



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Urban Transportation Commission

Recommendation Number 20170110-04A:

An Integrated Strategy for Acquisition of Transit Parks at Transit Hubs

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of the Urban Transportation Commission to vet proposals and make recommendations concerning pedestrian, bicycle and public transit infrastructure in the City of Austin, guided by the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan, and

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin has directed the City to pursue a compact and connected land form, equipped with public spaces to shape truly walkable and bikeable, affordable communities of all ages and abilities, and

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin implies that the most compact places should also be the most connected, with priority to walking, biking and transit, and

WHEREAS, The City's activity corridors have two functions – as transportation systems and as places to live. These functions sometimes conflict. The sides of busy corridors may be characterized as “too loud to linger”, and

WHEREAS, The CodeNext Diagnosis Report calls for corridors to be broken up into transit hubs, also known as village centers, which should have the most people, best transit, and most careful attention to pedestrian amenities, and

WHEREAS, The highest quality place to live and to be along a corridor is not right next to the road, but a block off the corridor where stress factors like noise and air pollution are much reduced, and

WHEREAS, Provision of public open space near transit stations, arranged out and away from the corridor and from the station, helps to achieve multiple Imagine Austin goals: mobility, community-building, recreation, for people of all ages and abilities, and

WHEREAS, Mobility open space includes two reinforcing elements: a hardscaped transit plaza closest to the station and businesses, and a greener pocket park farther from the station, and

WHEREAS, Examples of corridor locations that work particularly well for both mobility and recreation in Austin include Guadalupe near 22nd St, where the Drag intersects with the West Mall at UT; North Lamar Blvd near 12th St, where the Shoal Creek bike route crosses under the corridor to House Park; North Lamar

near 38th St, where a greenbelt connects from Central Market to Guadalupe St; North Lamar near 45th, where the park at The Triangle provides both connectivity and recreation, Saltillo Plaza in East Austin, and

WHEREAS, Feedback over the course of many years, from communities adjoining corridors with high growth like Burnet Rd, has called for minimum public space at village centers to achieve walkable communities for all ages and abilities, and

WHEREAS, This feedback led City Council in 2013 to amend the Vertical Mixed Use rules that govern zoning along many corridors, to require open space extensions to rapid bus platforms using a part of the open space already required in the ordinance, and

WHEREAS, Land near corridors is expensive and getting more so. These high land prices tend to deflect current Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) acquisitions away from properties close to the corridor where they provide the most mobility and recreational benefit, and

WHEREAS, The City faces a dangerous Catch-22, where there is no integrated strategy to acquire and land bank park space near corridor village centers prior to development, and no ability to retrofit a community with sufficient open space after development,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Urban Transportation Commission recommends that the City develop a targeted program for acquisition of real property for Transit Parks to explicitly support mobility, including the following:

1. **From City Council or City Manager:** direction to staff to develop a pilot transit park acquisition program, implemented on at least two corridors, and funded from the 2016 Mobility bond package
2. **From CodeNext:** more robust requirements for transit plazas and/or parkland dedication in development adjacent to rapid bus and rail stations
3. **From PARD:** prioritization of pocket park acquisition within one to two blocks of rapid transit stations
4. **From PARD:** development of a land banking mechanism, similar to or integrated with the program used by affordable housing, so that transit-oriented parks can be obtained and planned for ahead of development
5. **From City Council:** revision of existing rules that prevent Parks Department from bidding on park land at market rate

Date of Approval: January 10, 2017

Record of the vote: 7-0, with Commissioners Rangel, Hoesk, and Weatherby absent

Attest:



Jim Dale, executive staff liaison