

ARTICLE X. PLANNING.

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§ 1. PURPOSE AND INTENT.

It is the purpose and intent of this article that the city council establish comprehensive planning as a continuous and ongoing governmental function in order to promote and strengthen the existing role, processes and powers of the City of Austin to prepare, adopt and implement a comprehensive plan to guide, regulate and manage the future development within the corporate limits and extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city to assure the most appropriate and beneficial use of land, water and other natural resources, consistent with the public interest. Through the process of comprehensive planning and the preparation, adoption and implementation of a comprehensive plan, the city intends to preserve, promote, protect and improve the public health, safety, comfort, order, appearance, convenience and general welfare; prevent the overcrowding of land and avoid undue concentration or diffusion of population or land uses; facilitate the adequate and efficient provision of transportation, water, wastewater, schools, parks, recreational facilities, housing and other facilities and services; and conserve, develop, utilize and protect natural resources.

It is further the intent of this article that the adopted comprehensive plan shall have the legal status set forth herein, and that no public or private development shall be permitted, except in conformity with such adopted comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof, prepared and adopted in conformity with the provisions of this article.

Amendment note:

Section 1 was added by the election of January 19, 1985.

§ 2. THE PLANNING COMMISSION — ORGANIZATION.

There shall be established a planning commission which shall consist of citizens of the City of Austin who must be registered voters in the city and must have resided within the city for one year next preceding their appointment. The planning commission shall have a number of members equal to the number of members on the council plus two (2) additional members, a minimum of two-thirds of the members who shall be lay members not directly or indirectly connected with real estate and land development. The city manager, the chairperson of the zoning board of adjustment, the director of public works and the president of the board of trustees of the Austin Independent School District shall serve as ex officio members. The members of said commission shall be appointed by the council for a term of two (2) years, five (5) members to be appointed in every odd-numbered year and four (4) members in every even-numbered year. The commission shall elect a chairperson from among its membership and shall meet not less than once each month. Vacancies in an unexpired term shall be filled by the council for the remainder of the term.

Amendment note:

Section 2 appears as amended by at the election of May 7, 1994. Such section was previously renumbered by the election of January 19, 1985. Formerly § 1, said section was previously amended at the election of April 7, 1973.

§ 3. DIRECTORS FOR PLANNING, GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND LAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES.

The city council shall create by ordinance the department or departments necessary to provide technical and administrative support in the areas of planning, growth management and land development, and the director(s) of said department(s) shall be appointed by the city manager.

Amendment note:

Section 3 appears as amended at the election of January 19, 1985.

§ 4. THE PLANNING COMMISSION — POWERS AND DUTIES.

The planning commission shall:

- (1) Review and make recommendations to the council regarding the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive plan (as defined by Section 5 of this article) or element or portion thereof prepared under authorization of the city council and under the direction of the city manager and responsible city planning staff;
- (2) After a comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof has been adopted in conformity with this article:
 - (a) Review and make recommendation to the council on all amendments to the comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof;
 - (b) Review and make recommendations to the council on all proposals to adopt or amend land development regulations for the purpose of establishing the relationship of such proposal to, and its consistency with, the adopted comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof. For purposes of this article and subsection, "land development regulations" includes zoning, subdivision, building and construction, environmental, and other police power regulations controlling, regulating, or affecting the use or development of land;
- (3) Pursuant to ordinances adopted by the council, exercise control over platting and subdividing land within the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city to insure the consistency of any such plats or subdivision with the adopted comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof;
- (4) Submit annually to the city manager, not less than ninety (90) days prior to the beginning of the budget year, a list of recommended capital improvements, which in the opinion of the commission are necessary or desirable to implement the adopted

comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof during the forthcoming five-year period:

- (5) Monitor and oversee the effectiveness and status of the comprehensive plan and recommend annually to the council any changes in or amendments to the comprehensive plan as may be desired or required;
- (6) Prepare periodic evaluation and appraisal reports on the comprehensive plan, which shall be sent to the council at least once every five (5) years after the adoption of the comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof;
- (7) Require information from the city manager relative to its work;

The commission shall be responsible to and act as an advisory body to the council and shall perform such additional duties and exercise such additional powers as may be prescribed by ordinance of the council not inconsistent with the provisions of this Charter.

Amendment note:

Section 4 appears as renumbered and amended at the election of January 19, 1985. Previously, this material was § 2.

§ 5. THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

The council shall adopt by ordinance a comprehensive plan, which shall constitute the master and general plan. The comprehensive plan shall contain the council's policies for growth, development and beautification of the land within the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city, or for geographic portions thereof including neighborhood, community or areawide plans. The comprehensive plan shall include the following elements: (1) a future land use element; (2) a traffic circulation and mass transit element; (3) a wastewater, solid waste, drainage and potable water element; (4) a conservation and environmental resources element; (5) a recreation and open space element; (6) a housing element; (7) a public services and facilities element, which shall include but not be limited to a capital improvement program; (8) a public buildings and related facilities element; (9) an economic element for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment; and (10) health and human service element.

The council may also adopt by ordinance other elements as are necessary or desirable to establish and implement policies for growth, development and beautification within the city, its extraterritorial jurisdiction, or for geographic portions thereof, including neighborhood, community, or areawide plans. The council shall provide for financing of all elements contained in the comprehensive plan in accordance with law.

The several elements of the comprehensive plan shall be coordinated and be internally consistent. Each element shall include policy recommendations for its implementation and shall be implemented, in part, by the adoption and enforcement of appropriate land development regulations.

The planning commission shall forward the proposed comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof to the city manager, who shall thereupon submit such plan, or element or portion thereof, to the council with recommendations thereon.

The council may adopt, or adopt with changes or amendments, the proposed comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof, after at least one public hearing. The council shall act on such plan, element or portion thereof, within sixty (60) days following its submission by the city manager. If such plan or element or portion thereof is not adopted by the council, it shall, with policy direction, return such plan or element thereof to the planning commission, which may modify such plan or element or portion thereof, and again forward it to the city manager for submission in like manner to the council. Furthermore, all amendments to the comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof recommended by the planning commission shall be forwarded to the city manager and shall be subject to review and adoption in the same manner as for the original adoption of the comprehensive plan as set forth above.

Amendment note:

Section 5 appears as renumbered and amended by the election of January 19, 1985. Said section was previously numbered § 4.

§ 6. LEGAL EFFECT OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

Upon adoption of a comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof by the city council, all land development regulations including zoning and map, subdivision regulations, roadway plan, all public improvements, public facilities, public utilities projects and all city regulatory actions relating to land use, subdivision and development approval shall be consistent with the comprehensive plan, element or portion thereof as adopted. For purposes of clarity, consistency and facilitation of comprehensive planning and land development process, the various types of local regulations or laws concerning the development of land may be combined in their totality in a single ordinance known as the Land Development Code of the City of Austin.

Amendment note:

Section 6 appears as renumbered and amended by the election of January 19, 1985. Said section was previously numbered § 5.

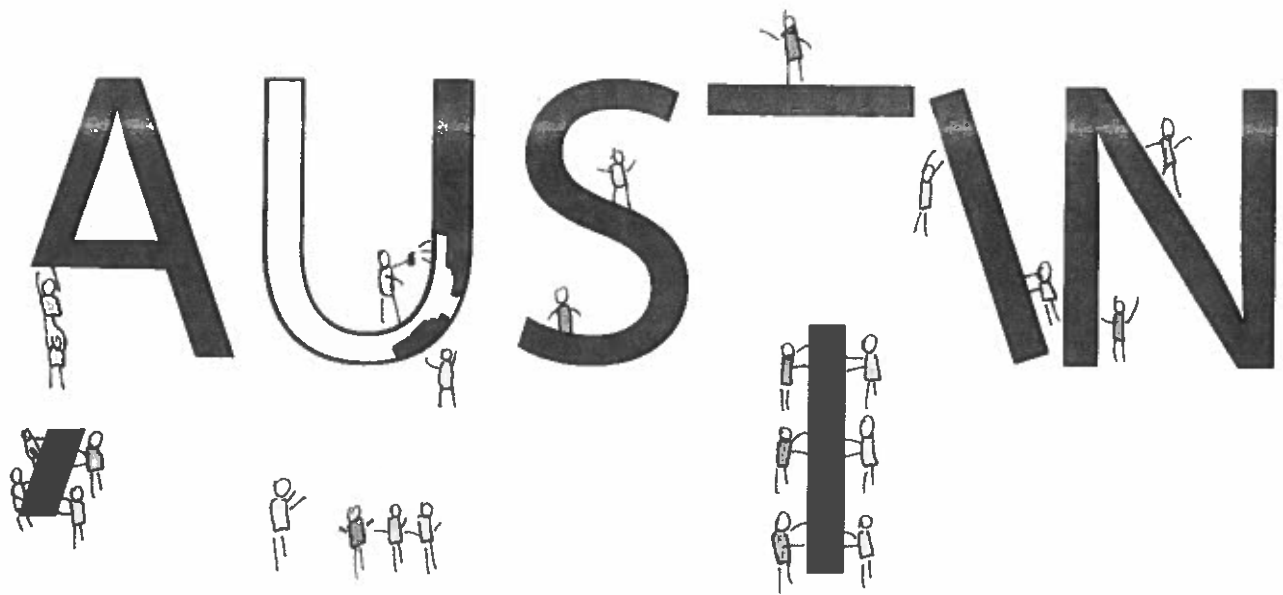
§ 7. LEGAL EFFECT OF PRIOR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

Any comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof adopted pursuant to the authority of Article X of this Charter or other law, but prior to the effective date of this amendment shall continue to have such force and effect as it had at the date of its adoption and until appropriate action is taken to adopt a new comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof as required and authorized by this amendment.

Amendment note:

Section 7 appears as added by the election of January 19, 1985.

MAKING



Public Participation
in a New Comprehensive Plan

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Welcome to Your Future

The City of Austin's citizens are about to embark on a very exciting journey. Over the next 18 months, elected and appointed leaders, residents, business people, city staff, civic groups, community volunteers, and many others will engage in a discussion about our values as a city and our aspirations for the future. This discussion will articulate a vision for Austin's future and guide the development of a new Comprehensive Plan that will drive the way the City grows, spends, and conserves its resources.

To citizens who were involved in pre-planning activities (e.g., the August 5, 2009 workshop), thank you. Your input directly shaped this Public Participation Plan. To citizens who will become involved as the planning process officially kicks off, welcome.

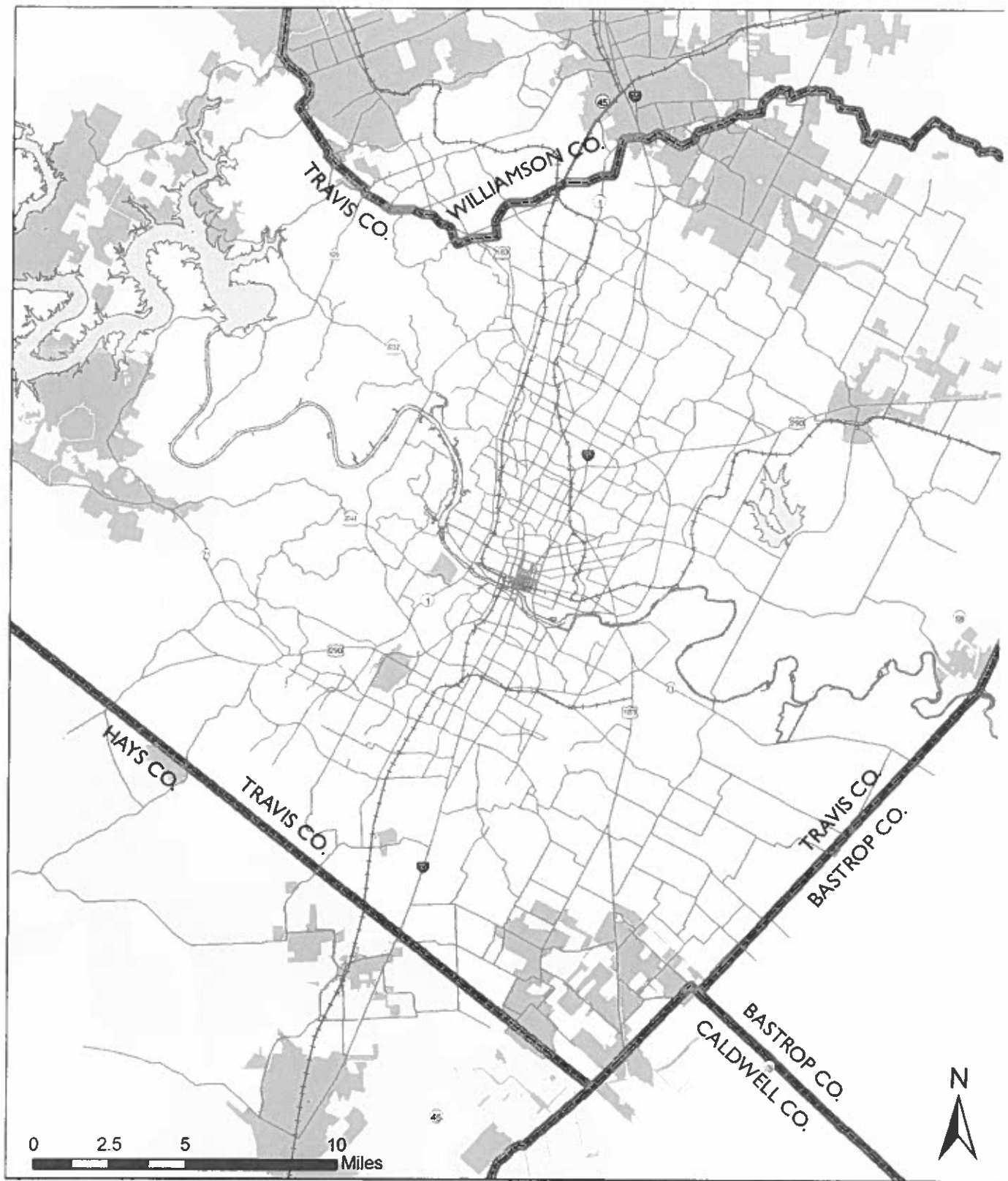


What the Comprehensive Plan Is

- ☒ An expression of the Austin community's shared values, aspirations, and vision for the future.
- ☒ The policy foundation for decision-making by the City and its partners to proactively manage growth and change.
- ☒ The City's "to-do" list defining a citywide action program and priorities to be implemented over time to achieve the vision.

What the Comprehensive Plan is Not

- ☐ A replacement of existing neighborhood, corridor, or other geographically specific plans (rather, it provides a policy framework to be taken into account in preparing or revising such plans in the future).
- ☐ A specific proposal for changing land use or zoning (again, the comprehensive plan sets the framework for undertaking such changes).



City of Austin Jurisdiction and Neighboring Municipalities

Legend

Austin - City Limits

Austin - Extra-territorial Jurisdiction

Other City Limits

Other ETJs

Figure 1. City of Austin Jurisdiction and Neighboring Municipalities.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

**Background on the
Austin Comprehensive Plan**

A comprehensive plan defines a city's public policies related to growth and development. It takes a broad, community-wide perspective, often referred to as a "30,000 foot view," as opposed to more detailed neighborhood, corridor, or area plans that deal with specific parcels and projects (e.g., filling gaps in the sidewalk network or undertaking specific park improvements). Austin's new comprehensive plan will establish a framework and action program for the City as a whole, to be implemented over a period of years to achieve the vision articulated by citizens.

The Austin City Charter spells out specific items that need to be incorporated into the City's comprehensive plan. According to Article X: "Planning" of the City of Austin Charter,

The council shall adopt by ordinance a comprehensive plan, which shall constitute the master and general plan. The Comprehensive Plan shall contain the council's policies for growth, development and beautification of the land within the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city, or for the geographic portions thereof including neighborhood, community and area wide plans.

The comprehensive plan shall include the following elements (although additional elements may be included):

1. *A future land use element*
2. *A traffic circulation and mass transit element*
3. *A wastewater, solid waste, drainage and potable water element*
4. *A conservation and environmental resources element*
5. *A recreation and open space element*
6. *A housing element*
7. *A public service and facilities element, which shall include but not be limited to a capital improvement program*
8. *A public buildings and related facilities element*
9. *An economic element for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment*
10. *A health and human service element*

Austin's current comprehensive plan of record, the *Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan*, was first adopted in 1979 and most recently updated in 2008. The 2008 *Interim Update* incorporated City Council policies and replaced the 1979 Growth Areas Map with an updated Growth Areas Map. The need to create a new Comprehensive Plan became increasingly clear during the process of developing the 2008 Update. Although the plan contained themes that are as relevant today as they were in the 1970s, such as neighborhood and environmental protection, much of the plan is dated and a product of the time in which it was written. In addition, since the plan's initial adoption, a number of issues have emerged that were not foreseen in the 1970s. Homelessness, diminishing automobile mobility, climate change, and an affordable housing supply that cannot meet the growing demand are among the issues of concern for current and future Austinites.

The ETJ is the unincorporated land within five miles of Austin's boundary that is not within the city limits or ETJ of another city. It is the territory where Austin alone is authorized to annex land.

Moving Forward with a New Comprehensive Plan

In their 2009-2010 annual budget, the Austin City Council apportioned funds to create a new Comprehensive Plan for the City. On April 23, 2009, Wallace Roberts and Todd, LLC (WRT) was selected to lead a consultant team to work with the City of Austin, the citizens of Austin, and residents of its extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ)¹ to create a new Comprehensive Plan (see Figure 1). City Council set three overarching goals to guide the process of preparing the plan:

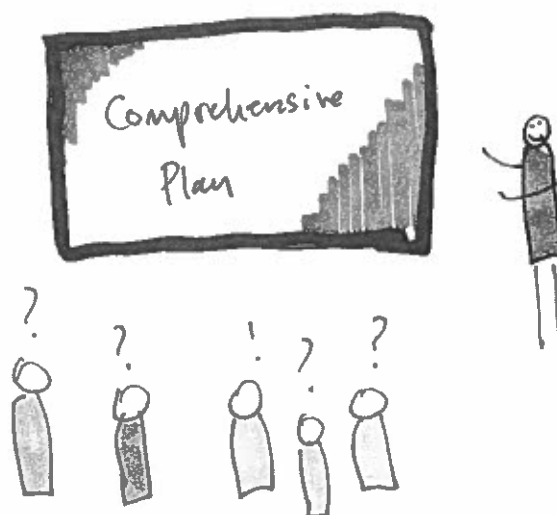
1. **Community Engagement:** The planning process will include multiple ways of engaging the public, with the overall goal of developing a plan that reflects the values and aspirations of the entire Austin community.
2. **Sustainability:** The planning process will define what sustainability means specifically for Austin and the aspirations of Austinites for a sustainable future environment, economy, and community.
3. **Implementation:** The planning process will incorporate a strategic focus on implementation, culminating in formulation of a realistic action agenda and benchmarks to measure progress in achieving the vision.

The end result is expected to be a landmark plan and model for other communities to use in charting a course towards a sustainable future.

This public participation plan defines a framework for achieving the first goal—involving the Austin community in developing a plan that will be vitally important to the City's future. Towards that end, it defines:

- Guiding principles and objectives; participants and their roles in the planning process (Chapter 2)
- Outreach, education, and discussion tools to be used to reach and inform residents (Chapter 3)
- Public participation tools to be used to actively engage residents in providing public input (Chapter 4)
- Key public participation events in the process (Chapter 5)
- Measures to be taken to document the planning process and provide a transparent record of results (Chapter 6)

"About the Comprehensive Plan"



CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Guiding Philosophy/
Principles of the Public
Participation Plan

Objectives

Targeted Audiences

Key Participants and
Their Roles

Decision-Making

This section lays out the guiding philosophy and objectives of the Public Participation Plan, as well as the roles of those who will be involved throughout the process. The plan is based on two principles of participation: 1) The plan will reflect the values and aspirations which citizens will be invited to express in a multitude of ways throughout the planning process; and 2) The process will engage members of the public who are not usually involved in city planning and decisions.

The goal of the Participation Plan is to create a framework to solicit public input to create a new Comprehensive Plan for Austin. This new plan should give clear direction for future policies, be rooted in Austin's broad common ground, and incorporate, where possible, new approaches to bringing together Austin's diverse interests.

Guiding Philosophy

These following principles provide the foundation upon which the public participation program is built.

- **Open to All:** Participation in the development of the comprehensive plan is open and inclusive of all of Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. Participation is encouraged across geographic, demographic, financial, and other lines. Because different people have different experiences, preferences, constraints, and capacities to participate, being open to all requires having multiple ways to participate.
- **Community Engagement:** Beyond staff and the consultant reaching out, talking with, and listening to the community, the community engages with itself, across the traditional lines that divide Austin. This happens across the process, but also within specific events (e.g., the community forum series).
- **Transparency:** Participants see their input reflected in the outcomes from meetings and events and see how those outcomes shape and influence the plan.
- **Enthusiastic and Vibrant:** The process welcomes and encourages enthusiasm, as a foundation for becoming an increasingly vibrant city.
- **Engaging Underrepresented Groups:** For traditionally hard-to-reach groups (e.g., younger citizens, families with children, renters, Spanish speakers, and residents who hold more than one job and have little free time) a concerted effort will be made to take participation opportunities directly to them—where they live, work, and gather. Among planned activities are community forums held at varied times and in geographically dispersed locations, the use of social media, leveraging the relationships of community leaders and institutional partners to reach targeted populations, and periodic focus groups.
- **Fun:** The planning process need not be a dry one. In fact, it can be enjoyable and even entertaining. By creating opportunities for the community to have fun together, the planning team will inspire trust, ownership, and commitment to the process. Appealing venues, music, visuals, energetic activities, concurrent youth events, and the opportunity to meet new “neighbors” are among the ways that fun will be interjected into activities.

The following objectives are the ends to which public participation efforts are directed:

Build understanding of the project and credibility for the process.

Strategy: A variety of outreach and educational tools will help create public understanding of the planning process and the important role the community will play in that process. Credibility will be built by a number of actions, including program transparency, effective branding, community ambassadors (e.g., Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force members, community leaders, and even local celebrities), media coverage, and an obvious connection between input and outcomes.

Provide numerous and varied opportunities for public participation and input.

Strategy: The program will offer a variety of participation methods, hold events in geographically diverse locations, partner with diverse individuals and organizations to expand opportunities to participate, and encourage community members to engage with one another. Dialogue will be decentralized.

Understand the needs and interests of the City's diverse constituency.

Strategy: Attention will be given to both those traditionally involved audiences as well as to groups who are traditionally less involved. While typically underrepresented groups can be challenging to reach, there are tools built into the planning process to ensure diversity of input. Citizens representing these groups, including those who live in Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction, young adults, ethnic and racial minorities, and those without a college education will be recruited to participate in focus group discussions. Additionally, these groups will have representation on the Comprehensive Plan Citizen's Advisory Task Force, and community leaders within these populations will be recruited to serve as "relayers," spreading the word about public participation opportunities and collecting hard-copy comment forms at meetings and events.

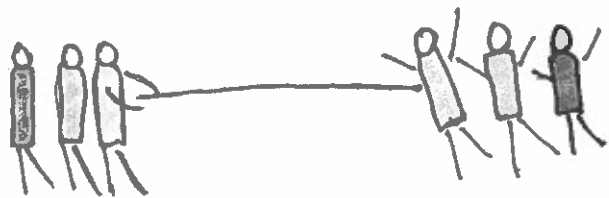
Carefully consider input and show a clear connection between input and outcomes.

Strategy: A well-structured system of documentation and transparency will keep the public informed about the development of the plan as it unfolds, accounting for how public input is collected and how that input is used in the subsequent phase of the planning process. Graphic representations of the process and timeline will be displayed in public facilities and online allowing the community to tangibly see how the plan evolves.

We recognize that these public participation principles and objectives aspire to a high standard. We also understand that the constraints of available time and resources may, at times, cause us to fall short of these ideals. However, by working together, our collective community efforts will yield an exceptional public experience and a strong Comprehensive Plan.

Targeted Audiences

Residents in the City of Austin and those in its ETJ are targeted for outreach and participation. Special efforts will be made to ensure that the voices of typically underrepresented groups are heard in the planning process. These groups include minority populations, non-English speakers, families with children, seniors, people with disabilities, and residents living outside the urban core who have not been traditionally engaged in community planning activities. Outreach and education tools are outlined in Section III of this document. These tools will be appropriately modified to reach underrepresented groups as well as the general population.



Key Participants and Their Roles

A well-orchestrated public participation program requires a team effort. Following are the key participants on that team and the roles they will play in the process.

Citizens

Members of the community are asked to engage in civil discourse about issues that affect current reality and dictate what Austin will be in the future. Citizens include not only residents, but also members of Austin's business and corporate communities, as well as its non-profit and advocacy communities. They are asked to communicate their interests, listen to diverse viewpoints, understand constraints and trade-offs, and help in defining the common ground. Most of all, they should bring Austin's enthusiasm, vibrancy, and openness into the process. Individual citizens who wish to become more involved may consider becoming project volunteers or partners. The process should accommodate every level of participation, including:

► Dedicated participants

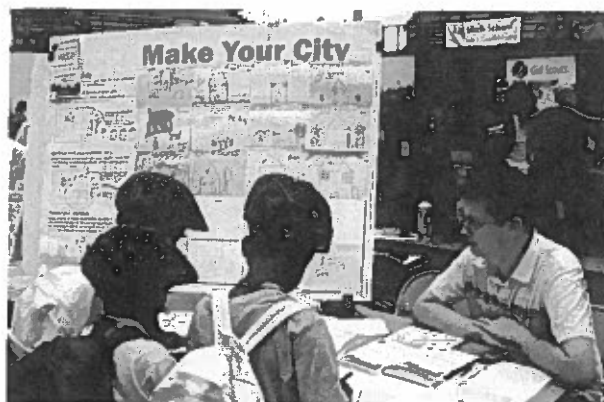
These are members of the public who are dedicated to close involvement throughout the planning process. Dedicated participants attend all (or most) major participation opportunities, are likely to be active on the project website, and are the most likely to attend a Planning Commission, Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Task Force, or City Council meeting. Dedicated participants are crucial to this process, because they provide "experts in the field," and serve as conduits between the planning team and the community.

► Occasional participants

These are members of the public who are committed to the process, but limit themselves primarily to the major avenues for participation. They attend most of the Community Forums, stay abreast of the process online or at the library, and may even attend a few outside meetings.

► Infrequent participants

These are people without much time, who are nevertheless able to attend one or two community forums. These participants are crucial, because they are likely to come from hard-to-reach communities without the time or ability to participate frequently. However, they are also more difficult to include for two reasons. First, because they are unlikely to have followed the process from the start, they will need more contextual information at each step. Second, because they are less likely to follow-up, their input needs to be weighed carefully with that of dedicated and occasional participants, who can repeat their positions throughout the process. To address these issues, orientation sessions will be scheduled to brief new participants on contextual information and decisions previously made during the process. By capturing the interests and needs of all participants (and participant groups) the draft plan can address the common interests of all segments of the community.



Partners

The City will recruit partners from the public and private sectors. These partners will help extend the reach of the public participation process and provide valuable outreach and input opportunities to the public. They may also provide venues, food, and/or entertainment for community events. One of Austin's strengths is its enormous civic entrepreneurialism. The Comprehensive Plan welcomes unaffiliated efforts at promoting discussion, outreach, and passion among the public. The following denotes varying partnership opportunities:

► Community Leaders

Citizens who hold leadership roles in the community will be recruited to encourage broad public participation in the planning effort. They may disseminate information, conduct Meetings-in a Box (i.e., an exercise that allows people to contribute their views outside the boundaries of the Community Forum Series), post information on their websites and in their newsletters, and volunteer in other ways to further dialogue and encourage input. Community leaders may also be institutions like churches, neighborhood associations, and professional organizations.

► Volunteers

These are citizens, organizations, and businesses without any formal leadership role who nonetheless are willing to go beyond the role of participating and take on some kind of organizing role, whether it is hosting a Meeting-in-a-Box, organizing an educational event, hosting a contest, or volunteering to work at community events promoting the process. In addition to individuals, volunteers may also be places where Austin's communities gather, such as restaurants, cafés, and beauty shops.

► Institutional partners

Organizations—such as the independent school districts, Capital Metro, the State of Texas, area colleges and universities, counties, or the Lower Colorado River Authority—in Austin and the region that have authority over something related to the Comprehensive Plan will be engaged as partners throughout the process. These partnerships could include providing outreach and in-kind assistance through participation as technical stakeholders.

Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Task Force

Members of the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Task Force will serve as champions, ambassadors, and guides for the process. The Task Force will provide a forum for the discussion of ideas and issues and help to guide the consultant team and staff in synthesizing public input. It will also, provide advice and recommendations to the City Council, the Planning Commission, City staff, and project consultant team.

Technical working groups

Later in the process, technical working groups will be established comprised of persons with special knowledge or interest in different plan elements. The technical working groups will help develop recommendations to the Task Force regarding how the Vision Statement and Plan Framework policy directions can be translated into specific strategies and actions. A process will be developed to ensure that the working group's recommendations are coordinated and integrated.

The Austin City Council

The City Council has final approval over the planning process and the new Austin Comprehensive Plan. Like the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Task Force and Planning Commission members they appoint, members of the City Council are advocates for a plan that captures the vision and spirit of Austin. In addition to hearings before the full City Council, the three-member Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee, which meets monthly, will be another venue for Council to stay up-to-date on the process.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission is charged by the City Charter to recommend a Comprehensive Plan to City Council. Planning Commission initiated the current process by recommending that the City Council authorize a new Comprehensive Plan. It will also oversee the process to ensure that the Plan adheres to the Charter requirements and provides a long-range perspective on the future of Austin. Its five-member Comprehensive Plan Committee was active in preparing for a new Comprehensive Plan planning process. They are likely to meet monthly throughout the process and beyond to oversee its progress.

Other Boards and Commissions

As citizens already closely involved with city issues covered by the new Comprehensive Plan, members of Austin's other Boards and Commissions are valuable resources for this process. They are encouraged to attend all Comprehensive Plan events, but will become especially important as the process moves into the parts of Phase 2 and into Phase 3 and begins to deal with the plan elements. Many Boards and Commissions will be given an opportunity to formally review the draft Plan Framework and draft Comprehensive Plan.

City of Austin Staff

City staff will serve a number of functions, ranging from administration of the public process to data collection and analysis to facilitation at events. The Planning and Development Review Department manages the process with the consultant team. Other departments will provide staffing throughout the process, with their participation increasing as the process moves from Phase 2 (Plan Vision and Framework) to Phase 3 (development of the full Comprehensive Plan). Staff of the departments most directly associated with each element will work with technical and citizen working groups to develop the Comprehensive Plan document from the Plan Framework.

Consultant Team

The consultant team will work collaboratively with City staff to "orchestrate" the planning process and prepare substantive work products reflecting the results of public participation. The members of the consultant team are:

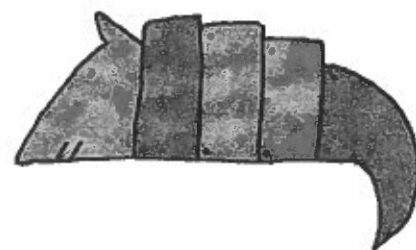
- ▶ WRT (lead planning consultant): land use and urban design, housing, environmental resources, public facilities and services, recreation and open space
- ▶ AngelouEconomics: economic development

- ▶ Canales-Sondgeroth Associates: local planning liaison/land use and implementation
- ▶ Carter Design Associates: community health and human services, related urban design issues
- ▶ Criterion Planners: sustainability modeling
- ▶ Estilo Communications, Inc.: public participation
- ▶ Group Solutions RJW: public participation
- ▶ Kimley Horn and Associates, Inc.: transportation
- ▶ Raymond Chan Associates, Inc.: utility infrastructure

Decision-Making

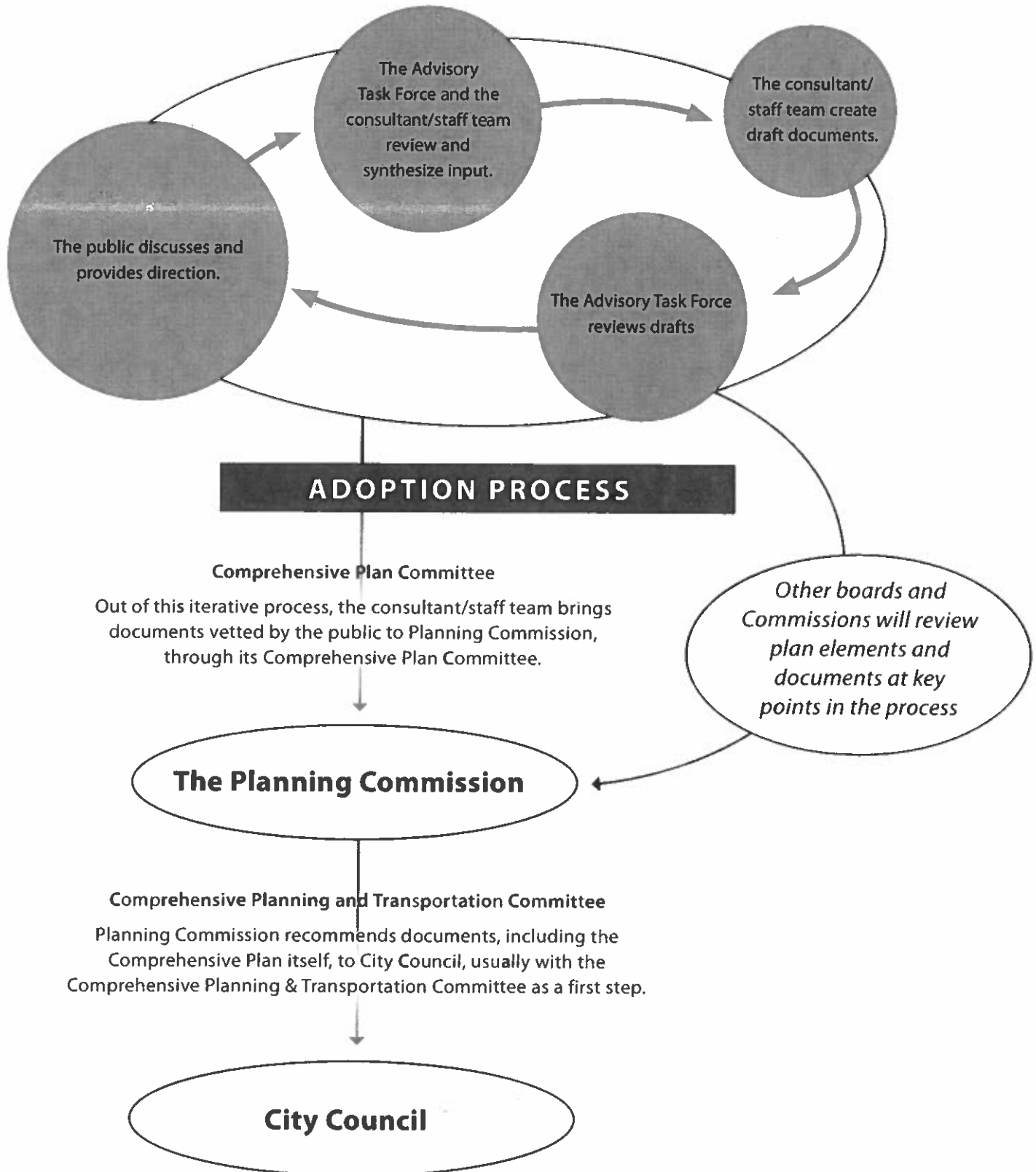
Articulating a vision for Austin's future will be a collaborative effort. While the ultimate decision-making power rests with City leadership, the collective voice of the community will guide decisions. It is with this in mind that the Public Participation Plan was designed as an iterative process, providing a variety of opportunities to elicit meaningful input from a diverse cross-section of Austin's citizenry. The overarching goal of the plan is to reasonably address the issues raised in that process and transcend personal and interest-based agendas to implement a common vision.

Before citizens can provide meaningful input on the Comprehensive Plan, they must first understand what the Comprehensive Plan is and learn about the variety of ways in which they can participate in its development. The Public Participation Plan addresses these needs through the following media outreach, education and discussion tools.



PUBLIC PROCESS

An iterative process between broad public input and review and the development of key plan documents, such as the Vision and Comprehensive Plan.



CHAPTER 3

MEDIA, EDUCATION, AND DISCUSSION TOOLS

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Outreach Message

Media Outreach

Educational and
Outreach Events
and Activities

Citizens may want to better understand what the Comprehensive Plan is, why it is important, and in what ways they can participate in its development. The information communicated in the outreach effort will answer these questions, and provide additional information for context. Outreach messages will vary with each phase of the planning process and will be shaped by the needs and desires of the public.

The table below outlines the outreach message(s) of each planning phase.

Table 1. Outreach Messages

- **Phase 1: Plan Kickoff**
 - What is a Comprehensive Plan?
 - Why should we care?
 - How can we get involved?
- **Phase 2: Forum Series #1**
 - What is a community vision?
 - The importance of a shared vision.
 - The role of the vision in shaping the rest of the plan.
- **Forum Series #2**
 - Understanding the growth Austin is facing and its implications.
 - Imagining alternative futures (scenarios).
- **Forum Series #3**
 - Implications of future scenarios.
 - Strategic directions for change.
- **Phase 3: Forum Series #4**
 - Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Priorities for Implementation.
- **Adopting the Plan**
 - The importance of the Comprehensive Plan.
 - Implementing the plan (e.g., policy changes, funding, spending priorities)

The Public Participation Plan will communicate the messages through the following media outreach, education and discussion tools.

Media Outreach

Recognizing the critical role the local media plays in informing residents about community issues, accurate and timely information will be provided to media representatives. Using the City's Public Information Office, regular news releases will be issued to newspapers and radio and television stations in the Austin area, including those targeting underrepresented populations. Press conferences, media interviews, and public service announcements will be used throughout the planning process to ensure the media thoroughly understands the project and can provide accurate information to the reading, viewing, and listening public.

Website

The project website will be a crucial resource for citizens involved in the process. It will be a resource library, an introduction to the plan and the process, and a record of the process. Citizens will also be able to receive project updates and meeting notices through the website.

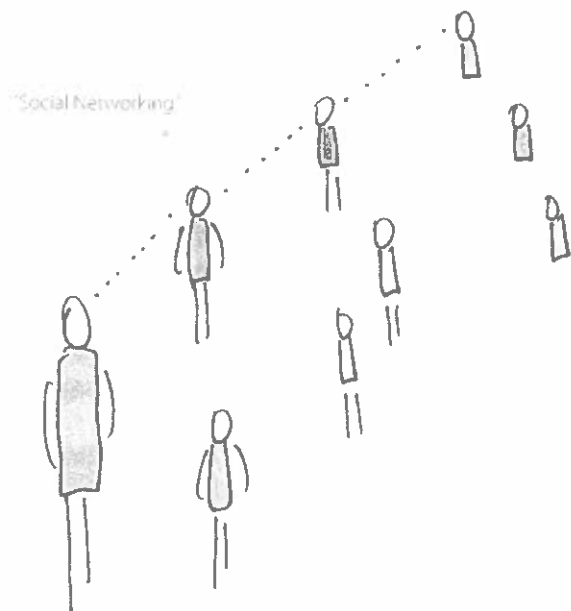


The site will also provide venues for discussion and comments, including live web chats. Note that many of these opportunities for discussion on the website will be distinct from formal opportunities for participation and input. Website opportunities are intended to encourage discussion and to spread information. Separate opportunities for direct input on the content of the plan will be available, tailored to the current stage of the process.

Video clips and photos will be posted to the website as they become available. Major updates will coincide with each phase of the planning process. Project newsletters, the results of web chats, a project calendar, and other guidance and reference materials will be posted. Once a brand and a name for the Comprehensive Plan have been selected, a distinct and easy-to-communicate URL will be acquired.

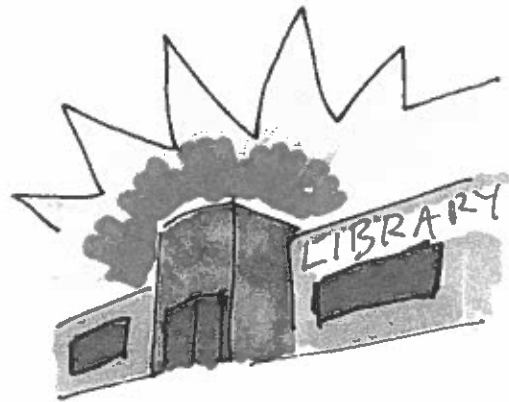
Social Networking

Leveraging social media has become a must-do in public outreach and can be both cost effective and time efficient. Content can be uploaded onto a variety of social media platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) by utilizing auto posting on the project blog. Video clips, another compelling tool for community education, can be spread virally via sites like YouTube. Together, these social networking tools will help increase public understanding of the plan and the planning process.



Austin Public Libraries

The library system will serve a role similar to that of the website: a repository of documents throughout the process, as well as a center for information about the current state of the process. Librarians will be able to assist members of the public who are new to the process. Libraries may also host “talk to a planner” days to facilitate informal discussion between City staff and the public.



Speakers Bureau and Presentations

Requests for speakers and special presentations will be solicited throughout the project. Speakers bureau presentations target existing groups and organizations in settings of their choice. Examples of targeted groups include neighborhood groups, civic organizations, advocacy groups, City boards and commissions, parent-teacher organizations, business groups, special interest groups, etc. In order to maximize the number of speaking engagements, City staff, Citizen Advisory Task Force members and other community leaders will be recruited to serve on the Speakers Bureau. PowerPoint presentations, scripts, and comment forms will support speaker presentations.

Newsletters, Updates and Fact Sheets

Project newsletters, updates, and fact sheets will be developed throughout the process to provide reliable information to the public. Newsletters will be produced at each phase of the project. Project updates and/or fact sheets will be prepared quarterly, or more frequently if new information, or circumstances, warrant. Newsletters, updates, and fact sheets will be posted to the project webpage. Links will also be forwarded electronically to the project's growing email database. The City may also elect to periodically include updates and flyers in utility bill inserts.

Engaging Activities

In addition to traditional routes to outreach and education, engaging events will be designed to complement each phase of the process. These activities should first and foremost be fun and interesting. They should also educate participants and reinforce the plan's participation principles. Examples include a citywide "get to know you" activity, a photo hunt, and self-guided tours of Austin.



Email Blasts

Email blasts are a cost-effective way to reach a large number of people quickly and with as much frequency as desired. They are, however, only as powerful as the database of addresses they target. The larger the reach of the database, the more effective an outreach tool email blasts are. The City has begun compiling an email database of individuals interested in knowing about, and participating in, the planning process. The project team will broadly communicate the desire to expand the list to include everyone interested in receiving information by this means. The project team will also forward email blasts to organizations for distribution to their members and constituents, along with requests that forwarded recipients go to the project website and join the project interest list.

Email blasts will generally be used no more than once a week and no less than once a month. They could include information such as meeting and event announcements, newsletters, process updates, and links to other planning documents.

Community Events

A staffed information booth placed at heavily attended community and public events, and at other locations with heavy foot traffic, can help reach the general public, as well as traditionally underrepresented populations. Targeting events and locations that appeal to and attract members of targeted populations provide the advantage of a physical presence in outreach, and helps generate familiarity, community and trust around the project. Examples of locations where informational booths may be set up are farmer's markets, ethnic events, and events held on campuses, housing authorities, churches, etc.

Brochures and Flyers

Basic outreach and information tools like brochures and flyers provide a hook for casual readers and can point those interested to more information. For the Comprehensive Plan, they will direct readers to the project website and/or public libraries for the opportunity to learn more. While the amount of information they can convey is limited, these materials are still important outreach tools because they are easy to distribute at meetings, public areas and community events.

Lectures and Discussion Events

These purely educational events may be sponsored by City partners (e.g., The University of Texas) or community organizations. To the extent possible, events such as lectures should be recorded and made available on the project website.

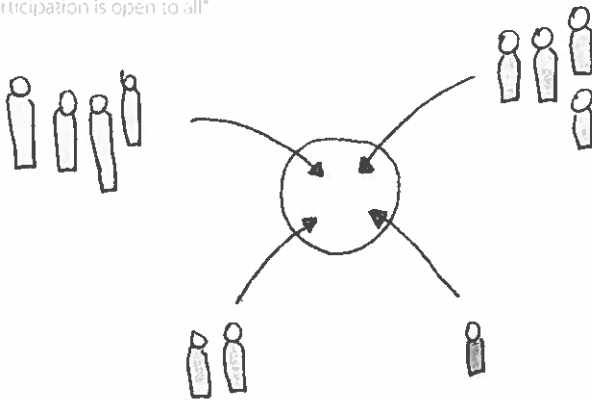
Book Club and Reading Lists

A list of books relevant to the planning process will be posted on the project website, in coordination with the Austin Public Library system. Throughout the process, existing book clubs will be encouraged to incorporate one or more of these titles into their groups.

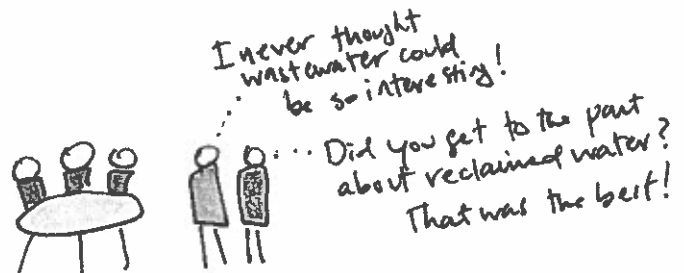
Meet-ups

In addition to community meetings hosted by existing organizations, ad hoc informal meet-ups will be encouraged at key points in the planning process. Reviewing document drafts in advance of formal discussions is one example of how these meet-ups might be used.

"Participation is open to all"



"Ad hoc meet-ups"



CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TOOLS

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Public Participation
Events

Discussion Opportunities

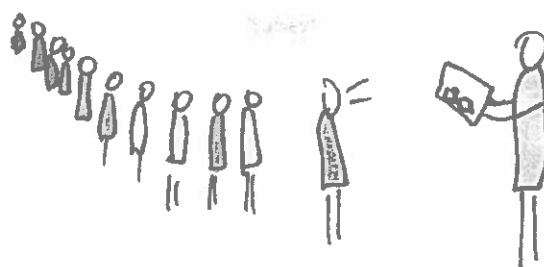
Remote Opportunities

Once the citizens understand the planning process and how they can get involved, they are likely to be eager to provide their input. The Public Participation Plan is designed to elicit that input through a number of creative, engaging, accessible, and diverse public participation tools.

Community Forum Series

Community input will be primarily collected during four series of community-wide forums. These forums will be held at geographically dispersed locations around the city and ETJ. Each forum series will have a different objective and will consist of six public meetings, including mostly evening meetings and at least one daytime meeting held during the week. To the extent possible, at least some meetings will offer childcare and/or Spanish translation services for participants. Informational materials will indicate which forums will have these services available.

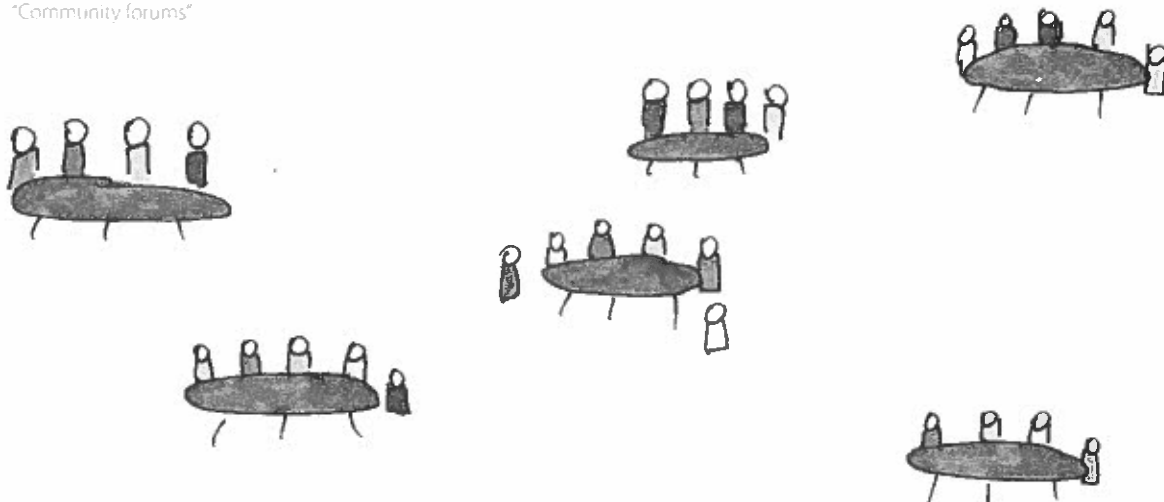
To make participation enjoyable for residents, the forums will offer engaging activities and light refreshments. Portions of the forums will be videotaped, and a brief video summary of each will be posted on the project website, along with the results.



Web and Statistically Valid Survey

A public opinion survey will be used to poll a statistically valid, random sample of Austinites. The resulting data will reveal general public opinion and substantiate, or amend, input gathered through other methods. The consultant will engage a research firm to provide expertise in developing and administering the survey. Results of this survey will be posted on the project web page. Concurrent with the statistically valid survey, there will be a self-selected version on the project website.

"Community forums"



Focus Groups

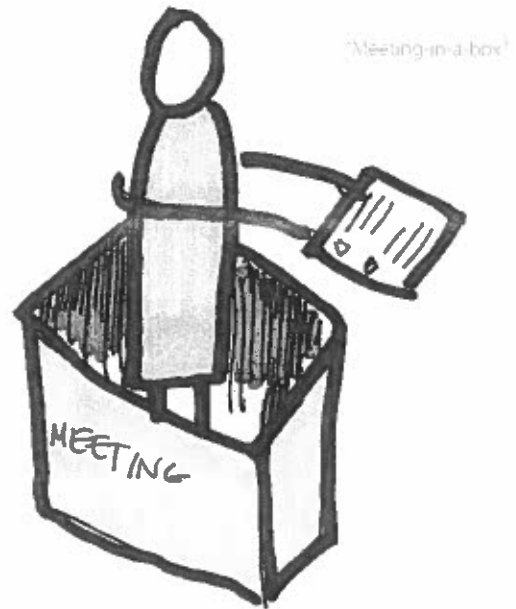
Citizens representing hard-to-reach or traditionally underrepresented groups may be recruited to take part in formal and/or informal focus groups. These discussions can provide rich, qualitative data that can help fill in the gaps left because other participation activities failed to adequately capture these viewpoints.

Draft Comments and Discussion Forums

An online comment form will provide an opportunity for “armchair” participants to lend their views on planning documents. The comment form will be posted on the project web page. Comment forms will be open for a defined time period (at least two weeks). In addition to soliciting feedback on draft documents from time to time, the website will host discussion forums aimed at soliciting input on the plan. This is distinct from other ongoing discussion forums that are primarily aimed at fostering general discussion or providing information.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews can provide the kind of rich data that bridges information gaps and offers invaluable insights to the planning team. These interviews will be conducted with opinion leaders and key project stakeholders. Elected officials, civic and business leaders, institutional partners, and subject matter experts are among those targeted for discussions.



Meetings-in-a-Box

A portable version of one of more of the community forums will be developed to use at small gatherings (equivalent to a table at a community forum). This “Meeting-in-a-Box” concept will allow volunteers to be trained as facilitators and conduct their own forums, capturing valuable public input that can be brought back to the planning team. The Meeting-in-a-Box will include background materials and tools for an interactive activity.

CHAPTER 5

KEY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EVENTS

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Public Open House

Community Forum
Series #1 (Issues and
Aspirations)Community Forum
Series #2 (Considering
Alternative Futures)Community Forum
Series #3 (Selecting
a Preferred Future)Community Forum
Series #4 (Draft Plan
Review)

While public participation will be ongoing throughout development of the Comprehensive Plan, the process will include key events at which focused public input will be received to guide the next steps of the planning process. The process consists of three major phases:

- **Phase 1 (Plan Kickoff):** This phase—which is underway—will define how the Comprehensive Plan will be developed and initiate public outreach and input activities.
- **Phase 2 (Vision and Plan Framework):** This phase will evaluate existing conditions and trends, consider alternative scenarios for the future, and develop a vision and policy framework based on citizen input.
- **Phase 3 (The Comprehensive Plan):** This phase will develop the Vision and Plan Framework from Phase 2 into the complete Comprehensive Plan document, including the elements required by the Austin City Charter.

The first public participation opportunity took place on August 5, 2009. Other key public participation events include a public open house in Phase 1 and four community forum series (i.e., meetings held in different parts of the City)—three in Phase 2 and one in Phase 3.

The following provides an overview of each event and the anticipated products to be provided to the public. Key products will be made available in Spanish as well as English.

	Task	Public Input Opportunities	Work Product	Estimated Start
PHASE 1 Plan Kickoff Aug. - Oct. 2009	Designing the process	Participation Workshops (2)	Participation Plan	Aug. 2009
	Beginning the process	Public Open House	Flyers/information materials	Oct. 2009
	Beginning to engage the public	Speakers bureau, engaging events, community events	Project handout; Comprehensive Plan fact book	Oct. 2009
PHASE 2 Vision Nov. 2009 - Dec. 2010	Articulating the vision	Community Forum Series #1: Brainstorming, strengths, challenges, ideas for the future	Common Ground Vision Statement (adopted by Council)	Nov. 2009
	Understanding the dynamics of change	Community Forum Series #2: Considering Alternative Futures (chip exercise)	Community Inventory Austin Today and Tomorrow Future Austin Scenarios	April 2010
	Plan Framework: Activating the vision	Community Forum #3: Selecting a Preferred Future	Scenario Evaluation/Preferred Scenario Draft Plan Framework Refined Plan Framework	July 2010
PHASE 3 Comprehensive Plan Document Jan. 2011 - Jun. 2012	Developing the plan document	Community Forum Series #4: Reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and setting priorities for implementation	Draft Comprehensive Plan; Final Comprehensive Plan	Oct. 2011
	Adopting the plan	Formal review by the City Council & Planning Commission		Jan. 2012

Public Participation Workshop

An initial public workshop was held at City Hall on August 5, 2009. Participants were asked for input on ways to engage the community in the planning process. That input helped develop this Public Participation Plan. The workshop kicked off a collaboration with the community that will weave its way throughout the entire planning process.

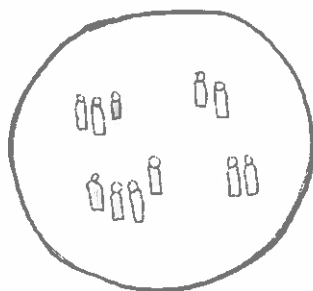
Public Open House

Conducted in a central location as part of the Plan Kickoff, the Public Open House will begin the planning process. Open House activities will introduce the comprehensive planning process to the public and provide an opportunity for citizens to begin to identify important issues for Austin's future ("issues scan"). The Open House will allow the public to meet the consultants and key city staff who will be involved in the comprehensive planning process. In addition to beginning to identify issues, members of the public will be able to provide input into selection of a "brand"/logo for the Comprehensive Plan. The Open House will also mark the launch of a web-based survey coordinated with the issues scan exercise.

Following the Open House, the consultant team will begin stakeholder and opinion leader interviews, structured similarly to the issues scan. The consultant team will also meet with the Citizens Advisory Task Force to orient them to their role in the process.

Following the Public Open House, the Speakers Bureau activities will begin. These presentations on the Comprehensive Plan will be made to interested groups across Austin. The project website will also launch after a brand has been determined and a URL has been acquired.

"Community engagement"



Primary products

1. Public Participation Plan (this document)
2. Flyers (half-page "pointers" to more information—e.g., on the project website)
3. Project handout (a full-page summary of the planning process)
4. Comprehensive Plan fact book (an introduction to the plan and a capsule summary of key Austin data)

Community Forum Series #1 (Issues and Aspirations): What do we want Austin to be in 10, 20, 25 years and beyond?

The first Community Forum Series will focus on identifying Austin's strengths, challenges, and components of a future vision for the City. Following an introductory presentation, meeting participants will separate into small groups and answer a series of questions. In addition to the scheduled community forum meetings, citizens will be provided the opportunity to provide input via "Meetings-in-a-Box," which will allow them to recreate the meeting activities in a portable format. Citizens interested in hosting a Meeting-in-a-Box will receive the Box and instructions; in exchange, they will ensure that a minimum number of people attend and provide the results of the meeting to the planning team.

A random, statistically valid survey will be conducted in coordination with Community Forum Series #1 and the Meetings-in-a-Box to receive representative input from residents who do not attend the meetings.

Primary products

1. Common Ground (a working paper organizing the results of Community Forum Series #1 into elements of a vision statement)
2. Vision Statement (to be adopted by Council)

Community Forum Series #2 (Considering Alternative Futures): What are we becoming?

The second Community Forum Series will provide an overview of current conditions and trends and their implications for a sustainable future using the sustainability measuring tool (INDEX software) developed by consultant team member Criterion Planners. Again working in small groups, participants will be asked to develop scenarios for Austin's future through a "chip exercise" (i.e., placing units representing projected increments of growth on a map of the City and its ETJ in the configuration they feel best meets their aspirations for the future). Representative visualizations of the chips in different contexts (e.g., what different densities look like and how much space they take up) will be provided. Follow-up discussions, such as online forums, will complement the chip exercise.

Primary products

1. Community Inventory (current conditions and trends)
2. Austin Today and Tomorrow (an assessment of current and future conditions if current trends continue)
3. Future Austin Scenarios (2–3 alternative scenarios synthesized from the chip exercise results)

Community Forum Series #3 (Selecting a Preferred Future): What changes in direction are needed?

Community Forum Series #3 will present and evaluate the alternative scenarios developed from the results of Series #2, again using Criterion Planners' INDEX software. A "scoring" exercise will allow participants to select a preferred scenario for the future, which may incorporate components of more than one alternative. Participants will also be asked to identify key changes in direction represented by the preferred scenario. The results will be used to craft a Draft Plan Framework that sets policy

directions for achieving the Vision and preferred scenario, integrated across the different plan elements (land use, transportation, conservation and environmental resources, economic development, etc.). The public will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Plan Framework through various means.

Primary products

1. Scenario Evaluation / Preferred Scenario
2. Draft Plan Framework
3. Refined Plan Framework

Community Forum Series #4 (Draft Plan Review): What actions should be taken to achieve the sustainable Austin of the future?

Workshops involving citizens with special technical expertise or interest in particular subjects will be conducted to develop action-oriented recommendations for different elements of the Comprehensive Plan. City staff and the consultant team will work with the Citizens Advisory Task Force and Planning Commission to incorporate these recommendations into a complete Draft Comprehensive Plan, including the Vision Statement, Plan Framework, Plan Elements, and Implementation. When the draft plan is completed, Community Forum Series #4—which like the previous series will include meetings and complementary venues for input—will provide an engaging way for participants to review the plan, with a focus on identifying priorities for implementation.

Primary products

1. Draft Comprehensive Plan
2. Community Forum Series #4 Results
3. Final Draft Comprehensive Plan for Adoption

CHAPTER 6

TRANSPARENCY AND DOCUMENTATION

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

Formal Documents

Working Documents

Materials for Media
and Public Outreach/
Participation

Project Journal

In order to establish and maintain the public's trust during this collaborative planning process, City staff and consultants will keep accurate records as the project unfolds. The resulting transparency will serve as a living contract between the City of Austin and its constituents and will provide an historical timeline for the project. Following is a list of items important to maintaining a transparent record of the planning process. It will continue to grow and evolve throughout the lifecycle of the project.

Formal Documents

Documents made available for public review include the Public Participation Plan, minutes from meetings (i.e., Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force), summary reports from all of the Community Forum Series, survey results, transcripts and a summary of web chats online, and written comments. Formal documents will be written in plain English, with as little jargon and as few acronyms as possible. When technical terms and acronyms are used, they should be clearly defined and used consistently across formal documents.

Working Documents

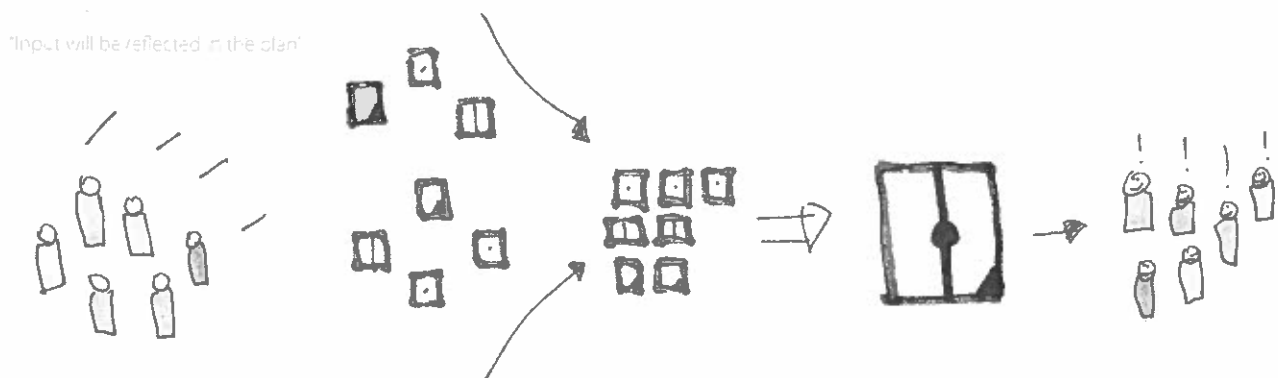
These documents are intended as stepping stones toward the formal documents. Working documents are more likely to include unexplained jargon or acronyms, even while they attempt to develop the plain language that will be used in formal documents. Because of their nature, they are more likely to be difficult for lay persons, other than dedicated participants, to navigate.

Materials for Media and Public Outreach/Participation

Materials used for media and public outreach will also be available to the public. These include news releases, media kits, other promotional print materials, and the PowerPoint presentation used in community forums and Meetings-in-a-Box.

Project Journal

One of the challenges of a large process like this one is that participants will drift in and out over time, and even citizens who are involved throughout can easily lose their bearings as new topics arise. As the process begins, a "Project Journal" will be developed, with two goals. First, it should give a sense of how the process moves back and forth between public input and planning team synthesis of that input, to ensure a transparent process. Second, it should give a sense of the public spirit at each step in the process, so as to respect the input given at each step. The journal should tell the story of the creation of the Comprehensive Plan.

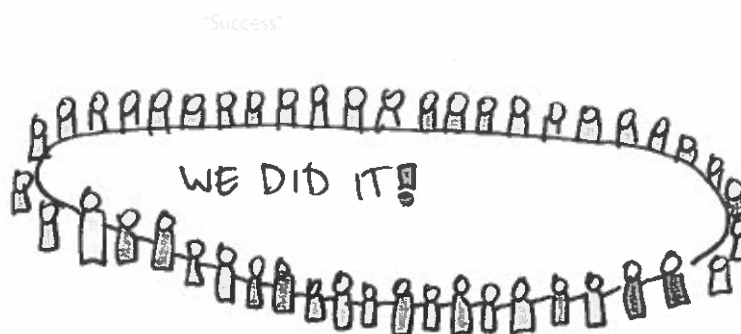


CHAPTER 7

MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Built into the public participation planning process are a variety of mechanisms to monitor the efficacy of outreach and participation tools. Feedback from these mechanisms can be used to alter methods as necessary to bridge gaps, ensure meaningful input, and maximize reach and diversity. The modular design of the Participation Plan allows for the flexibility to adapt to feedback and refine methods to elicit more salient results. Monitoring and feedback mechanisms include:

- Feedback from the Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Task Force
- Feedback from partners
- Evaluation forms collected at all public events
- Media coverage
- Team self-evaluation



IMAGINE AUSTIN

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT Strategic Issues Working Paper
for City Staff and Citizen's Advisory Task Force
Review and Discussion



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As described in the introduction, this draft is intended as a “work-in-progress” that summarizes the current understanding of issues to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. As a starting point for discussion, it is presented in a flexible format that can be revised and added to over time to reflect input from the public, Citizens’ Advisory Task Force, city staff, etc.

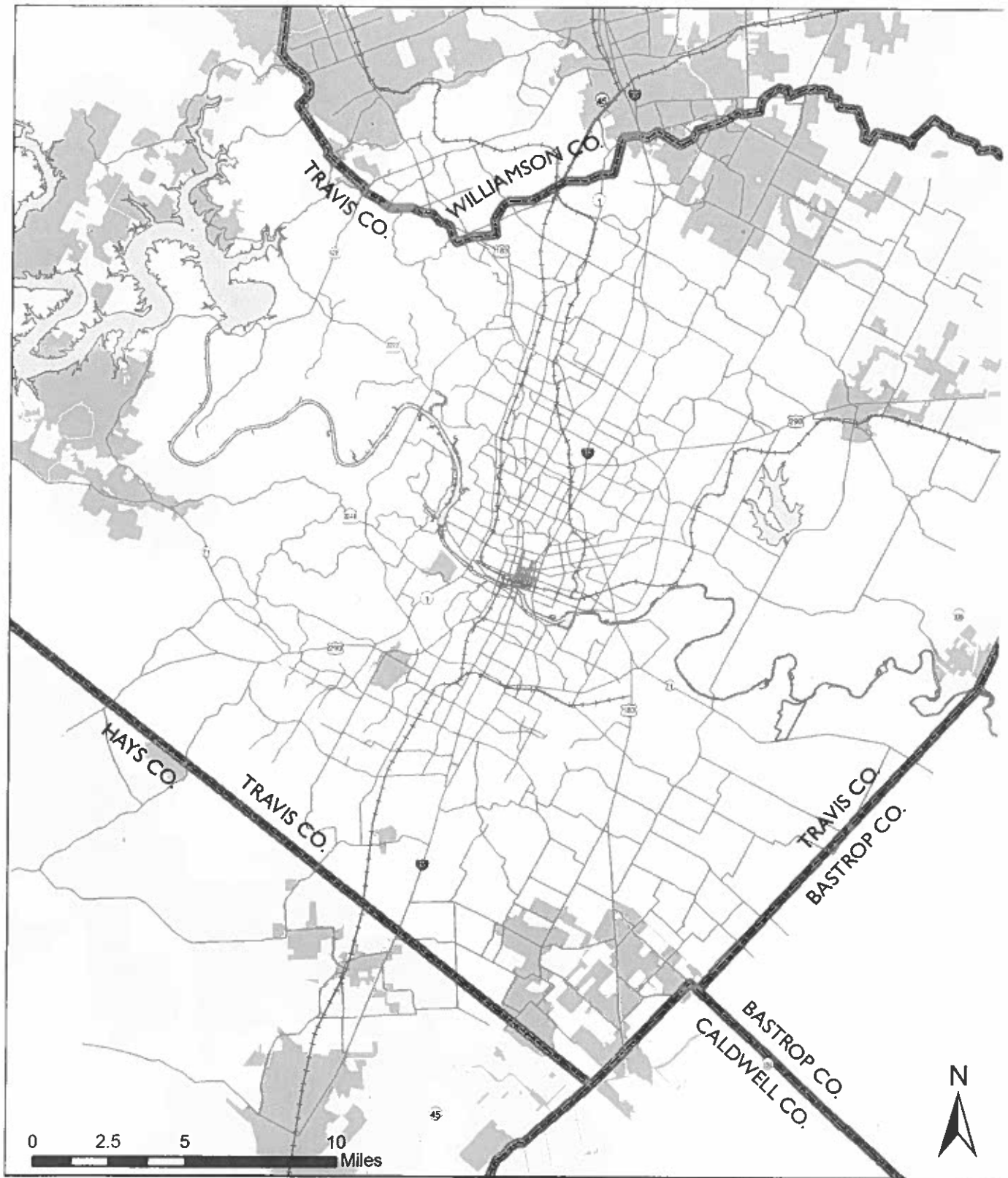
Prepared by:

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Raymond Chan & Associates



City of Austin Jurisdiction and Neighboring Municipalities

Legend

Austin - City Limits

Austin - Extra-territorial Jurisdiction

Other City Limits

Other ETJs

Figure 1. City of Austin Jurisdiction and Neighboring Municipalities

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan will establish 1) a vision for Austin's future derived from community input and 2) a "game plan" to achieve the vision through action by the City and its partners. An understanding of the conditions and trends that are shaping Austin today and its evolution in the future is necessary to provide context for the vision, policy framework, and action plan that will be developed through the planning process. The foundation for this understanding is provided by the Community Inventory, which provides data about demographic and household trends, Austin's natural environment, land use and zoning, and other topics relevant to the Comprehensive Plan. This Strategic Issues Report provides a summary of key issues for Austin's future based on a review of the Community Inventory as well as public input to date, including public meetings, surveys, stakeholder interviews, etc.

This report is intended not as a definitive product but as a "work-in-progress" that summarizes the current understanding of important issues to be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. As a starting point for discussion, it is presented in a flexible format that can be revised and added to over time to reflect input from the public, Citizens' Advisory Task Force, city staff, etc., including as further elements are added. As the planning process moves from visioning to developing policies and actions, the format can be expanded to incorporate ideas (implementation strategies, case studies from other cities, etc.) to address each issue.

Sustainability

The report organization largely mirrors the content of the Comprehensive Plan elements required by the Austin City Charter (future land use, traffic circulation and mass transit, housing, etc.). It should be noted, however, that there is much overlap between elements (e.g., land use and transportation). Sustainability has been identified by City Council as an overarching goal of the Comprehensive Plan and thus can be used help identify interrelationships and synergies between issues identified for different plan elements. The comprehensive planning process is designed, in large part, to engage the community in defining what a sustainable future for Austin means. To help inform this process, this report characterizes the dimensions of sustainability in terms of the three "E's" – Economy, Environment, and Equity. The basic tenet of this triple bottom line approach is that sustainable communities are those that address economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity in a mutually supportive manner. To broadly depict the interrelated dimensions of sustainability, the report identifies one or more of the three E's for each strategic issue. For example, land use issues are wide-ranging in nature and thus touch on all three dimensions of sustainability, while issues identified for Environmental Resources primarily impact environmental quality.

Locally, the University of Texas Environmental Science Institute defines the foundation of sustainability using the often cited Brundtland Commission definition: *the ability to provide for the needs of the world's current population without damaging the ability of future generations to provide for themselves*. In addition, the University of Texas applies the triple bottom line approach to its sustainability studies programs and decision making efforts across departments.

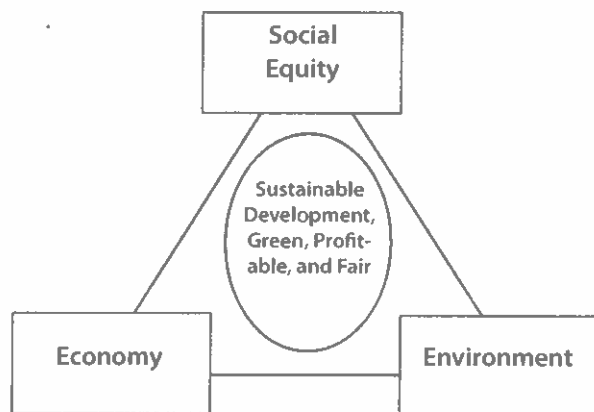


Figure 2. University of Texas Sustainability Graphic

At the October 2009 Imagine Austin Open House participants were asked to define what sustainability means for Austin and the region. While responses ranged from affordability, to reducing sprawl, to living wage jobs, the most frequently cited responses point to effective public transportation, pedestrian/bicycle friendly development, and protecting the natural environment. As the comprehensive planning process continues, Austin residents will continue to shape exactly what a sustainable future looks like Austin, using the three “E’s” as building blocks.

The “three-legged stool” is a useful concept that has been used as the foundation of a number of community plans. The following five sustainability principles (developed by WRT) is another example of a conceptual framework for sustainable community planning and may be useful as Austin develops its own definition of a sustainable future:

1. **Energy:** Reduce fossil fuel usage and carbon emissions through the planning and design of communities, sites, and buildings.
2. **Resiliency:** Reduce vulnerability to external environmental and economic threats through planning, design, and increased reliance on local resources, goods, and services.
3. **Mobility:** Locate and design transportation system components to reduce automobile dependency and promote use of alternative transportation modes.
4. **Stewardship:** Preserve and restore natural, cultural, and historic built resources. Integrate natural and human ecological systems in the planning and design of communities.
5. **Equity:** Provide housing, transportation, and employment opportunities for persons of all socioeconomic backgrounds and abilities.

Stakeholder Engagement

As referenced above, the consultants are conducting stakeholder interviews to gain a broad range of input in defining strategic issues. A list of organizations and departments interviewed thus far is summarized below. In addition to interviews, Austin City departments were invited to provide their thoughts on strategic issues from the perspective of each department.

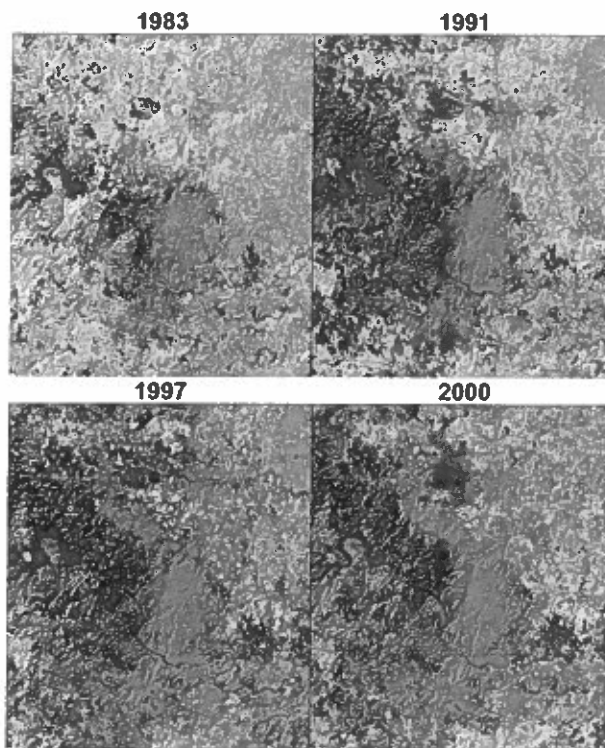
Imagine Austin Stakeholder Interviews Conducted to Date (October 2009 – February 2010)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Austin Economic Forecast Event and Survey (January 2010) • Asian American Cultural Center • Austin Board of Realtors (ABOR) • Austin Chamber of Commerce (<i>economic development, business retention, government relations, and transportation representatives</i>) • Austin City Council & Plan Commission Members • Austin Community College (ACC) • Austin Convention and Visitor's Bureau (ACVB) • Austin Electric (AE) • Austin Independent Business Alliance (AIBA) • Austin Independent School District (AISD) • Austin Neighborhood Council • Austin Water Utility (AWU), City of Austin • Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) • Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) • Capital Metro Transportation Authority (CapMetro) • Concordia University | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Austin Alliance • Del Valle Independent School District (DVISD) • Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office (EGRSO), City of Austin • Hill Country Conservancy • Immigrant Services Network (ISN) • Leadership Austin • Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) • Meals on Wheels and More • Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Office (NHCD), City of Austin • Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) • St David's Community Health Foundation • Texas Nature Conservancy • Travis County Health and Human Services • Urban Coalition • UT Sustainability Center • Watershed Protection and Development Review (WPDRD), City of Austin • Watershed Protection District (WPD), City of Austin |
|---|--|

LAND USE AND POPULATION

Land Use Issue #1: The growth dynamic in Austin and the surrounding region has been characterized by population growth, land consumption, and outward expansion.

- ▶ Much of the growth of Austin and the larger region has been lower density development outside of established centers, resulting in separation of uses, greater travel times and associated traffic congestion, consumption of open space, and other impacts.
- ▶ While still the largest jurisdiction in the MSA, Austin's share of regional population and employment is decreasing. Austin currently comprises nearly 50% of the MSA's population but that figure is projected to decline to one-third by 2040 (source: *U.S. Census and City of Austin*).¹



Source: U.S. Geological Survey

Figure 3. Recent Land Consumption, 1983-2000, Source: Austin Community Inventory, U.S. Geological Survey

LAND USE/POPULATION INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- ▶ Before 2000, Austin's population grew at an annual rate of about 3.5% per year (close to doubling every 20 years). The recent annual growth rate has slowed to about 1.6%.
- ▶ Between 2000 and 2008, Austin's population grew at a rate of 13%, which was less than Travis County (17%), the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area¹ (MSA) (24%), and Texas (14%), but greater than the national average (7%).
- ▶ About 46% of rangeland in the Austin-Round Rock MSA was converted to urban uses between 1983 and 2000.
- ▶ Austin's population is projected to grow at an annual rate of about 1.5% - 2% over the next 30 years, compared to about 3.5% per year projected in the Austin-Round Rock MSA as a whole.
- ▶ About 18% (73,000 Acres) of the ETJ are undeveloped without environmental constraints. However, this land is seeing increased development pressure.

¹ The Austin-Round Rock MSA includes Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties.

¹ This projection does not account for any future annexations by the City, meaning that Austin's population may actually grow at a faster rate.

*Economy,
Environment,
Equity*

Land Use Issue #2: While the general direction of growth has been outward expansion, there is considerable potential for redevelopment and infill development within Austin.

- Sources such as demolition permit records and analysis of improvement to land ratio² indicate that there has been a significant amount of redevelopment in Austin and that redevelopment is likely to continue in the future.
- Commercial corridors such as Lamar Boulevard, Burnet Road and Airport Boulevard are examples of locations with potential for infill and redevelopment of older retail uses.



Figure 5. Example of Improvement to Land Ratio (ILR), Commercial and Multi-Family Parcels (See Community Inventory for more detail). Based on analysis, parcels with an ILR of less than 1.0 (shown in dark red) are more likely to redevelop.

**Economy,
Environment**

² Improvement to land ratio is the appraised value of the improvements on a parcel divided by the value of the land. The theory is that property owners will seek to maximize the value of their investment when the value of the improvement is less than the value of the land.

³ The ETJ covers the unincorporated area within five miles of the present city boundary.

Land Use Issue #3: Population growth and land use within Austin affects the larger region and vice versa, underscoring the need for coordinated planning.

- In the past Austin's land area experienced major growth through annexation (from 30.9 square miles in 1940 to over 300 square miles in 2009). The area beyond the city boundary within which Austin can maintain some control, including the potential for annexation, is referred to as its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and is part of the study area for the comprehensive plan.³ In recent decades, state legislation, the creation of Municipal Utility Districts, and the presence of other growing municipalities limit the potential for future annexation, particularly to the north.
- Jurisdictional limitations on annexation are less pronounced to the east and south of Austin's current city boundary. This area of Austin and its ETJ has a relatively high proportion of undeveloped land with minimal environmental constraints and has been designated as Austin's "Desired Development Zone" by City Council. However, development in Round Rock / Williamson County is shifting the momentum of growth north away from Austin and GIS analysis indicates that this trend may continue in the future (see *Susceptibility to Change* section).
- Two regional transportation initiatives highlight how planning for Austin and the region as a whole are inextricably linked (see *Transportation* section):
 - » The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CAMPO) People, Planning and Preparing for the Future: Your 25 Year Transportation Plan, scheduled for release in June 2010; and
 - » Capital Metro Transit's All Systems Go Plan.

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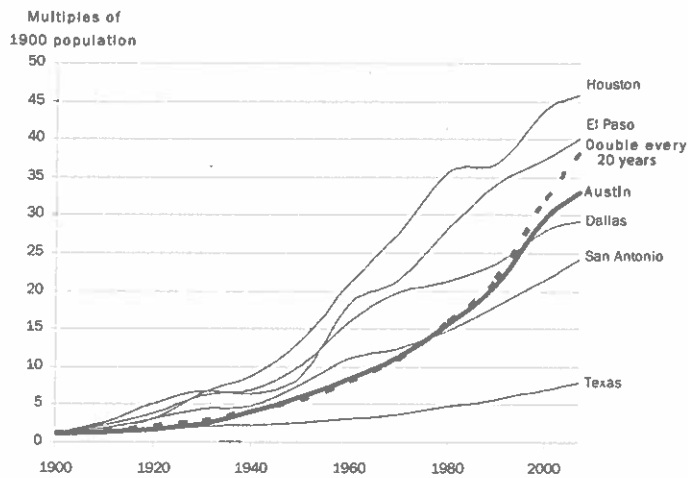


Figure 6. Population for Austin, Texas, and other large Texas cities (1900-2000), Source: U.S. Census, Austin Community Inventory.

Land Use Issue #4: A complex set of plans, policies, and regulations impact land use and development in Austin.

- The City has an active neighborhood planning program. A number of neighborhoods have completed or are in the process of developing plans and future land use maps intended to guide zoning changes to implement the plan. However, many others lack neighborhood plans and future land use maps (see *Housing and Neighborhoods Issue #4*).
- Austin has numerous zoning designations ranging from single use districts (residential, commercial, industrial) to special purpose base districts to overlay/combining districts. Zoning is not necessarily a good predictor of future land use because rezonings are common, particularly in areas without an adopted neighborhood plan and future land use map.
- A number of past and current planning initiatives have influenced and will continue to influence land use patterns in Austin. For example, the Barton Springs Watershed regulations enacted pursuant to the 1992 Save Our Springs initiative resulted in reduced density but did not prevent development within the Drinking Water Protection Zone (see *Environmental Issue #1*). Examples of more recent planning initiatives include the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Redevelopment (2000), the Corridor Planning Program (2001), the University Neighborhood Overlay (2004), Transit-Oriented Development Ordinance (2005), and Commercial Design Standards (2006).
- What is lacking is an overall framework that ties all of these plans, policies, regulations, and initiatives together in a unified direction for the future. This is a key purpose of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

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HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Housing and Neighborhoods Issue #1:

Housing prices have increased significantly over the last ten years without similar increases in household income.

- Many Austin households experienced large increases in household income during the 1990s at a time when Austin housing prices were considered relatively affordable. However, over the last ten years housing costs have risen by 85%, while household incomes have remained stagnant or declined. The declining median family income trend is most prevalent in Hispanic and African-American households, compared with the overall population.⁴ As the percentage of homes affordable to Austin residents is declining, families are forced to look elsewhere in the region for housing. Austin has a need for more moderately priced homes (i.e., \$113,000 to \$240,000). Attached housing, which often fills this need in other cities, is limited in Austin.
- Austin residents have consistently supported creating and maintaining affordable housing, which is reflected in City policy. In 2006, voters approved the use of \$55 million in General Obligation Bonds to increase homeownership and rental opportunities for low-to-moderate income households. Austin's Five-Year Consolidated Plan describes priorities and funding recommendations for the City's housing and community development activities.

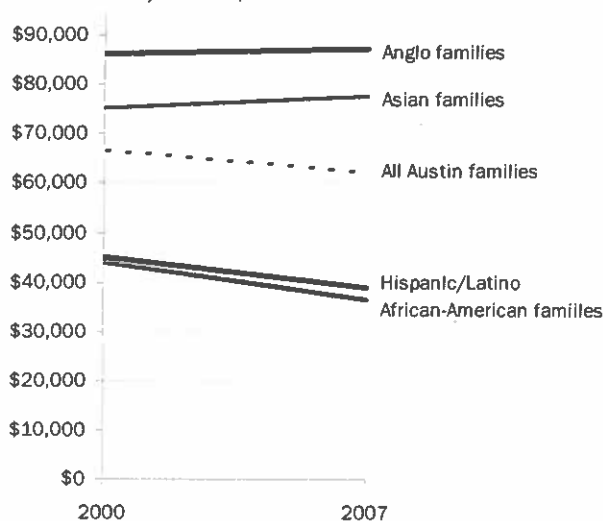


Fig 7. Median Family Income (2000-2007), 2007 dollars,
Source: Census, 2000, 2007, Austin Community Inventory.

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- In 2008, median household income in Austin (\$51,004) was less than the MSA (\$57,973), but slightly higher than Texas (\$49,078). Per capita income in Austin (\$30,429) was higher than in the MSA, Texas, and the U.S. in 2008.
- Between 1998 and 2008, the median single-family home price increased by 90% from \$129,900 to \$240,000. The percentage of all single family homes considered affordable (to households earning 80% of the median family income as defined by HUD), declined to 28% from 42% in 1998.
- Austin is a majority renter city (54%) and has a need for affordable housing rentals (e.g., there is a shortage of rental units for households with incomes less than \$20,000).
- Austin's Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations are growing. According to the Census, 6% of Austin's population is Asian, which is a higher percentage than the region, state, or nation. The largest number increase occurred in the Hispanic population, which grew from 106,148 in 1990 to 260,535 in 2007. Austin's Hispanic population (35%) is slightly less than in Texas (36%), but higher than the MSA (30%) and the nation (15%).



⁴ From 2000-2007 in 2007 dollars. Source: Austin Community Inventory, 2000 Census, 2009 American Community Survey.

Housing and Neighborhood Issue #2:

Austin's Hispanic/Latino and Asian communities have grown significantly since 1990; however, their growth has not been evenly distributed throughout the City.

- Since 1990, the racial/ethnic makeup of Austin's population has shifted. Around 2005, the City's Anglo population (non-Hispanic white) decreased to 49% of the total population, while the Hispanic population grew to 35%. Austin's African-American population grew in absolute numbers, but its percentage decreased from 12% to 8%. Austin's Asian community grew (both in numbers and in percentage) and increased in diversity. According to the 2007 Census, 6% of Austin's residents were Asian.
- While the Hispanic/Latino is growing, lower-income Hispanic households are becoming increasingly concentrated in three areas: lower east Austin, greater Dove Springs, and St. John.



Equity

Housing and Neighborhood Issue #3:

In terms of age, Austin is a relatively young city; however, since 1990, the percentage of the population in the 20-34 age groups has decreased, while the percentage in the 45-64 age groups has increased.

- In 2008, the largest segment of Austin's population (21%) fell into the 25-34 age range. The median age in Austin was 31.4, compared to 33.2 for the state of Texas, and 36.7 for the United States.
- While there hasn't been a major shift in the distribution of age groups in Austin, the growing percentage of residents in the 45-64 year old groups may lead to a shift in housing type need (e.g., higher-priced homes) and need for health and other social services in the future.



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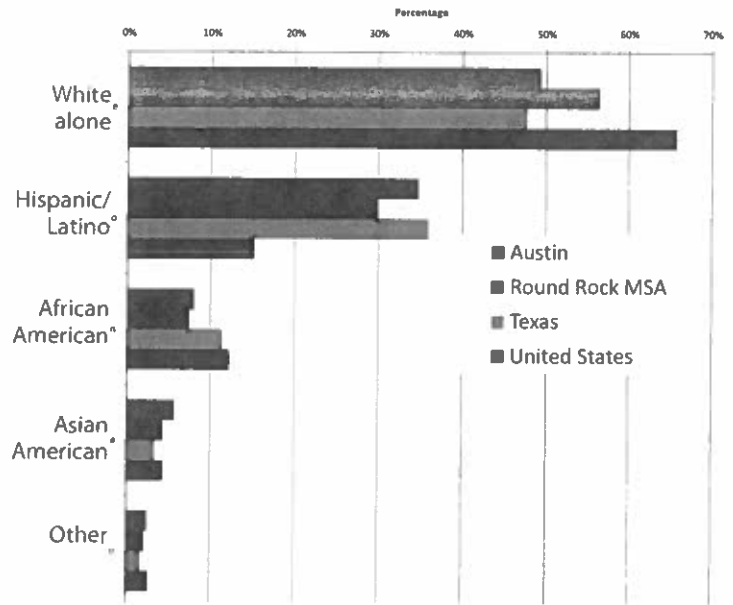


Figure 8. Population by Racial/Ethnic Composition, Source: Census, 2000-2007.

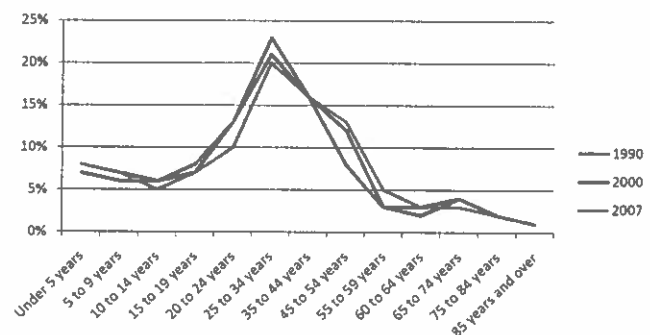


Figure 9. Age Groups (1990-2007), Source: Census.

Housing and Neighborhood Issue #4:

Austin is a city of strong neighborhoods that contribute greatly to community character and quality of life. Maintaining the character of these neighborhoods is a key concern of residents.

- Austin's older neighborhoods, particularly those built before World War II, are characterized by their walkability, compact character (typically smaller houses and lots), architecture, and sense of place.
- Neighborhoods developed since the 1950s have been more suburban in character as Austin expanded outwards from its central core.
- The City has an active neighborhood planning program and a number of neighborhoods (Brentwood/Highland, Central East Austin, North Burnet/Gateway, and South Congress, to name a few) have adopted neighborhood plans. While the issues addressed by these plans vary by neighborhood, examples of common goals include protecting existing neighborhood character; preventing encroachment from adjacent commercial corridors; maintaining safe, pedestrian-friendly streets while limiting cut-through traffic; protecting natural resources and providing parks and open spaces; and maintaining affordability and accessibility.

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ECONOMY

Economic Issue #1: Existing transportation mobility and quality are identified by the business community as a major challenge to economic growth.

- As the labor force grows and new industry opportunities arise, there is a need for physical infrastructure to keep pace and align with industry requirements. For example, direct air service and connectivity to both coasts is extremely limited for a city of Austin's size and inhibits the city's ability to recruit high-end office users (e.g. corporate headquarters) with frequent travel needs.
- Roadway congestion impacts commute-time for workers and also places a burden on economic activity (e.g., 93% of freight coming in and out of central Texas travels on roadways). While providing new transit options (CapitalMetro All Systems Go Plan) will help relieve roadway congestion, the pace of implementation is a concern (*see Transportation section*).
- Transportation infrastructure was the most frequently ranked challenge and necessary improvement by respondents at the Austin Economic Forecast event.⁵
- Currently, there is no rail infrastructure in Austin to load/unload freight. This could become an important issue if the light industrial employment sectors continue to expand (e.g. logistics & distribution, etc.).
- Anticipated growth in the office and industrial sectors of the city economy may lead to more infill and redevelopment in Austin. These industries have a common desire for "clustering" near similar firms, but also require transportation access and mobility.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- **Between 2001 and 2008, the Austin MSA gained over 76,104 jobs in the professional services, trade, hospitality, and education sectors.**
- **Austin has established the following target growth sectors in technology and creative industries: nanotechnology, life sciences, corporate headquarters, software/tech support, digital media, communication, clean technology, and advanced manufacturing.**
- **The percentage of workers with college degrees has increased dramatically in the last two decades (49% of Austin's workers, compared with 32% in Texas, and 36% in the nation).**

Economy

⁵ Survey respondents included a mix of regional private sector industry representatives, realty groups, banks, and other economic interests (e.g., Austin Community College, University of Texas, Austin Tech Incubator, Sematech, etc.).

Economic Issue #2: The City is well-suited to recruit and grow businesses in Austin's target employment sectors.

- Over the last 30 years, Austin major employment sectors transitioned from university, government, and military to a high-tech computer hardware and software employment center. The manufacturing and electronic sectors continue to decline and the greatest growth is occurring in professional services, trade, and leisure/hospitality.
- While the current recession has resulted in a high vacancy rate (20%) in the office market, Austin's technical and creative industries provide opportunity to grow the City's tax base and generate new jobs. Growth in these industries will require an educated workforce and a mix of available office, flexible light industrial, and research and development space.
- There is potential for significant growth in the medical and life sciences sectors. The proposed development of a medical school in Austin and the City's expanding senior population could lead to greater expansion in the health services sectors.
- Austin is emerging as a national center for clean energy technology and employment. Local and national incentives provide the potential for significant numbers of well-paid jobs in the industry (e.g., solar insulation and manufacturing, energy services, and sustainable building).⁶ In Austin, key projects like Pecan Street and UT's Clean Energy Incubator are providing strategic thinking and resources for capitalizing clean energy technology. Regional stakeholders (e.g., city officials, local utility companies, business groups, economic and workforce developers, higher education institutions) are beginning to formally collaborate to strengthen the region's competitiveness.

Economy

⁶ Renewable energy generation (i.e. wind, solar, biofuels), in particular, is anticipated to be a \$325 billion industry nationally by 2018 and Central Texas is well positioned to play a major role.

⁷ The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently awarded a \$10.4 million grant to the Mueller/Pecan Street project to act as a national demonstration site for development of an advanced smart grid system. This project will monitor electricity and water use and generate clean energy further supporting Austin's growth in renewable energy industries.

Economic Issue #3: The City is experiencing a rapidly expanding and more educated labor force, which in turn is strengthening Austin's economy. Educational attainment levels are especially important to high-growth companies.

- Growth in new target industries will expand the need for job training in areas such as business management, entrepreneurship, and health services to meet expected industry demand (e.g., at Austin Community College, University of Texas, and regional institutions). Interviews suggest there is a need for improved coordination between employers and regional education/job training development (i.e., to match post-secondary institutions with skills most needed by high-growth industry sectors).
- Despite a growing percentage of the population with college degrees, high drop-out rates among the minority community in the Austin Independent School District (AISD) have significant economic development implications. Businesses cannot necessarily hire locally and the drop-out rate impacts the overall competitiveness/attractiveness of the region to employers and families.

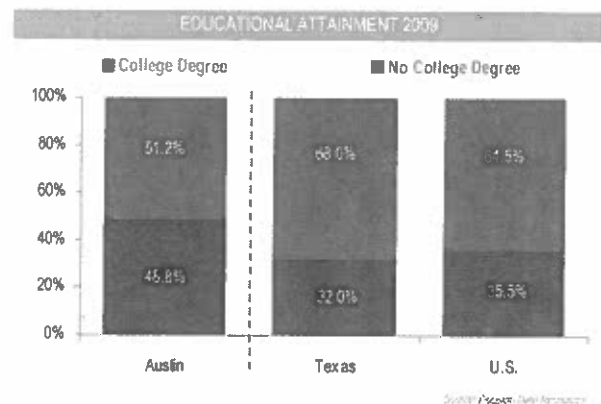


Figure 10. Educational Attainment, 2009, Source: Decision Data Resources

Economy

Economic Issue #4: Small businesses and start-up companies face challenges that may inhibit their growth (e.g., rising business costs, regulatory barriers, lack of affordable rental space).

- Despite recent improvements, land development codes and permitting processes are seen as complex, making it difficult for small business owners and start-up businesses to navigate. In addition, the codes and processes do not necessarily support mixed-use development patterns.
- Creative industries (arts, film, music, etc.) are an important niche industry sector that contributes jobs, strengthens the tax base, and enhances the city's quality of life. However, a number of factors inhibit the growth of this sector. The limitations for these small businesses include physical space, health care options, affordable housing, and affordable rents for venue owners.
- For Austin high-tech start-ups, two primary concerns are insufficient lab/incubation space and availability of later-stage financing. Given the importance of high-tech entrepreneurship to Austin's future economy, there is an opportunity for the City to position itself to address these issues in preparation for the economy's rebound.

Economic Issue #5: As the City continues to grow, increased investment and coordination to ensure adequate infrastructure provision (e.g., electric power) will be critical.

- Given Austin's strong technology sector, affordable and reliable electricity for industrial and commercial consumers is essential. Utility reliability is also a concern for high-volume electricity users (e.g. data centers, hospitals, large manufacturers, etc.).
- Austin Energy's newly diversified power portfolio (which includes increased contribution from renewable resources) may create higher electricity rates and increased costs for resident and industry customers making the city less competitive in terms of cost, at least in the short-term.
- Professional service firms are another key future industry sectors. While not necessarily large power consumers, these businesses demand high-quality buildings with adequate buffer from non-compatible uses, clear access to major highways, and often on-site amenities such as hike and bike trails and nearby entertainment amenities.

Economy

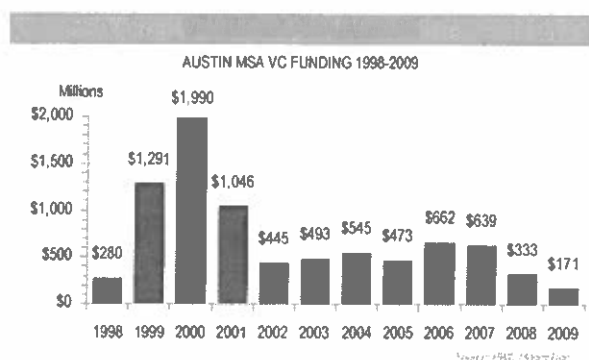


Figure 11. Austin MSA Venture Capital Funding, 1998-2009

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Economic Issue #6: There is a need for regular business/industry trend analysis of economic, labor market, and demographic data issues impacting Austin businesses.

- Interviewees identified a need to measure and quantify employment and per capita income in target industries and continue to calculate fiscal impact in the overall context of economic effects and any environmental impacts. In addition, while there are positive relationships between economic development entities in Austin, there is a need for better coordination between the organizations.

***Economy,
Environment***

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Environmental Issue #1: As one of the fastest growing regions in the U.S., a major challenge facing Central Texas is the protection of the region's watersheds, waterways, and water supply.

- In an effort to protect sensitive watersheds, impervious coverage limits range from 15-25% in the Barton Springs Zone and Water Supply Rural watersheds. Through regulation and policy, Austin is working to protect and enhance the region's water supply. Since 1997, development has been limited in the designated Drinking Water Protection Zone (DWPZ) watersheds and encouraged in the Desired Development Zone (generally the City of Austin and the south and eastern areas of the ETJ) (see Figure 12).
- Impervious cover limits are imposed by both watershed classification and zoning classification. However, stricter regulations are not in place on grandfathered tracts, or on tracts where certain development agreements exist. Development in restricted watersheds has still occurred at lower densities with more open space. Undeveloped land in the DWPZ continues to face development pressure (see *Land Use Issue #1*).



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- Austin is located along the Colorado River, where it crosses the Balcones Escarpment, an area notable for its diversity in terrain, soils, habitats, plants, and animals.
- The most significant physiographic transition in Central Texas is marked by the change from Hill Country and Edwards Plateau on the west to the prairies on the east.
- Austin and the region are known for the water resources of the Colorado River and Highland Lakes system (e.g., Lake Travis, Bull Creek, Barton Creek, Lake Austin, Lady Bird Lake, Walnut Creek, and McKinney Falls).
- Barton Springs, the fourth largest spring in Texas, discharges an average of 27 million gallons of water a day from the Barton Springs Segment of the Edwards Aquifer. The springs feed Barton Springs Pool, one of the most popular and visited attractions in Central Texas.
- Despite abundant water resources, Austin's Watershed Protection Master Plan (2001) estimated over \$1.2 billion in capital funds needed to address flooding, erosion, habitat degradation, and damaged creek biology.
- The City measures the environmental integrity (EI) of watersheds on a two-year cycle. While 2006 scores were higher than 1996 scores overall, they were generally lower than both 2000 and 2003 scores, a decline which may be attributable to prolonged drought conditions and/or urban development.

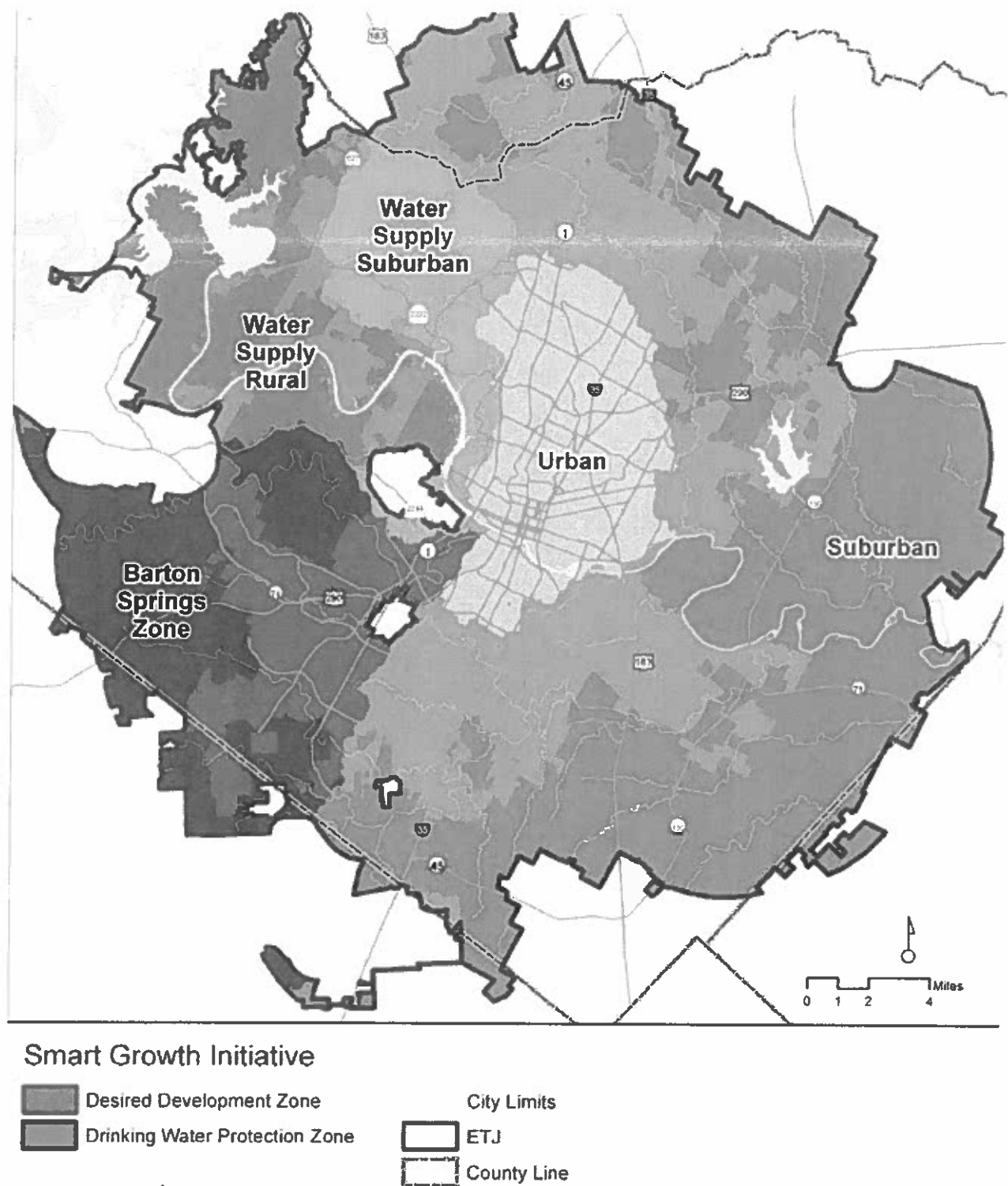
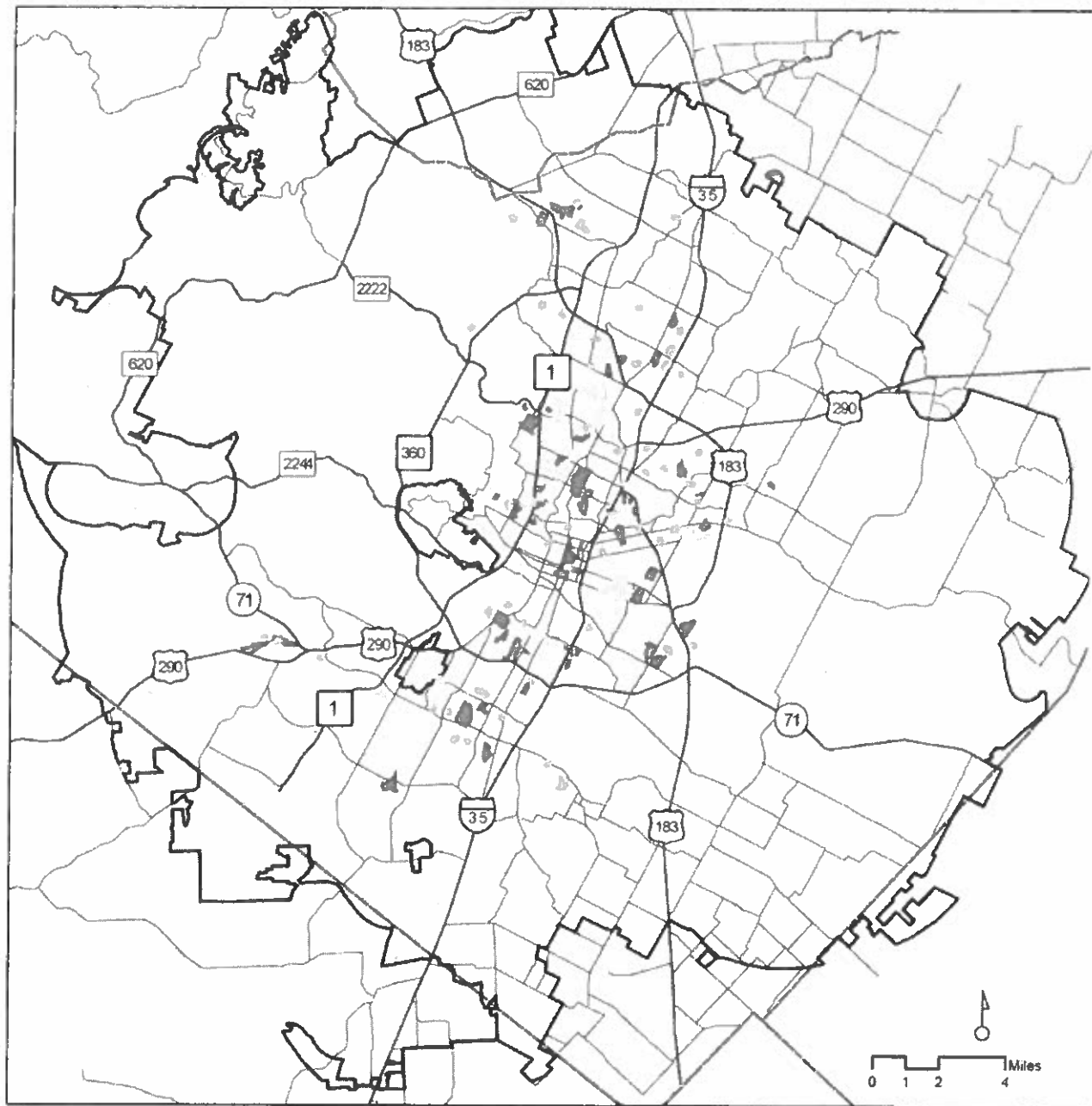


Figure 12. City of Austin Desired Development Zones, Source: Austin Community Inventory, GIS.



Localized Flood







- | | |
|--|---|
|  Current Capital Improvement Projects |  City Limits |
|  Future Capital Improvement Projects |  ETJ |
|  Additional Localized Flood Problem Areas |  County Line |

Figure 13. City of Austin Localized Flooding, Source: Austin Community Inventory, GIS.

Environmental Issue #2: Regional

planning and coordination is needed to provide adequate water-related infrastructure and protect environmentally sensitive areas and floodplains.

- Regional population growth and development (including demand for water and wastewater treatment and groundwater pumping) threaten public water supply. Austin participates in regional water quality planning, public education, and is acquiring open space.⁸ In addition, interdepartmental cooperation is increasing in an effort to promote increased use of recycled water for xeriscapes and other landscapes (see *Land Use Issue #1*).
- The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) is continuing its efforts to restore headwater streams, riparian areas, and erosion hazard zones. Tools such as conservation subdivision, transfer of development rights (i.e., designated sending and receiving areas, protection of sensitive areas and prime farmland), and enhanced floodplain management regulations are being considered.



Environmental Issue #3: Watershed

problems are widespread and will worsen if corrective action is not taken. Urbanization and drought are causing a decline in watershed health due to changes in hydrology (e.g., loss of baseflow, eroding streambanks, and increased flooding).

- Austin closely monitors watershed issues and demand for projects addressing stream erosion far exceeds the City's resources. In addition, creek flooding poses a recurring citywide risk to public safety and property (see *Figure 13*).
- Localized flooding threatens property across the City due to undersized, deteriorated, or clogged drain systems. The Austin Water Utility (AWU) has a program to replace aging infrastructure and continuously upgrades infrastructure through its capital improvement plan. The City will need additional resources to improve and maintain aging infrastructure in areas where infill and redevelopment occur (e.g., in the urban core and along transit corridors).
- WPD is continuing to investigate methods to maximize on-site stormwater retention and is considering incentives or requirements to retrofit flood controls in areas that were developed without adequate drainage infrastructure.⁹ Other actions include: exploring ways to increase the use of green infrastructure in public and private development; supporting conversion of enclosed streams to naturalized streams; educating the public about flash flood dangers and water quality; and considering erosion studies of the downstream system to better understand and prevent negative impacts.



⁸ Water Quality Protection Lands and the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve.

⁹ Existing financing methods for watershed improvement projects include: the Drainage Utility Fee, General Obligation Bonds, Regional Stormwater Management Fee, and the Urban Watershed Ordinance Fee.

Environmental Issue #4: Potential impacts of climate change in Central Texas include increased drought, more severe weather events, elevated temperatures, and air pollution.

- The likelihood of increased drought and storms increases the vulnerability of the region's arid climate and reliance on rainwater to recharge the aquifer. Higher temperatures may result in an increase in energy use to cool homes and businesses, which also results in more air pollution. Increased costs (e.g., as region seeks to address air quality) and health risks are associated with the potential impacts.
- Austin's Climate Protection Plan (2007) seeks to make the City of Austin a national leader in local action to address climate change.¹⁰ The Climate Action Team has completed a greenhouse gas inventory and update, reduced output by the equivalent of the electricity used by 26,100 homes per year, and continues to focus on collaboration, education, mitigation, and innovation. Regional cooperation is needed to implement climate change solutions.

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Environment***

Environmental Issue #5: While Central Texas complies with all federal air quality standards, the region is in danger of exceeding the ground-level ozone standard.

- Based on stricter EPA standards, depending on 2009 ozone levels, the region may not meet air quality standards for ozone levels. Not meeting federal air quality standards impacts the health of area residents, the cost of healthcare, and may damage Austin's reputation as a "green city."
- The region has a record of taking proactive voluntary measures to reduce ozone-forming emissions and Austin's air quality efforts have focused almost entirely on the reduction of ozone levels. Still, a non-attainment designation triggers federal requirements for transportation and industry that can increase costs for businesses and delay federal transportation projects. Many of these requirements apply for twenty years after the area regains compliance. EPA will announce its decision by spring of 2010.

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¹⁰ The Climate Protection Plan sets broad goals (e.g., make all City facilities, vehicles, and operation carbon neutral by 2020; meet all energy needs with renewable resources by 2020).

Environmental Issue #6: Despite Austin's landscape requirements and tree protection ordinances, Austin's tree canopy continues to decline as urbanization occurs.

- Tree canopy is notably absent in commercial, multi-family, and industrial areas. Canopy losses from conversion of eastern prairie lands to farmland are also apparent, with bottomland areas along creeks and the Colorado River remaining patchily forested with large sections of exposed riparian zones along creeks.
- Austin's City Arborist has been working with a Task Force to address concerns regarding protection of the trees and the natural environment. City staff is currently working to define the existing tree canopy baseline and establish quantifiable benefits that can be achieved from improved protection of the tree canopy.

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Environmental Issue #7: As development continues to occur in or near environmentally sensitive areas of the region, ongoing preservation and conservation efforts will be required.

- In 2002, voters passed a bond issue for open space acquisition and subsequent grants enabled the purchase of additional land and conservation easements. The same year, the Wildland Conservation Division (of AWU) was created by City Council.
- The Wildlands Conservation oversees land that provide key benefits to the Colorado River and its aquifers, in addition to re-establishing and protecting natural and plant species and habitats of the larger ecosystem.
- Land within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) conserves habitat for eight endangered species and is owned through a partnership system. Major owners/partners include: the City of Austin, Travis County, The Nature Conservancy of Texas, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Travis Audubon Society, and other private BCP partners.

***Economy,
Environment***

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Issue #1: While transit use is increasing, automobiles remain the dominant travel mode in Austin and the larger region.

- Transportation choices and trends are closely related to land use patterns. Much of the region's growth has occurred in low-density development at the edge of the existing urban areas. As a result, the Austin MSA has a relatively high percentage of people driving alone to work compared with other metro cities (e.g., San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Chicago, and Los Angeles).
- More roads are required to support lower density development patterns. During 1980-2000, the total vehicles miles traveled increased in all of the five counties surrounding Austin. The annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) continued to increase (36% between 1980-2005), but at a slower rate after 2000. The average daily miles traveled per person actually decreased in the MSA after 2000.
- Although factors such as fuel price, transit usage, and population density have shown to reduce total VMT, and in turn improve air quality, addressing the land use/transportation connection has been shown to play a significant role in reducing vehicle trips and VMT in other metropolitan areas.
- While the percentage of workers driving to work increased since 2000, the percentage of workers taking transit to work in Austin is estimated to have also increased to 4.9%, which is higher than the MSA or State average.

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TRANSPORTATION INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- Over 76% of all workers in the MSA travel to work alone by car, compared with 71% of all workers in Austin. Compared with other major cities (e.g., Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle), Austin has a high relatively low percentage of people commuting to work by transit.
- Both the percentage of workers driving to work and taking transit to work is estimated to have increased since 2000, while the percentage carpooling decreased.
- In 2005, the average trip in the region was 7.8 miles long and took 12.9 minutes. However, nearly 25% of trips are fewer than two miles or take under five minutes.
- Capital Metro's All Systems Go Long Range Transit Plan weaves together a number of existing and proposed transportation modes. At full realization, the transit system will include: MetroRail (red line with diesel-electric engine trains) and potential connector lines, the Regional Commuter Line (Austin-San Antonio), Capital Metro Rapid (high-tech bus service), Express and Local Bus service, and Circulator Streetcars (connected to MetroRail).
- Capital Metro Rail (red line) is preparing for service to begin as soon as March 2010. The system will run on 32-miles of existing freight tracks between Leander and Downtown Austin, with service every 35 minutes.

Transportation Issue #2: In Austin, roadway congestion and related costs (e.g., increased commuter time) have been increasing since the 1980s.

- From 1982 to 2006, in 90% of areas surveyed in Texas demand for roadway capacity grew faster than supply.
- Adding capacity to roadways is not a stand-alone solution to transportation congestion. Impacts of added capacity include increased construction and maintenance costs, the negative environmental impacts of new roads, and increased regional vehicle miles traveled.



Figure 14. Road Growth and Mobility, Source: Texas Transportation Institute, Urban Mobility Report.

Transportation Issue #3: There are 11 separate agencies that have the authority to plan, construct, or operate various modes of transportation in Austin and the ETJ, which can make coordination between agencies difficult.

- Regional agencies include: Capital Areas Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO); Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT); Capital Metro Transportation Authority; Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA); Austin San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District (ASAICRD); Capital Area Rural Transit (CARTS); and the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG). The following municipalities are also responsible for planning, construction, and implementation in their jurisdictions: City of Austin; Travis County; Williamson County; and Hays County.
- All of these agencies, with the exception of CAMPO and CAPCOG, have the responsibility for implementing and operating as well as planning their mode or system.

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Transportation Issue #4: The recently adopted Austin Bicycle Plan identified barriers along existing bicycle routes as a key issue impacting bicycle commuting and use.

- In 2007, the League of American Bicyclists designated Austin a Silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community reflecting the community's commitment to providing safe, efficient, and accessible bicycle facilities to residents.
- Austin's 2009 Bicycle Plan established a number of objectives to meet the goal of significantly increasing bicycle use and safety across Austin over the next ten years. The Plan seeks to reduce the number of barriers along existing routes (e.g., crossing of major highways such as MoPac, IH-35, US 183, and US 290; crossing of the Colorado River at Pleasant Valley Road) as a priority in completing the city's bicycle network.

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Transportation Issue #5: According to the recently adopted Sidewalk Master Plan, Austin has 3,500 linear miles of absent sidewalk and 5,500 curb ramps.

- The 2009 Sidewalk Master Plan estimates the total cost for building out the sidewalk network (i.e., filling in gaps) at \$750 million. The Plan identifies priorities for improving the network across the City and in different neighborhoods.
- Priority areas for sidewalk improvements are distributed the City. However, the highest concentrations were identified in the Central East Austin, East Cesar Chavez, Holly, and South River City neighborhoods.

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PUBLIC UTILITIES

Public Utilities Issue #1: Much of Austin's stormwater system in the Urban Watersheds (the most densely populated areas) is undersized and in poor condition.

- The City's stormwater system is in need of upgrades and infrastructure improvements. The identified stormwater capacity improvement areas are likely to increase as infill and development occurs (see *Environment Issue #3*).

*Economy,
Environment*

Public Utilities Issue #2: While Austin has initiated measures to reduce water use and demand for treated water, Austin Water Utility (AWU) projects that the demand for treated water will exceed the current treatment capacity within approximately six years.

- Since 1983, Austin's Water Conservation Program has focused on reducing water use by reducing peak day demands through incentives, education, water use evaluations, and audits.¹¹ The city's top water conservation successes, in order of ten-year estimated savings are: 1) watering restrictions (6.16 MGD), 2) reclaimed water use (5.95 MGD), 3) utility water rates (5.0 MGD), 4) reducing water loss (4.8 MGD), and 5) mandatory toilet retrofit program (2.1 MGD).
- AWU's Water Reclamation Initiative has provided reclaimed water for irrigation since the 1970's. Reclaimed water from two plants provides non-potable water for irrigation, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. Plans to expand this system are in place.
- The nationally recognized Beneficial Biosolids Reuse Program is designed to treat wastewater byproduct by composting it into an EPA-approved fertilizer (i.e. Dillo Dirt), which is then reused at the City's parks and sold to the public through garden retailers.

PUBLIC UTILITIES INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- **Austin Water Utility (AWU) has a total service population of approximately 854,000. Water is drawn from the Colorado River (on Lake Austin) into two treatment plants (Davis and Ullrich) located in Central Austin.**
- **The Water Protection Department (WPD) has identified more than 420 areas needing stormwater capacity updates in the urban core.**
- **Austin currently has the combined wastewater treatment plant capacity to treat 285 million gallons per day (MGD).**
- **In 2007, the Solid Waste Services diversion rate was 29% and recycling participation was around 71% citywide.**

Peak Day Water Savings Amounts (Listed in order)	Ten Year Estimated Peak Day Savings	WCTF FY 2008 Projected	FY 08 Actual
Watering Restrictions	6.16	0.0	5.0 to 9.0
Reclaimed Water Use	5.95	0.0	0.0
Utility Water Rates	5.00	0.0	0.0
Reducing Water Loss	4.80	0.0	1.31
Mandatory Toilet Retrofit	2.10	0.29	0.0
Annual Irrigation System Audits	1.47	0.45	0.0
Residential Irrigation Standards	1.32	0.13	0.07
Commercial Irrigation Standards	0.74	0.07	0.0
Enhanced Irrigation Audit Program	0.63	0.21	0.04
Pressure Reduction Program	0.29	0.03	0.001
Car Washes	0.15	0.00	0.00
Total (MGD)	32.65	1.18	6.4 to 10.4

Figure 15. Water Conservation Successes, Source: Austin Water Utility, City Council Briefing 2009.

*Economy,
Environment*

¹¹ City Council passed the Water Management Ordinance (2007), which resulted in a higher than expected reduction in peak outdoor water use the following year. Over the next ten years, the Ordinance establishes a goal of saving an average of 1% in water use per year to achieve a total savings of 25 MGD.

Public Utilities Issue #3: To meet energy efficiency goals set by Austin Electric and the Climate Protection Plan, the City needs to reduce peak energy demand by 700 MW by 2020.

- From 1982 through 2003, Austin Electric (AE), the largest City of Austin department, reduced peak electric demands by 600 MW through conservation, efficiency, and load-shifting programs. AE's goal is double their efforts and reduce peak demand further by 2020.
- Peak demands occur in the summer and during winter evenings. Reductions during these peak periods provide both AE and its customers with costs savings and reductions in power plant emissions.

**Economy,
Environment**

Public Utilities Issue #4: At present rates of demand growth, the trend in water usage suggests Austin customers will exceed long-range water supply as currently contracted with the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) by the year 2050.

- To meet future demand for water, based on present rates of growth, Austin would need 376,000 acre-ft of water in year 2050, or about 51,000 acre-ft per year more than the current contract amount with LCRA. Conservation and water reclamation programs will be required to make up the shortfall (*source: AWU, Raymond Chan Engineers*).

Environment

Public Utilities Issue #5: To implement the goals set by the City's Zero Waste Plan (i.e., reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills by 90% in the year 2040), Austin will need to increase recycling rates, increase the type of materials recycled, increase capacity, and increase residential and commercial composting.

- Austin operates a "pay as you throw program" that provides a volume-based system for garbage collection tied to fees charged to customers.
- The City has a relatively high (71%) participation in recycling rate and has set aggressive targets to further reduce waste and increase the landfill diversion rate. Significant increases in recycling rates for multi-family, commercial, institutional, industrial, and manufacturing uses are needed to meet the target. In addition, the types of materials (e.g., electronics, furniture) residential and commercial customers recycle must be increased. If recycling rates increase, the City currently does not have adequate containers and space to store and manage the increased volume of material and will need to develop local Material Recovery Facilities with capacity to handle large volumes of unique materials. Finally, increased public participation in composting and home and work is needed to meet the diversion target.

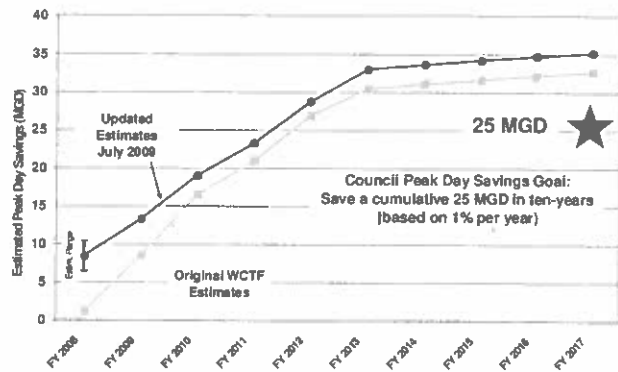


Figure 16. Projected peak day water usage savings (MGD)

**Economy,
Environment**

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Community Services Issue #1:

Continued outward growth and annexation and/or increased density and infill affects the ability of public safety providers (i.e., Austin Fire Department, Austin Police Department) to maintain levels of service.

- Texas state statutes require the immediate provision of fire protection and emergency service response to newly annexed areas of a municipality. Annexations may divert funding for improvements and maintenance from existing service areas or limit the City's ability to move forward with proposed annexations. Both police and fire departments require additional staff, facilities, and equipment to maintain level of service standards in developing areas.
- Austin's Fire Department building infrastructure is aging and may require renovation, reconstruction, or consolidation to accommodate modern equipment and increased personnel. For example, 12 fire stations cannot accommodate the larger fire truck apparatus required to improve level of service standards and response capabilities and nearly half of AFD stations are more than 40 years old.



COMMUNITY SERVICES INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- **Austin Fire Department is rated Class 2 by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), the second highest level on a scale of 1-10. Ratings are based on factors such as water supply and distribution, fire department apparatus and equipment, distribution of fire companies, staffing and training of fire personnel, fire alarm processing, and fire prevention efforts.**
- **According to the Central Texas Sustainability Project, after a long decline, most municipalities in the five-County region saw an increase in crime in 2007.**
- **The Austin Police Department has established targets for 2010 aimed at reducing crime and traffic fatalities, as well as increasing the percentage of residents who feel safe in their neighborhoods during the day and night (e.g., from 70% to 75% based on surveys).**
- **The Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Services (A/TCEMS) serves the entire county and is jointly funded by the City of Austin and Travis County.**
- **There are 12 Independent School Districts and a growing number of private and charter schools operating in the Austin ETJ.**
- **Austin Independent School District (AISD), the largest school district in Austin, has 8 nationally recognized blue ribbon schools.**

Community Services Issue #2:

Regionalization, cooperation, and sharing of resources among public safety and other providers can maximize efficiencies in the use of available resources.

- Regionalization of fire protection and emergency service response can occur through mutual and/or automatic aid agreements. A benefit of regionalization is increased communications and development of policies to improve the sharing of limited resources and reduce potential duplication of services. In addition, trends point to an increase in the type of crimes occurring across municipal and state borders, further supporting the need for improved coordination between municipal, county, and state police and emergency service providers.
- The Austin Fire Department has indicated that state disaster response plans are beginning to place more emphasis on statewide cooperation in the event of a large-scale disaster (e.g., wildfires, floods) to reduce the burden on local and regional fire and emergency response departments.

**Economy,
Equity**

Community Services Issue #3:

The two school districts serving the largest area in the Austin ETJ (Austin ISD and Del Valle ISD) are facing challenges related to population growth, immigration/language needs, poverty, and transient families.

- Austin ISD is the largest school district in the ETJ with an enrollment of 82,074 students on 110 campuses. AISD has a diverse student body (e.g., 57 different languages) and about 20% of students enter the district as non-English speakers.
- Del Valle ISD is experiencing significant growth in its student body resulting in overcrowded schools. Nearly 80% of students are considered economically

disadvantaged. The District covers southeastern area of the Austin ETJ, generally east of I-35 and includes developing areas near the airport. The District is adding a middle school and elementary school, however securing funding for continued growth will be a challenge.

- Overall student test scores at both school districts are close to, but slightly below state averages. Generally, test scores at AISD have increased over the last four years. Both AISD and Del Valle ISD are rated “academically acceptable” by the State Education Agency (source: *GreatSchools.net*)

Equity

Community Services Issue #4:

Stakeholder interviews suggest that blue ribbon and other high-ranking schools are attracting upper-income families, while lower-income families are moving to other areas of the region to seek out high performing schools in more affordable neighborhoods (e.g., Red Rock) or remain in under-performing schools.

- Students have the option to attend their neighborhood school, another school in the district, or a magnet school (specific admission requirements). Students enrolled in low-performing schools (as rated by the Texas Education Agency) may also transfer to another school district.
- Still, the 2009 Central Texas Indicators project found inequalities in graduation, drop-out, and test statistics based on race and income in Central Texas school districts. Graduation rates are disproportionately low among Hispanic and African-American students in the region. Further, Hispanic and African-American students remain less likely than white students to attend an “Exemplary School” as defined by the State Education Agency.

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Equity**

PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks and Recreation Issue #1:

Population growth and changing demographics is creating a growing need for open space in the urban core, neighborhood and regional parks in developing areas, and trails and greenway projects across the region.

- The 2010 Long Range Plan found that there is a need for more park space within walking distance (1/2-1 mile) of urban core neighborhoods. In addition, the plan identifies priority park trail projects and greenway acquisition.
- Based on the recommendation of the Long Range Plan, Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) has shifted parkland acquisition to include “infill” or pocket parks within already developed areas of the city. This shift may result in lowering Austin’s ratio of 24 acres of parkland/1,000 people (due to acquisition of smaller, more expensive land areas), but will further the goal of making parkland available within one-mile of all residential neighborhoods.
- In addition to meeting urban needs, land acquisition planning is ongoing in developing areas where the gap analysis revealed the greatest need, areas with significant environmental features, new Transit Oriented Developments, and the North Burnett/Gateway Neighborhood Planning Area.
- Trail-related activities (e.g., walking, running, biking) continue to be the most popular recreational activities in Austin. PARD has identified priority trails and greenway projects (e.g., trail connections from Blunn and West Bouldin Creek to Lady Bird Lake and the Red Line railroad ROW Trail) and continues to acquire land to close the gaps within existing greenways.
- The 2010 Long Range Plan also identified a need for: development of off-leash dog parks, skate parks, neighborhood tennis courts; protection of environmentally sensitive areas; increased connectivity from neighborhoods to parks, greenways, and trails; and installation of park benches, tables, and trash receptacles.

PARKS AND RECREATION INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- Austin has over 200 parks and preserves totaling more than 17,000 acres, including district parks, neighborhood parks, and activity centers. The park system includes facilities such as museums, an art center, a botanical garden, and cultural centers.
- According to the Parks and Recreation Long-Range Plan for Land, Facilities, and Programs Austin has 24 acres of parkland/1,000 persons, which on an overall basis exceeds national guidelines.
- The standard service area for a neighborhood park in Austin has been defined as 1 mile; however, ½ mile is considered desirable for walking areas. There is a need for more parkland within walking distance in urban core neighborhoods and developing areas in southwest, north, northeast, and northwest Austin.
- Austin is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), a national benchmark for parks and recreation departments.

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Environment,
Equity*

Parks and Recreation Issue #2:

There is a growing need to repair, restore, and replace older park facilities.

- The improvement and repair of park facilities in and around Downtown Austin is an emerging need, in part resulting from an increase in population in Central Austin. Priority projects include the improvement of parkland along Lady Bird Lake, preservation of historic squares, conversion of Holly Street Power Plant to a park, and improvement of Zilker Park/Barton Springs Pool. Another goal is to install more park benches, checkerboard tables, and trash receptacles in existing parks.

Environment

Parks and Recreation Issue #3:

Austin's park system has doubled in size over the last 20 years, but funding for the maintenance and operation of new parks and facilities has not kept pace with growth.

- PARD's long range plan indicates that the department will need to increase its reliance on partners and volunteers to more efficiently provide recreational services. Planning for new parks needs to be closely coordinated with other providers given fiscal constraints. The rising cost of fuel also impacts the operations of PARD and park users. As more people stay close to their homes, local recreational resources are becoming increasingly important to residents.

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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Health Issue #1: There are a growing number of children and families without health insurance in Travis County.¹²

- While the percentage of Travis County residents with health insurance (85%) is greater than the national average, there is great discrepancy based income across the region.
- According to a survey for the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project, the number of Travis County respondents without health insurance decreased from 2004 to 2008 (18% to 15%), which may indicate a positive trend in percentage of insured.
- The Indicators Project also found the demand in Central Texas for public mental health providers has increased since 2006, without similar increases in capacity/programs. The number of adult residents served by public mental health providers increased after 2006, spiking in the first half of 2009. These increases could be attributed to the stresses associated with the current economic recession.

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HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES INDICATORS AND TRENDS

- **The Austin region has two major health care systems: St. David's and Seton Healthcare networks.**
- **In Central Texas in 2008, over 35% of households earning less than \$35,000 a year did not have health insurance.**
- **In 2008, approximately 18% of children and youth under age 18 in Travis County were uninsured and nearly 20% were living in poverty.**
- **The Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project is increasing its monitoring of trends such as childhood obesity. For example, distribution of Body Mass Index (BMI) scores for middle schools in Austin indicate nearly all clusters of obesity are located in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in North, East, and South Austin.**
- **The number of immigrants in Travis County is growing; between 1990 and 2005, the foreign-born population grew by 230% (about 45,000 to 148,000) (Source: Immigrant Services Network of Austin).**

¹² Sources: Community Action Network, American Community Survey (Census), Central Texas Sustainable Indicators Project.

Health Issue #2: Texas has the fastest growing population under 18 in the nation and in 2008, nearly one in five children in Travis County was living poverty.

- Nationally, one-third of children raised in poverty remain in poverty as adults. The region’s rapidly growing population of young children (under 5 years old) is especially vulnerable to poverty and its effects.
- Food insecurity is more likely in children in low-income households.
- As housing becomes more expensive in Austin, some middle/low-income families are seeking housing outside of the City and farther from jobs. Proximity to transportation, employment, healthcare, and childcare can greatly benefit families dealing with poverty (see *Housing Issue #1*).
- Austin has a very active social service network. In 1995, city and county school districts came together to address the large amount of funds being spent on social services. The Community Action Network (CAN), a board of 18 partner organizations, now meets on a regular basis to strengthen partnerships develop collaborative strategies to health and other social issues. CAN is developing a set of priority indicators for children and youth to measure progress.
- As mentioned above, the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project tracks measures of health/human services as part of the overall sustainability measure. Still, stakeholder interviews indicate there is more collaboration on solutions to health and human services issues at the regional level.



¹¹Urgent care refers to ambulatory or walk-in care outside of a traditional emergency room. Urgent care centers across the country are primarily used to treat patients with an illness or injury (e.g., ear infection) that requires immediate care, but is not serious enough to warrant an emergency room visit. These centers often provide significant savings compared with hospital emergency care options.

Health Issue #3: Stakeholder interviews indicate that there is a need for more urgent (non-emergency) care facilities and better access to primary care facilities in Austin.

- As of 2009, all Central Texas counties were classified as “medically underserved” by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This designates a shortage of personal health services in the five-county region.
- While the two healthcare systems have sufficient emergency care, there is a lack of urgent care facilities in Travis County.¹³
- The Community Action Network (CAN) is considering strategies to better connect public transportation services and health and human service providers. This effort would help to better inform case workers and others involved in social services of existing networks (e.g., churches with van pool) and identify areas that are in need of transportation and access improvements.



How Are We Doing? Trends

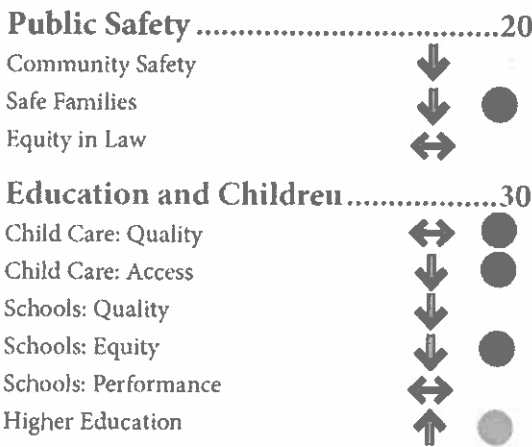


Figure 17. Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project (Excerpt from 2009 Report).

Health Issue #4: There is a need to address barriers (e.g., cultural, language, safety concerns, etc.) that hamper participation of immigrants in the larger Austin community.

- Austin's immigrant population is growing. As of 2008, the majority was Spanish speaking (80%). The other 20% included an increasing number of refugees from countries such as Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, and Turkey as a result of Austin's status as a preferred settlement community. Nationally, the Austin-San Marcos region is classified as an "pre-emerging immigrant gateway" - or an area with a previously small foreign-born population that is now experiencing rapid growth (Brookings Institute, 2004).
- Austin's Asian community is growing rapidly. Some households in this community, (e.g., Vietnamese families) have few or no English speakers and therefore face language barriers (*see Housing Issue #2*).
- In addition to language barriers, immigrant families can experience economic hardships, separation between parents and children, isolation, and emotional stress. These issues often place a strain on school resources, faith-based organizations, and other community organizations. Recent immigrants, across educational levels, may also experience difficulties finding employment (source: Immigrant Services Network).

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SUSCEPTIBILITY TO CHANGE

Susceptibility to Change is used to broadly indicate the likelihood that an area will change in the foreseeable future. Change can include new development on previously undeveloped land, redevelopment, change of use, or intensification of use. Characterizing the probability of such change (typically in three categories – high, medium, and low) is useful for a comprehensive planning process in order to help understand the dynamics of growth and change in the community. This analysis will inform development of Comprehensive Plan strategies and actions (i.e., to influence change in highly susceptible areas in the direction of the Vision).

Susceptibility to Change in the study area (the City of Austin and its ETJ) was determined by spatially overlaying eleven factors (indicators of change) from the City's GIS database:

- owner occupancy
- land status
- improvement to land ratio
- zoning and overlay districts
- projected growth in employment
- water service
- transit corridors
- road access
- property violations
- year built
- development cases

Conclusions

In general terms, the Susceptibility to Change analysis reveals the following:

- Areas most susceptible to change are concentrated in a north-south "spine" within the study area, particularly from downtown Austin north to Williamson County. This confirms the conclusion of Land Use Issue #3 that the momentum of growth in the region appears to be in a northward direction.
- The predominant classification of areas in the eastern and southern portions of the study area is moderately susceptible to change.
- The predominant classification of areas in the western portion of the study area is least susceptible to change.

For the purposes of this analysis, the study area was divided into 10-acre grid cells. Every cell received a normalized value for each factor between 0 and 1, with 0 being the least susceptible to change and 1 being the most susceptible to change. All factors were then added together with equal weights to produce a final susceptibility score. The accompanying series of maps show the results for each factor and the synthesis of all factors. The synthesis map totals the susceptibility scores for each cell and divides the result using logical breaks into three categories: areas most susceptible to change, areas moderately susceptible to change, and areas least susceptible to change.

The draft synthesis map and description of each factor is provided below.

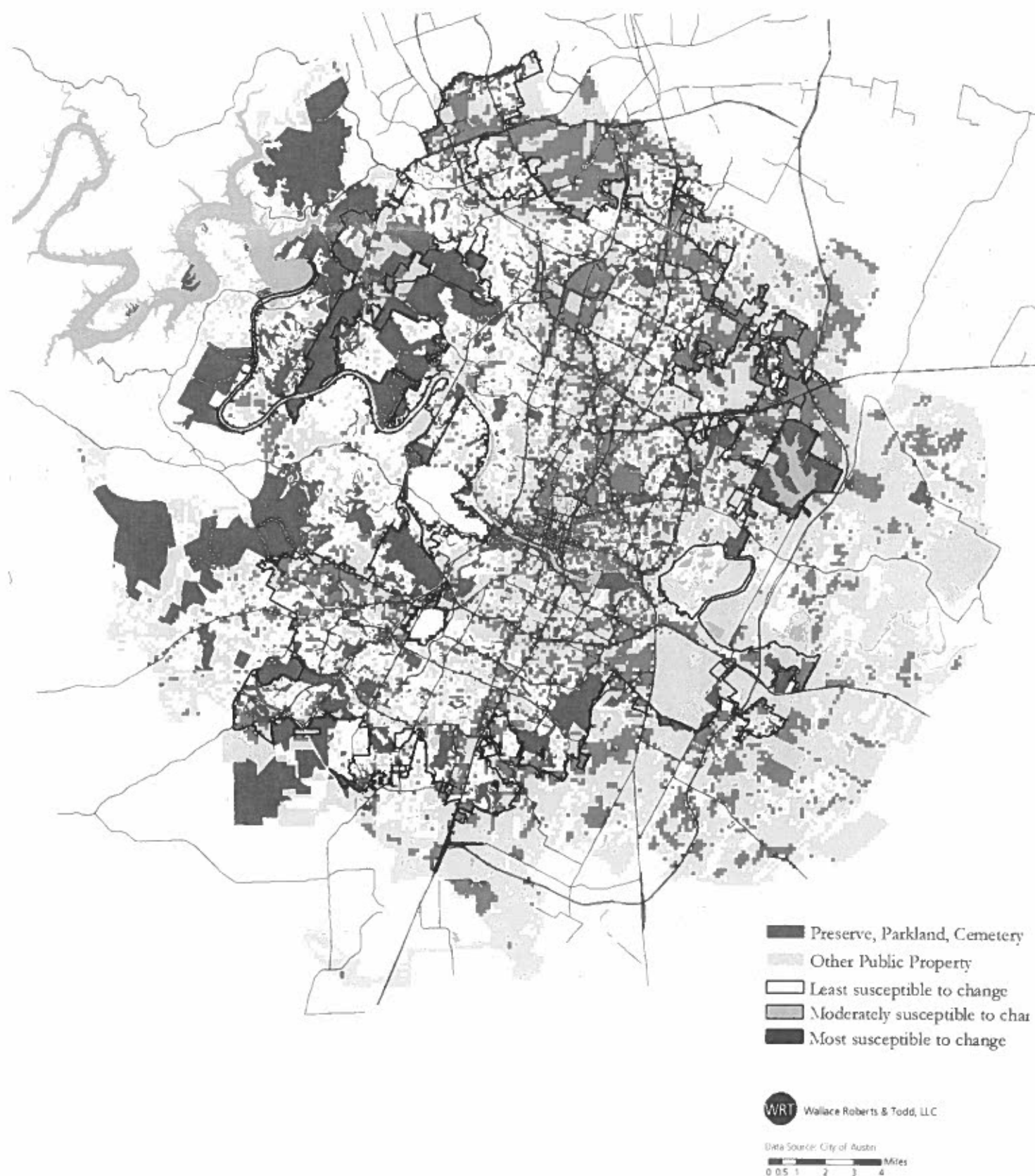


Figure 18. Draft Susceptibility to Change Analysis, February 2010

Susceptibility to Change Factors

Owner Occupancy

Most susceptible	1	not owner-occupied or not residential
Least susceptible	0	owner-occupied residence

Owner occupancy is based on the homestead exemption flag in Austin's land database.

Land Status

Most susceptible	1	undeveloped, no constraints
	0.67	developed, no constraints
	0.33	undeveloped, constraints
Least susceptible	0	developed, constraints

Improvement to Land Ratio

Most susceptible	1	ILR > 1.5	
Least susceptible	0	ILR = 0, or non-commercial property	
All possible values in-between			
Example		0.67	ILR = 1

Improvement to Land Ratio (ILR) is the appraised value of an improvement divided by the value of its land. The theory is that land owners will seek to maximize their investment in the land by developing or redeveloping when the value of the improvement is less than the land.

Zoning and Overlay Districts

Most susceptible	1	areas in vertical mixed use, mixed use, planned unit development, transit-oriented development, or North Burnet/Gateway districts;
		areas in North Burnet/Gateway, transit-oriented development, university, urban renewal, or central urban redevelopment overlay districts; and
		areas with high-density mixed use, major planned development, mixed use, mixed use/office, neighborhood mixed use, or transit-oriented development future land use designations
	0.5	not in any of the above or below districts
Least susceptible	0	areas in historic or neighborhood conservation combining districts

Projected Growth in Employment

Most susceptible	1	greatest growth in employment density (jobs / acre)
Least susceptible	0	least growth in employment density (jobs/acre)

All possible values in-between

Water Service

Most susceptible	1	areas currently served by water mains
	0.75	retail water area served 2009
	0.5	impact fee service area boundary
	0.25	outside impact fee service area, in desired development zone
Least susceptible	0	outside all areas above

Transit Corridors

Most susceptible	1	areas closest to most transit corridors (well served by transit)
Least susceptible	0	areas outside all transit corridors (not well served by transit)

All values in-between

This layer is the result of a sub-overlay analysis that combined transit corridors. For each of the following transit corridors, a cell was given a value equal to its distance from the corridor. Distance values given up to a half mile away for CapMetro Red Line and rapid bus routes, Austin-San Antonio Commuter Rail corridor, and MoKan corridor. Distance values given up to a quarter mile away for Core Transit Corridors, express and local bus routes.

Road Access

Most susceptible	1	areas with greatest density of arterial roadways (best road access)
Least susceptible	0	areas with least density of arterial roadways (worst road access)

All values in-between

The road network included in this analysis combines existing roadways with those proposed in the 2025 Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan.

Property Violations

Most susceptible	1	most property violations
Least susceptible	0	no property violations

All values in-between

Year Built

Most susceptible	1	built in or before 1900 or undeveloped
Least susceptible	0	built in 2000 or later
All values in-between		
Example	0.19	built in 1981

Development Cases

Most susceptible	1	areas with development cases
Least susceptible	0	areas without development cases or developed

Imagine Austin Plan Framework Building Blocks – Working Paper Draft

Final – Revised 3/11/2011 (Changes by Comprehensive Plan Citizen Task Force , Planning Commission, and City Council)

Introduction

As Austin approaches its 200th anniversary in 2039 it is at a critical juncture in its history. Since the adoption of its current comprehensive plan (Austin Tomorrow) in 1979, the population of the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)¹ has grown from 407,195 in 1980 to 990,576 (2010 estimate), and over the next 30 years about 750,000 more residents and 300,000 new jobs are projected. While Austin Tomorrow has been amended numerous times through the adoption of neighborhood, transportation, and other plans, the time is right for a new comprehensive plan to set the direction for managing growth and change as the 21st century unfolds.

The Austin City Council established three goals for the *Imagine Austin* planning process: engage the whole community in developing the plan; set the direction to achieve a sustainable future; and create a plan that will be implemented. Since the initial public open house in October 2009, almost 15,000 residents have participated in community forums, online and print surveys, social media groups, neighborhood meetings, and informal gatherings throughout Austin. In August 2010, *Imagine Austin* reached a major milestone with the City Council endorsement of a community-based Vision Statement describing Austin in 2039 – crafted from the input and ideas of thousands of residents.

With the Vision Statement defining in broad strokes what residents want Austin to be in 30 years, the remainder of the planning process will establish how to get there:

- How can the City accommodate the projected 750,000 new residents and 300,000 new jobs in a way that supports the Vision Statement?
- How can Vision Statement goals such as sustainability, affordability, and equal opportunity for all residents be achieved?

The current step in the planning process, creation of a **Plan Framework and Preferred Growth Scenario**, sets the course to answer these questions. In very general terms, the draft Preferred Growth Scenario expresses the ideal direction for Austin's future physical development and preservation. The draft Plan Framework establishes strategic directions to address the full range of challenges that must be surmounted to achieve an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable future as defined by the Vision Statement.

The **Plan Framework** is organized into seven "building blocks" incorporating elements (subject areas) required by the Austin City Charter to be included in the Comprehensive Plan and

Plan Framework

A set of "topical" building blocks (land use and transportation, housing and neighborhoods, economy, etc.) that identify strategic directions for action to achieve the Imagine Austin Vision.

Preferred Growth Scenario

The overall concept for the direction of growth and preservation over the next 30 years in Austin and its ETJ, based on community input.

¹ As defined by the Texas Local Government Code, Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction is the unincorporated area that is contiguous to and located within five miles of its corporate boundaries (city limits) and not within another city or another city's ETJ. The combined area within the city limits and the ETJ constitute the study area for the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

several others added based on public input (see *Comprehensive Plan Building Blocks and Elements* below). The Plan Framework is based on public input combined with analysis of current and projected conditions and trends shaping Austin's future. It represents the "bridge" between the Vision Statement and full Comprehensive Plan to be developed in 2011, which will include more detailed strategies and an action component specifying the steps needed to implement the plan.

Both the Preferred Growth Scenario and the Plan Framework are "works in progress" rather than definitive documents. They will be used by the Working Groups in the Building Blocks Workshop and follow up meetings to guide development of the full Comprehensive Plan (see *Next Steps* below).

Preferred Growth Scenario

The Preferred Growth Scenario is a map accompanying the Plan Framework that sets out, conceptually, how Austin should grow in the future. It represents the most desirable way, based on Austin's Vision for 2030, in which the City can accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use areas, open space, transit, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years. The Preferred Growth Scenario reflects public input received in two series of community forums and associated public outreach activities, including the *Which Way, Austin* newsletter and survey.

In Community Forum #2 and follow-up meetings, residents worked from resource materials to create over 60 maps depicting the development patterns and transportation network they felt would best accommodate projected future growth.

During Community Forum #3 and accompanying surveys, residents were asked to compare five growth scenarios (a projected trend and four alternatives constructed from the Community Forum #2 maps) and provide input on a preferred growth direction for the future. Residents selected their preferred scenario based on a series of sustainability indicators (see Sustainability and the Comprehensive Plan below). Scenario "D" (referred to as the linear scenario) was their first choice, followed by the Scenario "C" (centers) as their second choice. City staff and the Citizens Advisory Task Force took the public input and created a blended scenario that serves as the Preferred Growth Scenario depicting Austin's Vision for 2039.

As an alternative to the way in which Austin could be expected to grow if it follows the growth patterns of the past several decades (Trend Scenario), the key directions of the Preferred Growth Scenario include:

- Protect existing open space and natural resources (e.g., creeks, rivers, lakes, and floodplains)
- Direct development away from the Edwards Aquifer
- Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Increase transit use and reduce vehicle miles traveled
- Reduce water consumption
- Develop mixed-use corridors and centers accessible by walking, biking, and transit
- Provide convenient access to jobs and employment centers
- Provide parks and open space close to where people live and work

In addition to reflecting public input, this scenario takes into account planned development and existing neighborhood plans. In essence, it represents a blending of the alternative scenarios and reality on the ground. In general, the Preferred Growth Scenario favors north-south redevelopment and new development that takes advantage of Austin's existing transportation and infrastructure network. There is very limited development to the environmentally-sensitive west, and development to the east takes place in compact, clustered patterns. This type of development helps to protect creeks and rivers in the eastern

part of the study area, as well as existing farmland. New growth along Austin's north-south axis is directed to centers and mixed-use corridors to preserve established neighborhoods and support a more robust public transportation network. The Preferred Scenario introduces a wider variety of alternatives to Austin's congested routes (e.g., I-35 and MoPac) supports existing investments in Downtown Austin, Mueller, North Burnet Gateway, the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, the Red Line, and the San Antonio to Georgetown Lone Star Rail.

Several different development types are included: mixed-use centers (i.e., Regional, Town, and Neighborhood Centers), Mixed-Use Corridors, Job Centers (predominantly office, retail, and industrial uses), infill residential, and greenfield residential uses. All of the mixed-use centers and corridors are intended to be pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly and supportive of transit, and should all include well-designed streetscapes, plazas, and parks.

- **Regional Centers** are the major urban hubs of the region. They have the highest densities of jobs and residents, are highly walkable, support high-capacity transit, and include a full spectrum of employment uses. Downtown, Lakeline, Robinson Ranch, North Burnett Gateway, Highland Mall, and Southside are Regional Centers. Some Regional Centers are entirely urban, like Downtown, while others (like Robinson Ranch or the southern center at the intersection of IH-35 and SH 45) are likely have urban cores surrounded by well-connected but lower density development.
- **Town Centers** have a mix of commercial and residential uses supporting high-capacity transit. They include townhouses, rowhouses, apartments, as well as some single-family houses, in addition to offices and community serving retail. The Mueller redevelopment is a local example of a Town Center.
- Like Town Centers, **Neighborhood Centers and Mixed-Use Corridors** are highly walkable and support transit, but are less dense and have more local focus than Town Centers. They have community-serving retail and services (e.g., dry cleaners, beauty salons, coffee shops, restaurants) along with moderately dense housing types, such as small-lot single-family, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments. Neighborhood centers are concentrated on several blocks or around one or two intersections, while mixed-use corridors extend along a linear corridor (e.g., South Congress Avenue).
- **Job Centers** are predominantly office and industrial uses. Development can occur at a range of scales, depending on zoning and neighborhood plans. Job center uses include major employers (e.g., IBM in North Austin) and industrial uses such as warehouses, offices, and manufacturing that need to be located further from residences. While these areas are currently best served by car, the Preferred Growth Scenario increases public transit options (e.g., light rail, bus rapid transit) to shift the reliance away from the automobile.
- **Infill Residential** is residential development that occurs as redevelopment or alongside existing development (e.g., new residences built on vacant land next to existing homes, redevelopment of a 1-story office building for several townhouses or apartments). Housing types may include the broad range of single-family houses, duplexes, secondary apartments, townhouses, and apartments.
- **Greenfield Residential** refers to residential development on undeveloped land. Residential housing types may include single-family houses, duplexes, townhouses, and apartments.

Sustainability and the Comprehensive Plan

Sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987

Sustainability is one of three overall goals for the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* set by the City Council. As a community, Austin is distinguished by a strong environmental ethos dating back to the 1960s. It enacted one of the country’s first green building programs in 1985; adopted an aggressive climate protection plan calling for city operations, facilities, vehicle fleets, and utilities to be totally carbon neutral by 2020 in 2007; and created the Office of Sustainability in 2010. SustainLane (an online community dedicated to sustainability) ranked Austin as the 13th most sustainable city in the nation in 2008, lauding its leadership in addressing climate change, green building, and renewable energy, but noting traffic congestion, transit ridership, and local food/agriculture as areas needing work.

The Comprehensive Plan defines sustainability as integrating **Economy, Environment, and Equity** (the three “Es”) in a mutually supporting, enduring manner. Thus, the sum of the Plan Framework’s strategic directions, while presented in separate Building Blocks, are designed to work together to achieve a “triple bottom line” of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity that is passed on to future generations. At the same time, a sustainable future will maintain Austin’s unique local character and spirit.

The Austin Spirit

As captured by the monikers “Live Music Capital of the World” and “Keep Austin Weird,” a spirit of creativity is at the heart of what differentiates Austin from other communities. For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, this spirit transcends Austin’s vibrant arts scene, creative community, and home-grown businesses to embody a broader, innovative mindset and approach to solving problems. Resilience – the ability to adapt to challenges and change – will be a hallmark of successful communities in the 21st century, and innovation has been identified as one of the key attributes of resiliency.² Whereas a sustainable future is the ultimate goal of the Comprehensive Plan, creativity and innovation are essential to the process of realizing it. By harnessing the collective energy of Austin’s people the plan and its implementation will address the big issues facing the City. As part of this process, the community will be asked in the Building Blocks Workshop and follow-up Working Group meetings to brainstorm and discuss creative strategies and actions to achieve a sustainable, resilient future Austin.

A Regional Perspective

The geographic scope of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* is Austin’s current city limits and its ETJ, which is mostly located in Travis County but also encompasses parts of Bastrop, Hays, and Williamson Counties. Looking beyond this study area, Austin is the principal city in the five-county area covered by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the larger ten-county region covered by the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG). Other significant cities in the region include Round Rock, Cedar Park, Kyle, San Marcos, Georgetown, and Pflugerville. At an even larger scale, Austin is part of the dynamic, fast growing Dallas/Fort Worth-San Antonio-Houston Texas Triangle “mega-region.” Consequently, it is important that the Comprehensive Plan incorporate a regional perspective that considers the impacts of the future growth and development of Austin on the larger

² Brian Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*, Island Press, 2006

region, and vice versa. Towards this end, the full Comprehensive Plan will incorporate a regional component developed through coordination with surrounding jurisdictions and regional agencies (e.g., Travis County, Round Rock, CAMPO, and CAPCOG).

Implementation and Complete Communities

Consistent with City Council direction that the *Imagine Austin* planning process result in a plan that will be implemented, the full Comprehensive Plan to be developed in 2011 (see *Next Steps* below) will include an Implementation Element specifying actions, timeframes, and responsibilities to carry out the Building Block strategic directions. The effectiveness of plan implementation will ultimately be measured by the extent to which it positively impacts the day-to-day lives of Austin's residents and families.

To assist in this process, the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force has put forward the concept of **Complete Communities** as a tool to assess the **outcomes** of the actions taken to implement the plan. Simply stated, this concept is designed to measure the extent to which residents' needs are met in all parts of the city using key metrics or indicators of community health (e.g., educational attainment, employment, public health, housing affordability, environmental quality, and tax base) that can be tracked over time.

The Complete Communities concept will be fleshed out with specific indicators tied to the Building Blocks as the Comprehensive Plan is developed in 2011.

The five-county Capital Region is at the beginning of a three-year process to refine and implement the Envision Central Texas (ECT) regional plan using a \$3.7 million grant awarded by the federal 2010 Sustainable Communities Partnership (the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency). Regional partners in developing the plan include the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG); Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO); the Cities of Austin, Round Rock, and San Marcos; the University of Texas; Envision Central Texas; and IBM. Developing and implementing the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* will be coordinated with the regional sustainability planning process as it moves forward. The *Imagine Austin Vision Statement* is consistent with six "Livability Principles" established by the Sustainable Communities Partnership, which will guide the regional planning effort.

Next Steps

Review and endorsement of the Preferred Growth Scenario and Plan Framework by the City Council is anticipated in March 2011. While these two work products are being finalized, Working Groups open to all interested citizens will be formed for each of the seven Building Blocks. Beginning in late March and early April of 2011, the Working Groups will participate in a Building Blocks Workshop and follow-up Working Group meetings, scheduled to run through the summer. Each group will identify strategies related to its Building Block's Strategic Directions to carry out the Vision Statement and make recommendations for prioritizing actions to be included in the implementation component of the Comprehensive Plan. Using the ideas and recommendations of the Working Groups and feedback from the Task Force, city staff and consultants will prepare working drafts to be assembled and integrated in the complete Comprehensive Plan. A public review of the complete draft of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* (Community Forum #4) is planned for late 2011, followed by Planning Commission and City Council review and adoption.

Plan Framework

Comprehensive Plan Building Blocks and Elements

Austin's City Charter requires that the Comprehensive Plan include the City Council's policies for growth, development, and beautification of land within the corporate limits and the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the city, or for geographic portions thereof including neighborhood, community, or area-wide plans.

According to the Charter, the comprehensive plan shall include the following elements:

- 1) Future Land Use element;
- 2) Traffic Circulation and Mass Transit element;
- 3) Wastewater, Solid Waste, Drainage, and Potable water element;
- 4) Conservation and Environmental Resources element;
- 5) Recreation and Open Space element;
- 6) Housing element;
- 7) Public Services and Facilities element, which shall include but not be limited to a capital improvement program;
- 8) Public Buildings and Related Facilities element;
- 9) Economic element for commercial and industrial development and redevelopment; and
- 10) Health and Human Service element.

The Austin City Council endorsed the inclusion of new elements not required by the Charter but established through the public input process:

- Historic and Cultural Preservation
- Children, Families, and Education
- Arts, Culture, and Creativity
- Urban Design

These elements have been grouped into the "Building Blocks" of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*. The plan's seven building blocks are:

- **Land Use and Transportation** (*includes Future Land Use, Urban Design, Traffic, and Mass Transit*)
- **Housing and Neighborhoods** (*includes Housing*)
- **Economy** (*includes Economic element*)
- **Conservation and Environmental Resources** (*includes Conservation and Environmental Resources*)
- **City Facilities and Services** (*includes Wastewater; Solid Waste, Drainage, Potable Water; Public Service and Facilities; Public Buildings and Facilities; Recreation and Open Space*)
- **Society** (*includes Health and Human Services; Children, Families, and Education*)
- **Culture** (*includes Arts, Culture, and Creativity; Historic and Cultural Preservation*)

For each Building Block, the Plan Framework identifies strategic directions to realize Austin's Vision for 2039 and address challenges facing the City. The draft Building Blocks draw on the Imagine Austin Community Inventory (www.imagineaustin.net/inventory.htm); existing city plans (e.g., *CreateAustin*, the *Climate Protection Plan*); public input as synthesized in the Common Ground Working Paper (www.imagineaustin.net/commonground-paper.htm) and Community Forum #3 survey; and the Strategic Issues Working Paper (www.imagineaustin.net/strategic-issues.htm).

BUILDING BLOCK 1: Land Use, Transportation, and Urban Design – Draft

The Land Use and Transportation Building Block addresses the connection between land use patterns, urban form, and the transportation network.

Building Block Elements:

- Land Use and Transportation
- Urban Design

Land Use and Transportation

Austin must create an efficient and sustainable land use pattern and transportation network that:

- Reduces sprawl and land consumption;
- Promotes infill and redevelopment;
- Preserves significant undeveloped land and protects sensitive environmental features;
- Encourages compact, mixed-use neighborhoods providing local-serving retail, schools, parks, and services that are accessible by transit, walking, and bicycling and promotes community health;
- Maintains Austin as a center of employment, government, commerce, entertainment, and recreation in the region;
- Supports all modes of transportation; and
- Reduces vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

From the Vision Statement - Austin is Livable:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents 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.

- Development occurs in connected and pedestrian-friendly patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles, while protecting and enhancing neighborhoods.
- Downtown offers a safe, vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Development occurs across the city in a manner friendly to families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.
- Austin's unique character and local businesses are recognized as a vital part of our community.
- Clear rules guide sustainable development and preservation, and they provide compatibility and certainty for residents and the business community.
- Austin's diverse population is active and healthy, with access to locally-grown, nourishing foods, and affordable healthcare.

Strategic Directions

- LUT 1. Align land use and transportation planning and decision-making to achieve the Preferred Growth Scenario/Growth Concept Map.
- LUT 2. Promote regional planning and increased coordination between municipalities to address major land use and transportation challenges.
- LUT 3. Promote development in compact centers, communities, or along corridors that are connected by transit service, are designed to encourage walking and bicycling, and reduce housing and transportation costs.
- LUT 4. Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change (e.g., designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites). Recognize that different neighborhoods have different characteristics, and infill and new development should be sensitive to the predominant character of these neighborhoods.

LUT 5. Create healthy and family-friendly communities through development that includes a mix of land uses and housing types and affords realistic opportunities for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian travel and provides both community gathering spaces and safe outdoor play areas for children.

LUT 6. Ensure that lower income neighborhoods have a mix of local-serving retail, employment opportunities, and residential uses.

LUT 7. Encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities that place residential, work, and retail land uses in proximity to each other to maximize walking, bicycling, and transit opportunities.

LUT 8. Develop land development regulations and standards that are clear and predictable and support the intent and goals of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

LUT 9. Direct housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development (TOD)³ and at intersections of major roadways and preserve and integrate existing affordable housing where possible.

LUT 10. Promote complete street design (e.g., traffic calming elements, street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access)⁴ throughout Austin, considering the safety needs of people of all ages and abilities.

LUT 11. Achieve the goals of area transit plans through effective planning, sufficient funding, and continued partnerships between the City of Austin, Capital Metro, and other area transportation providers.

LUT 12. Coordinate with area school districts in the placement of schools and facilities.

LUT 13. Promote safer routes to schools for students of all ages.

LUT 14. Incorporate provisions for bicycles and pedestrians into all roads (e.g., freeway/toll roads, arterial roadways, etc.), and to and from transit stations and stops, and major activity centers.

From the Vision Statement - *Austin is Mobile and Interconnected:*

Austin is accessible. Our transportation network provides a wide variety of options that are efficient, reliable, and cost-effective to serve the diverse needs and capabilities of our citizens. Public and private sectors work together to improve our air quality and reduce congestion in a collaborative and creative manner.

- Interconnected development patterns support public transit and a variety of transportation choices, while reducing sprawl, congestion, travel times, and negative impacts on existing neighborhoods.
- Our integrated transportation system is well-maintained, minimizes negative impacts on natural resources, and remains affordable for all users.
- Austin promotes safe bicycle and pedestrian access with well-designed routes that provide connectivity throughout the greater Austin area. These routes are part of our comprehensive regional transportation network.

³ Transit-Oriented Development is defined by the Federal Transit Administration as compact, mixed-use development within walking distance of public transportation.

⁴ Roads that are designed to safely accommodate necessary street functions for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers, and transit riders.

- LUT 15. Educate the public on the long-range need for commitment to a community fully served by a range of transportation modes and the benefits of each mode.
- LUT 16. Develop intermediate transit solutions that allow the City to reach the ultimate goal of a complete transit network over the long term.
- LUT 17. Continue efforts to implement future intercity rail and High Speed Rail in the Austin region.
- LUT 18. Reduce traffic congestion and encourage alternative transportation modes (e.g., using Transportation Demand Management approaches).
- LUT 19. Locate industry, warehousing, logistics, manufacturing, and other freight-intensive uses in proximity to adequate transportation infrastructure.
- LUT 20. Ensure that redevelopment in the Edwards Aquifer's recharge and contributing zones maintains the recharge of the aquifer.
- LUT 21. Protect Austin's natural resources and environmental systems by limiting land use and transportation development in sensitive environmental areas and preserving new areas of open space.
- LUT 22. Integrate a citywide/regional green infrastructure (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.) and the trail system into the urban environment and the transportation network. *(See also Conservation and Environmental Resources).*
- LUT 23. Direct hazardous materials/cargo that are being transported through Austin away from heavily populated or environmental sensitive areas.
- LUT 24. Develop a comprehensive network of evacuation routes for all areas of Austin.
- LUT 25. Strengthen planning processes by recognizing that the Comprehensive Plan and small-area plans (e.g., neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and station area plans) need to respect, inform, and draw from each other.

Urban Design

Austin must preserve and enhance the character of Austin's downtown, neighborhoods, commercial corridors, and public spaces through design that:

- Promotes pedestrian activity, healthy communities, and fosters a sense of community;
- Reflects the local heritage, landscape, history, and values of Austin;
- Results in high-quality, socially active public places;
- Supports the economic vitality of the city's neighborhoods and commercial and mixed-use districts;
- Creates inviting public spaces that are physically, culturally, socially, and economically accessible;
- Accommodates all modes of transportation on the city's streets; and
- Provides open space and transportation linkages between mixed-use and commercial districts, neighborhoods, and parks and recreational areas.

Strategic Directions

- UD 1. Develop accessible community gathering places (e.g., plazas, parks, farmers' markets, sidewalks, and streets) in all parts of Austin, especially in the Downtown, future TODs, in denser, mixed-use communities, and other redevelopment areas, that encourage interaction and provide places for people to visit and relax.
- UD 2. Protect and enhance the unique qualities of Austin's treasured public spaces and places such as parks, plazas, and streetscapes; and, where needed, enrich those areas lacking distinctive visual character or where the character has faded.
- UD 3. Define the community's goals for new public and private developments using principles and design guidelines that capture the distinctive, diverse local character of Austin.
- UD 4. Assure that new development is walkable and bikable and preserves the positive characteristics of existing pedestrian-friendly environments.
- UD 5. Apply high standards of urban design to ensure that "complete streets" are safe and accessible for all users. Encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation that are sensitive to the demands of the Central Texas climate.
- UD 6. Integrate green infrastructure elements such as the urban forest, green buildings, and green streets into the urban design of the City through "green" development practices and regulations.
- UD 7. Infuse public art into Austin's urban fabric (e.g., streetscapes, parks, plazas).
- UD 8. Transform all major streets into vibrant, multi-functional, pedestrian-friendly corridors.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a "triple bottom line" of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Land Use, Transportation, and Urban Design Building Block, the focus is on environmental quality and social equity that supports economic prosperity. Examples include:

- **Create healthy, family-friendly communities** that improve air quality through reduced transportation emissions (environmental quality), provide access to quality schools and health services (social equity), and encourage diverse, neighborhood serving businesses (economic prosperity).
- **Promote complete street design** to encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation and reduce emissions (environmental quality), provide safe transportation options (equity), and reduce congestion (economic prosperity).

BUILDING BLOCK 2: Housing and Neighborhoods – Draft

The Housing and Neighborhoods Building Block covers housing and neighborhoods in Austin, including issues related to affordable housing, services, demographics, mix of uses, character, and preservation.

Building Block Elements:

- Housing
- Neighborhoods

Housing

Austin must provide a range of energy and resource-efficient housing options and prices in all parts of the city to sustainably meet the needs of all segments of Austin's diverse population.

Strategic Directions

- H 1. Distribute a variety of housing types throughout the City to expand the choices available to meet the financial and lifestyle needs of Austin's diverse population.
- H 2. Expand the availability of affordable housing throughout Austin by preserving existing affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons.
- H 3. Increase the availability of affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons, through new and innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., public/private partnerships).
- H 4. Connect housing to jobs, child care, schools, retail, and other amenities and services needed on a daily basis, e.g.:
 - Direct housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development.
 - Coordinate in planning for housing near public transportation networks and employment centers to reduce household transportation costs and vehicle miles traveled.
- H 5. Promote a diversity of land uses throughout Austin to allow a variety of housing types ranging from permanent supportive housing to rental and ownership opportunities for singles, families with and without children, seniors, and person with disabilities.
- H 6. Address accessibility issues and other housing barriers to persons with disabilities or special needs.

From the Vision Statement -

Austin is Livable:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents 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.

- Development occurs in connected and pedestrian-friendly patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles, while protecting and enhancing neighborhoods.
- Downtown offers a safe, vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Development occurs across the city in a manner friendly to families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.
- Austin's unique character and local businesses are recognized as a vital part of our community.
- Clear rules guide sustainable development and preservation, and they provide compatibility and certainty for residents and the business community.
- Austin's diverse population is active and healthy, with access to locally-grown, nourishing foods, and affordable healthcare.

- H 7. Reuse former brownfields, greyfields (previously developed properties such as strip centers or malls that are not contaminated) and vacant building sites to reduce negative impacts of vacancy and provide new mixed-use and/or housing options.
- H 8. Encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes. *(See also Children, Families, and Education).*
- H 9. Renovate the existing housing stock to reduce utility and maintenance costs for owners and occupants.

Neighborhoods

Austin must sustain distinct, stable, and attractive neighborhoods that preserve and reinforce the livability, character, and special sense of place of the City.

Strategic Directions

- N 1. Create complete neighborhoods across Austin with a mix of housing types and land uses, affordable housing and transportation options, and access to schools, retail, employment, community services, and parks and recreation options. *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- N 2. Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change and ensuring context sensitive infill (e.g., designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites). *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- N 3. Identify and assess the infrastructure needs of older neighborhoods and provide for improvements needed to maintain their sustainability.
- N 4. Protect historic buildings, structures, sites, places, and districts in neighborhoods throughout the City. *(See also Historic and Cultural Preservation).*
- N 5. Strengthen Austin's neighborhoods by connecting to other neighborhoods, quality schools, parks, and other community-serving uses that are accessible by transit, walking, and bicycling.
- N 6. Strengthen planning processes by recognizing that the Comprehensive Plan and small-area plans (e.g., neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and station area plans) need to respect, inform, and draw from each other.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a "triple bottom line" of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Housing and Neighborhoods Building Block, the focus is on equity that supports environmental quality and economic prosperity. For example,

- **Increase accessibility and affordability of housing** by connecting housing with employment (economic prosperity), concentrating housing in sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development to consume fewer acres of land (environmental quality), and increasing housing/transportation affordability (social equity).

BUILDING BLOCK 3: Economy – Draft

The Economy Building Block covers Austin's economic growth sectors and employment, as well as related issues such as education, transportation, and housing.

Economy

Austin must build a vibrant, resilient, and diverse economy that celebrates innovation and creativity; provides equitable opportunities for people; and protects the environment. Sustainability includes not only environmental stewardship and social equity but economic prosperity for Austin residents and businesses.

Strategic Directions

- ECO 1. Promote and measure business entrepreneurship, innovation and a culture of creativity.
- ECO 2. Implement policies that create, nurture, and retain small businesses.
- ECO 3. Build on the Austin metropolitan area's position as a leader in global trade.
- ECO 4. Continue to strengthen partnerships among Chambers of Commerce, state and local governments, and major employers and leverage incentives to attract and retain major employers.
- ECO 5. Enhance Austin's draw as a premier national and international tourist destination by strengthening cultural (arts, music, film) and entertainment offerings, enhancing natural resources, and expanding the availability of family-friendly events and venues.
- ECO 6. Encourage Austin's creative economy and culture through flexible, place-based policies (those directed at specific geographic areas) as well as policies directed toward virtual reality and digital media.
- ECO 7. Promote Downtown as the premier business district in the region and expand the presence of global finance and trade.
- ECO 8. Invest in and expand major cultural facilities in Austin's Downtown.
- ECO 9. Spur medical and life science technology investments by establishing a medical school.

From the Vision Statement -

Austin is Prosperous:

Austin's prosperity exists because of the overall health, vitality, and sustainability of the city as a whole—including the skills, hard work, and qualities of our citizens, the stewardship of our natural resources, and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions.

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

- Our economy is resilient and responsive to global trends thanks to its diverse and thriving mix of local entrepreneurs, large and small businesses, educational institutions, government, and industry.
- Innovation and creativity are the engines of Austin's economy in the arts, research and development, and technology.
- Our ecology is integrated with our economy—the preservation of the environment and natural resources contribute to our prosperity.
- Equitable opportunities are accessible to all through quality education, training, and good jobs.

- ECO 10. Cluster or co-locate educational facilities (e.g., high schools, vocational schools, colleges or universities) near employment centers (e.g., healthcare facilities, biotech and green technologies, etc.) to better connect students to potential employment opportunities.
- ECO 11. Expand the educational offerings and establish cooperative partnerships between Austin Community College, the University of Texas, and other institutions of higher learning to support target industries' education and training requirements.
- ECO 12. Engage major employers and institutions of higher education to provide leadership in meeting the needs of chronic unemployed and underemployed residents, such as people with disabilities, and former clients of the criminal justice or foster care systems.
- ECO 13. Promote "start-up districts" where new businesses benefit from locating near transportation infrastructure, services, suppliers, mentors, and affordable support facilities.
- ECO 14. Encourage and support innovation through flexible city rules, adaptive reuse of buildings, and up-to-date infrastructure so that creativity thrives in actual as well as virtual reality and digital media.
- ECO 15. Improve regional transportation planning and financing for infrastructure (e.g., air, rail, and roads) in order to ensure the reliable movement of goods and people.
- ECO 16. Invest in sustainable, affordable utility sources (communications, power, water, wastewater) to meet the needs of increasing population and employment bases.
- ECO 17. Expand connectivity within the Texas Triangle (Dallas/Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and Houston) in order to facilitate movement of ideas, goods, and people for economic prosperity.
- ECO 18. Promote convenient and affordable child care for working families.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a "triple bottom line" of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Economy Building Block, the focus is on economic development that supports equity and environmental quality. For example,

- **Promote business growth** in Austin's target industries to expand the clean energy sector (economic prosperity), reduce dependence on non-renewable energy sources (environmental quality), and create new skilled jobs (social equity).

BUILDING BLOCK 4: Conservation and Environmental Resources – Draft

The Conservation and Environmental Resources Building Block covers Austin's natural resources (e.g., waterways, tree canopy, plant and animal habitat) and green infrastructure systems.

Conservation and Environmental Resources

Austin must conserve, protect, and support the City's natural resource systems. This includes protecting our land, water, and air, and developing and adopting better practices for long-term stewardship of Austin's environment.

Strategic Directions

- CER 1. Permanently preserve areas of the greatest environmental and agricultural value.
- CER 2. Conserve Austin's natural resources systems by limiting development in sensitive environmental areas (e.g., Edwards Aquifer and its contributing and recharge zones; endangered species habitat). *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- CER 3. Expand the city's green infrastructure network (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.).
- CER 4. Maintain and increase Austin's urban forest as a key component of the green infrastructure network. *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- CER 5. Expand regional programs and planning for the purchase of conservation easements and open space for aquifer protection, stream/water quality protection, wildlife habitat conservation, as well as sustainable agriculture.
- CER 6. Enhance the protection of creeks and flood plains to preserve environmentally and other sensitive areas and improve the quality of water entering the Colorado River through regional planning and improved coordination.
- CER 7. Protect and improve the water quality of the City's creeks, lakes, and aquifers for use and the support of aquatic life.
- CER 8. Improve the urban environment by fostering safe public uses of waterways (e.g., for public recreation that maintains the natural and traditional character of the floodplain).

From the Vision Statement -

Austin is Natural and Sustainable:

Austin is a green city. We are environmentally aware and ensure the long-term health and quality of our community through responsible resource use as citizens at the local, regional, and global level. Growth and infrastructure systems are well-managed to respect the limitations of our natural resources.

- We enjoy an accessible, well-maintained network of parks throughout our city.
- We protect the beauty of the Hill Country and blackland prairie, and value our farmland that nurtures local food production.
- Our parks, open spaces, and preserves shape city planning, reduce infrastructure costs, and provide us with recreation, clean air and water, local food, cooler temperatures, and biodiversity.
- We conserve water, energy, and other valuable resources.
- Austin is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- We use and inspire new technologies that create more sustainable communities while reducing our dependence on environmentally costly practices.

- CER 9. Reduce the carbon footprint of the City and its citizens by implementing Austin's *Climate Protection Plan* and develop strategies to adapt to the projected impacts of climate change.
- CER 10. Improve the air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from vehicle use, traffic and congestion, industrial sources, and waste.
- CER 11. Reduce noise pollution from transportation, construction, and other sources.
- CER 12. Decrease light pollution from apartments and single-family houses, signage, commercial buildings, parking lot lights, and street lights.
- CER 13. Integrate development with the natural environment through green building/site planning practices (e.g., tree preservation, reduced impervious coverage) and regulations. Ensure new development provides necessary and adequate infrastructure improvements. (*see also Land Use and Transportation*).
- CER 14. Adopt innovative programs, practices, and technologies to increase environmental quality and sustainability through the conservation of natural resources.
- CER 15. Incentivize, develop, and expand the market for local and sustainable food production (e.g., farming, ranching, food processing).
- CER 16. Establish policies that consider the benefits provided by natural ecosystems, such as ecological processes or functions (e.g., wetlands, riparian areas) having value to individuals or society.
- CER 17. Reduce the overall disposal of solid waste and increase reuse/recycling to conserve environmental resources. (*See also City Facilities and Services*).
- CER 18. Expand and improve regional collaboration and coordination in preserving Central Texas' natural environment.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a "triple bottom line" of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Conservation and Environmental Resources Building Block, the focus is on environmental quality that supports social equity and economic prosperity. For example:

- **Integrate development with the natural environment** by limiting removal of trees (environmental quality), ensuring new development provide necessary infrastructure improvements (economic prosperity), and reducing stormwater runoff and flooding (social equity).

BUILDING BLOCK 5: City Facilities and Services – Draft

The City Facilities and Services Building Block addresses the many different public facilities, utilities, and services that impact the development and character of Austin, including water and wastewater, drainage, solid waste, public buildings and facilities, and recreation and open space.

Building Block Elements:

- Wastewater, Potable Water, Drainage, and Solid Waste
- Public Services, Buildings, and Facilities⁵
- Recreation and Open Space

Wastewater, Potable Water, Drainage, and Solid Waste

Wastewater, Potable Water, Drainage

Austin must provide safe, reliable and high quality water and wastewater services to residents while conserving and protecting the City's natural water resources and protecting lives and property.

Strategic Directions

- WPD 1. Deliver potable water to Austin's residents as the population grows and maintain an efficient and sustainable water system in support of the Preferred Growth Scenario.
- WPD 2. Replace and maintain water and wastewater pipes and infrastructure.
- WPD 3. Develop decentralized wastewater processing sites to complement centralized facilities.
- WPD 4. Plan for and develop alternative water sources other than the Colorado River.
- WPD 5. Plan for and adapt to increased drought, severe weather, and other potential impacts of climate change on the water supply.
- WPD 6. Protect the public water supply and the health and safety of users.
- WPD 7. Reduce the public safety threats of flooding in the 100-year floodplain.

From the Vision Statement -

Austin Is Livable:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents 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.

- Development occurs in connected and pedestrian-friendly patterns supporting transit and urban lifestyles, while protecting and enhancing neighborhoods.
- Downtown offers a safe, vibrant, day and night time urban lifestyle for residents, workers, and visitors.
- Development occurs across the city in a manner friendly to families with children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.
- Austin's unique character and local businesses are recognized as a vital part of our community.
- Clear rules guide sustainable development and preservation, and they provide compatibility and certainty for residents and the business community.
- Austin's diverse population is active and healthy, with access to locally-grown, nourishing foods, and affordable healthcare.

⁵ Combines two Charter-required elements, "Public Buildings and Facilities" and "Public Services and Facilities."

- WPD 8. Reduce existing and future pollutant loads in all creeks from stormwater runoff, overflow, and other non-point sources.⁶ (*See also Conservation and Environmental Resources*).
- WPD 9. Reduce per capita potable water use through conservation, water reclamation, and other water resource stewardship programs.
- WPD 10. Protect and improve Austin's streams, lakes, and aquifers for sustainable uses and the support of aquatic life.
- WPD 11. Protect the health of creek channels by minimizing their expansion and preventing public and private property damage resulting from erosion.
- WPD 12. Maintain or enhance the existing rate of recharge in the Edward's Aquifer. (*See also Conservation and Environmental Resources*)
- WPD 13. Meet or exceed all local, state, and federal permit and regulatory requirements (e.g., Designated Use Support status, National Flood Insurance Program).
- WPD 14. Integrate erosion, flood, and water quality control measures into all City of Austin capital improvement projects.

Solid Waste

To realize the Vision, Austin must provide safe and efficient solid waste services and reduce, re-use, and recycle to decrease the amount of landfill waste by 90% over the next 30 years.

Strategic Directions

- SW 1. Address the waste management implications of continued growth in Central Texas through a regional solid waste management plan.
- SW 2. Expand recycle rates and services:
 - Require recycling at apartment complexes, retail establishments, restaurants, and manufacturers
 - Increase the types of materials that can be added to curbside collection
 - Develop more effective recycling practices for construction and demolition debris
 - Increase composting at homes and businesses
 - Improve recycling of material and food scraps in public spaces, in trash receptacles on city streets, and at public events
- SW 3. Divert hazardous waste from landfills and increase participation in recycling hazardous materials (e.g., develop an on-call door-to-door hazardous waste collection program).
- SW 4. Divert bulk items such as furniture and other household items from landfills and consider ways to recycle or reuse these materials.
- SW 5. Improve awareness and participation in the City's recycling programs through traditional and emerging methods such as a large-scale media, social marketing campaigns, and presence at public events.

⁶ Pollutants from a source that is difficult to pinpoint such as chemicals from lawns and fields, trash, oil, and animal and human wastes.

- SW 6. Continue to work with the Texas Product Stewardship Council and others to advocate for statewide "extended producer responsibility" (EPR) initiatives that require manufacturers and retailers to stop using "hard to recycle" and/or toxic products.

Public Services, Buildings, and Facilities

Energy

Austin must continue to provide reliable, affordable electricity and energy services to its residents, while promoting energy efficiency and conservation and continuing to shift to renewable energy sources.

Strategic Directions

- EN 1. Support the Preferred Growth Scenario and provide affordable, reliable electricity to Austin's residents and businesses.
- EN 2. Reduce per capita energy use through conservation and improvements that make buildings more energy efficient.
- EN 3. Reduce peak energy demand / total electric generation capacity that Austin Energy needs to maintain by encouraging users to use electricity during off-peak hours.
- EN 4. Increase the share of renewable energy sources (e.g., wind, solar, biomass) used by Austin Energy to generate electricity, including on-site sources throughout the city.

Public Safety

Austin must increase the safety of its residents, workers, and visitors by improving collaboration with the community, other public safety providers, and other jurisdictions.

Strategic Directions

- PS 1. Reduce crime rates, thereby improving the perception of safety in neighborhoods across Austin.
- PS 2. Continue to improve community outreach and build trust between the police force and Austin's minority communities.
- PS 3. Provide public safety services to newly annexed areas and areas with increased activity, such as new neighborhoods, redevelopment areas, transportation corridors, and mixed-use centers.
- PS 4. Provide preventive safety education (fire, police, and emergency services) to Austin residents.
- PS 5. Increase the use of joint or shared facilities between public safety and other city service providers, when possible, to provide residents with efficient services, reduce costs, and maintain public safety infrastructure.

- PS 6. Improve collaboration between public safety providers and city planners to incorporate best development practices to reduce crime (e.g., lighting, density, neighborhood ingress/egress, “eyes on the street” Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design⁷, etc.).
- PS 7. Collaborate and coordinate with other public safety agencies (i.e., county, state) to share resources and address the increasingly regional nature of crime.
- PS 8. Maintain quality standards in recruiting and training new public safety officers, and strive for a public safety workforce that reflects Austin’s changing demographics.
- PS 9. Continue to improve education and training of public safety employees and build new skills in using technology to improve public safety.

Public Buildings

Austin must improve access to its public buildings and use them as models of sustainable design.

Strategic Directions

- PB 1. Improve access to neighborhood libraries to support development of Complete Communities throughout Austin.
- PB 2. Distribute public buildings where services are offered in neighborhoods and other accessible locations throughout the city.
- PB 3. Improve multi-modal public transportation access to the City’s public buildings and facilities, including the Austin Bergstrom International Airport.
- PB 4. Integrate public buildings and facilities into active, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and complete, healthy communities.
- PB 5. Reduce energy consumption and waste generation in all public buildings to meet the City’s climate and Zero Waste goals.
- PB 6. Develop public buildings and facilities that create healthy work environments and educate the public about energy-efficient, sustainable building and landscape best practices.

⁷ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach to designing the physical environment that has proven to be effective in helping to deter criminal behavior. Key CPTED principles include natural surveillance and access control.

Recreation and Open Space

Austin must provide an accessible park and recreation system with quality recreational, cultural, and outdoor experiences and promote healthy lifestyles and provide access to natural areas.

Strategic Directions

- RO 1. Operate, maintain, and upgrade new and existing parks and preserved open space and develop new parks to serve Austin's diverse, growing population.
- RO 2. Ensure and increase equitable access to and opportunities for cultural arts, recreation and leisure activities for all ages throughout the City.
- RO 3. Increase connectivity between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to parks and greenways through the use of sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use paths, and trails.
- RO 4. Maximize the role of parks and recreation in promoting healthy communities and lifestyles.
- RO 5. Feature superior design in parks and recreational facilities and include opportunities for public art and green/sustainable design solutions.
- RO 6. Expand the amount of permanently protected natural and environmentally sensitive areas for use as open space and passive recreational areas.
- RO 7. Foster the use of creeks and lakes for public recreation and enjoyment in a manner that maintains their natural character.
- RO 8. Extend existing trail and greenway projects to create an interconnected green infrastructure network (e.g., preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, etc.) linking all parts of Austin and linking Austin to nearby cities. *(See also Conservation and Environmental Resources).*
- RO 9. Maintain existing partnerships and develop new relationships with other City of Austin departments, community organizations, and volunteers to support recreational services and maintain high levels of service.

From the Vision Statement -

Austin is Natural and Sustainable:

Austin is a green city. We are environmentally aware and ensure the long-term health and quality of our community through responsible resource use as citizens at the local, regional, and global level. Growth and infrastructure systems are well-managed to respect the limitations of our natural resources.

- We enjoy an accessible, well-maintained network of parks throughout our city.
- We protect the beauty of the Hill Country and blackland prairie, and value our farmland that nurtures local food production.
- Our parks, open spaces, and preserves shape city planning, reduce infrastructure costs, and provide us with recreation, clean air and water, local food, cooler temperatures, and biodiversity.
- We conserve water, energy, and other valuable resources.
- Austin is a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- We use and inspire new technologies that create more sustainable communities while reducing our dependence on environmentally costly practices.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a “triple bottom line” of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the City Facilities and Services Building Block, the focus is on environmental quality and social equity that supports economic prosperity. For example:

- **Strengthen connectivity from and between neighborhoods** to improve access to parks and trails (environmental quality), raise home values by increasing access to parks and recreation (economic prosperity), and improve mobility options through transit, bike lanes, and sidewalks (social equity).

BUILDING BLOCK 6: Society – Draft

The Society Building Block includes components that impact a person or family's quality of life and satisfaction with living in Austin, including health and human services, children, families, and education.

Building Block Elements:

- Health and Human Services
- Children, Families, and Education

Health and Human Services

Austin must improve community health through equal access to services and education about health care and healthy lifestyles.

Strategic Directions

- HHS 1. Provide access to primary, preventive health, trauma, specialty care, and urgent care.
- HHS 2. Attract and retain high-quality health service providers (including doctors, dentists, specialists, medical technicians, and nurses) and promote the development and expansion of medical education opportunities.
- HHS 3. Encourage more active lifestyles through development patterns that support walking and biking. Locate retail, services, and public facilities (e.g., parks, health services, libraries, etc.) in or near neighborhoods to reduce traffic congestion and contribute to an improved sense of community.
- HHS 4. Increase availability of quality early education, child care, after school, and preschool programs for all residents, especially low and middle income households and families with children with disabilities.
- HHS 5. Reduce homelessness through long-term supportive housing, mental health services, counseling, and alcohol and drug treatment.
- HHS 6. Develop close relationships between public safety personnel and neighborhoods to promote cooperation and safety.
- HHS 7. Promote the availability of and educate the community about healthy food choices, including "slow food" (local food traditions, small-scale food processing, and organic agriculture) and nutritional education programs.

From the Austin Vision Statement:

Austin Values and Respects its People:

Austin is its people. Our city is home to engaged, compassionate, creative, and independent thinking people, where diversity is a source of strength and where we have the opportunity to fully participate and fulfill our potential.

- Austin government is transparent and accountable.
- 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.
- Austin ensures that no person is without such basic necessities as healthy food, clothing, shelter, physical and mental healthcare, or basic civil rights.
- We stand together for equal rights for all persons, especially acknowledging those who have been denied full participation in the opportunities offered by our community in the past.
- The history of the people of the Austin area is preserved and protected for future generations.

- HHS 8. Provide broad access to fresh foods, local farmers markets, co-ops, grocery stores, community gardens, and healthy restaurants in neighborhoods.
- HHS 9. Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations and provide better services for at-risk segments of our community.
- HHS 10. Develop and promote tobacco cessation programs and regulations to support tobacco-free environments.

Children, Families, and Education

To realize the Vision, Austin must foster complete communities through access to healthy foods, community services, safe neighborhoods, and quality education.

Strategic Directions

- CFE 1. Develop public transportation options that link all areas of the City, are affordable to economically disadvantaged groups, and provide access to job opportunities and services. *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- CFE 2. Increase the variety of housing options (i.e., housing type and number of bedrooms) to meet the needs of family and non-traditional households including households with children.
- CFE 3. Provide opportunities for seniors and persons with disabilities to live in affordable neighborhoods and housing to meet their special needs (e.g., mobility).
- CFE 4. Locate emergency services within close proximity to all neighborhoods and continue to improve community outreach and relationships between police and neighbors. *(See also City Facilities and Services).*
- CFE 5. Increase access to educational opportunities for higher education, technical education and vocational training in Austin area public schools, colleges, universities, and other educational facilities. Match job training with current and expected employment needs for existing and emerging “target industries.”
- CFE 6. Increase the availability of continuing education.
- CFE 7. Work with the school districts on planning for long-range student population growth from kindergarten through high school. Maintain and/or secure new educational facilities to support the direction set by the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.
- CFE 8. Improve educational opportunities for marginalized populations.
- CFE 9. Increase the availability of quality early education, child care, after school, and preschool programs for all residents, especially low and middle income households and families with children with disabilities.
- CFE 10. Enact land use and other planning policies that enhance the quality of life for families with children and promote family-friendly neighborhoods and services.
- CFE 11. Increase dense, compact family-friendly housing in the urban core by creating standards and guidelines that encourage private interests to create more family-friendly development.
- CFE 12. Improve access to quality child care services near homes and workplaces.

- CFE 13. Partner with local school districts to transform public school yards into enhanced, multi-use outdoor resources for children and the community and to share public amenities such as parks, landscaping, pools, and athletic courts.
- CFE 14. Partner with local school districts, non-profits, and civic groups to expand after school and summer programs for children of all ages and abilities.
- CFE 15. Increase sidewalks and bike lanes in neighborhoods for safe routes to schools, parks, and transit stops. *(See also Land Use and Transportation).*
- CFE 16. Ensure that Austin children in every part of town have access to excellent public schools.
- CFE 17. Partner with Austin-area schools districts to enhance policies and practices that support neighborhood-based schools.
- CFE 18. Collaborate with school districts and with public and private entities to create joint-use partnerships at existing and new public school campuses.
- CFE 19. Create public spaces that attract and engage children and serve as gathering places for children and families.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a "triple bottom line" of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Society Building Block, the focus is on social equity that supports environmental quality and economic prosperity. For example,

- **Encourage more active lifestyles** to promote development patterns that support shorter trips (economic prosperity), provide opportunities for physical activity (social equity), and reduce land consumed for development (environmental quality).

BUILDING BLOCK 7: Culture – Draft

The Culture Building Block includes arts, culture, creativity, and historic preservation, as they relate to the City's heritage, "vibe", spirit, and character, quality of life, downtown, and neighborhoods.

Building Block Elements:

- Arts, Culture, and Creativity
- Historic Preservation

Arts, Culture, and Creativity

Austin must support and value the City's arts, culture, and creativity as vital contributors to the city's identity, economy, and quality of life.

Strategic Directions

- ACC 1. Continue to grow artists, micro-enterprises, small cultural organizations as businesses, and iconic cultural institutions, in order to sustain and grow Austin's economic and cultural vitality.
- ACC 2. Increase and enhance coordination and resource sharing, and partnership among artist and creative individuals, organizations, institutions, and businesses.
- ACC 3. Increase philanthropic, public, and citizen support and participation in arts, culture, and creative activities in Austin.
- ACC 4. Continue to sustain and grow the city's successful live music scene, festivals, theater, film and digital media, other cultural offerings.
- ACC 5. Continue to explore and identify solutions to support live music venues and while addressing sound abatement issues.
- ACC 6. Encourage new or existing art forms, new approaches to the creation or presentation of art, or new ways of engaging the public with art.
- ACC 7. Grow Austin's regional and global cultural efforts in order to stimulate trade and bring new resources to the community. *(See also Economy).*
- ACC 8. Expand access to affordable and functional studio, exhibition, performance space, and office space for arts and culture organizations, artists, and creative industries businesses.

From the Vision Statement -

Austin is Creative:

Creativity is the engine of Austin's prosperity. Arts, culture, and creativity are essential keys to the city's unique and distinctive identity and are valued as vital contributors to our community's character, quality of life and economy.

- As a community that continues to stimulate innovation, Austin is a magnet that draws and retains talented and creative individuals.
- Our creative efforts reflect, engage with and appeal to the ethnic, gender and age diversity of Austin and to all socioeconomic levels.
- Residents and visitors participate fully in arts and cultural activities because the opportunities are valued, visible, and accessible.
- Our buildings and places reflect the inspirational and creative spirit of who we are as Austinites, through design excellence, public art and beautiful, accessible public spaces.

- ACC 9. Encourage and support artists, artist live/work spaces, creative industry hubs/districts/clusters, etc. as retail, community, or neighborhood anchors and activity generators to attract and support other economic and community enterprises. (*See also Economy*).
- ACC 10. Improve access to affordable living to include housing, healthcare, and effective transportation in order to develop and retain Austin's creative organizations, industries, and individuals.
- ACC 11. Encourage cultural, creative and arts-based education in schools and neighborhoods throughout Austin to sustain Austin's "culture of creativity" as fundamental to Austin's spirit and mindset.
- ACC 12. Sustain and grow Austin's multicultural and artistic heritage (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and other ethnic and culturally-specific groups) as the city develops and grows.
- ACC 13. Create avenues for cultural variety and provide the opportunity for all groups to benefit from the different cultures present in Austin.
- ACC 14. Encourage grassroots, neighborhood-based cultural development and activity and recognize and enhance the role the arts play at the center of community life.
- ACC 15. Maximize the recognition of arts and creativity as part of Austin's "Creative Economy." (*See also Economy*).
- ACC 16. Increase the availability of significant public art to designate districts and/or their entrances and to assist visitors in navigating the area.
- ACC 17. Define Austin's sense of place through high standards for architecture and urban design, public art, public spaces and public parks, and arts education. (*See also Urban Design*).
- ACC 18. Explore existing city policies, processes and regulations regarding the arts to determine what changes can be made to coordinate these with other goals such as historic preservation, affordable housing, and high-density development.
- ACC 19. Collaborate with AISD, local businesses, and cultural organizations in developing programs that encourage lifelong active engagement and participation in the cultural arts.

Historic Preservation

Austin must preserve the historic buildings, neighborhoods, and sites that reflect the City's diverse historical, architectural, and cultural heritage; maximize the benefits for the economy; and provide opportunities for cultural and historic education and recreation.

Strategic Directions

- HP 1. Promote historic and heritage-based tourism and cultural events.
- HP 2. Preserve and interpret historic resources (those objects, buildings, structures, sites, places, or districts with historic, cultural, or aesthetic significance) in Austin for residents and visitors.
- HP 3. Maintain and update inventories of historic resources, including locally significant historic properties not listed on national or state registries, archeological sites, etc.
- HP 4. Increase opportunities for historic and cultural learning at the City's public libraries.

- HP 5. Protect historic resources in neighborhoods throughout the City. *(see also Housing and Neighborhoods)*.
- HP 6. Retain the character of National Register and local Historic Districts and ensure that development and redevelopment is compatible with historic resources and character.
- HP 7. Continue to protect and enhance important view corridors (e.g., Capitol Overlay District, Lady Bird Lake, and public waterfronts).
- HP 8. Preserve and restore historic parks and recreational areas.

Achieving Sustainability

The strategic directions are designed to work across Building Blocks to achieve a “triple bottom line” of environmental quality, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the Culture Building Block, the focus is on social equity that supports environmental quality and economic prosperity.

For example, **retain Austin’s multicultural and artistic heritage** to improve diversity in arts and culture (social equity), increase participation at events (economic prosperity), and integrate new facilities integrating low-impact development practices into new facilities (environmental quality).