

VISION STATEMENT

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.

VISION FRAMEWORK

As the district evolves, the plan will guide development and programming to achieve the vision for a vibrant, accessible and successful district. Informed by an understanding of area history, the elements of the vision are inclusive growth, culture, connection and nature. The desired outcomes for each of these elements are outlined in the following sections.



INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Growth in the district will provide a prosperous future for longtime and recent residents and for established and new businesses. This future will provide opportunities to prioritize and celebrate the district's cultural and historical institutions. Focusing on these important assets will enhance the entertainment, live music, tourism, convention, and innovation market sectors.



CULTURE

The district will become a destination that celebrates its multi-cultural heritage by supporting and expanding the Red River Cultural District's live music and entertainment economy and by preserving and enhancing the Mexican-American heritage community assets and their stories.



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.

KEY OPPORTUNITY SITES

Key Opportunities identified on the following map series represent sites that are controlled by a variety of public and private entities, and not all sites are under the direct ownership of the City of Austin. Opportunity sites are sites that are likely to serve as key anchors supporting placemaking and helping to achieve desired outcomes in the District over the years ahead.

The Vision is intended to provide an aspirational view of how the district could develop over time. Implementation will require a range of actions by the City of Austin and its partners. While Palm Park is currently owned by the City of Austin, the adjacent Palm School is owned by Travis County, and Travis County has been undertaking a process to explore options for this site. For additional information on the Palm School site please visit - <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/planning-budget/economic-development-strategic-investments/palm-school>.





INCLUSIVE GROWTH VISION FRAMEWORK

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

INCLUSIVE GROWTH PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

- » Housing and Planning
- » Capital City Innovation
- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Austin Convention Center
- » Downtown Austin Alliance
- » Travis County
- » Homeless support services providers
- » Housing Authority of City of Austin
- » Austin Economic Development Corporation
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation

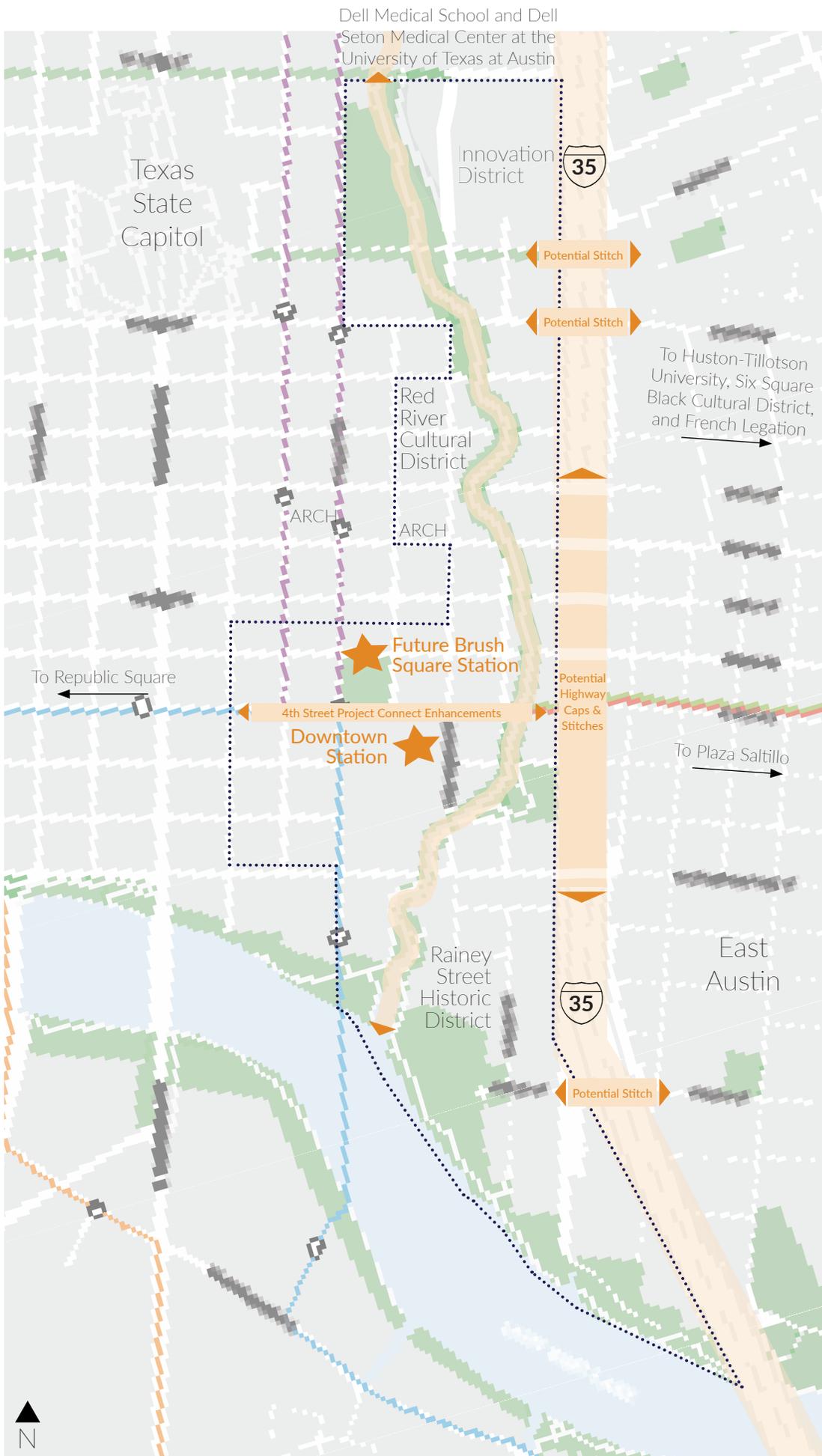


CULTURE VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ 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

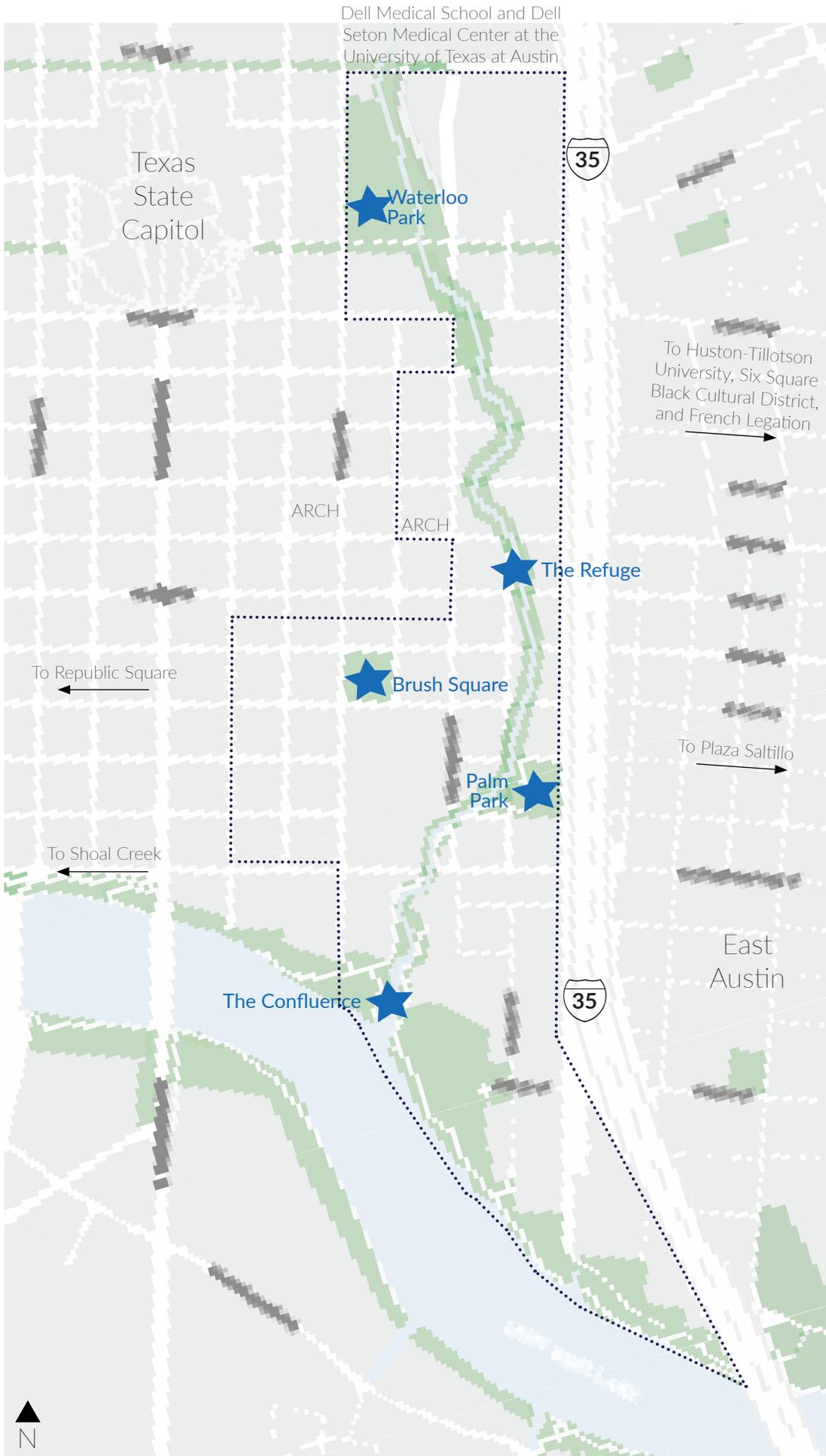


CONNECTION VISION FRAMEWORK

- ★ Key Opportunities
- ◀▶ Key Corridors
- ⋯ Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways
- ↔ I-35 Redesign
- Project Connect Light Rail
- Project Connect MetroRail
- Project Connect Transit Stations
- - - Project Connect MetroRapid (BRT)

CONNECTION PARTNERS & COORDINATION RESOURCES

- » CapMetro
- » Austin Transit Partnership
- » Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- » Austin Transportation
- » Downtown Austin Alliance
- » Austin Energy
- » Austin Watershed Protection
- » Austin Water
- » Austin Parks & Recreation
- » Waller Creek Local Government Corporation



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 Conservancy



PALM DISTRICT PLANNING

VISION ELEMENT KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- ★ Inclusive Growth
- ★ Culture
- ★ Connection
- ★ Nature

PLANNING AREA

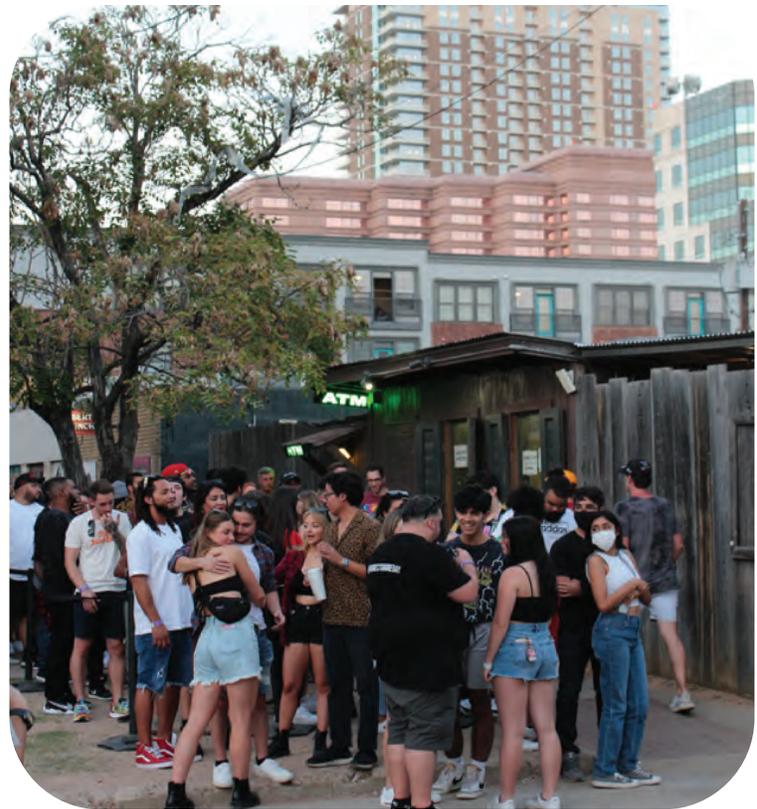
- Palm District
- Parks
- Waterways
- I-35 Redesign
- Project Connect Light Rail
- Project Connect MetroRail
- Project Connect Transit Stations
- Project Connect MetroRapid (BRT)

The combined map shows points of interests and ongoing projects that are opportunities for coordination to work towards a shared vision for the future of the district.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The following desired outcomes for the Palm District came directly from community, partner, and stakeholder input during the visioning phase of the planning process.

The desired outcomes are synthesized statements that express the recommendations and visions for how the Palm District should develop and grow. The desired outcomes were then grouped into the four thematic elements from the draft Palm District Vision Framework.





INCLUSIVE GROWTH

AN INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND PROSPEROUS PALM DISTRICT...

- Acknowledges and prioritizes history and cultural heritage and integrates these concepts into new development and any redevelopment in the area.
- Establishes anti-displacement policies, such as a right to return, for the District's existing, lower income residents.
- Makes housing a priority, not just a luxury, for all socioeconomic groups. All development should produce affordable housing and preserve existing affordable housing.
- Increases the real and perceived sense of safety in the District by providing lighting, accessibility, signage, staffing, and a continuum of care that includes adequate shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness.
- Leverages redevelopment opportunities and increased transit options to increase housing density and walkability with options to live, work, learn, and play.
- Supports all aspects of the local creative economy and artists of color.
- Promotes destinations for families and children.
- Creates and promotes recreational spaces and destinations as downtown amenities.
- Ensures the redevelopment and expansion of the Convention Center providing a world-class community-friendly facility that contributes positively to Austin and Central Texas's economy, and enhances the surrounding public realm.
- Ensures that the economic benefits of the Innovation District reach all Austinites, especially historically excluded populations.
- Promotes a thriving retail environment to foster small business ownership or creation, and to support economic well-being, including first-floor retail activations.
- Encourages private development to positively contribute to the public realm.
- Provides a variety of affordable options for people to access and get around the district.
- Creates opportunities to use publicly owned properties for dense, mixed-income housing, as well as places for cultural celebration, and to preserve those sites that are of historical, social, and cultural significance.



A CULTURALLY RICH AND DIVERSE PALM DISTRICT...

- Honors the presence and experiences of American Indians, Mexican Americans/Tejanos, Latinos, African Americans, as well as the Chinese, Greek, German, Lebanese, and Jewish immigrants who lived and worked in the District through interpretive projects such as Texas Historical Commission's Undertold Marker program and enhanced Waterloo Greenway cultural programming.
- Preserves and promotes physical cultural resources and architecture.
- Creates welcoming places for Austin's and Central Texas's Mexican American population.
- Incorporates cultural uses in the future plans for Palm School.
- Expands Austin's musical identity as the Live Music Capital of the World by including and promoting local Tejano/Latinx/Spanish-language music and culture and includes the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center, Palm Park, and Brush Square as performance venues during citywide events.
- Creates a sense of identity and place through public art by local artists.
- Utilizes the redevelopment of the Convention Center to create gathering spaces for the local community that foster a sense of belonging.
- Uses the redesign of I-35 to create gateways into Downtown and East Austin that celebrate the District's rich cultural identity and history.
- Engages Huston-Tillotson University, Six Square, and other institutions to identify and preserve remaining historic resources associated with African American history, including the former Freedman community and Black-owned businesses along Sixth Street and Red River Street.
- Enhances the pedestrian life of the district by promoting active, street-level uses such as restaurants and retail, with an emphasis on fostering businesses owned by people of color and locally owned businesses.
- Preserves 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.
- Conserves the history of the District through preservation of historic structures, adaptive reuse of existing structures, and thoughtful integration of historic structures into new development.



A WELL-CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE PALM DISTRICT..

- Leverages the lowering and replacement of I-35 to create better and more attractive connections between East Austin and the District.
- Creates a cohesive and complimentary edge to new, urban-designed boulevards with slower travel speeds that will replace traditional frontage roads that exist along the I-35 corridor today.
- Leverages potential wider, larger connections across new freeway caps at Palm Park, Holly Street, and other key crossings along I-35 to create a seamless connection between downtown, Waterloo Greenway, and East Austin/Salttillo.
- Encourages walking, biking, public transit, and creates accessible pedestrian paths that guide people through the district to all amenities.
- Provides continuity and connectivity from Rainey Street up to the Innovation District.
- Leverages Waterloo Greenway as a pedestrian pathway (open year-round, twenty-four hours a day) linking Lady Bird Lake to Palm School, Palm Park and Waterloo Park.
- Creates a series of signature locations, such as in the Innovation District, Red River Cultural District, and Rainey Street National Historic District, that are worthy of celebrating.
- Increases safety and visibility on pedestrian paths and along connections between amenities such as the Butler Trail to Rainey Street and to Cesar Chavez.
- Increases circulation through Waterloo Greenway investments with universally accessible bridges and trail connections.
- Leverages the significant transit investments under the Project Connect transit vision to foster placemaking.
- Creates a more welcoming pedestrian experience in and around the Convention Center by improving the pathways and connections linking it to other parts of the District and to the rest of Downtown.
- Increases sustainability and resilience of utility and infrastructure networks throughout the District by implementing autonomous technologies, supporting expansion of District cooling and the reclaimed water network, and supporting stormwater management through engineered and green infrastructure approaches.
- Creates better pedestrian infrastructure and vehicle circulation for Rainey Street and East Sixth Street and connections crossing Cesar Chavez Street.



NATURE

AN ECOLOGICALLY HEALTHY PALM DISTRICT...

- Serves as a natural recreational area for everyone and a respite from the hardness of the Central Business District.
- Creates an interconnected ribbon of green spaces throughout Downtown connecting the Waterloo Greenway, the Roy and Ann Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail, and the Shoal Creek Trail which facilitates travel through Downtown and beyond.
- Creates a welcoming Palm Park though better lighting and improved amenities to make it more attractive to visitors.
- Improves 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.
- Enhances ecological function of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake.
- Increases tree canopy in the district, specifically along Red River Street and on pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
- Enhances sustainability of the district by using standards of nationally recognized rating systems such as the Sustainable SITES Initiative for site development.
- Promotes the proposed Waterloo Greenway Plan that provides a 1.5-mile park system and 35 acres of connected greenspace.
- Restores natural creek and delta areas including creek bank stabilization, re-planting landscape with new plants and trees, and new east-west connections.
- Connects Palm Park area with the hike & bike trail through a creek-level trail.
- Improves public health through quality access to nature, active transportation options, and other healthy community initiatives including Waterloo Greenway programming designed to bring people closer to nature.
- Focuses on native/regional plants that are resilient and suited to our climate, providing a sense of place, educational opportunities, and long-term maintenance benefits.
- Manages stormwater in the District with fine-grained solutions throughout that keep our water clean and make the District more resilient to future flooding.

SCENARIOS

Building upon the stakeholder input received during the five Palm District Future Scenarios Focus Group workshops in August 2022, the Asakura Robinson design team generated three possible future scenarios for the District. The scenarios are differentiated by the three purposes they represent: Live, Work, and Play.

NOTE: The following scenarios represent visualizations of potential future development in the district. The visualizations include sites that are controlled by a variety of public and private entities, and not all sites are under the direct ownership of the City of Austin. These scenarios are intended to provide an aspirational view of how the district could develop over time; they do not bind individual property owners or the City of Austin and partner agencies. Implementation would require a range of actions by the City of Austin and its partners.

Palm School: The Palm School site is owned by Travis County, and Travis County has been undertaking a process to explore options for this site. See <https://www.traviscountytx.gov/planning-budget/economic-development-strategic-investments/palm-school> for additional information.

Austin's Cap and Stitch Program: The Texas Department of Transportation is currently evaluating options the reconstruction of I-35 through the federally-required environmental review process, and the City is working in tandem with that process to explore possible approaches for capping I-35 and/or designing enhanced bridges (stitches) over the freeway that could be used for a range of purposes in the future. In 2023 Our Future 35 will be working with community members to identify preferred concepts and program elements for new caps and stitches. The following scenarios assumes construction of caps and stitches and small-scale development for visualization proposes only. See <https://austintexas.gov/ourfuture35> for additional information.

The Live Scenario focuses on increasing the amount of mixed-income housing developed through density programs and promoting supportive, goods, services, and activities in the Palm District.

The Live Scenario:

- Increases the amount of supportive goods and services such as pharmacies, downtown-scaled grocery stores, dine in casual and fast casual restaurants, coffee shops, dry cleaners, and cultural activities.
- Locates new housing, supportive retail and services, on publicly owned land and sites currently used for surface and structured parking.
- Improves localized transit options by implementing a circulator route within the District along Red River Street to link the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican America Cultural Center, Convention Center, Downtown Station, Red River Cultural District, Waterloo Park, Innovation District, and the Dell Seton Medical Center at the University of Texas, as well as the Dell Medical School, and the University of Texas' School of Nursing.
- Leverages the Waterloo Greenway trail to create safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle transportation choices.

- Potential cap and stitch development over I-35 may support by providing amenities for the growing resident populations

The Work Scenario focuses on growing the number of jobs by increasing new office and mixed-use development throughout the district. A primary objective of this scenario is to promote more daytime, evening, and nighttime activities.

The Work Scenario:

- Promotes business and work supportive retail such as office services like printing, delivery services, dry cleaners, and diners in and near these developments.
- Offers more flexible office and creative spaces to support the growing numbers of people who commute to the District as well as those who live and work there.
- Expands opportunities for new work and/or rehearsal spaces for the Palm District's creative and innovation job sectors.
- Leverages I-35 caps and stitches to provide programming and amenities, potentially including, but not limited to, new business incubation space, gathering places, and employment opportunities that will encourage new economic and community activity. The potential caps and stitches at 11th and 12th Street offer strong links to the neighboring Innovation District. Develops underutilized and aging creek-side properties for mixed use developments, with ground floor commercial space of varying heights (due to the Capitol View Corridors) to establish a more vibrant District identity.

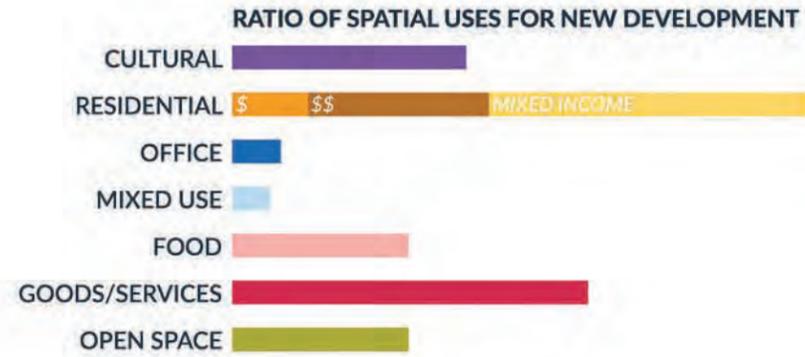
The Play Scenario maximizes the amount of greenspace in the Palm District by building upon the reimagining of Waller Creek with the Waterloo Greenway and promotes additional open spaces such as skate parks and recreational playscapes for people of all ages and abilities.

The Play Scenario:

- Leverages I-35 caps and stitches to provide programming and amenities, potentially including, but not limited to, small scale commercial, entertainment, and open spaces to build east/west connection.
- Introduces two new hotels with entertainment spaces between East 6th and East 7th Streets to support new tourist and entertainment investments, existing music venues, and other cultural assets in the District.
- Repurposes existing publicly owned buildings between 10th and 11th Streets to meet the District's housing and office needs.
- Establishes the District as a citywide destination, elevating its rich history through such street-level

LIVE

Scenario 1



LEGEND

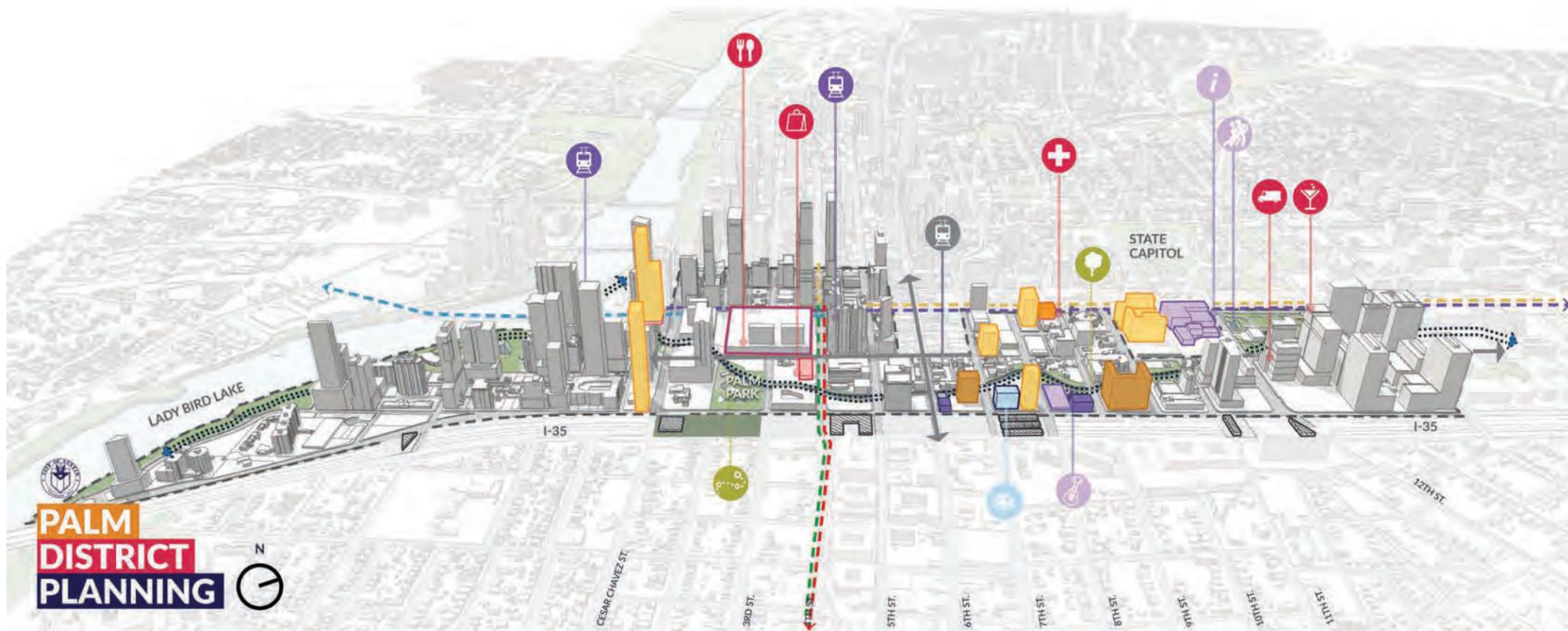
- Goods / Services**
- Food / Restaurants
 - Bar / Pub
 - Food Truck / Street Vendors
 - Retail
 - Health Services
- Residential**
- Low Income
 - Market Rate
 - Mixed Income
 - Hotel
- Office**
- Class A Office
 - Artist Studio / Creative Office
 - Mixed Use
- Cultural**
- Music Venue
 - Theatre
 - Visitors Center
- Open Space**
- Park
 - Trail Connections
- Other**
- Parking
 - Project Connect Stations
 - Streetcar Improvements

Connectivity

- Streetcar
- Waterloo Greenway Trail
- Project Connect Blue Line
- Project Connect Red Line
- Project Connect Green Line
- Project Connect Purple Line
- Project Connect Gold Line

Scenario Notes

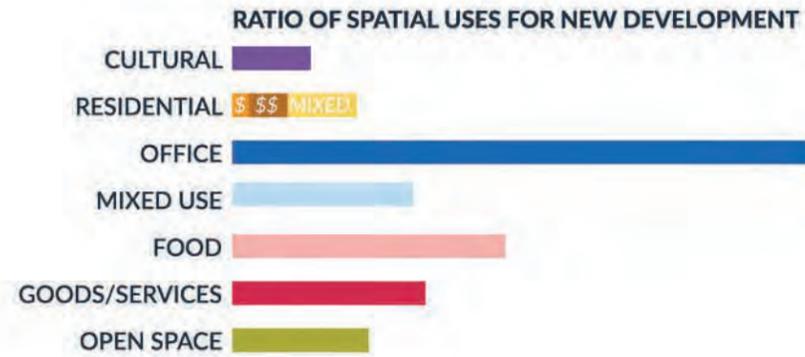
- » Taking advantage of density initiatives, the Live scenario significantly increases mixed income housing to support the building of a more vibrant and diverse community.
- » Strategic placement of goods and services including pharmacies, mixed-scale groceries, and eateries within a ten minute walkshed of each other.
- » The Live scenario interventions propose re-purposing surface lots and parking garages to provide largely public-owned land for more services and housing.
- » In support of new Project Connect rail lines and the Waterloo Greenway trail expansion for bike and pedestrian connection, the Live scenario also proposes the use of a public transportation circulator to move residents along Red River and connect them to key cultural sites like Waterloo Park, the Red River Cultural District, and the Mexican American Cultural Center.
- » The Live scenario envisions Palm District as an area with all day activity, including a range of cultural and necessary elements required to thrive in the area. Potential I-35 Cap & Stitch development can support in building more service provision for the growing resident population.



**Renderings are for illustrative purposes only; Cap and Stitch design to be developed as part of the Our Future 35 community process.

WORK

Scenario 2



LEGEND

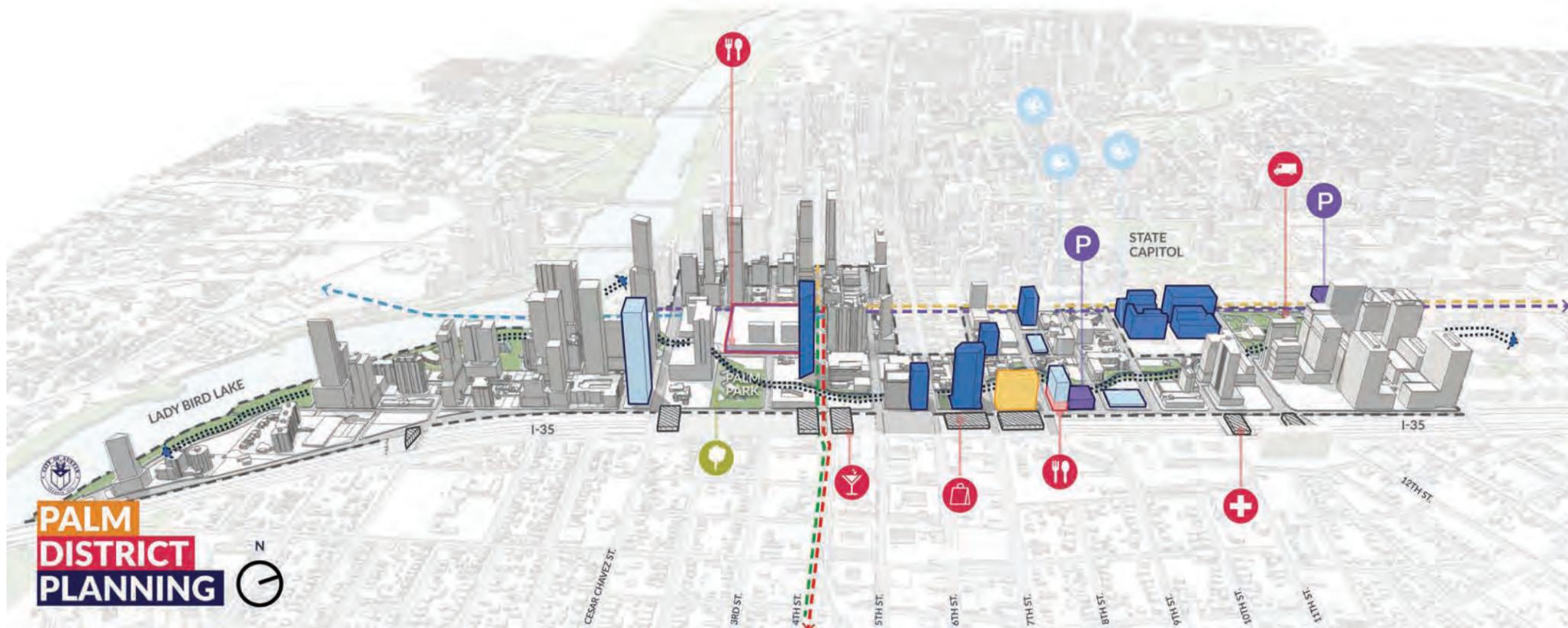
- Goods / Services**
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 - Bar / Pub
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 - Retail
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 - Low Income
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- Open Space**
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 - Parking
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Connectivity

- Streetcar
- Waterloo Greenway Trail
- Project Connect Blue Line
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Scenario Notes

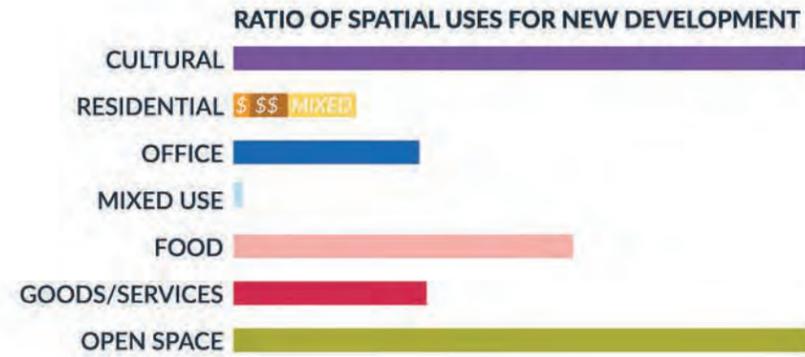
- The Work Scenario creates new office and mixed use opportunities throughout the district, with the goal of introducing more daytime, evening, and night activity across Palm District.
- Strategic placement of work-centric services like printers, cafes, and dry cleaners around proposed sites of new investment.
- This scenario offers more creative workspaces and flexible office environments to support the district's growing resident and workforce, and also create new work or practice spaces for Palm District's creative and innovative industries.
- The Work Scenario leverages the I-35 Cap & Stitch to envision new business incubation space, gathering places, employment opportunities that will encourage new economic and community activity. The 11th and 12th Street Cap & Stitch areas offer strong links to the neighboring Innovation District.
- Creek-side real estate is also seen as an opportunity area for more mixed use, mixed-height development that encourages ground floor commercial areas for a more vibrant neighborhood identity.



**Renderings are for illustrative purposes only; Cap and Stitch design to be developed as part of the Our Future 35 community process.

PLAY

Scenario 3



LEGEND

- Goods / Services**
 - Food / Restaurants
 - Bar/Pub
 - Food Truck / Street Vendors
 - Retail
 - Health Services
- Residential**
 - Low Income
 - Market Rate
 - Mixed Income
 - Hotel
- Office**
 - Class A Office
 - Artist Studio / Creative Office
 - Mixed Use
- Cultural**
 - Music Venue
 - Theatre
 - Visitors Center
- Open Space**
 - Park
 - Trail Connections
- Other**
 - Parking
 - Project Connect Stations
 - Streetcar Improvements

Connectivity

- Streetcar
- Waterloo Greenway Trail
- Project Connect Blue Line
- Project Connect Red Line
- Project Connect Green Line
- Project Connect Purple Line
- Project Connect Gold Line

Scenario Notes

- » The Play scenario maximizes greenspace in the area, spotlighting the influx of investment in Waterloo Greenway and making additional recommendations for programed open spaces, like skate parks and recreational play spaces for people of all ages and abilities.
- » The scenario proposes more small scale commercial, entertainment, and open space spaces on the I-35 Cap & Stitch to build E-W connection.
- » In support of new tourist and entertainment investment, bolstering the existing music and cultural assets in the area, the Play scenario also introduces two new hotels between 6th and 7th streets incorporating entertainment spaces.
- » This scenario also calls for the strategic re-purposing of existing government buildings between 10th and 11th streets to meet housing and office needs in the area.
- » The Play scenario envisions Palm District as a city-wide destination that celebrates the area's rich history through street-level intervention. Additional recommendations include expanding area-wide interpretive signage and creative placemaking that acknowledges the rich cultural heritage of the district.



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PREFERRED SCENARIO

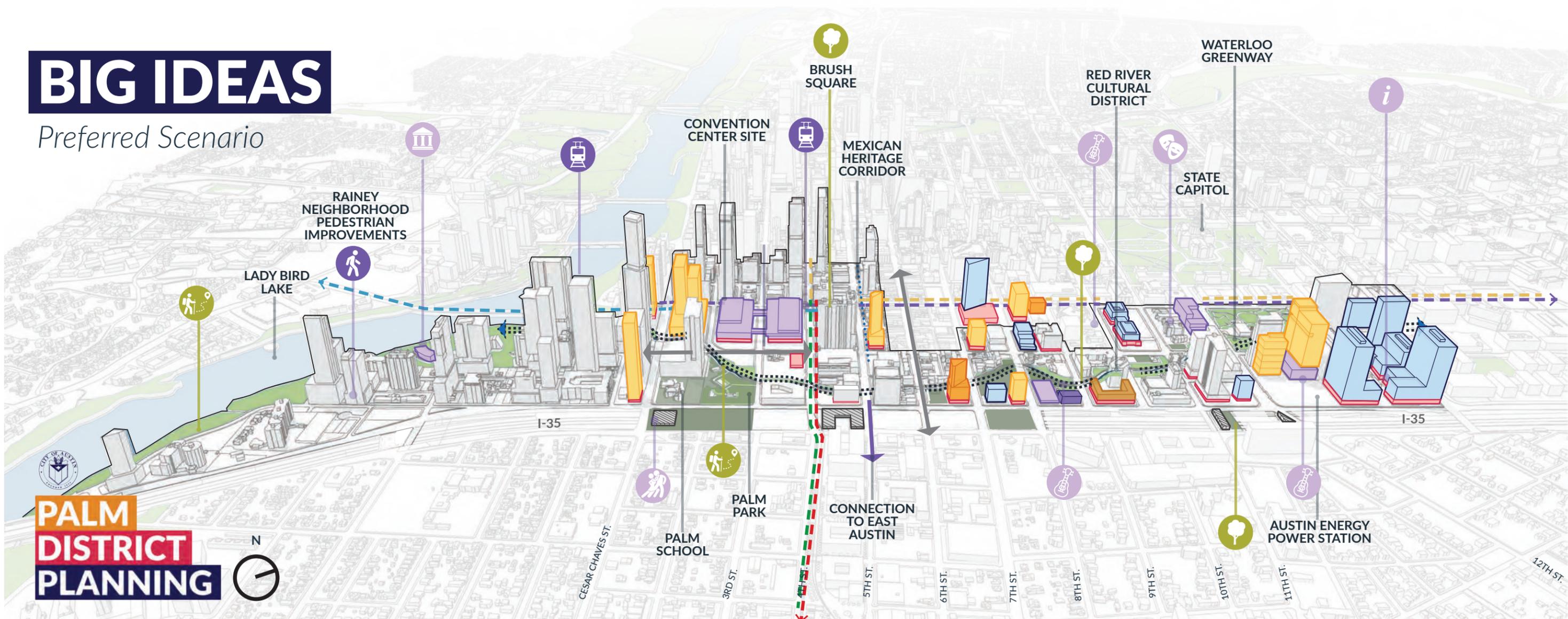
The Preferred Scenario builds on the Live, Work, Play scenarios. Through feedback via the online survey most respondents favored the Live scenario and emphasized a desire for more housing in the future growth of the Palm District. Taking advantage of density initiatives, this scenario significantly increases mixed income housing to support a more vibrant and diverse community.

The Preferred Scenario:

- Envisions the Palm District as thriving, 24-hour a day community.
- Prioritizes a strategic placement of goods and services, such as pharmacies, mixed-scale groceries, and eateries within a ten-minute walk of residences.
- Prioritizes mixed use buildings with ground floor spaces for retail, entertainment, recreation, cultural activities, and services.
- Creates new work or practice spaces for the Palm District's creative and innovation industries by proposing strategic repurposing of existing government buildings between 10th and 11th streets.
- Supports new tourist and entertainment investments and bolsters existing live music and cultural spaces by introducing two new hotels with entertainment venues.
- Supports Project Connect and the Waterloo Greenway trail expansion by proposing a transit circulator along Red River, connecting riders to key locations like Waterloo Park, the Red River Cultural District, and the Mexican American Cultural Center.
- Promotes the potential I-35 Cap & Stitch that could create opportunities to expand the Palm District's retail and commercial environment and create more open and green space to support the eastern edge of Downtown.

BIG IDEAS

Preferred Scenario



This scenario envisions Palm District as an area with all day activity, including a range of cultural and necessary elements required to thrive in the area.



BIG IDEA

Provide new spaces for services that support residents and new open, green spaces for recreation and cultural uses on I-35 Caps and Stitches.



BIG IDEA

Preserve and grow the Red River Cultural District and its venues and expand the downtown live music economy into a “Music Mile” a 24-hour activated neighborhood with new cultural, entertainment and hospitality uses.

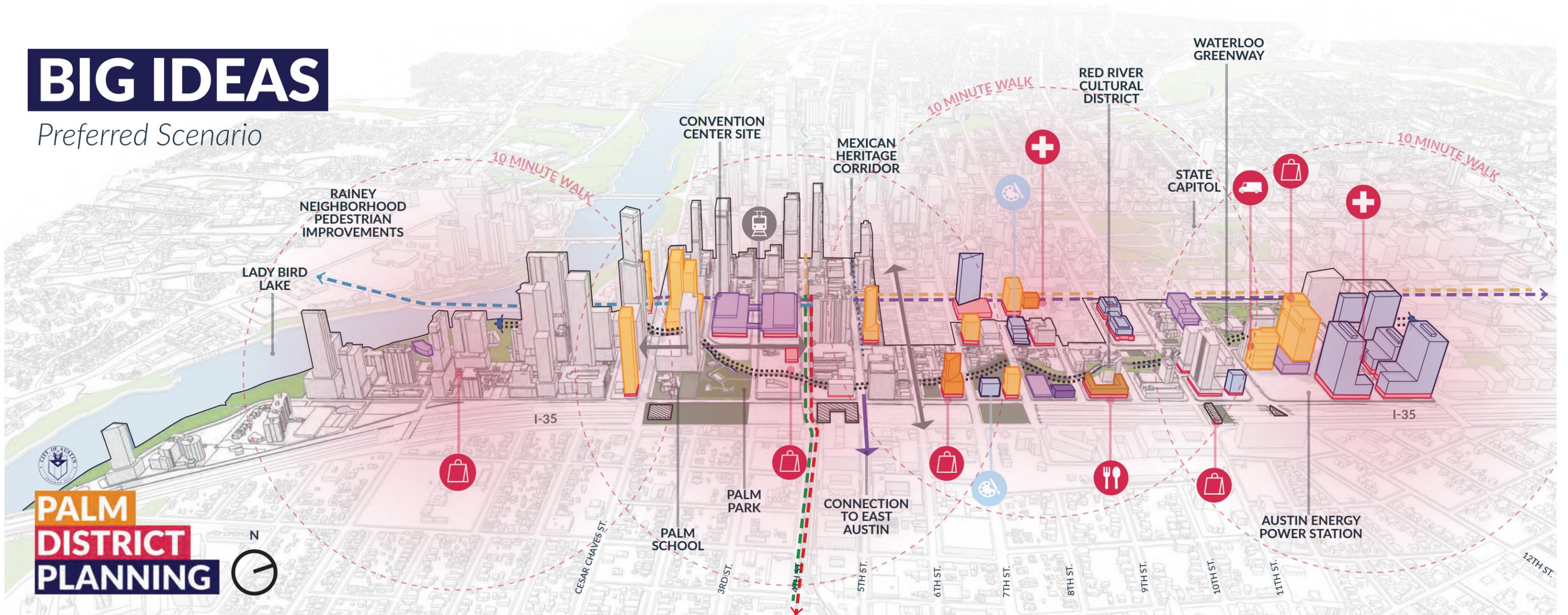


BIG IDEA

Provide a new public transportation circulator that moves people along Red River Street and connects them to cultural sites like Waterloo Park, Red River Cultural District and the Mexican American Cultural Center.

BIG IDEAS

Preferred Scenario



Taking advantage of density initiatives, this scenario significantly increases mixed income housing to support the building of a more vibrant and diverse community.



BIG IDEA

Prioritize dense buildings with a majority of residential uses that are accessible to a range of incomes and with ground-floor uses that serve residents and activate the street.



BIG IDEA

Locate ground-floor retail and goods and services uses like groceries, pharmacies, dry cleaners, salons and eateries within a 10 minute walkshed.



BIG IDEA

Repurpose publicly-owned sites and buildings with affordable, mixed-income residential uses and affordable commercial uses like child care, social services, live/work, non-profits, start-ups, creative arts studios and galleries and collaborative gathering spaces.

PREFERRED SCENARIO

Putting it All Together



LEGEND

Goods / Services

- Food/ Restaurants
- Bar/Pub
- Food Truck/ Street Vendors
- Retail
- Health Services

Residential

- Low Income
- Market Rate
- Mixed Income
- Hotel
- Office
- Artist Studio/ Creative Office
- Mixed Use: Office, Hotel, Residential

Cultural

- Music Venue
- Theatre
- Visitors Center
- Open Space
- Park
- Trail Connections

Connectivity

- Streetcar
- Waterloo Greenway Trail
- Project Connect Blue Line
- Project Connect Red Line
- Project Connect Green Line
- Project Connect Purple Line
- Project Connect Gold Line

Other

- Parking
- Project Connect Stations
- Streetcar Improvements
- Sidewalk/ Streetscape Improvements

PREFERRED SCENARIO

Putting it All Together

Music/Entertainment/Recreation

The diverse array of entertainment venues in the Palm District distinguishes it as a nighttime district. With new venues like the Moody Theater and Waterloo Amphitheater serving as assets in and around the area, there is an increased need for a more developed nighttime ecosystem with commercial and retail amenities in-between key entertainment destinations to move visitors through the district. Many participants indicated that they would like to see more daytime programming like festivals, recreation activities for visitors of all ages, museums, street markets, and other programming to make Palm District into a 24-hour area.

Connectivity/ Walkability/Bikeability

Enhanced walkability and safer pedestrian crossings surfaced as top priorities among stakeholders. Missing and broken sidewalks are a major hindrance to walkability across the Palm District and inhibit access to transit connections like the Downtown Rail Station and Plaza Saltillo, as well as access to other areas of Downtown and the University of Texas. Particular intersections like the crossing at Red River and E Cesar Chavez were identified as major district pain points in need of necessary improvements like preserving high quality right-of-way to maximize pedestrian safety.

Transportation

As new CapMetro investment breaks ground in the district, it is essential to break up existing super-blocks to maximize shorter routes and encourage easier movement in and around the district. New ideas included the addition of a public transit circulator along Red River Street, or to add a new shuttle that easily and affordably moves people from the new MACC/Rainey Blue Line Station to the MACC and other district destinations. New investments may also be complemented by more transit-oriented wayfinding, guiding people station areas to local assets like Waterloo Park, or the Red River Cultural District.



Music Venue



Theatre



Visitors Center



Park



Trail Connections



Parking



Project Connect Stations



Streetcar Improvements



Sidewalk/Streetscape Improvements



Streetcar



Waterloo Greenway Trail



Project Connect Blue Line



Project Connect Red Line



Project Connect Green Line



Project Connect Purple Line



Project Connect Gold Line

Commercial Development/ Business Mix

To support the influx of development in the area, there is a need for a heightened variety of commercial developments and business types. Business and service considerations moving forward include more affordable dining options, bars, designated food truck areas, locally owned stores, retail, pharmacies, health services, and grocery stores of different scales (ie. grab-and-go vs. full service grocery). Collectively, there is a desire to see more ground-floor commercial development throughout the district to support street level activity all day. Key sites for commercial or mixed-use redevelopment include the Austin Police Department and I-35 Cap & Stitch. Suggestions for repurposing both locations include a combination of small business incubation, affordable housing, stacked groceries, and ground floor eateries.

Office

In support of developing sub-areas like the Innovation District, new flexible office spaces are needed across Palm District. This may spur partnerships between major entities in and around the area. More work-oriented retail is also needed to support office investment, including additions like dry cleaners, quick lunch options, and after-work bars or cafes.

Culture

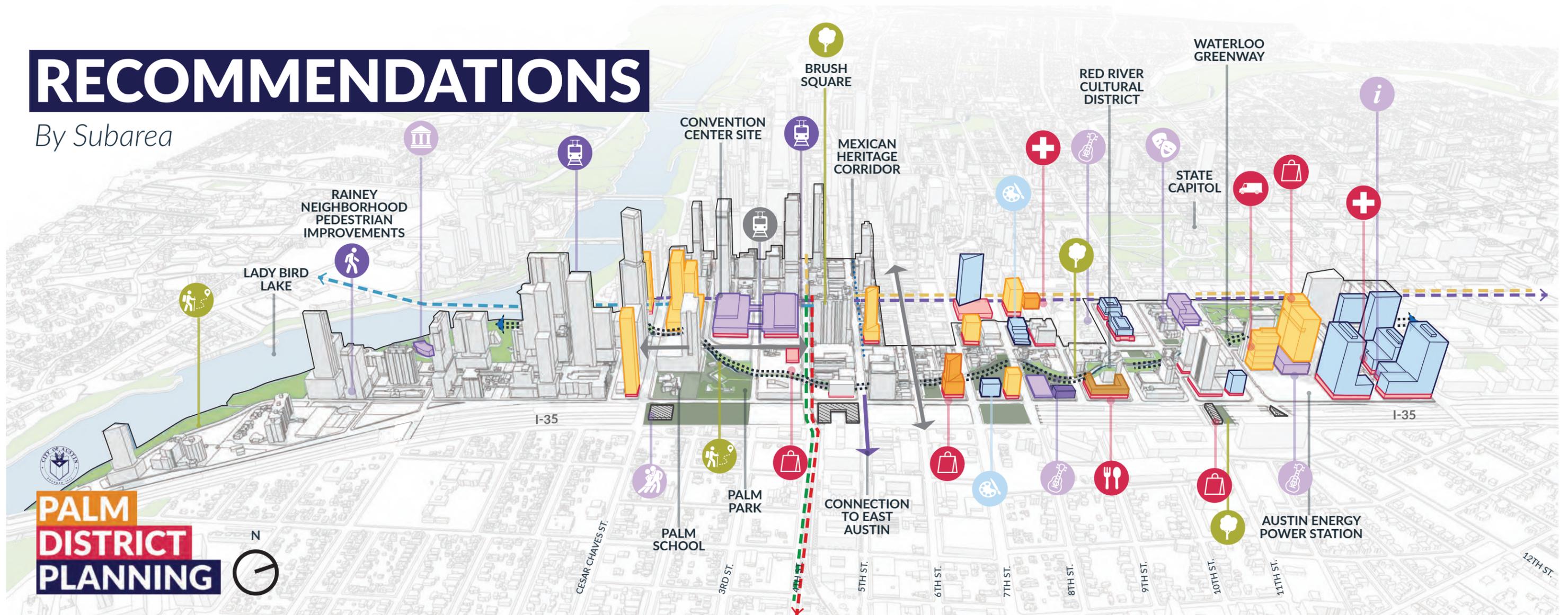
While Palm District boasts a rich historic legacy, celebrated elements of its culture are not currently widely recognized or showcased throughout the district. There is a strong desire for this area to become a destination where “history is honored & displaced are welcome back”. Suggestions to increase the presence of cultural elements throughout the district include: solidifying connections between the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) & Latinx Holly neighborhood; bringing back displaced communities through Black and Hispanic businesses and cultural placemaking; adding a historic trail that moves people from Waterloo Park to Rainey Street; introducing digital or analog informational kiosks; and identifying gateways to highlight other important cultural E-W corridors like E 11th Street, 6th Street, or E Cesar Chavez Street.

-  *Food/ Restaurants*
-  *Bar/Pub*
-  *Food Truck/ Street Vendors*
-  *Retail*
-  *Health Services*

-  *Artist Studio/
Creative Office*
-  *Mixed Use:
Office, Hotel, Residential*
-  *Hotel*

RECOMMENDATIONS

By Subarea



South

- Create safe, accessible, and welcoming north-south pedestrian and bicycling connections along the Waterloo Greenway from Lady Bird Lake and Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail to Waterloo Park linking all of the Palm District's many amenities.
- Create safe, accessible, and welcoming north-south pedestrian and bicycling connections along the Waterloo Greenway from Lady Bird Lake and Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail to Waterloo Park linking all of the Palm District's many amenities.
- Expand opportunities for cultural space in the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) expansion.
- Implement Phase Two of the Waterloo Greenway, the Confluence, to help restore the ecological health of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across East Cesar Chavez Avenue.
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation within the Rainey Street national Historical Register District.

Central

- Continue to fund Iconic Venue Fund.
- Develop policies and programming to support small business development and retention for existing businesses and those locating in ground-floor retail spaces.
- Ensure that people experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to access to shelter and a continuum of care.
- Improve automobile and transit circulation for East 6th Street.
- Improve pedestrian mobility and circulation for East 6th Street.
- Incentivize greater levels of affordable housing in the Palm District.
- Incentivize the preservation of existing affordable housing in the Palm District.

North

- Create opportunities for cultural spaces to locate in the Innovation District. This will require exploring new governance models, funding sources, and active programming partnerships.
- Develop new programs to support all aspects and sectors of the local creative economy.
- Incorporate elements into the development and programming of the Innovation District spaces such as educational pathways for underrepresented students, promotion of health and wellness, and inclusive arts initiatives that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Leverage publicly-owned sites for affordable and mixed-income housing.

*Renderings are for illustrative purposes only; Cap and Stitch design to be developed as part of the Our Future 35 community process.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Palm District Plan will require support from multiple public and private sector partners. While many of the recommendations identified build on work that is already underway, some of the longer-term actions may require that additional funding or sponsors be identified.

Governance

Implementation of the Plan will require on-going collaboration. There are several options for governance as this plan moves into the implementation phase:

Tier 1: COA Housing and Planning Department monitors and reports on implementation of the Plan.

Under this option, Housing and Planning Department staff would monitor implementation of this plan (as we monitor implementation of other adopted small area plans) and would report on implementation at regular intervals over time. City Council or others could use implementation reporting to guide future decision making and policy guidance.

Tier 2: Build on governance structures that already exist in the district. Under this option, the City would partner with existing organizations to coordinate implementation of various aspects of the plan that are aligned with the missions of those organizations. For example, the City could partner with the ESB-MACC to coordinate across cultural entities in support of the cultural outcomes of the plan.

Tier 3: Identify a governing entity to serve as coordination lead. Under this option, a governing entity would be established or identified that would provide robust governance for future implementation of the plan. Many community members, including the East Austin thought leaders interviewed by Martha Cotera, provided input that new governing entity should be created to coordinate implementation of various aspects of the plan, in particular the enhancements to cultural assets that would be needed to implement the plan. An existing governing entity may be able to step into this role.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section includes a list of concrete actions that the City and others should take to move toward the desired outcomes identified in this Plan. In some cases one action may help to move closer to multiple desired outcomes. These actions have been identified through the planning process by agency, organizational, and community stakeholders. The actions are intended to be feasible, and in many cases are already moving forward as part of one or more ongoing initiatives in the district.

Sponsors:

Austin Convention Center
Capital City Innovation
Downtown Austin Alliance
ECHO
Homeless Strategy Office
Preservation Austin
Red Line Parkway Initiative
Travis County
Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
AE - Austin Energy
AHC - Austin History Center
ATD - Austin Transportation Department
APD - Austin Police Department
AW - Austin Water Department
CPO - Corridor Program Office
DSD - Development Services Department
EDD - Economic Development Department
FSD - Financial Services Department - Real Estate
HPD - Housing and Planning Department
OoS - Office of Sustainability
PARD - Parks and Recreation Department
TxDOT - Texas Department of Transportation
WPD - Watershed Protection Department

UNDERWAY

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
NTR_6	Implement the Waller Creek Master Plan to transform Waller Creek into a restorative and welcoming place for all Austin residents and out-of-town visitors.	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, PARD	Nature
CLTR_1	Develop new programs to support all aspects and sectors of the local creative economy.	EDD	Culture
CLTR_2	Expand opportunities for cultural space in the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) expansion.	PARD	Culture
CLTR_4	Complete Heritage Wayfinding Program ensuring it is bilingual and accessible to diverse visitors and that it honors the history of Palm District's diverse communities	EDD	Culture
IG_7	Ensure that people experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to access to shelter and a continuum of care.	ECHO, Homeless Strategy Office	Inclusive Growth
IG_15	Ensure Live Music Fund Guidelines are promoted to Mexican American and Black musicians and assist with access to City funding for local acts.	EDD	Inclusive Growth
IG_18	Continue to the fund Iconic Venue Fund.	EDD	Inclusive Growth

1-3 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
CLTR_3	Create opportunities for cultural spaces in City of Austin owned parcels and properties during new development and redevelopment projects.	Convention Center, FSD-Real Estate, HPD	Culture
CLTR_3.1	Create opportunities for cultural spaces to locate within the Innovation District.	Capital City Innovation	Culture
CLTR_3.2	Create opportunities for cultural spaces to locate at the Palm School site and through the redesign of Palm Park.	Travis County, PARD	Culture
CLTR_5	Incorporate cultural uses and programming into the Palm School site in addition to site restoration.	Travis County	Culture
CLTR_7	Ensure I-35 Cap & Stitch alternatives incorporate cultural uses that provide space for diverse communities	CPO, PARD	Culture
CLTR_8	Implement the Heritage Wayfinding for African American Cultural Heritage District and include points of interest such as Freedman Communities found within and near the Palm District.	EDD	Culture
CLTR_8.1	Implement the Heritage Wayfinding for Mexican American history in the city and include points of interest such as the Palm School, Rainey Street, ESB-MACC, Mexic-Arte and sites within and near the Palm District.	EDD	Culture
CLTR_11	Create opportunities for the implementaion of the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor and larger Mexican American Cultural District.	EDD	Culture

1-3 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
IG_1	Incentivize new development to include ground floor retail spaces to provide opportunities for: local-serving goods, services, entertainment, and cultural spaces to foster complete communities in the Palm District.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_2	Incentivize new development to positively contribute to the public realm such as improved streetscape designs, public art, and pedestrian-oriented design for the ground floor spaces.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_3	Promote/incentivize denser, mixed-income housing.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_8	Improve street lighting throughout Palm District.	APD, AE	Inclusive Growth
IG_9	Develop policies and programming to support small business development and retention for existing businesses and those locating in ground-floor retail spaces.	EDD	Inclusive Growth
IG_10	Ensure that the redevelopment and expansion of the Neal Kocurek Memorial Convention Center results in a world-class facility with a more open design that repairs the surrounding public realm.	Convention Center, HPD, ATD	Inclusive Growth
IG_13	Identify opportunities to develop publicly subsidized affordable housing.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_13.1	Make affordable housing units available to residents whose families were historically displaced from the area.	HPD	Inclusive Growth

1-3 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
IG_14	Using the development regulations proposed in the Waller Creek Master Plan as a baseline, engage community stakeholders to develop code amendments that meet the intent of the Waller Creek Master Plan and the goals and desired outcomes of the Palm District Plan.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_16	Include public and open spaces in the redesign of the Austin Convention Center and enhance connectivity through the site.	Convention Center	Inclusive Growth
IG_19	Create a public engagement strategy to solicit wide-ranging community input from residents, property owners, business owners, intuitions, and Austin's design community during the design process to ensure that the Convention Center's redesign is pedestrian-friendly and reflects the broader community's values.	Convention Center	Inclusive Growth
IG_21	Create policies and opportunities to preserve music venues in the Red River Cultural District	EDD	Inclusive Growth
NTR_3	Partner with area property owners to locate and construct an additional district cooling facility in the Palm District as redevelopment occurs in order to support expansion of the downtown district cooling network.	AE	Nature
NTR_7	Engage the community, including people with historic connection to Palm Park, to regain its status as a community gathering place which provides recreational activities for people of all ages and abilities.	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, PARD	Nature
NTR_10	Implement Phase Two of the Waterloo Greenway, the Confluence, to help restore the ecological health of Waller Creek and Lady Bird Lake.	Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, PARD	Nature

3-5 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
CNCT_10	Identify opportunities to improve mobility and circulation along East 6th Street through Austin Core Transportation Plan.	ATD, APD	Connection
CNCT_2	Create a pedestrian-friendly environment with connections linking the Palm District's northern and southern attractions to the Downtown Station.	ATD	Connection
CNCT_3	Create safe and easy-to-use bicycle connections linking the Palm District's many attractions to the Downtown Station.	ATD, ATP, Red Line Parkway Initiative	Connection
CNCT_4	Remove pedestrian mobility barriers and create better connections to the Convention Center from the other parts of the Palm District and the rest of Downtown.	Convention Center, ATD	Connection
CNCT_5	Create safe, accessible, and welcoming north-south pedestrian and bicycling connections along the Waterloo Greenway from Lady Bird Lake and Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail to Waterloo Park linking all of the Palm District's many amenities.	ATD, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy	Connection
CNCT_6	Develop safe and accessible east-west connections to and across the Waterloo Greenway.	ATD, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, Red Line Parkway Initiative	Connection
CNCT_7	Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across East Cesar Chavez Avenue.	ATD	Connection
CNCT_8	Improve pedestrian circulation within the Rainey Street National Register Historic District.	ATD	Connection

3-5 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
CLTR_10	Recognize the history of the people who lived, went to school, and worked in the Palm District through the strategic placement of interpretive and commemorative installations.	EDD, Austin History Center	Culture
IG_11	Promote, recruit, program the reimagined Neal Kocurek Memorial Convention Center to become a significant economic driver for the Austin and Central Texas economy.	Convention Center	Inclusive Growth
IG_12	Incorporate elements into the development and programming of the Innovation District spaces such as educational pathways for underrepresented students, promotion of health and wellness, and inclusive arts initiatives that support diversity, equity, and inclusion.	Capital City Innovation, Downtown Austin Alliance	Inclusive Growth
NTR_5	Expand reclaimed water network to support additional portions of Palm District as redevelopment occurs.	AW	Nature
NTR_8	Improve the pedestrian experience throughout the Palm District by the introduction of street trees.	HPD, ATD	Nature

5-10 YEARS

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
CNCT_12	Use the opportunities created by the redesign and reconstruction of I-35 to create better and more welcoming connections between East Austin and Downtown.	ATD, CPO, TXDOT	Connection
CNCT_13	The frontage roads along the redesigned and reconstructed I-35 should function as lower speed boulevards.	ATD, CPO, TXDOT	Connection
CNCT_14	Improve pedestrian and bicyclist mobility throughout the Palm District by creating and improving north-south and east-west connections to include wider, shaded activated sidewalks and continuous, dedicated bike lanes.	ATD, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy	Connection
IG_20	New development along the redesigned and reconstructed I-35 frontage roads should create a welcoming pedestrian environment.	ATD, CPO, TXDOT	Inclusive Growth

ONGOING/LONG-TERM

#	Recommendation	Sponsor (s)	Theme/Outcomes
CNCT_9	Improve vehicular circulation within the Rainey Street national Historical Register District.	ATD	Connection
CLTR_6	Ensure cultural and public spaces encourage programming to include Tejano, Latino, and Mexican American arts and music.	PARD, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, Convention Center	Culture
CLTR_9	Preserve historic sites in the district.	HPD, Preservation Austin	Culture
IG_4	Leverage publicly owned sites for affordable and mixed-income housing. See IG_13 in 1-3 Year table for additional housing goal.	Office of Real Estate, HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_5	Incentivize greater levels of affordable housing in the Palm District.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
IG_6	Incentivize the preservation of existing affordable housing in the Palm District.	HPD	Inclusive Growth
NTR_11	Enhance the sustainability of the district by using standards of nationally recognized rating systems such as the Sustainable SITES Initiative for site development.	Sustainability, HPD, DSD, AE, WPD, AW	Nature
NTR_2	Promote the design and programming of the Palm District's parks to be family friendly.	PARD, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy	Nature

LOOKING FORWARD

Bold Moves for the District's Future

The Palm District is experiencing and will continue to experience transformative change through the remainder of this decade and into the next. In no other place in our city will there likely be the concentrated investments in infrastructure, parks, cultural facilities, and public and private development. The Palm District Plan should be used as a guide for that transformation in order to ensure that as the district changes it grows into a truly special place where the past is honored, culture is celebrated, and the future is shaped.

The plan's adoption is only the first step in moving toward its Vision. There are two important steps still needed to codify the guidance provided by this Plan. The first is to amend the *Downtown Austin Plan* to incorporate the changes created by the Palm District Plan and to reconcile any discrepancies created by its adoption. The second is to implement parts of the Palm District Plan by initiating amendments to the [Land Development Code](#) to ensure that properties adjacent to Waller Creek develop in a way that supports the function and design of Waterloo Greenway.

In addition, the plan will be implemented through multiple significant initiatives that are underway in the district, and the City will work with its partners to ensure that the guidance provided by the plan informs these initiatives, including:

- The redesign and reconstruction of IH 35 and the [My 35 Program](#)
- The redesign and reconstruction of the Neal Kocurek Memorial Austin Convention Center
- Continued development of parks and trails as part of the Waterloo Greenway
- Travis County-led work to identify a future plan for the [Palm School site](#)
- The ongoing work of the Economic Development Department, Red River Cultural District, ESB-MACC and others to support the vitality and health of the creative ecosystem and the live music industry
- The implementation of the Project Connect Transit Improvements
- The re-imagining of East 6th Street being undertaken by property owners and partners
- The future re-imagining and redevelopment of the Austin Police Department's Headquarters site by the City in coordination with Waterloo Greenway
- Continued implementation of improvements throughout the Innovation District and its interface and integration with Red River Cultural District

Together, Austin can create a district where the past is honored, culture is celebrated, and the future is shaped.



Execute the Council-approved vision for Waterloo Greenway.

- Create opportunities for cultural spaces to locate in the Palm School site and through the redesign of Palm Park.
- Engage the community, including people with historic connection to Palm Park, to regain its status as a community gathering place which provides recreational activities for people of all ages and abilities.
- Implement Heritage Wayfinding for Black and Mexican American histories that include points of interest found within and near the Palm District.
- Incorporate cultural uses and programming into the Palm School site in addition to site restoration.
- Ensure that the parks and public spaces in the Palm District serve as amenities to residents and visitors.

Bolster the Red River Cultural District and the “Live Music Mile”.



- Create new policies and opportunities to preserve music venues in the Red River Cultural District.
- Ensure Live Music Fund Guidelines are promoted to Mexican-American and Black musicians and assist with access to City funding for local acts.
- Incentivize new development to include ground floor retail spaces to provide opportunities for local-serving goods and services and entertainment and cultural spaces to foster complete communities in the Palm District.
- Ensure cultural and public spaces encourage programming to include Tejano, Latino, and Mexican American arts and music.

Stay Focused on Cap and Stitch, and I-35 frontage roads.

- Ensure I-35 Cap & Stitch alternatives incorporate cultural uses near Cesar Chavez Street and Palm Park that provide space for diverse communities.
- New development along the redesigned and reconstructed I-35 frontage roads should create a welcoming pedestrian environment.
- The frontage roads along the redesigned and reconstructed I-35 should function as lower speed boulevards.
- Use the opportunities created by the redesign and reconstruction of I-35 to create better and more welcoming connections between East Austin and Downtown.



Leverage E-TOD, Downtown Station connectivity, and future Convention Center cultural programming.

- Ensure that the redevelopment and expansion of the Neal Kocurek Memorial Convention Center results in a world-class facility with a more open design that repairs the surrounding public realm.
- Create opportunities for cultural spaces to locate in the expanded Convention Center. This will require exploring new governance models, funding sources, and active programming partnerships.
- Prior to commencing preliminary design, create a public engagement strategy to solicit wide-ranging community input from residents, property owners, business owners, intuitions, and Austin's design community to ensure that the Convention Center's redesign is pedestrian-friendly and reflects the broader community's values.
- Include public and open spaces along 2nd and 3rd Street in the redesign of the Austin Convention Center
- Create safe and easy-to-use bicycle connections linking the Palm District's many attractions to the Downtown Station.
- Promote, recruit, program the reimagined Neal Kocurek Memorial Convention Center to become a significant economic driver for the Austin and Central Texas economy.
- Remove obstacles and create better connections to the Convention Center from the other parts of the Palm District and the rest of Downtown.





Accommodate housing at a range of incomes.

- Housing stock in the Palm District is increasing rapidly due to market forces. As new market-rate development increases, there is a desire to see more creative and affordable housing options including artist lodging, full-service housing with onsite employment and service provision, or other mixed-income solutions to address waning affordability in the district.
- New opportunities for housing should include repurposing existing parking garages, and leveraging publically owned sites for housing.
- Incentivize new development to positively contribute to the public realm such as improved streetscape designs, public art, and pedestrian-oriented design for the ground floor spaces.
- Promote/incentivize denser, mixed-income housing.
- Identify opportunities to develop publicly subsidized affordable housing.
- Make affordable housing units available to residents whose families were historically displaced from the area.
- Incentivize the preservation of existing affordable housing in the Palm District.

