



## **Annual Internal Review**

**This report covers the time period of 7/1/2020 to 6/30/2021**

### **Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Plan Implementation Advisory Commission**

**The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is:**

Advise the City Council on implementation of the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Master Plan, the 1996 Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Process and Goals Task Force Report, and other redevelopment issues at Robert Mueller Municipal Airport, including proposed amendments to the Master Plan, land disposition strategy, traffic, urban design and zoning issues, demolition of existing facilities; and at the request of the City Council, make recommendations on amendments to the Master Plan and other matters related to Robert Mueller Airport redevelopment. Section [2-1-169](#) of the City Code.

The Robert Mueller Municipal Airport (RMMA) Plan Implementation Advisory Commission (PIAC) was created in 2000 to provide oversight at a time when the Redevelopment and Reuse Plan for Mueller had been accepted, and the City was preparing to seek a master developer. In 2002 the master developer, Catellus, was selected and approved by City Council, and in December of 2004, the Master Development Agreement (MDA) between the City of Austin and Catellus was approved and executed by City Council. Because the MDA contractually obligates the City and Catellus to develop the property per the provisions in the agreement, the practical role of the PIAC has evolved to encompass the following:

- Advise Council on items that come before Council, including those needing formal approval, such as proposed zoning revisions;
- Advise Council on any items that require Council approval stipulated in the MDA, such as selling land within the Mueller boundary to another governmental entity;
- Advise Council on bigger picture topics that may impact the ability to implement the plans as fully anticipated, such as, but not limited to, transit or Interstate 35 improvements; and
- Serve as a venue for the master developer and City staff to report progress, hear concerns and receive feedback. This last role is paramount and provides a unique opportunity to problem-solve as Catellus, together with the community and City staff, work to implement the Mueller vision.

## Background

In 1996, a Council-appointed 16-member task force representing a broad spectrum of Austin interests called for the creation of a compact, pedestrian-oriented, and mixed-use community. The plans to redevelop the airport were guided by a vision and goals developed with extensive community input.

The task force challenged the City to create a district that would be a model for responsible urban development - an alternative to land-consumptive and automobile-dependent development patterns throughout the region that could influence the form and pattern of growth within Austin as it entered the new millennium. With this vision, the task force and the City Council articulated six clear goals, stating the redevelopment of RMMA must marshal long-term market forces through an effective public-private partnership to promote:

- I. **Fiscal Responsibility:** Redevelopment must create a positive revenue stream that will fund on-site infrastructure and increase the City's tax base for the benefit of all citizens.
- II. **Economic Development:** The project should serve to reinforce Austin's role in an increasingly global marketplace and create a wide range of employment opportunities for a diversity of the community's citizens.
- III. **East Austin Revitalization:** The project must promote economic development opportunities within East Austin, giving local residents a direct stake in redevelopment.
- IV. **Compatibility with Surrounding Neighborhoods:** Development must maintain and enhance the quality of life in adjacent neighborhoods, providing complementary linkages, land uses and transportation patterns.
- V. **Diversity:** Redevelopment must offer a wide range of housing choices in order to create a new community of socially and economically diverse residents.
- VI. **Sustainability:** Development should be planned in a way that promotes energy and water efficiency, environmental quality, reduced auto dependency, watershed protection and green space preservation.

In 1997, the City initiated the redevelopment master planning process that included comprehensive public participation at all stages of the work. Specific planning principles were established that became the structuring elements of the master plan to support a vision of a new community within a community – one that is welcoming, diverse and inclusive, that complements and extends the surrounding neighborhoods and that becomes an integral part of the urban and social fabric of Austin.

Redevelopment of the airport was also intended to achieve broader public objectives for economic development and revitalization, helping to overcome the perceptual barrier of the IH-35 freeway, and providing an alternative to the outward expansion of the City.

In 2000, the City Council accepted the "Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Redevelopment and Reuse Plan" and directed implementation of it, which subsequently led to the solicitation for a Master Developer for Mueller. Today, the Mueller Design Book serves as the Master Plan and encompasses and incorporates the 2000 Redevelopment and Reuse Plan along with refinements that have been made to the Plan since its adoption.

**1. Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code.**

- A. The Commission received a staff briefing on the East 51<sup>st</sup> Street Mobility Project during the August 14, 2020 meeting. The briefing included information on planned improvements to reduce traffic congestion and safety enhancements for cyclists and pedestrians.
- B. The Commission received an update at the October 16, 2020 meeting on the status of Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) outreach activities to meet Mueller project goals. As of May 31, 2020, more than 90 minority and women-owned businesses had been awarded contracts worth \$47.9 million, representing 23.8% of the total contracts awarded by Catellus since the inception of the Mueller project. Hispanic American businesses received 39% of the contracts. Women businesses received 32% of the contracts and African American business owners were awarded 27% of the contracts. The remaining contracts were divided between Asian Pacific American contractors (2%) and Native American businesses (0.03%).
- C. The Commission received a briefing from the Economic Development Department on the financing of the Mueller development during the October 16, 2020 meeting. The Mueller finance report indicates the annual (2019) TIF revenue of \$7.2 million exceeds the project's \$4.6 million annual debt service. City economic department officials testified to the financial strength of the project in its ability to support the TIF despite the rapid economic downturn in 2020.
- D. The Commission also received an update during the November 13, 2020 meeting from Catellus representatives and the Mueller Foundation regarding the status of the Affordable Housing program. At the time of the presentation, the Foundation had 525 affordable homes in its portfolio. Foundation representatives also discussed the mortgage forbearance and refinancing assistance provided to homeowners negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- E. The Commission received an update from Austin Independent School District (AISD) representatives at the September 11, 2020 meeting on design concepts for the new 800-student middle school to be built in the eastern area of Mueller.
- F. City staff briefed the Commission at the April 13, 2021 meeting on delays in the land transfer based on requirements under state law that have postponed the start of AISD middle school construction.
- G. Catellus representatives discussed site plan concepts for the 60-year-old control tower and the surrounding Tower District at the September 11, 2020 meeting. The plans include the construction of multi-family residential units and the maintenance of existing views of the tower.
- H. Commission was briefed during the May 11, 2021 meeting on the diversity of housing

designs to be used in Section 11 of Mueller. The Mueller development has 1,576 affordable housing units to date, including apartments, condos and homes of various designs.

- I. Catellus' consultant RVi and their team provided an update on plans for the Southeast Greenway Park at the March 9, 2021 meeting. The greenway is one of several Mueller parks that will be deeded to the City at a future date.

The Commission did not submit any resolutions to Council during the 12 months covered by this report.

## **2. Determine if the board's actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.**

The briefings on housing design diversity and the Mueller Foundation Affordable Home program support the Master Plan goal of affordability. The briefing on the Mueller project's financial status supports the goal of fiscal responsibility. The briefing on Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise outreach efforts supports the goals of economic development and East Austin revitalization. The Commission discussion of the control tower concept plan and the East 51<sup>st</sup> Street Mobility briefing support the goal of compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

Under the Governor's orders regarding the COVID-19 disaster declaration for Texas and with support from the Office of the City Clerk and Communication and Technology Management Department, the Commission was able to meet virtually beginning in August 2020. These meetings transition to the Commission's regular meeting time and day beginning in January 2021.

## **3. List the board's goals and objectives for the new calendar year.**

The RMMA Plan Implementation Advisory Commission is charged with advising the City Council on the implementation of the Mueller Master Plan. We will advise the Council when requested or otherwise appropriate, as when issues come before them regarding Mueller's redevelopment. For 2021, the Commission will continue to serve both as a venue for public input about Mueller's redevelopment, and for the dissemination of information regarding the progress. We will request information from City staff to assure Mueller's redevelopment is aligned with the Master Plan and promotes its redevelopment goals, as listed below:

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

The Commission will request updates from the Financial Services and Economic Development Departments on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Mueller's overall project costs, including its tax increment financing (TIF) debt, confirming that sales taxes, property taxes, and new commercial and residential construction provide an adequate revenue stream to fund on-site infrastructure; that the TIF continues to protect the City of Austin from financial risk; and that the redevelopment will substantially benefit the City's tax base once Mueller's TIF debt is retired.



### **Economic Development**

The Commission may request updates on the types of business being recruited to and locating at Mueller to ensure they offer a variety of employment opportunities as well as the services and retail needs of the community; on the status of the good faith effort for a thirty-percent minimum of locally-owned businesses in Mueller's Town Center; on the Minority & Women Owned Businesses (MWBE) contracting and employment goals required by the MDA; and on any lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic health of Mueller's institutional and commercial entities.

### **East Austin Revitalization**

Early in Mueller's redevelopment discussions, the community expressed the desire to preserve Mueller's iconic Control Tower and Hangar. The Commission will continue to ask for updates on the future of the Tower and Hangar, their possible reuse and/or disposition, and request that Catellus and the City seek wide public input for the programming and planning for each structure and its surroundings. The Commission may ask if it can be determined where those employed or who patronize businesses or parks at Mueller reside to determine if the east Austin community is benefiting as envisioned.

### **Compatibility with Surrounding Neighborhoods**

The Commission remains dedicated to seeing that land uses at Mueller are complementary to adjacent neighborhoods and its streets provide safe, multi-modal mobility and connections to the larger community. We will request updates from the City's Transportation Department on the East 51<sup>st</sup> Street Mobility Project, Airport Boulevard improvements, and any other proposed transit or transportation developments that might affect or improve Mueller's accessibility.

Many aspects of the future Austin Independent School District middle school at Mueller fall outside of the City's, and our, jurisdiction, but we will request updates on the land transfer to AISD and other aspects of the project's schedule in order to convey information to the community. We will continue to advocate for a complementary or joint-use facility adjacent to the school as noted in the MDA and indicated on Mueller's illustrative plan.

Similarly extra-jurisdictional, we will request an update from University of Texas staff regarding the status of their master plan for UT's Mueller campus, on their proposed build-out schedule, and any new information on proposed buildings, services and programs that may provide direct benefits to the community.

### **Diversity & Affordability**

The Commission will request updates on the mix of market-rate housing types offered needed to provide more socio-economic diversity at Mueller; on the successful efforts in exceeding the goal for twenty-five percent of Mueller's dwelling units be initially affordable; on the Mueller Foundation's audit, and on the affordable housing program's sustainability beyond the Master Developer Agreement. Though limited by jurisdictional constraints, we will urge continued communication between the City of Austin, Travis Central Appraisal District, and the Mueller Foundation to maintain long-term affordability.

### **Sustainability**

The Commission may request updates on best practices for sustainable development, meeting climate-change challenges, alternative transportation options, and plans for accommodating the growing electric vehicle market.

Lastly, the Commission formed a Transition Working Group in 2018 to begin addressing community questions about how the City of Austin-Catellus joint venture for Mueller will evolve once the MDA is complete. The Commission hopes to receive regular updates from the Working Group, and may advise the Council of needed policy considerations to address the governance and management of Mueller, its community venues and events, and most importantly, the continuation and maintenance of Mueller's affordability program. The Group will reconsider the original goals, and consult with City staff, Catellus and the community to better understand what the future holds for Mueller.