

EAST 51ST STREET VISION PLAN

Executive Summary



M U E L L E R

AUSTIN, TEXAS

EAST 51ST STREET VISION PLAN

Summary of Recommendations

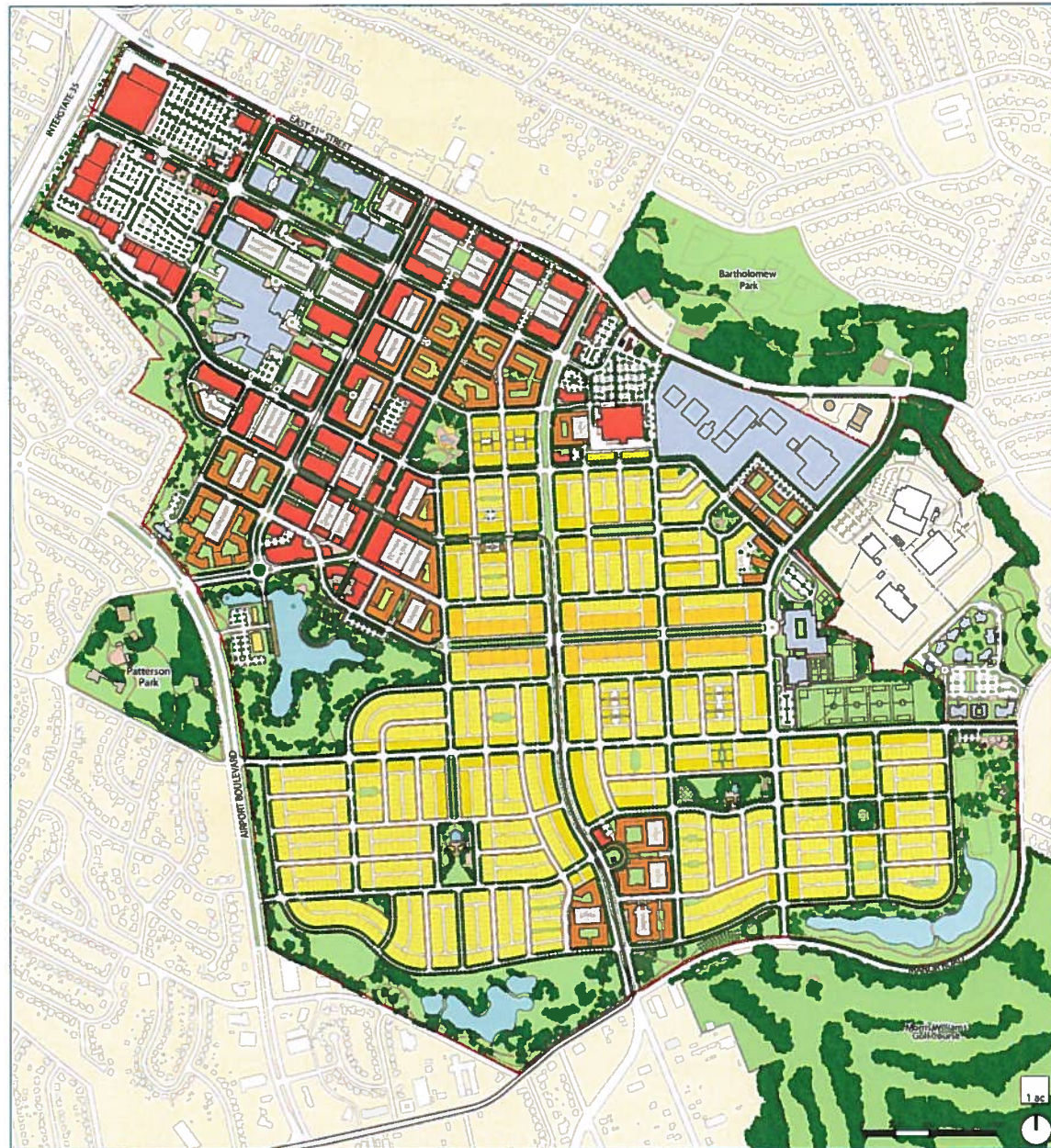


AUSTIN TEXAS

**PREPARED FOR CATELLUS AUSTIN, LLC
BY McCANN ADAMS STUDIO IN ASSOCIATION WITH KINNEY & ASSOCIATES**

FEBRUARY 14, 2012

Figure 1:
Mueller Illustrative 2011



BACKGROUND

A fundamental goal of the new Mueller community is that it should contribute positively to the quality of life of surrounding neighborhoods. Rather than a place apart, it has always been envisioned as a seamless extension of the neighborhood fabric, offering new amenities, appropriate transitions and connections, while creating a more intensive and diverse pattern of uses. Along the eastern, western and southern edges of the development, a continuous greenway with water quality and detention ponds provides an attractive trail system that links the adjacent neighborhoods with Patterson and Bartholomew Parks and the Morris Williams Golf Course, a goal first established in the 1984 CARE plan, authored by the surrounding neighborhoods.

The 51st Street frontage along the northern edge of Mueller has a more urban character; the Master Plan provides for mixed-use development oriented to a multi-use trail with connections to the perimeter greenway system (Figure 1). The 2000 Reuse and Redevelopment Plan, and the subsequent 2004 Design Book which was incorporated into the City's Development Agreement with Mueller's master developer Catellus, calls for 51st Street to be reserved as a multi-modal boulevard with provisions for future urban rail along a center median. As such, the Plan requires new Mueller development to step back from the existing 51st Street property line by 60-feet, to reserve future right-of-way for urban rail. The Plan identifies an interim condition for the street, and a future ultimate condition to accommodate urban rail (Figure 2).

With the planned development of AISD's Performing Arts Center at the corner of Mueller Boulevard and 51st Street, and with the City's urban rail plan nearing completion, the attention to 51st Street's role and design has re-emerged and questions have arisen: is the concept of exclusive-running urban rail along the median of the street consistent

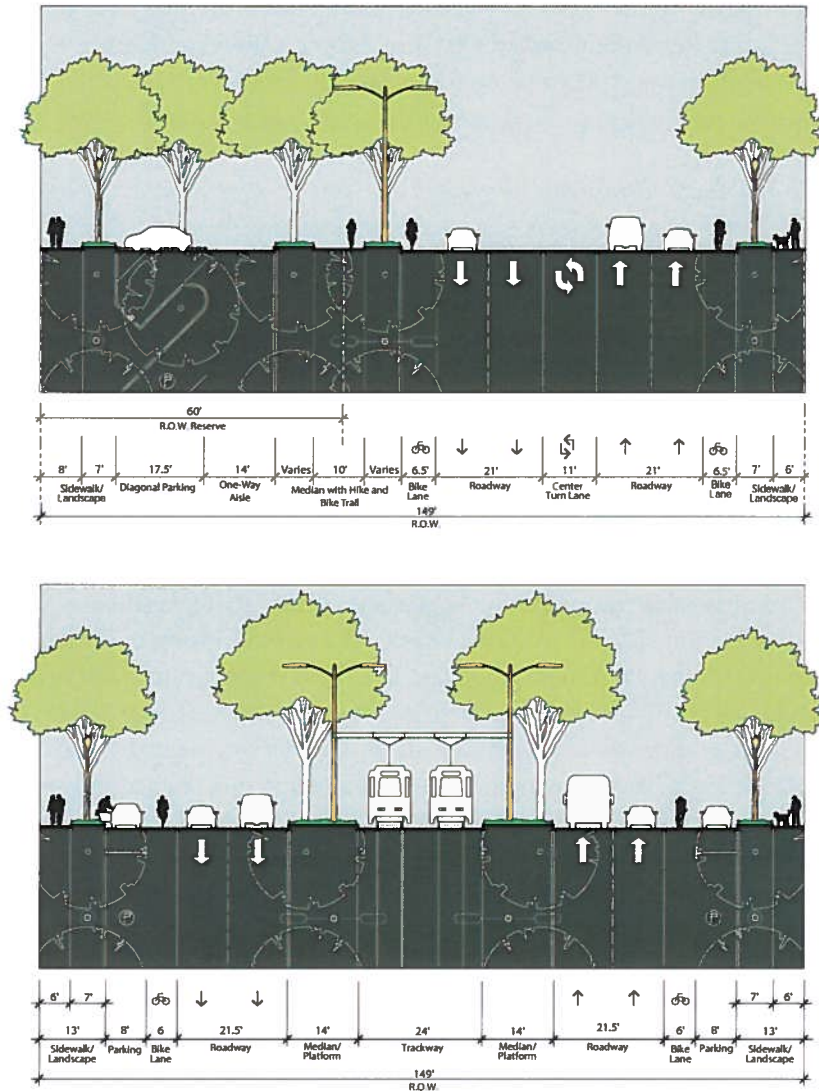


Figure 2:
51st Street Interim and Ultimate Conditions

with the City's rail plan, and is such a street consistent with the vision of the adjoining neighborhoods, particularly that of Windsor Park immediately to the north and Mueller to the south? In the spring of 2011, Catellus commissioned McCann Adams Studio and Kinney & Associates to undertake a planning and design process to re-visit the question of 51st Street. The goal of the study was articulated as follows:

"To establish a coordinated vision for East 51st Street between IH 35 and Old Manor Road, where the street provides important frontage for both the Mueller and Windsor Park neighborhoods. Through this effort, a dialogue will be established among key stakeholders to develop recommendations that can guide future public and private sector investment toward the realization of the vision."

Planning Process

A Working Group consisting of key neighborhood stakeholders, property owners transportation agencies and the City of Austin was assembled to guide the planning effort. (A complete listing of Working Group members is provided on page 11). Two workshop sessions were held with the Working Group in September and November of 2011. The first of these sessions provided an overview of existing plans and policies, issues and opportunities, and culminated in a brainstorming of design strategies for the street and the nature of development alongside. The second session focused on specific recommendations and the proposed design of the street cross section.

To inform these Working Group sessions, separate focus group meetings were held to discuss specific issues and topics. These included:

- A work session on August 17th with transportation agencies (TxDOT, CAMPO, Capital Metro and the City of Austin) to discuss plans and policies related to 51st Street;

- A work session on August 29th with representatives from the Windsor Park/University Hills Neighborhood Contact Team to discuss the neighborhood's vision for the corridor and the policies of their neighborhood plan, which was adopted in 2007; and
- Work sessions with key property owners (e.g., PromiseLand Church, Our Lady of Maronite Church and The University of Texas) to discuss their respective Master Plans and to review preliminary recommendations and concepts.

During the planning process, two presentations were made to the Mueller Plan Implementation Advisory Commission (PIAC) to inform them of the status of work and to receive input. In addition, presentations were made to the Windsor Park Neighborhood Association and have been scheduled for the Mueller Neighborhood Association.

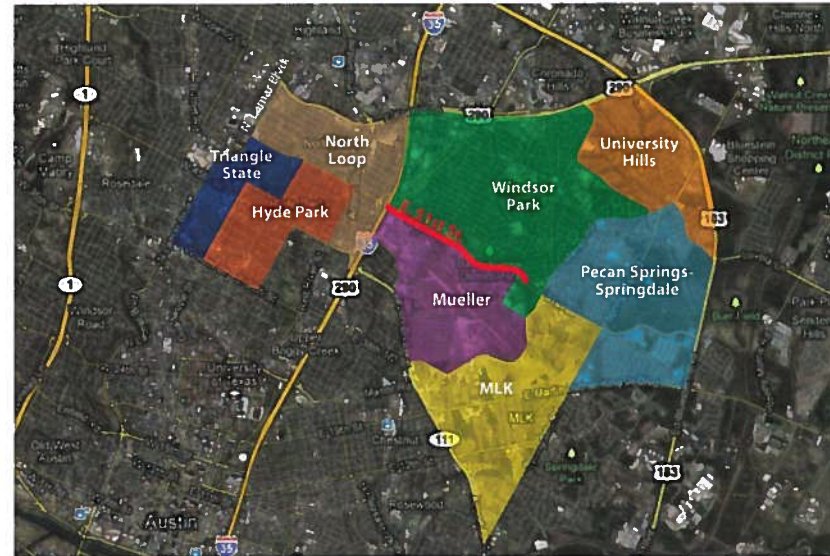


Figure 3:
51st Street Regional Context

THE VISION FOR 51ST STREET

At the first workshop with the Working Group, a series of questions were asked to help establish a coordinated vision for the corridor. Through a visual preference exercise, the Working Group expressed the following opinions:

- **What transportation role should 51st street play in the future?** Traffic should be calmed and speeds reduced. West of Berkman Drive, on-street “teaser” parking should be provided on both sides of the street to encourage ground floor retail uses. A wide landscaped median should be introduced to reduce the perceived width of the street in this segment, and to provide for safer pedestrian crossings. Canopy trees should be planted to provide generous shade.



- **What kind of bicycle facilities should 51st Street have (bike lanes, off-street trails and/or separated cycle tracks)?**

Separated cycle tracks were preferred by most of the Working Group, because of the reduced conflict with moving traffic and parked cars. The need for a continuous bike lane along the length of the entire 51st Street corridor was emphasized.



- **What kind of sidewalks should 51st Street have (a hike and bike trail, or a more urban sidewalk with development activities alongside)?**

The group felt strongly that the segment of the street west of Berkman should be more urban with wide sidewalks and lots of pedestrian-friendly uses on both sides of the street. East of Berkman, a hike and bike trail was felt to be appropriate to extend the parkway character of Bartholomew Park and to provide connectivity with the Mueller greenway system.



- **What would make 51st Street beautiful (a wide street with lots of greenery, or a street framed by great buildings)?**

A majority of the Working Group felt that the segment of the street east of Berkman should be characterized by landscaping and greenery, while the portion to the west should be framed by buildings that offer spatial definition and pedestrian activity. The group felt that the height of buildings needs to be carefully considered to promote an appropriate transition to the neighborhood to the north.



- **Should on-street parking be provided on 51st Street, and if so how?**

Most of the Working Group strongly favored on-street parking west of Berkman Drive to support active retail and neighborhood-serving uses. Parallel or diagonal parking were deemed to be acceptable, as long as bulb-outs could be provided to reduce the width of pedestrian crossings.



- **How should buildings contribute to the street (residential uses that put “eyes on the street”, active retail and restaurant uses, a combination of live and work uses, or uses set back for landscape and greenery)?**

Consistent with the responses above, a majority of the Working Group felt strongly that retail and restaurant uses, office and a combination of live and work uses should be encouraged along both sides of the street west of Berkman Drive. They emphasized the need for buildings to be oriented and built to the street to reinforce the pedestrian character of the corridor.



When asked to describe their highest single priority for the street, half of the respondents emphasized the need for activities to bring life and vitality to the corridor. A quarter of the group felt that the most important priority was to calm traffic to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists. Others called for reducing the width of the street to make it easier to cross. Only a small minority felt that the top priority should be to ensure more efficient traffic flows.

As a result of this input, the following three vision statements were established for the street:



VISION STATEMENT 1:

51ST Street is a multi-modal urban street that accommodates safe pedestrian and bicycle movement as well as calm vehicular traffic.



VISION STATEMENT 2:

51st Street west of Berkman Drive is lined with buildings and developments that promote a safe, interesting and lively pedestrian environment, with strong linkages and an appropriate scale transition to the Windsor Park neighborhood.



VISION STATEMENT 3:

East of Berkman Drive, 51st Street is a narrow parkway with generous landscaping, bike lanes and trails alongside.



*51st Street from the
corner of Mueller
Boulevard looking east.*



PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

With the Working Group reaching significant consensus on the vision of the corridor, the consultants explored various cross sections for the street with the City of Austin's Transportation Department and its Planning and Development Review Department. Policy recommendations for development were also prepared in tandem with recommendations for the design of the street and the right-of-way. The following describes the recommended street design and development policies for the segment of the street east of Berkman Drive, the segment between Berkman Drive and Lancaster Drive, and for the westernmost segment between Lancaster and IH 35.

East of Berkman Drive to Old Manor Road

- The segment of the roadway between Berkman Drive and Old Manor Road should be re-striped within the existing curbs as a three-lane roadway with continuous curbside bike lanes; and a continuous tree-lined sidewalk or trail on each side of the street (Figure 4). (Note: For continuity, it is assumed that the City will extend this striping eastward to Manor Road).
- New Mueller buildings 75 feet or more east of the Berkman Drive intersection, should be set back from 51st Street by at least 40 feet with generous landscaping and trails that extend the park setting of Bartholomew Park.
- Surface parking lots should be well-screened with trees and landscaping and set back from the property line by at least 10 feet.

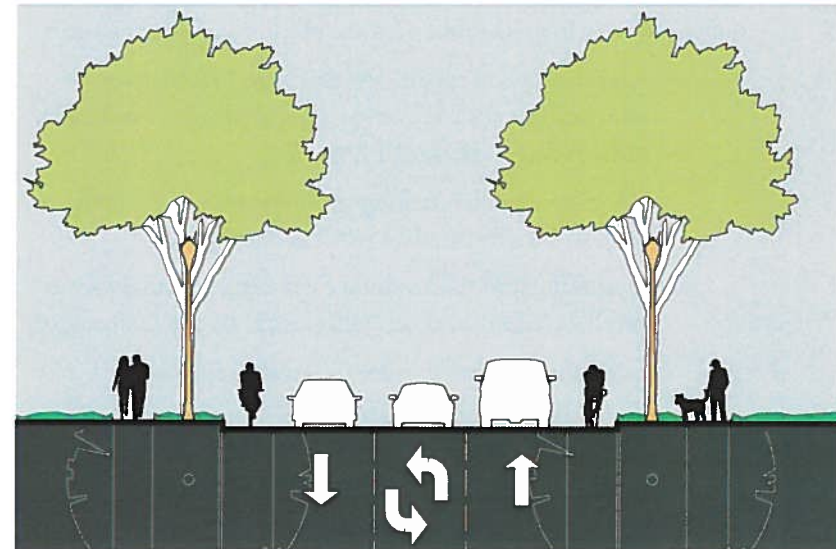


Figure 4:
Manor Road East of Berkman Drive Re-striped



East of the Berkman intersection development should be set back by at least 40 feet and screened with generous landscaping.

Berkman Drive to Lancaster Drive

- Between Lancaster Drive and Berkman Drive, Mueller's 60-foot urban reserve for future rail should be removed and the cross section of 51st Street should be retrofitted to include (Figure 5):
 - A landscaped median with (left turn lanes) at key intersections (i.e., Lancaster Drive, Mueller Boulevard, Aldrich Street, Berkman Drive);
 - On-street parallel parking on both sides of the street to support local businesses (see bullet below);
 - One-way cycle tracks along each curb, separated from parallel parking and vehicular traffic by a raised median;
 - Generous tree-lined sidewalks; and
 - Pedestrian cross walks with intersection bulb-outs and median refuge areas.
- In 2007, the Austin City Council adopted a policy (Resolution No. 20070125-016) requiring a 10-foot maneuvering lane adjacent to parallel parking stalls on streets where the posted speed limit exceeds 35 miles per hour. Since, the posted speed limit for this segment of East 51st Street is 40 miles per hour and since the desire of the community is to reduce the perceived and actual width of the street, it is recommended that the posted speed limit be reduced to 35 miles per hour. In order to accomplish this, a study should be undertaken to show that traffic speeds will naturally reduce to 35 miles per hour or less, with the active uses and enhanced bicycle and pedestrian environment proposed for the corridor. With approval of a reduced posted traffic speed, an engineering report will then be required by the City to demonstrate that the proposed location and configuration of parallel parking spaces will not impact the critical capacity of the street.

- At least 75% of each property's frontage along the south side of 51st Street edge should be lined with office, commercial, residential, shop house or live-work buildings that present their front entries to the street. Parking lots and garages should be screened from predominant view from 51st Street.
- The recommended height of new development within Mueller's existing urban reserve should not exceed 60 feet, to respect the scale of future development on the north side of the street.
- Buildings along the north side of the street should meet the City's Commercial Design Standards set forth in Subchapter E of the Land Development Code.
- New development within 75 feet of the intersections of Lancaster Drive, Mueller Boulevard, Aldrich Street and Berkman Drive should include active ground level commercial

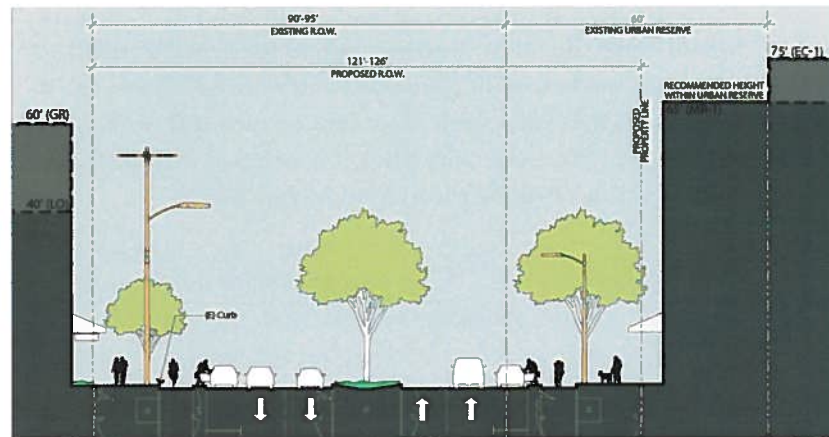


Figure 5:
E. 51st Street Section Lancaster Drive to Berkman Drive

or live-work uses having their primary pedestrian entries oriented to the street. Automobile entries and curb cuts should be minimized to the maximum extent practicable.

- Awnings are encouraged on buildings facing the street to provide shade and rain protection.

West of Lancaster Drive to IH 35

- Between IH 35 and Lancaster Drive, Mueller's 60-foot urban reserve and frontage road should be maintained, but the cross section of 51st Street should be retrofitted to include (Figure 6):
 - A landscaped median with left turn lanes for Home Depot; and

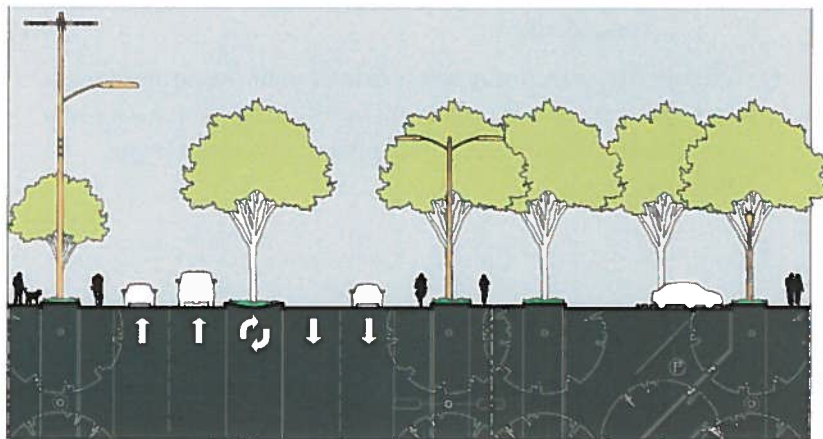


Figure 6:
West of Lancaster Drive to IH 35

- Improved tree-lined sidewalks along the north side of the street to be constructed as adjacent development projects occur.

- At least 35% of each property's frontage along the south side of 51st Street should be lined with office, commercial, residential, shop houses or live-work buildings with their primary or secondary entries oriented to the street. Parking lots should be screened with generous landscaping and situated no closer than 10 feet from the property line. Parking garages shall not be in the dominant viewshed along the frontage.
- New development along the north side of the street should meet the City's Commercial Design Standards set forth in Subchapter E of the Land Development Code.
- New development within 75 feet of the Lancaster Drive intersection should include active ground level commercial or live-work uses having their primary pedestrian entries oriented to the street or to the frontage road along the south side of the street.

Landscape

- Large canopy trees should be incorporated along both sides of the street and in the median to provide a continuous boulevard of green. The feasibility of realigning, upgrading or undergrounding the existing power lines on the north side of 51st Street to reduce their visual and landscape impact should be explored with Austin Energy.

Implementation

- Continue to coordinate with other planning and transportation initiatives in the vicinity of 51st Street including: the Airport Boulevard Transportation Corridor Study and Form Based Code Initiative; TxDOT's improvement of the IH 35/51st Street interchange; and the City of Austin's exploration of traffic circles at Berkman Drive and 51st Street.
- PromiseLand and the Maronite Church should be encouraged to work together to reinforce the overall vision of 51st Street and the University Hills/Windsor Park Neighborhood Plan. The churches have the opportunity to develop master plans aimed at meeting their programmatic needs and guiding future redevelopment in a way that provides for:
 - The orderly replacement of vacant land and surface parking lots with new activities, buildings and open spaces that enhance the pedestrian life and vitality of the corridor;
 - Consolidation and reduction of the number of driveways and curb-cuts along 51st Street to avoid disruption of the pedestrian and cycling environment;
 - Internal streets that break up the large superblock and provide connectivity among properties;
 - Traffic circulation that does not have a negative impact on adjacent neighborhoods; and
 - At least one pedestrian/bicycle trail connection across Tannehill Creek to connect the Windsor Park neighborhood with the 51st Street corridor and Mueller.
- Coordinate with the City of Austin to place the recommended improvements for 51st Street in the 2012 transportation bond package. The project is a very good candidate for the bond package, since it adheres to the guiding principles set forth by the Capital Planning Office and the Bond Election Advisory Task Force. More specifically:
 - The Vision Plan reflects the values and priorities of the City's Comprehensive Plan "*Imagine Austin*", by promoting "connected and pedestrian-friendly patterns" of development that support "transit and urban lifestyles....while protecting and enhancing neighborhoods."
 - It promotes enhanced mobility and transportation choices with improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities;

It will enhance the quality of life for residents and businesses along the corridor; and

It will leverage other funding sources including private infrastructure investment by Catellus and the Mueller development.
- Prepare materials to support a reduction of the posted travel speed on 51st Street, and an engineering report that supports the location of on-street parking between Lancaster and Berkman drives.

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