

Claxton, Gregory

From: Thomas Butler [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 4:27 PM
To: Claxton, Gregory
Cc: Julie Fitch
Subject: DAA comments on beautification
Attachments: IA_VisState_suggadd.doc

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Mr. Claxton,

On August 2, Girard Kinney asked the Downtown Austin Alliance's Mobility and Streetscapes Committee to consider supporting the addition of beautification as a theme of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan vision statement. Mr. Kinney presented the attached language as an example of how such a theme could be incorporated into the vision statement.

The committee voted to recommend that the DAA support the proposal, and, on August 6, the DAA's Executive Committee also voted in support of the proposal. The DAA board of directors will take the matter up tomorrow, August 11, as part of its monthly agenda. However, I'm writing to you now because it is my understanding that the City of Austin Planning Commission will finalize the Imagine Austin vision statement this evening. Although, support of the proposed language is not formally a DAA position until approval of the full board, I wanted to let you know that the sentiment of our organization is generally supportive of the idea that the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan should include beautification as an important component in the future of our city.

Please share this information with the members of the Planning Commission prior to their discussion this evening.

Sincerely,
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8/10/2010

Suggested Language for "Beautification Theme"
Addition to the Imagine Austin Comp Plan Vision Statement

The Austin we love is Beautiful:

- We have preserved our most beautiful structures and our most precious natural features.**
- We have created public spaces that represent the highest standards of design, both urban and exurban.**
- We have made sure that as we have grown, we have plenty of functional, connected open space.**
- We have incorporated public art, created both by local artists and artists of international esteem throughout our public spaces.**
- Our downtown and all of our commercial corridors have tree-lined Great Streets defined by shady, human-scale building facades.**
- We have built new buildings, bridges and other improvements that are not only functional but are beautiful to the eye. We have embodied the ancient principles of "firmness, commodity and delight" in all that we have built.**
- In addition to eliminating air and water pollution, we have similarly eliminated visual pollution throughout the city and its ETJ.**
- We have eliminated or reduced to a minimum the previously existing visual barriers represented by overhead power and telecommunication lines, utility poles and other infrastructure that cluttered our commercial nodes, parks and roadways in general.**
- We have eliminated billboards and excessive on-premise signage and have banned overly bright, kinetic and otherwise obtrusive technologies that previously distracted drivers and pedestrians, promoted competition among signs thus making appropriate use of signage difficult or impossible and have prevented the clear, unobstructed view from the public way of our beautiful natural and built environment.**

Submitted by Girard Kinney, AIA
President, Scenic Austin, Member, Scenic Texas Executive Board

Comments on the Imagine Austin Vision Statement through August 9

General Comments

Tom Davis

I have two comments on the vision statement and the comprehensive plan. They're general, about the statement and about the Plan as a whole, rather than specific nits to be picked.

The first problem is with the Vision Statement: it's Pollyanna's view of the world. Most of you have heard me say this before, in person, but America is facing three major changes that'll all happen during the same 30 years that the Plan is supposed to be planning for: the end of the age of oil, a significantly warmer (and, for Texas, drier) climate, and an unstable global financial situation. The plan nods slightly in the general direction of sustainability and conservation, but nobody doing the process really understands the scope of the problems we're going to face or what things like sustainability *really* mean. (I've attached a short document that defines sustainability better than anything else I've seen.)

Second, the process by which the content of the Plan is being collected is fundamentally - and fatally - flawed. Inputs from the public are invited and encouraged, *as well they should be*, but as far as I can see, that's the only input the staffers are using to build the plan (other than the staffers' own opinions, of course). Where are the experts - the ones who know what they're doing, who understand what's really going on, and who can see where we're going? Oh, they can join the cattle calls ... uh, excuse me: public forums ... and put their one cent's worth in with the rest of us. But their expert opinions count no more than those of any uninformed person off the street. Doing things this way ensures that the "We want trees" people get included into the plan, but those who understand the reality of what's coming in the next 30 years get pretty much completely ignored.

nancy neavel & Jim Eastburn

I am very concerned and disappointed that there was little mention of equal access to healthcare for all and that basic needs for all was not addressed.

"Jenna"

Regarding Nancy Neavel's statement: the first step to getting healthcare for everyone is eliminating the fat cats who siphon off the system and we have two of those fat cats right in Austin running Dura Medic LLC. Watch this video to see how these two Austin "citizens" are draining public health care resources to enrich themselves: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9YVoRQuhus> This needs to be stopped. The first step is by exposing them.



"Bonnie"

Please include a real market into your planning like the ones they have in most major cities. The Redding Terminal Market in Philadelphia is a good prototype to examine. I like the covered environment, the food choices and the variety and stability of fresh foods and meats.

Commissioner Tovo

Rename document to **Vision and Principles**

Preamble

Marilyn Shashoua

Comments:

- The first paragraph may be the only thing people may read of the vision and it should set direction,
- how do you prepare "to get poised to become," why not shoot for already being there,
- I am not sure when Austin's 200th anniversary is, (2035?)
- innovation/(technology and arts) has been the driving force behind Austin's prosperity and sets us apart
- I am not sure what is meant by "community needs and values" very vague, maybe neighborhood is the better word since we have worked so hard on neighborhoods and that conveys a celebration of diversity and preservation
- Hopefully businesses as well as "citizens" would be included in moving the city forward.

Possible changes:

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is poised to become a beacon of sustainability, social equity and ~~economic opportunity~~ **innovation**; where diversity, ~~hard work~~, economic opportunity and creativity are celebrated; where ~~community~~ **neighborhood** needs and values are recognized; where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all and where leadership comes from its citizens and its businesses.

Austin's greatest asset is its people: passionate about our city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see this vision become a reality.

Commissioner Anderson

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is poised to become a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity; where diversity, hard work, and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all.

Austin's greatest asset is its people: passionate about our city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see this vision become a reality.

Cory Walton

While the vision's introductory paragraph speaks of sustainability, social equity diversity, creativity, recognition of community needs and values, It says nothing of respect for and protection of individuals' privacy and property rights and values--that would include freedom from intrusion by unwanted and undesired commercial noise in one's own home. Of course, this should go without saying and be subsumed in our codes, ordinances and code enforcement. The problem, is, they're not. Individuals' rights must not be abridged by businesses' irresponsible capitalization on Austin's self-proclaimed moniker as the "live music capital of the world."

Livable

Commissioner Tovo

Residents of all ages and income levels have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

Commissioners Dealey and Kirk

Clear guidelines for both quality development and preservation sustain and improve Austin's character, and provide certainty for residents and the business community.

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"Clear guidelines that support quality development that sustains and improves Austin's character provide certainty for residents and the business community."

Commission Members, who defines "quality"? Again, a slight revision would more concretely reflect the values and responsibilities Austin residents seek in a forward looking blueprint:

"Clear guidelines that support compatible, sustainable development improve Austin's character while providing certainty for residents and the business community."

Commissioner Tovo

Add: Development across the city is friendly to families with children, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

Change: Downtown and other urban neighborhoods offer a vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors.

To: Downtown and other town and neighborhood centers offer residents, workers, and visitors easy access to recreation, entertainment, and shopping.

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"Downtown and other urban neighborhoods offer a vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors."

The suggested revision from Planning Commission codes and ordinances committee seems to address residents' concern that residential neighborhoods today house families with children and working adults who value quiet, low-traffic residential streets and a quiet night's sleep so they can rise early for school or work.

Steven Zettner #1

Development occurs in connected, walkable, and pedestrian-friendly patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles, while reducing sprawl and negative impacts on neighborhoods.

Steven Zettner #2

I had proposed adding pedestrian-friendly to the statement "Development occurs in connected, walkable patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles, while reducing sprawl and negative impacts on neighborhoods." Several people have expressed confusion over the difference between pedestrian-friendly and walkable. I think the key is having a walkable environment that offers more than just bus stops, bars and boutiques as destinations.

I'd like to propose dropping "pedestrian-friendly," but instead changing another proposed revision to read, "Downtown and other town and neighborhood centers offer residents, workers and visitors easy access to recreation, entertainment, shopping, [ADD] community gathering places, and other civic and spiritual places."

Thanks for all the time of people who have worked on this.

Comprehensive Planning & Transportation

- is it possible to note, where we talk about protecting neighborhoods from negative effects, that we are also looking for things that can improve or enhance neighborhoods?
- in the first bullet under Livable, is there a way to indicate that there's a distinction between downtown and other urban neighborhoods?

Natural and Sustainable

Rachel Saucier

Good Afternoon,

I would like to thank you for your hard work in guiding the development of our city. I am very impressed with the values identified in the Vision Statement, but I have one request that I would like added - perhaps under the "Austin is Natural and Sustainable" category. The preservation of our park lands and green spaces is a vital component to the health of our City. It is very difficult to reclaim land once development has begun, and I want to ensure that we have ample hike & bike trails, dog parks, and clean swimming holes for our current and future residents. Having urban green retreats is key to rejuvenating one's self.

Please consider adding a component identifying our park lands and the planning and preservation of natural spaces as a priority as we continue to grow.

Again, thank you very much for your efforts to keep our community the great place that it is.

Comprehensive Planning & Transportation Committee

- add "Colorado River" to the second bullet under Natural and Sustainable

Mobile and Interconnected

Dana Rigg

In response to a request for resident input regarding a long term vision for Austin I would like to put forward the idea of a subway to relieve our traffic problems. I don't believe surface trains or buses are adequate solutions for the already congested downtown area since they do not remove traffic from the street but simply create more of a surface traffic bottleneck. Every time a bus stops so does all the traffic behind it. Every time a train passes all of the other surface traffic stops. A subway is capable of moving a much larger volume of people than either of these alternatives without interfering with other surface traffic.

I believe the initial subway lines should run between the Mueller development, UT, downtown Austin, and (assuming development proceeds) the Brackenridge tract west of downtown Austin for which development is currently being proposed. Surface trains and buses could be used to ferry people to and from Mueller and Brackenridge, thus averting additional surface traffic congestion in the downtown area. Surface trains could connect the Mueller subway line to the airport as well possibly run along the Mopac corridor, connecting to the Brackenridge subway line. A surface train could also run further east of Austin to connect Pflugerville, Manor, and Round Rock to the Mueller subway line providing even more far flung access to downtown and the airport.

Without going into a lot of detail here regarding the benefits of such a transportation plan (I'm sure you can imagine it for yourself), it fits well with the current goals of increased residential density in the downtown area, current and planned development at Mueller and Brackenridge, and movement toward a greener Austin. Additionally, this transportation plan enables nightly access to Austin's entertainment areas without the need for many of those patronizing bars and clubs to drive.

If you wish to discuss the topic further please feel free to contact me.

Prosperous

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"Development carefully balances the needs of differing land uses with improved transportation to ensure that growth is both fiscally sound and environmentally sustainable."

I suggest a slightly more fiscally responsible revision:

"Development carefully balances the needs of differing land uses with improved transportation while ensuring that growth and transportation are fiscally and environmentally sustainable."

[later:] similarly, a previous point under "Austin is Prosperous" states:

"Innovation and creativity are the engines of Austin's economy in the arts, research and development, and technology."

A suggested modification would, I believe, clarify:

"Innovation and creativity are key drivers in Austin's arts, research and development, and technology economies."

Values and Respects Its People

Mark Yznaga

Hi all,

I wanted to pass on to you a suggestion that was raised during a meeting with health and human services leaders that we (Livable City -What is Austin) had last week regarding the Comp Plan Vision statement.

Overall there were very pleased with the document. I told them that other suggestions were being raised regarding income levels, age groups, etc. They were very clear that they were looking for a statement about compassion (see bolded line below). They see that as a recognition that our community understands that there are people who are always going to need our compassion and

support to live their lives. They said that this was raised in meetings in a box they had but i don't think the wording made it's way to the Task Force.

They of course would prefer a line in the Values and Respects section however with the other proposed language regarding economic levels, ages, disabled, etc. maybe it could be accomplished with a simple addition of compassionate between engaged and creative in the Values section [second sentence of this section].

I am also attaching one of the meetings in a box notes they sent us after our meeting as proof of their interest in this idea.

Commissioner Tovo

People across all parts of the city and of all ages and income levels live in safe, stable neighborhoods with a variety of affordable and accessible homes, healthy food, economic opportunity, healthcare, education, and transportation.

Comprehensive Planning & Transportation

- add a bullet corresponding to "leadership comes from its citizens" in the Preamble, possibly under the Austin Values and Respects its People section.

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

Finally, Commission Members, this vision statement completely omits the mechanism that will fairly implement the principles embodied in this document i.e.: a responsive and responsible representative government, which combines and balances representation of geographic, ethnic and cultural sectors with overarching city-wide representation.

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"The history of the Austin area people is preserved and protected for future generations."

Historic preservation can consist of as little as a written document or a photograph. What do we mean by historic preservation? I suggest:

"The history of Austin's people, their culture, possessions and structures is preserved and protected for future generations."

Creative

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"Creativity is the engine of Austin's prosperity."

Commission Members, while I think we all recognize the value of creativity in Austin's civic culture, please ask yourselves, "What does this statement mean?" Are we now elevating the creative arts to top economic billing over education, government, science and technology? Does it mean a live outdoor amplified music venue on every street corner? Does it mean we're now going to allow even more creative latitude with our traditional economic engine i.e. land development and interpretation of the City's land development code? Rather than speculate or argue over the meaning of the above statement, May I suggest:

"A culture that cherishes creativity and the arts is key to the city's unique and distinctive identity and is valued as a vital contributor to our community's character, quality of life and economy."

Comprehensive Planning & Transportation

- add "beautiful" before "accessible public spaces" in the last bullet under Creative

Design Commissioner McKinney

Our buildings and places reflect the inspirational and creative spirit of who we are as Austinites, through the integration of design excellence, public art and accessible public spaces.

Cory Walton (not discussed by CP Committee)

"Our buildings and places reflect the inspirational and creative spirit of who we are as Austinites, through good design, public art and accessible public spaces."

With the use of the totally subjective term "good," this statement risks placing buildings over people by omitting one crucial element. I suggest:

"Our buildings and places reflect the inspirational and creative spirit of who we are as Austinites, through good, compatible design, public art and accessible public spaces."