



**DRAFT**

# The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

## Neighborhood Plan

An Amendment to the  
Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan

Spring 2010

*Note: This is the **DRAFT** neighborhood plan, and the content herein may not reflect that of the final version.*





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Sue Edwards

**PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT REVIEW DEPARTMENT**

Greg Guernsey, Director



By adopting the plan, the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to the implementation of the plan. However, approval of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular action item, nor does adoption of the plan begin the implementation of any item. The implementation of every recommendation will require separate and specific actions by the neighborhood, the City, and by other agencies.

The Neighborhood Plan will be supported and implemented by:

- City Boards, Commissions, and Staff
- City departmental budgets
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Other agencies and organizations
- Direct neighborhood action



## NEIGHBORHOOD ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Saint Mark United Methodist Church

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Lisa Garner	Laura Rheams
Ray Garner	Vicky Scofield
Pastor Karl Gronberg	Wayne and Sandy Tobias
Lisa Hinely	Deloise Vasquez
Manoocher Kavoussi	Gene and Marzella Zumalt



Participants at the November 2007 Kick-Off Event



## **CITY STAFF and OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

### **Lead Planning and Development Review Department staff members for this plan were:**

Mark Walters, Principal Planner  
Jacob Browning, Neighborhood Planner  
Greg Dutton, Neighborhood Planner

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Michael Abramov, Austin Public Library  
Surbhi Bakshi, Planning and Development Review Department  
Sheila Balog, Human Resources Department  
Nadia Barrera, Public Works Department  
Sharon Bauer, Austin Police Department  
Minal Bhakta, Planning and Development Review Department  
Dipti Borkar-Desai, Austin Transportation Department  
Victoria Craig, Planning and Development Review Department  
Jean Drew, Watershed Protection Department  
Eric Dusza, Public Works Department  
Michael Embesi, Planning and Development Review Department  
Kathleen Fox, Planning and Development Review Department  
Paul Frank, Planning and Development Review Department  
Joe Guerrero, Austin Energy  
Keith Harvill, Austin Energy  
Carol Haywood, Planning and Development Review Department  
Matt Hollon, Watershed Protection Department  
Terry Knapp, Austin Police Department  
Melissa Laursen, Planning and Development Review Department  
Peter Marsh, Austin Transportation Department  
Jean Niswonger, Health and Human Services Department  
Dee Dee Quinnelly, Planning and Development Review Department  
Laura Patlove, Planning and Development Review Department  
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# INTRODUCTION

## ***Plan Summary***

This plan document is the culmination of a collaborative effort between North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) residents, property- and business-owners, and neighborhood representatives and the City of Austin's Planning and Development Review Department. The vision, goals, objectives, and recommendations found herein are meant to be stepping stones to an improved community and shall be implemented as such.

The NLCNPA plan was created in accordance with the City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning Program. The sections below provide a history of this program both throughout the City and within the NLCNPA.

### **Neighborhood Planning in the City of Austin**

Adopted in 1979, the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan provided the foundation for neighborhood planning throughout the City. In order to guide the City's development and growth within its existing neighborhoods, that plan stated the need to "[d]evelop and implement specific, detailed plans tailored to the needs of each neighborhood" (Policy 511.1). Once adopted, the NLCNPA neighborhood plan will become an amendment to the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan.

In the mid-1990s, the Citizen's Planning Advisory Committee urged the City Council to consider a planning program to identify and address community needs and those issues related to development within the City's core neighborhoods. In 1997, City Council approved and adopted the neighborhood planning program to meet the broad initiatives set forth in the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan.

### **Neighborhood Planning in the NLCNPA**

In late 2006, City Council directed Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department<sup>1</sup> staff to begin the planning process in several neighborhoods, including those that make up the NLCNPA: Georgian Acres and North Lamar. Because the NLCNPA lies within an area of the City's urban core<sup>2</sup> that has largely been unplanned, the City Council thought it appropriate to initiate neighborhood planning here in 2006. Other defining factors and features that led to the creation of the NLCNPA neighborhood plan include:

- The amount of developable and vacant land within the area
- The presence of major arterial roadways, including North Lamar Boulevard, where much of the future development will be focused
- Development pressures
- The prevalence of crime and code enforcement violations

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<sup>1</sup> In October 2009, the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department became the Planning and Development Review Department and will be referred to as such throughout the plan.

<sup>2</sup> The *urban core* was originally designated by the City Council as a priority planning area; it is also that dense portion of the City of Austin where development is to be guided through policies such as the neighborhood plans or other various tools.



- The current mix of commercial and residential zoning

The content of this plan, including its goals, objectives, and recommendations, was formed through a public planning process in which area stakeholders<sup>3</sup> took part in numerous meetings, workshops, surveys, and public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Throughout the planning process, Planning and Development Review staff coordinated planning activities with other City of Austin departments and outside agencies or organizations to solicit their input regarding the plan's content. Representatives from these groups offered useful insight as to how they can help fulfill the goals, objectives, and recommendations found in the NLCNPA plan. The following departments and organizations participated in the planning process for the NLCNPA:

- Austin Police Department
- Health and Human Services Department
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Public Works Department
- Solid Waste Services, Code Enforcement Division
- Transportation Department
- Capital Metro Transportation Authority
- Texas Transportation Institute

A more detailed explanation of the planning process can be found in the next chapter.

### **Chapter Structure and Content**

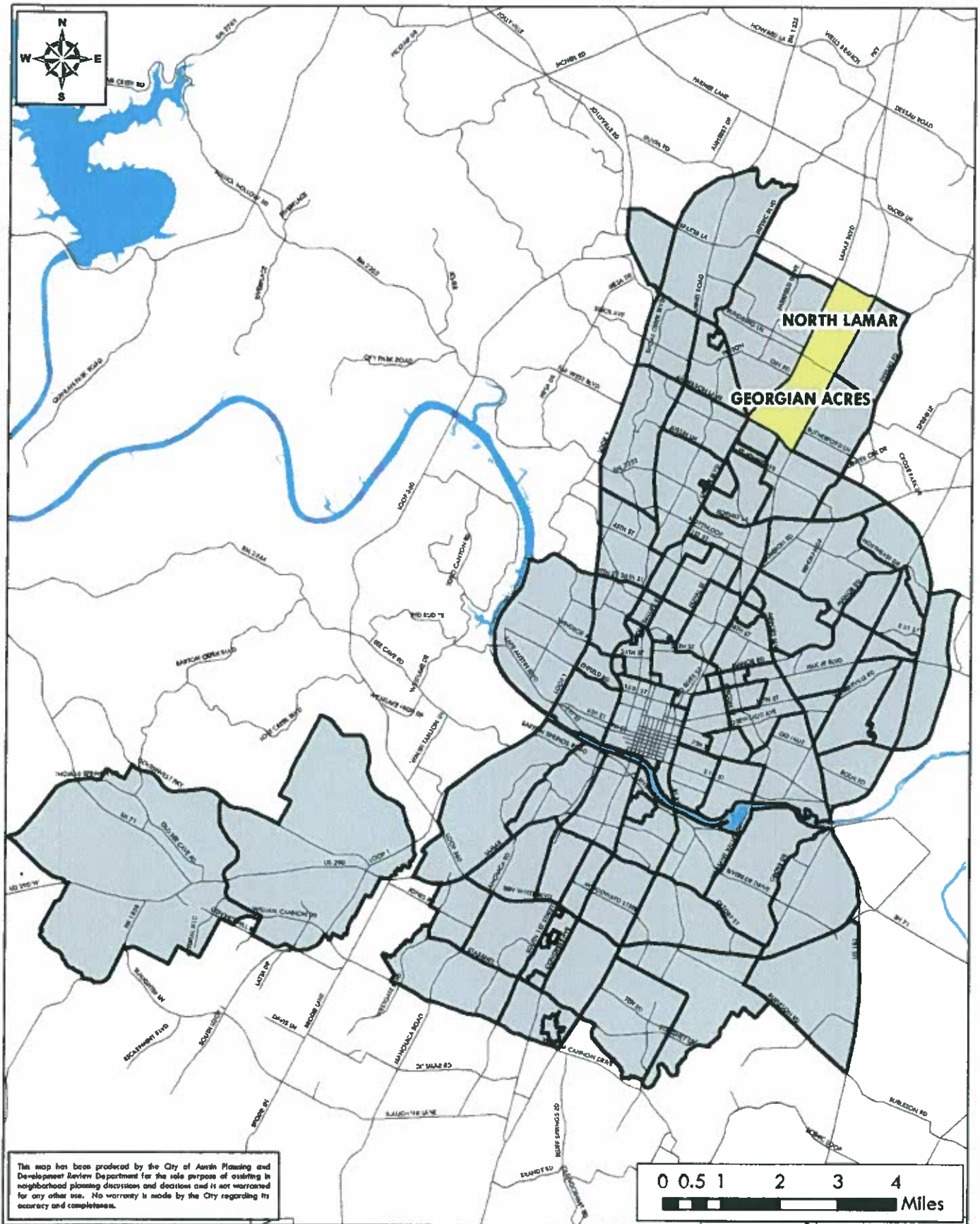
The NLCNPA plan should be thought of as a “workbook,” providing stakeholders with the framework to address those issues affecting their neighborhood. NLCNPA history, statistics, and other background information are offered in the plan's introductory chapters. Topic chapters, however, form the core of the plan. These topic chapters address the five main areas of focus identified by stakeholders at the beginning of the planning process: quality of life (including crime and code enforcement), parks and trees, transportation, infrastructure, and land use.

Each chapter opens with an overall goal for that chapter's specific topic. Objectives and recommendations follow that will help satisfy each of the plan's goals and overall vision for the neighborhood. Throughout the plan document, shaded boxes are used to offer additional resources or information to help address specific issues.

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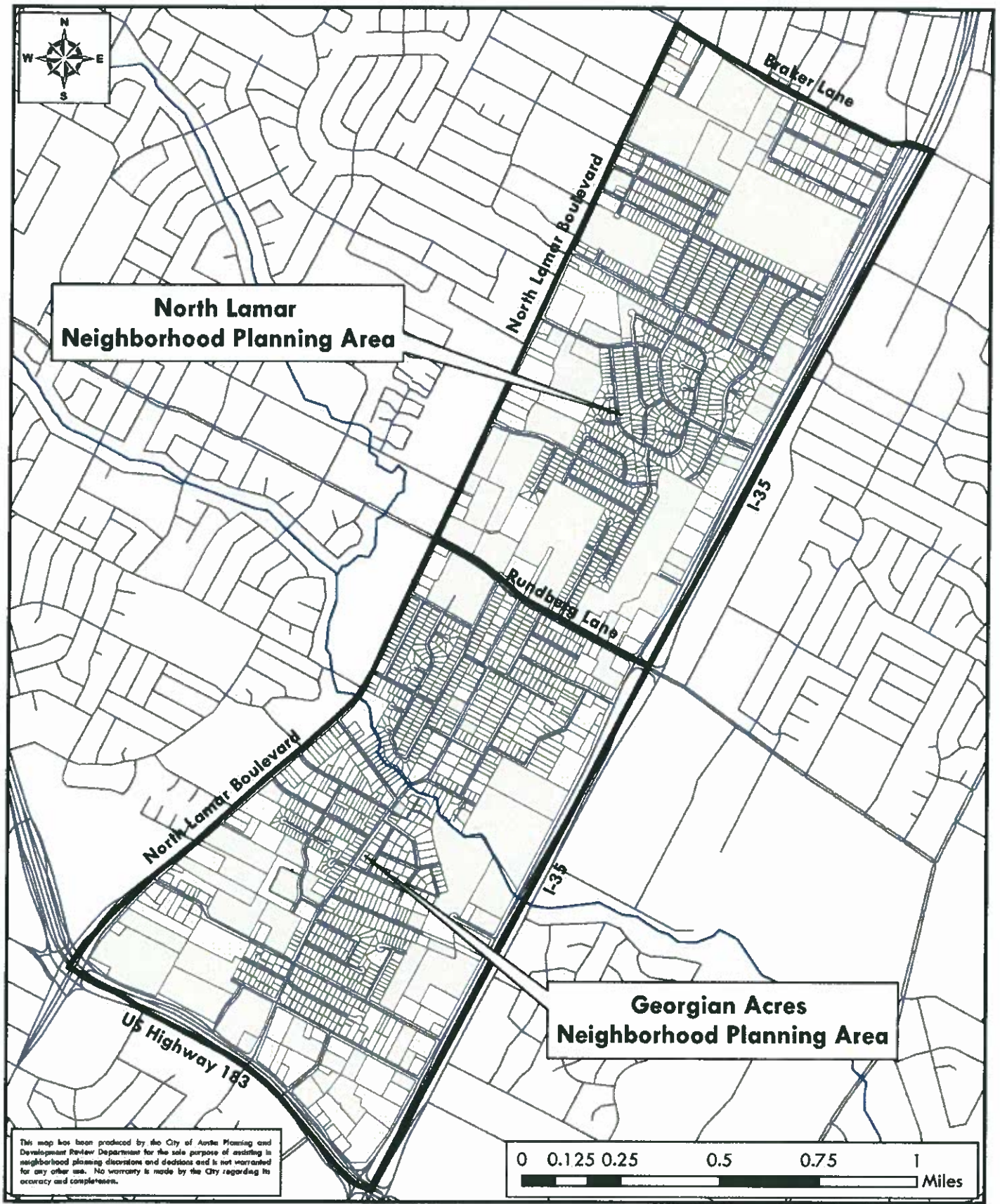
<sup>3</sup> The term “stakeholders” is used throughout this plan. Within this document, “stakeholders” refers to those who either reside, work, own property, or some combination thereof, within the NLCNPA.





# City of Austin Neighborhood Planning Areas





## North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

### Planning Area Boundaries



### ***A Community Vision:***

#### ***A Future History of the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area***

As all of the goals and objectives of the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Plan were realized, the whole of the planning area has become a more livable and sustainable community. As businesses began to reinvest along North Lamar Boulevard, more of people's daily needs have become located within a short walk or bicycle trip. This reinvestment has created redevelopment opportunities that allow more people to live closer to their daily necessities and within ready access to high-quality transit. As the sidewalk network is improved and the street trees mature, it has become easier and safer to walk to the store or transit. And, as homeownership rates continue to increase, people's personal investment in the community's quality of life motivates them to be actively engaged and committed to the health and well-being of their part of North Austin.

The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) has emerged as the safe and livable place envisioned in 2010. The neighborhoods are now safe, clean, diverse, vibrant, and friendly. During the intervening twenty years, the hard work and cooperation of residents, property owners, business owners, the City of Austin and Travis County, and non-profit organizations addressed the major problems and issues that concerned the community when the neighborhood plan was adopted by the City Council in 2010.

#### **Crime and Code Violations**

After the plan's adoption, the NLCNPA has become a clean and safe community. The residents and business owners developed ongoing partnerships with the Austin Police Department and Travis County District Attorney's Office. Prostitution, drug sales, and associated criminal activities have dissipated throughout the neighborhood. The establishments associated with these activities have cleaned up their businesses or left the neighborhood. The area near the intersection of I-35 and Rundberg Lane, once a center of drug dealing and prostitution, is now a clean, thriving commercial corridor where a number of small, local businesses have set up shop.

The community has worked with City of Austin code inspectors to deal with activities such as illegal dumping, improperly and illegally operating businesses, nuisance properties, and other code violations to improve the quality of life for all residents.

#### **North Lamar Boulevard**

Since 2010, North Lamar Boulevard, north of US Highway 183, has emerged as Austin's international Main Street, attracting people from all over Austin and the Central Texas region. Vietnamese pho shops, Indian restaurants and grocery stores, East Asian markets and restaurants, and Mexican and halal butchers are down and across the street from one another. The spaces between these commercial establishments are filled with book stores, boutiques, coffee shops, a variety of other small eateries, and music stores that cater to all segments of Austin's increasingly diverse population.

While the commercial character has become more international, the built environment has become more urban. Slowly, as new investment was made along North Lamar Boulevard, parking lots and ageing single story strip malls disappeared as new buildings were constructed closer to the street and wide, tree-lined sidewalks replaced curb cuts, culverts,



and dirt paths. At the street level and along the bustling sidewalk, are shops, stores, and restaurants. Along some stretches of North Lamar Boulevard, the new development provides residential uses above the shops. It is interesting to note that many of these households do not have or need a car since most of their daily needs are within a short walk. Additionally, the high-quality transit service along North Lamar Boulevard quickly and efficiently connects them to the rest of Austin.

### **The Neighborhoods**

In the interior of the NLCNPA, the neighborhoods largely retain their single-family character. The homes remain modestly-sized and reasonably-priced. As gas prices steadily increased and the tolerance for lengthy suburban commutes declined in the years since the plan's adoption, people began to look for close-in alternatives for their housing. After years of declining homeownership rates, the pendulum has begun to swing the other direction as more and more properties are switching from rental to owner-occupied. The neighborhoods of the NLCNPA—Georgian Acres, North Creek, and Mockingbird Hill—have once again become the choice of working-class families to buy their homes. As this trend continues, neighbors will work more closely with each other to improve the quality of their community.

### **Getting Around the Neighborhood**

North Lamar Boulevard has evolved from a suburban to an urban roadway, and more and more local-serving businesses have begun to appear. The convenience of these businesses entices people out of their cars. Improvements to the sidewalk network, design changes along several streets, and a street-tree planting program create a pleasant walking environment. These changes have also made bicycle riding much more enjoyable. Changes made in subsequent City of Austin Bicycle Master Plans connect the neighborhoods much more safely and efficiently to the rest of Austin. Georgian Drive is known as one of the best walking and biking streets in the city.

### **Parks and Open Space**

When the plan was adopted in 2010, there were limited opportunities for a neighborhood park but, after much work, an appropriate site was selected. The NLCNPA's newest park provides residents a pleasant refuge from their daily lives and creates the opportunities to be alone or engage with their fellow residents. The park's award-winning design reflects the diverse community along North Lamar Boulevard and is upheld as a national example.

The banks of Little Walnut Creek, although reinforced against erosion, provide natural open space for a healthy wildlife community in the middle of the city.

Although there were heavily wooded portions of the NLCNPA in 2010, there were other areas with little or no tree canopy. In the years following the adoption of the plan, the community, working with the City of Austin and several other organizations, sought to create a lush urban forest. Focused plantings have matured and the urban forest in this part of Austin is having the desired effect—shading in the summer, cleaning the air, and cooling the city.



### **A Sustainable Community**

As the cost of fossil fuels continue to climb, people in the NLCNPA look to alternatives to power their homes, businesses, and transportation. Changes to the City of Austin Land Development Code have made it easier to install small-scaled wind generators. Incentives and improvements in technology make solar power a more cost-effective and -efficient energy source. At new commercial and mixed-use developments, people are able to charge their plug-in cars, electric bicycles, and electric scooters and motorcycles.

Throughout the NLCNPA, community gardens appear in empty lots, at houses of worship, at large apartment complexes, and in other open spaces previously covered with grass. In the single-family areas, people have converted portions of their yards to vegetable gardens. Those who did not plant gardens have begun to plant more draught-tolerant plant species and engage in more sustainable landscaping practices.

In the years since the adoption of its neighborhood plan, the NLCNPA has become many things to many people. It is many scales: neighborhood, community, and region. It is many modes: by bike, bus, car, or foot. It is many uses: residential, commercial, civic, and mixed use. It is a place to shop, to visit, to do business, and to enjoy. But, most of all, it is a place to call home.

### **Neighborhood Plan Goals**

The following five goals were developed by NLCNPA stakeholders at the Vision and Goals Workshop held January 24, 2008. Each of these goals is to be upheld through the implementation of the objectives and recommendations found throughout this document.

**Quality of Life Goal:** The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area shall be a safe, healthy, and well-maintained neighborhood that promotes and preserves the quality of life for both residents and business-owners.

**Parks and Trees Goal:** Achieve and maintain healthy, sustainable, functional, quality, safe, and aesthetically-beautiful parks and green spaces that provide opportunities for cultural interactions within the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area.

**Transportation Goal:** Pedestrians, motorists, transit users, bicyclists, and mobility-impaired neighbors should be able to safely and efficiently travel throughout the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area and to the rest of the City.

**Infrastructure Goal:** Develop infrastructure within the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area that upholds the safety of residents and property- and business-owners.

**Land Use Goal:** Create a well-balanced land use pattern that benefits everybody in the North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area by assigning appropriate land uses to particular properties.



### **Priority Action Items**

During the planning process, NLCNPA stakeholders identified seventeen priority action items. These priority action items are those projects or initiatives most desired to improve the quality of life throughout and enhance the resources within the NLCNPA. The priority action items also serve as a foundation for the NLCNPA Contact Team's recommendations for future implementation efforts in their neighborhood.

At the Final Open House held on March 6, 2010, participants were asked to rank the priority action items in order of their importance or for their potential impact(s) on the neighborhood. The priority action items are listed below according to the rankings received at the final open house:

- Priority Action Item 1** Construct new sidewalks along:
- the south side of Applegate Drive, between North Lamar Boulevard and Brownie Drive
  - North Lamar Boulevard (several locations)
  - the west side of Brownie Drive, between West Applegate Drive and East Grady Drive
  - the north side of West Grady Drive, between North Lamar Boulevard and Georgian Drive
  - the entire north side of Powell Lane
  - the south side of East Lola Drive
  - the entire north side of Deen Avenue
  - the entire north side of Carpenter Avenue
  - the south side of Diamondback Trail between Brownie Drive and the I-35 frontage road
  - either side of Turner Drive, between West Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
  - either side of Georgian Drive, between Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
  - either side of Jean Drive, between East Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
  - either side of McMillan Drive, between East Grady Drive and West Applegate Drive
  - the south side of East Wonsley Drive, between Georgian Drive and the I-35 frontage road
  - the south side of Middle Lane, between North Drive and Capitol Drive (Recommendation 70)
- Priority Action Item 2** Increase Austin Police Department patrols throughout the NLCNPA. (Recommendation 5)
- Priority Action Item 3** Conduct a traffic-calming study to determine possible design changes to the NLCNPA street network to



facilitate traffic flow and reduce hazards throughout the neighborhood. If warranted, implement the recommendation(s) from the traffic-calming study. Special emphasis should be placed on the following thoroughfares:

- Grady Drive
- Masterson Pass-Diamondback Trail
- Powell Lane
- Georgian Drive, between US Highway 183 and Rundberg Lane
- East Drive
- Beaver Street (Recommendation 79)

**Priority Action Item 4** In order to preserve the large-lot rural character of the northeastern corner of the Georgian Acres NPA, zoning requests for intense residential development should be denied. (Recommendation 120)

**Priority Action Item 5** Consider the incorporation of the following amenities within the design of a new park:

- Drinking fountains for both people and dogs
- Interactive water fountain
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- A pavilion and/or an area that can be reserved for various functions
- Bar-B-Que pits and/or grills
- Trash cans
- “Mutt Mitt” stations with bags and receptacles for pet waste
- Playground equipment
- Walking trails
- Exercise equipment similar to that found at Barrington Park
- An area for a community garden
- Large open space to allow for various activities, including football and kite-flying (Recommendation 47)

**Priority Action Item 6** Plant hardy, long-lasting, and drought-tolerant trees throughout the NLCNPA. Specific areas include:

- North Lamar Boulevard, between Braker Lane and US Highway 183



- I-35, between Braker Lane and Barwood Park
- Rundberg Lane, between North Lamar Boulevard and IH-35
- The Chinatown Center and the adjacent property to its east
- The Crockett Center
- The commercial and multi-family properties located along I-35, between Showplace Lane and Little Walnut Creek
- The residential area bounded by Diamondback Trail to the north, Doc Holliday Trail to the east, East Garrett Run to the south, and Derringer Trail to the west (Recommendation 60)

**Priority Action Item 7** Guarantee the anonymity and safety of those neighbors reporting code violations. (Recommendation 13)

**Priority Action Item 8** Limit the construction of new fast food restaurants throughout the NLCNPA. (Recommendation 31)

**Priority Action Item 9** Limit the construction of new, large multi-family residential complexes throughout the NLCNPA. (Recommendation 121)

**Priority Action Item 10** Encourage greater investment in those properties owned by absentee landlords. (Recommendation 20)

**Priority Action Item 11** Examine the feasibility and support for a local farmers' market. (Recommendation 33)

**Priority Action Item 12** Examine flooding issues at the following locations:

- Georgian Drive, just north of US Highway 183
- East Drive, just north of Florence Drive
- Intersection of Shepard Drive and Cooper Drive
- Intersection of Rundberg Lane and the I-35 service road
- North Creek Drive, just north of Rundberg Lane
- Vacant lot north of Showplace Lane
- Masterson Pass, just west of Garrett Run
- Applegate Drive, just west of Turner Drive
- Intersection of Grady Drive and North Lamar
- Intersection of Grady Drive and Turner Drive
- Intersection of Grady Drive and Georgian Drive
- Intersection of Grady Drive and Brownie Drive



- Intersection of Middle Lane and the I-35 frontage road (Recommendation 111)

**Priority Action Item 13** Place restrictions on the development of new hotels/motels along I-35. (Recommendation 139)

**Priority Action Item 14** Report all substandard living conditions to the City's Code Compliance Department via 311. (Recommendation 18)

**Priority Action Item 15** Communicate with the Austin Police Department regarding the enforcement of traffic regulations throughout the NLCNPA. These traffic regulations include:

- Speeding
- "No Through Trucks," especially along Grady Drive
- Jaywalking (Recommendation 80)

**Priority Action Item 16** Improve street lighting throughout the NLCNPA. (Recommendation 103)

**Priority Action Item 17** Increase patrols near all Capital Metro bus stops within the NLCNPA. (Recommendation 104)



Participants at the March 6, 2010, Final Open House discuss the plan's objectives and recommendations.



## THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN CONTEXT

The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (NLCNPA) is comprised of two neighborhood planning areas: North Lamar and Georgian Acres. Located in the north central portion of Austin's urban core, the NLCNPA is bounded by Braker Lane to the north, Interstate 35 (I-35) to the east, US Highway 183 to the south, and North Lamar Boulevard to the west. See the *Planning Area Boundaries* map on page 4.

### ***Lay of the Land***

The NLCNPA is an approximately 1,297 acre urban neighborhood with seemingly suburban characteristics. Development in the neighborhood is similar to other areas that have once been at the fringe of a sprawling city: the NLCNPA is marked by strip malls, suburban-style tract homes, and culs-de-sac. The majority of non-residential and multifamily (i.e., apartments) development has occurred at or near the periphery of the NLCNPA; the area's interior is made up of mostly single family neighborhoods. Though mostly developed, the NLCNPA contains several undeveloped properties largely within or near the residential portion of the neighborhood.

The most prominent natural feature of the NLCNPA is Little Walnut Creek and its tributaries; originating northeast of the planning area, Little Walnut Creek bisects the Georgian Acres planning area as it runs southwest toward the Colorado River. The more rural character of the Georgian Acres area can likely be attributed to the colorful history of Little Walnut Creek. The creek had been the site of early battles between Native Americans and European settlers; later, farmers and ranchers were drawn to the creek for the fertile soils it provided for both their crops and livelihoods. Erosion has threatened the creek and adjacent properties for years; however, in 1995, a portion of the creek's banks were stabilized to prevent further erosion in the area.



Little Walnut Creek as seen from Georgian Drive

### ***Built Environment***

The NLCNPA is a fairly new addition to the City of Austin: the neighborhood had been entirely annexed into the city limits between 1945 and 1984. Most of the NLCNPA has been developed, with much of the development activity occurring since annexation of the area began. Development, including the housing stock, is older in Georgian Acres than in



North Lamar; the newer, suburban-style development in the North Lamar planning area is a result of its growth at the outer fringe of the central city.



Chinatown Center is an example of commercial development in the NLCNPA.

Of the developed properties within the NLCNPA, the majority contains single-family homes. In 2008, nearly 73 percent were single-family residences. Most of these homes are located within the interior of the neighborhood and have styles that reflect the era in which they were built; the majority of the single-family residences in the NLCNPA are single-story, ranch-style homes. Despite a large proportion of single-family *properties*, the NLCNPA has a substantial amount of multifamily *housing units*. While only 5.5 percent of properties contain a multifamily use, 60 percent of all NLCNPA housing units were in multifamily developments.<sup>4</sup>



Single-family homes in Georgian Acres (left) and North Lamar (right) exemplify the residential character of the NLCNPA.

Most of the neighborhood's commercial development lies at its periphery. Suburban-style, automobile-oriented commercial establishments dominate North Lamar Boulevard: the design of these establishments (including strip malls and fast food restaurants) largely separates them from the roadway by big parking lots. Industrial-type commercial businesses and travel-related establishments (i.e., hotels, motels, and service stations) are located along the interstate frontage to provide easy access to those traveling along the I-35 thoroughfare.

### ***Neighborhood History and Background***

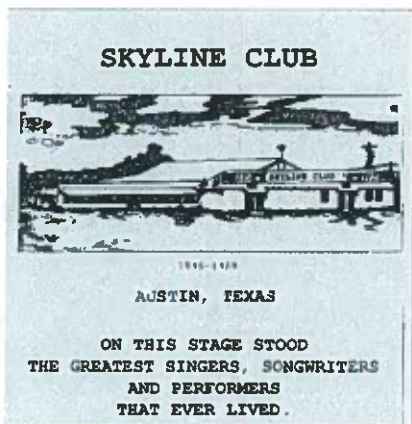
Although a relatively new portion of the City, the NLCNPA has a rich history that has established its role within the City of Austin. While North Lamar Boulevard and Little Walnut Creek lend themselves to the colorful past that has helped shape much of north Austin (including the NLCNPA), more recent events, however, will provide for a more volatile history of this neighborhood.

<sup>4</sup> According to the 2000 Census, approximately 26 percent of all housing units in the NLCNPA were single-family; 60 percent were multifamily units; 13 percent were duplex, triplex, or fourplex units.



### North Lamar Boulevard

As the namesake of the NLCNPA, North Lamar Boulevard has helped shape the north Austin area. Serving as the western boundary for the neighborhood, North Lamar Boulevard is also a historic north-south thoroughfare for the entire City of Austin. An ox-cart trail predates the current path of North Lamar Boulevard; this trail carried Spanish teamsters en route to San Antonio through the north Austin area, including the NLCNPA.



Brochure for the Skyline Club  
Photo courtesy of: <http://trjr.tripod.com/chistnlamar.html>

Now marked by myriad commercial establishments, North Lamar Boulevard was once a prominent route to the many farms and homesteads that dotted the north Austin landscape, including some in or near the NLCNPA. The route also led to several popular nightclubs and music venues that lied outside the City's original limits; and, some of these clubs played host to many famous musicians. In particular, at the Skyline Club, performances by Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, and Johnny Horton entertained the north Austin area for decades until its closure in 1989.

### Fiskville<sup>5</sup>

Just north of Austin, the village of Fiskville was founded in the early 1870s near the convergence of Little Walnut Creek and US Highway 81 (now North Lamar Boulevard). Named for pioneer settlers George Greenleaf Fisk and Josiah Fisk, this small community was the first stage stop between north Austin and Georgetown.

Once settled, Fiskville became a growing community with an estimated population of 120 in the mid-1890s. A steam flour mill and cotton gin, general store, church, and school were all constructed to serve Fiskville's growing population. However, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the community's population began to decline as people moved to nearby Austin and the additional opportunities it provided them. Although its population declined considerably, Fiskville retained its identity until it was annexed to the City of Austin in the mid-1960s. One of the few remnants of the Fiskville community is the Fiskville Cemetery, located in the heart of the Heritage Hills-Windsor Hills neighborhood, just outside of the NLCNPA.



Remnants of the Fiskville stage stop  
Photo courtesy of:  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/library/ahc/outside/north.htm>

### Crime and the Neighborhood's Response

In recent years, a dramatic rise in criminal activity has occurred in north Austin. For each year in the five-year period between 2004 and 2008, an average of nearly 3,100 crimes occurred in the NLCNPA; this average accounts for approximately 2 percent of *all* crimes

<sup>5</sup> For more information on Fiskville, refer to the *Handbook of Texas Online*. (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hvf23.html>)



committed within the City of Austin's limits for this same period. Though the actual crime rate has varied between 2004 and 2008 for the NLCNPA, it has stayed fairly on par with that of the City of Austin. However, in 2006, the NLCNPA saw a nearly 72 percent increase in criminal activity, with an across-the-board increase in all major offenses. The Austin Police Department partially attributes this rise in crime to the addition of Hurricane Katrina evacuees to the NLCNPA population between 2005 and 2006.

**Table A. NLCNPA Total Crime Data Summary, 2004-2008**

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Murders</b>	2	0	1	2	0
<b>Rape/Sex-Related Crimes</b>	14	9	23	12	38
<b>Violent Crimes</b>	145	142	181	143	166
<b>Property Crimes</b>	1,184	1,133	1,378	1,277	1,054
<b>Drug-related crimes</b>	245	n/a	722	515	624
<b>Prostitution</b>	158	122	146	91	39
<b>Other, non-violent offenses</b>	953	775	1,299	1,239	1,635
<b>Total</b>	2,701	2,181	3,750	3,279	3,556

Source: Austin Police Department

Non-violent offenses (e.g., domestic disturbances, criminal mischief) and property crimes (e.g., burglary, theft) have consistently made up the majority of criminal activity in the NLCNPA (Table A); however, the NLCNPA has recently become a focal point in the City's fight against prostitution and drug-related offenses. Most of the crimes have occurred on the area's main thoroughfares: North Lamar Boulevard, Rundberg Lane, and the I-35 frontage road (see the *Criminal Activity Hotspots, 2004-2008, Map* on page 16). Those locations with the most occurrences of crime include commercial establishments along North Lamar Boulevard, large apartment complexes on I-35 and Masterson Pass, motels at

the intersection of Rundberg Lane and I-35, and the Sam Rayburn Drive residential area.



The front page article of *Austin American Statesman's* Metro Section (August 4, 2007) denotes a community march against crime.

In response to the area's rise in crime, the NLCNPA community has sponsored neighborhood marches, barbeques, and protests to bring much-needed attention to the serious conditions that have greatly affected the quality of life here in recent years. Residents have focused on ridding their neighborhood of criminals and of those businesses that harbor them. Their efforts have been successful by garnering support from various agencies including

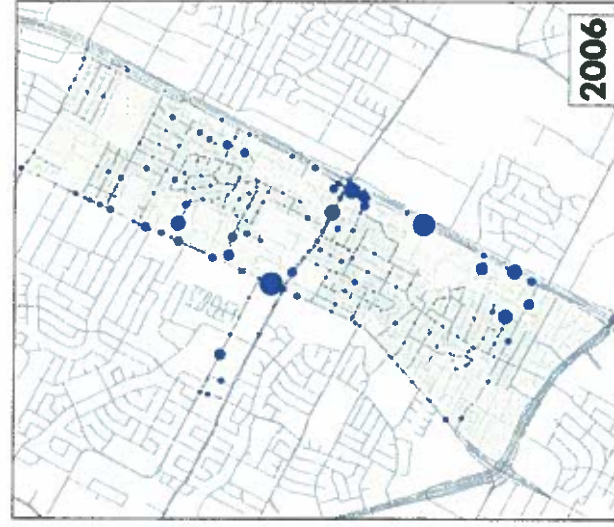




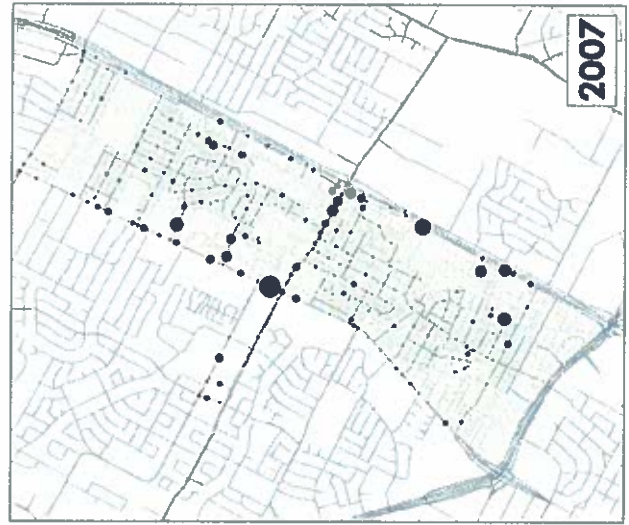
2004



2005



2006

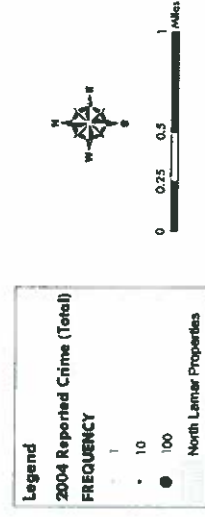


2007



2008

# **North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area** **Criminal Activity Hotspots, 2004 - 2008** (Total Data)



This map has been produced by the City of Austin Planning and Development Review Department for the sole purpose of assisting in neighborhood planning discussions and decisions and is not warranted for any other use. No warranty is made by the City regarding its accuracy and completeness.

Data Source: Austin Police Department



the District Attorney's Office and the Austin Police Department. Crime will continue to be a recurrent challenge for the NLCNPA. However, with the continued involvement of residents and area agencies, the neighborhood will surely become a safer, more secure area for its residents, businesses, and visitors.

### Neighborhood Changes

The face of the NLCNPA resident is changing; this suburban community has become more heterogeneous and diverse in recent decades with the addition of many foreign-born immigrants (Table B). Central Americans, Mexicans, and Asians are now considering north Austin home. In 2000, nearly one-third of the NLCNPA population was born outside of the United States; only 16.6 percent of the entire City's population was foreign-born. This demographic shift is reflected in an increase in the number of international businesses area-wide: grocery stores, shopping centers, restaurants, and other professional businesses have located within the NLCNPA to accommodate those newly-arrived to the area.

**Table B. Foreign-Born Population, 2000**

	Georgian Acres	North Lamar	NLCNPA	City of Austin
<b>Total Population</b>	8,593	5,888	14,481	656,562
<b>Foreign-Born Population</b>	2,769	1,843	4,612	109,006
<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>	32.2%	31.3%	31.8%	16.6%

Source: US Census Bureau

Austin is a city of renters; being a college town with a relatively young, mobile population, home-ownership is not as common as in other comparable cities. The NLCNPA is no different than the City as a whole; a majority of renters call this neighborhood home. However, renters far outnumber homeowners in the NLCNPA: in 2000, nearly 82 percent of all occupied housing units were occupied by renters (Table C). The rentership rate fell slightly between 1990 and 2000; however, based upon the trend set between the two decades, it is safe to assume that this rate will remain relatively high in this area for years to come.

**Table C. Occupied Housing Units by Tenure, 1990-2000**

	Georgian Acres	North Lamar	NLCNPA	City of Austin
<b>Occupied Housing Units, 1990</b>	3,274	1,689	4,963	192,148
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	2,868	1,267	4,135	114,174
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	406	422	828	77,974
<b>Percentage Renter-Occupied, 1990</b>			83.3%	59.4%
<b>Occupied Housing Units, 2000</b>	3,621	2,094	5,715	265,649
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	3,128	1,534	4,662	146,547
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	493	560	1,053	119,102
<b>Percentage Renter-Occupied, 2000</b>			81.6%	55.2%

Source: US Census Bureau



The high rentership rate *and* disproportionate number of area rental units are of great concern to many NLCNPA stakeholders. The lack of homeownership or homeownership opportunities in an area could potentially lead to its overall instability: as fewer people become personally invested in their community (i.e., by owning a home), the less likely they will remain or cultivate any future there. Neighborhood stabilization through homeownership opportunities was discussed throughout the planning process, especially when discussing future land uses for particular properties. See the Land Use chapter for a further discussion on the special use infill options and their potential impacts on the NLCNPA.

### **Area Schools**

The NLCNPA contains two Austin Independent School District (AISD) elementary schools within its boundaries: Barrington Elementary and Walnut Creek Elementary. Both schools have been cornerstones of the north Austin community since the 1960s. Walnut Creek and Barrington were built in 1961 and 1969, respectively. The construction of these schools signaled AISD's anticipation of the area's significant growth in population, especially that of school-aged children. In recent years, both schools have become heavily- or overpopulated as the NLCNPA and surrounding areas continue to grow.



Scripted signage of Barrington Elementary



Entrance to Walnut Creek Elementary

Barrington Elementary School was named in honor of Mollie Barrington, a long-time AISD teacher who championed the development of both spelling and handwriting skills in her students. Thus, to honor this woman, Barrington Elementary is the only school in the district with its name written in script on the front of its building. Like other landmarks in the area, Walnut Creek Elementary shares its name with the creek that runs through the planning area.

Both elementary schools serve the NLCNPA not only as education centers, but as places for neighbors and residents to commune, gather, or recreate. Barrington Elementary, especially, provides the neighborhood with one of its only two public, park-like settings.

### **Gethsemane Lutheran Church<sup>6</sup>**

The tradition of Gethsemane Lutheran Church began in late 1868 with the congregation of several Swedish Lutheran immigrants. Originally, this congregation met in a stone and wooden church building in what is now downtown Austin; later, between 1883 and 1963,

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed history, see the "125 Years of Faith: A History" booklet provided by the Gethsemane Lutheran Church.



they occupied the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Gethsemane Church building at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Congress Avenue.



Gethsemane Lutheran Church

Having outgrown its previous two locations, the Gethsemane congregation built a large, 10-acre campus-like church near the intersection of Anderson Lane (US Highway 183) and I-35 in the NLCNPA. The new church buildings were dedicated beginning in 1963. The church's sanctuary serves as a "lighthouse on a hill" as its 36-foot high stained glass windows and wall front US Highway 183. The stained-glass windows were designed and constructed by Gabriel Loire's studio in Chartres, France, and, upon their placement on the Gethsemane site, were the first of their kind in the state of Texas.

Gethsemane Lutheran Church has become an integral part of the NLCNPA community and to the entire City of Austin. With several community outreach programs, the Gethsemane congregation reaches those not just within its vicinity but to those in all parts of the Austin community.

### Statistical Profile

Since 1990, the Austin area has become one of the fastest growing metropolitan regions in the nation. While a lot of this growth occurred in the more suburban portions of the metropolitan region, the City of Austin's population growth rate was 41 percent between 1990 and 2000. The NLCNPA's growth has been on par with that of the City of Austin, growing over 37 percent for the same time period; refer to Table D for these trends. Austin and its core neighborhoods (including the NLCNPA) continue to grow: in July 2008, the US Census Bureau estimated that 757,688 people resided in the City of Austin.<sup>7</sup>

**Table D. Population, 1990-2000**

	Georgian Acres	North Lamar	NLCNPA	City of Austin
<b>1990 Population</b>	6,575	3,976	10,551	465,622
<b>2000 Population</b>	8,593	5,888	14,481	656,562
<b>1990-2000 Population Change</b>	2,018	1,912	3,930	190,940
<b>Percent Change</b>	30.7%	48.1%	37.2%	41.0%

Source: US Census Bureau

Perhaps the most significant indicator of changes in the population is the increase in the number of people living in each household (Table E). Between 1990 and 2000, the average household size in the NLCNPA increased by nearly 12.5 percent, from an average of 2.35 persons per household to an average of 2.64. By contrast, the average household size increased by only 3 percent for the whole of Austin, from 2.33 to 2.40 persons per

<sup>7</sup> Detailed population estimates for the NLCNPA are not readily available for 2008. This data is only available through the decennial census data released by the United States Census Bureau.



household. More telling is the relatively flat rate of residential development within the NLCNPA between 2000 and the second quarter of 2007; only 65 building permits were issued during this period. It can be assumed, then, that as average household sizes continue to rise in the NLCNPA, where residential development has all but stagnated, the existing housing stock has become more crowded.

**Table E. Persons per Household, 1990-2000<sup>8</sup>**

		Persons per Occupied Unit, 1990	Persons per Occupied Unit, 2000
<b>Georgian Acres</b>	Census Tract 18.04, Block Group 3	2.11	2.28
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 1	2.95	3.14
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 2	1.66	2.07
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 3	2.05	2.50
<b>North Lamar</b>	Census Tract 18.23, Block Group 1	2.25	2.77
	Census Tract 18.23, Block Group 2	3.07	3.09
<b>City of Austin</b>		2.33	2.40

Source: US Census Bureau

The NLCNPA is a relatively young neighborhood (Table F). In 1990 and 2000, nearly half of the NLCNPA population was between the ages of 15 and 34; 50.5 percent and 45.6 percent of the population was made up of 15- to 34-year-olds in 1990 and 2000, respectively. However, the number of 45- to 54-year-olds more than doubled between 1990 and 2000, growing by 105.5 percent. While the population ages, NLCNPA residents are also forming families, indicated by the significant gains in the younger cohorts (ages under 5 to 24). The increases in both the younger- and middle-aged cohorts also suggest families' attraction to the NLCNPA and its relatively affordable housing.

**Table F. NLCNPA Population by Age, 1990-2000**

Cohort	Population		% Change
	1990	2000	
<b>under 5</b>	1,027	1,498	45.9%
<b>5 to 9</b>	733	1,159	58.1%
<b>10 to 14</b>	533	788	47.8%
<b>15 to 24</b>	2,284	3,102	35.8%
<b>25 to 34</b>	3,048	3,501	14.9%
<b>35 to 44</b>	1,431	2,142	49.7%
<b>45 to 54</b>	620	1,274	105.5%
<b>55 to 64</b>	399	524	31.3%
<b>65 and over</b>	476	493	3.6%
<b>Total</b>	10,551	14,481	37.2%

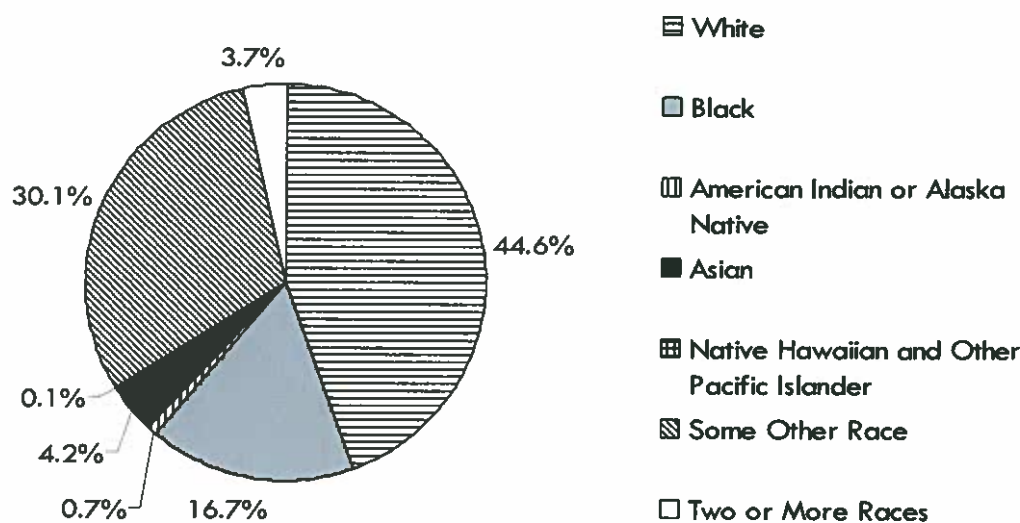
Source: US Census Bureau

<sup>8</sup> The data presented in Tables E and K is Block Group-level data; a Block Group is one of the smallest geographical divisions used by the US Census Bureau to gather data for a specific area. The data could not be combined on a planning area-wide level (as found in other tables) so to not skew their results.



In recent years, the NLCNPA has become a minority-majority neighborhood, where no ethnic group has a majority of the area's population (Figure G). In 2000, whites made up 44.6 percent of the area's total population; persons of other races, blacks, and Asians made up the remaining portion of the population with a representation of 30.1 percent, 16.7 percent, and 4.2 percent, respectively. Greatly contributing to the majority-minority representation in the area is the substantial growth in the Hispanic or Latino population here (Table H). Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people of Hispanic or Latino descent increased by nearly two-and-a-half times. Though the absolute increase in this portion of the population is telling, the percentage share Hispanic or Latino persons have of the NLCNPA's total population is even more so: of the 1990 population, 28.1 percent of the residents were of Hispanic or Latino origin; in 2000, that share rose to 49.9 percent.<sup>9</sup> This data solidifies the NLCNPA's position as a popular destination, or "immigrant gateway," for recent Hispanic or Latino immigrants, especially those from Mexico and Central America.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure G. NLCNPA Percentage Share of Races, 2000**



Source: US Census Bureau

<sup>9</sup> Persons of Hispanic or Latino origins fall within most of the ethnic groups as determined by the United States Census Bureau; Hispanics or Latinos can be white, black, American Indian, etc. For example, in 2000, the 49.9 percentage share of Hispanic or Latino descendants falls across the entire racial spectrum shown in Figure G; thus, a specific racial or ethnic group does *not* contain the entire share of Hispanic or Latino descendants.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to: Singer, Audrey. "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways." The Brookings Institution: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy (2004): 1-36.



**Table H. Persons of Hispanic or Latino Origin, 1990-2000**

	Total		
	1990	2000	% Change
<b>Georgian Acres</b>	1,876	4,329	130.8%
<b>North Lamar</b>	1,088	2,897	166.3%
<b>NLCNPA</b>	2,964	7,226	143.8%
<b>Percent Hispanic</b>	28.1%	49.9%	

Source: US Census Bureau

NLCNPA residents are generally less educated than other City of Austin residents. Educational attainment levels (Table J) trend toward residents earning less than a college-level education for the NLCNPA: a higher percentage of those without a college-level degree live within the neighborhood. In fact, between 1990 and 2000, the NLCNPA has become a less-educated neighborhood while the City has seen greater gains in educational attainment amongst its population. In direct correlation to the low educational attainment of NLCNPA residents, their relative wealth is comparatively lower than the City of Austin as well. Though substantial gains were made in the area's median family income between 1990 and 2000 (Table K), in 2000, the income levels in the NLCNPA were between 34.4 and 51.4 percent less than the City's median family income.

**Table J. Educational Attainment (for persons 25 years old or older), 2000**

	Georgian Acres	North Lamar	NLCNPA	City of Austin
<b>Less than 9th Grade</b>	18.3%	16.4%	17.5%	8.3%
<b>9th - 12th Grade, na diploma</b>	11.7%	14.6%	12.9%	8.3%
<b>High School Graduate</b>	27.6%	26.1%	27.0%	17.0%
<b>Some College, no degree</b>	22.3%	21.6%	22.1%	21.1%
<b>Associate's Degree</b>	4.7%	7.6%	5.9%	5.0%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	11.7%	9.8%	10.9%	25.7%
<b>Graduate or Professional Degree</b>	3.6%	3.9%	3.7%	14.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

**Table K. Median Family Income (MFI), 1989-1999**

		1989 MFI	1999 MFI
<b>Georgian Acres</b>	Census Tract 18.04, Block Group 3	\$15,417	\$29,667
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 1	\$32,750	\$31,250
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 2	\$19,688	\$26,310
	Census Tract 18.06, Block Group 3	\$16,660	\$27,589
<b>North Lamar</b>	Census Tract 18.23, Block Group 1	\$27,429	\$35,461
	Census Tract 18.23, Block Group 2	\$21,932	\$30,263
<b>City of Austin</b>		\$33,481	\$54,091

Source: US Census Bureau

