



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** City of Austin Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Erica Leak, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Review  
Department, 974-2856

**DATE:** February 10, 2010

**RE:** East Riverside Corridor Master Plan (MP 2009-0001)

**C.C. Date:** February 25, 2010

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### **List of Attachments:**

Attachment 1: East Riverside Corridor Master Planning Area Map  
Attachment 2: Staff recommended revisions to the January 2010 Draft East Riverside  
Corridor Master Plan in response to Waterfront Planning Advisory Board  
feedback  
Attachment 3: Affordability Impact Statement memo  
Attachment 4: Public Comments

### **East Riverside Corridor Master Plan Area:**

The East Riverside Corridor Master Plan area includes properties within approximately one-quarter to one-half mile on the north and south sides of East Riverside Drive, bounded by State Highway 71/Ben White Boulevard on the east, and Interstate Highway 35 on the west. Please see map (Attachment 1).

### **Staff Comments:**

The purpose of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan is to guide future redevelopment and city infrastructure improvements so that they are in line with the community's vision for the area. The Master Plan includes land use, urban design, transportation, parks and open space, and infrastructure recommendations. The draft East Riverside Corridor Master Plan was provided to Planning Commissioners on January 8, 2010, and is available online at: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/urbandesign/riversideplan.htm>

### **Related Case:**

A related Code Amendment (Case # C20-2009-013) is being proposed to amend Title 25 of the City Code to amend the Land Development Code (LDC) Chapter 25-2 Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use to reclassify East Riverside Drive between Pleasant Valley Road and Highway 71 from an Urban Roadway to a Core Transit Corridor. The code amendment will be presented for consideration during the same public hearings as this master plan case.

**Background:**

In November of 2007, the Austin City Council selected the consultant team A. Nelessen and Associates, Inc. (ANA) to lead a public input process to develop a master plan for the East Riverside Corridor and establish a vision, plan and implementation strategy for the corridor, including specific land use, urban design, and transportation recommendations. The Master Plan provides land use and urban design recommendations to improve the character and function of the environment of the East Riverside Corridor planning area and identifies infrastructure improvements that may be required to implement the plan.

The first stakeholder meeting was held in June of 2008. Since that meeting, consultants and City staff conducted approximately 10 public and stakeholder meetings. Anton Nelessen of ANA conducted a Visual Preferences Survey at two meetings to solicit input on the appropriateness of various elements for the East Riverside Corridor. A short version of the survey was also available online. Information gathered from community meetings and the Visual Preferences Survey became the foundation for the recommendations in the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends adoption of the proposed East Riverside Corridor Master Plan with staff suggested revisions that are provided in backup.

**Actions by Boards and Commissions:**

The Waterfront Planning Advisory Board voted 7-0 at their January 11, 2010 meeting to not make a recommendation for or against the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. The Board recommended that the Master Plan and future regulations should pay particular attention to the qualities of Lady Bird Lake Waterfront and connectivity in design standards that pertain to the area of the Master Plan that overlaps with the Waterfront Overlay. The design standards' emphasis on the waterfront should include both sides of East Riverside Drive between I-35 and where the Waterfront Overlay boundary diverges from the roadway. The Master Plan should further emphasize the prominence of the lake and its importance to the City and the area.

**Planning Commission Date & Action:**

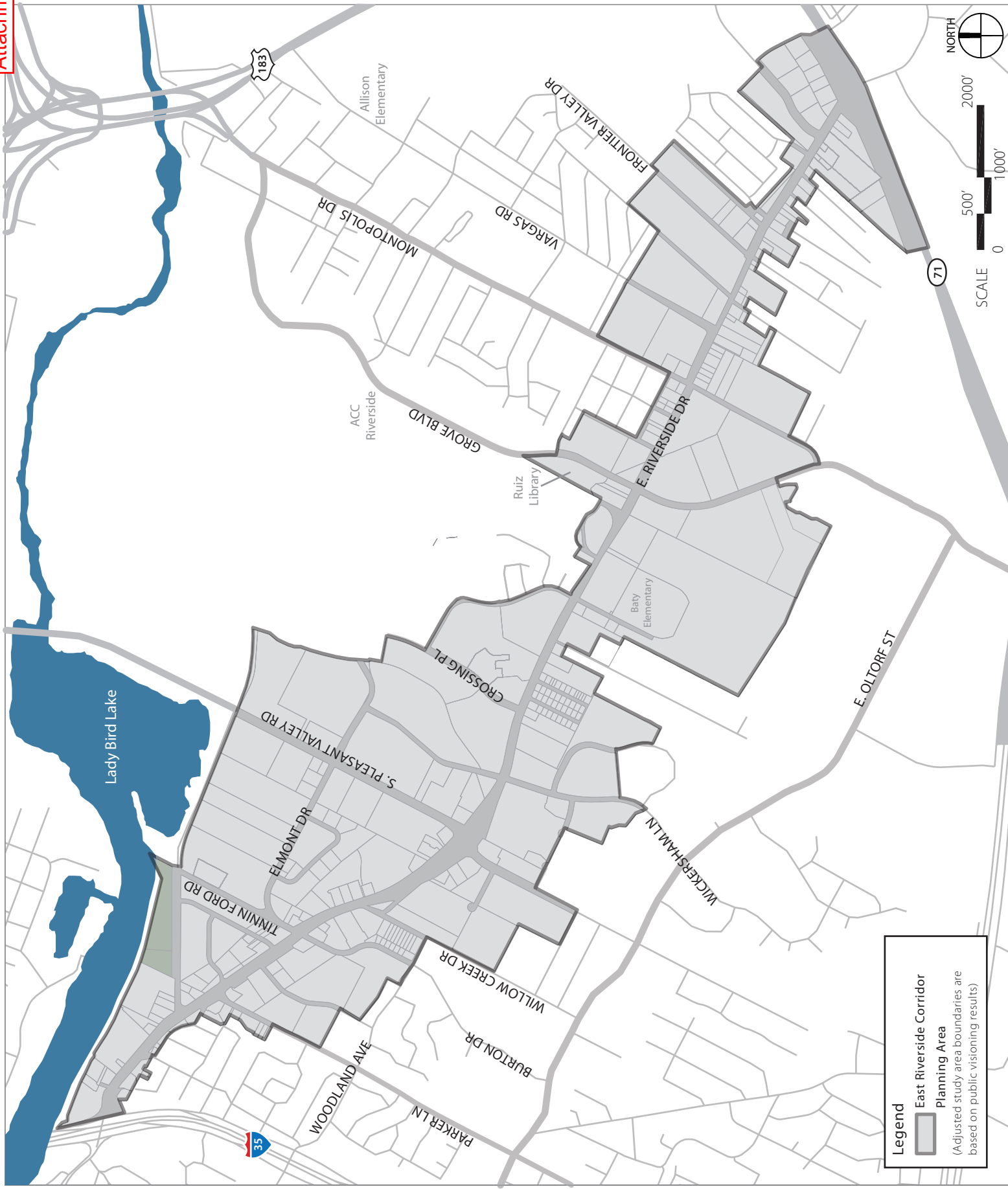
At its Feb. 9th meeting, the Planning Commission voted 8-0 to recommend adoption the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan as an amendment to the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan as recommended by staff, with the following amendments:

- The plan should state that all compatibility standards should apply for all current and future land uses permitted in an SF-5 or more restrictive zoning district.
- The areas in the master plan area that are currently zoned single family should be changed to the Neighborhood Residential land use district.

**City Council Date & Action:**

February 11, 2010: Staff will brief City Council on the draft master plan on Feb. 11, 2010.  
February 25, 2010: The master plan adoption is scheduled for action by City Council on Feb. 25, 2010.

Attachments



## Feedback from the Waterfront Planning Advisory Board

The Waterfront Planning Advisory Board voted 7-0 at their January 11, 2010 meeting to not make a recommendation for or against the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. The Board recommended that the Master Plan and future regulations should pay particular attention to the qualities of Lady Bird Lake Waterfront and connectivity in design standards that pertain to the area of the Master Plan that overlaps with the Waterfront Overlay. The design standards' emphasis on the waterfront should include both sides of East Riverside Drive between I-35 and where the Waterfront Overlay boundary diverges from the roadway. The Master Plan should further emphasize the prominence of the lake and its importance to the City and the area.

## Staff Recommended Revisions to the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan

### Vision Statement, p. v, paragraph 2

The East Riverside Drive Area is comprised of active urban centers along a rail transit line that connects area residents, employees, and visitors with the airport, Lady Bird Lake, downtown, the University of Texas, and the Mueller Redevelopment, in addition to providing local service to amenities along East Riverside Drive itself. Long-time and new residents mix in public spaces created to meet the needs of a diverse population. Significant automobile traffic still travels through the Area, but it does not overshadow the built environment and drivers know when they enter the Area that they are traveling through a distinct and special place. In addition to rail, local and express bus service provides frequent and efficient travel options, making it easy to get around without use of a car. A designated bicycle lane on East Riverside Drive enables cyclists to travel safely through the area and to destinations along the way.

### Vision Statement, p. vi, paragraphs 2 and 3

Street connectivity throughout the Area has been improved, providing more options for traveling by foot, bicycle, or car. Large blocks are broken-up, allowing residents to efficiently walk, bike, or drive to the rail and bus stops, coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, and civic facilities, and Lady Bird Lake without having to travel on major arterials. The secondary street network accommodates local trips within the Area but also enables more options for traveling outside the Area.

Pocket and linear parks, street trees, and other green elements are interspersed among the new development to soften the edges, to integrate the natural with the built environment, and to provide places for residents, employees, and visitors to recreate or simply enjoy the space. Public plazas are dispersed throughout development along East Riverside Drive, providing space for small gatherings, taking in the sun, and eating lunch. A recreational trail system along Country Club Creek provides links to the Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park and the Lady Bird Lake trail system, maintaining balance between the natural and built environments. Xeriscaping is used in open spaces throughout the Area and amenities for kids are provided in offering neighborhood recreation space to families with children to supplement the amenities of Lady Bird Lake on the north side of the East Riverside area.

### Executive Summary, p. viii, paragraph 1

East Riverside Drive is important as a commercial center to an economically and socially diverse group of residents living in proximity to the roadway, in addition to serving as a gateway to downtown. It is an important commercial and residential corridor located a few

minutes from downtown and along a portion of Lady Bird Lake. The Corridor is one of the few direct connections from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) to Downtown Austin and has tremendous potential for redevelopment and renewal, some of which is already beginning to occur. The Corridor currently contains a high percentage of market-rate affordable housing, which unfortunately is affordable in part due to aging multi-family housing stock and a history of economic disinvestment and crime in the area. Private investment and redevelopment is beginning to occur on the edge of the Corridor close to downtown. The challenge for planning in the East Riverside Corridor area is to offer a framework by which public investment and private redevelopment can occur to reinvigorate the area, making it attractive for further investment as a local employment center and transit-supportive neighborhood, while managing to address the needs of all citizens living in the area, now and in the future.

**Executive Summary, p. xii, bullet 3**

- Provide additional street options, allowing residents to efficiently walk, bike, or drive to the rail and bus stops, coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, civic facilities, and Lady Bird Lake without having to travel on major arterials~~so that all traffic is not forced onto major streets~~ and through already overcrowded intersections.

**Executive Summary, p. xiv, new bullet**

- Supports completion of the Country Club Creek trail and closing the gap in the Trail at Lady Bird Lake to improve bicycle and pedestrian access to the waterfront and local and regional destinations.

**Executive Summary, p. xv, bullet 2**

- Provide improved connections between Lady Bird Lake and Roy G. Guererro Park to the East Riverside Corridor and surrounding neighborhoods so that all residents, employees, and visitors to the East Riverside Corridor can have access to and enjoy Austin's treasured waterfront

**Executive Summary, p. xviii, paragraph 2, bullet 8**

- Design buildings with active outdoor space through the use of balconies, patios, courtyards or similar areas, and engage open space amenities such as Lady Bird Lake, public parks, and trails

**Section 1: Introduction, p. 4, paragraph 1**

East Riverside Drive is important as a commercial center to an economically and socially diverse group of residents living in proximity to the roadway, in addition to serving as a gateway to downtown. The strip shopping malls along E. Riverside Drive epitomize the car-dominated environment that is, unfortunately, typical of much of the modern American landscape. The first impression many visitors have of the area is of an expanse of low rise buildings or under-utilized and/or vacant retail space, and the associated surface parking lots. The current appearance of the built features in the area is dominated by a cacophony of commercial signs, blistering parking lot asphalt, and a distinct lack of both quality architecture and landscaping. The Corridor currently contains a high percentage of market-rate affordable housing, which unfortunately is affordable in part due to aging multi-family housing stock and a history of economic disinvestment and crime in the area. Private investment and redevelopment is beginning to occur on the edge of the East Riverside area

close to downtown and one of the city's most important amenities, Lady Bird Lake. The challenge for planning in the East Riverside Corridor area is to offer a framework by which public investment and private redevelopment can occur to reinvigorate the area, making it attractive for further investment as a local employment center and transit supportive neighborhood, while managing to address the needs of all citizens living in the area, now and in the future.

#### **Section 2: Mobility, p. 15, paragraph 4**

These streets are designed to work together to accommodate a mix of vehicle, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, and to create a series of "Main Street" areas in the Corridor, a feature that has been identified as desirable by the public through the planning process. New streets are recommended to be added to the network of existing streets at strategic locations in order to create pedestrian friendly "walkable blocks," allowing residents to efficiently walk, bike, or drive to the rail and bus stops, coffee shops, restaurants, grocery stores, civic facilities, and Lady Bird Lake without having to travel on major arterials-and through already overcrowded intersections. ~~and improve traffic circulation by providing alternative routes for vehicles so that all traffic is not forced onto East Riverside Drive and into already overcrowded intersections for every trip.~~

#### **Section 3: Open Space, p. 28, paragraph 1**

The northwest portion of the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan area is adjacent to the City's treasured Lady Bird Lake Metropolitan Park and Roy G. Guererro Park, but other parts of the Corridor are lacking in open space. Open space provides a range of important benefits: in urban settings it provides gathering places for all types of people and brings life and activity to the street, it preserves natural and environmentally sensitive areas, and it serves recreational and, if properly designed, mobility needs. Public spaces and well-connected neighborhoods play an important role in sustaining social and economic diversity by promoting social interaction on sidewalks and in shared public spaces.

#### **Section 5: Urban Design Guidelines, p. 54, paragraph 8**

##### **Create Active Outdoor Space and Engage Open Space Amenities**

Buildings should incorporate outdoor spaces such as balconies, patios, courtyards or similar areas to provide additional open space and amenities, and to activate and provide architectural interest. Developments that border Lady Bird Lake, public parks or trails should be designed to provide connections to and engage those amenities. This could include design elements such as providing multi-modal access to the open space, having pedestrian oriented uses with windows and doors facing the amenity, and providing visual continuity between public and private spaces.

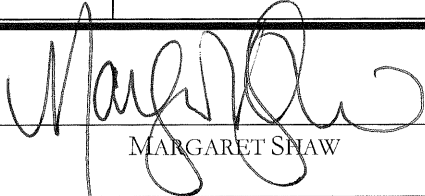
#### **Correction to Maps**

Staff will correct all maps to show the planning area boundary line to include all of the property in the northwest portion of the planning area north of Riverside Drive and west of Tinnin Ford Road (the boundary should follow property lines and not leave a gap between the planning area boundary and the edge of the lake).



AFFORDABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT  
 NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
 CITY COUNCIL AGENDA: *PENDING* CASE NUMBER: *PENDING*

PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT:	<p><b>EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN.</b> THE PLAN'S VISION IS TO ENCOURAGE THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EAST RIVERSIDE DRIVE CORRIDOR AREA, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSIT-ORIENTED AND WALKABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES THROUGHOUT THE CORRIDOR, WHILE MAINTAINING HOUSING OPTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH A RANGE OF INCOMES.</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION STEPS INCLUDE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESTABLISHING THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN AND MECHANISMS TO ENCOURAGE ON-GOING IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS.</li> <li>• DESIGNATING THE PORTION OF EAST RIVERSIDE DR. FROM PLEASANT VALLEY BLVD. TO HWY. 71 AS A CORE TRANSIT CORRIDOR PER APPLICATION OF STANDARDS IN LDC SUBCHAPTER: DESIGN STANDARDS AND MIXED USE AND AN INTERIM STEP WHEN THE CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN IS ADOPTED.</li> <li>• CREATING NEW ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TAILORED FOR THE CORRIDOR TO IMPLEMENT THE LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MASTER PLAN.</li> <li>• THE TWO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS THAT OVERLAP THE EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR AREA SHOULD BE AMENDED TO INCORPORATE THE EAST RIVERSIDE MASTER PLAN WHEN THE NEW ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS ARE ADOPTED.</li> </ul>
IMPACT ON REGULATORY BARRIERS TO HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO IMPACT
LAND USE / ZONING OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO IMPACT
IMPACT ON COST OF DEVELOPMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO IMPACT
IMPACT ON PRODUCTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INCREASE <input type="checkbox"/> DECREASE <input type="checkbox"/> NO IMPACT
PROPOSED CHANGES IMPACTING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY:	A <b><u>POSITIVE IMPACT ON AFFORDABILITY</u></b> IS ANTICIPATED IF THE PLAN WERE TO BE IMPLEMENTED.
ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE TO MAXIMIZE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES:	NO CHANGES NECESSARY.

OTHER HOUSING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:	IMPLEMENTATION OF A DENSITY BONUS INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OTHER PUBLIC BENEFITS DURING THE EAST RIVERSIDE CORRIDOR REGULATING PLANNING PROCESS, ANTICIPATED FOR SUMMER OR FALL 2010.
DATE PREPARED:	
<div data-bbox="159 478 457 508">DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE:</div> <div data-bbox="479 382 901 575"></div> <div data-bbox="977 424 1128 508">1/19/10</div> <div data-bbox="600 512 818 541">MARGARET SHAW</div>	