



MEMORANDUM

TO: David Sullivan, Chair
Planning Commission Members

FROM: Garner Stoll, Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department
974-2397

City Council Briefing Date: April 26, 2012

City Council Public Hearing Date: May 24, 2012

RE: Revised Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Report

Description of Backup Information

- April 5, 2012 draft of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*
- Zoning and Platting Commission comments and staff responses
- List of minor edits (grammar, punctuation, etc.)
- Activity Center and Corridor Concept spread
- *Transportation and Environmental Challenges Associated with the Proposed State Highway 45 Southwest* white paper
- List of Chapter 4 cross-referenced policies

Planning Process

The process to develop the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* was divided into four phases—Plan Kickoff, Vision and Plan Framework, Creating the Comprehensive Plan, and Draft Plan Review.

Phase One—Plan Kickoff

This phase of the process involved both designing and beginning the process to create the comprehensive plan. The significant elements of this phase included the consultants getting to know Austin and meeting with the community. It also included both staff and consultants reviewing existing plans and finalizing the Community Inventory (a document with different types of information and data about Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction [ETJ]. See the following URL for a link to the Community Inventory: <http://www.imagineaustin.net/community-inventory>).

It was during this phase that the process to create the comprehensive plan was designed. This included assigning roles and responsibilities for City of Austin staff, the consultant team, and the public. The phase culminated with Kick-Off Party held at the Austin Convention Center on

October 12, 2010 which was attended by more than 230 members of the public, plus an additional 40 children from Austin recreation centers.

Phase Two—Vision and Plan Framework

This phase of the process revolved around a series of public meetings (Community Forum Series [CFS] #1, #2, and #3.) During each of these series of meetings, the public was asked to consider different aspects of Austin and its future.

During CFS #1, the community was asked what they valued most about Austin, what needs to change to make it a better place, and what type of city could it be if the issues facing the community were addressed. This input was synthesized into elements of the Vision Statement.

During CFS #2, participants were asked to comment on the elements of the Vision Statement and engaged in a chip exercise to assign future population and job growth, identified areas to be preserved from development, and indicated the types and locations of future transportation improvements. The results from this exercise were synthesized into four different future growth scenarios:

- **Scenario A**—A widely dispersed development pattern spreading future growth all over Austin and its ETJ.
- **Scenario B**—It directed growth in a crescent shape along US 183 in the north arching to the south and directed most development east of Mopac with a significant amount development located between IH-35 and SH 130.
- **Scenario C**—A more compact growth pattern directing a significant amount of redevelopment to the central city with dense concentrations of people and jobs located in centers mostly located to the north, east, and south.
- **Scenario D**—The most compact development pattern and directed most of the jobs and people into the central city.

In addition, Comprehensive Planning staff developed a fifth scenario that reflected current development patterns and growth trends. These scenarios were analyzed using a number of sustainability indicators such as land consumed, amount of CO2 emitted, development over the Edwards Aquifer, and the relative infrastructure costs associated with each scenario.

During CFS #3, the community was asked to indicate their preferred scenario and was provided the indicator results to assist in the task. The public's preferences resulted in a map capturing significant elements of Scenarios C and D. This Preferred Growth Scenario map later evolved in the Growth Concept Map.

The significant work products of Phase Two were the Plan Framework and Preferred Growth Scenario which served as the basis for the next phase of the process.

Phase Three—Creating the Comprehensive Plan

During this phase of the process, staff reached out to people and groups with interest and expertise in the plan's elements to join topic-specific working groups. Their assignment was to create actions to implement the policy directions created in Phase Two. Over the course of 20 meetings the working groups generated and honed the actions from a beginning number of over

3,000 to a little more than 200. During this phase, with public input, the Preferred Growth Scenario evolved into the Growth Concept Map.

Phase Four—Draft Plan Review

This phase began with a Plan Release Party held at the Carver Museum and Cultural Center on October 1, 2011. More than 600 people attended the event to review the draft plan, rank plan elements, eat from food trailers, and listen to live music.

This phase asked the community to read the plan and comment on what they like and what they did not. During this comment period, staff received almost 2,000 comments. Each of these were reviewed and commented upon by staff and the Council-appointed task force. Many of these comments resulted in changes to the draft plan and are reflected in the adoption draft attached to this memo.

Draft Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Summary

As part of establishing the scope of for the contract with the lead consultant, Wallace, Roberts, and Todd (WRT), the City Council established three priorities for the plan—public engagement, sustainability, and implementation—which are central to how the plan was developed as well as its content. The comprehensive plan is organized into five chapters:

Chapter One: The Roadmap and the Road Ahead describes the need for a comprehensive plan providing a roadmap for Austin to navigate the challenges of the 21st century; core principles for action to achieve a sustainable future; and how we will use those principles to turn the plan into reality. It is useful for those who may not wish to read the plan “cover to cover.”

Chapter Two: Experiencing Austin: Who Are We Today? contains information on the current state of Austin and what it means for the city’s future, such as how affordable it is to live here, how people are getting around, and how our parks and city services are performing.

Chapter Three: Imagining Austin: Our Vision of a Complete Community presents the Imagine Austin vision statement, developed with the input of thousands of residents. It describes the Austin we aspire to be in 2039, the two hundredth anniversary of the city’s founding. Our city will be a city of complete communities that is natural and sustainable, prosperous, livable, mobile and interconnected, educated, creative, and that values and respects all Austinites. The vision statement defines the destination that the plan policies, actions, and programs are designed to reach.

Chapter Four: Shaping Austin: Building the Complete Community sets a two-part framework for action to realize our vision of a city of complete communities. The growth concept map shows in general terms where new development over the next 30 years should be located. The building blocks define specific policies to guide decisions on topics ranging from land use and transportation to economy to creativity. The core concepts of Imagine Austin – complete communities and compact, connected centers – are two sides of the same coin. These policies are the foundation of the action ideas and programs contained in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Implementation and Measuring Success addresses how Imagine Austin’s vision and framework will be implemented. It identifies eight priority action programs based on hundreds of ideas developed by citizen working groups, provides guidance for decision-making, and defines the ongoing process that will be used to monitor implementation progress.

Outstanding Issues

Although the process to develop the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* has been inclusive and has captured the aspirations of a broad cross-section of the community, several outstanding issues remain:

- Differing perspectives among segments of the community as to the scope and purpose of a comprehensive plan. The plan anticipates Austin will continue to grow and it intends to guide this growth in alignment with the public values expressed during the plan’s development.
- Some have expressed concerns that the levels of outreach and participation have not been adequate.
- Uncertainty among segments of the community as to the role of the *Austin Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* relative to small area plans such as neighborhood plans.
- The specific designation of centers located on existing developed areas in recharge and contributing zones of the Edwards Aquifer such as the designation of the center located at the “Y” in Oak Hill as a neighborhood center. In addition some in the community would like to see all the centers located in these areas removed.
- Some in the community want SH 45 Southwest to be reinserted on the Growth Concept Map.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends forwarding the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan as endorsed by the Comprehensive plan Citizens Advisory Task Force to the City Council with the following changes:

Minor Edits and Continued Work on Plan Document Layout and Graphics — The attached list of minor edits represents the ongoing copy editing of the plan for non-substantive changes (*see attachments for the specific changes.*) Staff will continue copy editing for readability, grammar, typographical and layout errors, and refining the layout for the City Council-review draft. This process will include the list of Chapter 4 cross-referenced policies to include in a final draft of the plan.

State Highway 45 SW (SH-45 SW) — On the Growth Concept Map, include the alignment of SH-45 SW linking the Mopac Expressway to Interstate 35 as a dotted line. Include the following text into the plan:

SH-45 Southwest: A source of continuing discussion

SH-45 Southwest (a.k.a., Manchaca Expressway) has been and continues to be a subject of great interest and dialogue in Austin, both with respect to mobility issues and concerns about potential impacts to sensitive environmental resources. The segment of the project from South Loop 1 to FM1626 will soon be evaluated through National Environmental Policy Act, which by federal law requires an examination of all alternatives, including not constructing the project (“no-build”). Including SH-45 Southwest on this map is not

intended to represent a position on which alternative is selected. If an alternative other than no-build is selected, this plan recommends designing the roadway to be attractive and to meet the City's objectives of non-degradation of water quality in the Barton Springs Zone of the Edwards Aquifer. In particular, if the project is built, it should be a roadway design identified as the locally preferred alternative in the results of the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority Environmental Assessment/ Environmental Impact Statement, should avoid impacts to critical environmental features, and should incorporate advanced stormwater quality and spill containment controls to achieve a nondegradation level of environmental protection.

Oak Hill Activity Center at the "Y" — On the Growth Concept Map change the Activity Center Designation from Neighborhood Center to Town Center.

Activity Center and Corridor Concept Spread — This is a two-page spread illustrating the concepts of the Activity Centers (Regional, Town, and Neighborhood) and Activity Corridors.

Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan Committee Recommendations — Incorporate the changes that Planning Commission's Comprehensive Plan Committee developed at their March 26 and April 2, 2012 meetings (*see attachments for the specific changes.*)