



MEMORANDUM

To: Small Area Plan Joint Committee of Planning Commission and ZAP

From: Stevie Greathouse, Program Manager
Planning and Zoning Department

Date: April 6, 2018

Subject: Future of Small Area Planning Initial Findings and Recommendations

Background

The Planning and Zoning Department is working to develop new types of small area plans and a new way to select future planning areas based on a number of inputs including: the "Zucker Report," the 2016 *Audit of Neighborhood Planning*, discussion at the Commission and Council level related to CodeNEXT, and City Council Resolution [#20170928-101](#).

Since approval of the Council Resolution in September Planning and Zoning staff have:

- Conducted research and analysis
- Formed an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary team to collaboratively develop ideas for future small area planning services
- Facilitated small group discussions with staff around the topic of our existing planning legacy of corridor, station area, and neighborhood plans
- Conducted a survey of external stakeholders
- Held a series of dialogue meetings with our partner departments
- Solicited the input and creative ideas of Planning and Zoning staff regarding future small area plan ideas through a "Design Challenge," and
- Solicited input from the Planning Commission and Small Area Plan Joint Committee.

We will be developing a detailed recommendation to bring to the full Planning Commission and City Council later this month.

Preliminary Recommendations

- 1) **Provide a Spectrum of Future Planning Services.** We anticipate that we will introduce several product lines related to small area planning:
 - **Imagine Austin Corridor/Centers Plans** within *Imagine Austin*-identified Centers and Corridors. These plans would be prioritized based on the area's susceptibility to change, the

potential to leverage mobility investments and other cross-departmental city-initiatives, and other factors.

- **Complete Communities Plans** would improve access and opportunity to residents' basic daily needs. These plans would be prioritized based on citywide complete communities analysis. They would focus on implementation-type interventions to move the needle on the area's most pressing issues. By fulfilling the identified needs, the community would move closer to completion.
- **Special Studies and Plans** would include Council and CMO-requested studies, citywide planning initiatives, exclusively urban design-focused plans, and other specialized departmental planning products.

- 2) **Focus on Mobility Corridors initially.** City Council Resolution [#20170928-101](#) specifically directed the Planning and Zoning Department to identify potential geographic areas along corridors identified for transportation investments under the 2016 Mobility Bond, Capital Metro Project Connect, and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan. Based on this direction, as well as discussions with the Corridor Program Office, Austin Transportation Department, Capital Metro and others, staff are analyzing the corridors that have been identified for future investments, and will be prioritizing corridors that would benefit from small area planning.
- 3) **Apply CodeNEXT Regulatory Tools.** Depending on the characteristics of the area being planned, future small area plans would be accompanied by customized modifications to the land development code that support the vision of the plan. These modifications could include:
 - a. Amendments to the zoning map; and/or
 - b. Development of specialized overlays and/or regulating plans for particular geographic areas.
- 4) **Clarify and require adherence to a citywide policy framework.** Future small area plans would be developed to fit within and to be consistent with the overall citywide policy framework.¹ In order to ensure that small area plans support our citywide vision and that they provide clear policy guidance, there may be a need to develop new tools to guide development and implementation of small area plans. (e.g. numerical targets and other decision support systems, revised LDC procedures, revised Comprehensive Plan policies, etc).
- 5) **Enhance engagement and consider planning through an Equity Lens.** The Planning and Zoning Department is in the process of partnering with the Equity Office on an Equity Assessment of CodeNEXT as well as the department as a whole. As the process of developing new planning services moves forward we will select planning areas, develop plans, and engage the community through an equity lens. We anticipate incorporating the recommended actions that come out of the Equity Assessment later this year into all future planning programs and projects.
- 6) **Partner with other departments.** Based on our meetings with partner departments, staff has identified the need to work more collaboratively, and may formally establish and utilize cross-departmental strike teams for particular planning efforts.

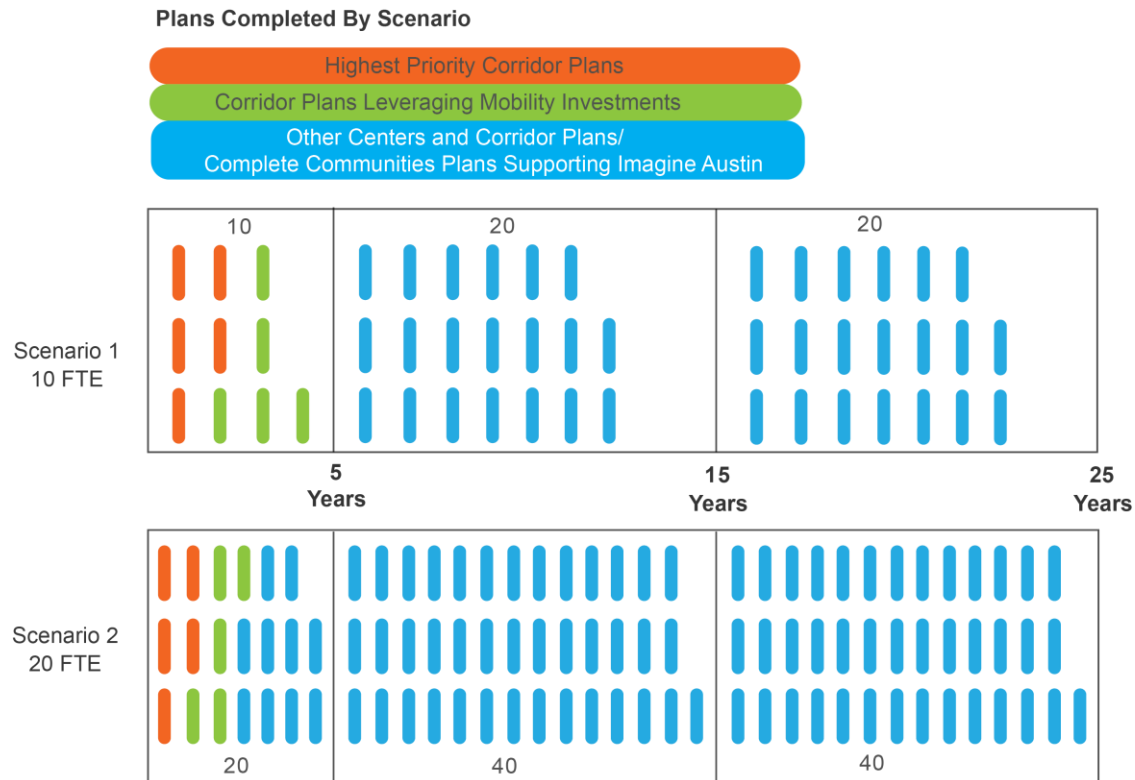
¹ Previously adopted small area plans including, Neighborhood Plans, Station Area Plans, Master Plans, and Corridor Plans would continue to exist as attachments to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan unless repealed or replaced through future action by the Austin City Council.

- 7) Emphasize Plan Implementation.** Implementation of the plan will be considered during every aspect of the planning process, and this consideration will be enhanced by clearly establishing expectations with community members and actively engaging partner departments. Depending on the characteristics of the plan, innovative funding partnerships may be explored, or planning may be accompanied by implementation of tactical/demonstration projects. The Planning and Zoning Department will continue to work in cooperation with neighborhood groups and City departments to monitor plan implementation status after plan adoption. In addition, the Department's small area planning process will more directly feed into the Strategic Areas Analysis of the CIP Long Range Strategic Plan.

Resource Scenarios

With existing resources, the Planning and Zoning Department would be able to complete, on average, 1 to 2 new small area plans per year, as described under **Scenario 1** below. With a doubling of existing resources, as shown under **Scenario 2**, PAZ would be able to complete on average 3-4 new plans per year. **Scenario 3** assumes additional one-time resources available for plans including consultant augmentation and/or demonstration projects. Scenario 3 would not increase the number of plans that could be developed over a given period of time, but would have the potential to enhance the quality and support early implementation of those plans.

	<i>Scenario 1: Base Case</i>	<i>Scenario 2: Expedited</i>	<i>Scenario 3: Enhanced</i>
Plans per year	1-2	3-4	3-4
Deliverables			
Background Research and Analysis	✓	✓	✓
Online and in person engagement	✓	✓	✓
Plan Document Development	✓	✓	✓
Code and Zoning Map Development	✓	✓	✓
Departmental Coordination	✓	✓	✓
Implementation Monitoring	✓	✓	✓
<i>Specialized technical analysis</i>			✓
<i>Funding for demonstration or tactical investments</i>			✓
<i>Enhanced engagement activities</i>			✓
Personnel	10 FTE	20 FTE	20 FTE + Consulting Services
Total On-Going Costs (includes personnel and commodities)	\$1,000,000/yr	\$2,000,000/yr	\$2,000,000/yr
One-Time Costs			\$500,000/plan
Additional Resources Needed	\$0	\$1,000,000/yr	\$2,000,000/yr



Next Steps

- 1) Finalize Staff Analysis.** Over the next several weeks, staff will:
 - Develop a detailed description of the proposed product lines described above based on the results of the Planning and Zoning Department Design Challenge, Public Survey, and meetings with departments;
 - Wrap up our initial analysis and prioritization of the mobility corridors for planning services based on the direction provided by City Council Resolution [#20170928-101](#);
 - Further refine our resource analysis; and
 - Prepare a briefing memo for Planning Commission and City Council which includes our recommendations, resource needs, and a year 1 work plan.
- 2) Briefings.** In late April we will distribute a briefing memo to Planning Commission and City Council, and will be available to provide briefings upon request thereafter.
- 3) Future action items.** After the briefings we will continue to refine our analysis and recommendations, and will bring specific recommendations back for action, as appropriate. Future actions could include:
 - Budget modifications
 - Code amendments, and/or
 - Initiation of one or more small area plans or planning studies.

Attachment(s):

- Summary of Public Survey
- Presentation to SAPC Joint Committee
- *Imagine Austin* Growth Concept map
- Prototype Complete Communities Map
- 2016 Mobility Bond Corridor Mobility Program
- Previously-Adopted Small Area Plans, including Neighborhood Plans Map

cc: Greg Guernsey, Jerry Rusthoven, Matt Dugan, Jorge Rousselin, Mark Walters