conserve water, energy, and other valuable resources.
- Austin is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- We use and inspire new technologies that create more sustainable communities while reducing our dependence on environmentally costly practices.

## **AUSTIN IS CREATIVE:**

Creativity is the engine of Austin's prosperity. Arts, culture, and creativity are essential keys to the city's unique and distinctive identity and are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life and economy.

- As a community that continues to stimulate innovation, Austin is a magnet that draws and retains talented and creative individuals.
- Our creative efforts reflect, engage with and appeal to the ethnic, gender and age diversity of Austin and to all socioeconomic levels.
- Residents and visitors participate fully in arts and cultural activities because the opportunities are valued, visible, and accessible.
- Our buildings and places reflect the inspirational and creative spirit of who we are as Austinites, through design excellence, public art and beautiful, accessible public spaces.

# CREATIVE

# EDUCATED

## **AUSTIN IS EDUCATED:**

Education is the hope for Austin's future. Austin provides everyone with an equal opportunity for the highest quality of education that allows them to fully develop their potential. Networks of community partnerships support our schools and ensure that our children receive the resources and services they need to thrive and learn.

- Our school campuses provide safe and stable environments enabling future success.
- Neighborhood schools and libraries serve as centers for community collaboration, recreational, and social events, as well as learning opportunities.
- In partnership with private entities and the broader community, institutions of higher education continue to be incubators for innovation in the cultural arts, medicine, industry, business, and technology.
- Every child in Austin has the chance to engage with other cultures, communities, and languages, providing pathways for healthy development, and the critical thinking skills students need as future citizens of Austin and the world.

## **AUSTIN IS MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED:**

Austin is accessible. Our transportation network provides a wide variety of options that are efficient, reliable, and cost-effective to serve the diverse needs and capabilities of our citizens. Public and private sectors work together to improve our air quality and reduce congestion in a collaborative and creative manner.

- Interconnected development patterns support public transit and a variety of transportation choices, while reducing sprawl, congestion, travel times, and negative impacts on existing neighborhoods.
- Our integrated transportation system is well-maintained, minimizes negative impacts on natural resources, and remains affordable for all users.
- Austin promotes safe bicycle and pedestrian access with well-designed routes that provide connectivity throughout the greater Austin area. These routes are part of our comprehensive regional transportation network.

# MOBILE

### **AUSTIN IS PROSPEROUS:**

Austin's prosperity exists because of the overall health, vitality, and sustainability of the city as a whole—including the skills, hard work, and qualities of our citizens, the stewardship of our natural resources, and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions. Development carefully balances the needs of differing land uses with improved transportation to ensure that growth is both fiscally sound and environmentally sustainable.

- Our economy is resilient and responsive to global trends thanks to its diverse and thriving mix of local entrepreneurs, large and small businesses, educational institutions, government, and industry.
- Innovation and creativity are the engines of Austin's economy in the arts, research and development, and technology.
- Our ecology is integrated with our economy—the preservation of the environment and natural resources contribute to our prosperity.
- Equitable opportunities are accessible to all through quality education, training, and good jobs.

### **AUSTIN VALUES AND RESPECTS ITS PEOPLE:**

Austin is its people. Our city is home to engaged, compassionate, creative, and independent thinking people, where diversity is a source of strength and where we have the opportunity to fully participate and fulfill our potential.

- Austin government is transparent and accountable.
- People across all parts of the city and of all ages and income levels live in safe, stable neighborhoods with a variety of affordable and accessible homes, healthy food, economic opportunity, healthcare, education, and transportation.
- We stand together for equal rights for all persons, especially acknowledging those who have been denied full participation in the opportunities offered by our community in the past.
- The history of the people of the Austin area is preserved and protected for future generations.

Each level of our Complete Community... will be livable, safe, and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; ensure that amenities and services are easily accessible to all; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit.

**WE WILL BECOME A COMPLETE COMMUNITY.**

To realize our vision, over the next three decades, the benefits produced by implementing Imagine Austin must be available to everyone. One measure of our success is to become a "Complete Community," a city defined by human-oriented networks of amenities, transportation, services, and opportunities that fulfill all Austinites' physical, social, and economic needs, while protecting our important environmental resources and preserving our identity, culture, and sense of place. A Complete Community provides access to employment, shopping, learning, open space, recreation, and other amenities and services in all parts of the city. Successfully creating the elements of a Complete Community will mean that the principles of the Imagine Austin Vision Statement have been fulfilled.

Making Austin a Complete Community means establishing relationships between the physical environment, environmental and health impacts, social equity, creativity, and opportunities for civic engagement. It means giving greater attention to non-physical components of a city. We need to consider how arts, culture, and entertainment; food systems, health, and wellness; and education and community services affect our community's well-being. Each level of our Complete Community—neighborhoods, larger subareas of the city, or the city as a whole—will be livable, safe, and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; make amenities and services accessible to all; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit.

**LIVABLE**

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

**MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED**

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

**VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE**

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

**PROSPEROUS**

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

**EDUCATED**

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

**CREATIVE**

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

**NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE**

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

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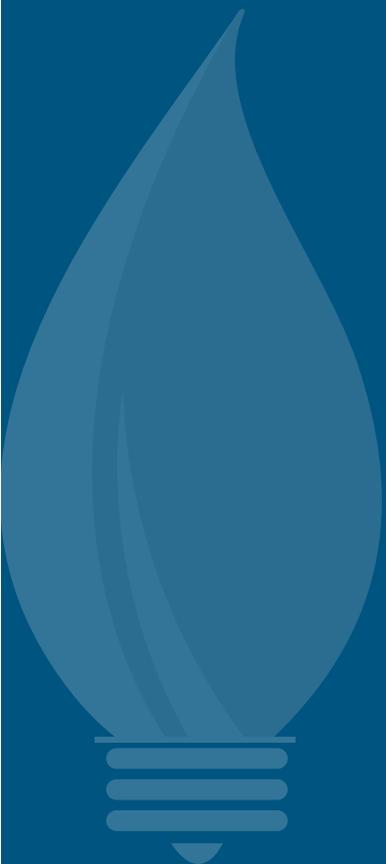


# SHAPING AUSTIN: BUILDING THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY

A Framework for the Future

Growth Concept Map

Comprehensive Plan Building Blocks





## SHAPING AUSTIN: BUILDING THE COMPLETE COMMUNITY

### A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

This chapter presents a two-part planning framework for realizing our vision of a complete community (Chapter 3) through action (Chapter 5):

- **Growth Concept Map.** The Growth Concept Map (Figure 4.4) applies the Imagine Austin vision to the city's physical pattern of development. Generated through a public scenario-building process, it defines how we will seek to accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use areas, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years.
- **Building Blocks.** The Building Blocks set the policies to implement Imagine Austin. They cover a range of subject areas, including the Austin City Charter-required elements of a comprehensive plan and several others based on public input. The seven Building Blocks are:

1. Land Use and Transportation
2. Housing and Neighborhoods
3. Economy
4. Conservation and Environment
5. City Facilities and Services
6. Society
7. Creativity

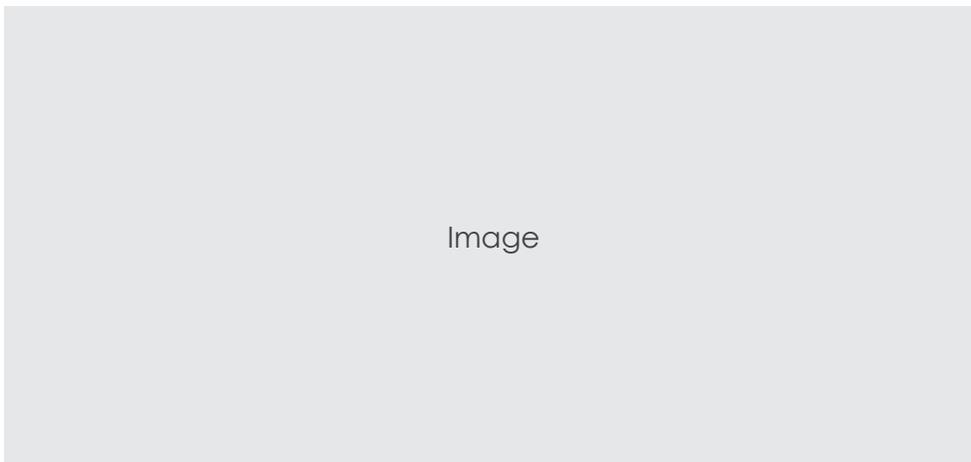


Image Caption

Developed through a public-driven scenario process, the Growth Concept Map represents the most desirable way for Austin to accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use areas, open space, transit, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years consistent with the vision.

## GROWTH CONCEPT MAP

The vision statement describes in aspirational terms what we value and seek to achieve over the next 30 years by setting forth directions to guide the city's growth and development. The Growth Concept Map (Figure 4.4) applies the Imagine Austin vision to how the city's physical development pattern will evolve over the next several decades. It is informed by the city's environmental features (Figure 4.1), existing development pattern (Figure 4.2), and planned transportation network (Figure 4.3).

Developed with extensive public involvement, the Growth Concept Map depicts how Austin should accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use developments, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years. During a series of public meetings, more than 450 participants created over 60 maps illustrating where Austin's growth should go over the next 30 years. City staff, consultants, and the Citizen's Advisory Task Force reviewed the maps for common patterns, ultimately synthesizing them into four distinct scenarios for comparison to a "trend" scenario map.

The five scenarios were measured using "sustainability indicators" (e.g., acres of land developed, greenhouse gas emissions, cost of public infrastructure, average travel time, percentage of housing near transit stops, etc.). All of the sustainability indicators were linked to the Imagine Austin Vision Statement. Through the next round of public meetings and surveys, the public rated each of the alternatives using the indicator results. The effort reached out to over 200,000 residents through community events, newspaper surveys, door to door outreach, newsletters, social media, business and organizational meetings, and one-on-one conversations.

Based on the results of the public survey and taking into account planned development and existing neighborhood plans, a blended scenario was created to illustrate Austin's vision for 2039. The Preferred Scenario was further tested and refined into the Growth Concept Map (Figure 4.4). More detail on the public process used to create the scenarios and Growth Concept Map is included in Appendix B.

The Growth Concept Map embodies the Imagine Austin vision and represents where the city will focus future investments (e.g., to support mixed-use centers). The Growth Concept Map is designed to:

- Protect existing open space and natural resources (e.g., creeks, rivers, lakes, and floodplains).
- Direct development away from the Southern Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones.
- Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Expand the transit network.

- Increase transit use and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- Reduce water consumption.
- Promote infill and redevelopment as opposed to typical low-density “greenfield” development.
- Focus new development in mixed-use corridors and centers accessible by walking, bicycling, and transit as well as by car.
- Provide convenient access to jobs and employment centers.
- Provide parks and open space close to where people live, work, and play.

### Growth Concept Map Definitions

The Growth Concept Map illustrates in general terms where new development over the next 30 years should be located. New development categories include several types of centers, mixed-use corridors, and job centers, all connected by transportation and open space networks. The intent of each component of the Growth Concept Map is described below. It should be noted that the new development categories are conceptual and thus not as specific as typical future land use classifications, nor do they carry the legal weight of zoning designations.

#### Regional Centers

Regional centers are the major urban hubs of the region. They have the highest employment and residential densities, are highly walkable, provide bicycle infrastructure, support high-capacity transit, and provide a full range of employment opportunities. Some regional centers are entirely urban, like Downtown, while others, like Robinson Ranch or the southern center at the intersection of IH 35 and SH 45 will likely have urban cores surrounded by well-connected but lower density development. Regional centers range in size between approximately 25,000-45,000 new people and 5,000-25,000 new jobs.

#### Town Centers

Town centers are less dense than regional centers and include a mix of commercial and residential uses that support high-capacity transit. Residential uses include townhouses, rowhouses, and apartments, as well as single-family houses. First-floor commercial uses, offices, and community serving retail make up the core of the town center. The Mueller redevelopment is a local example of a town center. Town centers are accessible by transit, walking, and biking, and include public plazas or open space. Town centers range in size between approximately 10,000-30,000 new people and 5,000-20,000 new jobs.



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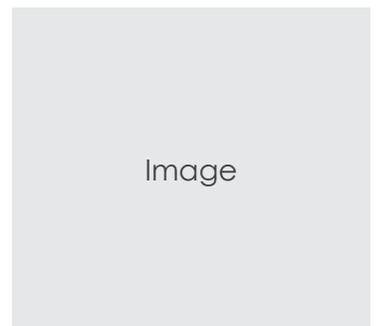


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### Neighborhood Centers and Mixed-Use Corridors

Neighborhood Centers and mixed-use corridors are highly walkable and support transit, but are less dense and have more local focus than town centers. They have community-serving retail and services (e.g., dry cleaners, beauty salons, coffee shops, restaurants) along with moderately dense housing types, such as small-lot single-family, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. Neighborhood centers are concentrated on several blocks around one or two intersections. Mixed-use corridors extend along a linear corridor (e.g., South Congress Avenue), either continuously or linking smaller pockets of denser development or redevelopment. Neighborhood centers range in size between approximately 5,000-10,000 new people and 2,500-7,500 new jobs.

### Job Centers

Job centers consist mostly of office and industrial uses. Development can occur at a range of scales, depending on zoning and neighborhood plans. Job centers include major employers (e.g., IBM in north Austin) and industrial uses such as warehouses, offices, and manufacturing that are not compatible with residential areas. While these centers are currently best served by car, the Growth Concept Map increases public transit options (e.g., light rail, bus rapid transit) to shift the reliance away from the automobile.

### Open Space Network

The open space network includes existing and proposed open space (e.g., parks, greenways, nature preserves) as well as environmentally sensitive land (e.g., floodplains and steep slopes).

### High Capacity Transit and Transit Stops

High capacity transit and transit stops include the existing Capital MetroRail red line and stops and planned transit routes and stops. High capacity transit includes regional rail, commuter rail, urban rail, and bus rapid transit. Regular bus routes are not illustrated on the Growth Concept Map.

### Highways and Other Streets

Highways and other streets consist of existing roads, planned extensions, capacity improvements (e.g., additional travel lane), and complete streets improvements (e.g., wider sidewalks, bike lanes). SH-45 is the subject of continued dialogue in Austin and is shown as a dashed line on the Growth Concept Map. The segment of the project from South Loop 1 to FM1626 is currently in environmental assessment, which by federal law requires an examination of all alternatives, including not constructing the project ("no-build"). Including SH-45 on this map is not intended to take a position on which alternative is selected. If an alternative other than no-build is selected, this plan recommends designing it to be attractive and to minimize environmental impacts. In particular, if the project is built, it should be a grade-level parkway that is sensitive to the Edwards Aquifer.



Image

Image Caption



Image

Image Caption

### Redevelopment over the Edwards Aquifer

Five centers are located over the recharge or contributing zones of the South Edwards Aquifer or within water-supply watersheds and are designated on the Growth Concept Map with a solid green outline. Redevelopment on these centers should improve retention and water quality feeding into the aquifer or drinking water sources. These centers should also be carefully evaluated to fit within their infrastructure and environmental context. See also policy LUT 20: "Ensure that redevelopment in the Edwards Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones maintains the recharge of the aquifer."

### Other Development within City Limits

While new development will be directed to centers and corridors, development can happen in other areas within city limits and is subject to existing zoning and development regulations. Infill development can occur as redevelopment or alongside existing development and may include new residences built on vacant land next to existing houses or redevelopment of obsolete office or retail sites for townhouses or apartments. Housing types will vary with site location and zoning classification and may include a broad range of single-family houses, duplexes, secondary apartments, townhouses, and smaller-scaled apartments. New commercial, office, and institutional uses may also be located in areas outside of centers and corridors. Land within city limits may also remain as agricultural or large-lot single-family uses, remain vacant, or become part of the planned open space network. New development should be connected by transit (when feasible), sidewalks, and bicycle lanes to existing and planned development.

### Other Development within the Austin Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

The extraterritorial jurisdiction is the unincorporated land within five miles of Austin's present city boundary that is not within the extraterritorial jurisdiction of another city. It is the territory where Austin alone is authorized to annex land. The City of Austin regulates land subdivision and can plan for areas outside of city limits, but it does not control zoning. While new development will be directed to centers and corridors, new development can occur in the extraterritorial jurisdiction. New development should be connected by transit (when feasible), sidewalks, and bicycle lanes to existing and planned development.



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Fig. 4.1 - ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES





Fig. 4.3 - ROADWAY PROJECTS AND NETWORKS

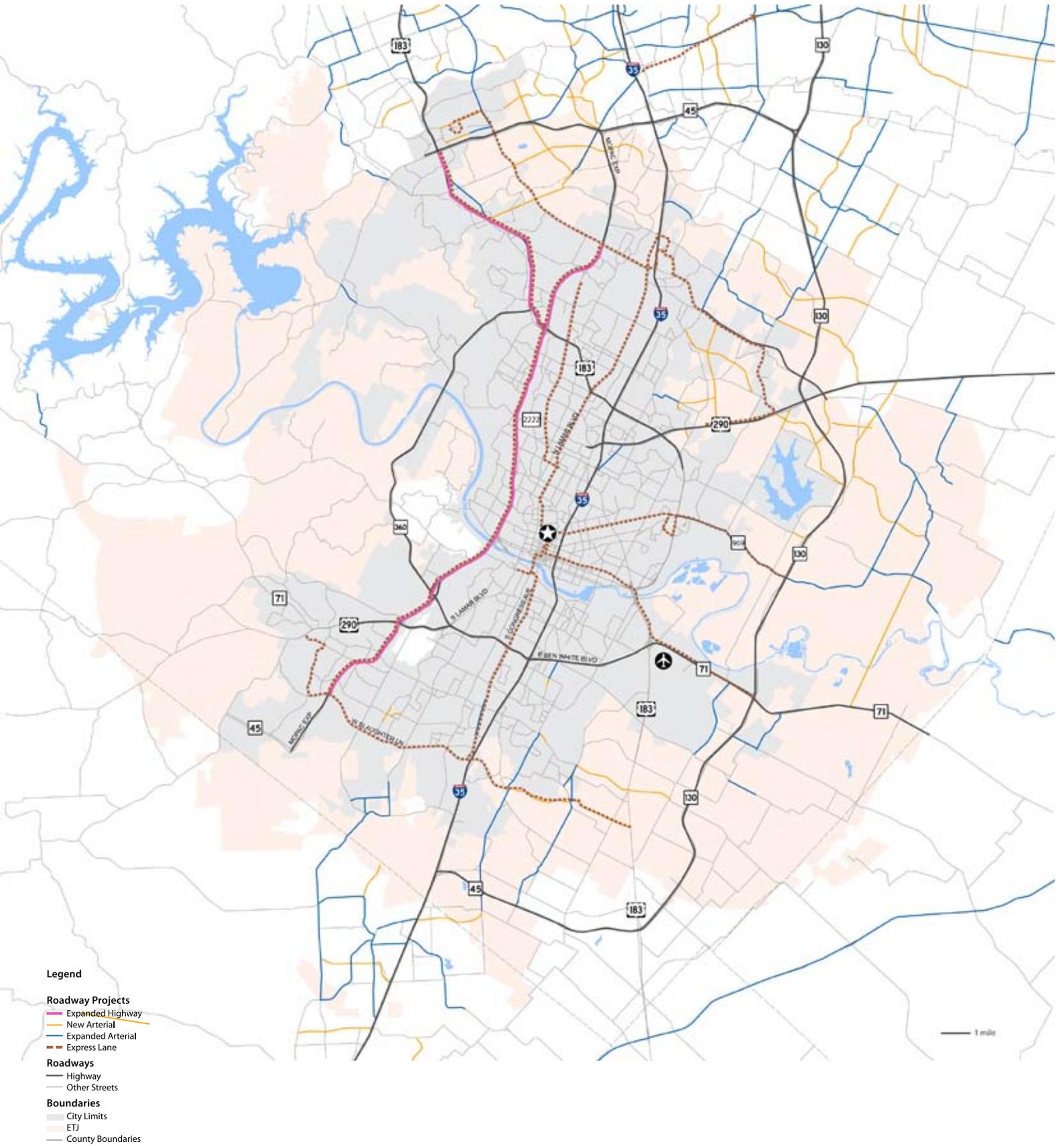
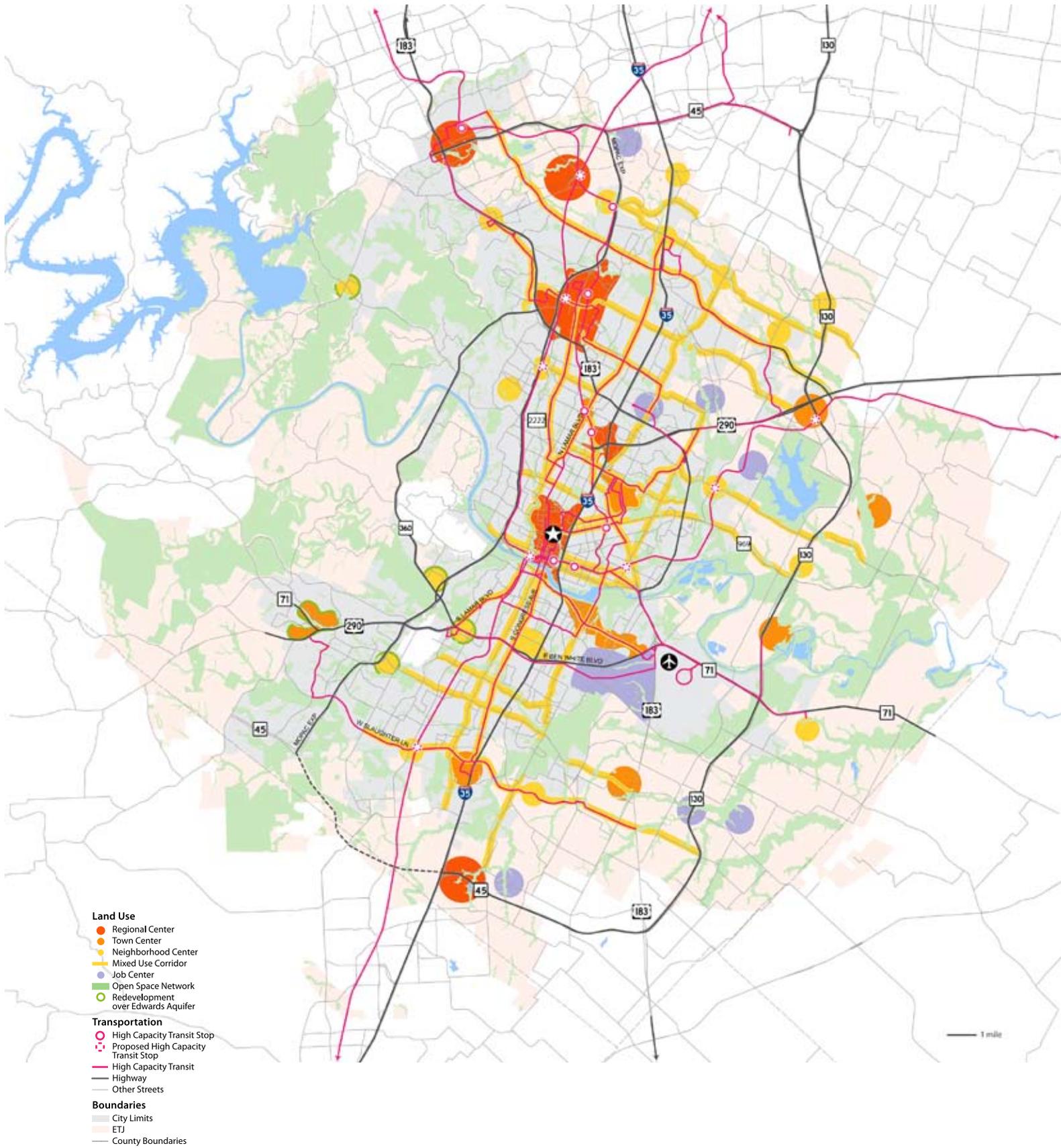


Fig. 4.4 - GROWTH CONCEPT MAP



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BUILDING BLOCKS

The Comprehensive Plan Building Blocks are the backbone of Imagine Austin. Each Building Block includes a summary of key issues and challenges for the future, policies to address those challenges, and selected best practices from other communities.<sup>1</sup> The Building Block policies were developed based on public input from community forums and surveys, as well as direction from the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force and City of Austin departments. They provide the basis for implementation through a series of priority programs and actions presented in Chapter 5. As Imagine Austin is implemented, policies and actions will be monitored on an annual basis to measure progress toward meeting our vision for Austin over the next several decades.

Many of Imagine Austin's policies cut across Building Blocks. This overlap creates synergies – or opportunities to make a greater impact by implementing one program or project that responds to several policies. The interrelationships are highlighted in blue with a reference that directs the reader to a similar policy from one of the other building blocks.

The synergies also play out in the core principles for action (introduced in Chapter 1) and the complete communities concept (introduced in Chapter 2). At the beginning of each Building Block, a summary matrix illustrates how the policies within that Building Block relate to Austin's vision for a complete community. A "solid" circle means that the policies directly implement a particular complete community element. While not every policy links to every complete community element, all of the policies work together to achieve Austin's vision.

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<sup>1</sup> More detail on existing trends and issues for each Building Block can be found in Chapter 2 and in the Austin Community Inventory <http://www.imagineaustin.net/inventory.htm>.

## LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

Complete Community Matrix

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

During the last half of the twentieth century Austin experienced significant growth. Between 1960 and 2010, the land area expanded by more than 400%, from almost 56 square miles to over 300 square miles. During the last decade, our land area increased by nearly 20%. Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction<sup>2</sup> represent an area of about 620 square miles. This is more than double the size of Chicago. Although a large percentage of Austin's land area is considered undeveloped (38%), much of this land is environmentally sensitive and less suitable for development.

The range of transportation options provided can profoundly effect the development of a city. A new high-speed road may spur low-density commercial and residential development, which does not support robust public transit. During the last half of the twentieth century, the extension of the city's freeway and highway system allowed development to spread north and south of Austin's city limits. However, further in Austin's past, our first suburb, the compact and walkable Hyde Park, was served by transit which allowed residents to live removed from the central city and commute to Downtown in the relative comfort of an electrified trolley. Recent Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency and City of Austin transit plans for rail and high-capacity bus lines seek to provide transportation options which will have a greater influence on where residents choose to live and work. A retooled transportation system could lead to the compact and walkable places envisioned in this plan.

<sup>2</sup> As defined by the Texas Local Government Code, Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction is the unincorporated area that is contiguous to and located within five miles of its corporate boundaries (city limits) and not within another city or another city's ETJ. The combined area within the city limits and the ETJ constitute the study area for the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

<sup>3</sup> See the All Systems Go Long-Range Transit Plan: <http://allsystems-go.capmetro.org/all-systems-go.shtml> and the Strategic Mobility Plan: <http://www.austinstrategicmobility.com/>

**KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:**

- Over the last century, Austin has experienced increasing population, urbanization, and outward expansion.
- Modest infill and redevelopment have occurred in older areas of Austin, though at a slower pace than lower-density suburban development.
- While Austin remains the largest jurisdiction in the five-county Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA, the City's share of population and employment is decreasing.
- Complex policies and regulations have greatly impacted land use and development in Austin.
- Areas located along a north-south axis of the City and in the North Burnet/Gateway planning area and Robinson Ranch in the northern portion of the City are identified as most likely to develop or redevelop.
- Regional cooperation is needed to more completely implement climate change solutions.

Historic resources in Austin include neighborhoods, buildings, and sites that reflect Austin's cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history. Designated historic resources include National Register properties and districts, Texas Historic Landmarks, Austin's Historic Landmark designation, and Local Historic Districts. In addition, Austin has many cultural resources that do not have formal historic designation (e.g., public art, cultural centers, museums, institutions, buildings, landscapes, and iconic businesses and buildings). Austin is also home to a number of historic museums and research libraries.

Austin has an active historic preservation program. The City of Austin Historic Preservation Office mission is to protect and enhance historic resources. Austin's Historic Landmark Commission meets monthly to review historic zoning cases, review some demolition permits, and maintains the Austin survey of cultural resources.

Austin is consistently rated a desirable community in which to live and work, with low unemployment and a wide variety of arts, cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities. Our city's increasing popularity creates challenges, but also a number of opportunities. We must create an efficient and sustainable land use pattern and transportation network that reduces low-density, automobile-oriented development and land consumption, protects sensitive environmental features, and enhances the character of our downtown, neighborhoods, and public spaces.

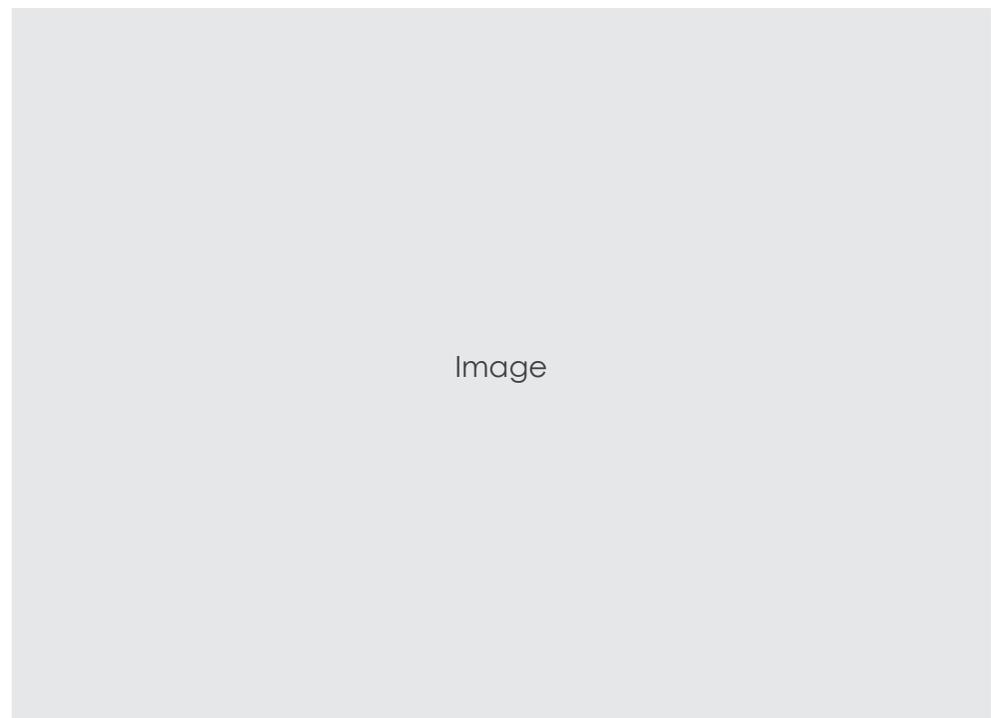


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## Key Challenges for the Future

- Counteracting the prevailing trend of sprawling development that consumes vacant land and natural resources, reduces air and water quality, and diminishes the natural environment.
- Preserving our natural resources and systems by limiting development in sensitive environmental areas, flood plains, creeks, and riparian areas and maintaining open space.
- Meet the housing and employment needs of a rapidly growing and demographically changing population in a sustainable manner.
- Coordinating land use, transportation, and economic development policies to address the inefficiency of infrastructure having to keep up with “green field” development and incentivize infill and redevelopment.
- Improving zoning and development standards in the City and the more limited regulations in place for the extraterritorial jurisdiction to improve clarity, increase certainty, and produce outcomes in alignment with the vision of Imagine Austin.
- Increasing coordination between municipalities to promote more efficient land use policies.
- Maintaining historic neighborhood character and preserving historic resources—especially in the urban core—as the city continues to grow.

## LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

**LUT 1.** Align land use and transportation planning and decision-making to achieve the Growth Concept Map. (See also WPD 1; EN 1)

**LUT 2.** Promote regional planning and increased coordination between municipalities to address major land use and transportation challenges. (See also CER 16; ECO 4)

**LUT 3.** Promote development in compact centers, communities, or along corridors that are connected by roads and transit, are designed to encourage walking and bicycling, and reduce housing and transportation costs. (See also H 4; HHS 3; ACC 9)

**LUT 4.** Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change (e.g., designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites). Recognize that different neighborhoods have different characteristics, and infill and new development should be sensitive to the predominant character of these neighborhoods. (See also N 2)

**LUT 5.** Create healthy and family-friendly communities through development that includes a mix of land uses and housing types and affords realistic opportunities for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel and provides both community gathering spaces and safe outdoor play areas for children. (See also H1; H 5; PB 4; HHS 3; CFE 11, CFE 2, H1)

## FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities

**FROM THE VISION STATEMENT -  
AUSTIN IS MOBILE AND  
INTERCONNECTED:**

Austin is accessible. Our transportation network provides a wide variety of options that are efficient, reliable, and cost-effective to serve the diverse needs and capabilities of our citizens. Public and private sectors work together to improve our air quality and reduce congestion in a collaborative and creative manner.

**BEST PRACTICE: REVISED LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE /  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Text

**LUT 6.** Ensure that lower income neighborhoods have a mix of local-serving retail, employment opportunities, and residential uses. (See also CER 13; H 4)

**LUT 7.** Encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities that place residential, work, and retail land uses in proximity to each other to maximize walking, bicycling, and transit opportunities. (See also H 7; CFE 1)

**LUT 8.** Develop land development regulations and standards that are clear and predictable and support the intent and goals of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. (See also ECO 14)

**LUT 9.** Direct housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development (TOD)<sup>4</sup> and at intersections of major roadways and preserve and integrate existing affordable housing where possible. (See also H 6)

**LUT 10.** Promote complete street design (e.g., traffic calming elements, street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access)<sup>5</sup> throughout Austin, considering the safety needs of people of all ages and abilities.

**LUT 11.** Achieve the goals of area transit plans through effective planning, sufficient funding, and continued partnerships between the City of Austin, Capital Metro, and other area transportation providers.

**LUT 12.** Coordinate with area school districts in the placement of schools and facilities. (See also ECO 10; ECO 11; CFE 7)

**LUT 13.** Promote safer routes to schools for students of all ages. (See also CFE 15)

**LUT 14.** Incorporate provisions for bicycles and pedestrians into all roads (e.g., free-way/toll roads, arterial roadways, etc.), and to and from transit stations and stops, and major activity centers. (See also CER 10; N 5)

**LUT 15.** Educate the public on the long-range need for commitment to a community fully served by a range of transportation modes and the benefits of each mode. (See also CER 10)

**LUT 16.** Develop intermediate transit solutions that allow the City to reach the ultimate goal of a complete transit network over the long term. (See also CER 10)

**LUT 17.** Continue efforts to implement future intercity rail and High Speed Rail in the Austin region. (See also ECO 17)

**LUT 18.** Reduce traffic congestion and encourage alternative transportation modes (e.g., using Transportation Demand Management approaches). (See also ECO 17)

<sup>4</sup> Transit-Oriented Development is defined by the Federal Transit Administration as compact, mixed-use development within walking distance of public transportation.

<sup>5</sup> Roads that are designed to safely accommodate necessary street functions for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit riders.

**LUT 19.** Locate industry, warehousing, logistics, manufacturing, and other freight-intensive uses in proximity to adequate transportation infrastructure. (See also ECO 17)

**LUT 20.** Ensure that redevelopment in the Edwards Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones maintains the recharge of the aquifer. (See also CER 2)

**LUT 21.** Protect Austin's natural resources and environmental systems by limiting land use and transportation development in sensitive environmental areas and preserving new areas of open space. (See also RO 6)

**LUT 22.** Integrate a citywide/regional green infrastructure (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.) and the trail system into the urban environment and the transportation network. (See also RO 8)

**LUT 23.** Direct hazardous materials/cargo that are being transported through Austin away from heavily populated or environmental sensitive areas. (See also CER 10; ECO 17)

**LUT 24.** Develop a comprehensive network of evacuation routes for all areas of Austin.

**LUT 25.** Reduce noise pollution from transportation, construction, and other sources.

**LUT 26.** Decrease light pollution from apartments and single-family houses, signage, commercial buildings, parking lot lights, and street lights.

### BEST PRACTICE: COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES

In the US, 28 percent of all trips are less than a mile. While many people are willing to walk or bike short distances, there are few places where it is safe and enjoyable. Complete streets seek to remedy this situation by making it safe and inviting for all users to share public roads. Complete streets should accommodate, but also encourages people to use alternative modes of transportation.

The complete street movement is growing as cities and states across the nation adopt policies and design guidelines. The National Complete Street Coalition provides resources including model state legislation. A policy must routinely "design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation." Cities and states are adopting legislation and design guidelines for streets. There is no one-size fits all design, each street will vary based on the local context and need. In this Portland, Oregon image, buses, cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians are safely accommodated.

Reference: National Complete Street Coalition; Complete Streets in NJ, Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, August 2010. [www.njbikeped.org](http://www.njbikeped.org); National Complete Streets Coalition; Image: Kimley-Horn Associates.

"The city should continue to develop more pedestrian and biker, and public transportation-reliant infrastructure systems. Our over-reliance on highways and interstates makes entire swathes of the city inaccessible to those who don't have cars."

Community Forum #1 Participant



**BEST PRACTICE: URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES | ROANOKE RESIDENTIAL PATTERN BOOK, ROANOKE, VA**

In 2008, Roanoke, Virginia adopted a residential pattern book to preserve and enhance the character and quality of its residential neighborhoods. It serves as an aid for new construction and renovation of existing buildings. The pattern book provides a dictionary of architectural styles found in different neighborhoods (e.g., downtown, suburban areas) and illustrates the characteristics of each housing type. Recommendations for appropriate renovations, materials, paint colors, new construction and additions, landscape, and "green buildings" practices that will improve and maintain the character of each neighborhood are included. Reference: <http://www.roanokeva.gov/>

**Maintaining Character  
Defining Features**



**URBAN DESIGN POLICIES**

**UD 1.** Develop accessible community gathering places (e.g., plazas, parks, farmers' markets, sidewalks, and streets) in all parts of Austin, especially in the Downtown, future TODs, in denser, mixed-use communities, and other redevelopment areas, that encourage interaction and provide places for people to visit and relax. (See also RO 1)

**UD 2.** Protect and enhance the unique qualities of Austin's treasured public spaces and places such as parks, plazas, and streetscapes; and, where needed, enrich those areas lacking distinctive visual character or where the character has faded. (See also N 4, HP 2)

**UD 3.** Define the community's goals for new public and private developments using principles and design guidelines that capture the distinctive, diverse local character of Austin. (See also ACC 17)

**UD 4.** Assure that new development is walkable and bikable and preserves the positive characteristics of existing pedestrian-friendly environments. (See also N 1, RO 3)

**UD 5.** Apply high standards of urban design to ensure that "complete streets" are safe and accessible for all users. Encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation that are sensitive to the demands of the Central Texas climate.

**UD 6.** Integrate green infrastructure elements such as the urban forest, green buildings, and green streets into the urban design of the City through "green" development practices and regulations. (See also CER 3; CER 4, CER 11)

**UD 7.** Infuse public art into Austin's urban fabric (e.g., streetscapes, parks, plazas). (See also RO 5; ACC 16)

**UD 8.** Transform all major streets into vibrant, multi-functional, pedestrian-friendly corridors.

**"We need more 'live here, work here' multi-use development resulting in less vehicular traffic, a greater sense of community, and parks/ped-friendly facilities."**

Community Forum #1 Participant

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICIES

**HP 1.** Promote historic and heritage-based tourism and cultural events.

**HP 2.** Preserve and interpret historic resources (those objects, buildings, structures, sites, places, or districts with historic, cultural, or aesthetic significance) in Austin for residents and visitors.

**HP 3.** Maintain and update inventories of historic resources, including locally significant historic properties not listed on national or state registries, archeological sites, etc.

**HP 4.** Increase opportunities for historic and cultural learning at the City's public libraries.

**HP 5.** Protect historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the City. (See also UD 2; HP 2; HP 3; HP 5)

**HP 6.** Retain the character of National Register and local Historic Districts and ensure that development and redevelopment is compatible with historic resources and character.

**HP 7.** Continue to protect and enhance important view corridors (e.g., Capitol Overlay District, Lady Bird Lake, and public waterfronts).

**HP 8.** Preserve and restore historic parks and recreational areas.

### BEST PRACTICE: HISTORIC REHABILITATION BUILDING CODES: NEW JERSEY REHABILITATION SUBCODE | STATE OF NEW JERSEY

In many states, building codes are designed solely for new construction leading to expensive retrofits for existing buildings. In an effort to reduce barriers to building renovation and adaptive reuse, New Jersey adopted a "Rehab Code" in 1999. The code requires structural and safety regulations that work with an existing building's height, area, and fire resistance ratings. In the first year of implementation, the amount of money dedicated to renovation in New Jersey increased by 41%. The code has resulted in reduced costs for building owners and increased historic preservation efforts in many older cities across the state. Reference and Image: <http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/codes/offices/rehab.html>

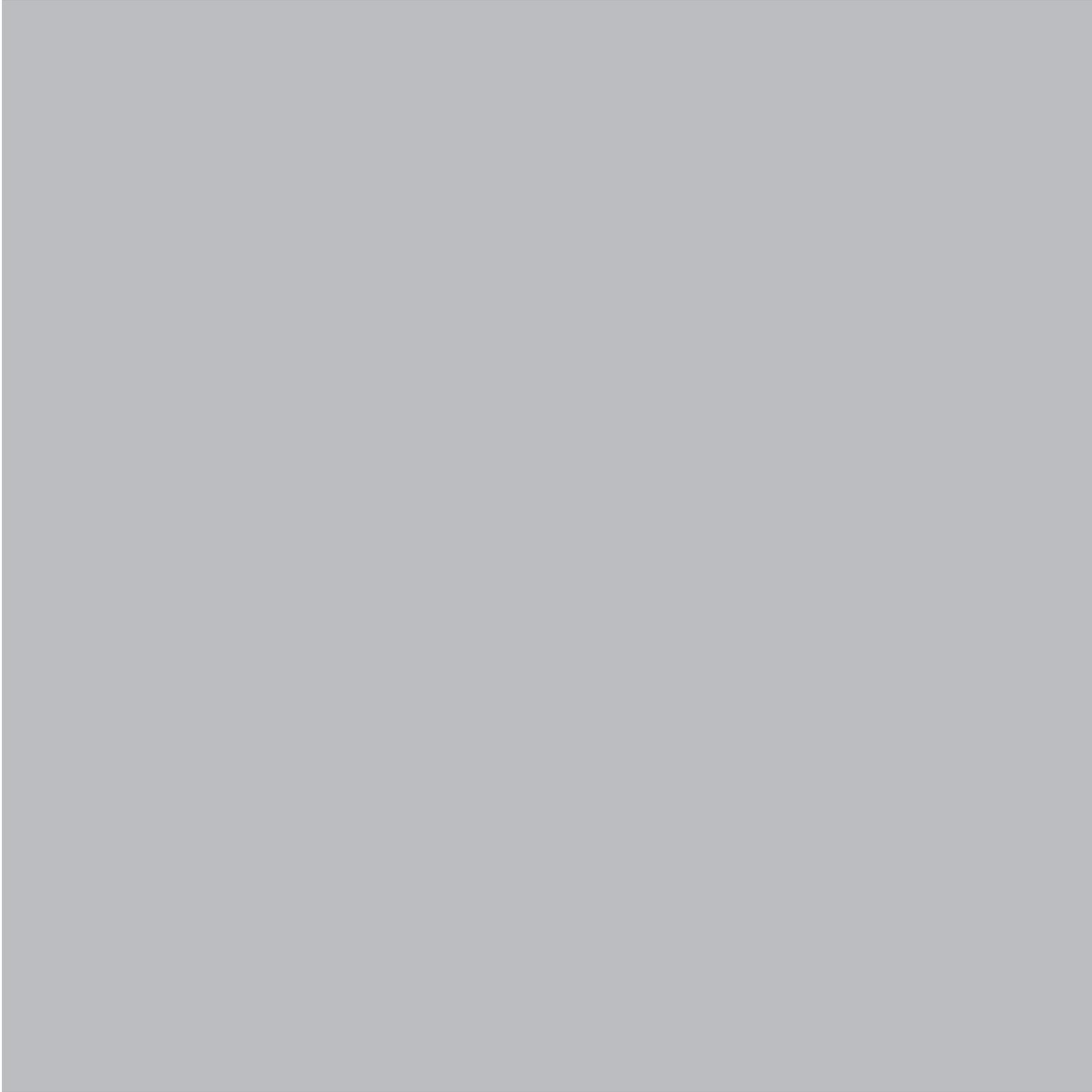


Image Caption





Fig. 4.6 - HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES





## HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Complete Community Matrix

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

Austin is a city of diverse neighborhoods that contribute to our community's character and quality of life. While these neighborhoods have a mix of housing types, single-family housing is the most common. The city has lower rates of homeownership than most other Texas cities. In addition, housing affordability is a major issue in Austin. Over the last ten years, median housing costs have risen by 85 percent, while household incomes have remained stagnant or declined. Centrally located neighborhoods in east and south Austin have experienced reinvestment that has also led to rising housing costs.

National demographic trends and housing preferences could significantly impact future housing and services in Austin. An increasing number of "Generation Y", also known as "Millennials" (those born between 1980 and 1995) will soon be entering the housing market. This demographic group has expressed a desire for more urban lifestyles. In addition, the growing number of "Baby Boomers" (born between 1946 and 1964) retiring and downsizing their homes will also affect housing and social service needs.

In 1997, the City initiated the neighborhood planning program to protect, enhance, and ensure the stability of neighborhoods—mostly located in the urban core. Currently, 48 neighborhood planning areas have completed the planning process and have adopted neighborhood plans (see Appendix C). Challenges and opportunities unique to individual neighborhoods are met through the neighborhood planning process.

Austin must provide a range of energy and resource-efficient housing options and prices in all parts of the City to sustainably meet the needs of all segments of our diverse population. In addition, we need to sustain distinct, stable, and attractive neighborhoods that preserve and reinforce the livability, character, and special sense of place in Austin.

### FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

## KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Austin's population is projected to almost double over the next 30 years requiring new and redeveloped housing to accommodate the City's growing population.
- Austin still has strong patterns of racial, ethnic, and income segregation
- Median housing and transportation costs are higher in Austin than most Texas cities.
- As the housing market has become more expensive, the location of affordable housing units has shifted to increasingly distant suburban areas, leading to more expensive transportation costs.
- Austin is a majority renter city, due in large part, to the high number of college students, recent graduates, and an overall younger population that has a need for affordable rental units.
- Higher housing costs and slower-growing incomes may prompt more families to rent rather than purchase a home.
- High demand for rental units translates into demand for housing types other than single-family detached.
- Infill development may be used to meet the growing demand for higher-density, closer-in affordable housing.

## Key Challenges for the Future

- Fostering mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods with a range of housing choices, community services, facilities, and amenities, in which Austinites can afford to live.
- Maintaining the unique and diverse personality of Austin's neighborhoods, while meeting the market demands for close-in housing.
- Making existing automobile-oriented neighborhoods more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
- Developing regulations that create better and context-specific transitions between more intense housing, commercial and office uses, and mixed-use development and adjacent, established neighborhoods.
- Discouraging the loss of affordable housing in working-class neighborhoods.
- Increasing the diversity of housing choices to reflect the needs of traditional and non-traditional households.



Image

Image Caption

## HOUSING POLICIES

**H 1.** Distribute a variety of housing types throughout the City to expand the choices available to meet the financial and lifestyle needs of Austin's diverse population. (See also LUT 5; CFE 2)

**H 2.** Expand the availability of affordable housing throughout Austin by preserving existing affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons.

**H 3.** Increase the availability of affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons, through new and innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., public/private partnerships). (See also HHS 5; CFE 3; ACC 10)

**H 4.** Connect housing to jobs, child care, schools, retail, and other amenities and services needed on a daily basis, e.g.:

- Direct housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development.
- Coordinate in planning for housing near public transportation networks and employment centers to reduce household transportation costs and vehicle miles traveled. (See also LUT 3; LUT 6)

**H 5.** Promote a diversity of land uses throughout Austin to allow a variety of housing types ranging from permanent supportive housing to rental and ownership opportunities for singles, families with and without children, seniors, and person with disabilities. (See also LUT 5)

**H 6.** Address accessibility issues and other housing barriers to persons with disabilities or special needs. (See also LUT 9)

**H 7.** Reuse former brownfields, greyfields (previously developed properties such as strip centers or malls that are not contaminated) and vacant building sites to reduce negative impacts of vacancy and provide new mixed-use and/or housing options. (See also LUT 7)

**H 8.** Encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes. (See also CER 9; WPD 9; EN 2)

**H 9.** Renovate the existing housing stock to reduce utility and maintenance costs for owners and occupants.

### BEST PRACTICE: PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR TRANSIT STATIONS | DENVER, COLORADO

Denver is in the process of a major transit expansion that will usher in new light rail, bus rapid transit, and transit stations. Housing and transportation costs are high in the region and residents are willing to pay more to live close to transit stations, resulting in higher rents and home values. To specifically combat rising home prices near transit, the City of Denver is working with public/private partners to create a TOD Fund with a goal of building or preserving more than 1,000 affordable units. In a recent success, the redevelopment of South Lincoln Homes (located across from an existing light rail station) will triple the number of affordable units on site and add amenities for residents.

*(Reference: Reconnecting America: Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit, Enterprise, 2010; Image: Denver Housing Authority).*





**BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY LAND TRUST | WASHINGTON D.C.**

A Community Land Trust is a private nonprofit corporation created to acquire and hold land for the benefit of a community and provide secure affordable access to land and housing for community residents.

The New Columbia Community Land Trust, Inc. is a community-based land acquisition, housing development and community education organization. The Land Trust serves as housing development coordinator/consultant to tenant groups seeking to exercise their “first-right-to-purchase” single-family or multi-family buildings when their landlords put them up for sale. In addition to a ground lease, the Land Trust provides tenant organization support, project feasibility, financial packaging and loan applications, architect and contractor selection, construction monitoring, and permanent financing and close-out.

Reference: <http://www.cdsc.org/ncclt/>

## NEIGHBORHOOD POLICIES

**N 1.** Create complete neighborhoods across Austin with a mix of housing types and land uses, affordable housing and transportation options, and access to schools, retail, employment, community services, and parks and recreation options. (See also UD 4; RO 3)

**N 2.** Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change and ensuring context sensitive infill (e.g., designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites).

**N 3.** Identify and assess the infrastructure needs of older neighborhoods and provide for improvements needed to maintain their sustainability.

**N 4.** Strengthen Austin's neighborhoods by connecting to other neighborhoods, quality schools, parks, and other community-serving uses that are accessible by transit, walking, and bicycling. (See also LUT 14)

**N 5.** Strengthen planning processes by recognizing that the Comprehensive Plan and small-area plans (e.g., neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and station area plans) need to respect, inform, and draw from each other.

In 2039, I would like Austin to be “a city with many small neighborhoods, each having a distinct, preserved character, that are affordable.”

Community Forum #1 Participant

I would like to see “self sufficient neighborhood sustainability: mixed use throughout neighborhoods (walk to food/produce, daily needs, parks, everywhere).”

Community Forum #1 Participant

Image



## ECONOMY

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

Austin's economy has grown substantially over the last twenty years. Between 1990 and 2010 the city's labor force increased by over 50 percent – more than twice the national rate during the same time period. Despite strong growth in population, Austin has maintained relatively low levels of unemployment as a result of strong business and job creation. Business formation has been particularly strong over the last decade, in part due to the City's entrepreneurial spirit.

Government, technology, medical, and institutional uses such as higher education and government form the base of Austin's economy. In recent years, the proportion of health care, management, arts, entertainment, and food service jobs have increased. In addition, Austin's technology sector has diversified and job growth is expected in high-tech computer and software employment, medical and life sciences, clean energy, creative and technology industries, data centers, and professional services. The percentage of workers with college degrees continues to rise and is significantly higher than the rate for Texas as a whole.

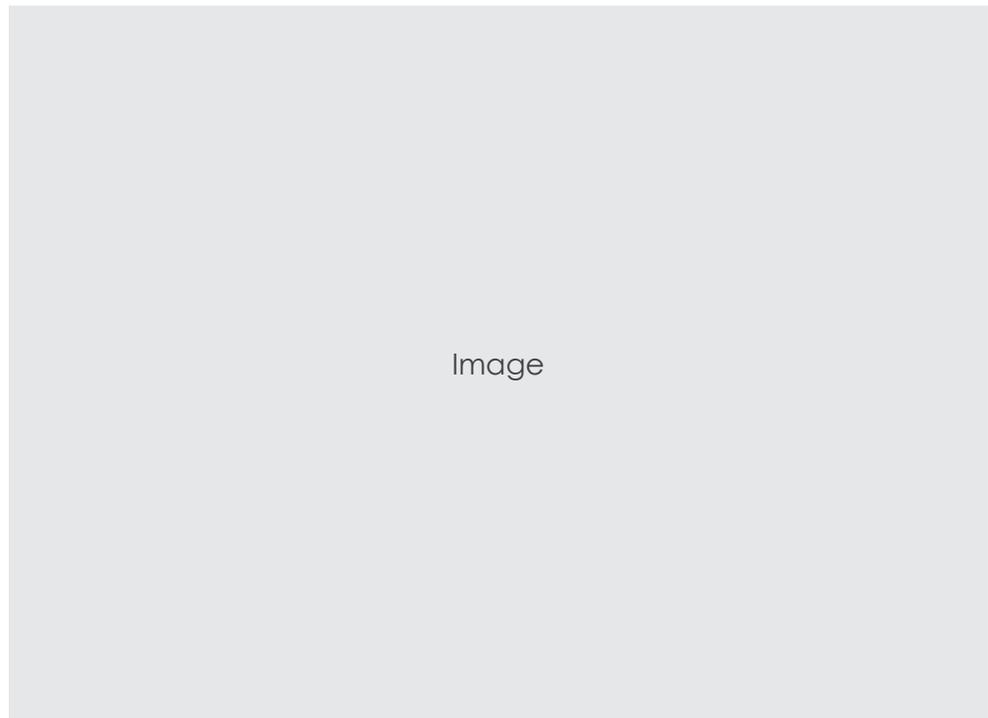
As described in core principles for action (Chapter 1), Austin must harness its strong economy to expand opportunity and social equity to all residents. The city must build a vibrant, resilient, and diverse economy that celebrates innovation and creativity; provides equitable opportunities for people; and protects the environment. Sustainability includes not only environmental stewardship and social equity, but also economic prosperity for Austin residents and businesses.

## KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Between 1990 and 2010, Austin's labor force increased by over 50 percent – more than twice the national rate during the same time period.
- New retail and office development in surrounding communities is reducing Austin's share of those markets.
- Austin's highly-educated workforce makes the city attractive to high-growth companies seeking to relocate or establish operations in the greater Austin area.
- Austin continues to create professional and skilled service jobs. However, access to these jobs is limited for many minority groups and individuals with lower educational attainment.
- Austin's creative class workers are a key to continued growth.
- Austin's lower wages (relative to other major U.S. cities) creates an impediment to attracting talented workers.
- Entrepreneurship and the ability of existing businesses to adapt to new technologies will continue to drive Austin's economy.

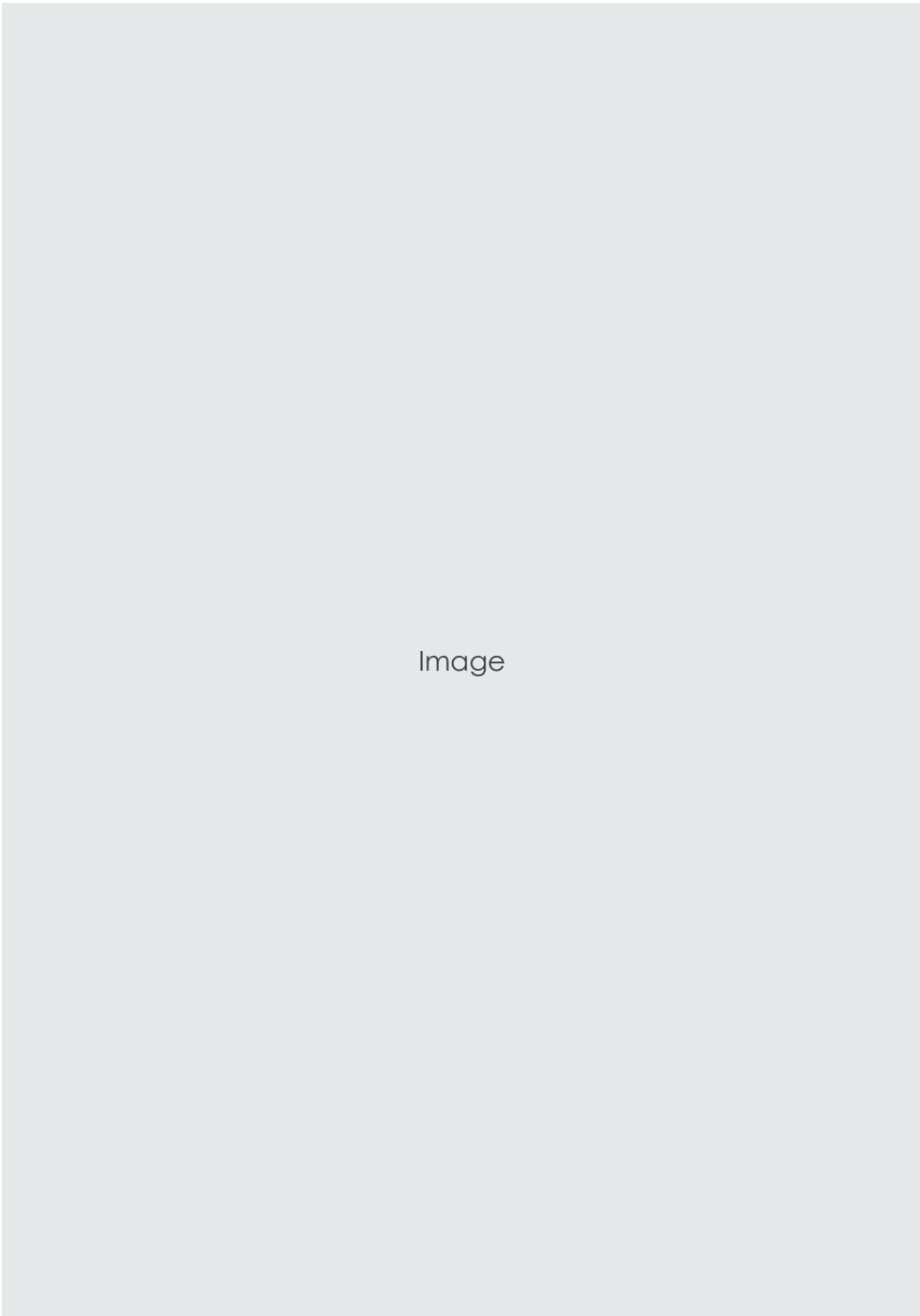
## KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Sustaining Austin's position as the economic hub of the Central Texas region.
- Ensuring that new employment growth can be accommodated in mixed-use centers and areas well-served by transit.
- Attracting and developing experienced, higher-level talent in high-growth industries.
- Working with area educational institutions and business leaders to expand job training opportunities in areas such as business management, entrepreneurship, and health services to meet expected industry demand.
- Creating well-paid jobs in the clean energy industry particularly in solar manufacturing and installation, energy services companies, and green building.
- Reducing the number of obstacles facing creative industries and small creative businesses (e.g., physical space for industry and business incubation, education and training, health care and housing options, and affordable rents for business owners).
- Preserving small businesses that may be negatively impacted by new development (e.g., businesses in east Austin).



Image

Image Caption



Image

Image Caption

**FROM THE VISION STATEMENT -  
AUSTIN IS PROSPEROUS:**

Austin's prosperity exists because of the overall health, vitality, and sustainability of the city as a whole-including the skills, hard work, and qualities of our citizens, the stewardship of our natural resources, and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions. Development carefully balances the needs of differing land uses with improved transportation to ensure that growth is both fiscally sound and environmentally sustainable.

In 2039, “my grandchildren can remain in Austin with good, well paying jobs.”

Community Forum #1 Participant

**BEST PRACTICE: TARGETED  
BUSINESS GROWTH | ASHEVILLE, NORTH  
CAROLINA**

Greater Asheville, NC established AshevilleHUB as a means to diversify its economy and introduce a new source of employment by focusing attention on the region's economic needs and assets.

Asheville capitalized on its strengths in government, business, academia, and the arts to target climate studies and the growing weather prediction industry (e.g., global information systems experts, meteorologists, air quality technicians, botanists, digital media specialists). As a result of this initiative, Asheville is now home to the National Climatic Data Center, the National Environmental Modeling and Analysis Center and the Renaissance Computing Institute, the U.S. Forest Service's Southern Research Station, and the Air Force Combat Climatology Center.

In addition to the quality jobs emerging from the climate initiative, the industry has invested in telecommunications infrastructure necessary to process data emanating from high speed satellite feeds securely and reliably.

Reference:<http://www.ashevillehub.com/>

## ECONOMIC POLICIES

**ECO 1.** Promote and measure business entrepreneurship, innovation and a culture of creativity.

**ECO 2.** Implement policies that create, nurture, and retain small businesses.

**ECO 3.** Build on the Austin metropolitan area's position as a leader in global trade.

**ECO 4.** Continue to strengthen partnerships among Chambers of Commerce, state and local governments, and major employers and leverage incentives to attract and retain major employers. (See also ECO 4; CER 18)

**ECO 5.** Enhance Austin's draw as a premier national and international tourist destination by strengthening cultural (arts, music, film) and entertainment offerings, enhancing natural resources, and expanding the availability of family-friendly events and venues. (See also ACC 1; ACC 7; HP 1)

**ECO 6.** Encourage Austin's creative economy and culture through flexible, place-based policies (those directed at specific geographic areas) as well as policies directed toward virtual reality and digital media. (See also ACC 15)



Image

Image Caption

**ECO 7.** Promote Downtown as the premier business district in the region and expand the presence of global finance and trade.

**ECO 8.** Invest in and expand major cultural facilities in Austin's Downtown.

**ECO 9.** Spur medical and life science technology investments by establishing a medical school.

**ECO 10.** Cluster or co-locate educational facilities (e.g., high schools, vocational schools, colleges or universities) near employment centers (e.g., healthcare facilities, biotech and green technologies, etc.) to better connect students to potential employment opportunities. (See also LUT 12; CFE 5; CFE 7)

**ECO 11.** Expand the educational offerings and establish cooperative partnerships between Austin Community College, the University of Texas, and other institutions of higher learning to support target industries' education and training requirements. (See also LUT 12; CFE 5; CFE 7)

**ECO 12.** Engage major employers and institutions of higher education to provide leadership in meeting the needs of chronic unemployed and underemployed residents, such as people with disabilities, and former clients of the criminal justice or foster care systems.

**ECO 13.** Promote "start-up districts" where new businesses benefit from locating near transportation infrastructure, services, suppliers, mentors, and affordable support facilities.

**ECO 14.** Encourage and support innovation through flexible city rules, adaptive reuse of buildings, and up-to-date infrastructure so that creativity thrives in actual as well as virtual reality and digital media. (See also LUT 8)

**ECO 15.** Improve regional transportation planning and financing for infrastructure (e.g., air, rail, and roads) in order to ensure the reliable movement of goods and people.

**ECO 16.** Invest in sustainable, affordable utility sources (communications, power, water, wastewater) to meet the needs of increasing population and employment bases. (See also EN 1; EN 4)

**ECO 17.** Expand connectivity within the Texas Triangle (Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston) in order to facilitate movement of ideas, goods, and people for economic prosperity. (See also LUT 17; LUT 18; LUT 19; LUT 23)

**"By promoting local business and encouraging innovation within the city we should strive to remain a highly desirable city."**

Community Forum #1 Participant

**BEST PRACTICE: SMALL BUSINESS / START-UP INCUBATOR | SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO**

The Santa Fe Business Incubator is a not-for-profit economic development organization and an entrepreneurial leader that provides a supportive environment for growing a business in a wide range of industries. It offers office, lab and light manufacturing space with affordable short-term leases, plus onsite business workshops and seminars, and access to the skill and support of its professional staff and experienced business advisors from the community.

Client companies receive exposure to best practices and enhanced financial networks, leading to faster growth and greater business success. Participants benefit from shared services and facilities, minimizing overhead costs and allowing valuable start-up capital to be used for expansion. Since the Santa Fe Business Incubator opened its doors in 1997, it has helped launch and grow over 70 businesses. Reference and image: <http://www.sfbincubator.com/>





## CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT

Complete Community Matrix

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

Austin is “a city that is environmentally healthy, that protects and acknowledges its land’s limits.”

CFS #1 Participant

Austin’s abundant environmental resources, including land, water, plant life, and air quality, perform essential functions and provide vital benefits to the City and its residents. Austin is located along the Colorado River, where it crosses the Balcones Escarpment, an area notable for its diversity of terrain, soils, habitats, plants, and animals. Austin and the region are known for the Colorado River and Highland Lakes system (including Lake Travis, Bull Creek, Barton Creek, Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, Walnut Creek, and McKinney Falls). In addition, Barton Springs, the fourth largest spring in Texas, discharges an average of 27 million gallons of water a day from the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer. The springs feed Barton Springs Pool, one of the most popular and visited natural attractions in Central Texas.

As one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S., a major challenge facing Austin and Central Texas is the protection of the region’s environmental resources, particularly watersheds, waterways, water supply, air quality, open space, and tree canopy. As development continues to occur in or near environmentally sensitive areas, ongoing preservation and conservation efforts will be required.

Austin must conserve, protect, and support the City’s natural resource systems. This includes protecting our land, water, and air, and developing and adopting better practices for long-term stewardship of Austin’s environment.

### FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE:

Austin is a green city. We are environmentally aware and ensure the long-term health and quality of our community through responsible resource use as citizens at the local, regional, and global level. Growth and infrastructure systems are well-managed to respect the limitations of our natural resources.

## KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- The Colorado River provides the majority of Austin's water supply. The City has contracts to meet demand at least through 2050.
- The Edwards Aquifer, one of the most important and sensitive aquifers in Texas, feeds a number of springs in Austin, including Barton Springs and its pool. The aquifer underlies approximately 42 percent of the city's land area.
- Austin has a Drinking Water Protection Zones ordinance for watersheds that drain to Lake Travis, Lake Austin, and Barton Springs.
- Central Texas is in compliance with all federal air quality standards. However, the region is in danger of exceeding ground-level ozone due to stricter federal standards.
- Farmland in Travis County decreased by 12 percent from 2002-2007 due to urbanization and farmland being taken out of production.
- In 2006, Austin's tree canopy cover was estimated at 30 percent of its total land area.
- The City is engaged in several programs to preserve sensitive lands, including purchasing land for water quality protection.
- In 2007, the City passed the Austin Climate Protection Plan resolution, and has completed a greenhouse gas inventory and update.
- Regional cooperation is needed to more completely implement climate change solutions.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Protecting Austin's watersheds, waterways, and water supply within Central Texas, one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S.
- Reducing the impact of development in environmentally sensitive watershed areas (e.g., Barton Springs and the Edwards Aquifer).
- Improving regional planning and coordination to provide adequate water-related infrastructure and protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Reducing the impact of development on watersheds, mostly located east of IH 35, that are prone to erosion and that are often characterized with large flood plains.
- Monitoring and increase Austin's tree canopy as urbanization occurs.
- Slowing the rate of farmland loss and protecting valuable agricultural soils from development.
- Balancing growth and protection of natural resources (e.g., natural areas, resources, air, water, soil, mature trees) to create a future that is sustainable.
- Preserving land with sensitive environmental features and plant and animal habitat from development.

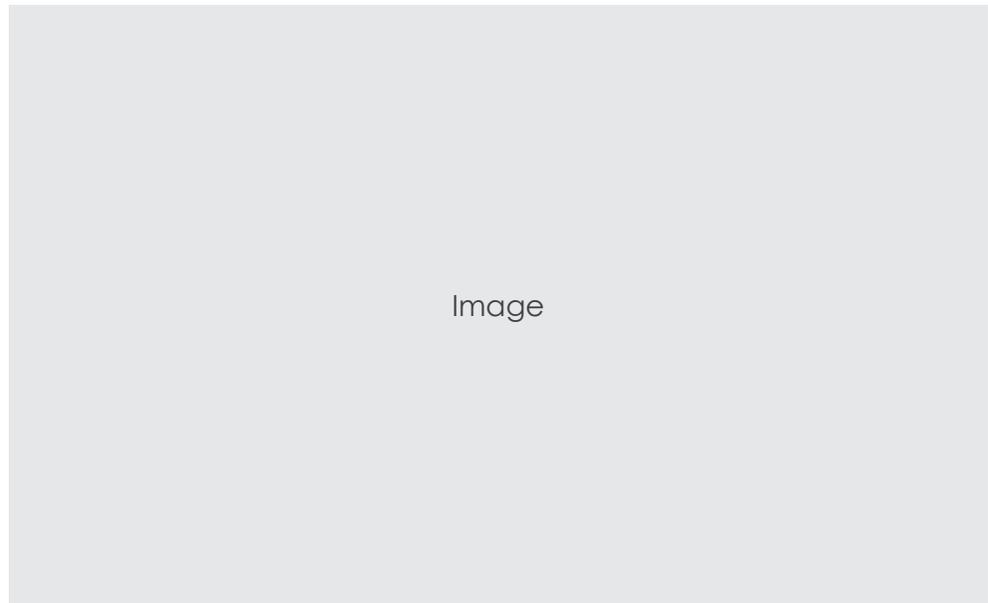


Image Caption

## CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

**CER 1.** Permanently preserve areas of the greatest environmental and agricultural value.

**CER 2.** Conserve Austin's natural resources systems by limiting development in sensitive environmental areas (e.g., Edwards Aquifer and its contributing and recharge zones; endangered species habitat). (See also H6; RO 6; HP 7; HP 8)

**CER 3.** Expand the city's green infrastructure network (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.). (See also UD 6; RO 8)

**CER 4.** Maintain and increase Austin's urban forest as a key component of the green infrastructure network. (See also UD 6)

**CER 5.** Expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for aquifer protection, stream/water quality protection, wildlife habitat conservation, as well as sustainable agriculture.

**CER 6.** Enhance the protection of creeks and flood plains to preserve environmentally and other sensitive areas and improve the quality of water entering the Colorado River through regional planning and improved coordination. (See also WPD 6; WPD 7; WPD 8; WPD 10; WPD 11; WPD 13)

**CER 7.** Protect and improve the water quality of the City's creeks, lakes, and aquifers for use and the support of aquatic life. (See also WPD 8; WPD 10; WPD 11; WPD 13; WPD 14)

### BEST PRACTICE: URBAN FORESTRY | ITHACA, NEW YORK

Ithaca adopted a master plan that envisions an improved urban forest by 2015 through the use of best practice forestry techniques, research in bare-root tree planting to lower costs, and volunteers to help maintain and improve the urban forest.

Ithaca Tree Works is a volunteer-based bare root tree planting initiative involving a cooperative effort between Cornell University's Urban Horticulture Institute and the City of Ithaca Parks and Forestry department. Ithaca's volunteer Citizen Pruner program is a unique partnership between the City, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Cornell University. Volunteers assist the City Forester with maintaining public trees, shrubs, and other landscape beautification projects.

Reference and image: <http://ithaca.gov/office.com/>



Image Caption



**BEST PRACTICE: URBAN  
AGRICULTURE GREENSGROW  
FARMS | PHILADELPHIA,  
PENNSYLVANIA**

Greensgrow Farms is located in Philadelphia's New Kensington neighborhood on a previously vacant lot. In the summer of 1998, the owners transformed the former galvanized steel plant and Environmental Protection Agency clean-up site into a three-quarter-acre specialty hydroponic lettuce farm. The business now produces a range of vegetables and flowers and supports a retail center for organic food and live plants. The business is profitable and provides employment opportunities for six seasonal employees and five full-time employees.

Reference and image: [www.greengrow.org](http://www.greengrow.org)



**CER 8.** Improve the urban environment by fostering safe public uses of waterways (e.g., for public recreation that maintains the natural and traditional character of the floodplain). (See also RO 7)

**CER 9.** Reduce the carbon footprint of the City and its residents by implementing Austin's Climate Protection Plan and develop strategies to adapt to the projected impacts of climate change. (See also H 6; EN 2; EN 3; EN 4; PB 5)

**CER 10.** Improve the air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from vehicle use, traffic and congestion, industrial sources, and waste. (See also LUT 14; LUT 15; LUT 16; LUT 23; ECO 15; RO 3; HHS 3; CFE 15)

**CER 11.** Integrate development with the natural environment through green building/site planning practices (e.g., tree preservation, reduced impervious coverage) and regulations. Ensure new development provides necessary and adequate infrastructure improvements. (See also UD 6; EN 2; EN 3; EN 4)

**CER 12.** Adopt innovative programs, practices, and technologies to increase environmental quality and sustainability through the conservation of natural resources. (See also WPD 9)

**CER 13.** Incentivize, develop, and expand the market for local and sustainable food production (e.g., farming, ranching, food processing). (See also HHS 6; HHS 7)

**CER 14.** Establish policies that consider the benefits provided by natural ecosystems, such as ecological processes or functions (e.g., wetlands, riparian areas) having value to individuals or society.

**CER 15.** Reduce the overall disposal of solid waste and increase reuse/recycling to conserve environmental resources. (See also SW 1; SW 2; SW 3; SW 5; SW 6)

**CER 16.** Expand and improve regional collaboration and coordination in preserving Central Texas' natural environment. (See also LUT 2)

“The City in 2039 has made choices that protect the water (aquifer) trees, food, natural resources, land development and the City is living within its means (GREEN!!) in regards to nonrenewable & renewable resources and safeguards sensitive areas for infrastructure or building...”

CFS #1 Participant

Image



## CITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

City facilities and services include the infrastructure systems and services that underlie day-to-day life in Austin. They create and convey many of the necessities of modern life (e.g., electricity, solid waste collection, and drinking water) and help define and shape our built environment. They also provide public safety, health and other services, and recreation for Austin's residents.

Austin is comprised of 30 departments and about 12,000 employees, providing direct services to residents and other departments. In addition to typical municipal services (such as police, fire, emergency, parks, libraries, solid waste, and streets), Austin also operates an electric utility (Austin Energy), a water/wastewater utility (Austin Water Utility), the Palmer Events Center and the Neal Kocurek Memorial Austin Convention Center, and the Austin Bergstrom International Airport.

### Wastewater, Solid Waste, Drainage, and Potable Water

Austin Water Utility manages water and wastewater service connections, which in 2008, represented service to an overall population of approximately 895,000 people. Austin Water's total operating costs for fiscal year 2009 was approximately \$400 million.

Austin's Solid Waste Services Department is responsible for citywide litter abatement and collection of discarded materials. In addition to providing weekly garbage and yard trimmings collection services, the City offers bi-weekly curbside recycling to its customers. Solid Waste Services annual operating costs are approximately \$66 million. Its primary source of revenue is residential solid waste collection fees.

## KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Continued suburban sprawl can strain the city's public safety budget, as more development on the city's fringes will require additional police and fire stations to ensure adequate response times.
- Low-density, suburban-styled development will require costly water and sewer infrastructure extensions.
- Despite the fact that the city has an above-average amount of parkland, more attention needs to be paid to creating smaller parks that are within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. The absence of these smaller parks means that many areas of the city are not adequately served by the park system.
- Austin is a regional leader in conservation strategies, but it must be proactive in planning for supplying water and other municipal services to its rapidly-growing population.
- More residents and businesses need to be encouraged to recycle to reduce the amount of solid waste deposited in regional landfills.

Known for its waterways, including Barton Creek and the Colorado River, water resources are a source of community pride, drinking water, recreational opportunities, attractive vistas, and support for the region's green infrastructure. The Watershed Protection Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the municipal storm water conveyance systems for the City, which includes the area's natural water resources.

## Public Services, Buildings, and Facilities

Austin's public services and facilities include libraries, police, fire, and emergency medical services. Municipal functions are distributed across the City, but the majority of the City's administrative functions operate from either City Hall or One Texas Center. Austin's building inventory includes approximately 250 facilities, both owned and leased, such as offices, libraries, recreation centers, fire stations, and service/fleet operating facilities. With some exceptions, offices which require a high level of public accessibility are located downtown. Several City of Austin departments such as Solid Waste Services, Austin Energy, and Austin Water require separate offices and facilities to accommodate their operations.

## Recreation and Open Space

Austin has over 17,000 acres of parks and preserves consisting of district parks, metropolitan parks, neighborhood parks, school parks, pocket parks, greenways, golf courses, senior activity centers, tennis courts, special parks, and nature preserves. The Austin Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the management of parks, recreational centers, museums, cultural centers, a botanical garden, a nature center, and an urban forestry program. Parks and preserves contribute to the city's green infrastructure network (i.e., the city's natural life support system that includes wilderness, parks, greenways, conservation easements, tree canopy, and working lands with conservation value). The network includes the natural resource areas described in the Conservation and Environment Building Block (e.g., wetlands, woodlands, waterways), conservation lands, forests, farms and ranches, and outdoor recreational areas and trails. Integrating nature into the city by strengthening our green infrastructure network is one of the core principles for action introduced in Chapter 1.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Continuing to provide high-quality public services to a city that is expanding through suburban development, annexation, and higher-density redevelopment in the urban core.
- Adapting to and improving the city's resiliency to deal with potential impacts of climate change, including hotter, drier seasons and droughts.
- Implementing successful water conservation and reclamation.
- Reducing peak demand water usage.
- Reducing stormwater runoff and improving groundwater infiltration.
- Reducing energy consumption in public buildings/facilities and general energy consumption to meet the energy efficiency goals set by Austin Energy.
- Increasing recycling participation rates from multi-family, commercial, institutional, industrial, and manufacturing waste generators.
- Adapting to and taking advantage of new technologies in police, fire, and public library services.
- Ensuring that public safety facilities have the space and additional land to house staff and equipment in locations that serve existing and new development and minimize response times.
- Providing services to a city that is changing in demographics. The rapid increases in Austin's older population and youth population will require additional services oriented to these age groups.
- Developing local recycling and composting facilities with capacity to handle large volumes of discarded materials.
- Providing sufficient funding for maintaining parks and recreation facilities, as the city continues to grow and budgets for police, fire, emergency services, and other city services increase.
- Strengthening partnerships between the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and private organizations, volunteers, and community groups to efficiently provide open space and recreation.
- Preserving environmentally sensitive areas as open space and expanding the city's green infrastructure network.

### FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

The City operates with “efficient, clear, predictable planning goals and processes.”

Community Forum Series #1  
Participant

In 2039, “Austin has expanded public services and is providing libraries, parks, public education and health services to all its residents. There is plenty of affordable housing...”

Community Forum Series #1  
Participant

“All government levels (city, regional, state) and organizations coordinate in an efficient manner.”

Community Forum Series #1  
Participant

## WASTEWATER, POTABLE WATER, AND DRAINAGE POLICIES

**WPD 1.** Deliver potable water to Austin's residents as the population grows and maintain an efficient and sustainable water system in support of the Growth Concept Map. (See also LUT 1)

**WPD 2.** Replace and maintain water and wastewater pipes and infrastructure.

**WPD 3.** Develop decentralized wastewater processing sites to complement centralized facilities.

**WPD 4.** Plan for and develop alternative water sources other than the Colorado River.

**WPD 5.** Plan for and adapt to increased drought, severe weather, and other potential impacts of climate change on the water supply.

**WPD 6.** Protect the public water supply and the health and safety of users. (See also LUT 12; CER 6)

**WPD 7.** Reduce the public safety threats of flooding in the 100-year floodplain. (See also CER 6)

**WPD 8.** Reduce existing and future pollutant loads in all creeks from stormwater runoff, overflow, and other non-point sources.<sup>6</sup> (See also CER 6; CER 7)

**WPD 9.** Reduce per capita potable water use through conservation, water reclamation, and other water resource stewardship programs. (See also CER 12)

**WPD 10.** Protect and improve Austin's streams, lakes, and aquifers for sustainable uses and the support of aquatic life. (See also CER 6; CER 7)

**WPD 11.** Protect the health of creek channels by minimizing their expansion and preventing public and private property damage resulting from erosion. (See also CER 6; CER 7)

**WPD 12.** Maintain or enhance the existing rate of recharge in the Edward's Aquifer.

**WPD 13.** Meet or exceed all local, state, and federal permit and regulatory requirements (e.g., Designated Use Support status, National Flood Insurance Program). (See also CER 6; CER 7)

**WPD 14.** Integrate erosion, flood, and water quality control measures into all City of Austin capital improvement projects. (See also CER 7)

## SOLID WASTE POLICIES

**SW 1.** Address the waste management implications of continued growth in Central Texas through a regional solid waste management plan. (See also CER 15)

**SW 2.** Expand waste diversion rates and services:

- o Require recycling at apartment complexes, retail establishments, restaurants, and manufacturers
- o Increase the types of materials that can be added to curbside collection
- o Develop more effective recycling practices for construction and demolition debris
- o Increase composting at homes and businesses
- o Improve recycling of material and food scraps in public spaces, in trash receptacles on city streets, and at public events (See also CER 15)

**SW 3.** Divert hazardous waste from landfills and increase participation in recycling hazardous materials (e.g., develop an on-call door-to-door hazardous waste collection program). (See also CER 15)

**SW 4.** Divert bulk items such as furniture and other household items from landfills and consider ways to recycle or reuse these materials.

**SW 5.** Improve awareness and participation in the City's recycling programs through traditional and emerging methods such as a large-scale media, social marketing campaigns, and presence at public events. (See also CER 15)

**SW 6.** Continue to work with the Texas Product Stewardship Council and others to advocate for statewide "extended producer responsibility" initiatives that require manufacturers and retailers to stop using "hard to recycle" and/or toxic products. (See also CER 15)

## ENERGY POLICIES

**EN 1.** Support the Preferred Growth Scenario and provide affordable, reliable electricity to Austin's residents and businesses. (See also ECO 16)

**EN 2.** Reduce per capita energy use through conservation and improvements that make buildings more energy efficient. (See also CER 9; CER 11)

**EN 3.** Reduce peak energy demand / total electric generation capacity that Austin Energy needs to maintain by encouraging users to use electricity during off-peak hours. (See also CER 9; CER 11)

**EN 4.** Increase the share of renewable energy sources (e.g., wind, solar, biomass) used by Austin Energy to generate electricity, including on-site sources throughout the city. (See also ECO 16; CER 9; CER 11)

## PUBLIC SAFETY POLICIES

**PS 1.** Reduce crime rates, thereby improving the perception of safety in neighborhoods across Austin.

**PS 2.** Continue to improve community outreach and build trust between the police force and Austin's minority communities. (See also HHS 5; CFE 4)

### BEST PRACTICE: RECYCLING RATES AND SERVICES | SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

San Jose has a reputation for innovation and leadership in recycling. In 2009, the Solid Waste Association of North America awarded the City its 2009 Recycling System Excellence Award for its efforts in diverting nearly 80% of apartment waste from landfills through a processing system that removes recyclables and composts organic materials.

San Jose is also working to reduce the amount of construction waste headed to landfills – which can account for 30% of total materials. Under the Construction and Demolition Diversion Deposit program, San Jose collects a mandatory deposit, based on square footage and project type, through building permitting. The deposit is fully refundable with proof that construction and demolition materials are being diverted from the project site. Materials can be taken to a certified facility for recycling or re-use/donated.

Reference: [www.recycletogether.com](http://www.recycletogether.com), <http://www.sjrecycles.org/construction-demolition/cddd.asp> and image: City-Data.com



**BEST PRACTICE: FOSTERING SAFE COMMUNITIES CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ACTION | HOUSTON, TX**

One of the goals of the Go-Neighborhoods program of LISC Houston is to support healthy neighborhood development through livable and safe environments. GO Neighborhood safety team members instructed over forty neighborhood leaders about best practices and principles of Crime Principles Through Environmental Design. The principles are part of LISC's Safe-Growth training and certification program for community leaders.

The new trainees will analyze problem areas using a safety audit form and work with police, civic organizations, community residents, and property owners to begin applying these principles (e.g., lighting, access control, "eyes on the street") in their neighborhoods.

Reference: [www.go-neighborhoods.org](http://www.go-neighborhoods.org)  
[www.lisc.org](http://www.lisc.org)

**PS 3.** Provide public safety services to newly annexed areas and areas with increased activity, such as new neighborhoods, redevelopment areas, transportation corridors, and mixed-use centers.

**PS 4.** Provide preventive safety education (fire, police, and emergency services) to Austin residents.

**PS 5.** Increase the use of joint or shared facilities between public safety and other city service providers, when possible, to provide residents with efficient services, reduce costs, and maintain public safety infrastructure. (See also CER 9; CFE 4)

**PS 6.** Improve collaboration between public safety providers and city planners to incorporate best development practices to reduce crime (e.g., lighting, density, neighborhood ingress/egress, "eyes on the street" etc.).

**PS 7.** Collaborate and coordinate with other public safety agencies (i.e., county, state) to share resources and address the increasingly regional nature of crime.

**PS 8.** Maintain quality standards in recruiting and training new public safety officers, and strive for a public safety workforce that reflects Austin's changing demographics.

**PS 9.** Continue to improve education and training of public safety employees and build new skills in using technology to improve public safety.

## **PUBLIC BUILDING POLICIES**

**PB 1.** Improve access to neighborhood libraries to support development of Complete Communities throughout Austin.

**PB 2.** Distribute public buildings where services are offered in neighborhoods and other accessible locations throughout the city. (See also CFE 7)

**PB 3.** Improve multi-modal public transportation access to the City's public buildings and facilities, including the Austin Bergstrom International Airport.

**PB 4.** Integrate public buildings and facilities into active, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and complete, healthy communities. (See also LUT 5; H1; HHS 3; CFE 11)

**PB 5.** Reduce energy consumption and waste generation in all public buildings to meet the City's climate and Zero Waste goals.

**PB 6.** Develop public buildings and facilities that create healthy work environments and educate the public about energy-efficient, sustainable building and landscape best practices.

## RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE POLICIES

**RO 1.** Operate, maintain, and upgrade new and existing parks and preserved open space and develop new parks to serve Austin's diverse, growing population. (See also UD 1)

**RO 2.** Ensure and increase equitable access to and opportunities for cultural arts, recreation and leisure activities for all ages throughout the City.

**RO 3.** Increase connectivity between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to parks and greenways through the use of sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use paths, and trails. (See also UD 4; N1; CER 10)

**RO 4.** Maximize the role of parks and recreation in promoting healthy communities and lifestyles.

**RO 5.** Feature superior design in parks and recreational facilities and include opportunities for public art and green/sustainable design solutions. (See also UD 7)

**RO 6.** Expand the amount of permanently protected natural and environmentally sensitive areas for use as open space and passive recreational areas. (See also LUT 21; CER 2)

**RO 7.** Foster the use of creeks and lakes for public recreation and enjoyment in a manner that maintains their natural character. (See also CER 8)

**RO 8.** Extend existing trail and greenway projects to create an interconnected green infrastructure network (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.) linking all parts of Austin and linking Austin to nearby cities. (See also LUT 22; CER 3)

**RO 9.** Maintain existing partnerships and develop new relationships with other City of Austin departments, community organizations, and volunteers to support recreational services and maintain high levels of service.

### BEST PRACTICE: JOINT USE FACILITIES

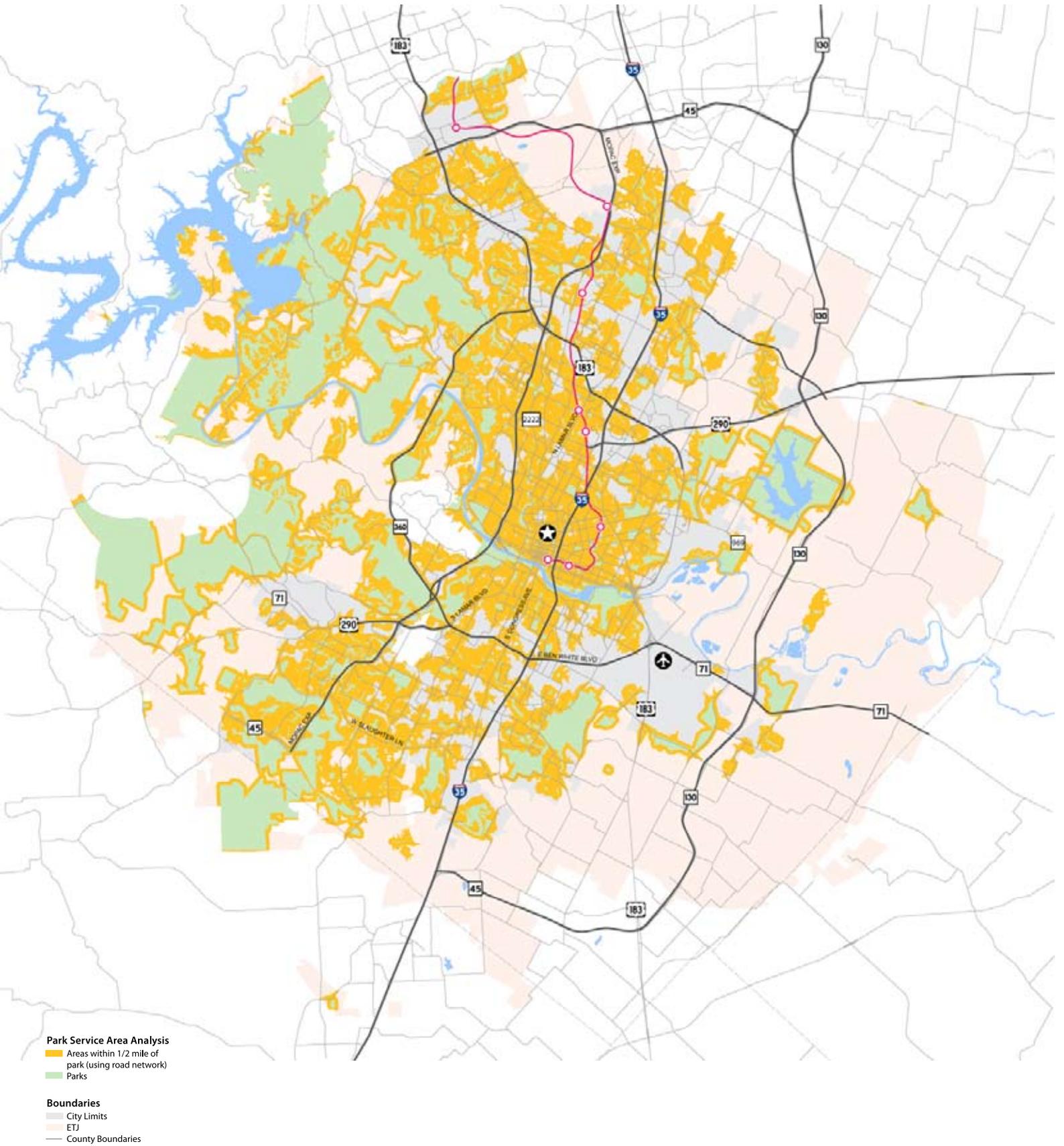
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Fig. 4.8 - PARKS SERVICE AREA ANALYSIS







## SOCIETY

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

A community's overall health relies on the quality of the built and natural environment as well as the services available. The built environment refers to the human-made surroundings - cities, roads, neighborhoods, and buildings that form the physical character of a city. The natural environment refers to resources such as air, water, and soil. Built and natural environments promoting health and well-being place fewer demands on health and human services. Promoting community-wide health and wellness, safety, disease prevention, and mitigation of potential environmental hazards and disasters are all components of a healthy community. Accessibility to quality educational options promotes a sustainable community with its residents prepared for a changing world and economy.

The ongoing national discussion about childhood and adult obesity and their associated illnesses (e.g., diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease) points to the need to address healthy communities on all fronts, including the designs of cities and their constituent neighborhoods, corridors, and districts.

Austin area families are large and small; married with and without children; households with one parent and those with extended families; as well as a variety of non-traditional families. Approximately 25 percent of Austin area families require children's recreational and educational opportunities and health care services. Families with elderly members may also require special supportive services. Regardless of the household composition, families require access to healthy food, transportation choices, healthy housing, family and children-friendly activity options, and a safe environment. Healthy children and families contribute to a strong and resilient society.

## KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Health care access in Austin is slightly better than the U.S. average, but below what would be considered optimal. The percentage of Travis County residents with health insurance is decreasing and lower income families are less likely to be covered.
- As of 2009, all Central Texas counties were classified as “medically underserved” by the US Department of Health and Human Services.
- The Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project found that nearly all clusters of middle school students who are obese are located in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in north, east, and south Austin.
- According to Austin Independent School District (AISD) records from the 2008-2009 school year, less than 65 percent of students had healthy BMI.
- Long term trends showing significant increases in diabetes rates will place a strain on delivery of health services.
- Currently, Austinites aged 45 and over are making the largest gains in population. Services specific to an aging population will increase as this group increases.
- Access to healthy foods is limited in some neighborhoods. Proximity and cost can both be limiting factors for access, particularly in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- As housing becomes more expensive in Austin, some families are seeking homes outside of the City and farther from jobs – resulting in increased transportation costs and travel times.

Austin is a highly educated city with a large portion of the population having advanced degrees. However, there are populations and parts of the city that lag behind in terms of education. To ensure that they can take part in the future envisioned by Imagine Austin, more educational opportunities are needed. Education goes beyond basic primary, secondary, and university education; it also includes continuing education as well as job skills training.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Ensuring that health care facilities continue to meet the needs of the changing population, including seniors and the disabled.
- Providing accessible preventive and basic care and services for all residents of Austin, including the economically disadvantaged, uninsured, and underinsured.
- Improving access to services for those struggling with drug and alcohol abuse.
- Providing access to housing and childcare for low- and middle-income families.
- Increasing access to quality pre-kindergarten options to make sure children are prepared to begin primary education and providing high-quality education and services to all residents of Austin.
- Ending homelessness with supportive housing, mental health services, counseling, and alcohol and drug treatment.
- Increasing accessibility and affordability of healthy lifestyle choices for low-income families and residents.
- Raising childhood fitness levels to help stem the tide of childhood health problems (e.g., obesity and asthma).
- Improve the actual and perceived safety of neighborhood streets to encourage children to play outside and encourage more outdoor activities by neighborhood residents.
- Protecting the population from hazardous substances and pollution.
- Preparing high school, vocational school, and college graduates to enter the work force at a competitive level.
- Improving access to job resources and training to improve ability to find jobs paying a living wage.
- Using schools as community centers and places for lifelong learning (e.g., tutoring, adult education, libraries, and technology).
- Reducing drop-out rates.

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE POLICIES

**HHS 1.** Provide access to primary, preventive health, trauma, specialty care, and urgent care.

**HHS 2.** Attract and retain high-quality health service providers (including doctors, dentists, specialists, medical technicians, and nurses) and promote the development and expansion of medical education opportunities.

**HHS 3.** Encourage more active lifestyles through development patterns that support walking and biking. Locate retail, services, and public facilities (e.g., parks, health services, libraries, etc.) in or near neighborhoods to reduce traffic congestion and contribute to an improved sense of community. (See also LUT 3; LUT 5; H1; H4; H5; CER 10)

**HHS 4.** Reduce homelessness through long-term supportive housing, mental health services, counseling, and alcohol and drug treatment.

**HHS 5.** Develop close relationships between public safety personnel and neighborhoods to promote cooperation and safety. (See also PS 2)

**HHS 6.** Promote the availability of and educate the community about healthy food choices, including “slow food” (local food traditions, small-scale food processing, and organic agriculture) and nutritional education programs. (See also CER 13)

**HHS 7.** Provide broad access to fresh foods, local farmers markets, co-ops, grocery stores, community gardens, and healthy restaurants in neighborhoods. (See also CER 13)

**HHS 8.** Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations and provide better services for at-risk segments of our community.

**HHS 9.** Develop and promote tobacco cessation programs and regulations to support tobacco-free environments.

**BEST PRACTICE: CENTRAL TEXAS SUSTAINABLE FOOD CENTER**

Text

Reference:

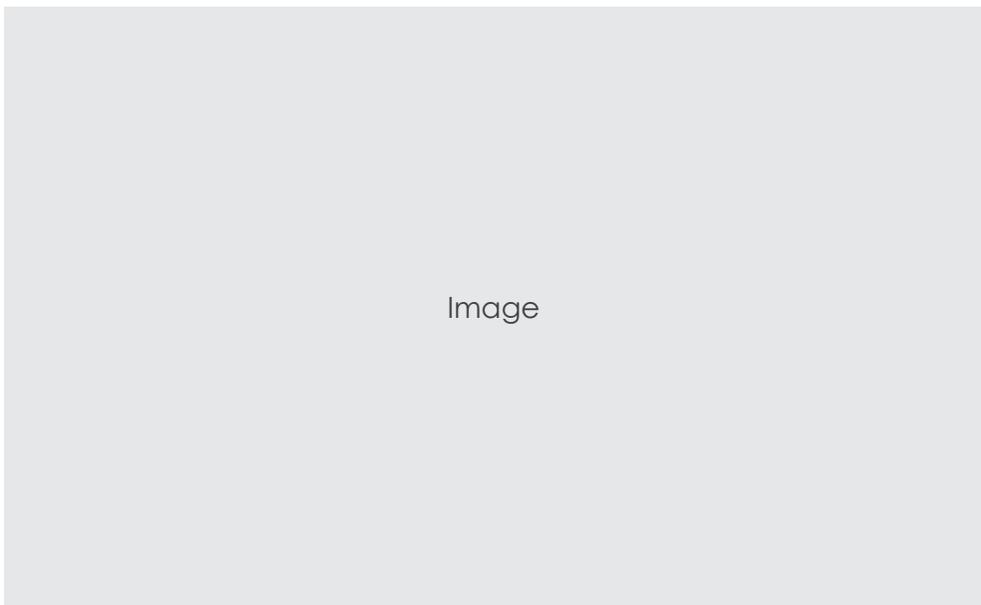


Image Caption



**BEST PRACTICE: CHILD CARE DOWNTOWN  
| DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA**

In 2009, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Durham, Inc. and Durham's Partnership for Children collaborated on an initiative to expand affordable, high quality child care options in downtown Durham. The group analyzed existing child care conditions in terms of availability, cost, and programming and compared them against stakeholder preferences and national standards for quality child care service. The research determined from supply/demand analysis, focus groups, and policy/best practices research, that downtown Durham lacks sufficient high-quality child care – a critical resource for working families and their employers. The initiative makes recommendations for expanding downtown child care by identifying properties for new facilities, promoting employer supported new child care facilities, and updating land use regulations and policies to accommodate new child care facilities.

"Child care is also good for business: the research and experience of many Fortune 500 companies shows that helping employees to balance their family and work roles by making child care available improves productivity, reduces absenteeism, cuts turnover, and increases company value."

Reference: *Child Care at the Core*  
<http://www.dpfc.net/Admin/uploads/photos/Documents/DowntownWhitePaperFINALWEB.pdf>

## CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND EDUCATION POLICIES

**CFE 1.** Develop public transportation options that link all areas of the City, are affordable to economically disadvantaged groups, and provide access to job opportunities and services. (See also LUT 7)

**CFE 2.** Increase the variety of housing options (i.e., housing type and number of bedrooms) to meet the needs of family and non-traditional households including households with children. (See also LUT 5; H1)

**CFE 3.** Provide opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities to live in affordable neighborhoods and housing to meet their special needs (e.g., mobility).

**CFE 4.** Locate emergency services within close proximity to all neighborhoods and continue to improve community outreach and relationships between police and neighbors. (See also PS 2; PS 5)

**CFE 5.** Increase access to educational opportunities for higher education, technical education and vocational training in Austin area public schools, colleges, universities, and other educational facilities. Match job training with current and expected employment needs for existing and emerging "target industries." (See also ECO 10; ECO 11)

**CFE 6.** Increase the availability of continuing education.

**CFE 7.** Work with the school districts on planning for long-range student population growth from kindergarten through high school. Maintain and/or secure new educational facilities to support the direction set by the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. (See also LUT 12; ECO 10; ECO 11; PB 2)

**CFE 8.** Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations.

**CFE 9.** Increase the availability of quality early education, child care, after school, and preschool programs for all residents, especially low and middle income households and families with children with disabilities.

**CFE 10.** Enact land use and other planning policies that enhance the quality of life for families with children and promote family-friendly neighborhoods and services.

**CFE 11.** Increase dense, compact family-friendly housing in the urban core by creating standards and guidelines that encourage private interests to create more family-friendly development. (See also LUT 5)

In 2039, Austin is "Community strength. Families, trust, safety, shared spaces highly valued, community centers, community gardens."

Community Forum Series #1 Participant



Image Caption

“Increase community awareness to keep our neighborhoods, police, Neighborhood Associations intact; safe, clean, green educated city with opportunities for all citizens to improve their lives; frequent community forums to inform and engage people; community where everyone participates.”

Community Forum Series #1  
Participant

**CFE 12.** Improve access to quality child care services near homes and workplaces.

**CFE 13.** Partner with local school districts to transform public school yards into enhanced, multi-use outdoor resources for children and the community and to share public amenities such as parks, landscaping, pools, and athletic courts.

**CFE 14.** Partner with local school districts, non-profits, and civic groups to expand after school and summer programs for children of all ages and abilities.

**CFE 15.** Increase sidewalks and bike lanes in neighborhoods for safe routes to schools, parks, and transit stops. (See also LUT 13; CER 10)

**CFE 16.** Ensure that Austin children in every part of town have access to excellent public schools.

**CFE 17.** Partner with Austin-area school districts to enhance policies and practices that support neighborhood-based schools.

**CFE 18.** Collaborate with school districts and with public and private entities to create joint-use partnerships at existing and new public school campuses.

**CFE 19.** Create public spaces that attract and engage children and serve as gathering places for children and families.



## CREATIVITY

### LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

### MOBILE & INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

### VALUES & RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

### PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

### EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

### CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

### NATURAL & SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Development Patterns
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

Austin's creativity is expressed through arts, music, dance, film, food, architecture, cultural traditions and history, and a variety of print and electronic media. A young, diverse city with a tradition of attracting creative individuals, Austin has a national reputation for its artistic and welcoming culture. It is routinely ranked as one of the "best of" or "most livable" cities in the country based on a high percentage of its workforce in creative jobs, a relatively low cost of living (especially when compared to the East and West Coasts), and healthy employment and salary growth. According to his ranking of creative and innovative cities, economist Richard Florida ranks Austin second behind San Francisco.

The Cultural Arts Division within the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, oversees the City's cultural arts programs and the development of arts and cultural industries as a part of Austin's overall economic development strategy. Programs include Art in Public Places, community based arts development, assistance for the music, film and creative industries in Austin, and initiatives designed to support and encourage Austin's cultural identity and vitality. Over 200 cultural contractors are funded through the Cultural Arts Division.

Arts, culture, and creativity are highly valued in Austin. Following a two-year planning effort, the City of Austin completed the CreateAustin Cultural Master Plan in 2010. In addition to refining the City's roles and responsibilities for cultural support, the planning process helped spark partnerships between community leaders and the City. Austin must support and value the City's arts, culture, and creativity as vital contributors to the city's identity, economy, and quality of life.

### KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Austin's arts scene is a cornerstone of the city's identity in 2011.
- The arts scene is also an important element of the city's economy and can be leveraged for additional economic growth.
- City and private funding for local arts facilities and programs is critical to the ongoing strength of the arts in Austin.
- Lower-income communities may not have adequate opportunities to participate in Austin's arts programs and events.
- Workforce development programs should include job training for technological, arts-related occupations.



Image

Image Caption

### FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS CREATIVE:

Creativity is the engine of Austin's prosperity. Arts, culture, and creativity are essential keys to the city's unique and distinctive identity and are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life and economy.

### KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Providing affordable, accessible, and functional studio, performance, rehearsal and office spaces for small organizations and individual artists.
- Ensuring that affordable residential units are available for artists as housing costs and land values in the urban core rise.
- Improving awareness and visibility of the city's many public art projects and its broad range of cultural resources.
- Providing ongoing funding for community arts programs.
- Maintaining a strong commitment to cultural/arts programs in schools and communities, and ensuring that all residents have equal access to these programs.
- Increasing the role of arts and culture in strengthening Austin's multicultural identity.
- Integrating arts and cultural facilities and activities with downtown development in a way that is true to Austin's identity.

## ARTS, CULTURE, AND CREATIVITY POLICIES

**ACC 1.** Continue to grow artists, micro-enterprises, small cultural organizations as businesses, and iconic cultural institutions, in order to sustain and grow Austin's economic and cultural vitality. (See also ECO 5)

**ACC 2.** Increase and enhance coordination and resource sharing, and partnership among artist and creative individuals, organizations, institutions, and businesses.

**ACC 3.** Increase philanthropic, public, and resident support and participation in arts, culture, and creative activities in Austin.

**ACC 4.** Continue to sustain and grow the city's successful live music scene, festivals, theater, film and digital media, other cultural offerings.

**ACC 5.** Continue to explore and identify solutions to support live music venues and while addressing sound abatement issues.

**ACC 6.** Encourage new or existing art forms, new approaches to the creation or presentation of art, or new ways of engaging the public with art.

**ACC 7.** Grow Austin's regional and global cultural efforts in order to stimulate trade and bring new resources to the community. (See also ECO 5)

**ACC 8.** Expand access to affordable and functional studio, exhibition, performance space, and office space for arts and culture organizations, artists, and creative industries businesses.

We will be “A city that retains the character of Austin of today, yesterday, years ago, and tomorrow - so that there is a thread/sense/pride of place now and for years to come. Blend of old and new, keep our neighborhoods, police, Neighborhood Associations intact...”

Community Forum Participant



Image Caption

**BEST PRACTICE: ARTIST SUPPORT PROGRAM: PADUCAH ARTIST RELOCATION PROGRAM | PADUCAH, KENTUCKY**

A national model for using the arts to foster economic and neighborhood investment, the Paducah, KY program offers financial incentives to artists interested in relocating. The program is managed by the Paducah Renaissance Alliance and offers incentives such as free or low-cost properties, moving assistance, start-up business assistance, and restaurant grants to qualified artists and businesses. Since it began in 2000, the program has relocated more than 50 artists to the LowerTown Arts Districts. Over \$30 million has been invested in the neighborhood since 2000.

Reference: [http://www.paducahalliance.org/artist\\_relocation\\_program.php#about](http://www.paducahalliance.org/artist_relocation_program.php#about) and Image: *Circulating, Flickr.com*



**ACC 9.** Encourage and support artists, artist live/work spaces, creative industry hubs/districts/clusters, etc. as retail, community, or neighborhood anchors and activity generators to attract and support other economic and community enterprises. (See also LUT 3; H4; HHS 3)

**ACC 10.** Improve access to affordable living to include housing, healthcare, and effective transportation in order to develop and retain Austin's creative organizations, industries, and individuals. (See also H3; HHS 5; CFE 3)

**ACC 11.** Encourage cultural, creative and arts-based education in schools and neighborhoods throughout Austin to sustain Austin's "culture of creativity" as fundamental to Austin's spirit and mindset.

**ACC 12.** Sustain and grow Austin's multicultural and artistic heritage (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other ethnic and culturally-specific groups) as the city develops and grows.

**ACC 13.** Create avenues for cultural variety and provide the opportunity for all groups to benefit from the different cultures present in Austin.

**ACC 14.** Encourage grassroots, neighborhood-based cultural development and activity and recognize and enhance the role the arts play at the center of community life.

**ACC 15.** Maximize the recognition of arts and creativity as part of Austin's "Creative Economy."

**ACC 16.** Increase the availability of significant public art to designate districts and/or their entrances and to assist visitors in navigating the area.

**ACC 17.** Define Austin's sense of place through high standards for architecture and urban design, public art, public spaces and public parks, and arts education.

**ACC 18.** Explore existing city policies, processes and regulations regarding the arts to determine what changes can be made to coordinate these with other goals such as historic preservation, affordable housing, and high-density development.

**ACC 19.** Collaborate with AISD, local businesses, and cultural organizations in developing programs that encourage lifelong active engagement and participation in the cultural arts.

Image

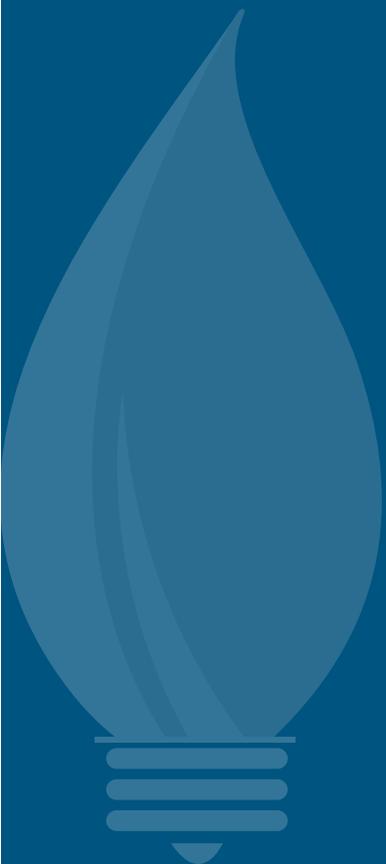


# IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURING SUCCESS

Priority Programs

Using the Comprehensive Plan

Documenting Progress: Plan Monitoring and Review

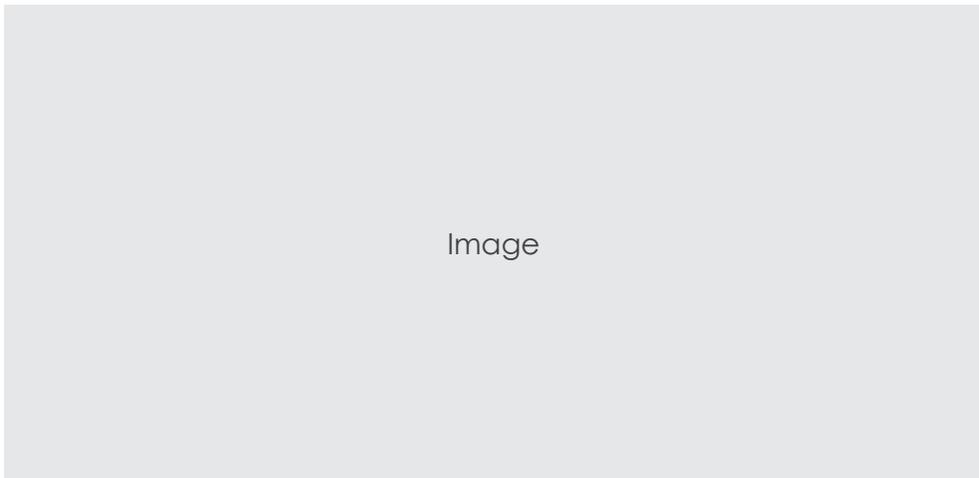




## IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASURING SUCCESS

Imagine Austin is our shared vision for the future. To achieve it, we must turn our focus from planning to implementation. The comprehensive plan not only sets a community's vision and goals for the future; it is the beginning of a process to implement those aspirations. The plan is the lens through which the City of Austin will look when developing new policies and regulations; master and area plans; and to provide direction for capital improvement projects, budget priorities, and bond packages.

The process to create Imagine Austin asked two questions: "Where do we want to go as a community?" and "How are we going to get there?" The vision statement in Chapter 3 answers the first question. To answer the second one, almost 500 people met in seven working groups (one for each building block) over several months to consider creative ways to implement the Imagine Austin policies in Chapter 4. They produced over 3,000 ideas, which were ultimately consolidated into 230 discrete actions (see Table 5.1 on page xx). Because it will take many years to achieve the vision for Austin's future, the implementation journey will be one of incremental progress towards the ultimate destination. To provide a structure and directions for the journey, eight action programs have been established to help prioritize and focus the many exciting ideas generated by the working groups. In addition to drawing directly from the working group actions, these programs were developed in concert with and reflect the core principles for action introduced in Chapter 1. Together, the core principles, priority programs, and actions provide a dynamic framework to guide decision-making, selection of priorities, and allocation of resources by the city on a yearly basis to implement Imagine Austin. Through the annual comprehensive plan review and reporting process required by City Charter, the city will use this framework to assess implementation progress during the previous year, evaluate and update the status of the action programs, and establish priorities for the upcoming year.



Caption

Image

## PRIORITY PROGRAMS

Imagine Austin will be implemented through **priority programs**. A program is an ongoing initiative that is carried out over a number of years. To be effective, a program must have an overall strategy that defines specific actions to be taken to realize its goals. As described above, progress in achieving the program plan or strategy should be evaluated annually in coordination with the city's budgeting process and implementing actions defined for the coming year.

The goals of the eight priority programs reflect the Imagine Austin vision statement and core principles. Each program cuts across – and will implement – policies and action ideas from multiple building blocks. In embarking on these programs we are not starting from scratch; most have established plans or initiatives that partners inside and outside city government are working to achieve. The power of the comprehensive plan is that it provides an overall umbrella that will enable all partners to pull together and bring our existing efforts to the next level.

The eight action programs are:

- Change Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city
- Invest in transportation and other improvements to create a compact and connected Austin
- Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city
- Create a program to sustainably manage our water resources
- Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy
- Develop and maintain affordable housing throughout Austin
- Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce and education system
- Create a "Healthy Austin" program



## **Change Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.**

Austin's City Charter states that the City's land development regulations must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Many Imagine Austin policies and actions call for changes to development regulations and standards to produce new development that is consistent with the vision statement. To achieve the goals of Imagine Austin, these changes need to be implemented through a comprehensive revision to the land development code, associated technical and criteria manuals, and administrative procedures. This process will likely result in changes to zoning categories, which may require changing the zoning map. Rezoning (change of a property from one zoning category to another) will continue to be done through the small area planning and implementation process or other special studies. Once the new code is in place, its application will need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is producing the types of development we want to see.

### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Promote diverse infill housing that complement and enhance the character of existing neighborhoods (LUT Action-2)
- Create sustainable pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods providing a range of housing-type options (LUT Action-3)
- Direct growth to areas with existing infrastructure capacity (LUT Action-4)
- Develop complete streets design guidelines (LUT Action-19)
- Promote a variety of market rate and affordable housing within, mixed use centers and transit corridors (HN Action-1)
- Promote affordable housing throughout Austin by allowing diverse housing types (HN Action-3)
- Create communities across Austin providing a range of facilities and services (HN Action-18)
- Change development regulations and processes to foster a business-friendly environment (ECON Action-3)
- Preserve & protect environmentally sensitive areas by directing growth toward redevelopment and infill areas (CE Action-4)
- Align policies, incentives, regulations, service area extensions, and infrastructure to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map (CFS Action-36)
- Provide flexible, affordable work space and housing for artists and creative professionals (CUL Action-14)



## **Invest in transportation and other improvements to create a compact and connected Austin.**

The Growth Concept Map envisions compact, walkable centers connected by mixed-use corridors. Creating the physical development patterns envisioned by the Growth Concept Map will require investments in a more complete transportation system. The recently opened MetroRail Red Line commuter rail; the soon-to-be implemented rapid bus routes; and the proposed inner-city urban rail, MetroRail Green Line, and San Antonio-to-Georgetown Lone Star rail line provide an initial framework to realize a more compact and walkable city. Creating the compact and connected Austin envisioned in this plan will require increased mixed-use and residential densities around transit stations and along transit corridors to support the more robust transit system. It will also require improving walking, biking, and other connections from existing and new development to the centers and corridors.

### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Develop complete street design guidelines that include green street designs and street trees (LUT Action-19)
- Expand the acquisition of environmentally significant land, conservation easements, and development rights to protect sensitive areas (CFS Action-1)
- Prioritize City of Austin investments to support mixed use, transit, and the creation of compact and walkable places (LUT Action-1)
- Create a system of high-capacity transit (LUT Action-13)
- Increase public transit ridership (LUT Action-14)
- Create a network of separated bicycle and walking routes and trails (LUT Action-21)
- Create communities across Austin that support walking, bicycling, and transit and provides a range of facilities and services (HN Action-18)
- Support the construction of a statewide high speed rail network (ECON Action-5)
- Align policies, incentives, regulations, service area extensions, and infrastructure to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map (CFS Action-36)
- Provide flexible, affordable work space and housing for artists and creative professionals (CUL Action #14)



## **Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.**

A green infrastructure program will build on ongoing efforts by the city to create a comprehensive network of parks, waterways, greenways, trails, green streets, natural areas, and other “green” features (e.g., a healthy urban forest) throughout Austin. A primary goal of the program is to manage Austin’s urban and natural ecosystems in an integrated, sustainable manner. A first step is preparation of a comprehensive, integrated green infrastructure plan that defines the parameters of the network and set targets for network components such as conserved land, new trails and bike paths, parks, and green streets.

### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Develop complete street design guidelines that include green street designs and street trees (LUT Action-19)
- Expand the acquisition of environmentally significant land, conservation easements, and development rights to protect sensitive areas (CFS Action-1)
- Create a trails master plan (CFS Action-10)
- Promote low-impact development designs and techniques (CFS Action-38)
- Explore additional funding sources for the design, construction, and maintenance of parks (CFS Action-5)
- Create a green infrastructure plan for public land or in public rights-of-way (CFS Action-37)
- Restore trees and vegetation along degraded waterways (CFS Action-9)
- Expand water quality regulations to protect recharge zones, floodplains, creeks and their headwaters, and other environmentally sensitive areas (CFS Action-45)
- Continue to preserve & protect environmentally sensitive areas (CE Action-4)
- Work with adjacent municipalities to protect sensitive areas that cross political boundaries (CE Action-6)
- Expand the acquisition of environmentally significant land (CE Action-17)
- Develop and implement unified, comprehensive land management of all City of Austin lands (CE Action-18)
- Establish a tree canopy goal (CE Action-25)



## **Create a program to sustainably manage our water resources.**

Austin has firm water commitments from the Lower Colorado River Authority through 2050. However, the ongoing drought, a changing climate, and increasing population are already straining our water system. Becoming more water resilient will mean seriously engaging with and managing for long-term use all of our water resources—the Colorado River, our aquifers, and rainfall, as well as learning to re-use water. Similar to (and in coordination with) the green infrastructure program, this program needs to build on ongoing water resource management efforts to establish a comprehensive, integrated strategy addressing the range of water resource issues – supply, conservation, environmental protection, etc.

### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Incentivize the use of low impact development design features such as rainwater harvesting and natural-looking water quality features (LUT Action-37 and CFS Action-38)
- Promote innovative water and greywater re-use options (CFS Action-40)
- Incentivize the use of sustainable and cost effective design features (HN Action-15)
- Preserve & protect environmentally sensitive areas (CE Action-4)
- Work with adjacent municipalities to protect sensitive areas that cross political boundaries (CE Action-6)
- Expand the acquisition of environmentally significant land (CE Action-17)
- Develop and implement unified, comprehensive land management of all City of Austin lands (CE Action-18)
- Expand the acquisition of environmentally significant land (CFS Action-1)
- Align policies, incentives, regulations, service area extensions, and infrastructure to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map (CFS Action-36)
- Create a green infrastructure plan for public land or in public rights-of-way (CFS Action-37)
- Protect recharge zones, floodplains, creeks and their headwaters, and other environmentally sensitive areas (CFS Action-45)



## **Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.**

Austin's robust economy is due, in large part, to its vibrant, creative sectors and diverse workforce. Creative individuals (artists, musicians, digital media professionals, architects, etc.), cultural organizations, and creative businesses use knowledge-based, innovation-driven principles that contribute to the region's economic growth and quality of life. Continued strategic investment in these industries is needed to grow existing businesses, encourage "home-grown" start-ups, and attract new businesses, residents, and visitors who will contribute to a healthy economy.

### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Support the development of creative industries (ECON Action-9)
- Identify the skills needed for current, emerging, and targeted job sectors (ECON Action-13)
- Develop a comprehensive education program focused on the skills for gainful employment (SOC Action-36)

- Expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of current and emerging industries (SOC Action-39)
- Create functions to oversee all arts, cultural and heritage programs (CUL Action-1)
- Cultivate cultural and heritage education and tourism (CUL Action-4)
- Promote the development and expansion of cultural facilities and programming (CUL Action-7)
- Increase funding sources and non-financial support to sustain and expand the creative industry sector (CUL Action-12)
- Provide flexible, affordable work space and housing for artists and creative professionals (CUL Action-14)



### **Develop and maintain affordable housing throughout Austin.**

Rising housing and related costs (e.g., transportation) is a major issue facing Austin as the economy expands and population grows. The S.M.A.R.T.<sup>1</sup> Housing Initiative started in 2000 has been the focus of city efforts to counter these trends by increasing the supply of affordable housing. Building on this initiative, a comprehensive program encompassing policy, planning, regulation, investment, and public/private partnerships is needed to maintain the existing affordable housing supply, provide new affordable housing, and reduce related costs as Austin grows.

#### **RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS**

- Promote diverse infill housing that complement and enhance the character of existing neighborhoods (LUT Action-2)
- Create sustainable pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods that provide a range of housing-type options (LUT Action-3)
- Promote a variety of market rate and affordable housing within, mixed use centers and transit corridors (HN Action-1)
- Promote affordable housing throughout Austin by continuing to encourage diverse housing types (HN Action-3)
- Provide resources for the rehabilitation and repair of affordable housing (HN Action-4)
- Retain long-time residents of neighborhoods experiencing increasing property values and an influx of wealthier residents (HN Action-9)
- Create communities across Austin that provide a range of facilities and services (HN Action-18)
- Reduce regulatory barriers for the development of housing for the homeless (SOC Action-20)
- Promote housing stability for persons transitioning from homelessness and struggling with other housing barriers (SOC Action-22)
- Provide flexible, affordable work space and housing for artists and creative professionals (CULT Action-14)

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<sup>1</sup> S.M.A.R.T.™ stands for Safe, Mixed-income, Accessible, Reasonably-priced, and Transit-oriented.

## Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce and education system.

As the local economy continues to expand, so will the need for an educated and skilled workforce. To ensure our continued economic health we must develop a skilled workforce, recruit new businesses, retain and grow existing businesses, and tap into our entrepreneurial spirit to cultivate local opportunities. Educational opportunities must be created to meet the workforce needs of current and emerging industries. Although Austin attracts talented people from across the globe, there is and will be a growing need to develop a talented, homegrown workforce. Established efforts on which this program can build include Opportunity Austin, a five-year, five-county economic development initiative aimed at fostering job-creating investment in Central Texas, and the City of Austin's existing economic development policy.

### RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Support the development of creative industries (ECON Action-9)
- Identify the skills needed for current, emerging, and targeted job sectors (ECON Action-13)
- Develop strategic economic directions for the Austin region (ECON Action-16)
- Create a world-class library system (CFS Action-29)
- Expand early childhood education, daycare services and programs (SOC Action-28)
- Use underutilized schools and other public facilities for child care, educational programs, and neighborhood activities (SOC Action-29)
- Develop a comprehensive education program focused on the skills for gainful employment (SOC Action-36)
- Expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of current and emerging industries (SOC Action-39)

## Create a "Healthy Austin" program.

Making healthy choices should be affordable, available, and easier than making unhealthy ones. Cities such as Philadelphia and San Antonio are implementing coordinated programs to improve community health. A "Healthy Austin" program will implement a range of policies and action ideas from different Imagine Austin building blocks. The chronic diseases associated with tobacco use and obesity — some cancers, diabetes, heart disease, and asthma — are the underlying causes of most deaths in Travis County and affect everyone in the region. These preventable diseases increase healthcare costs, lower worker productivity, increase family stress, and diminish the overall quality of life. In order for the city to be healthy, the root causes of these and other diseases caused by environmental and lifestyle factors need to be addressed.

## RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS

- Support wellness and prevention education (SOC Action-1)
- Dedicate funding to mental health & substance abuse programming (SOC Action-3)
- Increase public awareness of the City's social services programs and healthcare options (SOC Action-5)
- Increase access to and affordability of healthcare services (SOC Action-6)
- Make locally-grown produce and produced foods more accessible (SOC Action-8)
- Use underutilized schools and other public facilities for child care, educational and healthy living programs, and neighborhood activities (SOC Action-29)
- Promote nutrition, healthy food, and local food sources (SOC Action-45)
- Prioritize City of Austin investments to support mixed use, transit, and the creation of compact and walkable places (LUT Action-1)
- Create sustainable pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods (LUT Action-3)
- Create an integrated transportation plan that addresses all modes of transportation (LUT Action-12)
- Increase public transit ridership (LUT Action-14)
- Develop complete streets design guidelines to promote walking and bicycling (LUT Action-19)
- Create a network of separated bicycle, walking routes, and trails (LUT Action-21)
- Create communities across Austin that provide a range of facilities and services (HN Action-18)
- Create a trails master plan (CE Action-21)
- Explore additional funding sources for the design, construction, and maintenance of parks (CFS Action-5)
- Create a trails master plan (CFS Action-10)
- Create a green infrastructure plan for public land or in public rights-of-way (CFS Action-37)

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-1	Prioritize City of Austin investments to support mixed use, transit, and the creation of compact and walkable places.	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
LUT Action-2	Promote diverse infill housing such as small-scale apartments, smaller-lot single-family houses, town and row houses, and garage apartments that complement and enhance the character of existing neighborhoods.	Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
LUT Action-3	Establish land use and street design regulations to create sustainable neighborhoods that support walking and bicycling, are in proximity to daily needs, provide a range of housing-type options (duplexes, townhouses, row houses, small-scale apartments, smaller lot single-family, etc.) to meet the needs of people of different means and at different stages of their lives	Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city.</li> </ul>
LUT Action-4	Direct growth to areas with existing infrastructure capacity including roads, water, wastewater and schools.	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> </ul>
LUT Action-5	<p>Create a regulatory environment to promote the redevelopment of brownfields and greyfields into compact, walkable places by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing development rights through changes in regulations, density bonuses, and other incentives;</li> <li>- Revising parking requirements that result in a higher permeable area and promote walking, biking, and transit;</li> <li>- Providing assistance in securing funding for redevelopment;</li> <li>- Ensuring appropriate transitions to less intensive residential areas;</li> <li>- Expediting the permitting and approval process.</li> </ul>	Regulations	
LUT Action-6	Create a regional planning initiative to encourage local governments in Central Texas to promote a mix of housing and land uses for diverse populations and income groups, located near work, shopping, and services.	Coordination	
LUT Action-7	Implement a transfer of development rights program to transfer development rights from environmentally sensitive areas to targeted growth areas identified on the Growth Concept Map.	Regulation	

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-8	Adopt policies and establish a regulatory environment that promotes the development of compact, mixed-use places that provide great public spaces accessible to people of all ages and abilities.	Regulation	
LUT Action-9	Coordinate with local school districts in the planning and siting of schools and other educational facilities to encourage sustainable designs and promote the creation of complete communities.	Coordination	
LUT Action-10	Locate new industrial development; logistics, warehousing, and distribution; and other comparable businesses in areas with adequate utility and transportation infrastructure and in areas that reduce the harmful effects on neighborhoods and the environment.	Policy	
LUT Action-11	Develop land use and transportation policies and regulations that promote the development of projects that promote more active and healthy lifestyles.		
LUT Action-12	Create an integrated transportation plan that encompasses driving, transit, bicycling, walking, and roadway and rail freight.	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
LUT Action-13	Create a system of high-capacity transit including elements such as urban rail and bus rapid transit corresponding to land use mix and intensity.	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin</li> </ul>

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-14	<p>Increase public transit ridership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- expand service to compact centers and mixed use corridors</li> <li>- increase the number of people who use transit by choice</li> <li>- create inviting public spaces at stops and transfer centers</li> <li>- provide real-time schedule information</li> <li>- add more covered bus shelters</li> <li>- make stops more convenient</li> <li>- add park and ride facilities</li> <li>- make routes more convenient and the system more intuitive</li> <li>- create street design standards (bus turnouts, sidewalk width, benches, shelter)</li> <li>- give transit priority (queue jumpers, signal priority, managed lanes, and dedicated lanes)</li> <li>- launch an informative and enticing public relations campaign</li> <li>- implement first and last mile solutions such as car-pooling, vanpools and bicycle and car sharing</li> </ul>	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
LUT Action-15	Ensure that the construction, operation, and management of rail, bus rapid transit, local bus systems, and future public transportation are integrated and coordinated.	Coordination	
LUT Action-16	Enhance cross town transit options to better connect people to the places where they live, work, play, shop, and access services.	Coordination	
LUT Action-17	Create an efficient and connected transportation system that allows people with disabilities and special needs to easily access their daily needs from where they live and work.	Regulations	
LUT Action-18	Develop a program and funding source to retrofit existing, incomplete roadways into complete streets.	CIP	

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-19	<p>Develop complete streets design guidelines and require these standards for all new road construction and reconstruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pedestrian and bicycle facilities and amenities.</li> <li>- Green street techniques</li> <li>- Interconnected, navigable, grid-like streets and blocks</li> <li>- Flexibility in design and regulations</li> <li>- Create pedestrian-activated cross walks at mid block intersections on arterials to improve pedestrian safety</li> <li>- Traffic calming measures</li> <li>- Transit accommodations</li> <li>- Use of native landscaping</li> </ul>	Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city.</li> </ul>
LUT Action-20	Develop street tree standards for all roadway types.	Regulation	
LUT Action-21	Create a network of separated bicycle and walking routes or trails linking all parts of Austin.	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
LUT Action-22	Expand the Safe Routes to School programs.	Coordination	
LUT Action-23	Require that all new neighborhoods be connected to adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas by streets, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes and/or paths.	Regulation	
LUT Action-24	Encourage the relocation of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad freight line from its current alignment through the middle of Austin.	CIP	
LUT Action-25	Create a transportation and congestion management plan and program to improve the flow of traffic in and out of the Central Business District during the morning and evening rush hours through coordination with the Downtown public and private sector stakeholders.	Coordination	
LUT Action-26	Set targets for vehicle miles traveled per capita, and incorporate those targets into traffic impact studies for new development.	Regulation	
LUT Action-27	Promote increased bicycling and walking by developing and integrating Web-based tools, mobile applications and other educational materials.	Analysis	

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-28	Create design standards for public spaces such as parks, plazas, sidewalks and trails that responds to the unique setting in which they are located.	Regulation	
LUT Action-29	Engage the local creative community to create more robust public art for Austin's public gathering places such as plazas, parks, trails, roadways, and sidewalks.	Program	
LUT Action-30	Create a regulatory environment to allow flexibility in how buildings are used in compact centers and along commercial corridors—particularly the first floor—by simplifying the process to adapt from one use to another, such as residential to commercial or vice versa.	Regulation	
LUT Action-31	Improve streetscapes and infrastructure along mixed use corridors and at mixed use centers through the use financing mechanisms such as tax increment financing (TIF) districts and Public Improvement Districts (PID).	CIP	
LUT Action-32	Develop standards for public spaces, such as parks, plazas and streets, to create integrated, tree-covered places.	Regulations	
LUT Action-33	Develop dark sky regulations and standards to reduce nighttime light pollution to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allow people to see the stars</li> <li>- Reduce the adverse health effects of light pollution on humans</li> <li>- Reduce the effects of unnatural lighting on the environment and nocturnal animals</li> <li>- Conserve natural resources due lowered energy usage.</li> </ul>		
LUT Action-34	Incentivize new and redevelopment to be sensitive to the Central Texas climate, culture, building traditions, and constructions materials.	Regulation	
LUT Action-35	Develop standards and expand incentives for green building and increased energy efficiency for new construction and remodels of older houses.	Regulations	

Land Use and Transportation / Building Block 1			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
LUT Action-36	Incentivize appropriately-scaled and located green infrastructure and public spaces, such as parks, plazas, greenbelts, trails, and/or open space in all new development and redevelopment projects.	Regulation	
LUT Action-37	Develop a regulatory framework to incentivize the use of Low Impact Development (LID) design features such as rainwater harvesting, increased permeable surfaces, rain gardens, green roofs, green streets, and natural-looking water quality features such as bioswales to manage stormwater.	Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
LUT Action-38	Review and change building and zoning codes and incorporate best practices to promote green building and sustainable development.	Analysis	
LUT Action-39	Create regulations and incentives for developers and builders to use green development techniques for buildings, streets, and open spaces with a focus on conservation, longevity, and sustainability.	Regulation	
LUT Action-40	Expand the number of parks and amount of open spaces of different sizes and purposes throughout the city.	CIP	
LUT Action-41	Promote Austin's and the surrounding area's green infrastructure by utilizing web-based tools such as maps and other resources.	Analysis	
Housing and Neighborhoods / Building Block 2			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
HN Action-1	Establish regulations and programs to promote the development of a variety of market rate and affordable housing types within compact, mixed use centers and corridors served by transit.	Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
HN Action-2	Develop incentives and policies to encourage more families with children to live in Austin's established neighborhoods by increasing the supply and variety of housing.	Regulation	
HN Action-3	Produce regulations and enhance programs to promote affordable housing throughout Austin by:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>

Housing and Neighborhoods / Building Block 2			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
HN Action-4	Provide incentives, educational materials, and develop new funding sources for the rehabilitation and repair of affordable housing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tax rebates</li> <li>- Flexible development regulations</li> <li>- Fees-in-lieu of providing affordable housing</li> <li>- Bond elections</li> <li>- Land banking.</li> </ul>	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
HN Action-5	Incentivize and subsidize the construction of infrastructure for projects providing affordable housing.	CIP	
HN Action-6	Provide greater consideration for the awarding of City of Austin incentives to businesses, organizations, and developments that provide stable housing and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged individuals.	CIP	
HN Action-7	Advocate changes to State of Texas legislation to support the development of affordable housing (i.e., repeal of the ban on inclusionary zoning).	Policy	
HN Action-8	Expand home-buyer assistance programs so that lower income households can purchase abandoned and foreclosed houses to increase homeownership levels in Austin.		
HN Action-9	Expand existing and develop new programs, and coordinate with other organizations to retain long-time residents of neighborhoods experiencing rapidly increasing property values and an influx of wealthier new residents.	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
HN Action-10	Create incentives and form partnerships with large employers to develop workforce housing.	Regulations	
HN Action-11	Establish a regulatory framework to promote and assist housing development that involves adaptive re-use of existing buildings.	Regulations	
HN Action-12	Develop a program to expand opportunities for homebuyers to incorporate the cost of energy-efficient improvements into their mortgages or into the refinancing of existing mortgages.	Policy	
HN Action-13	Expand informational programs that educate homeowners and builders about sustainable building practices.	Policy	
HN Action-14	Create a more robust code enforcement program to improve the quality of housing.	Policy	

Housing and Neighborhoods / Building Block 2			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
HN Action-15	Develop a regulatory framework to incentivize the use of sustainable and cost effective design features such as rainwater harvesting, xeriscape features, rain gardens, green roofs, greywater irrigation, solar power, and energy efficient utilities.	Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
HN Action-16	Engage the local architect and design community in creating a variety of housing types to meet the housing needs of all types of households (e.g., singles, empty nester, families with children and people with disabilities).		
HN Action-17	Develop regulations and standards that promote innovative and diverse residential architecture that is sensitive to the surrounding neighborhood.	Regulations	
HN Action-19	Work with employers to locate their place of business along mixed use and commercial corridors and centers in proximity to residential areas that could provide housing for their employees.	Coordination	
HN Action-20	Ensure harmonious and compatible transitions between neighborhoods and adjacent commercial, mixed-use, and denser housing by regulating setbacks, building mass and height, and other design elements and uses.	Regulations	
HN Action-21	Develop and implement strategies that address spillover parking from commercial districts into adjacent residential areas that include increased public transportation, better pedestrian and bicycling amenities, improved signs and parking management.	Regulations	
HN Action-22	Create a process to implement Imagine Austin and small areas plans, including neighborhood plans, in a coordinated manner.	Policy	
HN Action-23	Continue small-area planning efforts such as neighborhood, corridor, and station area planning throughout Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and develop criteria to prioritize the selection of these areas such as increased development pressures related to rapid growth or increased blight.	Policy	

Housing and Neighborhoods / Building Block 2			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
HN Action-24	Align future development with the Growth Concept Map through adoption of small-area plans (e.g., neighborhood, corridor, and station area plans) that contain provisions set forth in Imagine Austin, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Areas experiencing change</li> <li>- Infill Development</li> <li>- Mixed-use centers and corridors</li> <li>- Increased density</li> <li>- Open space and open space connectivity</li> <li>- Historic preservation</li> <li>- Neighborhood preservation</li> <li>- Transitioning between land uses</li> <li>- A variety of housing types</li> <li>- Affordable housing</li> <li>- Brownfield and greyfield redevelopment</li> <li>- Public Transportation</li> </ul>	Policy	
HN Action-25	Ensure that development approvals support the intent and provisions of neighborhood plans, small-area plans, and the comprehensive plan.	Policy	
HN Action-26	Ensure that future neighborhood plans, significant revisions of existing neighborhood plans and other small area plans reflect the goals, themes, and principles of the comprehensive plan.	Policy	
HN Action-27	Ensure outreach efforts for small-area plans are directed toward attracting a diversity of stakeholders including under-represented demographic and socio-economic groups.	Policy	
HN Action-28	Review existing small area plans developed from earlier planning processes and determine their viability and practicality.	Analysis	
HN Action-29	Coordinate with public and private sector organizations in Austin, such as school districts, non-profit organizations, and other agencies to address efforts related to health and human services, housing, economic development, sustainable development, and planning.	Coordination	

Economy / Building Block 3			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
ECON Action-1	Maintain partnerships between local chambers of commerce, business associations, and regional and state economic agencies to develop and improve programs to recruit and retain businesses to Austin.	Coordination	
ECON Action-2	Establish strategic incentives and investments tailored to targeted industries and business districts throughout Austin such as downtown, industrial areas, roadway corridors, neighborhood-oriented and -scaled districts, transit-oriented districts (TOD), etc.	Policy	
ECON Action -3	Create a regulatory framework to foster a business-friendly environment by:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> </ul>
ECON Action -4	Establish and continually monitor a set of measures to gauge the effectiveness of economic development initiatives.	Analysis	
ECON Action -5	Improve Austin's transportation and economic connections between other major cities in Texas by supporting the construction of a high speed rail network.	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin</li> </ul>
ECON Action -6	Increase international air service to Austin Bergstrom International Airport to improve business and tourism opportunities.	Policy	
ECON Action -7	Facilitate international trade that benefits diverse sectors of the Austin economy.	Policy	
ECON Action -8	Expand the online availability of business development resources, such as best practices, for small businesses.	Coordination	
ECON Action -9	Establish and expand policies, programs, and partnerships to support the development of creative industries, including film, music, gaming, etc., in Austin. These could include:	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system</li> </ul>
ECON Action -10	Partner with the Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a marketing strategy to promote tourism that builds upon Austin and Central Texas' unique natural environment, outdoor lifestyles, live music, performing arts, culture, diversity, and history.	Programmatic	
ECON Action -11	Partner with business, property, and cultural organizations to enhance downtown Austin's position as a nationally- and internationally-renowned business, entertainment, and cultural center and destination.	Programmatic	

Economy / Building Block 3			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
ECON Action -12	Preserve and promote iconic and unique Austin facilities and events that attract tourists, convention business, corporate relocations, and the recruitment of skilled workers.	Programmatic	
ECON Action -13	Work with local school districts, the University of Texas, Austin Community College, other area institutions of higher learning, major employers, and elected officials to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify gaps in educational programs;</li> <li>- Identify the skills needed for current, emerging, and targeted job sectors;</li> <li>- Educate students at all levels about the skills needed to compete in a 21st Century economy.</li> </ul>	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system</li> </ul>
ECON Action -14	Work with local colleges and universities to expand their medical education offerings and increase the availability of medical residency programs.	Coordination	
ECON Action -15	Develop economic development programs and incentives to promote the employment of historically under-employed segments of the population.	Programmatic	
ECON Action -16	Create a regional economic development task force, led by the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, that includes the City of Austin, nearby municipalities and surrounding counties; the University of Texas, Austin Community College and other area institutions of higher learning; area transportation providers such the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Agency, Texas Department of Transportation, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, and Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency; major employers and representatives from major industries; and other regional partners to develop a strategic direction for the Austin region by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing a shared direction for the region;</li> <li>- Sharing information between the public and private sectors;</li> <li>- Establishing collaborative communication links among regional planning efforts;</li> <li>- Analyzing the impacts of publically-owned land;</li> <li>- Collaborating and co-locating institutional uses;</li> <li>- Attracting and supporting target industries;</li> <li>- Coordinating transportation planning efforts;</li> <li>- Assisting with grant research and writing.</li> </ul>	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system</li> </ul>

Economy / Building Block 3			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
ECON Action -17	Establish more formal relationships between the cities in the Texas Triangle (Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio) to address issues regarding the larger region, including intraregional trade policies, the development of an inland port, and the employment of the region's diverse population.	Coordination	
ECON Action -18	Partner with the Austin business community to develop policies, regulations, and programs to foster the development and success of local businesses by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating an inventory of locally-owned businesses, including creative industries;</li> <li>- Developing a mentor program for locally-owned businesses;</li> <li>- Promoting the formation of worker-owned and community-owned businesses (co-ops) that sell local products;</li> <li>- Creating an Austin Craftsmen's Guild to showcase products created by Austin residents;</li> <li>- Providing tax incentives for locally-owned businesses;</li> <li>- Creating a directory of locally-produced products;</li> <li>- Expanding the "Go Local" card concept;</li> <li>- Simplifying the process to have local businesses provide additional services (e.g. host bands for SXSW);</li> <li>- Supporting businesses at each stage of the business life cycle;</li> <li>- Enhancing and expanding small business development services to grow market share of small, local businesses;</li> <li>- Expanding economic opportunities and measurable results for Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE / WBE) firms.</li> </ul>	Coordination	
ECON Action -19	Create a public-private task force between the State of Texas, the City of Austin, Travis County, local universities, the Chamber of Commerce, and local industries to invest in research and development and green tech, biotech, high tech, and other emerging technologies.	Coordination	
ECON Action -20	Improve government efficiency through technology (software and hardware) investments and by developing and retaining information technology staff.	Programmatic	

Conservation and Environment / Building Block 4			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CE Action-1	Implement the City of Austin Climate Protection Plan.	Policy, Programmatic	
CE Action-2	Eliminate "grandfathering" of out-of-date energy efficiency standards by requiring implementation of current standards when a property is renovated or changes ownership.		
CE Action-3	Create a system for identifying, defining, and mapping environmentally sensitive areas for their protection.	Analysis	
CE Action-4	Preserve & protect environmentally sensitive areas using a variety of tools including transferable development rights as well as policies and regulations that incentivize greyfield/redevelopment/infill.	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CE Action-5	Create policies and incentives for restoration of damaged natural resources areas.	Policy, Regulations/Incentives	
CE Action-6	Collaborate regionally to align conservation and sustainable development regulations and policies to protect environmentally sensitive areas that cross political boundaries.	Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources</li> </ul>
CE Action-7	Encourage designs and building practices that reduce the environmental impact of development and that result in accessible green space.	Policy, Regulations/Incentives	
CE Action-8	Establish a comprehensive, clear, and consistent process to evaluate the environmental effects of new development.		
CE Action-9	Develop an educational and awards program to showcase best practices in sustainable and low-impact development and achievements or innovations in waste reduction and recycling.	Programmatic	
CE Action-10	Create print and online educational materials to expand public awareness of the benefits of environmental protection, simple steps to improve protection, and common threats to avoid.	Programmatic	
CE Action-11	Continue to include environmental planners, landscape architects, and the City of Austin arborist in the development review process.	Analysis, Regulations & Incentives	

Conservation and Environment / Building Block 4			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CE Action-12	Identify existing areas with limited access to parks, open space, and trails and create mechanisms to address these gaps.		
CE Action-13	Develop regulations and incentives to protect prime farmland such as transferable development rights.	Programmatic	
CE Action-14	Support local farmers by creating incentives and removing regulatory barriers, offering tailored small business support, and creating public information campaigns to promote local food.	Analysis, Regulations & Incentives	
CE Action-15	Expand existing and facilitate the establishment of new distribution avenues for local farm products.	Programmatic	
CE Action-16	Identify and map food deserts and provide incentives for full service grocery stores and farmers markets to locate in these underserved areas.	Analysis, Regulations & Incentives	
CE Action-17	Expand the City of Austin's acquisition of environmentally significant land, conservation easements, and/or development rights for the protection of sensitive areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- floodplains</li> <li>- riparian areas</li> <li>- wetlands</li> <li>- prairies</li> <li>- land that supports recharge of the Edwards Aquifer</li> <li>- wildlife habitat and corridors</li> <li>- bottomland forests and priority woodlands</li> <li>- critical environmental features</li> </ul>	Analysis, Policy, Capital Expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CE Action-18	Develop and implement unified, comprehensive land management of all City of Austin lands for integrated environmental sustainability, including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity and education.	Programmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CE Action-19	Continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with universities and local schools to integrate educational programs with conservation and sustainability policies and projects.	Coordination	
CE Action-20	Create a regional task force to address inter-jurisdictional environmental sustainability issues.	Coordination	

Conservation and Environment / Building Block 4			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CE Action-21	Create a trails master plan to ensure connectivity and provide consistency with regional, city and neighborhood level trail and transportation goals. These goals may include providing pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and destinations, incorporating trails throughout the city and region, and using protected land along creeks and floodplains in an environmentally sustainable way.	Coordination, Policy, Programmatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city.</li> </ul>
CE Action-22	Review tree planting regulations to ensure that invasive species are not permitted. Create incentives to remove invasive plant species and replace them with native species.	Analysis, Regulations & Incentives	
CE Action-23	Create a heritage tree inventory and monitoring system to create stronger mechanisms for protecting heritage trees.	Analysis, Regulations & Incentives	
CE Action-24	Strengthen tree protection regulations.	Policy, Regulations	
CE Action-25	Create an urban forest plan to that identifies tree canopy goals, establishes a budget, and presents implementation measures.	Regulations & Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> </ul>
CE Action-26	Strengthen regulations that protect creeks and floodplains from development by increasing buffer zones and reducing the amount and type of development allowed in these areas.	Policy, Regulations & Incentives	
CE Action-27	Reduce pollution hotspots and prohibit high-emission uses (e.g. scrap yards, automotive repair, etc.) in floodplains and critical water quality zones.	Policy, Regulations & Incentives	

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-1	Expand the City of Austin's acquisition of environmentally significant land, conservation easements, and/or development rights for the protection of sensitive areas, including:	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources</li> </ul>
CFS Action-2	Limit, buffer, or prohibit public access to certain environmentally sensitive areas to maintain their value (i.e. wildlife protection and erosion control).	Regulation	
CFS Action-3	Expand equitable access for people and their pets to active and passive parks throughout the city by carefully targeting new parks where most needed and developing public access agreements with non-City-owned parks and open space, including school playgrounds.	Coordination	
CFS Action-4	Establish pocket parks, smaller undeveloped preserves, and passive recreational spaces in areas with little open space.	CIP	
CFS Action-5	Explore additional funding sources for the design, construction, and maintenance of parks, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- user fees</li> <li>- rental fees</li> <li>- additional grant opportunities</li> <li>- additional levy</li> <li>- reinvestment of revenue generated in parks</li> <li>- through partnerships</li> </ul>	Analysis, CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
CFS Action-6	Ensure adequate funding for the maintenance of parks and trees on City of Austin property through passive maintenance practices and prioritizing the maintenance of existing parks over the development of new ones.	CIP	
CFS Action-7	Create and expand partnerships between local organizations and the City of Austin to maintain and improve local parks and open spaces.	Coordination	
CFS Action-8	Revise tree planting and tree care standards to be more sustainable and reduce tree mortality.	Regulation	
CFS Action-9	Restore trees and vegetation along degraded waterways, especially in eastern watersheds.	CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> </ul>

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-10	Create a trails master plan to ensure connectivity and provide consistency with regional, city and neighborhood-level trail and transportation goals to provide pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods and destinations; incorporate trails throughout the city and region; and use protected land along creeks and floodplains in an environmentally sustainable way	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city. 8. Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
CFS Action-11	Develop, through a process engaging the general public and professionals, context-sensitive trail, park, and greenway standards to ensure high-quality, environmentally-sustainable design.	Policy	
CFS Action-12	Develop multi-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional planning teams for projects that involve major natural features, such as the Colorado River or Onion Creek Greenway.	Coordination	
CFS Action-13	Incorporate public art and interpretive signage into green spaces as an educational tool to demonstrate practices such as water conservation, recycling, and low-impact development.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-14	Coordinate amongst City of Austin departments and other agencies to market recreational programs and health related awareness campaigns.	Coordination, Programmatic	
CFS Action-15	Strengthen police ties to the community, including more personal interaction, to enhance safety and build trust.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-16	Coordinate performance measures across public safety agencies to better plan for additional facilities, units, and staffing and to provide better oversight and service to all parts of Austin as the city grows.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-17	Develop and promote online and interactive mapping, analysis and notification tools to provide recent data related to public safety issues and natural disaster threats.	Analysis	
CFS Action-18	Develop or enhance public safety educational programs in the community regarding topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- personal safety</li> <li>- drug use, especially among youth</li> <li>- fire dangers for property within or near the wildland interface</li> <li>- police and fire procedure awareness.</li> </ul>	Programmatic	

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-19	Conduct and maintain a comprehensive existing Austin Fire Department and Austin-Travis County Emergency Management Services building condition report to assess the need for remodeling, expansion, replacement, or consolidation of facilities.	Analysis	
CFS Action-20	Ensure that land development policies, regulations and design standards take public safety issues like roadway connectivity, ingress/egress and street design into consideration.	Policy	
CFS Action-21	Develop an integrated emergency mitigation and response plan through coordination with our public and private sector regional partners: -Surrounding municipalities and counties -School districts, colleges, and universities -Major employers -Hospitals -Regional agencies such as Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) and Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Cap Metro) -State of Texas agencies and departments.	Coordination	
CFS Action-22	Improve communication between City of Austin departments, as well as other local governments and school districts, regarding future facility planning to ensure that opportunities for shared facilities are discussed at the earliest stage of the planning process.	Coordination	
CFS Action-23	Continue expansion of public safety regional service delivery model. This may be accomplished through Interlocal Agreements with surrounding municipalities and agencies or a confederation or consolidation of public safety agency operations.	Coordination	
CFS Action-24	Create a more robust and flexible code enforcement program to improve the quality of housing.	Regulation	

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-25	Develop design standards for public buildings and spaces that promote high-quality community focal points in the areas where they are located. These standards should address issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- re-use of existing structures</li> <li>- LEED certification, including water and energy efficiency</li> <li>- low impact development</li> <li>- resource recovery such as recycling, composting, and reuse</li> <li>- trees planting, preservation, and protection</li> <li>- green spaces</li> <li>- transit access</li> <li>- carshare/electric vehicle parking spaces</li> <li>- bikesharing and bike facilities</li> <li>- safe, connected walkways</li> <li>- public spaces inside and outside of buildings</li> <li>- anchoring neighborhood niches.</li> </ul>	Policy, Programmatic	
CFS Action-26	Ensure the City's bidding and design processes achieve superior design and promote quality construction of parks, buildings, and other City of Austin facilities.	Policy	
CFS Action-27	Cluster and, where appropriate, co-locate public facilities and programs to reduce costs.	Policy, CIP	
CFS Action-28	Increase access to and awareness of City of Austin services and public spaces through new tools and technologies, including web-based services and self-service kiosks.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-29	Create a world-class library system by upgrading and expanding library facilities, collections, and public computer access.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system</li> </ul>
CFS Action-30	Seek opportunities to align water, energy, and waste conservation/reduction funding, education, and incentives.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-31	Provide tools, education, and assistance for utility users to better understand the environmental impacts their water and energy use, and waste generation.	Programmatic	

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-32	Adopt and implement the Zero Waste Strategic Plan and Solid Waste Services Master Plan to divert 90% of waste from landfills and incinerators by 2040, with particular attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- expanding diversion opportunities such as recycling and composting for residents and businesses;</li> <li>- supporting resale, refurbishing, and reuse opportunities throughout Austin;</li> <li>- fostering public awareness of Zero Waste through education, recognition, and incentive programs;</li> <li>- assessing the current capacity of waste diversion facilities to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map.</li> </ul>	Analysis	
CFS Action-33	Maintain a safe and reliable energy system and improve Austin's air quality and lower greenhouse gas emissions through continued review and adoption alternative fuel sources and energy storage technologies.	Programmatic, CIP	
CFS Action-34	Maintain Austin Energy's financial stability and affordable energy rates while encouraging conservation and funding increased energy efficiency and conservation incentives.	Regulation	
CFS Action-35	Maintain superior energy efficiency standards and requirements for new construction.	Regulation	
CFS Action-36	Align policies, incentives, regulations, service area extensions, and infrastructure to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map, maintain Austin's livability and affordability, protect environmentally sensitive areas, and sustainably manage Austin's water resources. Include consideration of diverse water sources and conservation and efficiency measures when planning for future demand for potable water.	Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources</li> </ul>
CFS Action-37	Create a green infrastructure plan for public land or in public rights-of-way to preserve Austin's ecosystem, improve the water cycle, reduce the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, enrich public space, and provide for traffic calming. Examples include open space, trails, wetlands, green streets, infiltration facilities, and the urban forest.	Policy, CIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city.</li> </ul>

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-38	Incentivize and promote low-impact development designs and techniques on private land that preserve key environmental features, reduce runoff and the use of potable water for plantings and increase stormwater infiltration. Examples include rainwater harvesting, porous pavement, rain gardens, and green roofs.	Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CFS Action-39	Strengthen water conservation programs to lower water use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions using new tools, incentives, and regulations.	Regulation & incentives	
CFS Action-40	Develop incentives and coordinate regulations to promote innovative water and greywater re-use options for building and site design, landscape maintenance, and agricultural irrigation.	Regulation & incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CFS Action-41	Establish regulations, programs, and funding sources to allow offsite stormwater detention and water quality controls to be used in concert with green infrastructure and low-impact development techniques in areas identified for compact, walkable development or redevelopment and identify opportunities for recreational uses and habitat creation or restoration.	Coordination	
CFS Action-42	Study and implement, as appropriate, decentralized wastewater management tools that locate processing closer to the re-use site, such as package plants and satellite facilities, to reduce fixed infrastructure costs.	Analysis	
CFS Action-43	Participate in national, state, and local efforts to identify, assess, and reduce emerging contaminants in water, such as pharmaceuticals and personal care products.	Programmatic	
CFS Action-44	Strengthen flood control, erosion, and water quality programs, regulations, and enforcement to incorporate best practices and meet or exceed national standards.	Programmatic	

City Facilities and Services / Building Block 5			
Label	Action Idea	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
CFS Action-45	Maintain and expand water quality regulations to protect recharge zones, floodplains, creeks and their headwaters, and other environmentally sensitive areas: -Increased buffers and setbacks -Restricted land uses with significant spill risks in sensitive environmental areas -Changes in allowed impervious cover.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a green infrastructure program to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.</li> <li>• Prepare for Austin's changing climate by sustainably managing our water resources.</li> </ul>
CFS Action-46	Collaborate with regional water providers to identify and reduce service overlaps and coordinate access to main water sources, including groundwater.	Coordination	
Society / Building Block 6			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-1	Support wellness and prevention education in schools and the general public to reduce the burden on primary care.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
Soc Action-2	Expand programs providing discounted transit fares for economically disadvantaged citizens, disabled individuals, and seniors.		
Soc Action-3	Collaborate with counties, the hospital district, and school districts to dedicate funding to mental health & substance abuse programming.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
Soc Action-4	Partner with healthcare providers to identify areas with limited access to adequate health services and develop regulations and policies to promote the clustering of medical facilities (i.e., clinics, and trauma and specialty care) in these areas.		
Soc Action-5	Increase public awareness of social services programs and healthcare options through the use of such devices as dedicated healthcare information lines, non-verbal flashcards, mobile preventative care vans, etc., to increase access to social resources, specifically: -Mental Health -Substance Abuse -HIV care -Homeless/basic needs -Prenatal education -Child development -Adult basic education & literacy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
Soc Action-6	Partner with healthcare providers such as hospitals and clinics in the region to develop and implement strategies to increase the affordability and access to healthcare, including:		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>

**Society / Building Block 6**

Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-7	Develop standard procedures for partnering with neighborhood and community groups, school districts, and citizens to share responsibility for development, rehab, upkeep, and programming public facilities.		
Soc Action-8	<p>Make locally-grown produce and locally-produced foods more accessible, particularly in areas with limited access to fresh produce by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Removing zoning barriers to the development of small grocery stores in residential areas;</li> <li>- Improving access to fresh, healthy foods in areas where it is currently not available;</li> <li>- Facilitating communication between farmers, distributors, and food stores;</li> <li>- Encouraging signage that identifies locally-grown food;</li> <li>- Identifying and removing barriers to establishing and expanding farmers markets;</li> <li>- Providing incentives for local community gardens and small urban farms;</li> <li>- Allowing small-scale food processing in the city;</li> <li>- Using city property and schools for neighborhood gardens;</li> <li>- Keeping and up-to-date list available of community gardens;</li> <li>- Working with Meals on Wheels to provide food access to older citizens.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
Soc Action-9	Increase the ethnic and racial diversity and bilingual and multilingual abilities of law enforcement and other first responders and healthcare staff, and increase opportunities for city staff to learn languages other than English.		
Soc Action-10	Continue and expand the reverse 911 to inform residents of public safety emergencies.		
Soc Action-11	Increase safety patrols in gathering spaces and along pedestrian routes--trails, walking paths, school tracks.		
Soc Action-12	Publish and publicize a list of emergency contacts to develop closer relationships between public safety personnel and the community.		

Society / Building Block 6			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-13	Extend the assignments of public safety professionals in a given geographic area in order to build stronger community relationships.		
Soc Action-14	Support the development of a community-wide electronic health information system.		
Soc Action-15	Expand collaboration among law enforcement personnel and service providers of marginalized populations.		
Soc Action-16	Maintain and expand city programs that promote the safety, prosperity, and integration of immigrants and refugees and their families.		
Soc Action-17	Develop the capacity of geographically-based communities of interest (i.e., neighborhood associations, community organizations, schools) to take ownership of their areas and share information and best practices with one another to achieve shared goals.		
Soc Action-18	Provide free wi-fi across Austin in indoor and outdoor public spaces.		
Soc Action-19	Develop informational materials and programs to promote the culture and history of Austin's diverse neighborhoods.		
Soc Action-20	Reduce homelessness in the City of Austin by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanding the recuperative care program for the homeless;</li> <li>- Incorporating recommendations of the current homeless and mental health task forces;</li> <li>- Reducing regulatory barriers of the development of housing for the homeless.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
Soc Action-21	Coordinate between all the organizations providing services to the homeless community to maximize the efficacy of limited resources.		
Soc Action-22	Promote the development of housing opportunities that support persons transitioning from homelessness and other barriers to housing stability.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
Soc Action-23	Support social services that provide financial support to families who are losing their homes.		
Soc Action-24	Locate supportive housing (i.e., housing with supportive services such as financial counseling, medical facilities, and child care) for families with children in areas of the city with under-enrolled schools.		

Society / Building Block 6			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-25	Investigate the feasibility of creating a program of city-owned housing, including but not limited to, cooperative, affordable and permanent supportive housing.		
Soc Action-26	Regulate the geographic distribution and operation of group homes for the disabled, homeless, and other individuals needing supportive housing.		
Soc Action-27	Expand mentoring and tutoring programs to help school-aged children improve their academic performance and develop essential life skills.		
Soc Action-28	Expand the availability of early childhood education and daycare services and programs for all residents, especially for middle and low income households and for those with children with disabilities, and fund through a modest fee or sliding-fee structure.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system</li> </ul>
Soc Action-29	Allow public and private sector use of underutilized schools and other public facilities for child care, educational programs, healthy living programs, and neighborhood activities.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system.</li> <li>• Create a healthy and active city</li> </ul>
Soc Action-30	Work with child care providers, school districts, local businesses, and non-profits to make widely available throughout Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) affordable and accessible child care, early education, preschool, afterschool, and summer programs.		
Soc Action-31	Partner with businesses to offer incentives to child-care, early education and preschool programs that locate in underserved areas and near employment centers.		
Soc Action-32	Explore funding opportunities to offer financial assistance or scholarships to low and moderate income families for early childhood education and child-care.		
Soc Action-33	Create opportunities for public-private partnerships to increase direct involvement by city departments, such as Parks & Recreation, in childcare and after-school programming.		
Soc Action-34	Partner with local school districts, colleges, universities, and vocational schools to expand the availability of evening and weekend continuing education and higher education classes.		
Soc Action-35	Develop a youth student leadership program that involves students in community planning and implementation.		

Society / Building Block 6			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-36	Partner with businesses to develop a comprehensive education program for all ages that focuses on the range of skills (i.e., literacy, interpersonal skills, and vocational skills) needed to for gainful employment.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system.</li> </ul>
Soc Action-37	Develop programs to aid children transitioning out of the foster care system.		
Soc Action-38	Make programs available for children and adult immigrants regardless of their legal status.		
Soc Action-39	Partner with school districts to expand educational opportunities to meet the needs of current and emerging industries, the safety needs of the public sector, as well as those of the skilled trades.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> <li>• Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in its workforce and education system.</li> </ul>
Soc Action-40	Partner with the University of Texas Department of Diversity and Community Involvement and the UT Department of Education when designing community based education programs.		
Soc Action-41	Explore leasing and cost-sharing agreements between the Austin Independent School District and the City of Austin to facilitate under-capacity schools and under-funded programs to remain open and in operation.		
Soc Action-42	Create the capacity within the City of Austin to partner with school districts, community organizations, and the private sector to increase collaboration at school campuses.		
Soc Action-43	Develop seamless, coordinated relationships between school districts, community colleges, other higher education institutions, to integrate and minimize lack of funding for better educational community opportunities.		
Soc Action-44	Support better integration of education from pre-kindergarten through higher education.		
Soc Action-45	Develop educational and public information programs focusing on promoting nutrition, healthy food, and local food sources.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a healthy and active city.</li> </ul>

Society / Building Block 6			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Soc Action-46	Work with local school districts to use locally-grown produce and increase the quality and nutritional value of food served to school aged young people.		
Soc Action-47	Work with local health providers to develop educational materials and programs for use in schools and the community about the dangers of tobacco use and promote available cessation resources.		
Soc Action-48	Promote tobacco free multifamily housing which share common walls, such as apartments, duplexes, townhouses, rowhouses, and condominiums.		
Soc Action-49	Promote tobacco-free environments and tobacco-free living.		
Culture / Building Block 7			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Cul Action-1	<p>Create a City of Austin function to oversee all arts, cultural and heritage programs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identifying funding sources for the arts</li> <li>- promoting the economic impact of arts and culture</li> <li>- publicizing best practice success stories</li> <li>- developing an advertising program and a website to promote local talent</li> <li>- creating an annual awards program for local artists</li> <li>- developing a branding campaign for arts and culture in Austin</li> <li>- developing a mapping and wayfinding system for arts, cultural, and historic resources</li> <li>- developing a cultural exchange program to market local artists regionally, nationally, and internationally</li> <li>- developing impromptu and non-traditional venues for an art and cultural exhibits and performances</li> <li>- facilitating the inclusion of public art.</li> </ul>	Programmatic, Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> </ul>
Cul Action-2	Incorporate arts and cultural preservation components into small area plans, such as neighborhood and corridor plans.	Programmatic	
Cul Action-3	Create incentives, regulations, and programs to promote the inclusion of public art into new development.		
Cul Action-4	Cultivate cultural and heritage education and tourism by marketing and promoting Austin's museums, libraries, historic sites and venues, and providing education and training to frontline tourism workers.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> </ul>

Culture / Building Block 7			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Cul Action-5	Promote the use of non-traditional venues (such as parks, schools, streets and vacant buildings) for impromptu and small scale performances and events, such as jugglers, dancers, mimes, actors, storytellers, poets, and performance artists.		
Cul Action-6	Collaborate with the transportation companies to develop special event transportation plans to mitigate traffic congestion associated with these events.		
Cul Action-7	Promote the development and expansion of cultural facilities and programming, including libraries, museums, parks, performing art venues and community centers.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> </ul>
Cul Action-8	Develop programs to promote Austin's diverse cultural heritage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Cultural events and venues</li> <li>-A city-wide multi-cultural festival</li> <li>-Culture-based tourism</li> <li>-Educational materials</li> </ul>		
Cul Action-9	Develop and invest in intergenerational art education partnerships and programming between schools, artists, arts and cultural organizations, libraries, neighborhood associations, and senior programs to provide life-long exposure to the arts.		
Cul Action-10	Develop regulations to mitigate the sound from live music venues through a collaborative process that includes the City of Austin, musicians, venue operators, property owners, and residents.		
Cul Action-11	Create incentives and programs to preserve iconic and established music venues and performance spaces throughout Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).		
Cul Action-12	Increase funding sources (grants, private and public funding programs) and non-financial support (business recruitment, business expansion and retention, workforce development) to sustain and expand the creative industry sector.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> </ul>
Cul Action-13	Establish incentives and regulations to promote the creation of artists' live/work space in residential areas that allow for limited gallery space.		

Culture / Building Block 7			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Cul Action-14	Develop programs and incentives to provide flexible, affordable work space and housing throughout Austin with an emphasis placed on locations in Transit Oriented Developments, Downtown, and mixed use centers and corridors for artists and creative professionals: -Live-work space -Home-based businesses -Temporary lease agreements in multi-use venues (schools, vacant buildings, warehouses, etc.).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a comprehensive update to Austin's Land Development Code to create a compact and connected city.</li> <li>• Invest in a compact and connected Austin.</li> <li>• Expand and invest in Austin's creative economy.</li> <li>• Develop affordable housing throughout Austin.</li> </ul>
Cul Action-15	Create programs and incentives and develop partnerships between the City of Austin, artists and members of the creative community, businesses, developers, and arts education and cultural institutions to provide more public and private exhibition space for local artists, students' exhibitions, and cultural events at such places as parks, public buildings, plazas, office and commercial buildings, as well as vacant buildings.		
Cul Action-16	Support programs to engage the business development community (i.e. business recruitment, business expansion and retention and workforce development) to assist creative economy start-ups and to develop business and management skills.		
Cul Action-17	Expand existing programs and identify funding sources to provide affordable physical and mental health care, housing and other support services for artists, musicians and others in the creative community.		
Cul Action-18	Coordinate with the different creative industry job sectors and area school districts, trade and vocational schools, colleges, and universities to develop and expand educational curricula to support the creative industries.		
Cul Action-19	Facilitate partnerships to connect artists with artist residency opportunities to provide workforce support for the creative community.		

Culture / Building Block 7			
Label	Action	Action Type	Priority Program(s)
Cul Action-20	Create incentives and develop funding mechanisms and regulations to promote the rehabilitation, reuse, and maintenance of historically designated properties: -Grants -Tax incentives -Flexible building requirements -Revolving loan sources -Fee waivers -Fast-track permitting		
Cul Action-21	Conduct ongoing updates to the historic and cultural resource survey and inventory to include iconic heritage trees, sites, structures, and districts.		
Cul Action-22	Develop and implement straightforward and transparent preservation strategies, guidelines, and regulations for historic areas, sites and structures, and cultural resources that preserves Austin's heritage, while being respectful of the local character, community values, and of the desires of property owners.		
Cul Action-23	Develop a program that acknowledges and rewards notable contemporary and historic architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design: - create an annual award for excellence in design - sponsor a design studio - develop a mapping and wayfinding system		

## USING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Imagine Austin is an overarching plan that sets the direction for how the city operates. It offers a wide-ranging framework of policies, programs, and actions to guide City decision-making. This plan works in concert with other plans. A complete planning framework consists of a coordinated system of plans at different scales and purposes. The comprehensive plan lays the foundation for a new generation of plans tailored to specific areas or issues. These plans bring the “30,000-foot perspective” of the comprehensive plan down to ground level, filling in details for its application in different areas of the city. If, during these planning processes, new conditions or issues are discovered which require reconsideration of Imagine Austin's recommendations, an amendment to the comprehensive plan may be considered by the City Council to ensure Imagine Austin's ongoing viability.

### CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING PLANS & ZONING

Austin has a number of master and area plans. Master plans provide detailed guidance for city systems (e.g., our parks system, watersheds, and waste management). Area plans guide decisions within small geographic areas (e.g., station areas, corridors, and neighborhoods). Although these plans were adopted prior to Imagine Austin, many of their goals and strategies are in alignment with those of the comprehensive plan. These documents were reviewed during Imagine Austin's development, and their recommendations—particularly for future land use—were taken into account during the development of the Growth Concept Map. Imagine Austin generally is consistent with existing plans. Plans that are attached to the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan will continue to be attached to Imagine Austin (see Appendix X).

Zoning decisions will be guided by Imagine Austin's vision, policies, and Growth Concept Map. Where an adopted area plan exists (neighborhood, station area, corridor, or other plan), requests for rezoning will be reviewed in the context of the adopted plan and decisions should be consistent with its Future Land Use Map (or alternate, if one exists).

Imagine Austin will guide updates to existing master and area plans. When updated, these plans will receive additional review to ensure that their directions support Imagine Austin. Inconsistencies will be addressed through plan updates or amendments considered and approved by the City Council.

### NEW PLANS

As city departments develop new plans, Imagine Austin will be used as the overarching policy document that informs all plans and promotes consistency across departmental planning. Development of these plans should include cross-departmental coordination and public involvement.

Many parts of Austin do not have existing plans. In these locations, Imagine Austin will be used as the starting point for developing new small area plans that implement the comprehensive plan's policies.

## LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS / CAPACITY BUILDING

The City of Austin cannot implement Imagine Austin by itself. To successfully implement the plan, partnerships between the City of Austin and other organizations and individuals will be necessary. This will include public/private and public/public partnerships; partnerships with non-profit organizations; and developing coalitions with our regional partners to address mutual concerns.

These partnerships may also require capacity building such as grants or other direct assistance to develop training, leadership, programs, revenue generation strategies, and community engagement. By providing assistance to partner organizations, their resources can be leveraged to implement some actions while freeing up resources to implement others.

## REGIONAL COORDINATION

Central Texas is becoming an increasingly interdependent region with natural systems and urban environments crossing political boundaries. If we are to address the region's collective concerns and realize Imagine Austin's vision we must collaborate with surrounding municipalities and counties. Within our city limits we can encourage sustainable growth patterns, but low-density development outside the city will undercut those efforts. For example, the best efforts within Austin's corporate limits to protect the Edwards Aquifer's will suffer without a regional commitment to similar targets. Collaboration and shared goals can improve the region's quality of life and competitiveness by providing such things as seamless transportation and open space connections. Cooperation can also increase the efficiency and reduce the cost of services by practices such as sharing of resources and coordination or consolidation of duplicative services.

## FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION-MAKING

As potential capital improvement projects, budget priorities, bond packages, programs, regulatory changes, initiatives, plans, and even zoning cases are considered, it will be important for the City to have clear and objective decision-making criteria. The following checklist can be used to extend and refine the Imagine Austin vision, making it easier to use for departmental decision-making. The checklist can also be used by other organizations seeking funding to guide the development of their projects and programs to increase the likelihood of funding. As part of the comprehensive plan's annual review, changes may be made to the checklist as conditions and priorities change.

Note: These are potential indicators for discussion of usefulness / feasibility of measuring. Ideally, baseline values should be included in the plan. We should also review whether targets should be set in the plan for the indicators. If setting targets is unmanageable, maybe we can just indicate which direction the indicator should move in for a positive outcome (up or down).

### **Natural and Sustainable**

- o The proposal adds to or enhances the city's green infrastructure system.
- o The proposal reduces water or energy demands, uses or generates alternative energy, or provides alternative transportation options.
- o The proposal encourages sustainable development patterns, such as compact and walkable places, use of public transit, infill development, or reuse of previously developed sites.

### **Prosperous**

- o The proposal creates jobs or serves a need in an industry that is not currently represented in its neighborhood or in the city at large.
- o The proposal develops new technologies or makes technology more widely available.
- o The proposal provides job training or skills development.

### **Livable**

- o The proposal is designed to increase the perception of safety.
- o The proposal includes affordable housing.
- o The proposal is within a half mile of a neighborhood anchor, such as a school, library, train station, community center, park, or recreation center.
- o The proposal achieves the highest standard of design.
- o The proposal preserves cultural resources.

### **Mobile & Interconnected**

- o The proposal increases transportation options.
- o The proposal provides connections to multiple modes of transportation.
- o The proposal provides connections to community centers.

### **Educated**

- o The proposal provides educational opportunities.
- o The proposal is supported by a partnership with a neighborhood school.
- o The proposal is supported by a partnership with a college or university.

### **Creative**

- o The proposal involves events or creates proposals that cater to residents and visitors.
- o The proposal provides arts or cultural activities supported by the community.

### **A Community that Values and Respects People**

- o The proposal increases access to park, library, public safety, or health and human services facilities.
- o The proposal increases the variety of housing types available in its neighborhood.
- o The proposal provides an opportunity engage grassroots stakeholders and community members.
- o The proposal has a champion and is sponsored by a City agency.

### **Additional Criteria**

- o The proposal coincides with or enhances already funded proposals.
- o The proposal reduces life cycle costs or facility maintenance and management.
- o The applicant has site control, or commitments for control have been made.
- o The proposal is attractive to other funders or has a credible, long-term funding plan.
- o A realistic timeframe has been identified, and all significant obstacles to achieving that timeframe have been addressed.
- o The proposal is highly visible or presents a unique set of opportunities.
- o The proposal is planned to stimulate increased tourism or to enhance the tourist experience.

## **DOCUMENTING PROGRESS: PLAN MONITORING AND REVIEW**

It is important for the Austin community to demonstrate that the comprehensive plan is being implemented by tracking and measuring progress. An ongoing monitoring process will evaluate Imagine Austin's effectiveness and keep City Council, Planning Commission, the city administration and departments, partner organizations, and the public informed. This process will allow us to recognize where we need to make adjustments to the implementation programs to steer change in the desired direction.

### **ANNUAL REPORT**

An annual report will be submitted to the Mayor, City Council, and Planning Commission, which assesses the progress in achieving the vision and goals of Imagine Austin. The annual report is a tool for measuring progress and providing updates to the comprehensive plan that respond to changing circumstances. The report will include:

- Projects and policies implemented and the alignment of those projects and policies with the goals of the plan
- An annotated matrix indicating the implementation status of each action program
- Project and policy priorities for the coming year
- Proposed attachments or amendments to the plan, for consideration by City Council
- Key indicators and changes from the previous year

## COMPLETE COMMUNITIES INDICATORS

Collecting consistent, comprehensive data is key to demonstrating the plan's progress. The indicators below provide ways for the City of Austin and its partners to measure progress using available data. As new data and measurement techniques become available or as circumstances change, existing indicators may be removed and new indicators added. All indicators should be calculated for the planning area at the time of adoption. This will ensure consistency and comparability from year to year, even if City boundaries change. Indicators highlighted in red will also be calculated for seven geographic subareas for comparison. Indicators will be presented as numeric results. Indicator mapping may be integrated into a small area planning process.

### Natural and Sustainable

- Developed land (square miles)
- Mixed-use development (percent)
- Impervious cover (percent)
- Parks and open space (acres or acres per capita)
- Water consumption (millions of gallons per day)
- Development within the Edwards Aquifer recharge and contributing zones (square miles)
- Development within the 100-year floodplain (square miles)
- Population within X distance of park/open space (percent)

### Prosperous

- Employment density (jobs per square mile)
- Economic output (dollars)
- Job/housing balance (ratio of jobs to people)
- Employment rate (percent)
- Tax revenue (dollars)
- Population within X distance of retail and mixed-use centers (percent)

### Livable

- Residential density (people per square mile)
- Median housing values (dollars, in different parts of city)
- Median rent (dollars, in different parts of city)
- Residents who are overweight/obese (percent)
- Community gardens/plots
- Neighborhood crime rates
- Population within X distance of full-service supermarket/grocery store (percent)

## Mobile & Interconnected

- Transit ridership (percentage of trips)
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Average transit headways (minutes)
- Sidewalks (miles)
- Bicycle lanes (miles)
- Jobs within X minutes of transit (percent)
- Population within X distance of transit (percent)

## Educated

- High-school graduation rate (percent)
- Residents with undergraduate and graduate degrees (percent)
- Standardized test scores: TAKS, SAT, AP (in relation to neighboring jurisdictions, state, and nation)
- Number of and enrollment in continuing education programs and programs for seniors
- Population within X distance of a school (percent)

## Creative

- Dedicated municipal funding for arts (dollars per capita)
- Private funding for arts (dollars)
- Arts programs in schools and neighborhood recreation centers
- Attendance at arts/cultural events
- Money brought into economy from arts/cultural events
- Population within X distance of art/cultural venue (percent)

## A Community that Values and Respects People

- Population that travels outside Austin for work (percent)
- Public safety response times (minutes)
- Population within X distance of medical services (percent)