

Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative

SWOT Analysis Summary

October 19, 2013

On October 19th, 2013, a community meeting was held to gather public opinion on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the Colony Park study area. Participants were led through a SWOT exercise in order to create a cumulative list of perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the area.

For the purposes of this exercise, the following definitions were given:

Strength: A positive quality about the area that exists now

Weakness: A negative quality about the area that exists now

Opportunity: A positive possibility that may occur in the future

Threat: A negative possibility that may occur in the future

Below is a summary of the discussion by category.

Strengths

Many strengths of the area were identified and can be categorized into location, community character, and livability. Specific strengths cited included:

Location: Access to highways, Proximity to Downtown Austin, Elevated views of Austin, Close to countryside, Undeveloped land, Black Land Prairie, Ecology/Nature (soil, wildlife, trees)

Community Character: Diversity by all measures (income, profession, cultural, racial), Active neighborhood association and community leadership, Precinct coordination with the City of Austin, Unique, Police district representative, New neighborhoods and development

Livability: Quiet area, Recreation (Walter E. Long Lake, bike trail on Decker Lane, South Walnut Creek Hike and Bike trail), Good schools (Barbara Jordan and Garcia), Access to bus transit, Nice area to live

Weaknesses:

Weaknesses of the area included concerns about safety and security, quality of life, and land use and development. Specifically this included:

Safety and Security: Crime, Inadequate police protection and response time, Lack of code enforcement, Tank farms near schools / health concerns, People living alone

Quality of Life: No parks, no trails, No immediate access to medical care, Bus routes (No stops on Decker, Hours too short, Does not run through neighborhood nor by Overton Elementary), No unity within neighborhood association (few members, poor coordination), Loud trucks (Garcia Trucking), Deterioration of African American community, Lakeside community is cut off (kids cannot get to recreational facilities, must walk through woods), Lack of city services from COA, Loose dogs, Train blows horn at all hours (969/Loyola crossing), Limited activities for teens, Section 8 tenants (crime), Wentwood/Loyola – need stronger apartment regulations for trash and cars, Lack of unity and communication in the community, Lack of things to do, Lack of Local businesses and jobs, Road noise from Loyola, Lots of trash, Information unavailable, Need better GIS and database tools, Landlords do not keep their properties up/poor upkeep of housing

Land Use and Development: Poor pedestrian infrastructure, car traffic and speeding, Access to school, Lack of amenities (retail stores, postal services/post office, grocery stores, hospital, restaurants, public library, pharmacy, coffee shops), Lack of sidewalks on Decker, Absentee landlords, Parking on streets and yards, 18 wheelers carrying gas pass by schools on Johnny Morris (truck traffic), Traffic on Loyola (before school and after work) – caused by non-residents because of thoroughfare, Severe traffic getting in and out (left turns, Lack of senior housing/long term care housing, Need pavements on trails and sidewalks, Lack of creative cultural outlets (theaters, museums, dance studios, etc.), No community garden, Lack of community space and recreational facilities

Opportunities:

When asked to describe opportunities for the area, participants cited opportunities for improved communication; quality of life enhancements; improvements to access and circulation; preserve neighborhood identity; and buildings and infrastructure.

Improved communication: Improve internet and cable access – Communication/ television/ cable/ Wi-Fi, Find ways to link jobs to people already living in Colony Park, Attract new people, Partnerships (school, business), Planning process repeated, This process as a model for future neighborhoods, Visibility of city laws, Community involvement

Quality of Life Enhancements: Kids/Teens cafes (afterschool locations), Rental boats for lake, Low income housing, Disc golf course, Fitness center, Library with computer labs, Computer labs and technology in general, Area for food trailers and trucks, Local job center, Public place to view the sunset, Amusement park, Local restaurants and coffee shops, Green corridor, Dog park, Bank, Drug store/pharmacy, Community garden, New full service parks (tennis, swimming pool, etc.), Post office, Medical facilities, Create new jobs/ jobs center/provide job opportunities, Create opportunities for entrepreneurs/incubator, Worker owned co-op businesses, Shopping (retail and grocery), New recreation activities and facilities (skating rink, golf course, etc.), Increase police protection, Boys and Girls Club, Lower property taxes, Upkeep neighborhood for children walking from school, Generate revenue for the community, Culture (art, music, library, movie theater)

Access and Circulation: Roads interconnecting neighborhoods, Road maintenance, Better public transportation, More and improved roads, Needs sidewalk down Decker Lane, Commuter biking –

streets/connectivity, Access to lake, Shoulders and sharrows for bikes, Commuter train stops/light rail, Sustainable covered bus stops, bus stop benches, Hike and bike trails/paths, More shading and light at bus stops, Lines in the street to divide and a few speed humps for speeders, Blind and handicap (disable signs, sidewalks for the disabled), Vehicle share/car share

Preserve Neighborhood Identity: Preserve and maintain community character while bringing new people in, To dream and create a space that has the needed amenities that is in keeping with the neighborhood character

Buildings and Infrastructure: Development of senior and long term care housing, Transit oriented development, Intergenerational housing, Workforce housing, Low income housing, Homeownership, Google Fiber Optic expansion in Austin to include study area, Land trust to maintain affordability, Undeveloped space

Threats:

Threats to the area included issues of communication, safety and security and future development.

Communication: Literacy (understanding of new proposition), Rules and regulations enforced, Confusing ballots, Lack of follow through on the part of City of Austin and City Council, City bureaucracy inertia

Safety and Security: Football in streets (unruly), Snakes in tall grass, Brushfires, Flooding, Crime (theft, vandalism, guns), No enforcement, Feral animals (dogs, cats, other) / Loose animals / Dumping, Gasoline/Gas lines, Absentee landlords, Wandering people

Future Development: District re-mapping, Gentrification, Overdevelopment, Rise in property taxes (pricing current historic residents out), Increased traffic (more traffic leads to more accidents), City/County jurisdiction issues, Poverty, Cost of living, Homeless /homeless shelters built closer