

REGIONAL  
AFFORDABILITY  
COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC PLAN

DRAFTED 2016; UPDATED 2019

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### MISSION

Provide expanded opportunity for transparency, public input, and collaboration between taxing jurisdictions and local leaders to improve how balance providing quality services and preserving regional affordability. The Committee may solicit public feedback on and discuss:

- A. Potential bond measures that may affect affordability in the Central Texas Region. Providing a place for the public to comment on all bond packages at once, and facilitate a community wide conversation about what community values should be prioritized and the viability of bond measures prior to placement on the ballot.
- B. Opportunities to strengthen partnerships for improved service delivery.
- C. Eliminating duplication in services between agencies for potential cost savings.
- D. Parameters for assessing factors have a significant impact on cost of living with the understanding that affordability encompasses many interrelated factors, including but not limited to, housing, food, healthcare, education, and transportation.
- E. Best practices of other cities, counties, and school districts.
- F. Any other relevant topics useful for maintaining and promoting affordability.

### VISION

Develop policy recommendations for all represented governmental entities to improve affordability in Austin and the Central Texas region and take possible formal action to make recommendations to the governmental bodies represented on the Committee.

### MEMBERS

Delia Garza (Chair) – Austin City Council Member

Charles Chadwell (Vice Chair) – Round Rock Independent School District, Board of Trustees

Natasha Harper-Madison – Austin City Council Member

Paige Ellis – Austin City Council Member

Brigid Shea – Travis County Commissioners Court

Jeffrey Travillion – Travis County Commissioners Court

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Terry Cook – Williamson County Commissioners Court

Jayne Mathias – Austin Independent School District, Board of Trustees

Susanna Woody – Del Valle Independent School District, Board of Trustees

Jim MacKay – Leander Independent School District, Board of Trustees

Dr. Nora de Hoyos Comstock – Austin Community College Board of Trustees

Sherri Greenberg – Central Health, Board of Managers

Terry Mitchell – Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Board of Directors

## INTRODUCTION

The Regional Affordability Committee members (Committee members) developed this strategic plan with assistance of a facilitator. It provides the Committee with a 2 year roadmap to guide its work. The Committee members will review its progress quarterly and update the plan annually as needed.

The Committee members developed the plan at four of their general committee meetings to reflect the Committee's mission, vision, and strategic goals. Staff helped coordinate the planning process and provided important support and analysis to complete this plan.

Some factors the Committee considered in developing the strategic plan were:

- A. The affordability crisis that the City of Austin and the Central Texas region are experiencing which impacts many residents quality of life and their ability to afford basic needs including food, housing, transportation, and healthcare.
- B. The cost burden on Austin residents which is almost 23% of residents who dedicate more than 30% of their income to housing costs (including utilities), and the 9% of Austin residents who are severely cost burdened since they dedicate more than 50% of their income to housing costs.
- C. A report published by the City of Austin in June 2013 titled, Market Trends and Issues for Affordable Housing in Austin, which states that, "since 2001, nominal median household incomes in the Austin area have increased by only about 25 percent in general while inflation (represented by Consumer Price Index) has increased by

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roughly 35 percent. During that same period, median home prices have increased by 40 percent, and median rents have increased by 50 percent.”

- D. The unprecedented opportunity to improve communication and collaboration between governmental jurisdictions with new leadership at every level of local government.

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# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

## STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

### STRATEGIC GOAL – HOUSEHOLD AFFORDABILITY

Several elements should be considered regarding rising household costs. Strategies to address taxes, housing, transportation, childcare, workforce training, education and healthcare & wellness are identified in this section as factors to consider for addressing household affordability. To achieve this goal the following should be considered:

1. Work with nonprofits and academic partners, such as Liveable City, CAN and the University of Texas, to examine public policies and explore best practices in collaboration with other community groups, to look at local policies and initiatives to analyze cost pressures on household budgets.
2. Support the creation of the Equity Office and identify key disparity tools such as an Equity Atlas.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The strategic goal has the following 6 initiatives:

- Initiative 1: Affordable and Attainable Housing
- Initiative 2: Affordable and Accessible Transportation
- Initiative 3: Government Efficiency
- Initiative 4: Quality affordable childcare
- Initiative 5: Wellness and quality healthcare
- Initiative 6: Quality education and workforce training

### Initiative 1: Affordable and Attainable Housing

With increasing housing costs and stagnant wage growth, households all along the income spectrum need affordable housing options. Based on the demand for affordable housing, the Committee identified the following outcomes to preserve and increase affordable housing.

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**Outcome 1:** Encourage affordable housing and jobs next to transportation.

- Strategies:
  1. Analyze how the link between density and land uses can promote having affordable housing and jobs next to transportation.
  2. Understand different tools and subsidies available.
  3. Familiarize committee members on past efforts by City Council and other local leaders such as the recommendations identified in the Housing+Transit+Jobs Team Action Plan.
- Objective: Develop recommendations from committee members that address possible funding options and future policies that should be considered by the diverse taxing jurisdictions the committee represents.

**Outcome 2:** Work and engage with current and future land use and planning tools that will help provide policies that will impact household affordability.

- Strategies:
  1. Familiarize committee members on planning tools such as the SMART growth index and the current efforts regarding the revisions of the City of Austin Land Development Code.
  2. Analyze prescription papers developed during the Land Development Code revision process.
  3. Look at how community hubs such as public schools and community centers are being addressed during the revised Land Development Code.
- Objective: Develop recommendations that help promote affordable housing and consider schools and community centers as a complement to the rest of the uses surrounding a neighborhood.

**Outcome 3:** Support the work of other housing corporations, nonprofits and other community efforts.

- Strategies:

# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

1. Familiarize committee members on current and future collaborations between Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) and other corporations.
  2. Analyze other community efforts that are working towards creating more affordable housing.
- Objective: Identify opportunities for future collaboration among diverse groups including private and public partnerships.

**Outcome 4:** Encourage the creation of permanent affordability in diverse parts of the City.

- Strategies:
  1. Increase committee member's awareness on the history and existing land trust models in the City of Austin and other part of the country including existing nonprofits and the City of Austin Land Trust (CLT).
  2. Analyze previous bonds and where money has been spent as it relates to affordable housing.
  3. Analyze studies and research done on how permanent affordability can prevent gentrification. For example "The Mapping Susceptibility to Gentrification: The Early Warning Toolkit" developed by the Center for Community Innovation at the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning in the University of California.
- Objectives:
  1. Identify potential tools to create permanent affordability for homeowners, and renters.
  2. Develop a recommendation for the creation of a community land trust fund that can help with homeownership on public land.

**Outcome 5:** Encourage the use of public land to increase affordable housing and associated supportive services for families.

- Strategies:
  1. Identify current public land owned by diverse entities: City of Austin, Capital Metro, Travis County, AISD and ACC.



# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

2. Identify characteristics that public land should have to be suitable for future affordable housing.
  3. Identify a process for sale of public land.
- Objective: Recommend an MOU or interlocal agreement between different public entities (right of first refusal).

**Outcome 6:** Support a Strategic Housing Plan that will look at the needs throughout the community.

- Strategy:
  1. Review the Strategic Housing Plan presented by City of Austin staff at the City Council Housing and Community Committee on June 6, 2016.
- Objective: Provide input on recommendations identified in the report.

**Outcome 7:** Analyze the impact of housing displacement caused by evictions in the City of Austin.

- Strategies:
  1. Familiarize committee member on how housing displacement impacts the loss of affordable housing in the City.
  2. Identify and look into current index.
  3. Evaluate the cost incurred by local government jurisdictions when multiple tenants are displaced from an affordable housing site.
- Objective: Create future policy recommendations that can be considered by the diverse taxing jurisdictions the Committee represents.

**Outcome 8:** Work with school districts and the City of Austin to determine what mechanism exists to transfer some functions or activities to the City of Austin as long as those functions or activities serve the City.

- Strategies:

# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

1. Analyze recommendations from the Commission on Seniors on tax implications of transfers on seniors, and potential remedies for any negative consequences. Including impacts of tax swap on tax burden on seniors.
  2. Evaluate the information provided by City staff from Council Resolution 20160512-019.
- Objective: Identify possible future actions.

## Initiative 2: Affordable and Accessible Transportation

The lack of transportation options throughout the City has contributed to families having to spend a greater percentage of their income to travel greater distances to get to their jobs and to access basic needs. The Committee identified the following outcomes to increase accessible and affordable transportation options.

**Outcome 1:** Work with different entities to identify key actions to reduce the cost of transportation.

- Strategies:
  1. Analyze the relationship between transportation and access to housing, healthcare, education and workforce training.
  2. Evaluate current cost of transportation and its impact on household affordability.
  3. Analyze and evaluate research and policies done in other cities in the United States.
  4. Identify key recommendations done by nonprofits and other groups.
- Objective: Develop key recommendations such as looking into flexible working hours in public entities as a way to remove car traffic on roads at peak hours.

**Outcome 2:** Encourage the use of technology to help with transportation challenges in the City of Austin

- Strategies:

# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

1. Evaluate the Austin Smart Cities Challenge proposal and the Ladders of Opportunity.
  2. Increase committee member's awareness on analysis and recommendations being put together by RMI (Rocky Mountain Institute) and other groups involved in looking at technology in transportation.
  3. Analyze how technology may optimize roadway use and potential infrastructure savings
- Objective: Develop key recommendations such as looking at the possibility that public entities can use telecommuting as an option to remove car traffic on roads.

**Outcome 3:** Work with school districts on policies and criteria in place for bus transportation for kids to schools.

- Strategies:
  1. Familiarize committee members on the cost of bus transportation hours and schedules in school districts and the criteria behind the policy of the 2 mile radius service for school buses.
  2. Analyze information from the school districts and City of Austin staff on how kids that live close to the school get served.
  3. Establish recommendations to be considered by CTRMA regarding school buses in toll roads.
- Objective: Develop recommendations that will help with the cost of school buses such as a possible agreement with CTRMA to help school buses not pay at toll roads.

## Initiative 3: Government Efficiency

The committee members saw the possible opportunity to improve collaboration between government jurisdictions with a discussion on perhaps eliminating duplication in services between agencies for potential cost savings. With that in mind the Committee identified the following outcome.

# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

**Outcome 1:** Identify all Costs for Residents (Taxes, Bills, & Fees) and calculate cumulative impact on affordability

- Strategies:
  1. Identify all costs for residents (taxes, bills and fees).
  2. Calculate cumulative impact on affordability.
  3. Establish a Cumulative Affordability Goal that identifies cost-reduction opportunities by consolidating services, contracts, and/or benefits.
- Objective: Develop a consolidated list that identifies possible cost-reduction opportunities for example in facilities maintenance contracts, healthcare services, public safety services and capital projects.

## Initiative 4: Facilitate access to quality affordable childcare

Childcare affordability is key in helping middle-class families have both parents in the workforce. Childcare costs account for a significant portion of a family budget and high quality childcare is out of reach for working families. With that in mind the Committee identified the following outcome.

**Outcome 1:** Raise awareness of childcare costs and effect on household affordability.

- Strategies:
  1. Familiarize committee members on current childcare costs and access to childcare in the City of Austin.
  2. Evaluate what nonprofits, school districts and other groups are currently doing to increase affordable, quality, childcare.
- Objective: Develop possible recommendations to look at various avenues to expand access to childcare and infant care in the City of Austin.

## Initiative 5: Facilitate access to wellness and quality healthcare

Access to affordable healthcare can be challenging for individuals and families. For many households medical costs can eliminate a family's savings and affect their financial stability for years to come. The Committee identified the following outcome.

# STRATEGIC GOAL AND INITIATIVES

**Outcome 1:** Raise awareness of healthcare cost and how they affect household affordability.

- Strategies:
  1. Identify current joint efforts between different public entities.
  2. Evaluate the impact of healthcare costs for part time and contract employees.
  3. Familiarize committee member on efforts being done by Central Health, Dell Medical School, Seton, St. David's Foundation, Children's Optimal Health, the City of Austin, Travis County, and other relevant entities.
  4. Analyze the relationship between health and other factors such as: housing, education, employment and transportation
  5. Examine the social determinants of health.
- Objective: Identify possible future actions.

## Initiative 6: Facilitate access to quality education and workforce training

**Outcome 1:** Support existing Austin Workforce Training Programs.

- Strategies:
  1. Familiarize committee members on Austin's designation by the White House as a TechHire City as well as Austin's area Workforce Training plan
  2. Analyze training programs from nonprofits such as: American YouthWork, Ascend Center for Learning, Austin Area Urban League, Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, Skillpoint Alliance, Workforce Solutions - Capital Area Workforce Board, Capital IDEA
  3. Evaluate other training programs provided by other entities that are involved in workforce such as: Austin Community College, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce
  4. Identify research projects from LBJ School students regarding research projects as it relates to Austin Workforce training and comparison with other cities.
- Objective: Identify possible future actions to support the creation of quality jobs and education.