

Everyone's Guide to the

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Concepts, Maps, Policies, Actions
An Executive Summary of the Plan Document





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A Community Roadmap

The city's comprehensive plan clearly defines where we are today and where we want to go.

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan provides a community roadmap, a policy for directing growth, and a platform for action. It contains a wealth of community-defined priorities for sustainability, livability, mobility, equity, and prosperity.

The distinctive value for Austin of this comprehensive plan is that it addresses big issues in a big-picture way, with a long-range perspective.

It considers the whole community's values, needs, people and places and how all the parts are interrelated and interdependent. It identifies the defining issues that are critical for protecting Austin's quality of life and for optimizing our sustainability and future success.

To achieve our many interrelated goals, in a cohesive fashion, we must organize the physical form of the city to support these goals. This is the plan's foundational solution:

Create compact, connected centers – attractive places where people can conveniently meet their daily needs, in a walkable complete community.

Austinites want to live in a city of connected “complete communities,” where people of all ages, persuasions, and income levels can easily meet their everyday needs and desires close to their homes, jobs, and schools. They want more transportation choices connecting them to everything that Austin and the region has to offer.

By directing development to fulfill this big vision over the next 25 years, we can advance a wealth of other building block policy goals within the plan – social, economic, environmental.

Austin is projected to add 750,000 new residents by 2039. Our metropolitan region, now home to more than 1.7 million people, will have nearly 4 million by 2040. As Austinites, we feel passionately that our city must grow to become better – in a distinctively Austin way – not just bigger.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH.



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The challenge now before us – in shaping the Austin of the 21st century – is to energetically leverage our strengths as we grow, while tackling our problems head-on.

We Must Embrace the Future that We Want, then Work to Make it Happen.

An overarching goal of this comprehensive plan is to advance Austin's sustainability. It promotes sustainable, responsible growth and conservation, to protect and enhance Austin's future.

Imagine Austin policies can help to shift growth patterns toward a more compact and connected physical city – for greater environmental and fiscal sustainability going forward.

6 KEY CHALLENGES

Issues and opportunities

- Preserving our livability
- Expanding transportation choices
- Tackling the ethnic divide
- Protecting our natural resources
- Promoting prosperity for all
- Collaborating regionally

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Overarching goals

- Grow as a compact, connected city
- Integrate nature into the city
- Provide paths to prosperity for all
- Develop as an affordable and healthy community
- Sustainably manage water and other environmental resources
- Civic creativity

THE ROAD AHEAD

Taking action

- **Get to work.** Set priorities; agree to work together; commit to action; set priorities
- **Act for the whole.** Think big-picture; think holistically; think of the less fortunate
- **Expand the growth-shaping toolkit.** Adopt supporting regulatory tools; use both zoning and incentives; look to peer cities; focus on urban design; partner
- **Measure progress and adapt.** Be transparent; practice continuous learning; be steadfast, but flexible

Sustainability requires balancing three sets of goals: **1) Prosperity and jobs, 2) conservation and the environment, and 3) community health, equity and cultural vitality.** It means taking positive, proactive steps to protect quality of life now, and for future generations.

Who Are We Today?

Austin, Texas is a unique community. Our greatest strengths are our distinctive spirit, character, values and sense of place. They underlie our city's strong economy and attractiveness. As Austinites, we celebrate and value our history, our creative culture, our inclusiveness and tolerance.

A great deal of research and analysis informed and shaped the comprehensive plan. The plan document includes extensive facts and figures about Austin; below is a brief overview of the trends the data reveals.

DEFINING TRENDS

Population and Households

Austin is a growing city, becoming more diverse, older, and urban.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Austin has a variety of neighborhoods, but limited housing choices; our housing costs are growing.

Land Use

Austin has continued to rapidly develop outward on lower-cost land, in lower-density suburban patterns.

Transportation

Austin is experiencing increasing traffic congestion and transportation costs; we have renewed interest in creating a mobility network that incorporates all transportation choices.

Economy

Austin has a thriving economy, which is resilient due to its diversity and entrepreneurial spirit; however, we need to prepare our workforce for changes ahead.

Environmental Resources

Austin is rich in natural resources, but the effects of development, pollution and climate change put them at risk.

City Facilities and Services

Austin has invested in high-quality facilities and services throughout the city, but faces new pressures on service delivery.

Society and Health

Austin is facing rising housing costs and a decreasing number of families with children living in many neighborhoods and wants to maintain access to quality education, schools, and healthcare, and the social service network.

Arts and Culture

Austin is a creative leader that recognizes the value of artistic and cultural amenities; rising costs of living may affect the long-term viability of the Austin arts community.

A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

As the largest city in Central Texas, the City of Austin must show leadership in collaborating with its neighbors to embrace a sustainable future. To tackle complex issues, we must take a regional perspective and work together on coordinated strategies.

Key Regional Issues

- Conversion of agricultural land; fragmented development
- Limited water supply; water systems
- Housing-jobs imbalance
- Rising costs of housing and transportation
- Few regional transportation options
- Regional job growth mostly in lower-wage positions
- Inconsistent legal and regulatory land-use powers



The Vision Statement

A Vision for Austin's Future

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all. Austin's greatest asset is its people: passionate about our city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see this vision become a reality.

The Imagine Austin vision statement, developed with input from thousands of residents, describes the Austin we aspire to be in 2039 – the 200th anniversary of the city's founding. It was drafted by the Comprehensive Plan Citizens Advisory Task Force, based on public input and with the assistance of city staff, and endorsed by City Council.

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 and reducing sprawl, 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 guidelines support both quality development and preservation that sustain and improve Austin's character and provide 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.

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 Colorado River watershed, Hill Country and Blackland Prairie and value our farmland that nurtures local food production.
- Our 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.



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.



AUSTIN IS EDUCATED:

Education is the hope for Austin's future. Austin provides everyone with an equal opportunity for the highest quality of education that allows them to fully develop their potential. Networks of community partnerships support our schools and ensure that our children receive the resources and services they need to thrive and learn.

- Our school campuses provide safe and stable environments enabling future success.
- Neighborhood schools and libraries serve as centers for community collaboration, recreational, and social events, as well as learning opportunities.
- In partnership with private entities and the broader community, institutions of higher education continue to be incubators for innovation in the cultural arts, medicine, industry, business, and technology.
- Every child in Austin has the chance to engage with other cultures, communities, and languages, providing pathways for healthy development, and the critical thinking skills students need as future citizens of Austin and the world.



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.



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.



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.
- 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.

Austin is:

LIVABLE

- Healthy & Safe Communities
- Housing Diversity & Affordability
- Access to Community Amenities
- Quality Design / Distinctive Character
- Preservation of Crucial Resources

NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable, Compact, and Walkable Development
- Resource Conservation/Efficiency
- Extensive Green Infrastructure

CREATIVE

- Vibrant Cultural Events/Programs
- Support for Arts/Cultural Activities

EDUCATED

- Learning Opportunities for All Ages
- Community Partnerships with Schools
- Relationships with Higher Learning

PROSPEROUS

- Diverse Business Opportunities
- Technological Innovation
- Education/Skills Development

MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED

- Range of Transportation Options
- Multimodal Connectivity
- Accessible Community Centers

VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

- Access to Community Services
- Employment & Housing Options
- Community/Civic Engagement
- Responsive/Accountable Government

Shaping Austin: Building Complete Communities

The plan establishes a two-part planning framework for action and implementation, to gradually achieve the vision as we follow the guiding principles over the next 25 to 30 years.

GROWTH CONCEPT MAP

The Geographic Guide

- Applies the vision to the city's physical development – an illustrative growth concept
- Shows locations where activity centers can best accommodate new residents, homes and jobs
- Indicates generally desirable locations for new development over time, by category:
 - o Regional Centers
 - o Town Centers and corridors
 - o Neighborhood Centers
 - o Activity Corridors
 - o Job Centers
- Shows transportation network to connect centers, offering people more mobility choices to get to homes, jobs, and other destinations
- Shows an open space network to include parks, recreation areas, greenways, nature preserves, waterways and floodplains, and other environmentally sensitive/protected land

Supporting map set provides more detail for: environmental resources; bicycle, pedestrian, and transit projects and networks; roadway projects and networks; and other issues.

REGULATING GROWTH PATTERNS:

Updated zoning that supports compact and connected centers can provide greater predictability and stability for property owners and developers, offering economic benefits and better returns on development investments.



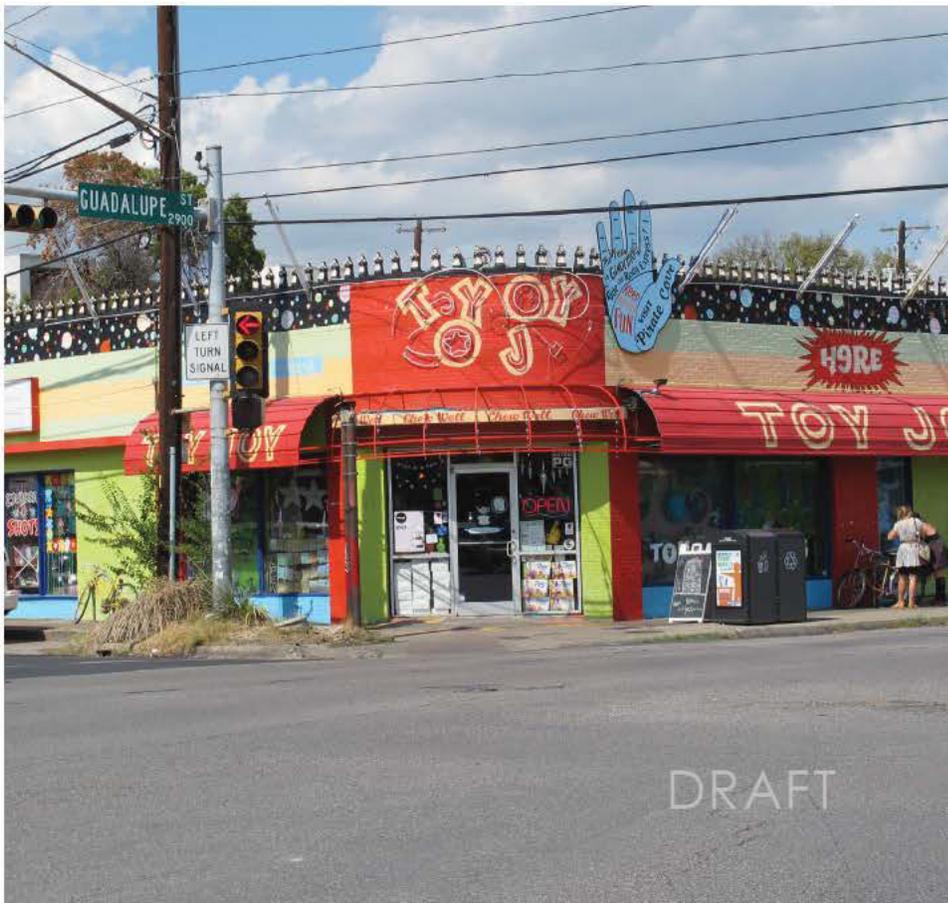
COMPLETE COMMUNITY BUILDING BLOCKS

The Policy Guide

- Address the individual subject areas required by City Charter, as well as others
 - o Land Use and Transportation
 - o Housing and Neighborhoods
 - o Economy
 - o Conservation and Environment
 - o City Facilities and Services
 - o Society
 - o Creativity
- Establishes the policies that will guide plan implementation
- Cross-references issues and policies that cut across individual building blocks
- Provides the context for individual priority programs and action steps

COST BENEFITS:

Directing new growth and development to compact centers is a fiscally conservative policy. In a more compact community, fewer public dollars are required for infrastructure construction and maintenance. Costs can be contained for core city services such as providing roadways, public safety and utilities. For example, fewer miles of new water pipes and power lines, and fewer fire stations, typically are needed to serve infill housing vs. new suburbs.



The Building Blocks

The policy guide for creating a compact, connected city of complete communities.

The policies within the plan are grouped into seven building blocks. Each building block section in the plan includes: An overview, a summary of key issues and challenges, a set of policies to address the challenges, and best-practice ideas from other communities.

The policies and growth concept map work together to guide long-term strategies that will implement the Imagine Austin vision. The building blocks also provide the basis for future plans and guide decision-making, including how the City spends money and develops regulations.

BUILDINGBLOCK1

Land Use and Transportation

28 Land Use and Transportation Policies

8 Urban Design Policies

8 Historic Preservation Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK2

Housing and Neighborhoods

9 Housing Policies

6 Neighborhood Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK3

Economy

18 Economic Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK4

Conservation and Environment

16 Conservation and Environment Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK5

City Facilities and Services

14 Wastewater, Water, and Drainage Policies

6 Solid Waste Policies

4 Energy Policies

9 Public Safety Policies

6 Public Building Policies

9 Recreation and Open Space Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK6

Society

10 Health and Human Service Policies

19 Children, Families, and Education Policies

BUILDINGBLOCK7

Creativity

19 Creativity Policies

A City of Complete Communities

To help fulfill the vision statement, the plan points us toward becoming a city of complete communities.

Austinites desire to meet their daily needs – for healthy food, employment, shopping, learning, healthcare, socializing and entertainment, public space and parks, recreation and fitness, natural beauty, and other amenities and services – within walking and biking distance, or a short drive or transit ride from their homes. We want each area of our city to have this complete set of amenities.

COMPLETE COMMUNITY PRINCIPLES

- Interrelate all elements of the city, to positively affect the community's well-being
- Develop in ways that contribute to Austin's unique community spirit, while serving diverse residents
- Provide neighborhoods, districts, and mixed-use "urban villages" that are safe and affordable, bring people together, promote physical activity, have a complete urban fabric, and offer varied amenities and services
- Connect all residents to the broader opportunities across Austin and the region, with multi-modal transportation
- Support Austinites in every stage of life, from young children to seniors
- Utilize "placemaking" principles to develop appealing, walkable places with enhanced value that attract and connect people and local businesses
- Balance Austin's natural and built environments

Equity, inclusion, affordability and accessibility are informing principles of the complete communities concept.

Where individual areas or neighborhoods suffer from gaps – missing elements that prevent them from being a complete community – the City, private developers and businesses, and other public and nonprofit partners can work together with residents to identify and fill the gaps over time.

The core concepts of this plan – complete communities, and compact, connected centers – are two sides of the same coin.

Growth Concept Map

EMBRACING A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

An Illustrative Growth Concept

This map indicates how Austin, as it grows over the next several decades, can organize the physical form of the city around compact, connected activity centers and corridors. This approach to directing growth, and new transportation and infrastructure investments, can help achieve the Imagine Austin vision.

By directing development to fulfill this vision over the next 25 years, Austin can realize a wealth of interrelated building block policies within the plan.

Land Use

- Regional Center
- Town Center
- Neighborhood Center
- Activity Corridor
- Activity Centers for Redevelopment in Sensitive Environmental Areas
- Job Center
- Current Open Space
- Future Open Space
- Barton Springs Contributing Zone
- Barton Springs Recharge Zone
- College / University

Transportation

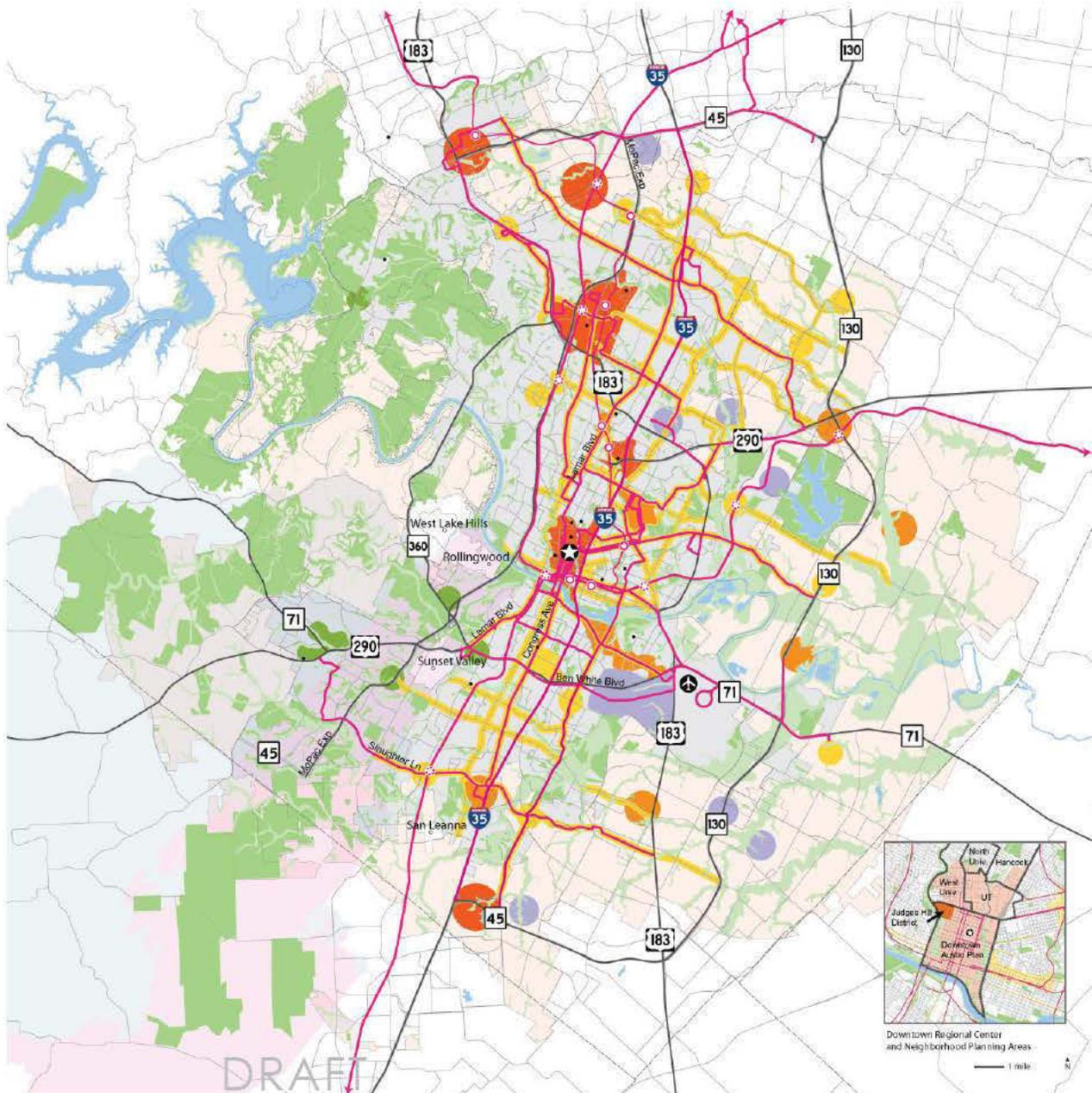
- High Capacity Transit Stop
- Proposed High Capacity Transit Stop
- High Capacity Transit
- Highway
- Other Streets

Boundaries

- City Limits
- ETJ
- County Boundaries

Map Disclaimers: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries.

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal engineering or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. This product has been produced by the Planning and Development Review Department for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



HOW THE MAP WAS DEVELOPED:

This map reflects community preferences expressed by many thousands of Austinites, during the planning process. Community members, City staff, consultants, the Citizens Advisory Task Force, the Planning Commission and Austin City Council helped to develop, review, synthesize, and finalize a preferred growth scenario, and individual maps, that were refined into this final illustrative growth concept map.

A compact center serves as part of a complete community.

Transportation network connects centers to one other, and to Downtown and existing neighborhoods.

In a center, walking and biking for daily trips becomes feasible.

Compact development supports transit.

An inclusive, fully developed complete community advances equity, diversity, and positive neighborly interactions.

Energetically pursuing centers and complete communities is a core, organizing concept of this plan.

Directing new growth and new development into centers and corridors is essential to realizing the vision and plan.

Centers will develop at differing scales – neighborhood, mixed use, town, and regional.

Open space network protects environmentally sensitive resources and provide opportunities for recreation.



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The Action Plan

The City of Austin invites you to join with us in advancing our common objectives.

8 PRIORITY PROGRAMS

Towards A City of Complete Communities

- Invest in a compact and connected Austin.
- Sustainably manage our water resources.
- Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, and entrepreneurs.
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.
- Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.
- Develop and maintain affordable housing throughout Austin.
- Create a "Healthy Austin" program.
- Change Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.

What are the first action steps?

Each priority program is supported by a detailed set of actions. To optimize success, the City will focus on tackling a small, achievable number of priority projects, at any one time. After plan adoption, the City will further develop detailed work plans with budgets and schedules.

How will progress be monitored and reviewed?

The final section of the plan provides guidance for actively using the comprehensive plan, and it defines a process to regularly monitor and communicate implementation and progress. The City will utilize two main tools: an annual report and a 5-year periodic evaluation and appraisal report. The annual report will include a review of the City's progress in implementing the priority programs from the previous year and a work plan for the coming year. The five-year evaluation and appraisal report will focus on how well actions that have been implemented in previous years are achieving their desired results. The five-year review will include a set of measurable complete community indicators (metrics) and benchmarks to monitor performance.

How will the City use the plan?

The City of Austin is required by City Charter to follow this new plan. The City is committed to actively referencing the comprehensive plan to inform strategic planning, annual budget priorities, and implementation of priority projects — both capital improvements and programs. The City will review the plan and publicly report on progress annually and review progress on indicators every five years. Major update will be undertaken at least every ten years.

Can community members help realize the Plan?

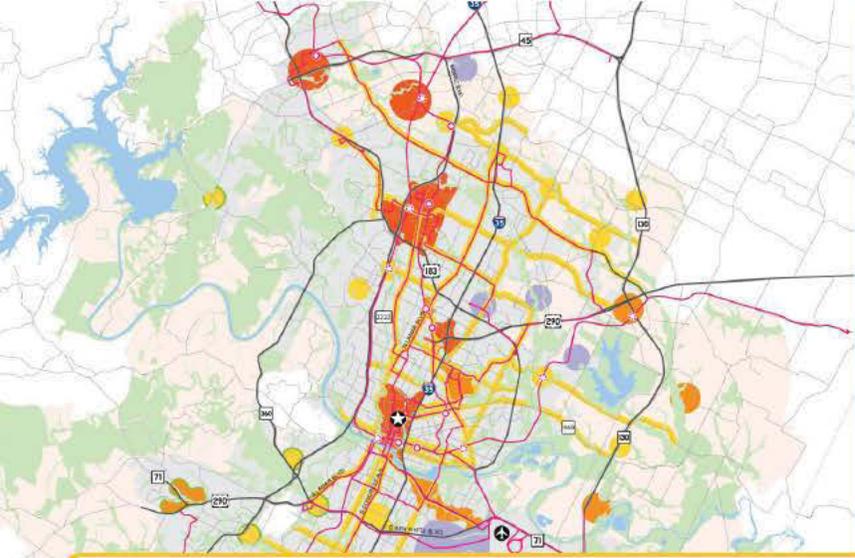
Yes! We invite you to find a specific policy within the comprehensive plan that you believe is important. Then help organize others to help implement it.

For all of the wonderful community goals captured in this plan to bear fruit, Austin residents – each one of us, Austin companies, property owners and developers, nonprofits, organizations – will need to actively embrace and lead aspects of the work.

The big vision, scope and aspirations of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan go far beyond the role and funding of city government. We need everyone to work together from this common playbook.

LET'S GET TO WORK!





Read the complete Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan document: www.imagineaustin.net

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