2013 Annual Report
The Way Forward

DRAFT

CITY OF AUSTIN · FOUNDED 1839

IMAGINEAUSTIN

Contents

Executive Summary

The *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* was adopted by the Austin City Council in June 2012. Informed by broad community input, *Imagine Austin* provides a vision and roadmap for our community's future. This vision includes ensuring the city "will be safe and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; make amenities and services easily accessible to everybody; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit" for current and future residents.

The City Charter (Article X, Section 5) requires the Planning Commission to provide an annual report to City Council about the comprehensive plan and its implementation. It also calls for a thorough review of plan implementation every five years, with recommendations for updates as needed.

The *Imagine Austin: The Way Forward 2013 Annual Report* provides key facts and highlights accomplishments in the year following the plan's adoption, from June 2012 to fall 2013. While not an exhaustive listing of all activities of all City departments, it references and links to other City departments' websites and documents that can provide a greater level of detail.

The City of Austin is moving forward on the comprehensive plan through a five-point program found in Chapter 5 of *Imagine Austin*:

1. **Education & Engagement**
2. **Internal Alignment**
3. **Regulations**
4. **Public Investment**
5. **Partnerships**

The *Imagine Austin: The Way Forward* 2013 Annual Report is comprised of two parts. The first part is organized based on the five-point program and describes how the City is using these methods to accomplish the plan's vision:

1. **Education & Engagement (p. 9)**: The City is using various types of media and multiple forums to educate the public as well as City staff about the City's first new comprehensive plan in over 30 years.

    o **Speakers Bureau:** Staff has presented the *Imagine Austin* story to diverse stakeholders at various events including local and national conferences.

    o **Speaker Series:** Nationally-renowned experts have been invited to Austin to educate citizens and staff on key issues related to compact and connected growth.

    o **Online outreach:** Staff maintains an *Imagine Austin* website, Facebook page, Twitter account, YouTube channel, blog, and two eNewsletters.

    o **Compact and Connect Training Program:** A cross-departmental staff training program will launch in summer and fall of 2013 focused on the City's goal of being more compact and connected.

2. **Internal Alignment (p. 15)**: City staff is developing ways to align internal functions under the vision and policies of the comprehensive plan. Key examples of 2012-13 cross-departmental coordination include:

    o **Priority Program Teams:** An interdepartmental team was formed for each of the eight priority programs to review and coordinate related work being done across departments.

    o **Capital Planning Office:** The Capital Planning Office facilitates coordination between departments to identify and advance Capital Improvement Program investments meeting multiple parts of *Imagine Austin's* vision.

    o **Sustainability Action Agenda:** The Sustainability Action Agenda, a project of the Office of Sustainability, tracks and reports on over 200 current departmental initiatives with measurable community benefits for sustainability – one of *Imagine Austin's* informing goals.

    o **Human Resources:** Human Resources staff has begun integrating *Imagine Austin* goals into its practices including select annual reviews for employees, job descriptions and postings, and new employee orientation.

3. **Regulations (p. 19):** In 2012-13, the City was active in its efforts to align land-use regulations with *Imagine Austin*. The following is a list of regulatory projects that were underway or completed this year:

   o **Land Development Code Update:** As part of the City's FY 2012-2013 annual budget, City Council allocated funds to revise the Land Development Code in alignment with *Imagine Austin*, and Council unanimously selected a consultant team for this effort.

   o **Cases for Rezoning:** Since *Imagine Austin*'s adoption, City staff has begun to review requests for zoning changes for their consistency with the comprehensive plan.

   o **East Riverside Corridor Regulating Plan:** On May 10, 2013, City Council adopted the East Riverside Corridor Regulating Plan to align land-use regulations with the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan's vision for a vibrant, attractive, affordable complete community in line with *Imagine Austin*.

   o **Airport Boulevard Form-Based Code Initiative:** In 2012-13, City staff and consultants are currently drafting new land-use regulations (form-based code) for Airport Boulevard to support a vision for a more walkable, transit-friendly and vibrant Airport Boulevard corridor in line with *Imagine Austin*.

   o **South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan:** Beginning in 2012, stakeholders have attended monthly workshops to develop a neighborhood plan for South Austin. Using *Imagine Austin*'s Growth Concept Map and policies as a guide, the neighborhood plan will provide a finer-grain vision and neighborhood-scale goals.

   o **Subdivision Standards and Transportation Criteria Manual Updates:** To help ensure that new subdivisions support *Imagine Austin*'s vision, the City is concurrently revising its Subdivision Regulations and Transportation Criteria Manual.

4. **Public Investment (p. 27):** City management has required department leadership to assess their operations, priorities, and budgets and adjust them as needed to support and align with the plan. As City departments continue with budgeting and capital planning for the upcoming fiscal year and longer horizons, new requests for both operating and capital funding are being reviewed against the plan's vision, policies, and priority programs.

5. **Partnerships (p. 31):** Partnerships are critical to advancing major *Imagine Austin* initiatives. In recognition of this, the City Manager's Office held a public-private partnerships staff symposium in 2012, and the Planning and Development Review Department has been building relationships with the Community Action Network.

The second main section of the Annual Report looks at how the City has begun implementing key *Imagine Austin* provisions through eight priority programs. Priority programs bring together experts from a broad range of City departments to improve internal alignment around *Imagine Austin* priorities and to review and make recommendations on related regulations, public investments, outreach, and partnerships. Each priority program focuses on a topic that the community identified as a top priority for Austin in the coming years.

Topic Group	Priority Program
Compact and Connected	1. **Compact and Connected (p. 41)**: Invest in a compact and connected Austin. 8. **Align Code (p. 47)**: Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.
Nature and City	2. **Sustainable Water (p. 57)**: Sustainably manage our water resources. 4. **Green Infrastructure (p. 63)**: Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.
Creativity and Economy	3. **Workforce Development (p. 71)**: Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses. 5. **Creative Economy (p. 77)**: Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.
Healthy and Affordable	6. **Household Affordability (p. 87)**: Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin. 7. **Healthy Austin (p. 93)**: Create a Healthy Austin program.

"We now suffer from serious traffic congestion, loss of natural and open space to urban sprawl, Central Austin housing that is increasingly unaffordable for individuals and families, a sense of loss about a simpler Austin of the past, and too many low-wage jobs that lag behind Austin's cost of living. Most troubling, at least 20 percent of our children live in poverty, go to bed hungry, go without health insurance and adequate healthcare, and fail to graduate from high school."

– Imagine Austin, p. 4

Before discussing the progress made on each priority program, the Annual Report briefly describes the current conditions of each of the four priority program topic groups using select complete community indicators to illustrate why these topics are priorities for Austin. On the following page is a summary of the four topic areas, highlighting why change in these areas is necessary to leverage our strengths and turn around the negatives as we grow.

Much of the work in 2012-13 involved establishing the interdepartmental priority program teams and defining how they are responsible for achieving the actions associated with each program. In addition, the priority program teams have begun establishing work plans, forming sub-teams to address key topics, coordinating efforts across multiple City departments, and tracking progress on specific *Imagine Austin* actions.

The second section of this report lists the core departments for each priority program and briefly describes their work plans and sub-teams (if applicable). It also lists and spotlights key recent City achievements and ongoing or planned initiatives that align with each priority program, as well as links to resources for more information on the achievements and initiatives. A summary of this information can be found in the tables at the end of this executive summary.

Finally, the priority program teams' work tracking progress on *Imagine Austin* actions is included in Appendix 2, and corrections of minor errors to *Imagine Austin* are included in Appendix 5.

The Four Topic Groups

Compact and Connected Austin

Priority Programs 1 and 8 both promote compact, people-friendly places, where it is easy to get to your daily needs by any means of travel. Up until now, Austin has not been growing in a manner that most would consider compact or connected. The rate of greenfield land development has increased in recent years, resulting in greater vehicle miles traveled and longer commute times.

Nature and City

Priority Programs 2 and 4 focus on improving the connection between people and the natural world. Priority Program 2 looks at ways to improve the supply and quality of our water, while Priority 4 emphasizes increasing the scope and vitality of our green infrastructure. Austinites are already working to reduce water use and protect the environment. However, with a rapidly increasing population and a prolonged drought, more work needs to be done.

Creativity and Economy

Priority Programs 3 and 5 seek to promote economic vitality. Priority Program 3 focuses on workforce development issues, while Priority Program 5 addresses Austin's creative economy, including Austin's live music, festivals, theater, film, digital media, and new creative art forms. Austin's economy is in the process of rebounding from the recession. Unemployment rates are down, while the number of people working for small businesses is increasing. An essential component of the recovery has been the success of Austin's creative industries.
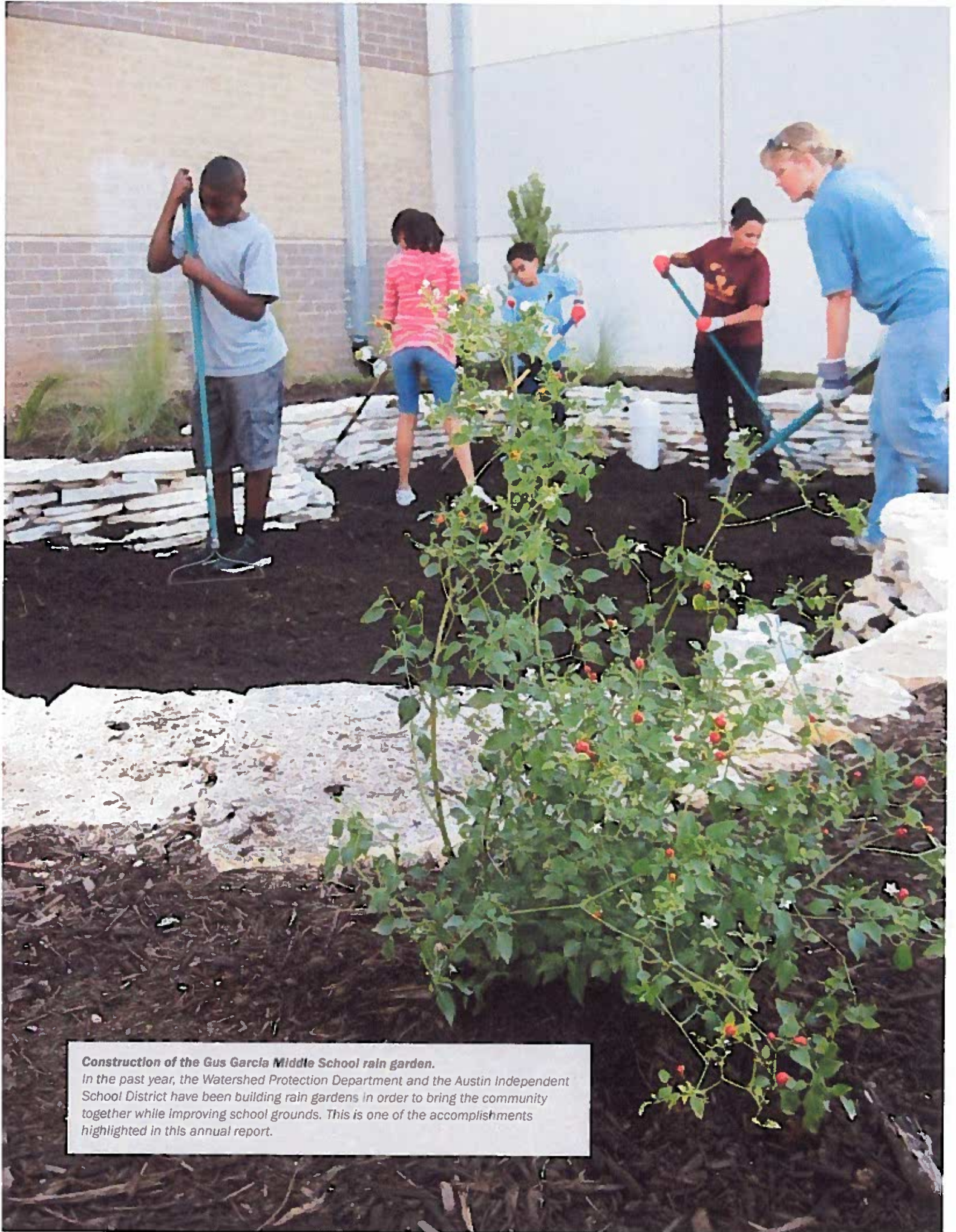
Healthy and Affordable

Priority Programs 6 and 7 promote ways of creating a more livable Austin. Priority Program 6 addresses issues of household affordability, which includes mortgage, rent and utilities costs and the stock of affordable housing. Currently, Austinites are experiencing rising housing and rent costs, while salaries are not increasing at the same pace. As a result, the City is becoming increasingly unaffordable to a number of residents. Priority Program 7 seeks to improve community health through increased opportunities for active lifestyles and access to healthy food and health care. Currently, the City is falling behind on providing new parkland at a pace that matches population growth, and existing parks are not distributed evenly across the City. At the same time, there are rising obesity rates and other health concerns in the City that need to be addressed.

Compact and Connected

Core Departments	Work Plan & Subteams	Key Related City Initiatives	2012–2013 Achievements
- Planning and Development Review - Austin Transportation - Public Works - Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office - Capital Planning Office	- Inventoried all City compact and connected initiatives. - Invited representatives of partner organizations to participate in team discussions. - Formed a subteam to provide recommendations on the Land Development Code Revision.	- Revision of Subdivision Code and Transportation Criteria Manual. - Implementation of Bicycle and Sidewalk Master Plans and implementation of bus stop accessibility improvements. - Implementation of Great Streets Master Plan. - Implementation of corridor improvements. - Facilitation of redevelopment in activity centers, including the Seaholm District in downtown Austin. - Support of an integrated transportation system by Austin Transportation Department. - Reinvestment in existing infrastructure in the urban core including water lines, storm drains, and streets.	- Began stakeholder outreach for Subdivision Code revision process. - Initiated Bike Share program. - Constructed 38.4 new miles of bicycle accommodations. - Constructed 66,757 linear feet of American with Disabilities Act compliant sidewalks and multiple new curb ramps. - Constructed 1.3 miles of urban trails. - Improved 170 bus stops. - Reconstructed 115 downtown blocks through the Great Streets Development Program. - Approved bond funding for construction of North Lamar Blvd. and Burnet Rd. corridor improvements. - Approved bond funding for a preliminary engineering report for improvements in the S Lamar Blvd. corridor. - Adopted East Riverside Corridor regulating plan. - Developed Airport Boulevard regulating plan. - Executed a master development agreement for a $500 million private investment to redevelop the decommissioned Green Water Treatment Plant Site. - Installed new parking meters. - Added new back-in parking. - Improved the visibility of crosswalks and smart signs. - Upgraded aging water lines and undersized storm drains and improved roadways.

Align Code

Core Departments	Work Plan & Subteams	Key Related City Initiatives	2012–2013 Achievements
- Planning and Development Review - Watershed Protection - Public Works - Austin Transportation - Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office - Neighborhood Housing and Community Development - Health and Human Services	- Completed most of the planning and preparation stage for the code revision process. - During 2013-14, will complete Steps 1 and 2: Listening, Code Diagnosis, and Draft Code Outline.	- Revision of the Land Development Code.	- Informal outreach to key stakeholder groups. - Appointment of an Advisory Group of 11 citizens for the code revision process. - Identification and hiring of staff leads for the revision process and formation of a cross-departmental code team. - Selection of consultant team led by Opticos Design for the revision process.

Nature & City

	Core Departments	Work Plan & Subteams	Key Related City Initiatives	2012–2013 Achievements
Sustainable Water	• Austin Water • Watershed Protection • Planning and Development Review	• Identified key staff members unique to each element of the work plan. • Prioritized the work plan.	• Implementation of the integrated water management plan and a new Austin water rate structure. • Facilitation of auxiliary water use. • Revision of the Watershed Protection Ordinance and update of the Watershed Master Plan • Collaboration with regional partners to protect and improve water quality.	• Implemented Stage 2 drought restrictions which limit irrigation to one day per week. • Implemented a new Austin Water rate structure. • Planned for the development of regulations to promote the use of auxiliary waters. A consultant will deliver recommendationson the appropriate level of regulation by the end of 2013. • Worked on the development of the Watershed Protection Ordinance revisions with an expected adoption in late 2013. • Updated the Watershed Master Plan. • Hosted a workshop in 2013 to celebrate successes and continue work on the 2005 Barton Springs Regional Water Quality Protection Plan. • Continued to monitor creek health.
Green Infrastructure	• Watershed Protection • Planning and Development Review • Public Works • Parks and Recreation • Austin Energy • Austin Water • Office of Sustainability • Austin Fire • Office of Real Estate Services • Austin Resource Recovery • Neighborhood Housing and Community Development • Austin Transportation • Building Services • Aviation	• Inventoried existing City plans, policies and programs related to green infrastructure and green infrastructure GIS data coverages. • Used the inventory to identify gaps and needs. • Formed three sub-teams: the Green Infrastructure Acquisition Team, the Public Lands Management Team, and the Regulatory Team.	• Aquistion of parkland. • Investment in water quality protection lands acquisition and management. • Prevention, control, and eradication of invasive species. • Construction of rain gardens on AISD school grounds. • Planting of trees through the Urban Forestry Program, Parks and Watershed Protection Departments, NeighborWoods Program, and the Large Shade Tree Program.	• Purchased 55 acres of parkland along Onion Creek with 2006 Bond funds. • Restored native habitats and natural systems on 5,000 acres of preserve lands. • Adopted an Invasive Species Management Plan in 2012. • Built rain gardens at a number of schools including Barbara Jordan Elementary School, Gus Garcia Middle School, and Dobie Middle School. • Planted 16,000 trees and 7,500 saplings.

Core Departments	Work Plan & Subteams	Key Related City Initiatives	2012–2013 Achievements
Workforce Development			
• Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services • Planning and Development Review • Parks and Recreation • Austin Public Library • Human Resources • Health and Human Services	• Identified the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office as lead. • Inventoried Austin's workforce development and education programs to identify gaps and recommend programs to address needs.	• Investment in workforce development and education systems. • Assistance of small businesses and entrepreneurs through the Small Business Development Program. • Provision of business and entrepreneurship related guides and classes at the Austin Public Library.	• Implemented the pilot phase of Careers in a Changing World with 27 students and planned to expand the program for the academic year 2013-2014. • Created & implemented the Any Given Child Creative Initiative (in partnership with Mindpop). • Provided 1,000 hours of free one-on-one business counseling annually. • Provided walk-in Business Solutions Center visited by 4,106 businesses in FY2012. • Provided low-cost technical assistance courses to small business owners and entrepreneurs. • Provided a free online marketing tool and directory for locally-owned businesses (LocallyAustin.org) which has over 900 small businesses registered and 34,657 Pageviews to date. • Provided help in navigating the City's Development process (BizOpen) used by 300 businesses annually. • Provided a new expansion loan program for small businesses. • Provided a series of business resource information guides by the Austin Public Library which was viewed by 4,553 users in the last year. • Offered free classes on business-related topics (partnership with SCORE).
Creative Economy			
• Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office • Planning and Development Review • Parks and Recreation • Austin Public Library	• Formed three sub-teams around conducting a creative needs assessment, developing a cultural tourism plan, and developing and implementing new strategies for creative space development.	• Analysis and strategic planning for the creative economy. • Capacity building and workforce development in the creative economy. • Infusion of creative elements in public space. • Cultivation of cultural and heritage tourism. • Development of centers for culture and the arts.	• Secured a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to create a Cultural Tourism Plan and Training in 2014. • In partnership with Austin Playhouse and Artspace Projects, produced survey results of artists and organizations to assess the demand for housing and commercial space. • Approved funding for the "Creative Content Incubator" with Troublemaker Studios. • Joined the Smithsonian Affiliations Program to provide Smithsonian Institution resources in our park system. • Broke ground on the new Central Library at Seaholm which will have gallery and other artistic space. • Created the Austin Historical Survey Wiki Project allowing people to find and contribute information about historical buildings and sites. • Opened the Asian American Resource Center and African American Cultural and Heritage Facility. • Secured funding for the redevelopment of the Dougherty Arts Center.

Healthy & Affordable

	Core Departments	Work Plan & Subteams	Key Related City Initiatives	2012–2013 Achievements
Household Affordability	• Neighborhood Housing and Community Development • Planning and Development Review • Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office • Health and Human Services • Code Compliance	• Formed three sub-teams: The Data and Research Team, the Dedicated Revenue and Affordable Housing Tools Team, and the Regulatory Practices and Policies Team.	• Funding of supportive housing units. • Review of affordable housing policy. • Development of a Downtown Density Program. • Growth of the Housing Trust Fund.	• Since 2010, funded 181 units that are now occupied; partially funded 105 units. • Developed a set of recommendations to assist Council in moving forward with geographic dispersion. • Established the Downtown Density Program which creates a means for projects to obtain additional height or square footage in exchange for affordable housing funds or units. • Negotiated the Green Water Treatment property sale requiring 40% of property taxes from City-owned land to be transferred to the Housing Trust Fund.
Healthy Austin	• Health and Human Services • Planning and Development Review • Parks and Recreation	• Helped in the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan. • Worked on a number of initiatives including the tobacco cessation program, and expansion of community gardens.	• Expansion of community gardening space and coordination of garden-related education and outreach events. • Acquisition, design, and development of parks. • Promotion of tobacco-free places.	• Opened gardens in the fall of 2012 at four senior citizen centers. • Began feasibility analysis of City-owned land that can be used for community gardening and leased for urban farming. • Coordinated urban agriculture- and community garden-related outreach events, clean up days, spring plantings, educational programming, organizational management, and design workshops. • Acquired nearly 142 acres of parkland since May of 2012 all in deficient parkland areas of south and east Austin. • Constructing and expanding four urban infill pocket and neighborhood parks. • Undertook projects city-wide at metropolitan, district, neighborhood, and pocket parks as well as greenbelt trails and corridors as approved under the 2012 Bonds. • Held design workshops for the Holly Shores/Edward Rendon Sr. Park at Festival Beach Master Plan. • Implemented the tobacco-free campus policy.

Construction of the Gus Garcia Middle School rain garden.
In the past year, the Watershed Protection Department and the Austin Independent School District have been building rain gardens in order to bring the community together while improving school grounds. This is one of the accomplishments highlighted in this annual report.

Introduction

Introduction

The *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* was adopted by the Austin City Council in June 2012. Informed by broad community input, *Imagine Austin* provides a vision and roadmap for our community's future. This vision includes ensuring the city "will be safe and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; make amenities and services easily accessible to everybody; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit" for current and future residents.

The City Charter (Article X, Section 5) requires the Planning Commission to provide an annual report to City Council about the comprehensive plan and its implementation. It also calls for a thorough review of plan implementation every five years, with recommendations for updates as needed.

This first Annual Report provides key facts and highlights accomplishments in the year following the plan's adoption, from June 2012 to fall 2013. While not an exhaustive listing of all activities of all City departments, it references and links to other City departments' websites and documents that can provide a greater level of detail.

All images: courtesy of City of Austin, unless otherwise noted.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT

This report focuses on how the City has begun implementing the plan and is comprised of two main parts (Sections III and IV). The first main section describes how the City is using education and engagement, internal alignment, regulations, public investment, and partnerships to accomplish the plan's vision. The second main section looks at how the City has begun implementing key *Imagine Austin* policies and actions through eight priority programs.

This report also contains several appendices:

1. **Appendix 1**: includes the purpose of the Annual Report (see *Imagine Austin*, p. 223)

2. **Appendix 2**: contains an Action Matrix listing the status of *Imagine Austin* actions that fall under priority program topics. For a full list of the actions for achieving the plan's vision and goals, see *Imagine Austin*, p. 228-266.

3. **Appendix 3**: contains baseline data on key indicators, or metrics that will be used to measure whether or not the goals and vision of the plan are being met. Some of these indicators are included in the body of the report to illustrate the City's current conditions. The Five Year Evaluation and Appraisal Report will include a full review of these indicators.

4. **Appendix 4**: provides greater detail about the *Imagine Austin* outreach events that are summarized in Section III under Education & Engagement.

5. **Appendix 5**: includes the correction of a few minor errors in the plan document.

KEY CONCEPTS

THE GROWTH CONCEPT MAP: COMPACT AND CONNECTED GROWTH

The Growth Concept Map assembles compact and walkable activity centers and corridors, as well as job centers, and coordinates them with future transportation improvements. The map is conceptual – it provides direction for future growth, but is not parcel-specific. The activity centers and corridors included on the Growth Concept Map identify locations for additional people and jobs above what currently exists on the ground.

The Growth Concept Map directs growth near existing infrastructure and away from sensitive environmental areas, creating a compact and connected built form where daily needs are in close proximity (compact) and easily accessible by car, transit, bike, or foot (connected). The compact, connected centers and corridors that organize the Growth Concept Map create a more sustainable physical form for our city. A compact and connected built form leads to greater affordability, reduced driving distances and car dependence, environmental protection, and complete communities (see *Imagine Austin*, pp. 128-129).
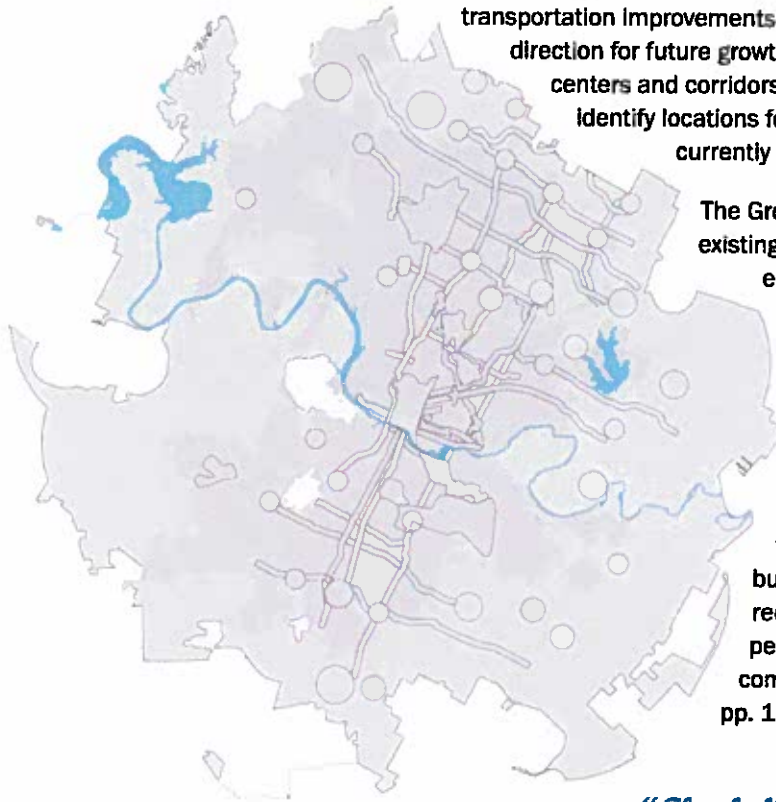
This simplified Growth Concept Map uses circles and lines to represent activity centers and corridors.

"The challenge now before us – in shaping the Austin of the 21st century – is to energetically leverage our strengths as we grow, while turning around the negatives. The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan provides the roadmap. The stakes are high. We must embrace the future that we want, and work to make it happen."

– *Imagine Austin, p. 4*

COMPLETE COMMUNITIES

According to *Imagine Austin*, complete communities are "safe and afford-able; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; make amenities and services easily accessible to everybody; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit." They achieve these outcomes while protecting our important environmental resources and preserving our identity, culture, and sense of place. An overarching goal of *Imagine Austin* is for Austin to become a city of complete communities. A complete community meets the daily material, social, and economic needs of all its residents by providing convenient "access to employment, shopping, learning, open space, recreation, and other amenities and services."

The complete communities goal informs all of the 2012-2013 initiatives highlighted in this annual report.

PRIORITY PROGRAMS

One framework *Imagine Austin* uses for implementation are its priority programs (see *Imagine Austin*, pp. 186-210). Each priority program focuses on a topic/goal that the community identified as a top priority for Austin in the coming years. The eight priority programs are:

1. **Compact and Connected Austin**: Invest in a compact and connected Austin.

2. **Sustainable Water**: Sustainably manage our water resources.

3. **Workforce Development**: Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses.

4. **Green Infrastructure**: Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.

5. **Creative Economy**: Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.

6. **Household Affordability**: Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin.

7. **Healthy Austin**: Create a Healthy Austin program.

8. **Code Alignment**: Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.
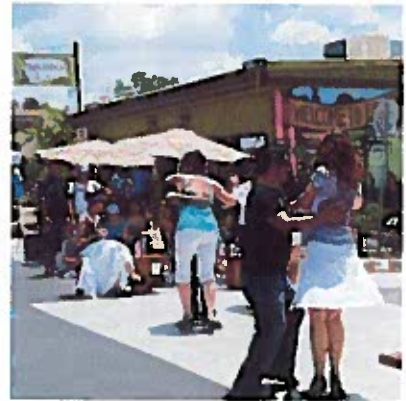
The City organized this 2013 community bike ride as outreach for the South Austin Combined Neighborhood (SACNP) planning process.
Imagine Austin's five-point implementation program can been seen in the SACNP planning process: During the process, the City is educating and engaging partici- pants through interactive activities, and improving internal alignment and strength- ening external partnerships by involving representatives from multiple City depart- ments and outside organizations, all in order to develop a neighborhood vision and goals that guide future public investment and land use regulations in the area.

Five-Point
Implementation Program

Five-Point Implementation Program

"*Change isn't easy. Actively preparing for change and uncertainty can be tough. However, the potential rewards can outweigh the discomforts. Choosing a different path for our city will require doing things differently. Having imagined a better Austin, it is incumbent upon us to realize our vision.*"

– *Imagine Austin, p. 6*

The City of Austin is implementing its comprehensive plan through a five-point program:

1. **Education & Engagement**

2. **Internal Alignment**

3. **Regulations**

4. **Public Investment**

5. **Partnerships**

This section describes these five programs and details how they have made progress towards implementing *Imagine Austin*.

1 EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

As the City launches its first new comprehensive plan in over 30 years, education and engagement – of both the public and City staff across departments – is a top priority. Public awareness, understanding, and support of the plan are critical to its successful implementation.

The City is using various types of media and multiple forums to highlight success stories as the plan is implemented. Communicating these success stories to the public builds confidence both in the plan's vision, and also in the City's dedication to achieving that vision.

Speakers Bureau

Through the Speakers Bureau, staff have presented the *Imagine Austin* story to various stakeholder groups including City Boards and Commissions, neighborhood and professional associations, and non-profit organizations. In addition, staff have presented at local and national conferences. This ongoing education is laying the groundwork to build relationships, engage the public, and identify potential public-private partnerships, or partnerships between public and private entities. Future presentations will feature stories about implementing *Imagine Austin*, including information on how community groups can get involved.

I imagine Austin...

More parks & Playgrounds

The Imagine Austin whiteboard has been used at multiple outreach events.

Visit **www.austintexas.gov/imagineaustin** *to request a group presentation.*

Speaker Series

Another way the City is working to build a culture of common understanding and collaboration is through the *Imagine Austin* Speakers Series. In 2012-13, the **Speakers Series** has brought in nationally-renowned experts to help educate citizens and staff on key issues. This year, the series has focused on how Austin can grow in a more compact and connected way, which addresses issues for Priority Program 1: Invest in Compact and Connected and Priority Program 8: Align Code. In the future, the series will expand beyond this theme to address other elements of *Imagine Austin*.

All events have been co-sponsored by community business and nonprofit groups, as well as multiple City departments. Most of the speakers have drawn an audience of 150 or more Austinites, and all of the presentations have been recorded by Channel 6. These broadcasts can be viewed on the web.

SPOTLIGHT: 2012-2013 SPEAKER SERIES

Christopher Leinberger visited Austin in September 2012 to share how Austin can capitalize on new market opportunities in real estate development to create vibrant and walkable neighborhoods.

★ **Christopher Leinberger**, real estate developer and visiting fellow at the Brookings Institute, spoke on development trends toward walkable communities.

★ **Ellen Dunham-Jones**, Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Georgia Tech and a renowned expert on urban and suburban design, spoke about retrofitting suburban spaces into lively places.

★ **Mitchell Silver**, Chief Planning and Development Officer and Director from Raleigh and current president of the American Planning Association; **Tina Axelrad**, Principal City Planner with the City and County of Denver; **Michael Slavney**, a Principal at Vandewalle & Associates in Madison; and **Valetta Forsythe Lill**, a former City Council member from Dallas, participated in a panel discussion about lessons learned in revising land development codes in Raleigh, Denver, Madison, and Dallas.

★ **Scott Bricker** of America Walks spoke and led a full-day workshop on creating walkable places.

★ This fall, **Janette Sadik-Khan**, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation, and other presenters will speak about a transformational series of projects that are turning the streets of New York into people-centered spaces that support walking, cycling, and transit.

Website

In 2013 the City launched a fresh *Imagine Austin* website headlined "*Imagine Austin*: The Way Forward." The website is regularly updated with news, information, and resources that demonstrate how the City of Austin and its community partners are actively advancing each of the eight priority programs. The website is available in Spanish.

Social Media

City staff continuously post information to an *Imagine Austin* Twitter account (#ImagineAustin) and Facebook page.

Reach:

- ★ Over 2,300 followers on Twitter

- ★ 2,750 likes on Facebook

Many *Imagine Austin* items are also re-posted to the City's general Facebook page and Twitter account, which are followed by 2,700 and 2,100 people respectively, as well as to departmental pages and sites.

YouTube

An *Imagine Austin* YouTube channel offers recordings of events like the Speaker Series, as well as videos with summaries of the plan and its development process.

Imagine Austin Online

Website

www.austintexas.gov/imagineaustin

Twitter

www.twitter.com/imagineaustin

Facebook

www.facebook.com/imagineaustin

Youtube Channel

www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB42CD113814DE2B7

Current banner on Imagine Austin's Facebook page.

Photographs courtesy of Green Doors.

City Shaping News

eNewsletters and Blog

The *Imagine Austin* staff has created two monthly electronic publications. These eNewsletters communicate *Imagine Austin*-related news, events, issues, and achievements to the public and across City departments.

★ **City Shaping News** (launched February 2013) *Austin's source for all things compact and connected.*

★ *Imagine Austin* **News** (launched July 2013) *The latest word on activating our comprehensive plan.*

To date the newsletters' subscription list includes over 3,600 key City staff and community members, with a goal of reaching 20,000 subscribers within one year. Everyone who subscribes online to the *Imagine Austin* mailing list receives both newsletters. All newsletter articles are posted to the *Imagine Austin* blog, where they remain archived and available to the public.
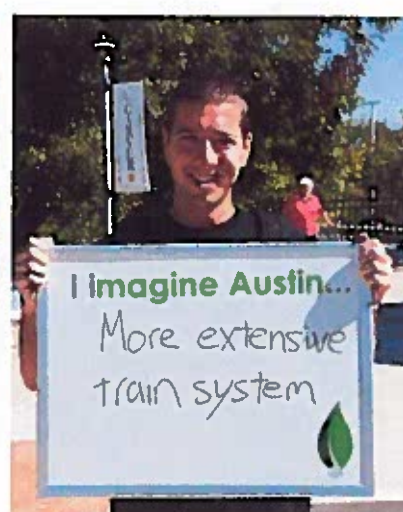
Compact and Connected Training Program

In spring 2013, the City began developing a cross-departmental staff training program that provides key staff the opportunity to share perspectives and dialogue about the City's goal of becoming more compact and connected. Launched in summer 2013, the aim of this innovative training is to generate a mutual understanding of what "compact and connected" means, how City departments can work together to make consistent investment decisions so outcomes align with *Imagine Austin*, and what the roles of department and divisions are for achieving this goal. The City plans to offer this training to the public in 2013.

INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Fulfilling the big-picture vision of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* requires the City of Austin to take a more collaborative, cross-departmental approach to major initiatives. With this in mind, City staff are developing ways to better integrate department work programs, decision-making, and long-range budgets. This effort to align internal operations will involve a gradual culture shift over time, as older projects are completed and new ones are planned.

ALIGNMENT OF CITY DEPARTMENTS

PAST   **PRESENT**   **FUTURE**
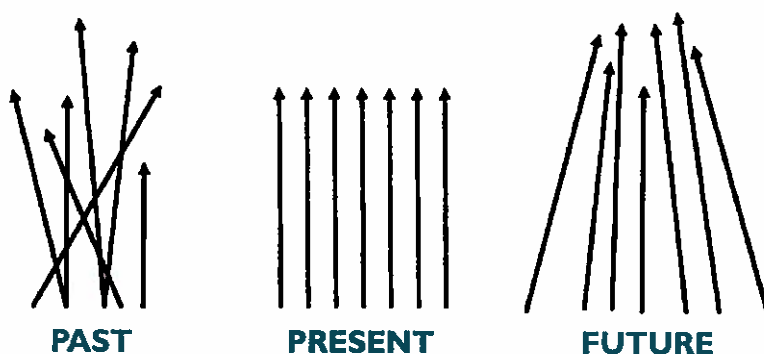
"The distinctive benefit of a comprehensive plan is that it confronts big issues in a big-picture way. Other City of Austin plans are more focused and deal with topics such as parks, solid waste, transportation, water, or smaller geographic areas. But only a comprehensive plan fully considers how the whole community's values, needs, people, and places are interrelated and interdependent."

– *Imagine Austin, p. 4*

Each City department and community partner has expertise to contribute, and each can learn from others. A walkable, mixed-use city of complete communities cannot be achieved by departments or nonprofits working in isolation; rather, *Imagine Austin's* vision requires a more holistic approach. Key examples of 2012-13 cross-departmental coordination, that are shifting business as usual at the City include:

Imagine Austin Priority Program Teams
(See Section IV, p. 34)

As mentioned earlier in this report, *Imagine Austin's* key policies and implementation actions are organized into eight priority programs. In 2012-2013, foundational work was completed to organize new, interdepartmental teams charged with helping to develop each priority program. The work being reviewed and coordinated by these teams is summarized in the following section.

www.austintexas.gov/sustain ability *for a list of projects by vision theme.*

Capital Planning Office

(See Spotlight, p. 28)

The Capital Planning Office is exploring integrated approaches to working with departments on long-range Capital Improvements Program strategies that can maximize value and outcomes for City capital investments. The Capital Planning Office engages departments to discuss collaborative approaches to future initiatives.

Human Resources

Human Resources staff has begun integrating *Imagine Austin* goals into its practices, as part of instilling the comprehensive plan in the culture of the City. For example, *Imagine Austin* goals are being integrated into select annual reviews for employees, job descriptions and job postings, and new employee orientation.

Sustainability Action Agenda

The Sustainability Action Agenda, a project of the Office of Sustainability, tracks and reports on over 200 current departmental initiatives. These initiatives were selected because they can deliver measurable community benefits for sustainability within one to two years. As sustainability is an informing goal of *Imagine Austin*, the two efforts align closely – with the Sustainability Action Agenda providing a shorter-term focus.

Many initiatives in the Sustainability Action Agenda are explicitly tied to *Imagine Austin* goals that are not covered by a priority program. This provides an indicator on how the City is advancing these *Imagine Austin* vision themes.

Photovoltaic sunflowers in the Robert Mueller Municipal Airport Redevelopment Area.

Vision for the green alley pilot project. This project is jointly managed by the Public Works Department and the Office of Sustainability in partnership with the University of Texas School of Architecture and Center for Sustainable Design.

www.austintexas.gov/department/green-alley-initiative.

SPOTLIGHT: WORKING TOGETHER ON A GREEN ALLEY

This year's Green Alley initiative offers an example of interdepartmental collaboration aligned with *Imagine Austin* goals. About a dozen different departments and divisions at the City – working with several community partners – have contributed to a pilot project that showcases Austin's commitment to sustainability. The first green alley will be constructed in fall 2013, on one block of the East Eighth Street alley (between Lydia and Waller).

The Green Alley Initiative – to transform alleys from forgotten spaces into sources of neighborhood pride – was spearheaded by the Office of Sustainability. When completed, the pilot green alley will serve as a concrete example – a micro-scale sustainable place – that models the *Imagine Austin's* vision and cuts across all priority programs. Green alleys can support compact neighborhoods and their residents, increase affordable housing choices, and model on-site improvements that advance big-picture sustainability goals. Features in a green alley can include pervious pavement, energy-efficient lighting, rain gardens, educational signage, a social gathering area, an art wall and more. Up to eleven Alley Flats, or small and affordable homes along alleys, could fit along the demonstration alley. Another focus is energy efficiency improvements for the thirteen existing houses that back onto the alley.

Staff from across City departments have enthusiastically lent a tremendous diversity of expertise and resources to the pilot green alley; construction being led by Public Works. Together they're engaged in an innovative, public-private collaborative effort to construct City-funded improvements.

Building on the Alley Flat initiative at the University of Texas, the Green Alley Initiative is exploring steps the City can take to make it easier to incorporate small secondary homes along alleys. A key focus area: How to align and revise City codes and policies to permit and enable more Alley Flats.

REGULATIONS

Numerous City regulations affect the comprehensive plan's implementation, including the City's land-use regulations. In 2012-13, the City began a major effort to align land-use regulations with *Imagine Austin*.

Imagine Austin envisions a shift in the development patterns of our city, towards a compact and connected city of complete communities. Currently, many of Austin's land-use regulations – dating from an era when suburban standards were in favor – shape development in ways that work against this goal. As the plan document states: "*Imagine Austin* calls for new development and redevelopment to be compact and connected, but many elements of the existing Land Development Code make this difficult to accomplish" (*Imagine Austin*, p. 207).

To address this, *Imagine Austin* includes Priority Program 8: Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city. The following is a summary of regulatory projects that were underway or completed this year.

"As we look to the future and follow this comprehensive plan, we have an important opportunity to be more intentional about the next chapters in Austin's development. ... Growth can have tremendous benefits for Austin, but not if we repeat our past actions and continue to incur ever-growing environmental, fiscal, and social costs. That's why we need to make some changes."

– *Imagine Austin*, p. 8

Downtown development (Photo by Michael Knox).

Development plans awaiting review.

Land Development Code Update

As part of the City's FY 2012-2013 annual budget, City Council allocated funds to revise the Land Development Code in alignment with *Imagine Austin*, and Council unanimously selected a consultant team for this effort, Opticos. Opticos is an award-winning, interdisciplinary firm and a leader in architecture, design, and urban planning. Opticos founding principal, Daniel Parolek, is one of the leading practitioners of form-based codes.

City staff has begun the process of working with the consultant team and community members to revise the Land Development Code – to make it easier and more straightforward to develop the physical city to achieve *Imagine Austin's* vision. Within a year, the initial phase of work is scheduled to be completed and endorsed by Planning Commission and Council. The full process will take several years.

Cases for Rezoning

Since *Imagine Austin's* adoption, City staff has begun to review requests for zone changes for their consistency with the comprehensive plan. The staff reviewers consider whether each proposed zone change supports *Imagine Austin's* policies, actions, and Growth Concept Map. Staff is also developing a system to track these zoning cases.

A vision for Airport Boulevard (Courtesy of City of Austin and Gateway Planning Group).

East Riverside Corridor Regulating Plan

On May 9, 2013, City Council adopted the East Riverside Corridor Regulating Plan. It provides a new set of regulations guiding development and redevelopment in a manner that supports the East Riverside Corridor Master Plan. These updated regulations support the master plan's vision for a vibrant, attractive, affordable complete community in line with *Imagine Austin*. Now that the regulations have been updated, redevelopment can begin on sites along the corridor in a manner consistent with the plan's vision.

austintexas.gov/eastriverside

Airport Boulevard Form-Based Code Initiative

To create a more walkable, transit-friendly and vibrant Airport Boulevard corridor, diverse community stakeholders have worked with City staff and consultants to develop a land-use vision grounded in urban design principles. In coordination, Austin Transportation Department has conducted a mobility study for the corridor. In 2012-13, City staff and consultants drafted new land-use regulations (form-based code) required for the vision to be implemented. A draft of the new code is being circulated for review. Its projected adoption by Council is late 2013 or early 2014.

www.airportboulevard.com

Updating Existing Small Area Plans and Selecting New Small Area Planning Areas
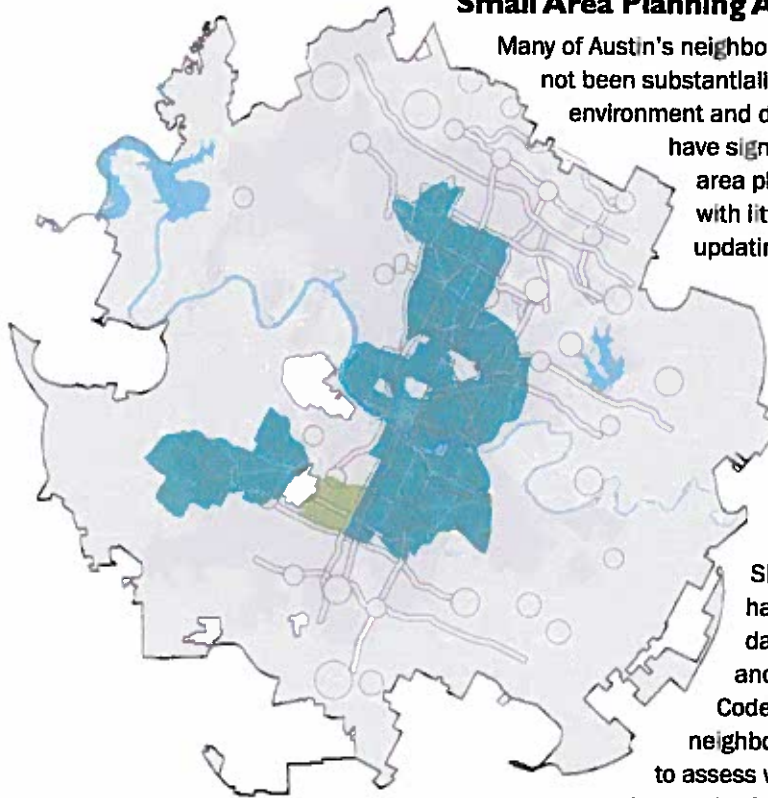
Many of Austin's neighborhood plans are over a decade old and have not been substantially updated. In the intervening years, the built environment and demographics of many of these neighborhoods have significantly changed. Outside of identified small area plan areas, growth and development continues with little guidance or direction. The process of updating existing small area plans (neighborhood, station area, corridor, etc.) and their policy directions, as well as the selection of new planning areas, should be aligned with *Imagine Austin*.

To date, all but three neighborhood planning areas in the urban core have had the opportunity to engage in the planning process. Once the Rosedale, Allandale, and North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Planning Areas have had their opportunity, it will be necessary to update earlier plans to address plan obsolescence and changing conditions. The Land Development Code revision process necessitates a review of neighborhood plans and presents an opportunity to assess which plans are most in need of updating. Among the factors to be considered are the age of the plan, alignment with *Imagine Austin*, changed conditions, and planned or needed public investment. More detailed analysis of the plans may indicate that only a portion of a planning area (a subdistrict or a corridor) may require additional planning, or two or more planning areas may be combined to maximize staff resources and address more broad-scale issues such as planning for an activity center. Plans will be reviewed, at a minimum, every five years to assess their update status. Although their content may likely be similar to the plan they are updating, these revised plans may differ in scope and content.

The activity centers and corridors outside of neighborhood planning areas and other areas outside of the urban core experiencing significant change are other places to focus planning resources. Private or public sector investment, demographic shifts, number of zoning cases, and permit activity should be considered when recommending these areas for planning processes. In addition, the Land Development Code revision process may identify areas in need of more detailed planning. Future planning areas, whether in or outside the urban core, provide opportunities to realize the aspirations of the comprehensive plan for complete communities across Austin.
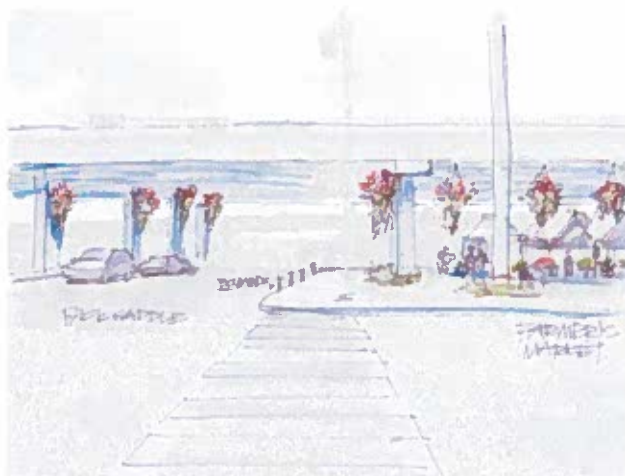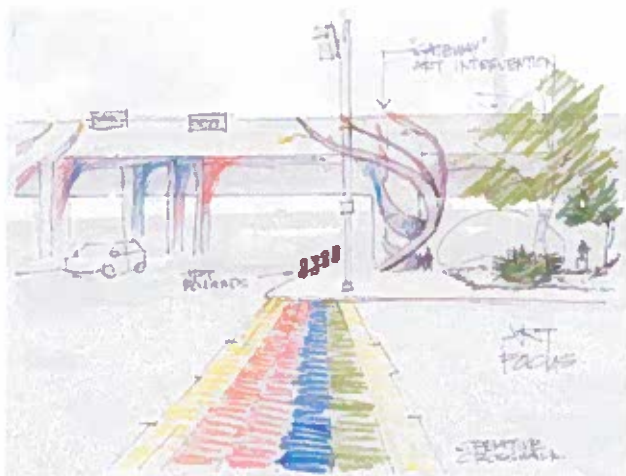
Blue-green fill denotes places in Austin covered by existing small area plans. The bright green area is the location of the South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan which is currently under development (see next page). Centers and corridors are outlined in gray.

Spotlight: South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan

The South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan is a great example of how *Imagine Austin* can be applied to neighborhoods. Kicked off in January 2013, the South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan is the first neighborhood plan initiated since the comprehensive plan was adopted. The planning area is bounded by Ben White Boulevard, South First Street, William Cannon Drive, and the Sunset Valley city limits.

From the start, this new planning process has striven to incorporate the spirit of *Imagine Austin*, including its vision of complete communities, goal of collaboration, and engaging public process.

★ **Complete community:** The neighborhood's vision is built on the idea that everyone should be able to meet their daily needs regardless of age, income or ability – in other words, what *Imagine Austin* calls a complete community.

★ **Cross-departmental:** Lead by an interdisciplinary team, the neighborhood planning process has brought together a variety of City departments and community organizations to assist neighbors.

★ **Engaging:** Interactive activities help local residents, private property and business owners, and community organizations work together to create a neighborhood vision.

★ **Finer detail:** Community members have created a detailed vision and neighborhood-scale goals for an activity center and activity corridor in the planning area.

Sketches from the June 15th Community Design Workshop: Reimagining the Frontage Road illustrating two community visions for the intersection of Ben White Boulevard and Pack Saddle Pass.

austintexas.gov/department/
south-austin-combined-neigh
borhood-plan

Focus Area: Coordinating Land-Use and Transportation

A benefit of having a citywide comprehensive plan is that it has led to better coordinated visioning, planning, and project construction by departments that shape the physical city, including the Planning and Development Review, Transportation, Public Works, and Health and Human Services Departments. For example, the Compact and Connected Priority Program brings together departments and divisions that address land-use patterns and the transportation system to coordinate more closely.

SPOTLIGHT: SUBDIVISION STANDARDS UPDATE

The rules and standards for how land is subdivided, and where and how streets are built, are part of the basic DNA of cities. To help ensure that new subdivisions support the *Imagine Austin* vision, the City is concurrently revising its rules for how new neighborhoods (the **Subdivision Regulations** in the Land Development Code) and for how new street networks (the **Transportation Criteria Manual**) will be designed and built. A new cross-departmental partnership, comprised of staff from the Planning and Development Review, Transportation, and Public Works Departments is in charge of this effort.

A primary goal of these new standards and of *Imagine Austin* is improved connectivity for everyone – pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair/scooter users, transit riders, and motorists – by promoting the development of complete streets. Complete streets are streets that are designed for all people, regardless of age, income, or ability.

The updates will also advance numerous other *Imagine Austin* priorities. For example, new street design standards may result in slower traffic speeds, advancing the *Imagine Austin* goal of a healthy Austin by reducing injuries and deaths from car crashes. Requiring a greater provision of sidewalks and bike lanes is another way new standards could promote health, increasing opportunity for daily exercise.

Spotlight: Austin Mobility Program

The Austin Transportation Department's Austin Mobility program is advancing *Imagine Austin's* compact and connected vision for Austin's future. Austin Mobility also is taking a complete streets approach to improving road corridors, by adding accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, as well as cars. Its current and future initiatives work to connect the *Imagine Austin's* activity centers (see the Growth Concept Map in *Imagine Austin*, p. 103) with this network of roads, transit, sidewalks, trails, and bicycle infrastructure.

The Austin Mobility program is tackling big transportation projects essential for our economy, jobs, and quality of life – such as improving Mopac and IH-35, and advancing Austin Urban Rail. The proactive outreach program includes a monthly emailer, daily news digests, and a dedicated website.

See Spotlight: Project Connect (p. 45) to learn how Austin Mobility is achieving a regional reach.

www.austin-mobility.com

Regulations

4 PUBLIC INVESTMENT

In 2012-2013, the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* has been actively used to guide the City's capital investment priorities. City management has required department leadership to assess their operations, priorities, and budgets and adjust them as needed to support and align with the plan. This assessment was formalized during the annual departmental business planning process in fall 2012. It required each department to summarize how it currently supports the comprehensive plan and/or how it plans to modify goals, performance measures, and programs to better align with it.

As City departments continue with budgeting and capital planning for the upcoming fiscal year and longer horizons, new requests for both operating and capital funding are being reviewed against the plan's vision, policies, and priority programs. Cross-departmental cooperation has been and will continue to be encouraged in these budgeting and planning efforts.

"As potential capital improvement projects, budget priorities, bond packages... are considered, it is important for the City of Austin to have a clear and objective framework for decision making."

– *Imagine Austin, p. A-57*

Complete streets construction project on Brazos Street.

Public Investment

A rendering of the Auditorium Shores trailhead improvements. This project is funded in part through the 2006 Bond Program.

By aligning City investments with the cross-sector goals of the comprehensive plan, the Capital Planning Office is helping to deliver more value for taxpayer investments. CIP departments are looking for ways to advance *Imagine Austin* goals through implementation of major capital projects that extend beyond the work of any one City department. The Capital Planning Office facilitates coordination among departments to identify and advance CIP investments meeting multiple parts of the *Imagine Austin* vision — livable, natural and sustainable, creative, educated, mobile and interconnected, prosperous, and people-oriented.

The Capital Planning Office works with departments to help ensure that capital investments serve to implement the comprehensive plan, which is now integrated into the CIP planning process.

Imagine Austin provides high-level guidance for how Austin should grow and develop in the coming decades. The CIP Plan uses that guidance to plan for capital projects during the next five years that will further the vision of *Imagine Austin*. Capital Planning Office efforts include considering *Imagine Austin* goals as the City moves forward with capital investments funded through the 2006, 2010, and 2012 Bond Programs.

For more information about the Capital Planning Office and its services, including an informative FAQ, visit www.austintexas.gov/CIP.

For information on the City's budget, see Financial Service's website at www.ci.austin.tx.us/financeonline/finance/financial_docs.cfm?ws=1&pg=1.

Capital Planning Office

The Capital Planning Office was established in 2010 – in anticipation of the City's first new comprehensive plan in more than 30 years – to provide high-level coordination among the City departments that are involved in capital planning and project implementation. The Capital Planning Office coordinates, monitors and aids in the development of the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and CIP Plan.

Other Public Agencies

The City of Austin welcomes partnerships with other Central Texas public entities and encourages them to make investments in a manner consistent with the *Imagine Austin*'s vision. Through partnering on city and regional initiatives, the City will bring the guiding direction of *Imagine Austin* to many area efforts.

SPOTLIGHT: SUSTAINABLE PLACES PROJECT

Over the past two years the City of Austin has participated as a regional partner in the Sustainable Places Project (SPP), an initiative funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A key SPP component has been the development of a computer-based analytic tool to assess and compare the economic, environmental and equity impacts of redevelopment scenarios for areas in our region.

In Austin, this analytic tool is being used to assist the City's urban rail economic development analysis. This past year, the South Shore Central waterfront district, which includes the planned location of the first station south of Downtown on the proposed urban rail system, was used as a demonstration site to develop the analytic tool.

To test and calibrate the analytic tool, three redevelopment scenarios for the future of the South Shore Central were modeled. In a SPP public demonstration of the analytic tool in May 2013, these three scenarios for the South Shore Central were compared across thirty-plus performance indicators; including, measuring return on investment and financial feasibility, impacts to water quality, impacts to municipal budgets, potential for district-wide value capture, jobs-to-housing ratios, overall density, walkability, net increase/decrease in open space, and energy savings from green infrastructure.

The demonstration showed that the SPP analytic tool can offer the public and officials a powerful new method for understanding the financial, environmental, and social impacts of public investments, both locally and regionally.

National waterfront development experts met with over 200 local stakeholders in the summer of 2012 to develop design recommendations for Austin's South Shore Central. This team of experts was brought to Austin as a Sustainable Design Assistance Team awarded to Austin in a national competition sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. (Image by SDAT member Stephanie Bower, Architectural Illustrator.)

www.austintexas.gov/water front

Public Investment

PARTNERSHIPS

Imagine Austin is a big plan with big ideas that extends beyond what the City of Austin can do as a single entity. Partnerships are critical to realizing *Imagine Austin*'s community-wide vision.

The comprehensive plan presents an opportunity – and a mandate – for the City to take public-private partnerships, or partnerships between public and private entities, to the next level. In recognition of this, the City Manager's Office held a staff symposium on public-private partnerships in 2012.

During this first year after plan adoption, the City has laid the groundwork for developing strategic and innovate partnerships. For example, the Planning and Development Review Department has been working with the Community Action Network. Developing partnerships will continue to be a focus over the next five years of plan implementation.

Opening of the African American Cultural & Heritage Facility.

"Austinites are united by their desire to see the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan yield results. We all want to see completed projects that make Austin better. In adopting this plan, the City of Austin is inviting everyone — residents, local companies and business groups, philanthropists and nonprofits, governmental agencies, and others — to partner with it to realize the plan. A collaborative commitment is essential. The action plan must start strong and be sustained in the years ahead."

– *Imagine Austin*, p. 12

http://www.austintexas.gov/department/imagine-austin-community-partners for information about our partnerships.

An art installation lights the revitalized parking lot under I-35 between E 6th Street and E 8th Street.

I-35 has come to symbolize the ethnic and economic divide between east and west Austin. This art installation, completed in 2011, is intended to symbolically stitch together east and west Austin, while its LED fixtures make it physically easier to cross the interstate. This project represents one of many existing City initiatives that align with Imagine Austin. It cuts across multiple Imagine Austin priority programs, improving connectivity while infusing public space with a creative element.

Priority Programs

Priority Programs

ABOUT PRIORITY PROGRAMS

"Transforming vision into reality through implementation will require incremental steps over time. Eight priority programs provide the structure and direction."

– *Imagine Austin p. 185*

One of the ways the City is implementing some of *Imagine Austin*'s biggest initiatives is through eight priority programs. Priority programs group related *Imagine Austin* policies and actions that cut across multiple departments. An interdisciplinary team of key stakeholders from those departments track, prioritize, and implement these policies and actions. Priority programs provide a structure that "will allow the City of Austin to more efficiently coordinate its operations, investments, and the provision of core services" (*Imagine Austin*, p. 186).

Chapter 5 (see *Imagine Austin*, p. 185-226) details the purpose, work program, goals and metrics of each of the eight priority programs. The eight priority programs are organized into four topic groups, each containing two priority programs.

Policies and actions that do not fit within a priority program are being advanced through other measures (e.g. energy efficiency efforts are being organized at Austin Energy). For a full list of actions, see the Action Matrix (*Imagine Austin* p. 228-266).

Topic Group	Priority Program
Compact and Connected	1. **Compact and Connected**: Invest in a compact and connected Austin. 8. **Align Code**: Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.
Nature and City	2. **Sustainable Water**: Sustainably manage our water resources. 4. **Green Infrastructure**: Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.
Creativity and Economy	3. **Workforce Development**: Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses. 5. **Creative Economy**: Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.
Healthy and Affordable	6. **Household Affordability**: Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin. 7. **Healthy Austin**: Create a Healthy Austin program.

PRIORITY PROGRAM TEAMS

Each priority program is overseen by an interdepartmental team to take advantage of shared expertise, information, and resources. This large-scale coordinated effort is a new way of doing business for the City. These priority program teams and their processes will continue to evolve and be refined over time.

Much of the work in 2012-13, the first year of implementing *Imagine Austin*, involved establishing these interdepartmental priority program teams and defining how they are responsible for achieving the actions associated with each program. Getting these new City staff teams in place and working together smoothly has been a big success story for the year.

The priority program teams have coordinated efforts across multiple City departments, established work plans, formed sub-teams to address key topics, and tracked the progress of specific actions listed in the Action Matrix in the *Imagine Austin* document. In 2013, they are responsible for bringing forward recommendations.

> *"The priority programs will enable the City of Austin and its partners to pull together, break down silos, make connections, and leverage resources for more effective implementation."*
>
> – *Imagine Austin p. 186*

Priority Program Process

Interdepartmental Priority Program Team	Teams develop work plans and recommendations.
⬇	
Department Directors	Teams present significant recommendations to department directors for review and refinement.
⬇	
Executive Management	Teams present final recommendations to City Manager for approval.
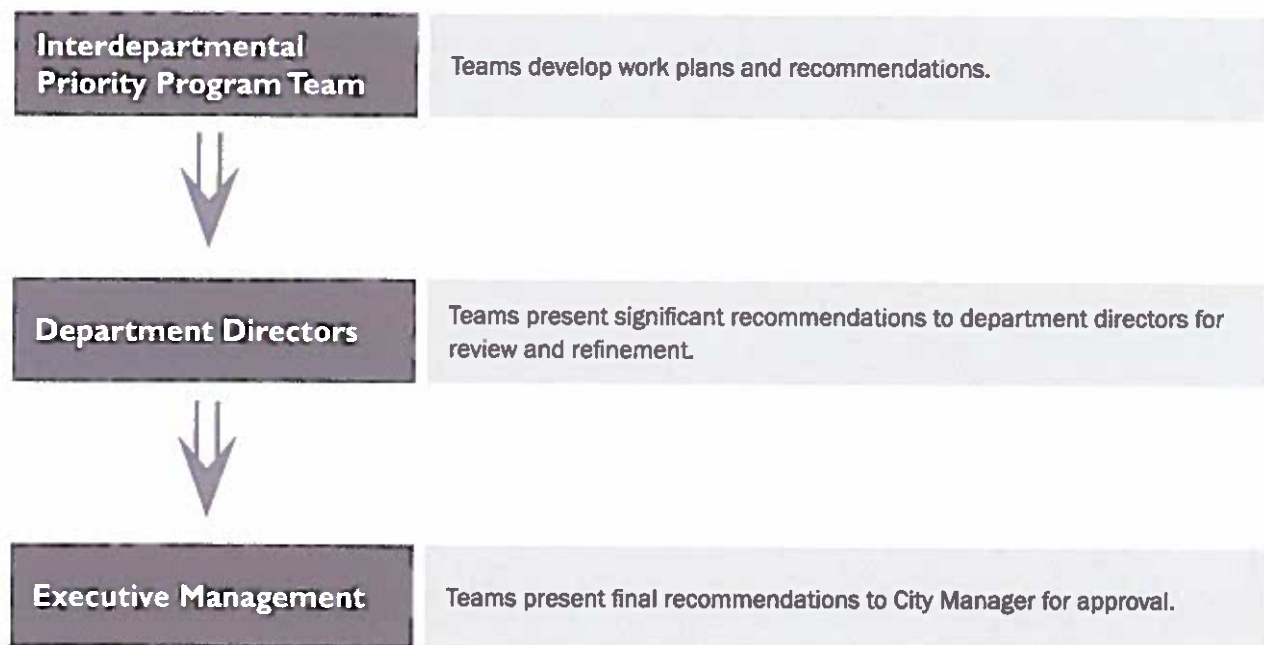
SECTION OVERVIEW

As 2012-2013 was the first year of comprehensive plan implementation, nearly all initiatives referenced in this section were already in progress or development by May 2012. In this first year, the priority program teams have reviewed existing initiatives to determine whether they align with *Imagine Austin* and how they fit within the priority program framework. Their cross-departmental discussions are allowing initiatives based in one department to become better coordinated to achieve multiple goals.

This section lists representative key achievements towards reaching priority program goals. *Imagine Austin* actions that correspond to these achievements are also listed as reference. This is not an exhaustive list of all City accomplishments; rather, it offers a representative sample of actions being considered and coordinated by the priority program teams.

Please see the Action Matrix (Appendix 2) for a more exhaustive list of 2012-13 accomplishments. Detailed information about City initiatives and programs can be found on the City's website.

Map of developed land. The land developed in the past six years (2006-2012) is in red.

2006 development footprint ▪

Newly developed land 2006-2012 ▪

Undeveloped land ▪
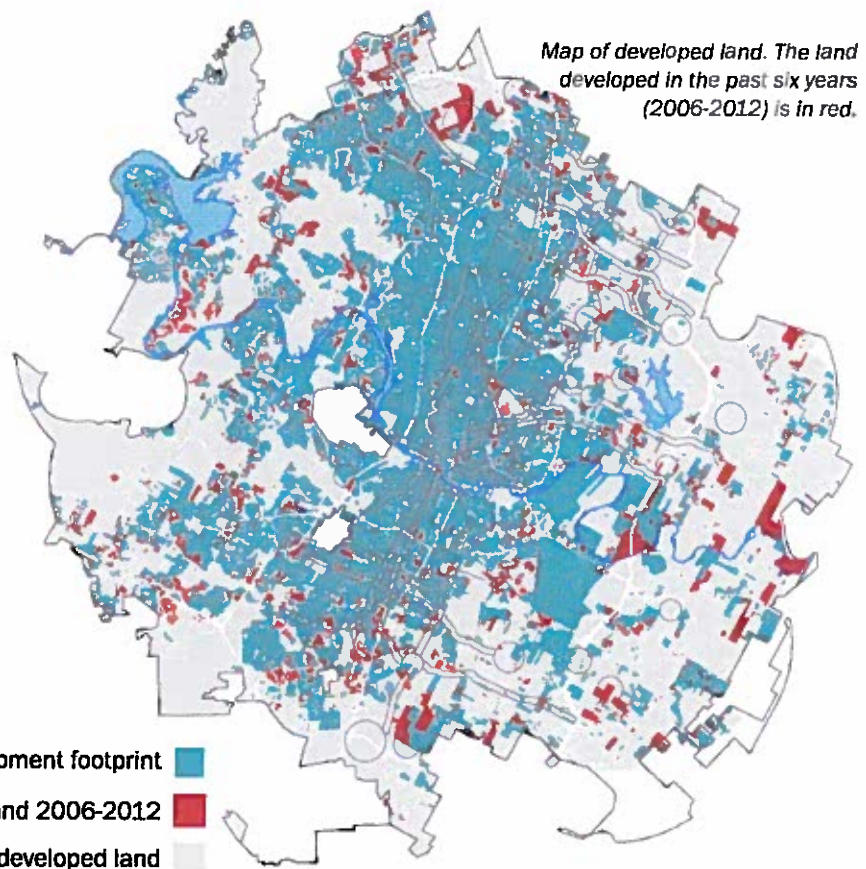
COMPACT AND CONNECTED

Mixed Use + People Friendly + Walkable

Priority Programs 1 and 8 both promote compact, people-friendly places, where it is easy to get to your daily needs by any means of travel.

Current Conditions

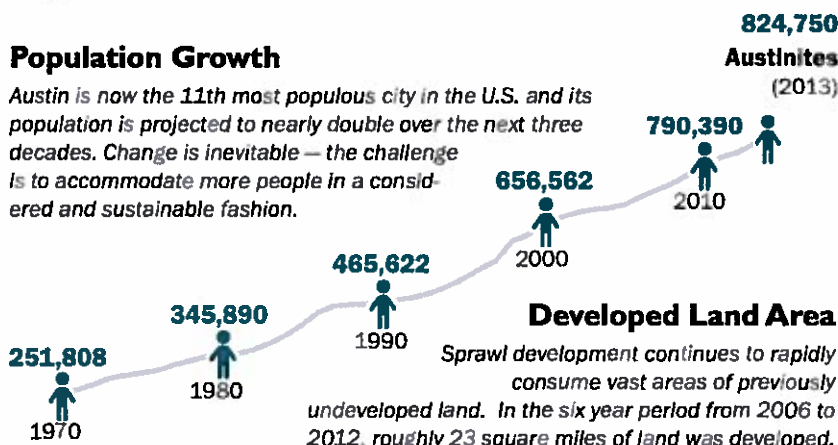Up until now, Austin has not been growing in a manner that most would consider compact or connected. The rate of greenfield land development has increased in recent years, resulting in greater vehicle miles traveled and longer commute times.

"Interconnected development patterns support public transit and a variety of transportation choices, while reducing sprawl, congestion, travel times, and negative impacts on existing neighborhoods."

– Imagine Austin Vision p. 86

Population Growth

Austin is now the 11th most populous city in the U.S. and its population is projected to nearly double over the next three decades. Change is inevitable — the challenge is to accommodate more people in a considered and sustainable fashion.

824,750 Austinites (2013)

790,390 — 2010

656,562 — 2000

465,622 — 1990

345,890 — 1980

251,808 — 1970

Developed Land Area

Sprawl development continues to rapidly consume vast areas of previously undeveloped land. In the six year period from 2006 to 2012, roughly 23 square miles of land was developed. While some of that was infill development of core urban areas, much of it was development of open land, greenfields, farms, and natural areas. Additional land was consumed by new road building. For comparison sake, the amount of land developed during this period is roughly half the size of San Francisco.

Total Land Area 2012

66.5% Developed

Recently Developed 2006-2012 = 23 square miles
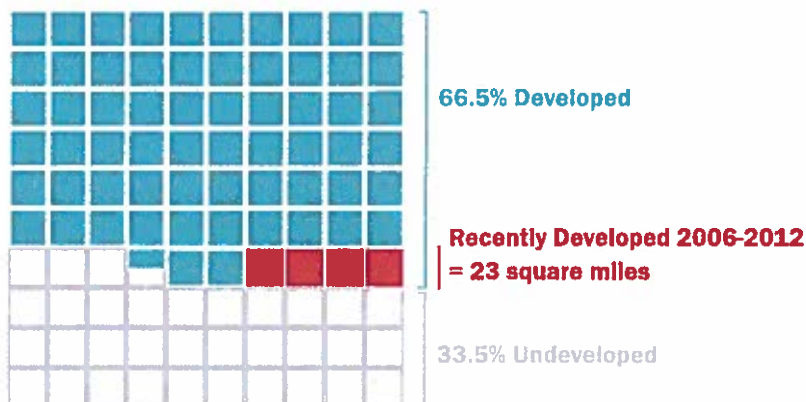
33.5% Undeveloped

*Of the 33.5% of undeveloped land, 8.5% is flood plains, riparian areas, steep slopes, and other lands in environmentally critical areas that are not desirable for development.

Commute Mode

Low intensity and auto-oriented development patterns increase the distances between activities, making it more difficult to walk, bike or take transit. As a result, the overwhelming majority of commute trips to work (over 83%) are taken by car.

84%

6%

4%

3%

2%

The remaining 1.1% categorized as "other."

(Census data for the City of Austin)

2015 goal for city-wide bicycle mode split.
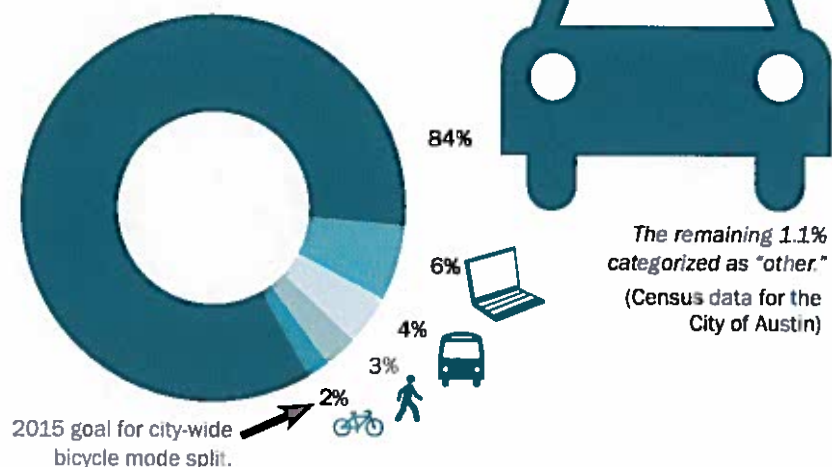
Transportation System Delay

With a growing population and many people commuting by car, traffic delays have increased, with extreme commute congestion on corridors such as IH-35 and Loop 1. While the total hours of traffic delays dipped from 2004 to 2008, likely due to the recession, they have since started trending upward. This reflects a national trend.

Peak delay in 2005 of 58 hours.

Average Annual Delay Per Peak-Hour Commuter

60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Trend

(Data for Austin's urban area)

1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011

In 2011, the average peak-hour commuter spent a total of 44 hours in traffic delay.
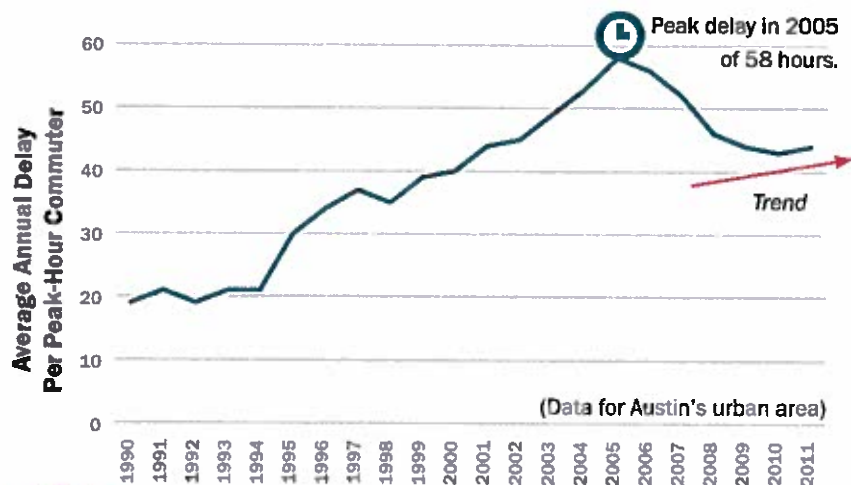
Vehicle delay and miles traveled data for Austin's urban area from Texas A&M's Transportation Institute's 2012 Urban Mobility Report (December 2012): http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/report/

Vehicle Miles Traveled

Total daily vehicle miles traveled per capita has also steadily increased from 1990 to 2006. While vehicle miles traveled have dipped recently, that trend is flattening out. This is also consistent with national trends.

Peak of ~20 miles per person per day in 2006.

Trend

(Data for Austin's urban area)

Y-axis: Average Vehicle Miles Traveled Per Capita Per Day (14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20)
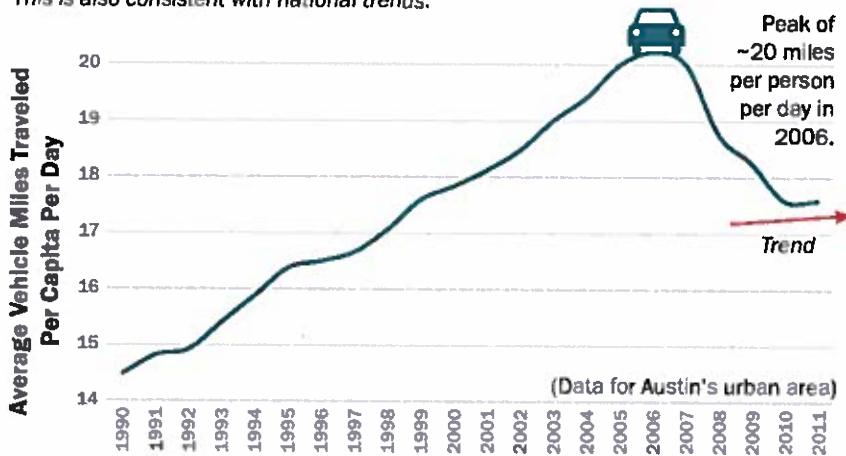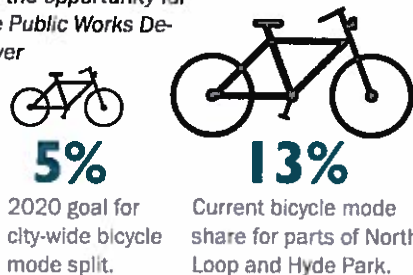
X-axis: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Bicycle Facilities

With limited opportunity to expand road capacity, one of the only ways the City can address traffic congestion is by increasing the opportunity for people to walk, bike, and take transit. The Public Works Department completed bicycle projects on over 40 miles of streets in 2012 to reach the City's goal of 2% of Austinites commuting by bike. Many of the compact and connected neighborhoods in the urban core already have bicycle mode splits well above 2%.

5%
2020 goal for city-wide bicycle mode split.

13%
Current bicycle mode share for parts of North Loop and Hyde Park.

Sidewalk Construction

The City has also been working to increase the number of people walking to their daily activities by improving pedestrian facilities. Currently only 44% of Austin's street frontage has sidewalks. Despite the fact that an immense amount of sidewalk is constructed each year, the need (3,325 miles of street frontage lacks sidewalks) is so great that new construction barely makes a dent.

44% with sidewalk

5,893 miles of street frontage in total

2012

3,325 miles without sidewalks

0 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 6,000

71 miles (147,000 linear feet) of sidewalk constructed between 2006 and 2012. ~ **Distance from Austin to San Antonio.**
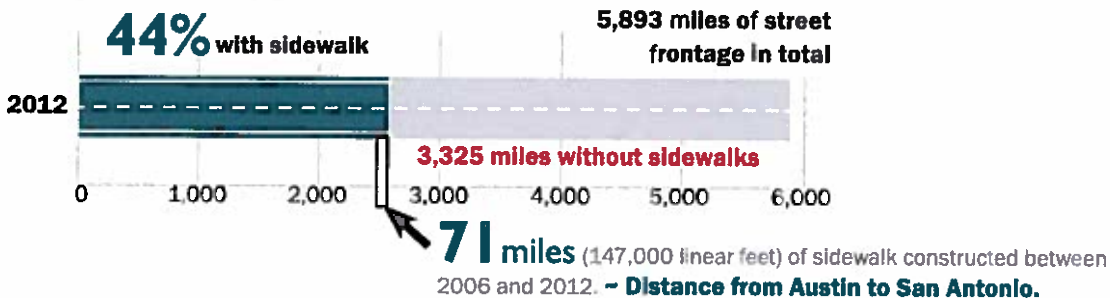
Bluebonnet Lane cycle track.

Priority Program 1:
Invest in a compact and connected Austin

See page 187 of Imagine Austin for more information on Priority Program 1.

Core Departments

Planning and Development Review, Austin Transportation Department, Public Works, Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, Capital Planning Office

Priority Program Team Workplan

The team has inventoried all City compact and connected initiatives, including transportation and economic programs. This inventory led to inviting representatives of partner organizations, including Capital Metro and the Texas Department of Transportation, to participate in team discussions. The team is also assisting the Priority Program 8 team for the Land Development Code revision.

Action Matrix: Moving Forward

★ **LUT A1:** Give priority to City of Austin investments to support mixed use, transit, and the creation of compact walkable and bikeable places.

★ **LUT A13:** Create a system of high-capacity transit, including elements such as urban rail and bus rapid transit corresponding to land-use mix and intensity.

★ **CFS A34:** Align policies, incentives, regulations, and infrastructure to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map and maintain Austin's livability and affordability.

Major Initiatives and Key Accomplishments

Stakeholder meeting to discuss possible revisions to the Subdivision Code.

Third Street cycle track.

New curb ramps at the intersection of Manchaca Road and Stassney Lane.

Revision of Subdivision Code and Transportation Criteria Manual.

Austin's Planning and Development Review, Public Works, and Transportation Departments are partnering to revise Austin's Subdivision Regulations and Transportation Criteria Manual to support enhanced transportation connectivity and development of complete streets. This effort is being coordinated with the larger Land Development Code revision.

Implementation of Bicycle and Sidewalk Master Plans.

In support of *Imagine Austin* Growth Concept Map, Public Works is implementing the Bicylce Master Plan and Sidewalk Master Plan. Successes included initiation of a Bike Share program (to launch later this year), and construction of 38.4 new miles of bicycle accommodations, 1.3 miles of urban trails, 66,757 linear feet of Americans with Disabilities Act compliant sidewalks, and multiple new curb ramps.

Bus stop accessibility improvements.

Public Works and Capital Metro are partnering to improve the accessibility of bus stops through extension of sidewalks and reconstruction of bus stop areas. In 2012, improvements were made to 170 bus stops.

Street improvements on Second Street.

Bicycle infrastructure improvements as part of the Complete Streets Program.

Possible future improvements to East Riverside (Rendering by A. Nelessen Associates, Inc. with MWM Design Group).

Implementation of Great Streets Master Plan.

The Great Streets Development Program reconstructed 11.5 downtown blocks, and Public Works implemented Second Street District streetscape improvements as part of its street reconstruction program.

Strategic coordination of capital improvements projects.

The Capital Planning Office was established in 2010 to provide coordination and management of City capital investments. The Capital Planning Office monitors Capital Improvements Program planning and implementation of General Obligation Bond Programs to support a compact and connected Austin.

Implementation of demonstration corridors.

In support of the *Imagine Austin* Growth Concept Map, Planning and Development Review led the initiatives for the East Riverside and Airport Boulevard corridor regulating plans, both of which are along designated activity corridors. In addition, bond funding was approved for construction of North Lamar Boulevard and Burnet Road corridor improvements, and for development of preliminary engineering for improvements along the South Lamar Boulevard corridor.

Major Initiatives and Key Accomplishments Continued
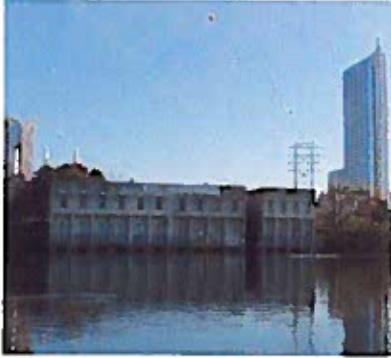
Current condition of the Seaholm site.

Williamson Creek — Blarwood stormdrain improvements.

MetroRail MLK Station.

Facilitation of redevelopment of activity centers and corridors.

The Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office coordinates business recruitment, expansion, and retention into activity corridors. They have recently executed a master development agreement for a $500 million private investment to redevelop the decommissioned Green Water Treatment Plant site. As part of the emerging Seaholm District, this project and the new Central Library (which broke ground in May 2013) further the evolution of downtown Austin into a vibrant, walkable place. Overall, the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office has implemented redevelopment services of $9 billion to activity centers.

Reinvestment in existing infrastructure to support a compact and connected city.

The City's continued emphasis on rehabilitating, replacing, and upgrading aging infrastructure in the urban core is essential to supporting compact and connected development and redevelopment. Accomplishments include:

○ Austin Water "Renewing Austin" program upgraded aging water lines.

○ Public Works street overlay and reconstruction programs improved roadways.

○ Watershed Protection upgraded undersized storm drain infrastructure.

Support of an integrated transportation system.

The Austin Transportation Department, in support of the Growth Concept Map, implements the Austin Mobility program and the Austin portion of the CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and is a partner on Project Connect (see Spotlight: Project Connect on the following page). They continue in the provision of an integrated transportation system including the implementation of car share services, installation of new parking meters and back in parking, and improvement of the visibility of crosswalks and smart signs.

MetroRail next to an urban rail example vehicle in downtown Austin during a public demonstration in 2011.

SPOTLIGHT: PROJECT CONNECT

Project Connect is a partnership among the Central Texas transportation agencies responsible for implementing the high-capacity transit component of the CAMPO 2035 Plan. The City of Austin has been actively engaged throughout 2012-13, and has provided input or leadership for each of the major projects listed.

★ **Urban Rail.** The City of Austin continues to work closely with Capital Metro and other partners to bring forward a rail transit system connecting Downtown, the Capitol Complex, the University of Texas, and the Mueller neighborhood. An analytic tool is being used to evaluate the economic return on investment on urban rail scenario locations, including potential future links to Riverside and the airport (see p. 29).

★ **MetroRail.** MetroRail began operation in 2010. Improvements continue that will enable increased service, including a project to double-track the line near Plaza Saltillo.

★ **MetroRapid.** This project will include two high-capacity rapid bus routes along North Lamar Boulevard/South Congress Avenue and Burnet Road/ South Lamar Boulevard and is anticipated to begin operation in 2014.

★ **MoPac Improvement Project.** This project will provide new tolled Express Lanes along MoPac between Parmer Lane and Cesar Chavez Street and include aesthetic enhancements, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and the construction of sound walls. The project is expected to begin operation by 2015.

★ **Lone Star Rail.** The Lone Star Rail District has been working with state and local governments to provide intercity passenger rail service to connect Austin to San Antonio and Georgetown along the existing Union Pacific rail line.

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www.connectcentraltexas.com/

For More Information on Priority Program 1

The Imagine Austin website's page for Priority Program 1:
www.austintexas.gov/page/ compact

Subdivision Regulations revision:
austintexas.gov/department/subdi vision-regulations-revisions

Public Work's Bicycle Program:
austintexas.gov/bicycle

Public Work's Pedestrian Program:
austintexas.gov/department/ pedestrian

Great Streets Program:
www.austintexas.gov/page/great -streets

Corridor development of North Lamar Boulevard/ Burnet Road:
www.austin-mobility.com/corri dor-development-north-la mar-boulevard-burnet-road

Seaholm District:
austintexas.gov/seaholm

Priority Program 8:
Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city

See page 207 of Imagine Austin for more information on Priority Program 8.

Core Departments

Planning and Development Review, Austin Transportation, Public Works, Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, Watershed Protection, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Health and Human Services, Capital Planning Office, Austin Energy, Austin Fire, Austin Resource Recovery, Austin Water, Aviation, Code Compliance, Communication and Technology Management, Law Department, Parks and Recreation, and Office of Real Estate Services

Priority Program Team Workplan

The City has initiated the process to revise the Land Development Code (LDC), to update it and encourage future (re)development projects and patterns that result in a compact and connected city. The revision process is expected to be completed in 2015.

Overview of the Code Revision Process

GROUPS WORKING TOGETHER TO UPDATE THE CODE:

★ **City Council.**

★ **Planning Commission.**

★ **City Staff:** The Planning and Development Review Department is leading the revision process, while other departments will serve in an advisory role, providing subject-matter expertise.

★ **Consultant team:** A consultant team was unanimously selected by the City Council to provide expertise on the code revision process.

★ **Land Development Code Advisory Group:** An 11-member citizen advisory group was appointed by the City Council and the City Manager to provide feedback on the consultant team's work, assist in public outreach, and actively support the code update.

City Council unanimously selected Opticos Design as the consultant for the Land Development Code revision process.

Find out more about the firm on their website, opticosdesign.com.

After an initial planning and preparation stage, there are four main steps in the code revision process. Each step includes review by the general public, major stakeholders, the Land Development Code Advisory Group, the Planning Commission and the City Council.

STEPS IN THE CODE REVISION PROCESS:

Planning and Preparation

- o Informal outreach to key stakeholder groups.
- o Determining staffing levels, consultant support, and financial resources needed.
- o Assembling staff, the advisory group, and the consultant team.

1. **Listening** (listening to the community, educating on code, and identifying critical issues and divisive topics).

2. **Code Diagnosis** (performing an initial review and assessment of the current Land Development Code and associated criteria manuals in order to identify major issues and key sections that need to be revised) **and Draft Code Outline** (creating a summary organization of the revised code).

3. **Draft Code Development.**

4. **Code Adoption.**
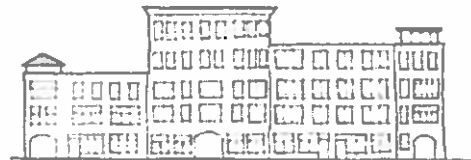
Key Accomplishments 2012-13

Completed most of the Planning and Preparation stage:

Initiated informal outreach.

- o Conducted outreach to stakeholders representing four key groups: household affordability; neighborhoods; development and business; and environment and sustainability.

- o Presented to community groups that included the Austin Neighborhoods Council, Real Estate Council of Austin, Community Development Commission, and the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities.

Assembled the advisory group, staff, and consultant team.

- o Conducted extensive research to identify a diverse group of appointees for the Land Development Code Advisory Group and appointed 11 citizens.

- o Identified and hired staff leads, and formed a cross-departmental staff team to assist in the code revision.

- o Selected a consultant team led by Opticos Design and developed the scope of services for the consultant team.

Land Development Code Revisions Scope: 2013-14

- ★ Complete Step 1 and Step 2: Listening, Code Diagnosis, and Draft Code Outline.

- ★ Gain approval from City Council of the code diagnosis and annotated outline.

The downtown State Theater hosted the speaker panel.

Watch the presentation video:
www.austintexas.gov/blog/4-cities-4-land-development-codes-watch-their-stories.

SPOTLIGHT: "FOUR CITIES. FOUR LAND DEVELOPMENT CODES. HEAR THEIR STORIES."

Mitchell Silver from Raleigh, Tina Axelrad from Denver, Michael Slavney from Madison, and Valetta Forsythe Lill from Dallas presented to the Austin community on lessons learned from recent major revisions to their codes. Two major events held downtown drew over 300 attendees including the general public and City staff. The speaker series is also mentioned in Spotlight: Speaker Series (p. 10).

For More Information on Priority Program 8

Land Development Code revision:
www.austintexas.gov/newLDC

Bibliography on compact and low density development:
**http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/Imagin
eAustin/Compacted%20and%20Connected%20Development%20or%20
Low%20Density%20Development_0.pdf**

Subscribe to City Shaping News:
www.austintexas.gov/department/follow-imagineatx

NATURE & CITY

Conservation + Sustainable + Quality of Place

Priority Programs 2 and 4 focus on improving the connection between people and the natural world. Priority Program 2 looks at ways to improve the supply and quality of our water, while Priority 4 emphasizes increasing the scope and vitality of our green infrastructure.

Current Conditions

Austinites are already working to reduce water use and protect the environment. However, with a rapidly increasing population and a prolonged drought, more work needs to be done.

Water Use

Through an effective water conservation program, Austinites are using fewer gallons of water per person per day, allowing the City to serve more people with the same amount of water. While these unit savings continue, **over time Austin's growing population and economy are projected to increase total water consumption per year.**

Water Use Per Capita Per Day

(Austin Water's service area)
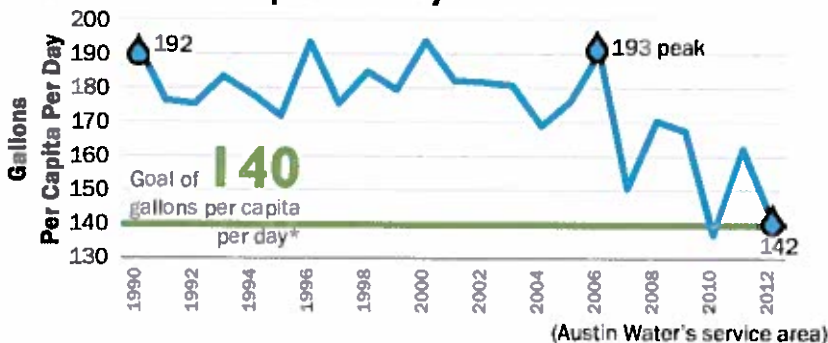
Total Water Use Per Year (100,000 Gallons)

(Austin Water's service area)

Nature & City

2012 Daily Water Use
(Austin Water's service area)

Residential	Total
84	**142**
gallons per capita per day.	gallons per capita per day.

* The City's goal of 140 gallons per capita per day is calculated using total water pumpage (which includes residential, commercial, and industrial water use).
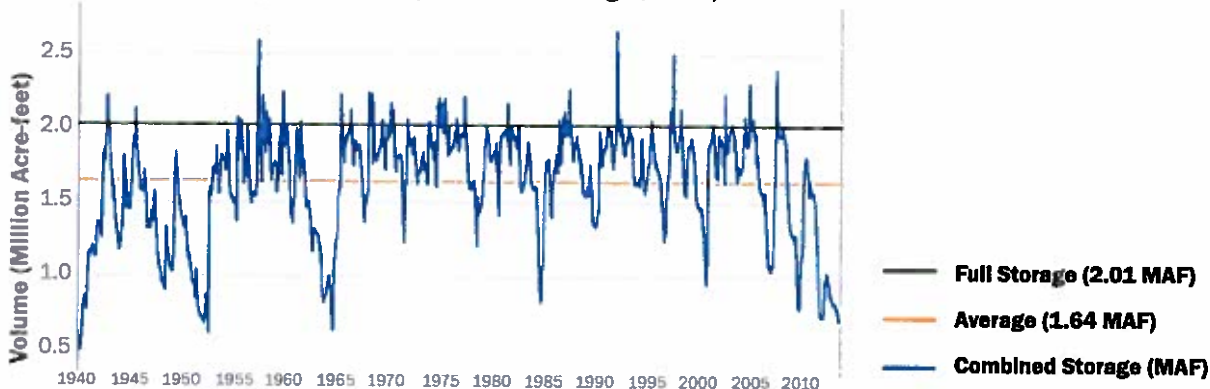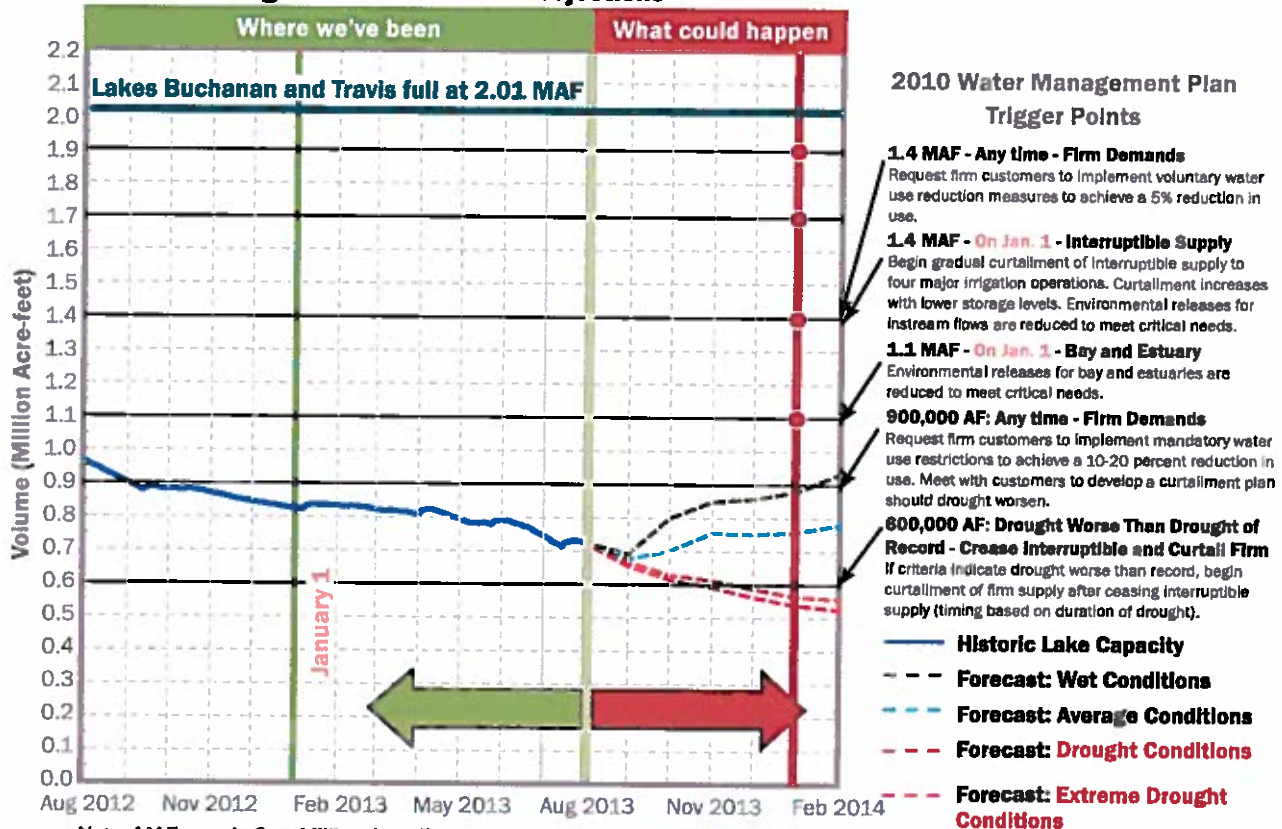
Data from Austin Water Utility:
http://www.austintexas.gov/department/austin-daily-water-usage

Water Supply: Highland Lake Storage

In light of the persistent drought, greater levels of water conservation by all users will be necessary.

Historic Water Storage Levels (Sept 30, 1940 to Aug 1, 2013)

— Full Storage (2.01 MAF)
— Average (1.64 MAF)
— Combined Storage (MAF)

Current Water Storage Levels and Future Projections

2010 Water Management Plan Trigger Points

1.4 MAF - Any time - Firm Demands
Request firm customers to implement voluntary water use reduction measures to achieve a 5% reduction in use.

1.4 MAF - On Jan. 1 - Interruptible Supply
Begin gradual curtailment of interruptible supply to four major irrigation operations. Curtailment increases with lower storage levels. Environmental releases for instream flows are reduced to meet critical needs.

1.1 MAF - On Jan. 1 - Bay and Estuary
Environmental releases for bay and estuaries are reduced to meet critical needs.

900,000 AF: Any time - Firm Demands
Request firm customers to implement mandatory water use restrictions to achieve a 10-20 percent reduction in use. Meet with customers to develop a curtailment plan should drought worsen.

600,000 AF: Drought Worse Than Drought of Record - Cease Interruptible and Curtail Firm
If criteria indicate drought worse than record, begin curtailment of firm supply after ceasing interruptible supply (timing based on duration of drought).

— **Historic Lake Capacity**
- - - **Forecast: Wet Conditions**
- - - **Forecast: Average Conditions**
- - - **Forecast: Drought Conditions**
- - - **Forecast: Extreme Drought Conditions**

Note: MAF equals One Million Acre-Feet
One Acre-Foot (AF) equals 325,851 gallons.

Projections take into account emergency drought relief measures affirmed by TCEQ on February 13, 2013.

LCRA
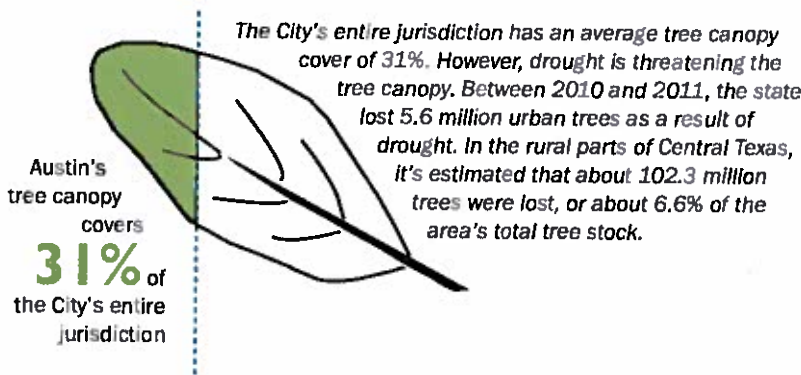August 1, 2013

The Watershed and Tree Canopy

Creek Health (Environmental Integrity Index)

While strong water quality ordinances have protected the quality of Austin's creeks from the pressures of a growing population and development, recent severe droughts have eroded creek quality by concentrating nutrients and causing some creeks to go dry. The City is actively working to prevent nutrients from entering creeks to improve water quality and restore areas around the creeks to increase water quantity.
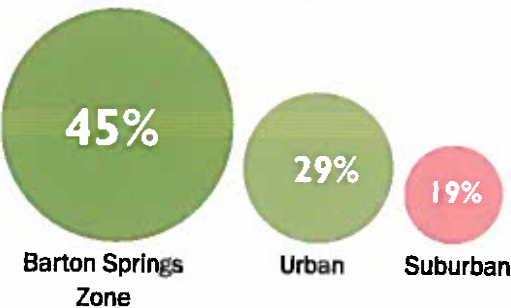
See Watershed Protection Department's 2012 State of Our Environment Report for more information: http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Watershed/SOE_report_2012.pdf

% Poor   **% Marginal or Fair**   **% Good or Better**

Tree Canopy Coverage

Austin's tree canopy covers **31%** of the City's entire jurisdiction
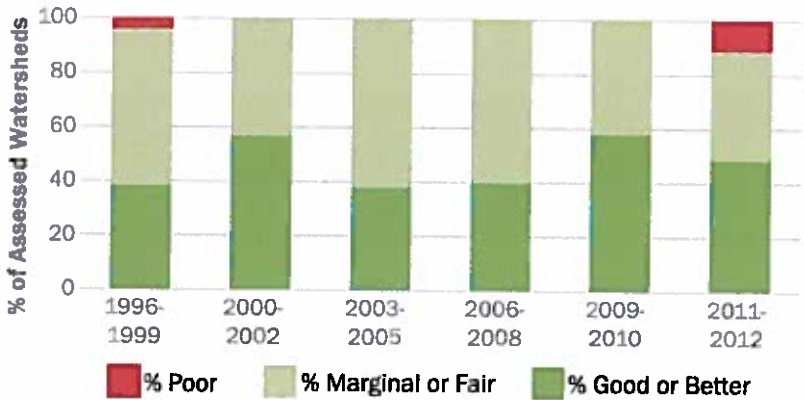
The City's entire jurisdiction has an average tree canopy cover of 31%. However, drought is threatening the tree canopy. Between 2010 and 2011, the state lost 5.6 million urban trees as a result of drought. In the rural parts of Central Texas, it's estimated that about 102.3 million trees were lost, or about 6.6% of the area's total tree stock.

Tree Canopy Coverage by Watershed Classification

45% Barton Springs Zone   **29%** Urban   **19%** Suburban

Washington DC has a goal of a 40% tree canopy by 2035.

Los Angeles has an ongoing program to plant one million trees.

Raingarden improving water quality.

Priority Program 2:
Sustainably manage our water resources

See page 191 of Imagine Austin for more information on Priority Program 2.

Core Departments

Austin Water, Watershed Protection, Planning and Development Review

Priority Program Team Workplan

The work team identified key staff members unique to each element of the work plan. This involved adding more partners to help achieve cross-departmental coordination. The team also prioritized the work program and identified actions to take.

Action Matrix: Moving Forward

★ **LUT A37.** Develop a regulatory framework to incentivize use of Low Impact Development (LID) features such as rainwater harvesting, increased permeable surfaces, rain gardens, green roofs, green streets, and naturalized water quality features such as bioswales to manage stormwater.

★ **CFS A38.** Develop incentives and coordinate regulations to promote innovative water and graywater re-use options for building and site design, landscape maintenance, and agricultural irrigation.

Major Initiatives and Key Accomplishments

Waterway improvements.

Raingarden improving water quality at One Texas Center.

Waterway improvements.

Monitoring of creek health.

To address the ongoing need to protect water quality while allowing for responsible growth, Watershed Protection continues to monitor creek health, measuring it in terms of an Environmental Integrity Index, a tool developed by Watershed Protection to monitor and assess the ecological integrity and degree of impairment of Austin's creeks. Despite constantly increasing pressure from Austin's growing population, the quality of Austin's creeks has not markedly declined since the inception of Austin's protective water quality ordinances and programs.

Revision of the Watershed Protection Ordinance.

Watershed Protection has embarked on an intensive stakeholder process to create a new Watershed Protection Ordinance, in an effort to continue to protect the health of our creeks and watersheds, as well as insure a scientific basis for our regulations (see Spotlight: Watershed Protection Ordinance on p. 61).

Update to the Watershed Master Plan.

Watershed Protection updated their Watershed Master Plan to reflect the latest flooding, erosion and water quality data. It also reflects advances in implemented watershed solutions based local experience, monitoring data, and current state of the art scientific and engineering practices.

Purple pipe for reclaimed water.

The Sand Hill Energy Center.

Barton Springs Pool.

Facilitation of auxiliary water use.
Work is underway to develop regulatory changes to promote the use of auxiliary waters such as rainwater, graywater, and reclaimed water. A consultant will deliver recommendations on the appropriate level of regulation by the end of 2013. In 2013 and 2014, Austin Water will begin implementing new provisions that encourage the use of these auxiliary waters.

Provision of reclaimed water for the Sand Hill generation facility.
Austin Water and Austin Energy are working together to reduce the water needed for energy generation by providing reclaimed water for Austin Energy's Sand Hill generation facility. The use of reclaimed water reduces the facility's water withdrawals from the Colorado River. Austin Water coordinates efforts with Austin Energy and other local energy utilities to assess risks and propose risk mitigation strategies related to water demands for power generation.

Collaboration with regional partners to protect and improve environmental health.
Watershed Protection continues to work with regional partners to implement the Barton Springs Regional Water Quality Protection Plan. The Plan was produced in 2005 by a coalition of thirteen county and municipal governments and groundwater conservation districts, including the City of Austin. A workshop hosted jointly by this working group and the Hill Country Alliance was held in April 2013 to celebrate successes and continue efforts to implement the plan. Additional collaborative projects include a conservation plan for the Barton Springs Salamander and the environmental review of the proposed Texas Department of Transportation Oak Hill Parkway and State Highway 45 Southwest roadway projects.

Major Initiatives and Key Accomplishments Continued

Volunteers dug out this karst feature to allow water to more easily recharge the aquifer.

Drought management.

Austin Water has stayed focused on water supply management and planning to ensure equitable management of the Colorado River and to protect the City's water supply. Collaboration with partners will continue, as will development and implementation of effective drought response related activities. In response to ongoing drought conditions, Austin has implemented Stage 2 restrictions, which limit irrigation to one-day per week. These restrictions have been in place for 20 of the past 22 months. The City is well on its way to the goal of 140 gallons per capita per day, hitting 142 during fiscal year 2012 (see Spotlight: Strategy for Water Use Management).

Update of the integrated water management plan.

In support of *Imagine Austin* water conservation provisions, update the integrated water management plan, including water conservation goals, drought planning and climate mitigation and adaptation strategies (see Spotlight: Strategy for Water Use Management).

Implementation of a new Austin Water rate structure.

The new Austin Water rate structure encourages conservation while providing price breaks for low income customers, maintaining affordability, funding conservation and education, and preserving Austin Water's financial stability.

For More Information on Priority Program 2

The Imagine Austin website's page for Priority Program 2:
www.austintexas.gov/page/sustainablewater

The Sustainability Action Agenda:
www.austintexas.gov/sustainability

Revised water use management plan:
austintexas.gov/page/revised-water-use-management-plan

Watershed Protection's 2012 State of our Environment Report:
www.austintexas.gov/watershed_protection/publications/document.cfm?id=192035

Barton Springs Regional Water Quality Protection Plan:
http://www.waterqualityplan.org/

Press release on Austin Water rate structure:
www.austintexas.gov/news/austin-water-implements-restructured-water-rates-and-increase

A healthy Austin waterway.

SPOTLIGHT: STRATEGY FOR WATER USE MANAGEMENT

A revision by Austin Water to this strategy established a year-round mandatory water use schedule which includes a Conservation Stage and three Drought Response Stages. Each of these stages increasingly restricts water usage during drought while still allowing watering of trees and vegetable gardens. These restrictions limit outdoor irrigation to a maximum of twice a week and less during some stages, prohibit daytime irrigation, limit use of commercial patio misters, and address other water-saving measures. In response to the ongoing drought, Austin Water implemented the revised Stage 2 restrictions beginning September 4, 2012, which allow watering only one day per week. Less restrictive stages limit watering to twice a week.

www.austintexas.gov/depart
ment/stage-2-watering-re
strictions

SPOTLIGHT: WATERSHED PROTECTION ORDINANCE

Watershed Protection anticipates substantial completion of the Watershed Protection Ordinance in 2013. In January 2011, City Council requested via resolution that staff develop a new ordinance to improve creek and floodplain protection, prevent unsustainable public expense on drainage systems, simplify development regulations where possible, and minimize the impact on the ability to develop land. This effort is the first of its kind since with Comprehensive Watershed Ordinance was passed in 1986. Staff met with both external and internal stakeholders from August 2011 through April 2012 to discuss potential code changes that resulted from an analysis of current code deficiencies and needs prepared in 2011. From the input received, staff worked with the Law Department to develop draft ordinance revisions. The Watershed Protection Ordinance is scheduled for presentation to boards, commissions, and Council for adoption in summer and fall 2013.

austintexas.gov/page/water
shed-protection-ordinance-0

Priority Program 4:
Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city

See page 195 of Imagine Austin for more information on Priority Program 4.

Core Departments

Watershed Protection, Planning and Development Review, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Austin Energy, Austin Water, Office of Sustainability, Austin Fire, Office of Real Estate Services, Austin Resource Recovery, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Austin Transportation, Building Services, Aviation

Priority Program Team Workplan

In developing its work plan, the team has compiled an inventory of existing City plans, regulatory policies, and programs related to green infrastructure; completed an inventory of available green infrastructure GIS data coverages; and conducted a preliminary gap analysis and needs assessment. One conclusion drawn from the analysis is that there is a need for greater inter-departmental collaboration to better "align" the City's existing infrastructure plans, policies, and programs. This alignment is being facilitated through the formation of the three inter-departmental sub-teams described on the following page.

Action Matrix: Moving Forward

★ **CE A15**. Expand the City of Austin's acquisition of environmentally significant land, conservation easements, and/or development rights for the protection of sensitive areas.

★ **LUT A38**. Review and change building and zoning codes and incorporate best practices to promote green building and sustainable development.

★ **CE A16**. Develop and implement unified, comprehensive land management of all City of Austin lands for integrated environmental sustainability, including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, and education.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Imagine Austin defines green infrastructure as strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, parks, working landscapes, other open spaces, and green stormwater controls that conserve and enhance ecosystems and provide associated benefits to human populations (P A-19).

Priority Program Sub-Teams

Green Infrastructure Acquisition Team

In order to bring a more strategic focus to the City's acquisition of new green infrastructure "assets," this team will collaborate to identify land acquisition priorities and to evaluate potential acquisitions from the perspective of maximizing "ecosystem services" and achieving multiple objectives and benefits. In addition, they will work to identify and capitalize on opportunities for interdepartmental partnerships in funding land acquisition. The team will also support a recently established administrative process for evaluating alternative public uses for land holdings considered to be "surplus" by the department with stewardship for such property.

Public Lands Management Team

This team will provide an interdepartmental forum for collaboration on several key initiatives relating to the management of public lands, including completion of the Comprehensive Urban Forestry Plan, providing input to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, implementation of Standards of Care for Trees and Vegetation, and implementation of the Invasive Species Management Plan. The team will also ensure that land management issues and costs are considered when acquiring land. The objective, as called out in *Imagine Austin*, is to develop a more unified and comprehensive approach to management of City lands for public access and recreation, connectivity, and environmental sustainability, with full consideration of the public purpose of various land holdings and any associated restrictions.

Regulatory Team

This team will provide specialized expertise to support the Land Development Code revision process. The team will evaluate current code provisions and alternative approaches and develop recommendations to improve the green infrastructure elements of the Land Development Code and other related City codes and criteria manuals.

Onion Creek.

Major Initiatives and Key Accomplishments

Adoption of an Invasive Species Management Plan.

In 2012, Austin became one of only two cities in the nation to adopt an Invasive Species Management Plan. The goal of the plan is to reduce and eradicate invasive species on City-owned and managed properties.

Purchase of parkland.

The City purchased 55 acres of parkland along Onion Creek with 2006 Bond funds. This property provides excellent recreational opportunities, such as areas of open space, picnic facilities, and the potential for 6.5 miles of trail along Onion Creek.

Investment in water quality protection lands acquisition.

The City, in partnership with others, has invested $159,545,925 million to acquire water quality protection lands in the Barton Springs Zone of the Edwards Aquifer. Investments to date have included 9,796 acres of land purchased fee simple and managed by Austin Water's Wildlands Division, as well as 16,781 acres of land protected through conservation easements. In November 2012, Austin voters approved an additional $30 million in bond funding to continue this program (see Spotlight: Preserving Land and Protecting Water Quality on p. 67).

For More Information on Priority Program 4

The Imagine Austin website's page for Priority Program 4:
www.austintexas.gov/page/Green Infrastructure

The Sustainability Action Agenda:
www.austintexas.gov/sustainability

Watershed Protection's 2012 State of our Environment Report:
www.austintexas.gov/watershed_protection/publications/document.cfm?id=192035

Invasive Species Management Plan:
www.austintexas.gov/invasive

Barbara Jordan Elementary School rain garden.

SPOTLIGHT: RAIN GARDENS — KEEPING WATER ON THE LAND

In the past year, the Watershed Protection Department and the Austin Independent School District have been building rain gardens as an opportunity to bring the community together while improving school grounds. With these types of projects, students gain service-learning experiences, neighbors become more invested in their neighborhood schools, and the campus gets a rain garden that improves water quality and can act as a teaching tool. Rain gardens have been established at a number of schools—Barbara Jordan Elementary School, Gus Garcia Middle School, and Dobie Middle School. These community building efforts have engaged a variety of volunteers representing a cross-section of Austin. Retired engineers, volunteer landscape professionals, Eagle Scout candidates, and university students have contributed their time to improve these campuses.

Planting Programs

Urban Forestry Program

Neighborwoods

**Austin Community Tree Program**

SPOTLIGHT: URBAN FOREST

As our big, green city develops and grows, we all want our urban forest to keep pace – our verdant canopy of big live oaks, colorful Texas mountain laurel, and other native trees that help define what we love about Austin. Happily, our community is doing a laudable job of loving its trees – as recognized by Austin recently landing on American Forest's list, "Top 10 Cities for Urban Forests." Among the features earning Austin national accolades are forest-friendly City rules requiring that developers preserve, plant, and replace trees, and provide for their ongoing care. As new and infill redevelopment occurs, these requirements ensure that new projects do their part to beautify the city, shade sidewalks to encourage walking, and plant the next generation of our tree canopy – all essential to Austin's sense of place. Some highlights from the past year include the Urban Forestry Program planting over 10,000 trees, Watershed Protection and PARD planting nearly 7,500 saplings, and NeighborWoods and Large Shade Tree Programs planting over 6,000 trees.

SPOTLIGHT: PRESERVING LAND AND PROTECTING WATER QUALITY

Austin Water manages and protects over 40,000 acres of source-water watersheds to protect Barton Springs and maintain Austin's public water supplies. Austin Water also manages and protects 13,500 acres of endangered species habitat that serves as Austin's mitigation to sustain economic development and public services in a manner compliant with the Endangered Species Act. The utility also restores native habitats and natural systems on 5,000 acres annually through land management and eco-system restoration projects.

www.austintexas.
gov/department/
wildland-conserva
tion-division.
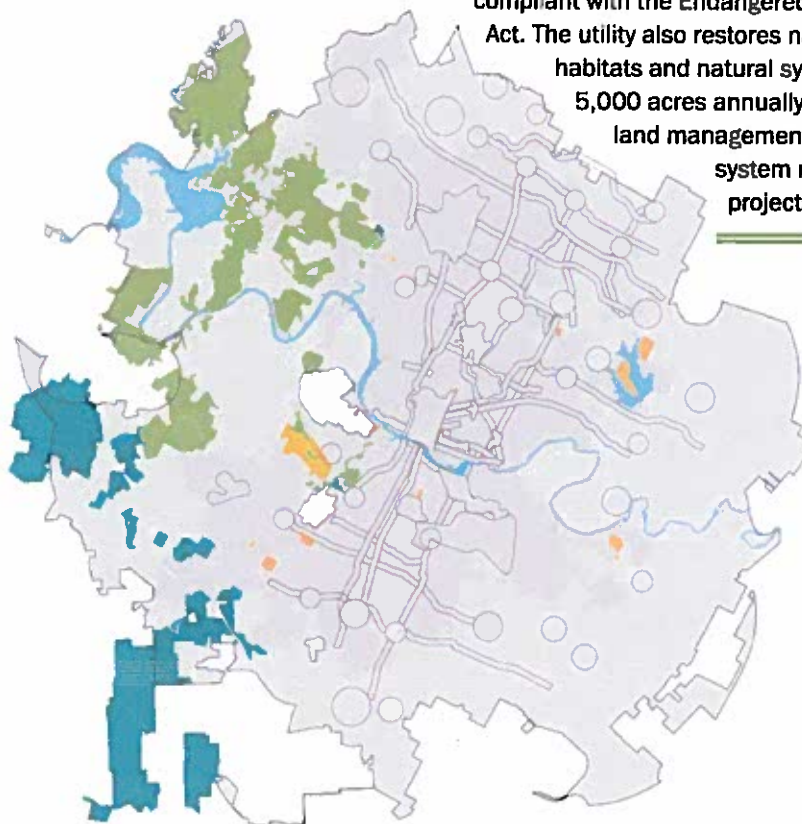
Preserved Land

■ Bacones Canyonlands Plan

■ Water Quality Protection Lands

■ Parks Department Nature Preserves

(Between 2001 and 2012, the City purchased 11,530 acres of Water Quality Protection Lands to protect the quality and quantity of water that flows into Barton Springs. Austin is actively working to use $30 million from the 2012 bond to purchase additional land towards this aim.)

Nature & City

CREATIVITY & ECONOMY

Education + Arts + Economy

Priority Programs 3 and 5 seek to promote economic vitality. Priority Program 3 focuses on workforce development issues, while Priority Program 5 addresses Austin's creative economy.
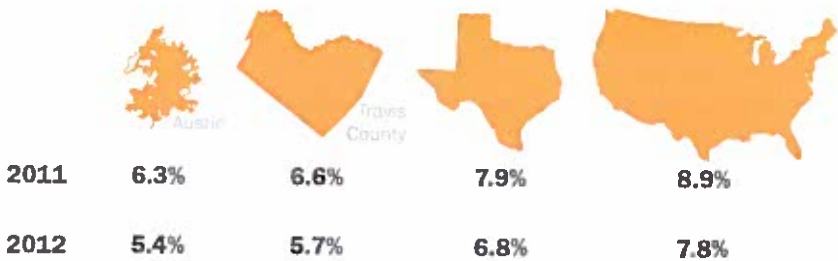
Current Conditions

Austin's economy is in the process of rebounding from the recession. Unemployment rates are down, while the number of people working for small businesses is increasing. An essential component of the recovery has been the success of Austin's creative industries.

Unemployment Comparison

Unemployment in Austin is lower than the county, state and nation.

	Austin	Travis County	Texas	US
2011	6.3%	6.6%	7.9%	8.9%
2012	5.4%	5.7%	6.8%	7.8%

Unemployment Over Time

6.5% unemployment peak in 2010

(City of Austin)

Small Business Employees

5-year high of **208,549** small business employees

(Austin-Round Rock MSA)

Austin's unemployment rate is not only low, it is falling — from a recession-high of 6.5% in 2010. The number of employees in small business, another indicator of economic health, mirrors this trend. In 2012, the number of small business employees hit a five-year high, a strong rebound just three years after a recession low in 2009.

"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... and developing conditions that foster both local businesses and large institutions."
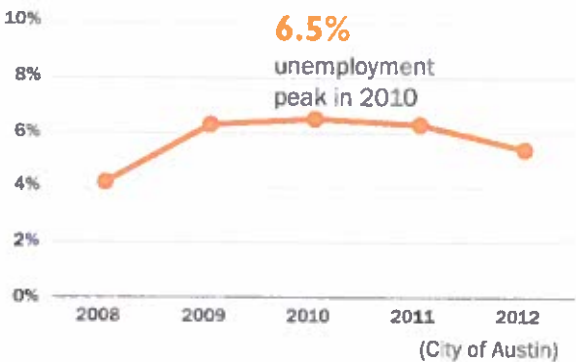
— *Imagine Austin Vision p. 87*

Creativity & Economy
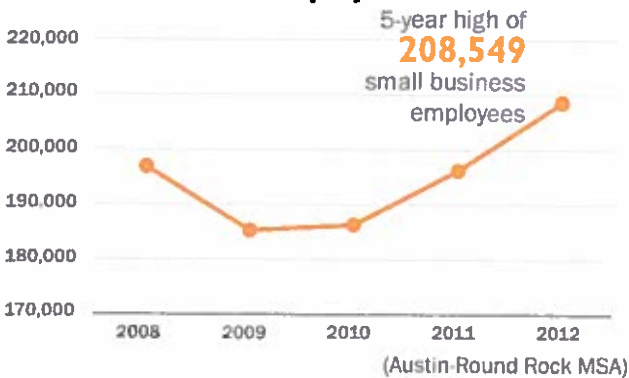
In the following graphs we've compared Travis County (Austin) to counties with similar population densities, including King (Seattle), Dallas (Dallas), and Multnomah (Portland) Counties.
(Data from the Americans for the Arts Arts Index: http://www.artsindexusa.org/where-i-live?c4=48453)

*"Participation in Arts and Culture" score based on a sum of percentages of adults who participate in various art and cultural activities.
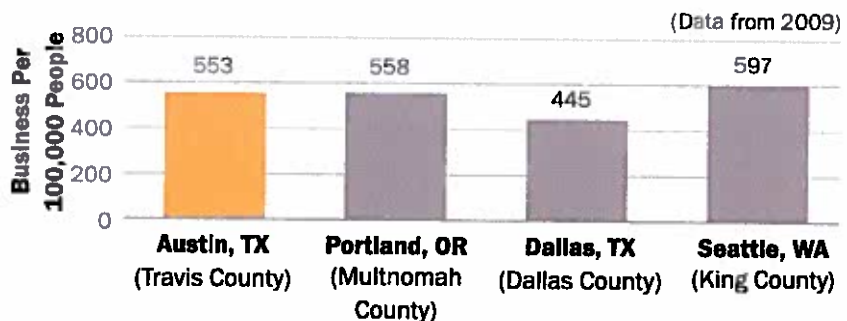
Participation in Arts and Culture

Part of Austin's economic recovery can be attributed to its creative industries, including growing gaming, digital media, film, and music festival industries, as well as community support of the arts. A large number of for-profit creative industries in Austin suggests there are many options available to residents with strong competition between businesses.

(Data from 2009)

	Austin, TX (Travis County)	Portland, OR (Multnomah County)	Dallas, TX (Dallas County)	Seattle, WA (King County)
Score*	226	195	173	243
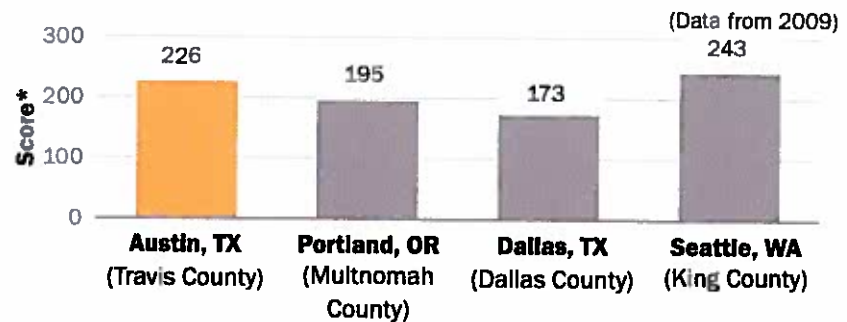
Creative Industry Businesses (Per 100,000 people)

This growth paired with Travis County's strong participation in the arts and different kinds of cultural activities demonstrates the importance of the arts to the overall community.

(Data from 2009)

	Austin, TX (Travis County)	Portland, OR (Multnomah County)	Dallas, TX (Dallas County)	Seattle, WA (King County)
Business Per 100,000 People	553	558	445	597

Nonprofits Arts Revenue Per Capita

However, both arts contributions and program revenue streams in the nonprofit arts and culture sector are not as strong in Travis as in the counties where Seattle, Dallas, and Portland reside; in these counties, private giving is more robust.

(Data from 2010)

	Austin, TX (Travis County)	Portland, OR (Multnomah County)	Dallas, TX (Dallas County)	Seattle, WA (King County)
Per Capita Revenue	$129	$249	$279	$240

Priority Program 3:
Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses

See page 193 of Imagine Austin for more information on Priority Program 3.

Core Departments

Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office, Planning and Development Review, Parks and Recreation, Austin Public Library, Human Resources, Health and Human Services

Priority Program Team Workplan

The Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office was identified as the lead department for this priority program. The team is inventorying the workforce development and educational programs that currently serve Austinites to identify gaps and recommend programs to address needs. They have also added new partners to help achieve the work plan steps and actions.

A ribbon cutting for one of the Small Business Development Program's customers (Live Oak Pharmacy) opening a location.

Action Matrix: Moving Forward

★ **E A1.** Maintain partnerships between local chambers of commerce, business associations, and regional and state economic agencies to develop and improve programs to recruit and retain businesses to Austin.

★ **E A13.** Work with local school districts, the University of Texas, Austin Community College, and other area partners to identify gaps in educational programs; the skills needed for current, emerging, and targeted job sectors; and educate students at all levels about the skills needed to compete in a 21st Century economy.

★ **E A18.** Partner with the Austin business community to develop policies, regulations, and programs to foster the development of local businesses by developing a mentor program; supporting businesses at each stage of the business life cycle; and enhancing and expanding small business development services to grow market share of small, local businesses.