

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

COPY: Marc A. Ott, City Manager

Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kevin Johns, Director

Economic Development Department

DATE: December 4, 2014

SUBJECT: Report on the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant

On August 7, 2014, City Council passed Resolution No. 20140807-106. The Resolution directed the City Manager to work with community members to develop goals and a vision for the reuse of the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant site. The resolution directed the City Manager to provide a summary of the vision and goals as well as a report summarizing the findings of a site assessment, including recommended project concepts and a possible mechanism to realize the concepts. The attached document is the result of a multi-departmental collaboration led by Economic Development Department to meet the goals of the resolution.

Key findings of the report are:

- Only 6.89 acres of the 47.78 acres are developable due to flood plains and water quality zones
- Austin Water Utility work will likely impact the ability to develop the site until FY 2021
- Constrained vehicular access to the site largely prevents commercial and retail uses
- The site is suitable for multifamily residential or community based uses
- The site has been identified as a priority for development of greenway and trail development
- Community members identified four goals that could be met through redevelopment of the site
 - o Food access and food security such as a farmers market and community gardens
 - o Secondary education and workforce training facilities
 - o Recreational opportunities such as a nature center or youth activity center
 - o Pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods, parks and schools

Any redevelopment of the site should be designed in close collaboration with Austin Water Utility, Parks and Recreation and Public Works to maximize the benefit and impact of planned public improvements.

Please feel free to contact me at (512) 974-7802 if we can provide any additional information.

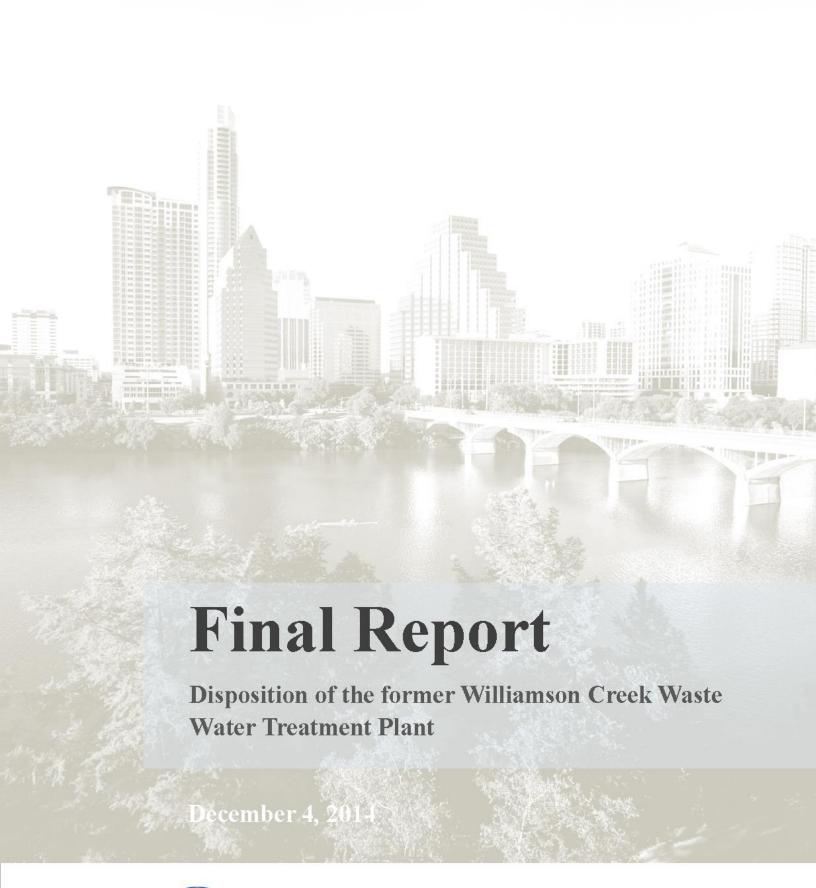




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Executive Summary

On August 7, 2014, City Council passed Resolution No. 20140807-106. The Resolution directed the City Manager to work with community members to develop goals and a vision for the reuse of the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant site. The resolution directed the City Manager to provide a summary of the community vision and goals, a report summarizing the findings of a site assessment, including recommended project concepts and a possible mechanism to realize the concepts.

The site is on the northeast corner of the William Cannon Drive and Pleasant Valley Road intersection and is currently 47.48 acres. Analysis of the site shows that approximately 6.89 acres of the site is not subject to flood plain or other encumbrances and is available for redevelopment. A third party appraisal notes that the highest and best use in terms of property valuation is for residential development and estimates the value of the entirety of the 47.48 acre property at \$1,350,000.

A community outreach effort identified community goals that could be achieved through a development at the site:

- Recreational amenities including youth activity centers and trails / greenbelts
- Food access such as farmers market / grocery store / community gardens
- Secondary education / workforce development
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods

Austin Water Utility (AWU) has developed plans for a large diameter relief interceptor facility to be built through the site and to use the site for staging of the construction of the three-mile long interceptor. The construction of this project is expected to last four to five years and will impact portions of the site during construction. This provides the opportunity for Austin Water Utility and any development partners to design and sequence construction at the site for mutual benefit. The collaboration is critical to ensure a successful and high quality development of the site. Design of the AWU interceptor is expected to take place in 2016, which allows time for the issuance of solicitations to select a development partner to further advance community goals.

Special Thanks

Economic Development Department staff collaborated with numerous City departments including Austin Water Utility, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development Review, Public Works, Transportation, and Watershed Protection. The Office of Real Estate Services, which procured a property appraisal and land plan report played a key role in developing this report. Council Member Laura Morrison and her staff provided key community contacts and sponsorship of the effort. Go! Austin / Vamos! Austin was invaluable in helping design and implement the community outreach effort including providing meeting facilitators. The South East Austin Combined Neighborhood Contact Team enthusiastically hosted the community outreach effort and ensured broad awareness of the event. Dr. Kaufman and the staff of Perez Elementary graciously hosted the event. Austin Independent School District interpreters ensured that all community members were welcome and were able to participate.

Site History

The site is located in the northeast corner of William Cannon Drive and S. Pleasant Valley Road at the confluence of the Williamson and Onion Creeks. In 1962, the City of Austin purchased 500 acres, which included the current site in question and constructed a waste water treatment plant in 1963. The treatment plant was decommissioned in 1985. Over the next 10 years, pieces of the parcel have been sold or swapped for public uses such as athletic fields and golf courses. The remaining parcel to date is approximately 47.48 acres. Up until August of 2013, the parcel had been used for material storage and staging by Austin Water Utility. It is this remnant parcel that is the subject of Resolution No.20140807-106.

Previous Plans and Studies

While the site is not included within the boundary of a City of Austin planning area, it is referenced in the South East Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan adopted by City Council in October 2002. This plan includes the Franklin Park Neighborhood Planning Area, McKinney Planning Area, and Southeast Neighborhood Planning Area, all located to the north and north east of the parcel.

Action Item 76 of the plan calls for the creation of hike and bike trails through the site along Williamson and Onion Creeks to connect IH-35 to the west with McKinney Falls State Park to the east. Additionally, the Park and Recreation Department's Long Range Plan for Land and Facilities identifies land at Williamson and Onion Creek for greenway acquisition and trail development as the number one priority in this area of the City.

In 2010, a study was conducted by the University of Texas, School of Architecture looking at the built environment of the Dove Springs community. The study identified that a triggering factor of local childhood obesity was directly related to conditions of aging suburban neighborhoods suffering from a lack of connectivity, lack of community, and lack of services. Additionally, the Go! Austin/VAMOS! Coalition of residents, community leaders, and non-profits, has identified health and wellness as a deficient factor in communities surrounding the site. This coalition is working to improve the health of these neighborhoods and increase access to and participation in physical activity and improved nutrition. The GAVA group has provided neighborhood analysis and staffing to help fulfill the health and wellness goals of the community.

In 2012, the City of Austin adopted their first comprehensive plan in 30 years. Imagine Austin is the City of Austin's road map for accommodating growth over the next 20 years. According to the Imagine Austin Growth Map, the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plan site is located along two Activity Corridors. Activity Corridors indicate where in an increased density of people, jobs, businesses, and services will be located. William Canon is identified as an Activity Corridor while Pleasant Valley is designated as both an Activity Corridor and proposed high capacity transit corridor. Imagine Austin defines high-capacity transit as a form of transit that has a greater level of service and capacity than typical local bus service. This type of corridor may accommodate rail or bus rapid transit, but in both instances will have dedicated lanes/right-of-way for at least a portion of its route and the ability to change traffic signals to facilitate faster travel times.

Existing Site Conditions

The site is severely impacted by its proximity to Williamson and Onion Creeks. Of the 47.78 acre site, 28.68 acres are within the 100-year flood plain. 42.54 acres of the site are subject to Critical Water Quality Zone regulations. Because of these conditions, the maximum contiguous developable area that can be created through reallocation of water quality buffer areas is 6.89 acres.

Vehicular access to the site is limited to two right in / right out access points: one on William Cannon and one on Pleasant Valley. These limitations are a result of reduced site distances when approaching the intersection and large bridge structures, which provide connectivity over the two adjacent creeks to the William Cannon and Pleasant Valley intersection. Options for U-turns to access the site are limited as both William Cannon and Pleasant Valley have safety medians that extend past the site access points. Construction costs for improvements to allow full turn access are estimated between \$1 million and \$3 million. The Integra Realty Resources (IRR) report notes that these access issues make retail development financially infeasible. Residential or other non-retail uses can be accommodated with right in / right out only access.

The intersection of William Cannon and Pleasant Valley is the highest topographical point in the surrounding neighborhoods. The site slopes downwards from both roads and is 30 feet below street grade at its lowest point. Reuse of the site for residential purposes may require compacted backfill or detention structures.

The site is served by Capital Metro bus routes including the local service 7, the flyer 127 and crosstown 333 with stops nearby the site. A small historic cemetery has been identified on the site. The impacts on development potential are unclear at this time and its exact boundaries are unknown; however, based on the limited information available, the impacts appear to be nominal.





Site photographed from William Cannon Drive

Site Appraisal

In August 2014, IRR completed a market value appraisal of the site at the request of the Office of Real Estate Services. The appraisal noted that of the 47.48 acres, only 6.89 acres are suitable for building or development due to flood plain issues and other significant restrictions. The entirety of the 47.48 acre parcel is appraised at \$1,350,000. The 2013 assessed value of the parcel was \$1,481,650

As part of the IRR appraisal, Hutson Land Planners examined potential development scenarios of the parcel based on existing entitlements, easements, and other regulatory restrictions. The portion of the parcel that is developable is currently zoned Development Reserve (DR) which is a placeholder designation that will not commit land to a particular use or intensity. The land could be effectively rezoned to any designation that fits within Imagine Austin. Because of this designation, the land plan identified five development scenarios ranging from 43 detached residential homes to 70,000 square feet of retail to mixed-use development with 186 multifamily units and 72,000 square feet of commercial space.

IRR applied four tests to the proposed scenarios to determine highest and best use:

- Physically possible
- Legally permissible
- Financially feasible
- Maximally productive

Development of the site for multifamily residential was the only use that met all four tests of highest and best use. It should be further noted that while the site shows adequate demand for retail uses, retail uses would require full turn access to be successful (See Site Conditions section). The estimated construction cost to create the full turn access could exceed the site value, thus making retail financially infeasible from a market perspective.





Photographs illustrating adjacent creek bridge structures

Williamson Creek Relief Interceptor – Austin Water Utility

The site will be impacted by the construction of waste water pipeline to address current capacity issues in the area. Known as the Williamson Creek Relief Interceptor (WCRI), the project is sponsored by Austin Water Utility and is intended to increase the capacity of the existing 48-inch interceptor with18,000 linear feet of a large diameter (66-inch +/-) gravity interceptor. The design of the downstream portion of the project reached 60% completion when the project was put on hold. The project has already paid for engineering services including a geotechnical study and 60% construction plans. AWU is seeking funding to evaluate and complete existing construction drawings in 2016 and is seeking a total of approximately \$30 million from 2017 to 2021 to construct the project. The project is anticipated to be complete in 2021.

The WCRI construction project will require the use of approximately 20% of the developable area for construction staging. An easement through a portion of the developable area to accommodate the Interceptor will be required as well. The construction activities will require vehicular and equipment access via the William Cannon site driveway. Construction activities will have significant practical and logistical impact for the next six years on the site, assuming funding is secured for construction of the project. Any development of the site will need to be carefully coordinated with the WCRI.

WCRI funding schedule as proposed by AWU:

2017	\$425,000		
2018	\$3,800,000 (construction begins)		
2019	\$7,900,000		
2020	\$10,500,000		
2021	\$8,000,000 (construction completed)		

Community Outreach

On October 22, 2014, staff from the Economic Development, Planning and Development Review, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Watershed Protection, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Code, and Health and Human Services departments held a community visioning session at Perez Elementary School, which is located one mile from the site. The event was held in conjunction with a specially called meeting of the South East Austin Combined Neighborhood Contact Team with assistance from Go! Austin /Vamos! Austin.

The meeting was kicked-off by members of the South Austin Combined Neighborhood contact team with opening remarks from Council Member Laura Morrison. Staff then presented information about the site with a recap of previous community discussions and plans. Approximately 50 community members and attendees then broke out into four facilitated discussion groups, including groups with real time Spanish language interpretation.

Discussion groups were given an hour to meet and were provided with maps of the site, on which they were encouraged to draw and make annotations. A facilitator ensured that the discussion groups were able to work through a set of questions while an assistant captured comments on a flipchart. Participants were also given a survey with open-ended comment spaces to augment the discussion.

Participants were asked to think broadly about their community and identify things they liked about their community and things they would like to change. Once the community goals were identified, the participants then began discussion of which of those goals could be met through physical redevelopment of a parcel. Each discussion group then selected their top three goals and reported them back to the full group at the end of the exercise.

This exercise provided valuable feedback regarding goals for building a complete neighborhood and what role the site could play in that effort. The four community goals most frequently cited by attendees related to the site were:

- Recreational amenities including youth activity centers and trails / greenbelts
- Food access such as farmers market / grocery store / community gardens
- Secondary education / workforce development
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods.

A summary of the community meeting comments is found in Appendix B of this report along with copies of the maps and flipchart notes produced by the discussion groups.

Project Concepts and Mechanism Recommendations

The 6.89 acres of developable land at the site appears to have four potential reuse scenarios that meet the expressed community goals and are consistent with existing planning documents:

- 1) Development as a community centered project related to food access and food security
 - Farmers market
 - Community gardens
 - Appropriately scaled food retailer
- 2) Development as a community centered project related to secondary education and workforce development
 - Community college campus
 - Workforce training facility
 - Employment center
- 3) Development as a community centered project related to youth and recreation activities
 - Environmental education center
 - Community event space
 - Trails and greenbelt facilities
- 4) Development as a residential project as identified as the highest and best use in the IRR appraisal
 - Single or multi-family
 - Affordability goals

Project Implementation

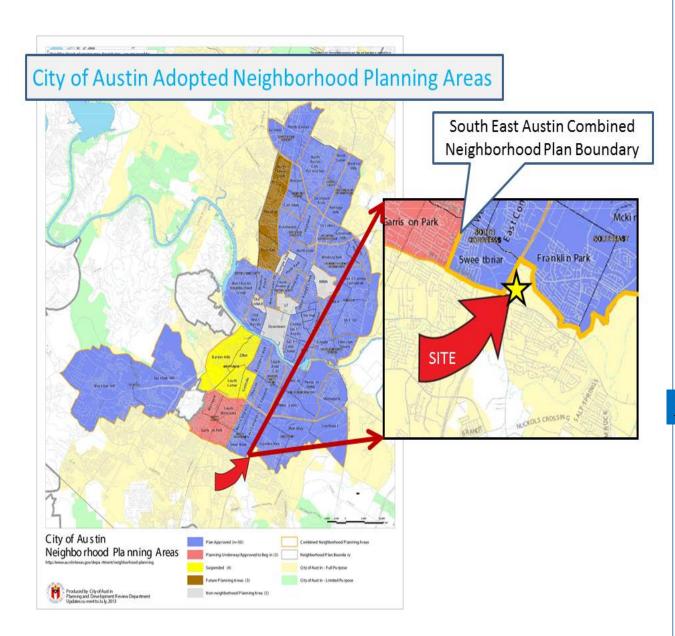
The concepts for the community-centered projects could be implemented in two ways:

- 1) By an appropriate City department through a request for proposals (RFP) process.
 - For example, in this instance an appropriate City department leads the efforts so that a project providing access to food might become a joint effort of the Office of Sustainability, Health and Human Services Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and an external partner, whether a non-profit or a for profit use.
- 2) By a public-private partnership between the City of Austin and the private development community.
 - For example, in this instance a residential project might be accomplished through a request for proposals (RFP) process, which identifies community benefits such as the provision of affordable units in the solicitation.

It is the strong recommendation of staff that any development of the site be designed in collaboration with Austin Water Utility's Lower Williamson Creek Relief Interceptor Project and the Williamson and Onion Creek trails effort. Collaborative design will help aid in the proactive coordination of public facilities and their locations, sequencing of construction and strategies for the sale and subdivision of the parcel for the mutual benefit of all parties. The design and construction of the above mentioned items without the coordination and cooperation of all interested parties, will likely result in a suboptimal project.

Attachment A – Site Maps

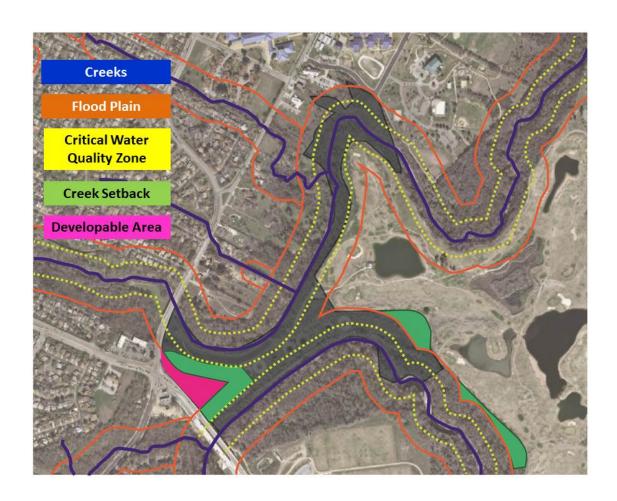
Map 1 – Site Location in Context of Neighborhood Plans



Map 2 – Site location



Map 3 – Site with relevant creek overlays



Attachment B – Community Meeting Report

Community Meeting Report

On October 22, 2014 from 6:30–8 p.m., the Economic Development Department convened a community meeting to discuss the future of the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant Site. The meeting, held at Perez Elementary School, had approximately 50 people attend.

Purpose:

Engage community members and stakeholders in a discussion about the goals and vision of the former Williamson Creek Waste water Treatment Plant Site.

Meeting Goals:

- Share the history of previous outreach for the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Provide information about site conditions/challenges/opportunities.
- Identify community gaps
- Identify community goals that could inform a vision Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant Site.

Format:

The meeting began with a "Welcome & Meeting Purpose" from the South East Austin Combined Neighborhood Contact Team, followed by "Background Information & Activity Briefing" from Council Member Morrison and Peter Zeiler with the Economic Development Department. After the introduction, the attendees participated in a Breakout Session where they had 50 minutes to discuss topics related to their neighborhoods and the former Williamson Creek Waste Water Treatment Plant site. During the discussion subject experts from Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Watershed, Parks and Recreation Department, Economic Development Department, Health and Human Services, and Code were present to help answer technical questions, while facilitators and scribes at each table helped record the discussion on large maps and flip charts. Questionnaires were also provided so that participants could record their own thoughts. Each table then selected one representative to Report Back to the group on what their table discussed.

Discussion Questions: (See Table 1 and Table 2 for a summary of the table discussions)

- $f 1_{ullet}$ What do you like about your neighborhood?
- 2. What would you like to see improved in your neighborhood?
- What do you think about the following in your neighborhood?

Higher Education, Economic Prosperity and Workforce Opportunities, Small Food Resources (Farmers Markets, Food Stands, etc.), Activities for Youths and Teens, Neighborhood Connectivity, Community Health

Summary of Meeting Discussion

Table 1: Summary of Question 1 Discussion

What do you like about your neighborhood?	Stakeholder Responses
	Cultural Diversity
	Neighborhood Character
	Amenities: Parks, Green Space
	Recreation Center: Doves Springs
	Schools
	Library
	Fire Station

Table 2: Summary of Ouestions 2 & 3 Discussion

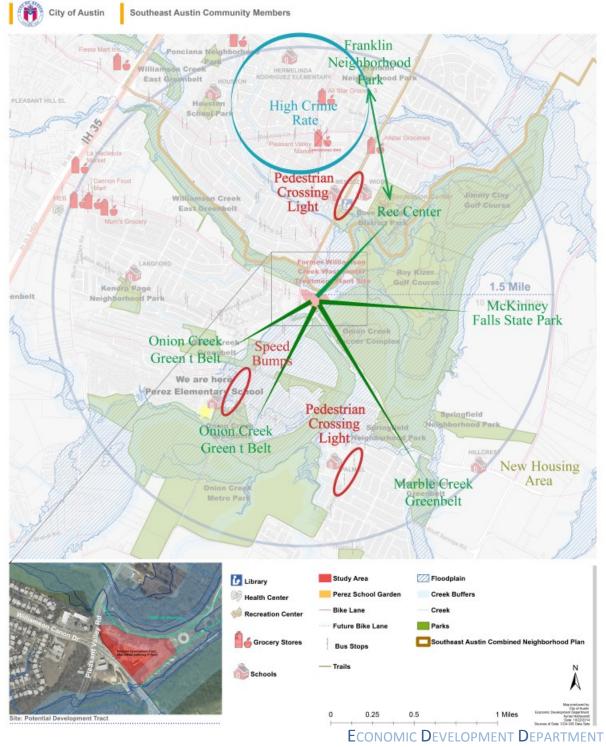
Table 2: Summa	ary of Questions 2 & 3 Disc	cussion		
Topic	What would you like to see improved in your neighborhood?	Additional Comments	Frequency	Total
Higher Education	Secondary education like Austin Community College (ACC) High school	 Job creation Workforce development 	4	6
	Grocery store		4	
Food resources	Farmers market or community garden		4	9
	Food cafés with outside patios		1	
	Trails & Greenbelt	 Trails should connect parks Trails promote wealth on public lands Schools should be able to use trails for educational purposes 	3	10
	Nature center		2	
Recreational Amenities	Parks	 More lighting in parks, Permanent restrooms and showers in parks Recycling in parks More outdoor events Practice space Water foundation in parks Rental space for events Swimming pool Fishing pier 	2	

	Youth activities like millennial youth complex, sport league, and a museum like "The Thinkery" at Mueller.	 Summer job program for youths Free/low cost youth activities School recycling contest Environmental education for kids Areas where kids can hang out Space for both indoor and outdoor 	3	
Community Health	Health Center	 Accessible health clinic (more than currently available) Parenting classes Behavioral health issues Senior Center 	3	3
Connectivity	Walkable and Bikeable Connections	 More Bike lanes (10 min. bike ride anywhere in the area) More sidewalks More lighting More signage More businesses within walking distance 	4	6
	Public transit (Bus shuttle)	- More/improved transit access (CARTS services adjacent neighborhoods only)	2	
	APD Substation	APD presence in parksMore security in parks	2	
Safety	Safe Streets, Safe Crosswalk, and Safe Routes to School	 Crosswalk safety Enforce speed limits around schools Speed bumps for Perez School School zone light flashing Pedestrian crossing light for Palm School 	2	4
Housing	Affordable Housing	- Affordable housing for displaced flood victims like row housing and cottage courts	1	1
Natural Area Preservation	Preserve natural area including the original Dove Spring		1	1
Workforce development	Increase employment opportunities	- Encourage more businesses to hire local community	1	1

Note: The pink cells show the topics have been discussed in all groups

Re-Imagine Public Land As Community Asset:

Former Williamson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Site





Defining a community vision is an important part of the process of becoming a sustainable community. This public meeting allowed local residents to look into the future, and ask themselves what they want their community to be in the future. As shown in the Table 1, three topics – higher education, food resources, and connectivity - have been discussed in all groups. Based on this fact the following visions and goals are recommended:

Food resources

Proposed Vision: Southeast Austin community members can obtain healthy and nutritious food every day to achieve optimal health.

Proposed Goals:

- Improving access by all community members to an adequate, affordable, nutritious, and healthy food.
- Developing food and agriculture-related businesses.

Higher education

Proposed Vision: Southeast Austin community members can have access to higher education and develop this neighborhood as a learning center that meet the needs of the community including career, general, developmental, and transfer education; workforce training; professional development; and lifelong learning.

Proposed Goals:

• Offer professional learning in order to strengthen the community's cultural of professional learning and development.

Connectivity

Proposed Vision: Southeast Austin community members will have access to safe travel space for pedestrian and cyclist. It will connect neighbors to neighbors, parks to parks, and trails to trails to promote healthy and safe lifestyles by encouraging walking and biking as ways of moving from place to place.

Proposed Goals:

- Linking natural places and urban build areas.
- Safe, livable and better build environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

GREEN BELT + TRAILS.

TO IMPROVE

The Crossing (SEE MAP)

The Crossing (SEE MAP)

ON SITE APD Substation (NATURE)

REST ROOMS CENTER

PARK Bldg SHOWERS

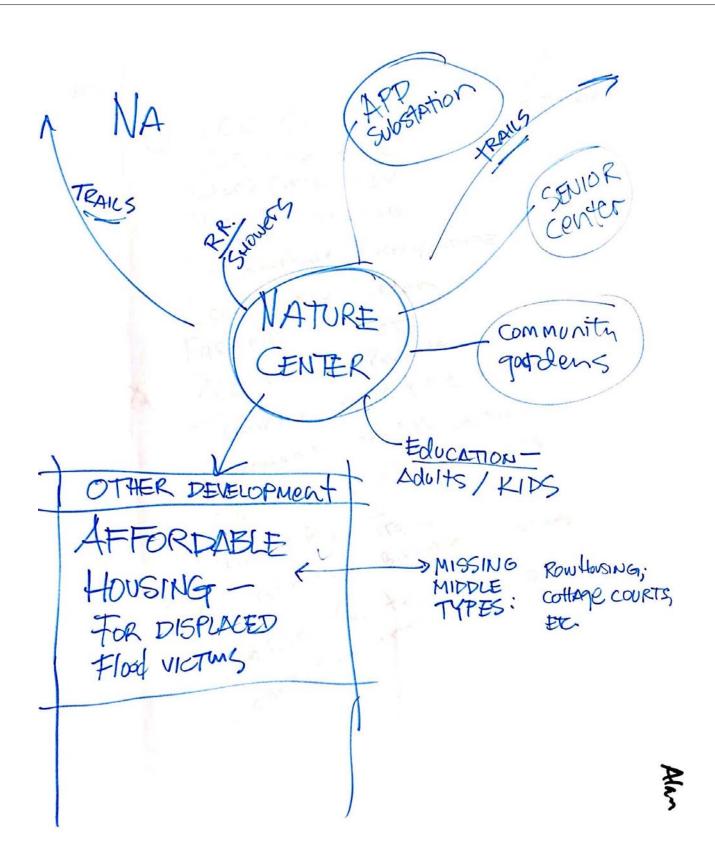
SENIOR CENTER COMMUNITY GARDEN

GROCERY-FROM FOOD,

HEACHING KITCHENS)

LAdult

Education



19

Group B

DACC Campus Vocationa trades
JOR Creation
Workforce Dev SHD EDUCATION Neighborhoud Grocery Sture COMMUNETY Garden FARMERS MARKET The Renter w/Rammater

(oilhead to NC & De w/porking Commonity Health Center Foon (afes w/outside Pation Nice Bike Trail Connections

Sale WALKABLE Bikeable Connections

Value Centeruc to oc

Nature Centeruc to oc

Connection

Connection

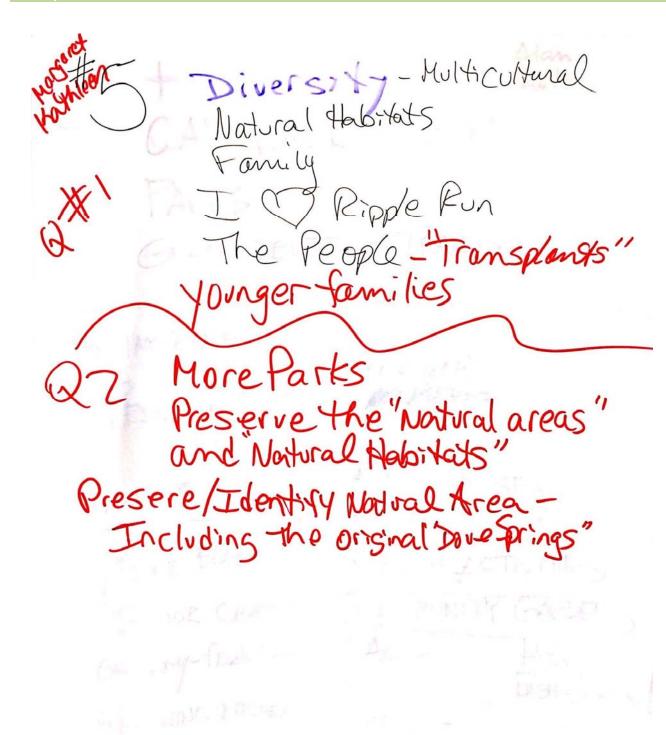
(2) FOOD RESOURCE Community Garden FARMERS Market

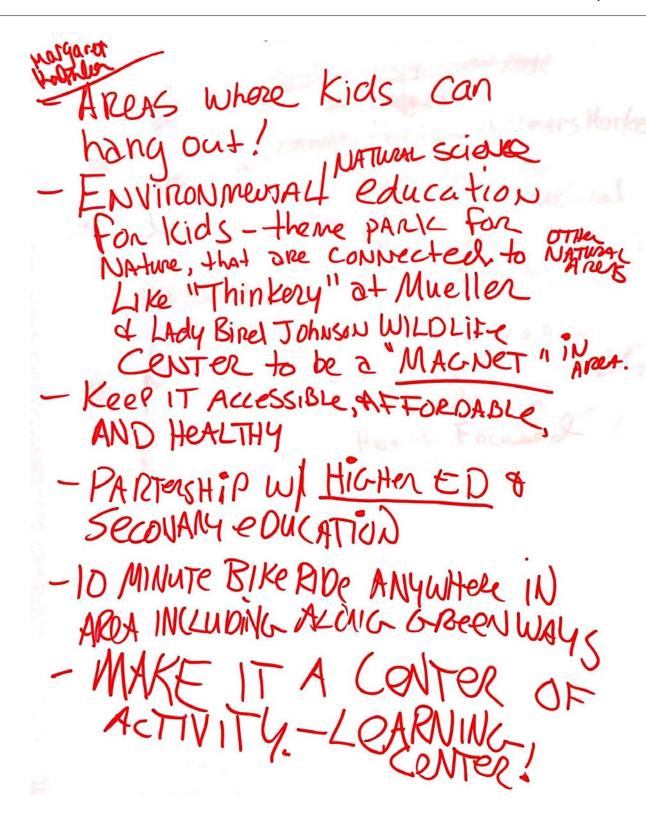
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21

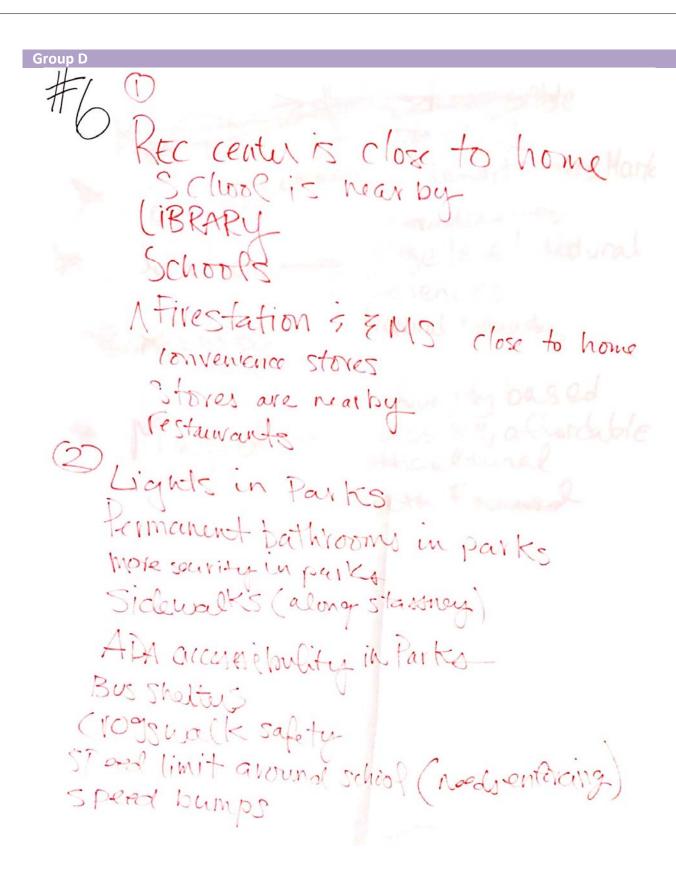
Group C





Margares Carbrary/pool Better transportation/Bus - Invest in more municipal infrastructuro - More WALKAble, bickeddle CONNections - More ScHOOLS - High School - ACC BRANCH - FULL SOLVICE GROGERY - SAFE STREETS / TRAFFIC - Community gardons -SAFE ROUTES to SCHOOL - PROMOTE WE WESS ON Public LANDS/ PARKS, CONNECT HARKS/ CREON BELTS





4 . Edic. Additional genous should be able to use trails for educational purposes
within prop. Ace campus location Summer job program for youlu B. If kids work during summer, more undependent employment understand value of dellar the bive locals heller prepared for house reducation clesive to improve learn C. Activities for youth York activity (with (is. Willenium York Comp Sports based in 14PD) more money in 14PD. more start Free/low cost youth activities Fishing pond would treach patience Recycling in Parks. School recycling contest Cafe enforcement

nove Sidewalts
more lighting
More Signage - way finding
School zone light (flashing) needs
ustallation
more walkable businesses
hove improved transit access
> local CARTS service - just in mighborhood

Hearn

NO SUPPORT GROUPS (AA, NA, ALANO

-> high behavioral health issues

accessible health clinics

-> hore access to ones we have.

Darental classes

1. more youth activities / Space for them Indoor & orddoor.

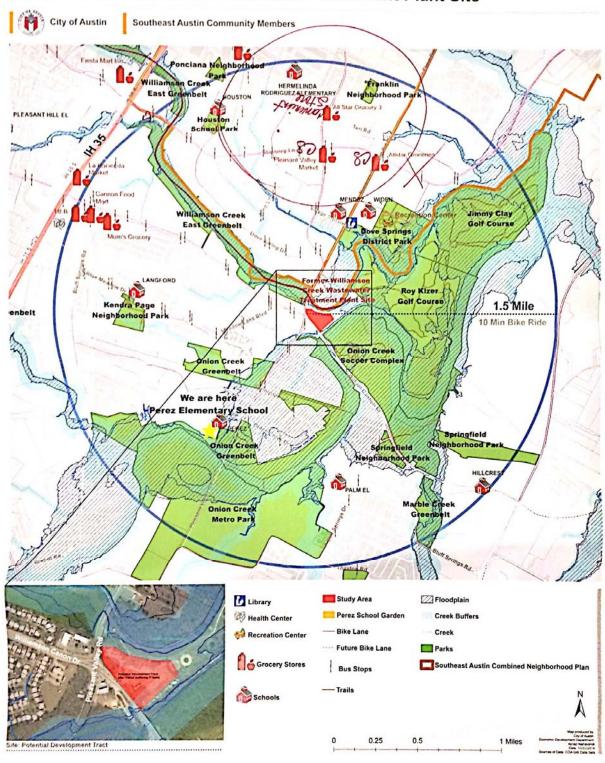
2. More safety for neighborhood - street signet - silwalts - Perch bumps - School zone lights - crosswall

3. More walkable businesses

Jennifer Denton

Re-Imagine Public Land As Community Asset:

Former Williamson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Site



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Former Williamson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant Site

