



**PALM  
DISTRICT  
PLANNING**

# Palm District Planning Initiative

Urban Design Commission  
April 25, 2022



**HOUSING &  
PLANNING**

# Content

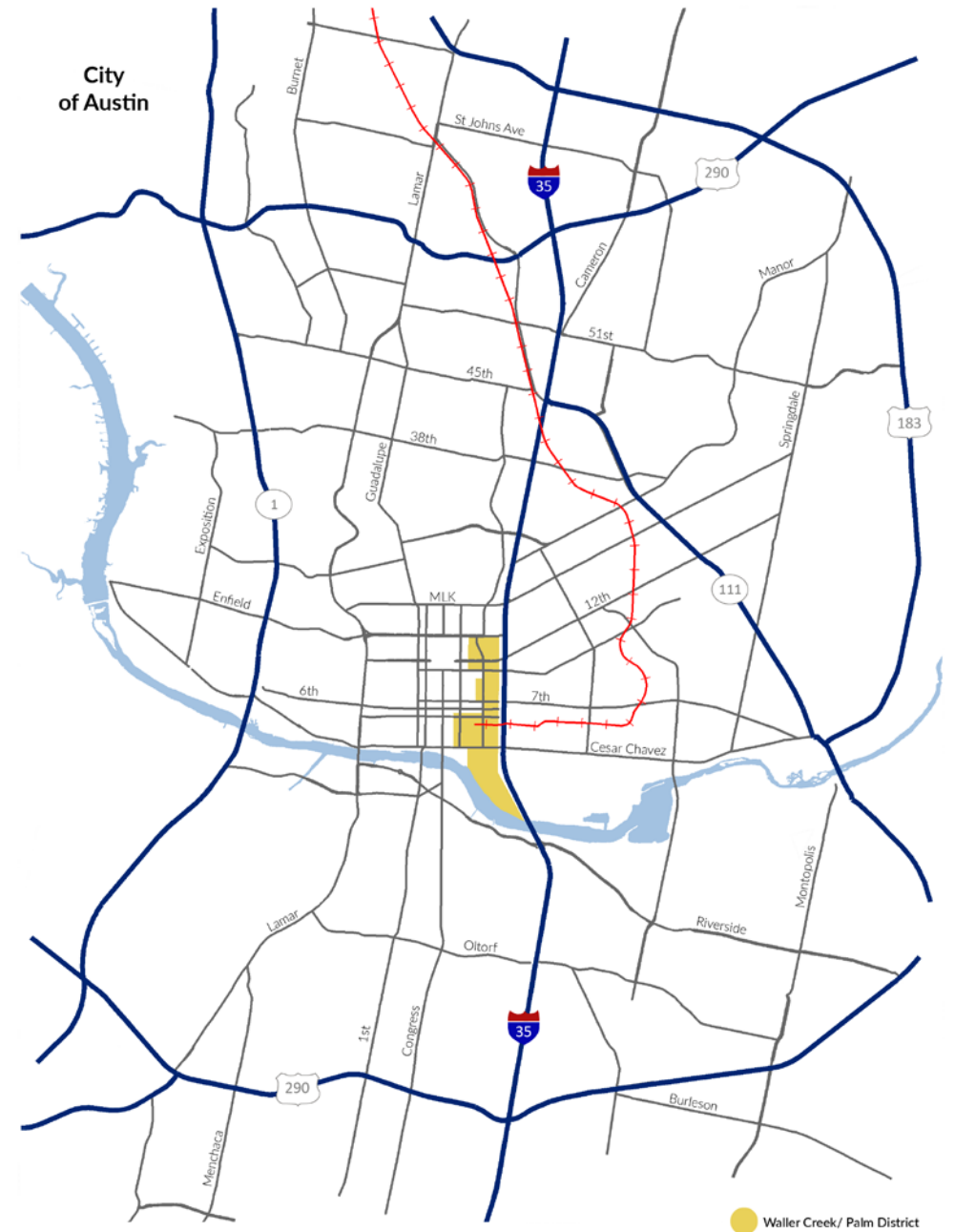
- Background
- Study Area
- What We Heard
- Draft Vision Framework
- Next Steps

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# Background and Study Area



Develop a shared vision for a complex, culturally rich, and rapidly transforming part of downtown Austin.







Gold Line / Metro Rapid (Proposed)

Brush Square Improvement Plan

Proposed Heritage Tourism/Proposed Mexican American Heritage Corridor/Cultural District

Convention Center Expansion

Waterloo Greenway

ESB-Mexican American Cultural Center Expansion

Blue Line (Proposed)

**Palm District Study Area**

- Initiatives
- Project Connect
- Blue Line (Proposed)
- Green Line (Proposed)
- Red Line (Proposed)
- Gold Line (Proposed)
- Mexican American Heritage Corridor (Proposed)
- Waterloo Greenway
- I-35 Capital Express Central Project
- Points of Interest
- Subdistricts
- Rainey Street District
- Red River Cultural District
- Innovation District

State Capitol

Waterloo Park

Innovation District

Red River Cultural District

APD Headquarters

Red Line + Green Line

Palm Park

Palm School

Rainey Mobility Improvements

Rainey Street District

I-35 Capital Express Central Project



**PALM DISTRICT PLANNING**



# Resolution 20190523-029

- Palm School Negotiations
- Rainey Street District Fund
- Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor
- Convention Center Expansion
- District Planning Process
- Improved Connectivity







# Project Team

## Project Leadership:

- **J. Rodney Gonzales, Assistant City Manager**  
*Executive Lead*
- **Stevie Greathouse, Housing and Planning**  
*Project Lead*
- **Jorge Rousselin, Housing and Planning**  
*Urban Design Lead*

## Core Project Team:

- **Mark Walters, Principal Planner**
- **Jesse Gutierrez, Senior Planner**
- **Susan Watkins, Senior Planner**

## Project Support:

- HPD Urban Design Division
- HPD Historic Preservation Office, Austin History Center
- HPD Communications Team, Communications and Public Information Office
- Martha Cotera (Information Systems DBA)

## Coordinating Departments:

- Convention Center
- Economic Development
- Real Estate
- Austin Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Watershed Protection
- Office of Sustainability
- Equity Office



# Partners/Key Stakeholders

- *Downtown Austin Alliance*
- *Waterloo Greenway*
- *Travis County*
- *Capital Metro*
- *American Institute of Architects*
- *UT School of Architecture*
- *Texas Department of Transportation*
- *Preservation Austin*
- *Visit Austin*
- *Our Austin Story*
- *The Trail Foundation*
- *Travis County Historical Commission*
- *The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce*
- *Housing Authority of the City of Austin*
- *Capital City Innovation*
- *Movability*
- *East Sixth Street Public Improvement District*
- *Project Connect Advisory Net*
- *Hispanic Austin Leadership*
- *Hispanic Advocates Business Leadership of Austin*
- *The Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association*
- *ESB-MACC*
- *Mexic-Arte*
- *La Peña*
- *The Red River Cultural District*
- *La Raza Roundtable*
- *The Rainey Neighbors Association*
- *The East Cesar Chavez NPCT*
- *The Rainey Business Coalition*
- *The Town Lake Neighborhood Association*
- *The Austin History Center Association*
- *The Greater Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*
- *City of Austin Boards and Commissions*  
....and more

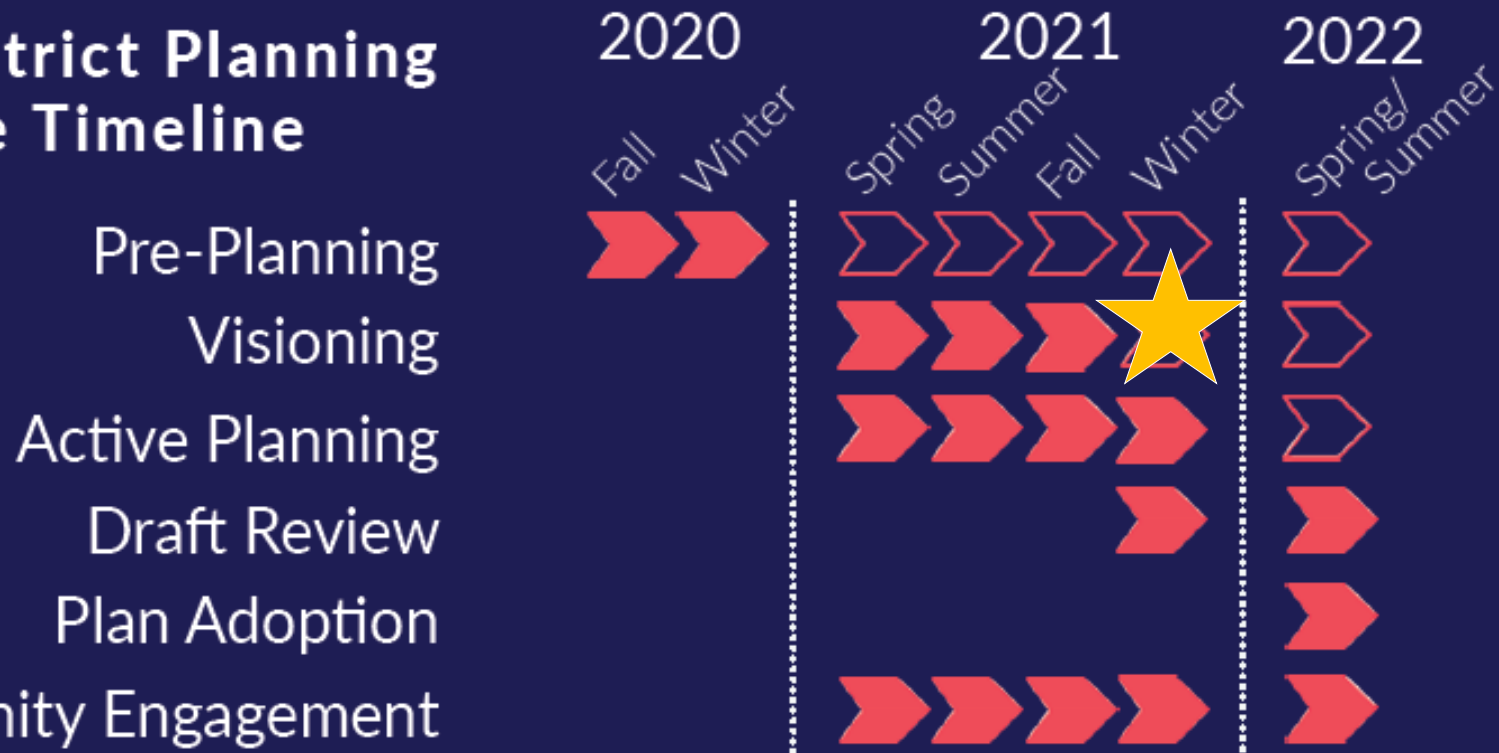




WE ARE HERE



# Palm District Planning Initiative Timeline



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# Overview Video



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# What We Heard



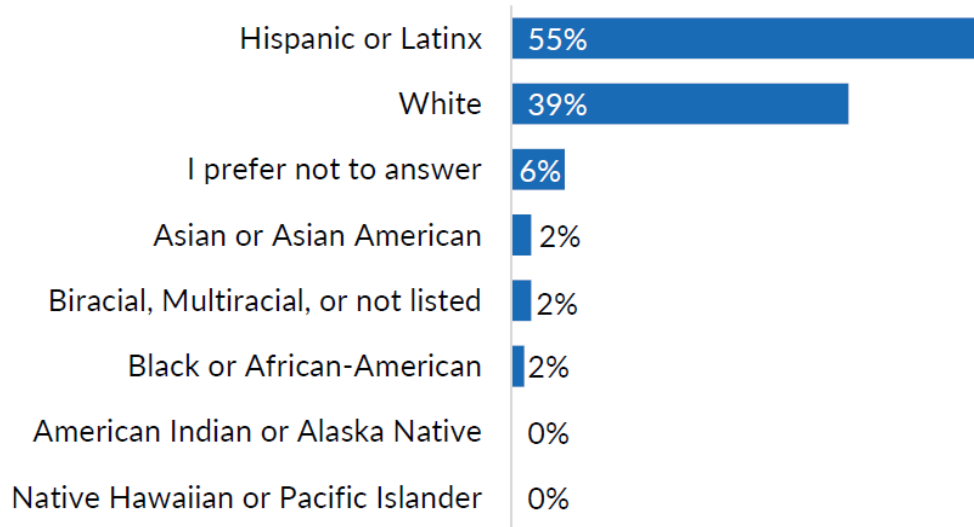
# Participants

- **Visits to SpeakUp Austin! Webpage: 3,600**
- **Survey Responses: 337**
- **Visioning Forum Attendees: 151**
- **Targeted East Austin Outreach: 75 + (Individuals and Organizations)**
- **AIA Event Participants: 60+**
- **Interactive Map Responses: 23**

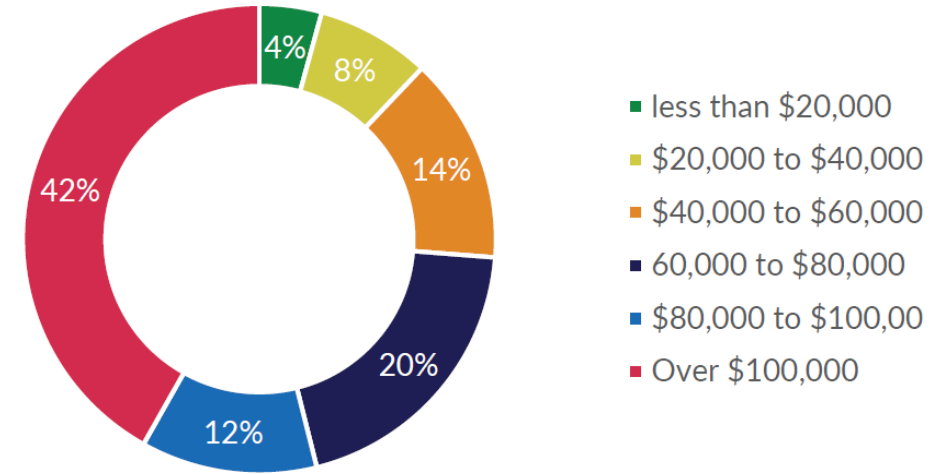


# Survey Demographics

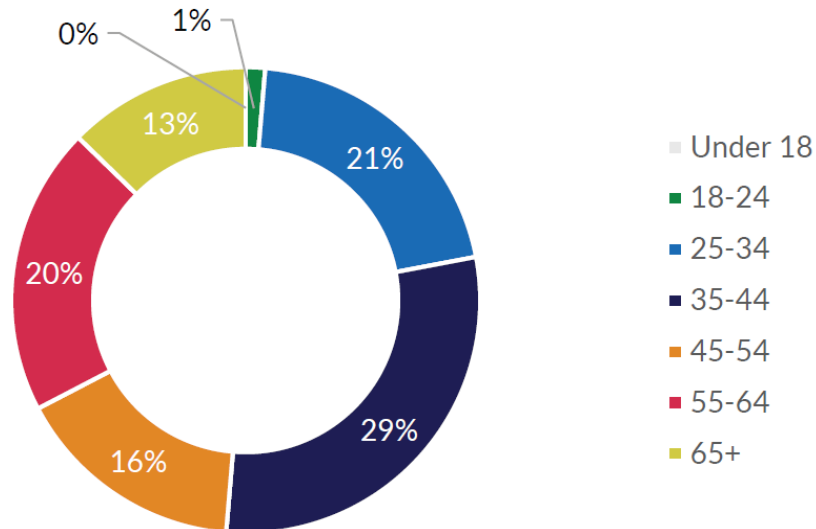
## Race and Ethnicity



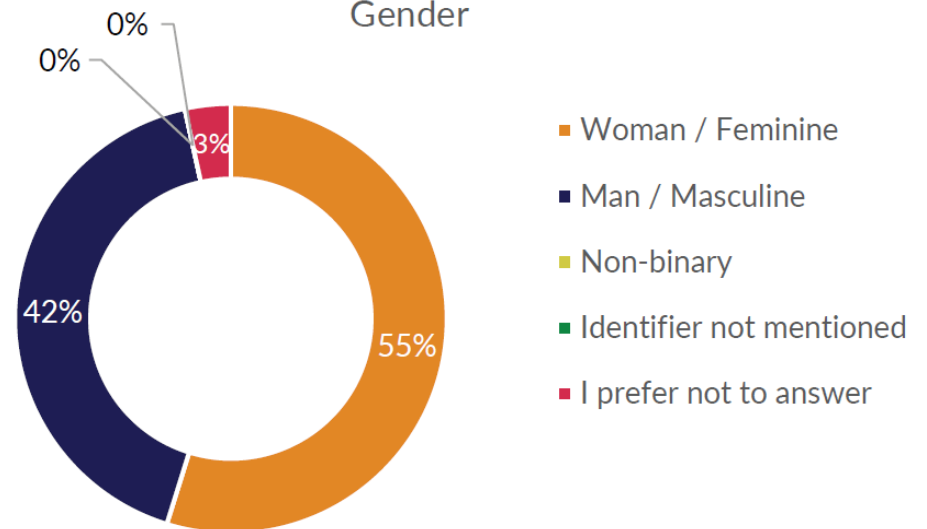
## Household Income



## Age Range



## Gender



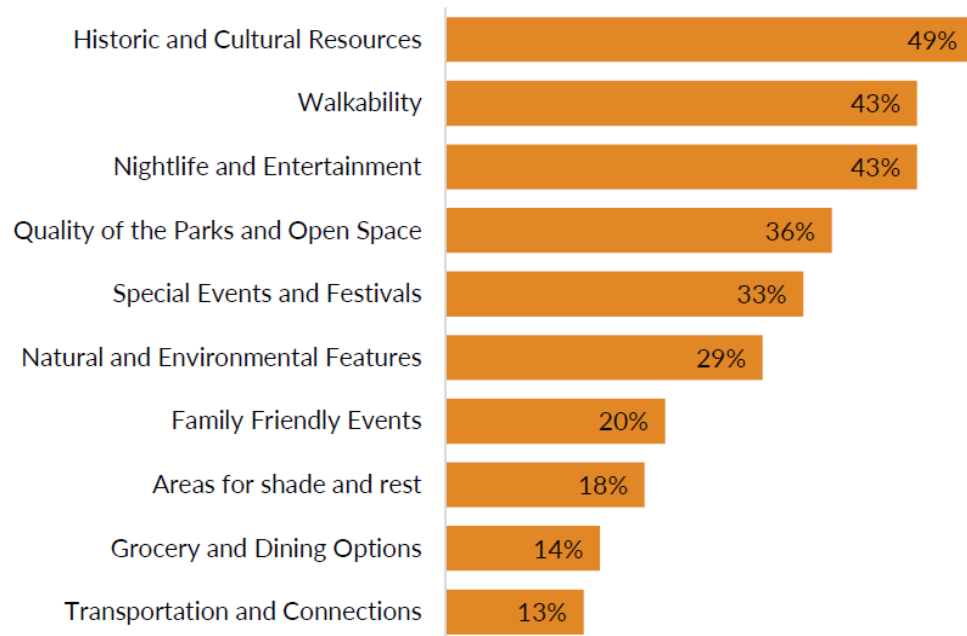
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# Survey and Visioning Forums

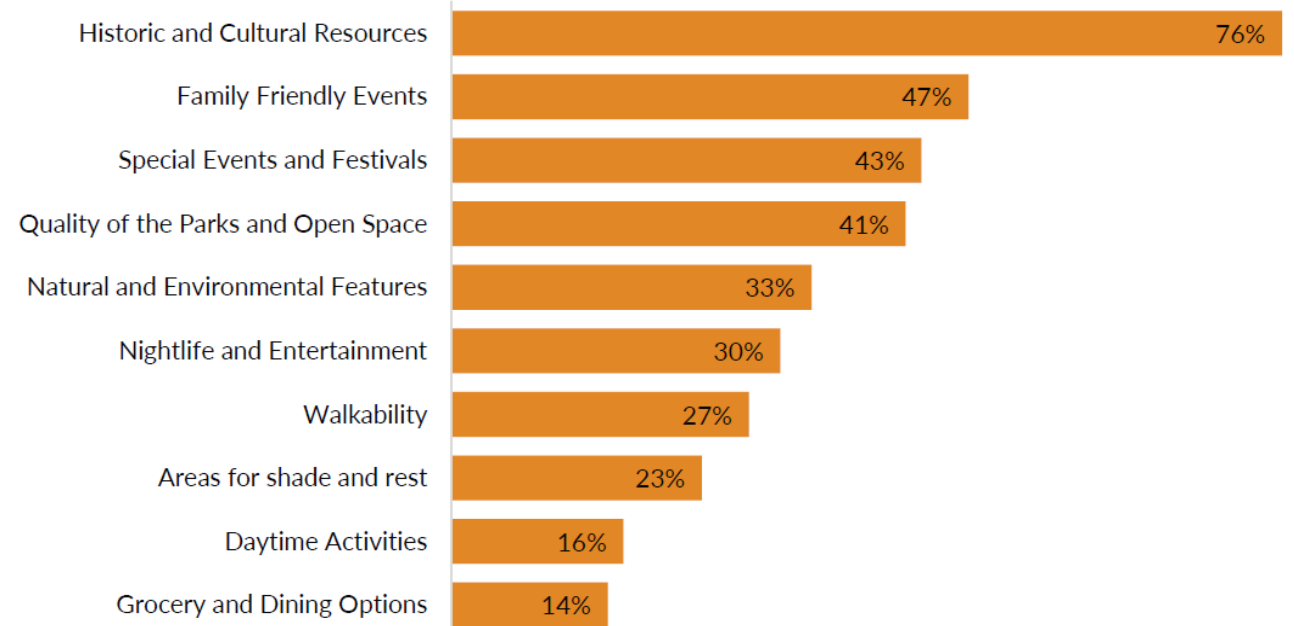


# Survey Responses

What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the most?



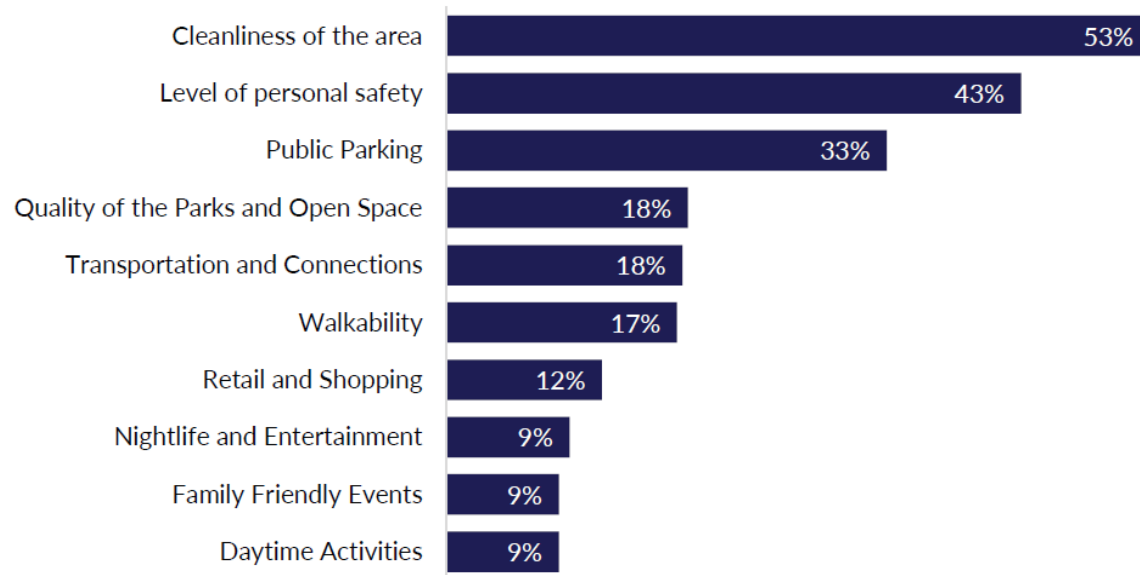
Hispanic or Latinx Response





# Survey Responses

What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the least?



Hispanic or Latinx Response







# Survey Responses (263 Open Ended Comments)

## On Palm School and History & Culture

*“My father along with his siblings all attended Palm School. It represents a vital part of the history for many families who grew up in East Austin. The connection from Palm School to UJH (University Junior High School) to the old Austin High—which has been restored beautifully—is important to recognizing the reality many families faced living in East Austin . . . There are very few landmarks in Austin that recognize & celebrate the contributions of Mexican Americans to the Austin community.”*



# Visioning Forums (372 Comments):



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Focused Outreach to  
East Austin Community  
Members



# Focus Group and Interview Participants

- La Raza Roundtable
- Current and Former Elected Officials
- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Tejano Democrats
- Palm School Alumni
- The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)
- La Pena Arts, Inc.
- Mexic-Arte
- Nuestro Grupo/Academia Cuauhtli
- AHMIGA (Latina civic and social networking organization)
- Café Con Letras
- L.A.C.E.
- PODER
- Long-time East Austin residents





# Recommendations and Comment Topics

- Palm School/Palm Park
- Palm District Planning Initiative
- Palm District as a Cultural Hub
- Rainey Street
- Mexican American Heritage Corridor (5th Street)
- Waterloo Greenway and Historic and Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness
- Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)
- Convention Center
- History and Preservation
- Innovation District
- Assorted Comments

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American Institute of  
Architects  
Recommendations



# American Institute of Architects (AIA) Team

## AIA Communities by Design



1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

- Cheryl Morgan, FAIA, Birmingham, Alabama (Team Leader)
- Rick Reinhard, Washington DC
- Sherry Okun-Rudnak, MA, LEED-AP, California
- Desiree Aranda, Phoenix, AZ
- Paola Capo, AIA Communities by Design Staff
- Erin Simmons, AIA Communities by Design Staff
- Joel Mills, Senior Director AIA Communities by Design

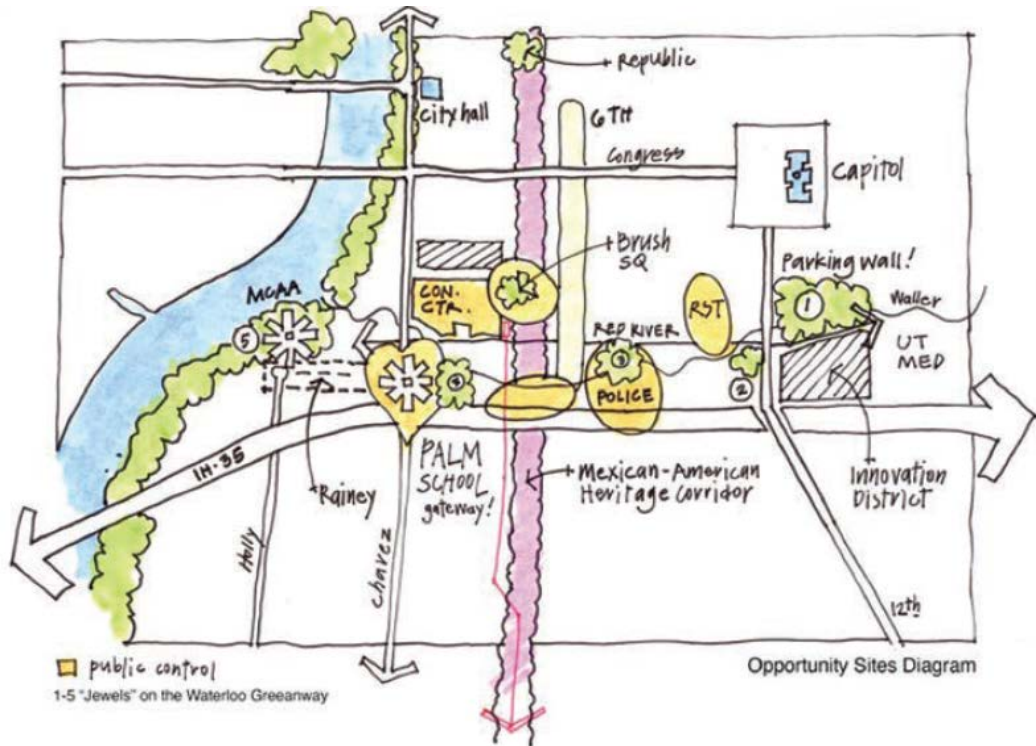


# AIA Recommendations:

“Ladies and gentlemen, citizens of Austin, the time is now. The opportunity is before you. The call to action has been sounded. You own it and you together carry the responsibility and the duty to your neighbors and fellow citizens to make this right. Make it happen.” (p. 32 AIA Report)



The AIA report included a rendering of a potential gateway to Downtown through the Palm District highlighting the Mexican American heritage of the area.







# Draft Vision Framework

# VISION

The Palm District is a vibrant historic hub of downtown where the past is honored, culture is celebrated, and the future is shaped.



*Dense transit-oriented development is balanced with history and natural spaces creating physical connections that invite people to move easily to and through the district.*



*The district is a dynamic place, growing and evolving, while actively retaining families and individuals who have traditionally called this place home.*

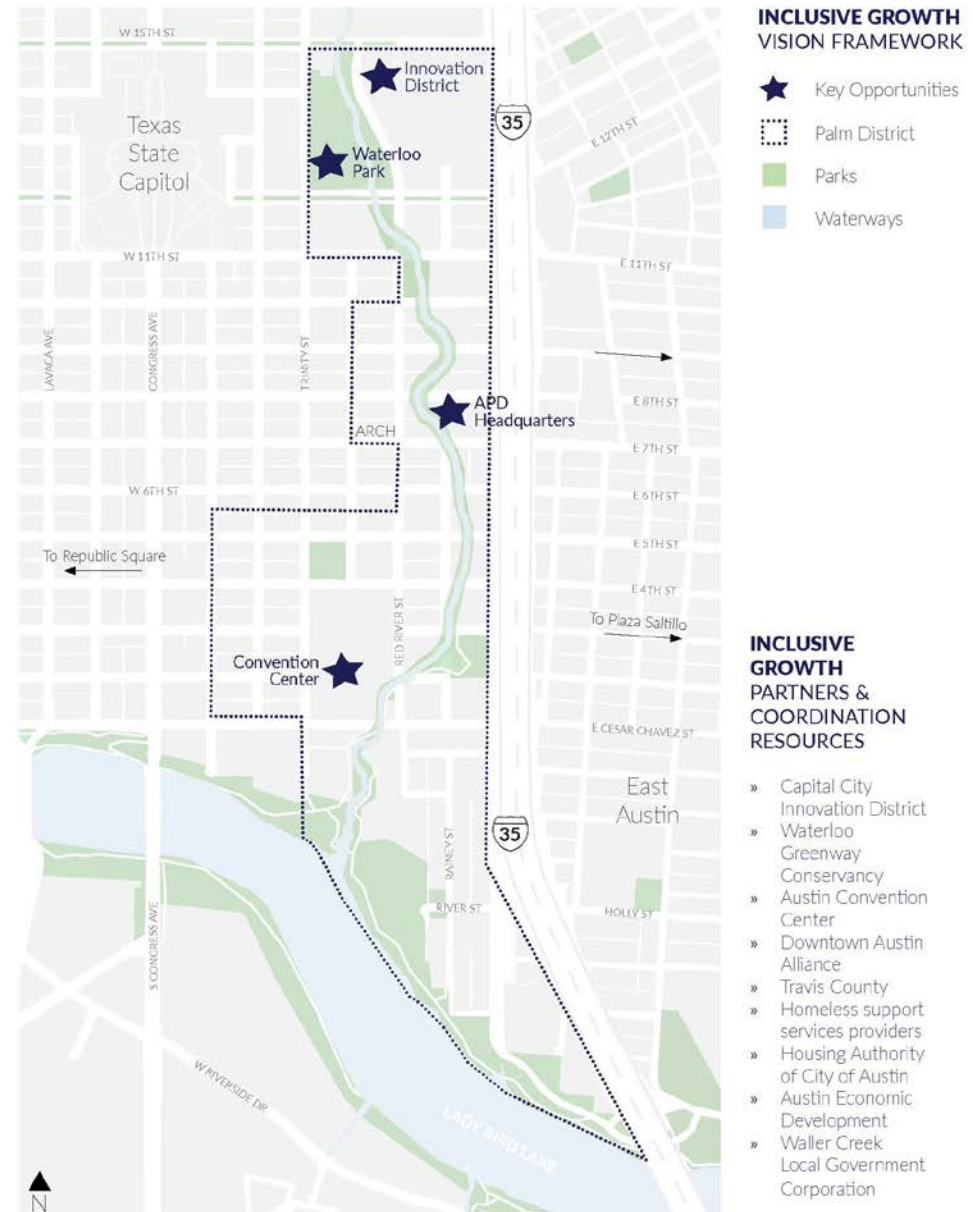


*Creativity and innovation are cultivated, and people from Austin and beyond are welcome to live, relax, work, play, learn, and connect with others.*



# INCLUSIVE GROWTH

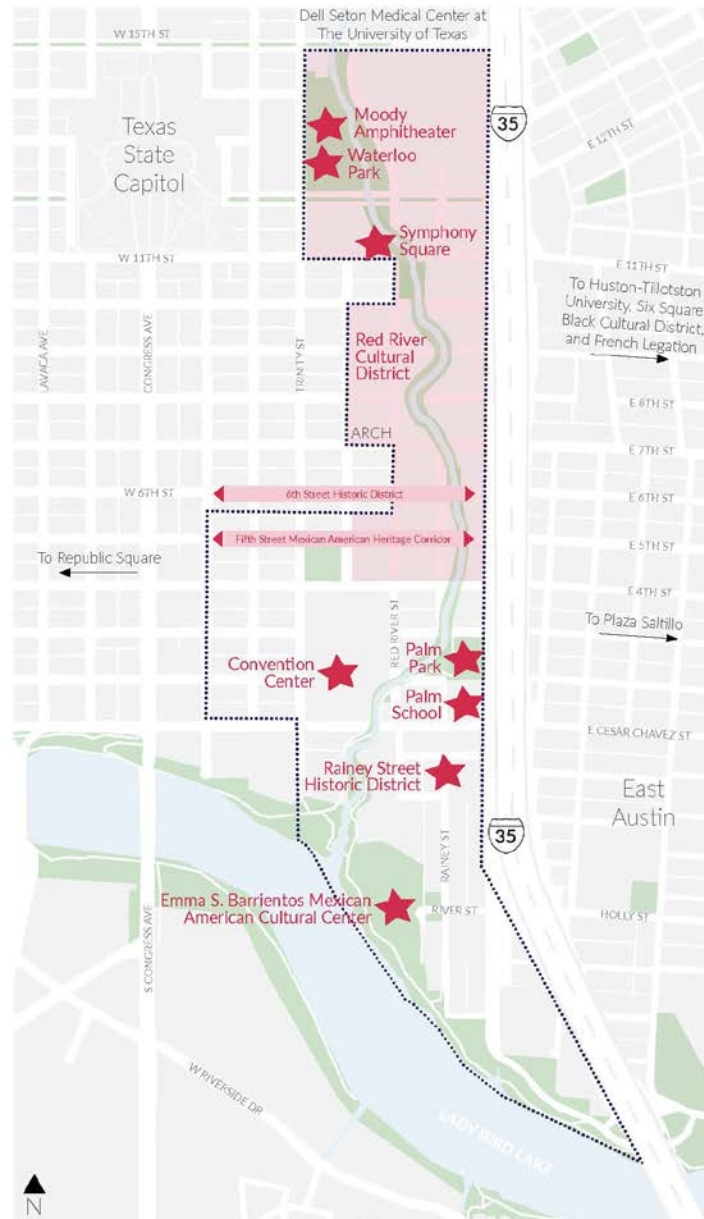
Growth in the district will provide a prosperous future for longtime and recent residents and for established and new businesses.





# CULTURE

The district will become a destination that celebrates its multi-cultural heritage.



## CULTURE VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ Key Opportunities
- ➔ Key Corridors
- ▭ Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways

## CULTURE PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

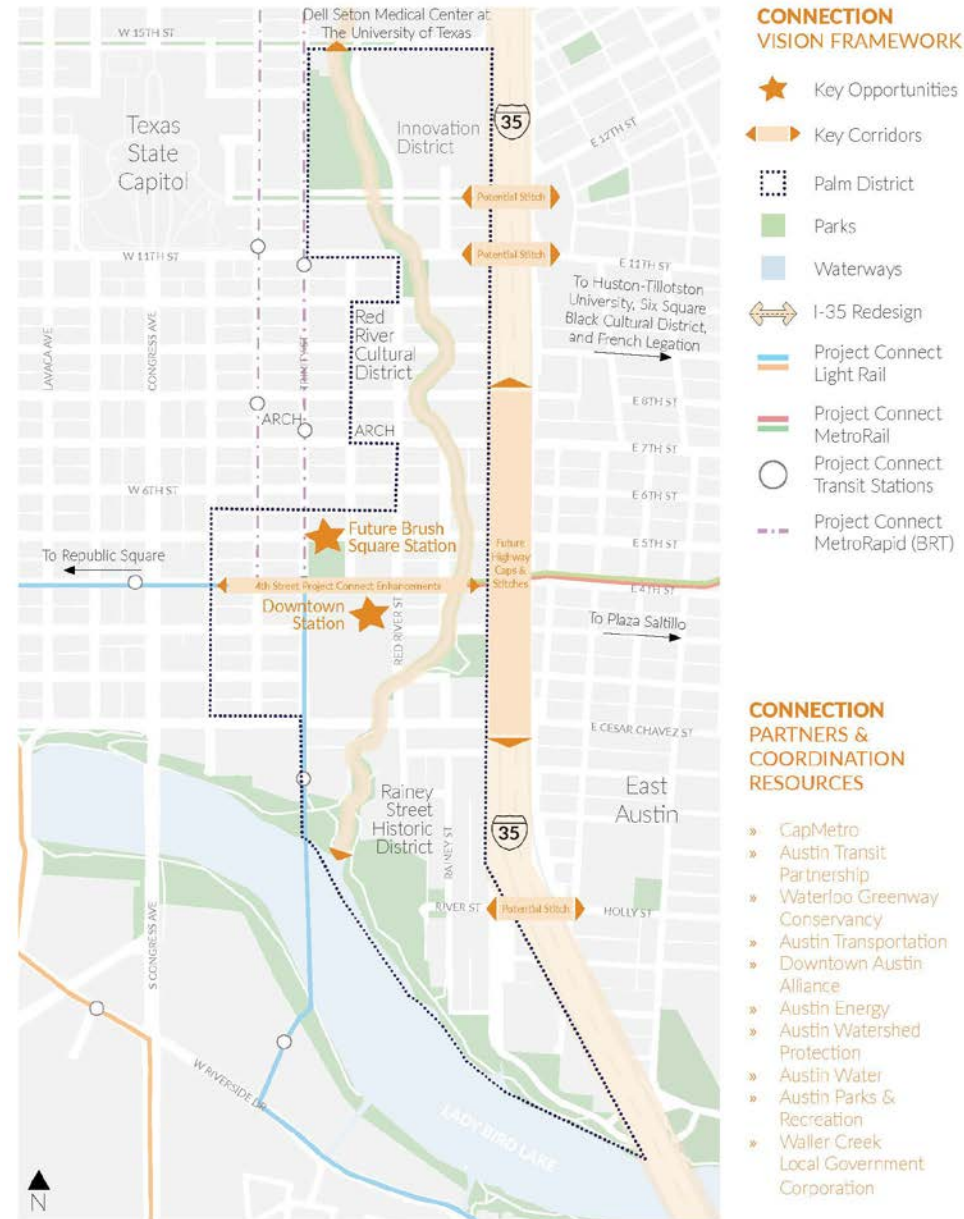
- » Austin Convention Center
- » Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center
- » George Washington Carver Museum
- » Huston-Tillotson University
- » Six Square Cultural District
- » Red River Cultural District
- » Mexic-Arte
- » La Peña
- » Tejano Trails
- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Travis County
- » Downtown Austin Alliance
- » Preservation Austin
- » Austin Parks & Recreation
- » Austin History Center
- » Austin Economic Development
- » Visit Austin
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation



# CONNECTION



Physical, cultural and social connections will be strengthened within downtown and between East Austin and downtown.

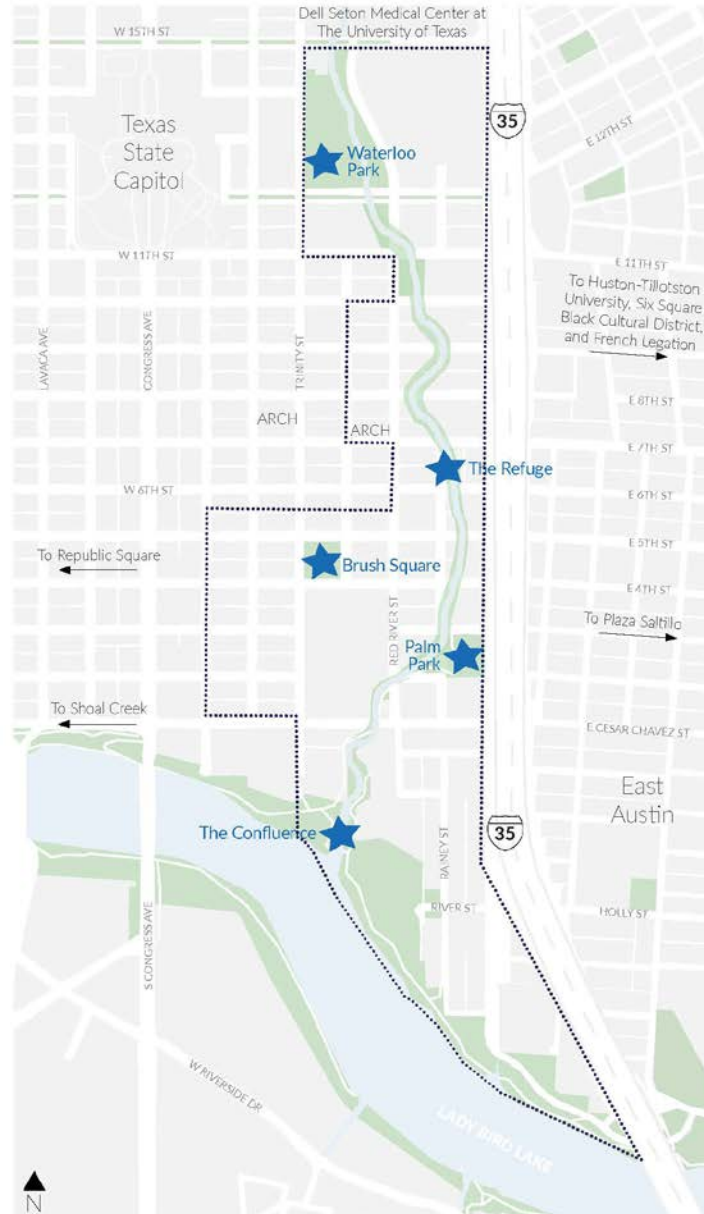






# NATURE

The natural environment will be preserved and enhanced by restoring existing natural and open spaces and pursuing high standards of sustainable design and development with a focus on green infrastructure.



## NATURE VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ Key Opportunities
- ▭ Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways

## NATURE PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation
- » Austin Parks & Recreation
- » Austin Watershed Protection
- » Austin Public Works
- » Austin Office of Sustainability
- » Trails Foundation

# 50+ Desired Outcomes....

## **Inclusive Growth**

Create opportunities to use publicly-owned properties for dense, mixed-income housing, places for cultural celebration, and to preserve those sites that are of historical, social, and cultural significance.

## **Culture**

Preserve performance venues in the Red River Cultural District through incentives, public private partnerships, and regulatory tools such as transfer of development rights, historic and landmark designations, and the Iconic Venue Fund.

## **Connection**

Leverage the lowering and replacement of I-35 to create better and more attractive connections between East Austin and the District.

## **Nature**

Improve the Waterloo Greenway, south of Palm Park to the Confluence, through lighting, interpretive signage, and other amenities to invite visitors and residents to explore and experience Waller Creek.

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# Next Steps



- Bringing the vision to life
  - Vision is aspirational
  - Detailed planning is needed
  - Implementation will require resources
  - City can't do the work alone

*WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! Does the draft Vision Framework reflect what we heard????*



- Next Steps/Deliverables
  - Public Review of Draft Vision Framework
  - Detailed Planning and Analysis
  - Alternative Future Scenarios
  - Draft Small Area Plan (by summer 2022)



# How to Get Involved!





- Visit [www.speakupaustin.org/palmdistrict](http://www.speakupaustin.org/palmdistrict)

- Review draft Vision Framework
- Take the Feedback Survey
- Review other materials and add thoughts to Interactive Map
- Ask questions

- Request an Organizational Briefing

**Palm District Planning Initiative**

Sign up here for email updates  
Regístrate aquí para recibir las últimas noticias por correo electrónico.  
<http://eepurl.com/hvN51j>

**Key Dates/Fechas Importantes**

- Presentation of American Institute of Architects Team Findings and Recommendations (6:30PM-8PM)  
July 26 2021
- Public Community Meeting (6PM-8PM)  
June 16 2021
- Public Community Meeting (8AM-10AM)  
June 15 2021

**Videos**

The Palm District is an area on the eastern edge of downtown Austin that includes many attractions and points of interest such as Waller Creek, Red River Cultural District, Palm School, Rainey Street, the Emma S. Barrientos - Mexican American Cultural Center, and the Convention Center. The area is a dynamic gateway for visitors and a cultural touchstone for Austin's Mexican American community.

The Palm District Planning Initiative will guide future development in the district, linking land use, urban design, transportation, economic development, housing, public spaces, historic preservation, cultural arts, and social equity.

Through this process, the City will partner [Continue reading](#)



- Provide input via
  - **e-mail:** [palmdistrictplanning@austintexas.gov](mailto:palmdistrictplanning@austintexas.gov)
  - **Phone:** 311
  - **Mail:** Palm District Planning, Housing and Planning Department, PO Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767



**HOUSING &  
PLANNING**

# Thank You

Mark Walters, Principal Planner

Inclusive Planning: Small Area Planning and Code Division

[Speakupaustin.org/PalmDistrict](https://speakupaustin.org/PalmDistrict)

[PalmDistrictPlanning@austintexas.gov](mailto:PalmDistrictPlanning@austintexas.gov)