IMAGINEAUSTIN

Vibrant. Livable. Connected.

Imagine Austin Year 10 Report

January 2023

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Introduction

Austin's comprehensive plan 10-year milestone
Imagine Austin is the City of Austin's long-range, comprehensive plan; it is a guide for Austin's growth and development over a 30-year period. Adopted in 2012, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan celebrates its ten-year anniversary in 2022. At this milestone, staff provides the following Year 10 report to help assess progress towards implementing the community's vision:

"to be a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all."

How the report is organized
The report begins with the City's population and jobs forecast, as demographic data is the foundation of long-range planning. These data not only paint a detailed picture of the city's population and groups within it but also tell an important story of change over the past decade – what are the differences, if any, in whom we plan for today compared to a decade ago?

A collection of stories detailing how City-wide implementation teams, named priority program teams, have advanced Imagine Austin make up the majority of this report. These stories shine a light on the breadth and depth of the teams' progress between 2012-2022 and are supplemented with quantitative data.

The final section of the report presents a series of challenge statements or opportunities as we look ahead. The Imagine Austin team and the city must learn from the past and continuously improve to ensure the Imagine Austin vision becomes a reality for all.

Major themes
Several key themes emerged during the review of the priority programs' stories. These are listed below with a brief description of the theme in the context of the City of Austin and selected work that the City is undertaking around these themes.

Racial Equity – while more needs to be done in terms of centering racial equity in the implementation of Imagine Austin, many priority program partner departments are already doing this work. Some examples include:

- Housing and Planning Department staff developed a racial equity anti-displacement tool to serve as a guide for investing Project Connect anti-displacement funding.
- The Office of Sustainability hired a local environmental planning firm to prepare a Green Infrastructure Strengths and Gaps Assessment, exposing significant disparities in access to green infrastructure.
- Austin Water created The Equity and Affordability Tool, in alignment with the Equity and Affordability Roadmap, to assist in evaluating the distribution of benefits and burdens from plan outcomes on vulnerable communities.

Affordability – data from the City's demographer shows that while most other large cities across the US are losing population, Austin's population continues to grow, exacerbating Austin's housing affordability issues.

- Economic Development Department is using $128 million in bond funding for projects to enhance existing City facilities with additional theaters, galleries, and arts education facilities, made available for rent by artists and musicians at below market rates, or through residencies and commissions.
- Austin Transportation Department, Housing and Planning Department, and others are working on Project Connect, which will connect people with jobs and opportunities. The project includes $300 million to mitigate the displacement of vulnerable populations impacted by new transit development and construction.

Unprecedented events – The past several years have been shaped by multiple unprecedented events, including a worldwide pandemic, protests over systemic racism and police brutality, mass unemployment, business closures, and evictions, and increasing evidence of the impacts of climate change.

- Austin Public Health quickly mobilized a multifaceted response to COVID-19, working with multiple task forces and developing programs to ensure the needs of populations at the highest risk and most vulnerable to COVID-19 were met.
- The City - along with community partners - launched the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps program to help Austinites who have been economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to earn income, serve their community, and gain skills.
- Parks and Recreation Department is in the process of creating a land management plan and climate vulnerability analysis to meet the challenges of climate change.

- Austin's Climate Equity Plan was developed with engagement from racially and economically diverse residents to include the challenges, barriers, and opportunities facing historically excluded groups on issues pertaining to climate change.

Concerns about racial equity, affordability, and unprecedented events including climate change have become significantly more acute since the adoption of Imagine Austin in 2012. This report highlights some of the ways the City of Austin is addressing these issues.

Population + Jobs Forecast

Overview

The Imagine Austin 2020 Annual Report documented the health and economic impacts of the global pandemic. It is increasingly clear the pandemic also had significant impacts on data collection and data quality, especially relating to the 2020 Census count, the building block of population and jobs projections.

Data processing delays associated with the pandemic and new data protections being implemented by the Census Bureau aiming to prevent data disclosure continue to impact the availability of data. Data with demographic detail that would help to inform growth contributions by different race/ethnicity groups in the city and housing characteristics useful to understand shifts in the housing landscape are yet to be released.

Preliminary Population Projections

Preliminary projections using the 2020 census count as the base population were produced by the City of Austin demographer, although it is recognized this base may be too low. The City of Austin has appealed the 2020 Census count for Austin. Once results of that appeal are received, the preliminary projections may be updated to produce a final set of projections. For the Imagine Austin Year 10 Report, findings have been drawn from the preliminary projections, which account for pandemic impacts on migration, birth, and survival rates.

Previous projections indicated the Austin population would reach the 1 million mark by 2020. Adjusting to the 2020 Census count base indicates Austin is projected to reach this milestone in 2023. Although population growth gains in Austin between 2010 and 2020 are lower than in the past, Austin continues to grow. This is not the case for most large cities across the country. Every city larger than Austin, with the exception of San Antonio, TX, and Phoenix, AZ, is estimated by the Census Bureau to have lost population between 2020 and 2021 (U.S. Census Bureau Vintage Population Estimates, 2021). Fifty-five percent of all U.S. cities with populations of 500,000 or more in 2021 lost population during this period. These recent Census Bureau estimates indicate the city of Austin continues to grow, and this growth is also reflected in the City of Austin preliminary projections shown below.

Table 1A: Preliminary Population Projections for the City of Austin, Travis County, and Austin Metropolitan Area, 2012 to 2027

	Year	City of Austin		Travis County		Austin MSA	
		Total Area Population	Annualized Growth Rate	Total Area Population	Annualized Growth Rate	Total Area Population	Annualized Growth Rate
	2012	823,539	2.0%	1,067,979	2.1%	**1,834,586**	3.0%
	2013	841,488	2.2%	1,095,041	2.5%	**1,883,315**	2.7%
	2014	859,830	2.2%	1,122,788	2.5%	**1,942,467**	3.1%
	2015	876,867	2.0%	1,148,867	2.3%	**2,002,134**	3.1%
	2016	896,716	2.3%	1,178,949	2.6%	**2,062,016**	3.0%
	2017	914,484	2.0%	1,206,333	2.3%	**2,115,475**	2.6%
	2018	928,256	1.5%	1,231,806	2.1%	**2,165,497**	2.4%
	2019	941,847	1.5%	1,256,776	2.0%	**2,227,083**	2.8%
	2020	**961,855**	2.1%	**1,290,188**	2.7%	**2,283,371**	2.5%
FORECAST	2021	971,474	1.0%	1,302,956	1.0%	2,335,051	2.3%
	2022	981,610	1.0%	1,318,775	1.2%	2,386,732	2.2%
	2023	1,009,833	2.9%	1,336,643	1.4%	2,438,412	2.2%
	2024	1,031,505	2.1%	1,355,887	1.4%	2,490,093	2.1%
	2025	1,049,333	1.7%	1,376,054	1.5%	2,541,773	2.1%
	2026	1,067,127	1.7%	1,396,841	1.5%	2,593,453	2.0%
	2027	1,084,889	1.7%	1,418,045	1.5%	2,645,134	2.0%

Source: Lila Valencia, Ph.D., City Demographer, Housing and Planning Department, City of Austin, January 2022. (A) Population figures are as of April 1 of each year; B) 2020 figure comes from U.S. Census Bureau 2020 decennial census count; C) 2012-2019 figures were retroactively adjusted to account for updated 2020 census figure and by applying historical growth rates; D) 2021-2030 figures are preliminary projections and do not assume future annexation activity; E) 2021-2022 figures are held at lower rates to account for impacts of COVID – these will be adjusted as new data become available; F) MSA figures are derived from Texas Demographic Center 2018 Vintage Population Projections.

The Austin metro area was the fastest-growing large metro in the country every year since 2010. In 2022, the five-county region making up the Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown metropolitan area is estimated at 2.35 million residents. Much of the growth in the metro area stems from incredibly fast growth in its suburban cities. In 2021, the top three fastest growing cities in the country were all in the Austin metro area, with Kyle ranked first followed by Georgetown and Leander. In the past, these cities grew fast but had small base populations, resulting in smaller numeric increases. However, more recently, these fast-growing cities are also leading in total numeric growth. For instance, between 2020 and 2021 Georgetown saw the 10th largest numeric growth in the country, and Leander saw the 12th largest numeric increase. These cities are growing ten times faster than Austin and nearly five times faster than the metro area.

Census 2020, Austin Texas

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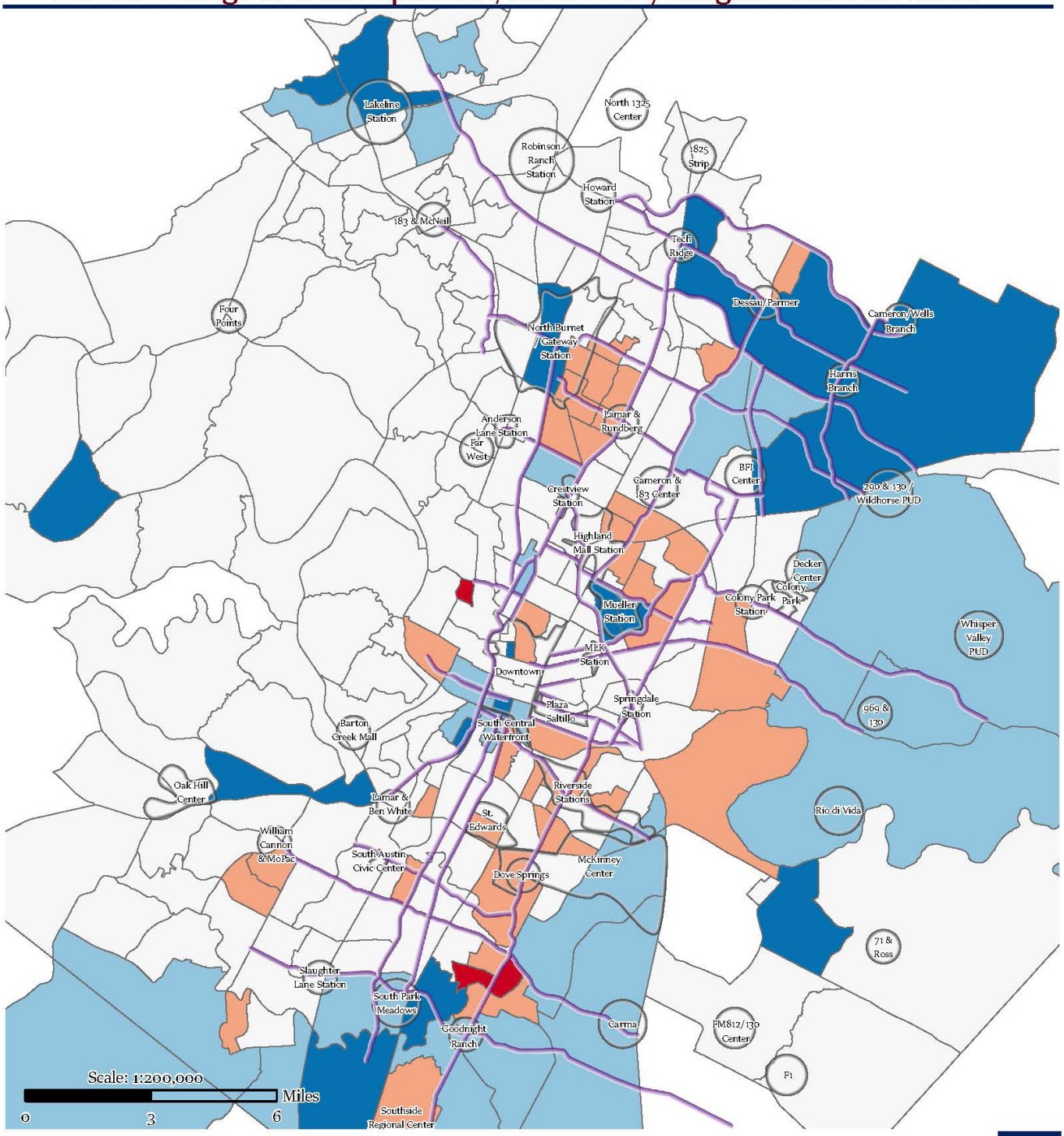
Percent Change in Total Population, 2010-2020/Imagine Austin Corridors



Percent Population Change per Census Tract

- -40% to -25%
- -24% to 0%
- 1% to 50%
- 51% to 100%
- 101% to 423%
- Imagine Austin Corridors
- Imagine Austin Centers

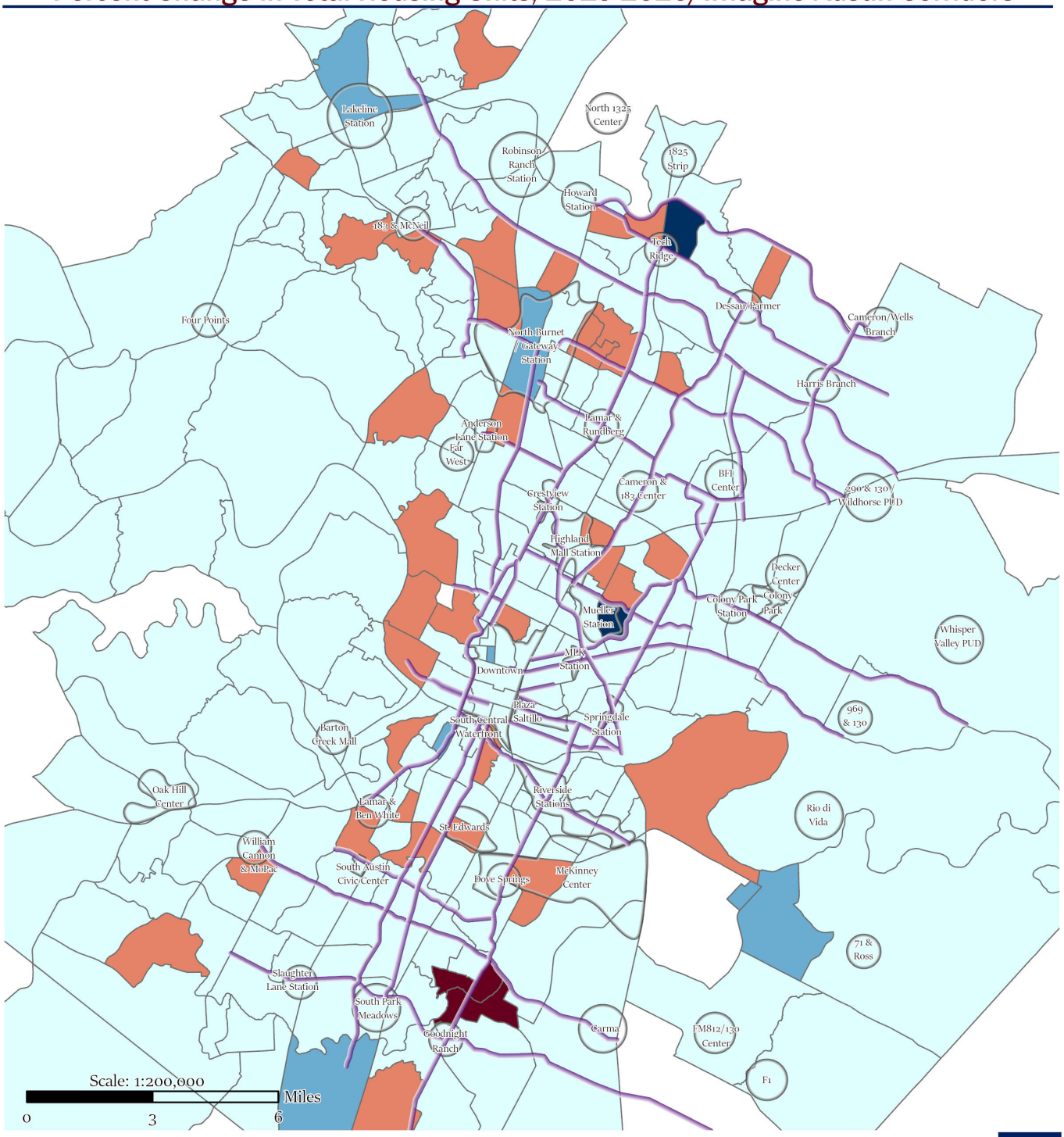
Author: City of Austin Housing and Planning Department
Date: 9.7.2021
Credit: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census P.L. 94-171 File

Map 1A: Percent Change in Total Population, 2010-2020 Imagine Austin Corridors

Census 2020, Austin Texas

HOUSING & PLANNING

Percent Change in Total Housing Units, 2010-2020/Imagine Austin Corridors



Housing Unit Percent Change per Census Tract

- -0.3% to -0.1%
- -0.1% to 0%
- 0.1% to 1.5%
- 1.6% to 3%
- 3.1% to 6.8%
- Imagine Austin Corridors
- Imagine Austin Centers

Author: City of Austin Housing and Planning Department
Date: 9.9.2021
Credit: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census P.L. 94-171 File

Map 1B: Percent Change in Total Housing Units, 2010-2020 Imagine Austin Corridors

Looking at population change between 2010 and 2020 across the region, the rapid growth in surrounding cities like Leander, Cedar Park, Liberty Hill, Hutto, and Bee Cave is evident. Within Austin, areas of rapid growth can be found in many Imagine Austin centers, where increased density is a goal. For instance, the Imagine Austin center Lakeline Station includes the most populous census tract in the city, located in the Lakeline/Avery Ranch area in the northwest portion of the city. The Harris Branch area, a hub for Imagine Austin centers Dessau/Parmer, Harris Branch, and Cameron/Wells Branch, also saw high population growth. The areas with the fastest growth can be found in the Mueller development and the Tech Ridge area. Increased housing generally followed population growth patterns. The areas that added the most housing between 2010 and 2020 were the Domain, followed by Lakeline, Avery Ranch, and the Slaughter Creek area south of FM 1626.

Race and Ethnicity

Areas with increased housing development and population growth also experienced racial and ethnic demographic shifts. Nearly 60 percent of areas with the greatest development - those that added over 1,000 housing units during the decade - saw increased diversity in their racial/ethnic composition. These areas were dispersed around the city, but, with the exception of the Domain and West Campus areas, most of the diverse growth took place in outer lying parts of the city, such as northeast Austin around Tech Ridge and Harris Branch, northwest Austin around Lakeline (north of Hwy 183), far east Austin and north of the Austin Bergstrom Airport, and far south and southwest Austin, spanning from Bluff Springs to Onion Creek and around to Circle C and West Oak Hill.

About 30 percent of these areas were also areas with significant growth in the Asian population. In addition to substantial growth in the Circle C, West Campus, and Domain areas, the Asian population also saw significant growth in northwest and northeast parts of the city.

The remaining 40 percent of areas with greatest development also experienced population growth but mostly among non-Hispanic Whites, particularly in areas of the central city such as Downtown, Seaholm, W. 5th, and more outlying areas like Crestview, Mueller, East Oak Hill, and Lakeline (south of Hwy 183). Similar growth patterns were seen in the Riverside, Holly, and Highland areas, but this growth was also coupled with declines in the Hispanic population. The Riverside area experienced one of the greatest shifts in racial makeup between 2010 and 2020, shifting from about 22 percent non-Hispanic White in 2010 to 63 percent in 2020, whereas the Hispanic population dropped from 68 percent to 22 percent during the same time. Similarly in the Holly neighborhood, Hispanics made up 72 percent of the population in 2010 and non-Hispanic Whites made up 19 percent. By 2020, the Hispanic population share had declined to 37 percent while the non-Hispanic White share had increased to 48 percent.

Another area of significant development paired with racial/ethnic shifts is the Chestnut neighborhood in East Austin, where the Black population made up nearly a quarter of the population in 2010 and now makes up less than less than 9 percent, whereas the non-Hispanic White population has increased from 43 percent to nearly 60 percent in 2020. For an interactive 2020 Census data web map series, click here.

Economic Opportunity and Affordability

Although Austin now makes up a smaller share of population growth in the region, the city continues to employ the large majority of workers in the metro area. Of the 1.1 million jobs in the Austin metro area, over two-thirds, or 734,000, are jobs in the city of Austin. As cities within the region continue to experience explosive growth, the city of Austin will likely remain the primary employer for the region, although future updates to the jobs forecast will need to closely monitor emerging employment centers in other parts of the region, such as Taylor and Del Valle.

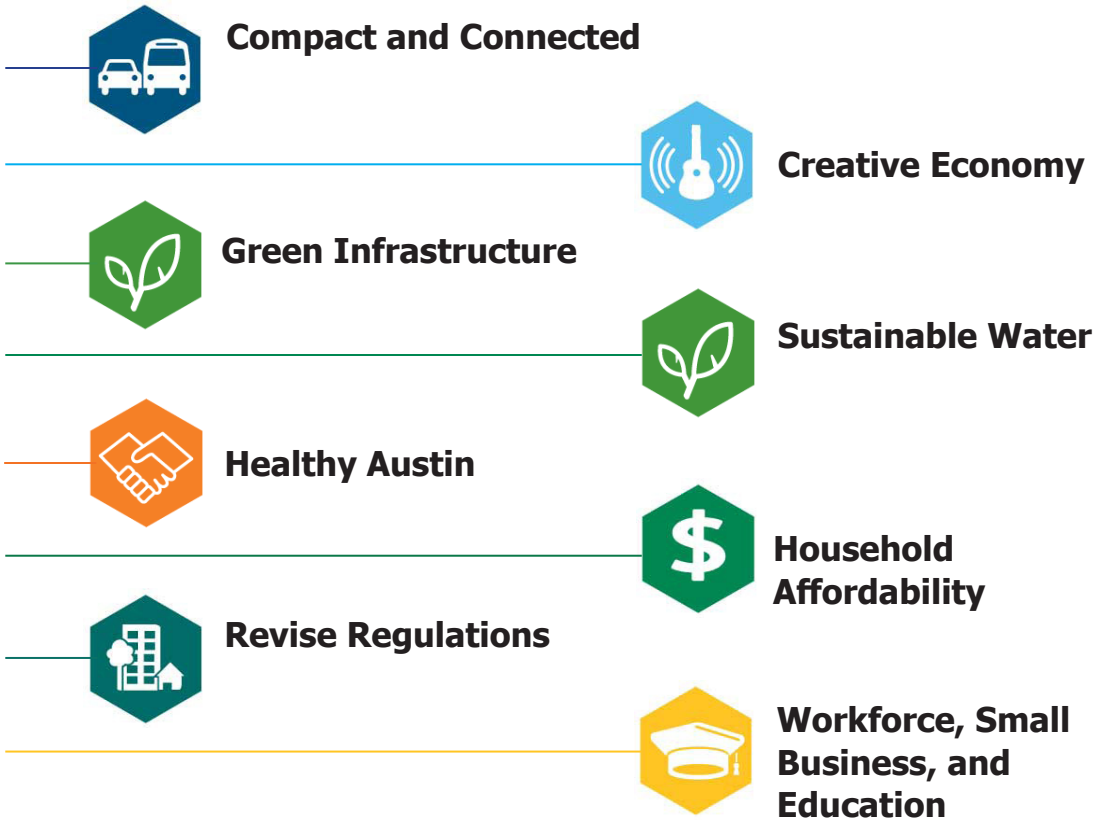
Also, important to the continuation of the trend of Austin's declining share of regional growth will be affordability, primarily housing affordability. As concerns over the pandemic waned, Austinites saw rapid increases in median home prices, rising to record levels from late 2020 through the spring of 2022. The median price of a home when Imagine Austin was adopted in 2012 was about $230,000 (Texas A&M Real Estate Center Housing Activity, 2022). By July 2022, the median home price had nearly tripled to $633,000 (Austin Board of Realtors Housing Market Report, July 2022). Increases in the housing market have also impacted the rental market, with Austin's rents increasing approximately 50.8 percent between 2012 and 2022.

Recent inflation mitigation efforts from the Federal Reserve have brought on higher mortgage rates, lowering demand and helping to stabilize housing prices. However, these same efforts could work to further widen homeownership gaps by impacting first-time home buyers, especially households of color, or lead to out migration by these families as they seek more affordable housing in other parts of the region. Even as home prices stabilized in summer 2022, affordability, compounded by inflation concerns driving up gas, food, and transportation costs, continues to be a major concern for the residents of Austin. These economic pressures could also impact the population growth, as well as its distribution, throughout the region in the future.

Priority Programs

Imagine Austin established a framework for implementing the plan's many policies and actions to help achieve the community vision outlined in the plan. An element of that implementation model was the formation of eight priority programs to provide structure and direction to accomplish the plan's many goals and actions. These priority programs span the core principles of the comprehensive plan and enable the City of Austin and its partners to pull together, break down silos, make connections, and leverage resources for more effective implementation. Each of the priority program teams are made up of a cross-departmental and diverse team of staff, and all have their own unique way of tackling their work. Each of these priority programs also have important relationships with the others and make valuable connections across subject areas.

For the purposes of this report, each priority program team was tasked with submitting a series of stories detailing how their work has advanced Imagine Austin make over the past decade. First, there is the gamechanger, or the one thing – a bond passage, a department-wide strategic plan, etc. - that has had or will have the most lasting impact or positive effect on implementing Imagine Austin. Next are the highlights, or a description of two or three of the most significant or major achievements over the past five years of Imagine Austin. These are awards, policies, and programs that should celebrated but may not be the single major achievement for the program that the gamechanger is. Last, the priority program teams let us know their challenges, or the key barriers that they faced, while attempting to implement Imagine Austin.



Compact + Connected

The Invest in a Compact and Connected Austin priority program calls for coordination of capital investments, incentives, and regulations in order to support the vision of Imagine Austin. This priority program focuses primarily on:

- investing in a transportation system that supports the Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map and decreased dependence on driving
- using the City's economic development toolkit and partnering with the private sector to leverage more beneficial development in support of Imagine Austin
- aligning the overall Capital Improvement Program with Imagine Austin

Game Changer

Project Connect
In November 2016, 2018, and 2020, voters in the City of Austin approved several transformative mobility propositions.

In 2016, the City of Austin voters approved a mobility bond package that included funding for Regional Mobility projects, Corridor Improvement projects, and Local Mobility projects. At $720 million, the 2016 Mobility Bond Program marked the largest one-time investment in the city's transportation and mobility system.

In 2018, an additional $160 million was approved providing funding for the City to address issues with existing transportation infrastructure, including street, sidewalk, and bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation; traffic signal upgrades; pedestrian safety improvements; intersection safety projects; and improvement of public spaces through approved Neighborhood Partnering Program projects.

In 2020, voters approved two additional mobility propositions. Proposition A approved the City's property tax rate, dedicating 8.75 cents of the operations and maintenance portion of the tax rate towards the implementation of Project Connect, the City's first high-capacity transit system.

Federal funding is anticipated to provide approximately 45% of the program's estimated $7.1 billion capital cost. The property tax revenue will provide funding for the rest of the capital cost plus operations and maintenance of the transit system once built. The proposition also included $300 million for transit-supportive anti-displacement housing strategies.

The dedicated property tax revenue, along with Capital Metro revenue and Federal funding, will be directed to the Austin Transit Partnership, an independent government organization formed to oversee, finance and implement Project Connect.

Second, 2020's Proposition B allocated an additional $460 million in general obligation bonds for transportation infrastructure including sidewalks, transportation-related Bikeways, urban trails, transportation safety projects (Vision Zero), safe routes to school, and substandard streets.

These voter-approved investments in mobility are unprecedented, and have already begun changing the transportation landscape across Austin. The City's All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network reached a major milestone at more than 50% complete, which adds up to over 220 linear miles of bike lanes. The Sidewalk and Safe Routes to School Programs have delivered miles of new sidewalks and safe crossings. In 2021 alone, the Sidewalk Program completed over 30 linear miles of new and rehabilitated sidewalks throughout Austin. This represents a 50% increase from 2020 and is double the amount of annual sidewalk work that was completed just three years ago. The City's Vision Zero Program is seeing significant reductions in fatal and serious injuries at intersections where safety improvements have been implemented and is also pursuing projects systemically through a number of safety initiatives aimed at focusing attention on the highest priority needs. Additionally, the Corridor Construction Program is delivering mobility, safety, and connectivity improvements on nine major roadways throughout Austin. Soon Austin will see the first investments from Project Connect with new MetroRapid Routes in service in the summer of 2023.

Highlights

Austin Strategic Mobility Plan
The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) is the City of Austin's first locally focused, comprehensive, multimodal transportation plan. Called for by Imagine Austin, the ASMP was unanimously approved by the Austin City Council on April 11, 2019, after a two and a half year planning process. The process to develop the ASMP was applauded by City Council for its vision of a 50-50 city, where 50% of Austinites drive to work and 50% use another mode of transportation, as well as the ability to elevate the voices of members of the community who have not been historically heard in planning processes. The ASMP provides new direction for mobility in Austin through its comprehensive set of policies and actions and sets priorities for future decisions.

The ASMP incorporates all modes of transportation for the future of Austin's transportation network. The ASMP is needed for Austin to achieve the mobility outcomes that will help to improve and sustain the quality of life desired by our community. Austin's transportation network must be safe, accessible, affordable, and inclusive for all members of the community, and the ASMP positions current and future leaders to be able to make decisions toward those exact values. The ASMP presents goals to achieve, the policies needed for guidance, and the actions necessary to realize the community's shared vision.

Vision Zero
Between 2017 and 2021, more than one-third of crashes in Austin that resulted in serious injury or death occurred at signalized intersections. Early data in a recent Vision Zero Analytics report shows promising results at completed and improved intersections.

Of the 13 intersections with at least one year of crash data following project completion, the annualized data showed a combined 30% reduction in total crashes and a 31% reduction in crashes resulting in serious injury or death. The serious injury or fatal crashes declined from an average of 12 per year to 8.3 per year. The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) also analyzed a control group of similar intersections across the city to better contextualize broader crash trends in Austin over the same period. At those locations, total crashes per year decreased by 4% and serious injury and fatal crashes increased by 8%.

Through funding from the City budget and the 2016, 2018, and 2020 Mobility Bonds, ATD is working to improve safety at dozens of high-crash intersections as part of its Vision Zero goal of eliminating serious injuries and fatalities

on Austin's roadways. Since 2016, ATD has completed work at 19 major intersections.

Undoing more than 80 years of vehicle-centric street design in a city of comprising approximately 300 square miles will take time, but the work continues as every avoided traffic fatality or serious injury is worth the effort. ATD teams finished upgrades to another major intersection at Cameron Road and Ferguson Lane in May 2022, and four more projects are scheduled to start construction before the end of 2022.

Colony Park Sustainable Community

The Colony Park Sustainable Community is a multi-year effort to implement the Colony Park Sustainable Community Master Plan, adopted by Austin City Council in December 2014. Since 2014, the City of Austin has been working with the community to secure a Master Developer partner for 208-acres of City-owned land in Northeast Austin. In October 2018, City Council unanimously selected Catellus Development Corporation as the proposed master developer for the Colony Park Sustainable Community and City staff are currently in active negotiations with the developer.

The project team has also been working closely with partnering agencies and interdepartmentally to coordinate nearby adjacent and supporting projects. These efforts include the Colony Park District Park, Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park Vision Plan, and Capital Metro TOD Green Line Study for which Colony Park is being considered as a station area. A critical initiative to support these efforts is the Colony Loop Drive project, which will provide a continuous complete street between Loyola and Decker Lanes through the existing and future Colony Park neighborhoods. Preliminary engineering and design for Colony Loop Drive are underway through the 2016 Mobility Corridor Program.

Challenges

The ASMP lays out the biggest challenges we face in trying to achieve our vision of a mobile, safe, and interconnected Austin by:

- Lowering the risk of travel-related injury and protect and promote public health;
- Supplying a multimodal transportation network that can meet the demands of a growing region while providing equitable access to transportation choices, opportunities, and services;
- Preparing for and leading in leveraging rapidly evolving technology in transportation;
- Ensuring a financially and environmentally sustainable transportation network; and
- Collaborating effectively with agencies, organizations, and the Austin community around mobility decision-making

Program Champion:
Cole Kitten

Corridor Program Office
Public Works
Housing and Planning
Economic Development
Austin Transportation
Watershed Protection

Creative Economy

Growing and investing in creative culture is a cornerstone of Austin's identity, as well its economy. The focus of the Grow and Invest in Austin's Creative Economy priority program is to encourage and support Austin's live music, festivals, theater, film, digital media, and new creative art forms. In order to support the creative industry, this priority program includes educational and economic programs as well as initiatives that provide affordable transportation, work space, housing, and healthcare.

Game Changer

Cultural space and affordability are the two biggest issues that Austin's Creative Economy faces. City of Austin Departments made strides in addressing these issues through two game-changing initiatives over the past 10 years.
Cultural space in Austin has faced increasing pressure as new development, gentrification and struggles in affordability threaten the medium and long-term sustainability of the City's cultural infrastructure. A new Cultural Trust has been formed as part of the Austin Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) to support acquisition and preservation of arts, cultural, and music spaces. The Cultural Trust manages transaction negotiations and coordinates fundraising, development supervision, and asset management for affordable cultural and music spaces. AEDC, through purchases and long-term leases, creates affordable spaces that support artists and arts organizations, and preserves historic and iconic cultural buildings and spaces for creative and cultural uses.

Austin voters expressed their support for more cultural space through the 2018 Bond election. Proposition B allocated $128 million in bond funding for seven named projects that would enhance existing City facilities with additional theaters, galleries, and arts education facilities, made available to artists and musicians for rent below market rates, or through residencies and commissions. The projects are now underway, with the first to be completed in 2025.

Highlights

In 2022, the Economic Development Department completed a 36-month Cultural Funding Review Process in consultation with City Council, boards and commissions, MJR Partners (consultants), and the cultural community, to re- imagine funding programs through an equity lens, and to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the City's use of Hotel Occupancy Tax to support cultural tourism. While this process was underway, the Economic Development Department deployed more than $28 million in pandemic relief funding to the local creative community.

From 2017-2022, the Cultural Arts Division supported Austin's designation as the only U.S. city designated as a City of Media Arts under the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Austin took part in summits and showcased the work of local artists in exhibitions in Enghien-les-Bains, France; Gwangju, South Korea; Changsha, China; and in virtual city-to-city exchanges with York, England; Changsha, China; and Karlsruhe, Germany.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department launched the Artists Access Program in 2019 to provide free access to Cultural Center sites for rehearsals and low-cost access to theaters for performances. Through a partnership with the Cultural Arts Division, funding from the Hotel Occupancy Tax helps support space usage by theater companies, musicians, and visual artists in need of low-cost space for creative work. The artists and musicians are chosen through a public competitive process. To date, the program has provided more than 60 residencies in five Cultural Center sites.

The opening of the Central Library and Oakwood Cemetery Chapel provided more venues for the arts in Austin. Known as tourist destinations as well as community gathering spaces, they provide opportunities for artists and musicians to share their work, showcasing both local and internationally-known artists, and serving as homes for creation and collaboration.

While the pandemic made in-person live performances all but impossible, Austin Public Library continued to find ways to elevate and celebrate artists and their works. In October 2021, the Library unveiled the "Legends Mosaics: Austin's Courageous Female Leaders of Color," six commemorative mosaic

portraits produced in a collaboration between Latinitas, Austin's only bilingual STEM nonprofit, and local artists. These pieces preserve the legacy of local trailblazers and were displayed at the Central Library as well as library locations throughout the city.

Challenges

Austin's fast-paced growth over the last decade continues to pose the greatest challenge for the local creative economy in terms of affordability and cost of living. The skyrocketing commercial and residential real estate markets and climbing property taxes are displacing creatives at a rapid rate, resulting in the loss of performing, production, and exhibition spaces and record numbers of residents moving to bedroom communities or to other cities altogether.

Lack of digital access is an expression of the affordability issues Austin's creatives face. Digital inclusion is a priority issue for the Austin Public Library. Disparities in levels of access for residents were made especially clear by the pandemic. APL applied for and received grants to circulate laptops and Wi-Fi hot spots to those in the community who lack those resources. Sustaining funding for these efforts is a challenge APL faces as grant funding cycles come to an end.

Photo from KUT, Gabriel C. Perez

Program Champion:
Laura Esparza

Parks and Recreation
Housing and Planning
Austin Public Library
Economic Development
Aviation

Green Infrastructure

The Use Green Infrastructure to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Integrate Nature Into the City priority program seeks to improve environmental, recreational, and transportation functions and improve the connection between people and the environment. This priority program addresses a key Imagine Austin goal of integrating nature into the city. Green infrastructure is broadly defined in Imagine Austin 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.”

The Green Infrastructure Priority Program Implementation Team (GIPPIT) was chartered with the goal of managing Austin’s urban and natural ecosystems in a coordinated and sustainable manner. The GIPPIT objectives are as follows:

- Continue public investment in green infrastructure
- Incentivize and/or require private investment in green infrastructure
- Maximize ecosystem function and services provided by green infrastructure on City-owned land
- Improve inter-departmental collaboration and coordination in the management of City-owned lands

Game Changer

A key gamechanger for the restoration and enhancement of green infrastructure in Austin since the adoption of Imagine Austin has been a long-overdue focus on advancing racial equity.

Austin has an extensive history of systemic racism and racial inequity that continues today. Communities of color have been excluded, marginalized, and discriminated against as a result of City policies and practices. In an effort to address racial inequity in Austin, City Council passed Resolution No. 20150507-027 in 2015, which directed the City Manager to
evaluate the impact of existing city policies and practices on racial equity and develop an Equity Assessment Tool that can be used across City departments. The Equity Office was created in 2016 to focus on advancing equity in all aspects of City operations.

The City of Austin defines racial equity as the condition when race no longer predicts a person's quality of life outcomes in our community. To better understand and evaluate the relationship between green infrastructure and quality of life outcomes, the City hired a local environmental planning firm to prepare a Green Infrastructure Strengths and Gaps Assessment. The report showed significant disparities in access to green infrastructure—such as tree canopy and green space—for communities of color and low-income communities. This means less shade, hotter temperatures, more flooding, and degraded water quality. Census tracts with the least amount of green infrastructure coincided with the census tracts with the worst health outcomes and most social vulnerability. This report was supplemented by other studies and assessments to help staff identify critical gaps in the green infrastructure network, including:

- A study conducted by Watershed Protection focused on stream corridors in the Blackland Prairie ecosystem to better understand the unique environmental sensitivities of these corridors as well as the specific challenges we need to address to protect and enhance them.
- The Urban Forest Inventory released by the U.S. Forest Service that estimated the quantity, health, composition, and benefits of Austin's urban trees and forest.
- The Our Parks, Our Future Plan (adopted by City Council in 2018) which conducted a thorough assessment of the condition and quality of parks to provide a strong data-driven baseline to inform prioritization and track implementation progress over time.

These disparities in green infrastructure have developed and deepened over decades. Addressing them will require significant investment, community collaboration, and innovative solutions. The City has made measured progress on reducing these gaps over the last five years by centering equity in the development of programs, plans, projects, and partnerships. Examples include:

- The adoption of the Climate Equity Plan by City Council in September 2021. The plan set a goal of equitably reaching net-zero community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. The plan was also created with an intentional focus on engaging racially and economically diverse residents about the challenges, barriers, and opportunities facing historically excluded groups. Additionally, each strategy in the plan was evaluated through an equity tool that accounted for outcomes related to health, affordability, accessibility, community capacity, cultural preservation, accountability, and a just transition to green jobs.
- The creation of the Austin Civilian Conservation Corps (ACCC) in 2020. The City of Austin, along with community partners, launched the ACCC program to help Austinites who have been economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to earn income, serve their community, and gain skills that can lead to new sustainable careers. There are many different types of work available through the ACCC, including landscape preservation and tree care, wildfire mitigation, green building and solar installation, and public art installation.
- The creation of a Floodplain Reforestation Program which partners with which partners with volunteers and TreeFolks to plant tree seedlings and saplings along Blackland Prairie creeks in the Eastern Crescent. This work complements the larger Central Texas Floodplain Restoration Program that TreeFolks has created for public and private landowners within a six-county region. Because the creeks in the Blackland Prairie typically have very little canopy cover, these efforts help restore healthy riparian forests— enhancing water quality, wildlife habitat, and the well-being of surrounding communities.

To learn more about the definition and benefits of green infrastructure, please visit: www.austintexas.gov/atxgreen

Highlights

Land Acquisition

- The Parkland Dedication and Acquisition Program has used 2018 bond funding as well as parkland dedication requirements to acquire parkland in high priority areas—investing $43 million and expanding park service to approximately 20,000 Austinites over the last 5 years. In the last 20 years, over 80% of parkland investments have been in the Eastern Crescent, a historically under-invested area of the city.
- 2018 bond funding has also been used to permanently preserve an additional 5,800 acres of wildlands. The Water Quality Protection Lands helps keep water clean and flowing in Austin's aquifers, springs, greenbelts, and parks while the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve protects the habitat of many endemic and imperiled species, including cave and spring invertebrates, aquatic salamanders, rare plants, and the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler.

Land Management

- The City of Austin adopted the new 2015 International Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code on April 9, 2020 and began implementing the code at the beginning of 2021. The new WUI code includes requirements and best practices to ensure that homes and businesses near wildland areas are protected from the next big fire.
- In 2020, the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) established a Land Management Program and is the process of creating a land management plan and climate vulnerability analysis for approximately 10,000 acres of parkland natural areas. This scientific guiding document will be comprised of a site analysis, climate analysis and vulnerability map, management goals, and appropriate restoration strategies. Completion is estimated early in calendar year 2023. PARD Land Management staff have also planned or implemented 385 acres of grassland and woodland restoration treatments, started a PARD prescribed burn team, established cooperative agreements with six local agencies for wildland fire management, drafted trail master plans and sign plans for the Austin Nature Preserve System, installed 1.6 miles of shaded fuel break, and facilitated almost 20 research projects on parkland.
- The Watershed Protection Department manages open space around the city that is acquired from property donations, voluntary home buyouts, or because the property contains stormwater infrastructure (such as ponds). The department works with neighborhood groups and partner organizations on collaborative stewardship of many of these properties to create amenities like wildflower meadows, restoration areas, community gardens, and trails.

- Austin Water won first place in the People's Choice Category of the EPA Outstanding Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Competition for a project that manages stormwater runoff in sensitive habitat areas in its Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. This work connects forest fragments, restores diverse native flora and fauna, and recharges karst features on critical conservation lands.

Programs and Partnerships

- The City of Austin's Office of Sustainability launched a new mini grant program focused on food justice, which offers up to $3,000 in grant funding to projects supporting people in our community most negatively impacted by food-related injustice. The program intends to provide flexible support for organizations leading transformational change in how our food is produced, sold, and consumed.
- The Rain Catcher Pilot Program is a new approach to stormwater management that will determine how the City changes the way it thinks about stormwater and creek health in the future. The Watershed Protection Department is collaborating with Austin Water, the Development Services Department, and the non-profits Urban Patchwork and The Nature Conservancy to encourage the installation of rain gardens and cisterns and the planting of trees that can help people save money while addressing water issues on their property.
- The City of Austin's Youth Forest Council is an immersive, yearlong, paid internship connecting young people (ages 16-19) in Austin to careers that support trees and our communities. Youth Forest Council members work with Urban Forest Program professionals to plan community activities and grow their own connection to Austin's natural spaces.

Challenges

Climate Change and Natural Systems
For decades, humans have relied on fossil fuels to power our lives. When we burn fossil fuels to heat and cool our homes, fuel our cars, and power up our electronics, greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere, causing the Earth to warm and our air quality to worsen. Austin is already experiencing climate impacts through heat, drought, flooding, and wildfires, and we can expect these to get worse as our climate continues to change. More frequent and more severe events will strain our natural resources and increase risks for our community.

Here in Austin, climate impacts threaten our unique natural environment, including our creeks, rivers, springs, urban forest, wildlife, and protected open spaces. As the effects of climate change become more frequent and intense, these systems could be permanently altered and fail to support the quality of life we have come to expect. Climate change will impact the ability of trees and natural areas to deliver ecosystem benefits like clean air and water. With further changes to the climate, the loss of benefits and services will continue, and the chance to significantly restore and recover our natural systems will be limited.

The Climate Equity Plan was adopted by City Council in September 2021. The plan included a section for natural systems that recommended looking at opportunities to protect, restore, and expand our natural lands, working lands, tree canopy, and urban public lands while prioritizing equity, enhancing resilience, and maximizing co-benefits. Natural systems are one of the few ways to achieve “negative emissions” by capturing, removing, and storing carbon from the atmosphere, known as carbon sequestration. They are also a unique strategy for climate change mitigation because they provide a variety of other benefits to communities related to health and wellness, quality of life, ecological health, and safety and resilience.

Urbanization and Population Growth
Rapid population growth and urbanization present tremendous challenges for Austin’s natural systems and green infrastructure. The expanding population requires new land development, which displaces forests, grasslands, and waterways and the ecological functions that soils and vegetation provide. Unmanaged, this causes reductions in tree canopy, shade, and farmland and increases in stormwater runoff and urban temperatures. And the growth also drives market demand and higher land prices, complicating efforts to purchase natural lands for public use and contributing to the displacement of more socially vulnerable residents. The good news is that our understanding

and protection of green infrastructure is greatly increasing. In an increasingly urban setting, it is ever more important to maximize the function of the remaining green infrastructure for human and environmental health. Imagine Austin's emphasis on the importance of green infrastructure helps with a larger effort to identify ways to protect, restore, and manage these areas using projects, programs, and regulations. These efforts are designed to ensure that both the beauty and function of Austin's green infrastructure remain strong and benefit all Austinites.

Program Champion:
Erin Wood

Watershed Protection
Housing and Planning
Public Works
Parks and Recreation
Austin Water
Austin Energy
Office of Sustainability
Austin Fire
Real Estate Services
Austin Transportation

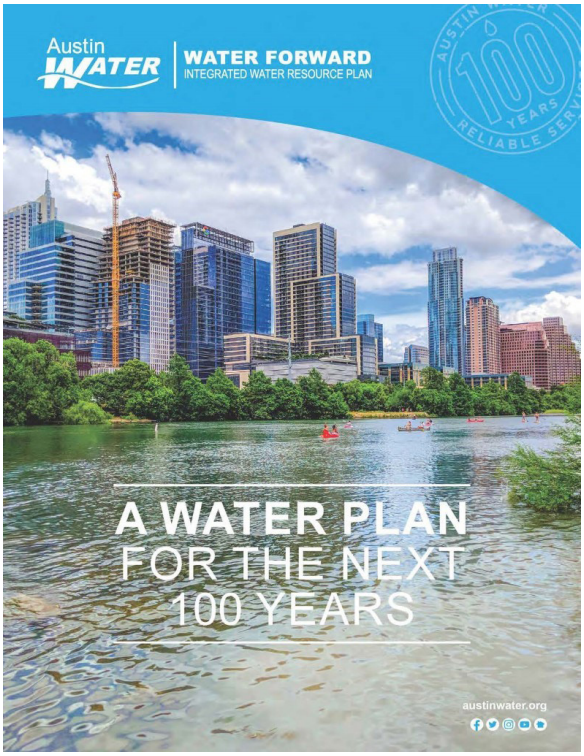
Sustainable Water

The Sustainably Manage Our Water Resources (SMOWR) priority program focuses on sustainable management of Austin's water resources, which include water, wastewater, reclaimed water, and storm drainage systems, floodplains, and the water quality of our lakes, rivers, streams, and aquifers. This priority program recognizes that water resources are vital to Austin's quality of life and viability as a city. Bringing together existing efforts allows us to move forward with more integrated strategies that span a comprehensive range of water resource issues such as supply, quality, conservation, public health, and recreation.

Game Changer

Water Forward Plan

The Water Forward Plan is Austin's 100-year integrated water resource plan to develop and implement diverse and environmentally conscious water management strategies to adapt to growth, drought, and climate change and ensure a sustainable, resilient, equitable, and affordable water future for our community for the next 100 years. The plan was developed using a holistic, One Water planning approach that balances multiple objectives including water reliability, social, environmental, and economic benefits. The plan's transformative vision reflects a substantial collaborative effort that took place over the course of three and a half years. The Austin City Council adoption of the Water Forward plan in November 2018 was the culmination of extensive work with the Austin community, a citizen task force, and across multiple City departments, Boards and Commissions, and regional entities.



The Water Forward plan's strategies can be grouped into four categories that are built on a foundation of continued community and stakeholder engagement. These include reducing water demand through strategies like conservation ordinances and incentives that make our landscapes and built environment more water efficient, and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), which are smart water meters that provide real-time water use information to customers. Austin City Council approved the contract for the My ATX Water program for AMI implementation in 2020; initially with a pilot

of 5,000 meters, with a full implementation beginning in the summer of 2021. As of June 2022, over 50,000 of Austin Water's 250,000 customer meters have been replaced with My ATX Water meters. Implementation continues at roughly 1,200 meters per week. The Water Forward plan also moves reuse forward by implementing onsite reuse systems that recycle water collected at the building-level and connecting developments to our centralized reclaimed water system to replace potable water with non-potable water.

The plan reinforces Austin Water's commitment to work collaboratively with our regional partners to protect our core Colorado River and Highland Lakes water supplies. The plan also includes strategies to build our resiliency to drought. We are in the planning stage for an Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) pilot that will lead to recommendations for a full-scale project that would be functioning by 2040 and would divert water from our existing supplies, treat the water to drinking water standards, and store that water in a natural underground aquifer so that we would have those supplies available to use in the event of a drought. The first phase of Austin's ASR project, to identify a location(s) for ASR pilot testing, is anticipated to be complete by 2024. Indirect Potable Reuse is a more near-term emergency drought strategy that could be used in the event of a very severe drought.

One of the recommendations included in the 2018 Water Forward plan is to update the plan on a regular basis. In alignment with that recommendation, Austin Water has begun an update to the Water Forward plan. This update will take into account new data from the last several years (including population and water demands), include updated climate and hydrology modeling, use more advanced scenario planning techniques, and include an equity and affordability roadmap and tool. The Equity and Affordability Roadmap (EARM) will outline considerations related to equity and affordability as they apply to the Water Forward plan. The purpose of the EARM is to develop action steps to include those equity considerations in the process to develop the plan. The Equity and Affordability Tool, developed in alignment with the roadmap, will assist in evaluating the distribution of benefits and burdens from plan outcomes on vulnerable communities.

Updates to the Water Forward plan help ensure that we are making plans based on the most up-to-date data and technology and give us an opportunity to adapt the plan as needed to changing conditions. This first update to the Water Forward plan is anticipated to be completed in 2024, with regular updates of the plan continuing in the future. The Water Forward community engagement process will include virtual and in person engagement

opportunities, including public workshops, ongoing Water Forward Task Force meetings, and other events. A Water Forward Community Ambassador group (CAG) made up of community leaders/members from diverse demographic groups and geographic areas typically underrepresented in water resource planning will provide input into the development of the equity and affordability roadmap and tool.

Highlights

Lower Onion Creek Flood Safety, Ecosystem Restoration, and Recreation

In 2019, the Watershed Protection Department, in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department, successfully completed the transformation of 290 acres of floodplain in the Yarrabee Bend area of Lower Onion Creek into an amenity for the community.This project, a partnership between the City of Austin and the US Army Corps of Engineers, began in 1999 with the first acquisitions of houses deep in the floodplain near the creek. By 2017, 483 properties within this project area had been acquired and financial assistance provided to relocate the families to homes outside the floodplain. The City then worked closely with the Army Corps to refine the vision for the area and develop design plans. Construction began in 2018 and 100 acres of the area was converted into a park with pavilions, picnic tables, trails, and a designated creek crossing to connect trails on both sides of the creek. The remaining 190 acres are undergoing floodplain restoration with widespread planting of native grasses and trees and adoption of a minimized maintenance routine that will allow the health of the riparian area to improve.

New park in Lower Onion Creek flood buyout area

Austin Water Onsite Water Reuse Program

Austin continues to be an innovator in onsite water reuse. It is the second city in the United States to mandate onsite water reuse for new development projects. Beginning in December 2023, new multi-family, mixed-use, and commercial developments of 250,000 square feet or greater will be required to collect, treat, and reuse rainwater, A/C condensate, or graywater for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing, irrigation, and cooling. Onsite water reuse systems maximize the use of locally available water sources and can help the city extend its drinking water supplies.

Onsite wastewater reuse facilities at Austin's Permitting and Development Center

In preparation for the mandate, in December 2020, the city adopted new regulations for the design, permitting, and operation and maintenance of onsite water reuse systems. The City Council also approved a pilot incentive program that rebates up to $500,000 per project to encourage voluntary installation of onsite water reuse systems. The pilot program is intended to test out the new regulatory framework and to aid the development community in the transition into the new paradigm of sustainable building design for water reuse.

Austin Water has also put together helpful online resources including a program guidebook, project case studies, and vendor lists. The Utility also developed a useful calculator tool that estimates a project's non-potable water demands and available onsite supplies that can aid in the optimal design of an onsite water reuse system. Ultimately these tools and resources help those involved in developing new commercial buildings have clear information for the design, decision making, and permitting processes for onsite water reuse systems. Lastly, the City piloted its own onsite blackwater reuse system at its new Permitting and Development Center. The project is now fully operational and is expected to reduce the building's potable water demand by 75%, saving over 1 million gallons of potable water per year. The successful implementation of this pilot project is a demonstration of how future buildings can be sustainably designed to help generate their own onsite water sources to help conserve potable water supplies.

More information about onsite reuse can be found online at www.austintexas.gov/onsite-water-reuse-systems and www.austintexas.gov/WaterForward

Exterior view of onsite wastewater reuse facilities at Austin's Permitting and Development Center

Challenges

Impacts of Climate Change on Utility Operations (Austin Water)
Since climate change affects nearly every part of the water cycle, it will continue to put added stress on utility infrastructure, water supplies, core service provision, and staff safety, and exacerbate any underlying vulnerabilities. While Austin Water (AW) is already skilled in addressing a variety of risks and hazards, climate change adds new risks to complex practices. To prepare for worsening climate conditions, AW has been working to build knowledge about climate science and is taking an adaptive management approach to address potential impacts to its business functions.

Climate scientists project that due to climate change, the Austin region will see longer periods of drought punctuated by increasingly heavy rain events. The Austin region is already experiencing impacts of changing patterns of droughts and floods. Inflows of water to Austin's water supply lakes, which are operated and managed by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), have been significantly low during recent times. AW has taken steps to help preserve its water supplies in response to drought conditions, which are exacerbated by record heat. In June 2022, the Utility began implementing Stage 1 of its Drought Contingency Plan after combined water storage in Lakes Buchanan and Travis dropped below 1.4 million acre-feet.

Lake Travis during 2010's drought in Central Texas

To consider climate threats at a utility-scale, AW included climate change as a focus area in its three-year Enterprise Resiliency initiative launched in late 2020. Project teams from across utility program areas met to evaluate climate risks to AW's assets and recommend mitigation projects. This broad-based approach brought together a wide range of ongoing initiatives and helped with prioritizing recommended projects. In its first year, the team looked at wildfire threats. Currently, the focus is on flooding.

Since climate change effects can manifest in unprecedented ways, they also require creativity and flexibility to go beyond established practices and quickly respond to changing conditions. AW got first-hand experience with this in February 2021, when Winter Storm Uri's record cold temperatures resulted in a city-wide boil water notice and extended widespread service outages. To support its customers in recovering from the storm, AW:

- Implemented a series of Council-approved measures to help prevent high water bills;

- Provided up to $1 million in funding to assist income-qualified residents
- with repairing plumbing damage and leaks resulting from the storm;
- Coordinated with other departments and community organizations to help ensure people had access to potable water; and
- Provided technical support to apartment complexes so hundreds of residents could have water service restored sooner than anticipated.

Going into the future, AW will continue to expand on these initiatives to build the adaptive capacity needed to ensure its water systems, operations, and investments are diversified, flexible, redundant, and resilient to a changing climate.

Impacts of Climate Change (Watershed Protection Department)
Climate scientists project that due to climate change, the Austin region will see longer periods of drought punctuated by increasingly heavy rain events. The Austin region is already experiencing impacts of changing rainfall patterns.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in partnership with many other federal, state, and local agencies, has completed a historical rainfall intensity study called Atlas 14. The Atlas 14 study shows that portions of Texas, including the City of Austin, are more likely to experience larger storms than previously thought. This means that what we used to think of as a 500-year rain event is more likely a 100-year rain event (a 1% chance of happening in any given year as opposed to a 0.2% chance). Rainfall intensities are used by Federal Emergency Management Agency, local communities, and the development community to determine flood risk, design drainage infrastructure, and to make floodplain maps. Rainfall intensities for the State of Texas were last assessed by the United States Geological Survey in 1994. Atlas 14 is an update of this data that incorporates almost a quarter century of rainfall data collected statewide since the last study, up to and including Hurricane Harvey. Our new understanding of flood risk means that more buildings, roadways, and storm drain systems are vulnerable to flooding. Approximately 3% of all buildings in Austin - more than 7,200 homes and businesses - are susceptible to flooding from a 100-year flood.

The City is taking a proactive approach to respond to this more accurate assessment of flood risk, and in November 2019 the city updated its floodplain regulations in response to the Atlas 14 study. These regulations provide rules for developing property in the floodplain, helping to protect the public from flooding and reduce public expense in the aftermath of a flood.

It is critical that we continue to ensure that future development is built to be sufficiently resilient to protect the lives and properties of our residents. At the same time, we are currently working to produce new floodplain studies for every watershed in the City.

Program Champion:
Teresa Lutes
Nick Kincaid

Austin Water
Watershed Protection

Healthy Austin

A person's health and ability to make healthy choices is directly affected by where they work, live, learn and play.

The Healthy Austin priority program seeks to improve community health and addresses how health risk factors are directly affected by our surroundings. This priority program works to address key elements of community health including physical activity, recreation, access to healthy foods, strengthening the local food system, tobacco-free living, access to healthcare, and improving the built environment to support healthy living.

Game Changer

Health outcomes are a key consideration for future development and integral in achieving a complete community. Over the last ten years, a major gamechanger toward achieving the goals of Imagine Austin has been the increased attention to incorporating health considerations into program and policy decision-making while considering the influence of race, income levels, education, and the built environment on health outcomes. This has been demonstrated through sustained community health planning, ensuring that community voice guides local priorities and a data-driven focus on health disparities and systemic inequities.

Crucially, the City has cemented the understanding that chronic health conditions and shorter life expectancy are directly correlated to where someone lives. Furthermore, the systems, institutions, and built environment directly impact a healthy life. Important community advocacy held us accountable in addressing these gaps and specifically led to the 2015 City Council Resolution related to focusing on health and economic equity and the subsequent Health Inequities in Travis County Report, increased investments in public health and social services, and the 2017 Mayor's Taskforce on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report. These efforts have been key building blocks that now extend into ongoing policy, plans, and investments that shape how we build the city. Examples of plans and initiatives that address health disparities include: the Climate Equity Plan; the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan; Vision Zero, which commits to the goal of zero traffic-related fatalities; Fast Track Cities, which commits to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030; the Age-Friendly Action Plan; Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness; and the City's Strategic Direction 2023.

Highlights

Pandemic Public Health Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on our community. The City of Austin's response began in January of 2020. Its public servant heroes investigated over 250,000 positive cases, administered almost 400,000 vaccines contributing to an overall 74% fully vaccinated population, provided 218,000 free PCR tests, and distributed 22,000 free home testing kits. There were countless efforts to support the community through a health equity and nurse call center; personal protective equipment and food distribution to more than 29,000 families; provisions for isolation facility, infusion center, and protective lodging; and focused community-based outreach, risk communications, and mass media. Focused efforts to keep schools and childcare centers safe included constant staff communications to schools and childcare centers and providing health and safety supplies to 300 childcare programs through more than 1,200 deliveries and distribution events.

The community's willingness to get tested, get vaccinated, and follow masking and other protective measures helped Austin and Travis County reduce the spread of this disease, which allowed our businesses and schools to open safely, reduced the burden on our healthcare system, and protected the most vulnerable members of our community.

Food Accessibility

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant innovation has occurred in food access programs. For example, Farmshare Austin, operator of the City-supported mobile produce markets, shifted to curbside delivery and a hybrid curbside/in-person market model. Other innovations include Austin Public Health neighborhood centers piloting a food delivery program in partnership with Amazon and the Central Texas Food Bank and a relaunch of the Healthy Corner Store program by Austin Public Health and Economic Development to encourage fresh produce in convenience stores.

Additionally, the dual crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri highlighted the fragility of our food system. They underscored the need for intentional coordination to strengthen community resilience. In June of 2021, Austin City Council directed a multi-lingual engagement and planning process to develop a 5-year comprehensive food plan and allocated American Rescue Plan Act resources to help fund the initiative. The Office of Sustainability is

leading this effort and intends to deliver a final plan to Council by early 2024.

Community gardens on City-owned land remained open throughout the pandemic because food cultivation is an essential activity. The Community Gardens Program offered supplemental support to gardens on City-owned land (parkland and land owned by other city departments). Seeds, seedlings, compost, and mulch were provided to community gardens to help increase food production. The Community Gardens Program also partnered with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to help distribute their vegetable seeds intended for the canceled East Austin Garden Fair.

Tobacco Free Environments

Significant health disparities exist for tobacco use; however, the last five years have shown the development of new resources and programs to address these disparities. The Breathe with Pride coalition launched in 2021 focused on policy, systems, and environmental changes to reduce tobacco disparities among LGBTQ2IA+ communities. This has led to the launch of a community-driven media and awareness campaign, tobacco-free events, and workplace policies at several community organizations. Additional awareness campaigns were created to highlight the impact of e-cigarettes and vaping on teens and young adults, a response to the severe lung injury outbreak of 2020.

Active and Healthy Lifestyles

The first Active Living Plan for Austin and Travis County was created in 2020 with input from City, County, and community leaders. Campaigns have focused on raising awareness of the availability of indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities at a free or reduced price.

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature initiative created a Walkable Greenspaces map in response to COVID-19 to encourage teachers to take learning outdoors. The map displays the nearest green space within a short walk to Austin ISD schools in an effort to provide educators and their students with the opportunity for physical distancing.

Austin Transportation Department's Vision Zero Program helped implement over 850 miles of speed limit reductions, completed nearly a dozen major intersection safety projects, and implemented low-cost, high-impact safety treatments at dozens of locations throughout the City to significantly reduce fatalities and serious injuries on Austin roadways. The Active Transportation and Street Design Division (ATSD) completed over 25 miles of new and improved bicycle and trail facilities, including over 5 miles of protected bikeways. ATSD and Austin Transportation Department's Parking Enterprise Division greatly improved the Bike Parking Program, leading to significant maintenance improvements to bike parking and the installation of 35 new bike racks in the public right of way.

ATSD also launched the Contraflow Transit Lane project on Guadalupe Street, which involved a partnership between Active Transportation, the Public Works Department, and Capital Metro, to accomplish a Zach Scott Street two-way protected bikeway, which includes the city's first completely protected intersection for active transportation users at Zach Scott Street and Berkman Drive.

Safe Routes to School continued to promote Walk to School Day in September and Bike and Roll to School Day in May. The enthusiasm for these events reached a new high in the 2021/2022 school year, with over 20 schools participating in Bike to School Day, the highest number of any city in Texas.

Access to Healthcare

In 2021, City Council adopted a resolution to spend federal economic recovery funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to establish a Health and Wellness Center at Colony Park in partnership with Central Health. This facility is slated to break ground in FY23.

Challenges

The neighborhood and urban built environment, access to health care, social and community connections, access to quality education, and economic stability are key factors (known as the social determinants of health) that impact an individual's ability to achieve better health and quality of life. The 2022 Austin/Travis County Community Health Assessment (CHA) confirms sustained deficiencies in one or more of these factors among populations with existing health disparities.

Austin is generally considered a healthy city. However, there are dramatic health disparities among communities of color, low-income residents, older adults, individuals with physical and developmental disabilities, individuals identifying as LGBTQ2IA+, those experiencing poor mental health, individuals experiencing homelessness, recent immigrants, refugees, and undocumented residents. These disparities result from long-term racial and economic inequities and the consequence of historical, racist land-use decisions codified in the 1928 Master Plan.

Resident feedback from the 2022 CHA confirmed Austin's continued growth and increased economic prosperity is only being realized by some Austinites. In 2019, the median household income in Travis County was $80,726, a 14.6% increase since 2015. The median household income for White households was 2.2 times greater than the household income for Black/African American households and 2.3 times greater than the household income for Hispanic/Latino households in 2019. An estimated one-quarter (25.0%) of LGBTQIA+ survey respondents reported having an annual income of less than $24,000. In comparison, 13.6% of Travis County children lived in poverty. According to the CHA, the high and rising cost of housing disproportionately affects low-income residents, residents of color, older adults, and persons with disabilities, and displaces residents from urban to rural areas.

As individuals and families move farther from the center city, seeking to maintain or improve their quality of life due to the rising cost of living in Austin, they face diminished access to important health care and health-related services, safe transportation infrastructure, mobility options, and quality grocery stores. Additionally, household income is a key factor in health decisions from purchasing healthy foods, taking time off to recover from illness, filling prescriptions, securing preventative care, and the ability to care for other family members.

While the City of Austin does not have control over all of these factors, it does have a significant role to play through direct investment and through convening community and organizational partners to impact desired outcomes.

Program Champion:
Cassandra DeLeon

Austin Public Health
Economic Development
Housing and Planning
Office of Sustainability
Parks and Recreation
Austin Transportation

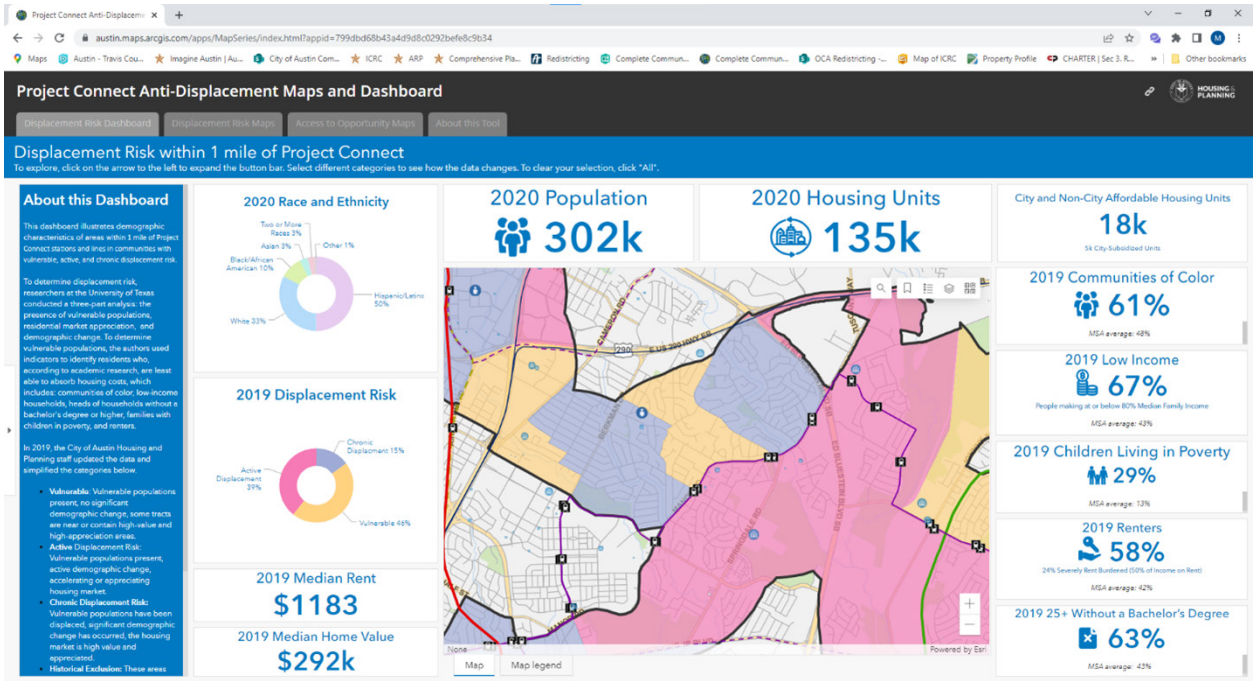
Household Affordability

The Develop and Maintain Household Affordability priority program takes a comprehensive approach in defining and providing household affordability for Austinites. This priority program considers not only household costs such as mortgage, rent, and utilities but also transportation and access to daily and weekly needs as essential and interrelated components of holistic affordability.

Game Changer

Project Connect

Project Connect is a transformative, voter-approved investment in new transit services that includes Light Rail, MetroRapid Bus Lines, Commuter Rail (improvements to existing line and a new line), and Park and Ride facilities. Project Connect also commits $300 million to mitigate the displacement of vulnerable populations impacted by transit development and construction. The effort represents a collaboration between the City of Austin, Capital Metro Transportation Authority (CapMetro), and the Austin Transit Partnership. Project Connect is locally funded through the November 2020 voter-approved increase in the City's property tax rate and certain dedicated funding from CapMetro, as well as anticipated federal funding. The Austin Transit Partnership, which is charged with implementing Project Connect, is committed to transparently delivering on the vision and goals that voters set out in the 2020 election



Project Connect Anti-Displacement Maps and Dashboard

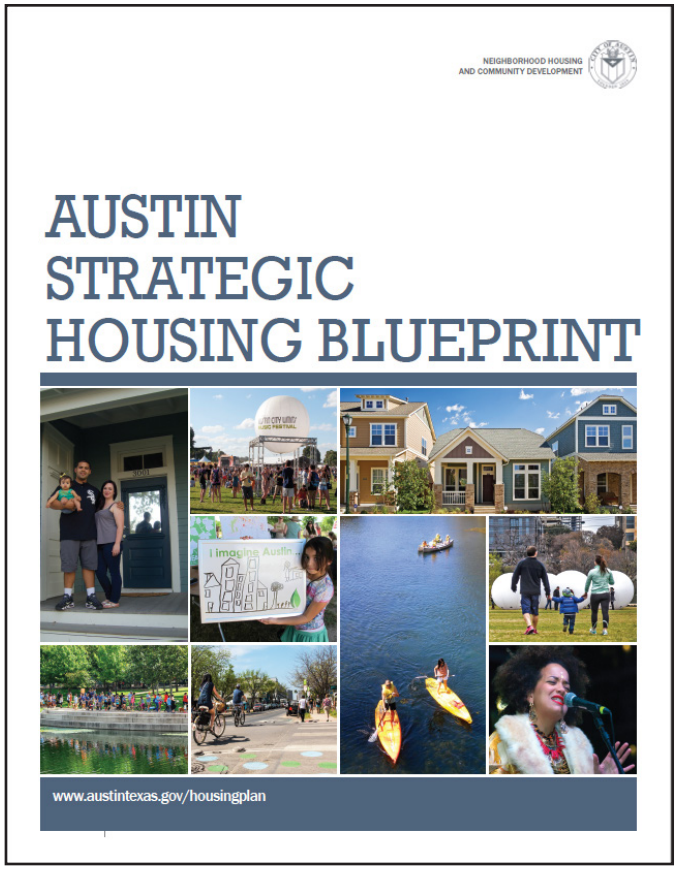
Austin voters issued a bold call to action when they approved a $300 million anti-displacement fund along with the Project Connect transit expansion. The Nothing About Us Without Us report, map series, and Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Equity Tool has examples of how it can be implemented.

The process of developing the Tool prioritized the voices of people most impacted by displacement. Thirty community members were selected from 117 applicants to participate as Racial Equity Catalysts, contributing a total of nearly 950 hours of work. Catalysts participated in two training sessions and five policy workshops to co-create the Tool over four months. The Catalysts reviewed displacement data and gathered lessons learned from other cities that have experienced transit-induced displacement.

Highlights

Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint Implementation

The implementation of the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint, adopted in 2017, will be instrumental in developing and maintaining household affordability throughout Austin. The Blueprint sets a goal of creating 135,000 new housing units in the next 10 years, with 60,000 of those units being affordable to households at or below 80 percent of the median family income (MFI) and at least 75 percent of new housing being located within a half-mile of an activity corridor as defined by the Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map.



From 2018-2020, 91 percent of affordable housing units were built within a half-mile of Imagine Austin Centers and Corridors. During that same period, 21 percent of new income-restricted affordable housing units were built in high-opportunity areas. For 2021, four Rental Housing Development Assistance projects completed construction and leased 137 units for permanent supportive housing. Of those, 27 were dedicated to the Continuum of Care and 21 units were for Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing voucher holders. The Housing Blueprint Scorecards show progress to date on the goals.

Affordability Unlocked

The Affordability Unlocked development bonus program was unanimously approved by City Council in May 2019. The program offers affordable housing developers access to a wide range of development bonuses that will enable them to build more housing units in their developments. In exchange for setting aside at least half of the units in a development as affordable, developers can use a variety of development bonuses, including: density, height, and parking modifications, and waivers of certain compatibility and occupancy limit restrictions. As of August 2022, 282 affordable units that have been produced and are in service through participation in Affordability Unlocked. The program supports several strategies in the Strategic Housing Blueprint and will help the City better leverage public subsidies, like the 2018 Affordable Housing Bond, to produce more units in affordable housing developments.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic tumult has exacerbated housing instability for many households in Austin. Between May of 2020 and the end of 2021, the City of Austin collaborated with the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) to distribute $77.7 million in emergency rental assistance through its Relief of Emergency Needs for Tenants (RENT) Program to more than 18,883 households. The majority of recipients reported annual incomes at or below 30% MFI, or $29,300 for a family of four. The RENT Program dashboard provides additional information about households served. This program supplemented other measures the City instituted during the COVID pandemic, such as the temporary moratorium on housing evictions and local Relief in a State of Emergency (RISE) funding to help keep Austinites safe, healthy, and housed during the pandemic.

Challenges

There are many challenges to providing housing that is affordable to the majority of people living within Austin and the surrounding metro. Over the past decade, the median sales price for a home in the City of Austin has jumped from roughly $230,000 (Texas A&M Real Estate Center Housing Activity, 2012) to $633,000 (Austin Board of Realtors Housing Market Report, July 2022) and average rents have increased from $1069 in 2012 to $1612 in 2022.

These price increases are a function of sustained demand for housing from existing households and in-migration from outside of Austin that saw a population increase from over 790,000 (U.S. Census, 2010) individuals in 2010 to nearly 962,000 (U.S. Census, 2020) in 2020. While housing construction also increased significantly over this period, bringing the number of units from approximately 354,000 (U.S. Census, 2010) to 445,000 (U.S. Census, 2020), this pace of development has not been sufficient to stem the surge in home prices. This lag in housing product partly resulted from the effects of the Great Recession, which reduced housing construction across the country for several years. The first years after 2010 saw anemic housing unit growth that didn't start accelerating until the middle of the decade. By the end of the decade, however, the ratio of population to housing units had slightly decreased from roughly 2.23 to 2.16, meaning there were more housing units per households in 2020 than 2010. So why did housing prices increase so much?

The income of households is a prime factor. During this same decade the incomes of households within Austin jumped considerably, from a median household income of $50,520 in 2010 to $75,752 in 2020 (ACS 5 Year Estimates, 2020). Of particular note is the change in income distribution during this period. The percentage of households at every income band below $74,999 dropped while the percentage in every income band at $75,000 and above increased. At the highest end, the percentage of households making $200,000 or more jumped from 5.2% to 11.3% over that time-period.

While many existing Austin households undoubtedly saw their incomes increase, that jump in overall median household income coupled with what should have been sufficient growth in the housing stock indicates that the phenomenon occurring is one in which higher income households are moving to Austin and outbidding existing lower-income households for housing, driving lower-income households out of the city. It is quite possible that had significantly more housing been constructed over that period, the population of Austin would have increased even more because fewer lower-

income households would have been priced out of the city. Instead, the new housing inventory went to moderate and high-income households, with very little inventory left for lower-income households with the exception of income-restricted housing developed over that period.

The challenge then of creating housing that meets the needs of households at all income levels is one of creating housing abundance at a greater number of price points, but especially housing affordable to low-income households, across the city. However, this is made difficult by restrictive land-use policies that prohibit the creation of more housing units and a variety of housing typologies in areas of greatest demand. In addition, the dramatic rise in home prices has made the value of land increase greatly as well, making new construction very expensive. The COVID pandemic has had an impact on the price of raw materials, particularly lumber, that go into construction, adding further cost to new homebuilding, while global inflation is causing central banks to raise interest rates that will also significantly raise the costs of building more housing. Finally, Austin's permitting regime is one of the most costly and time-consuming within Texas, which discourages the construction of moderately priced housing as developers seek to cover their costs.

The public sector can provide some support for the creation of income-restricted housing through existing programs. However, the larger economic picture facing Austin ensures these efforts will not assist the majority of households in need of housing at a price that is affordable to them. Moreover, all those factors affecting market rate housing also drive up the cost of developing income-restricted housing, meaning greater subsidies or incentives will be needed just to generate the same number of units. Ultimately, unless Austin experiences a long-term economic decline, real estate will remain expensive compared with peer cities and will continue to appreciate at levels that may increase the likelihood that those most vulnerable to economic displacement will no longer be able to call Austin home.

An effective land development code that allows for more housing and reduces the complexity and cost of the permitting process could slow the rate of increase in housing costs. Affordable housing density bonus programs can leverage private sector construction to add more income-restricted units. Analysis of regulations that should be changed to support a more equitable Austin and address historic inequities should include assessment of the designation and regulations associated with the Drinking Water Protection and the Desired Development zones. These regulations have

likely contributed to more demolitions, redevelopment, and displacement in communities of color while exacerbating affordability issues and reinforcing exclusionary areas in west Austin. Between 2006 and 2022, only 1,104 housing units (including single-family and multifamily units) have been demolished in the Drinking Water Protection Zone in west Austin, while 8,831 housing units have been demolished in the Desired Development Zone in east Austin.

Program Champion:
Rachel Tepper

Housing and Planning
Economic Development
Austin Public Health
Austin Code
Development Services
Austin Transportation
Austin Water
Austin Energy
Office of Innovation
Office of Equity

Revise Regulations

Revise Austin's Development Regulations and Processes
Imagine Austin calls for updates to the City's Land Development Code (LDC), which determines how land can be used throughout the city – including what can be built, where it can be built, and how much can (and cannot) be built. The City's existing land development code was written nearly 40 years ago, when Austin's population was less than half the size it is now. After nearly four decades, the current code has become a patchwork of amendments and revised regulations which are outdated, overly complex, and inconsistent. The LDC needs to be changed to help us create the kinds of places we want and to help guide growth towards an accessible and affordable Austin for all.

The Revise Regulations priority program has focused its efforts on comprehensive update of the LDC. In spring 2019, the City Council directed the City Manager to offer a LDC Revision process that achieves the goals set out in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, the Strategic Housing Blueprint, the Watershed Protection Master Plan, the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, and Strategic Direction 2023.

In developing a new process, the City Manager asked Council five policy questions that would drive the content of the LDC Revision. On May 2, 2019, Council provided its policy direction that directed staff to:

- Create a new land development code and zoning map concurrently.
- Plan for approximately 400,000 residential units over the next 10 years as a means of achieving the 135,000 unit goal established by the Strategic Housing Blueprint.
- Encourage smaller scale, multi-family housing to address Austin's missing middle housing types.
- Consider vulnerable populations in the development of the draft code, map, and district-level planning.
- Prioritize a development pattern that supports 50/50 Transportation Mode share by 2039 (per the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan).
- Reduce minimum parking requirements.
- Reduce the impact of compatibility standards.
- Improve water quality and reduce flood risk.
- Provide a clear public process for Austinites, including timelines and opportunities for public input, and how their input has been received and used.
- Provide the draft code text and zoning map for Council action in October of 2019.

The City Manager assembled a cross-functional team that worked collaboratively to draft a revised code and zoning map. A few milestones of the LDC Revision team's 2019 – 2020 activities included:

- Release of LDC Revision draft code texts, maps, as well as supplemental reports.
- Public engagement events, including town halls, open houses, public code testing, office hours, and community stakeholder meetings.
- Public hearings at Planning Commission and City Council.

In March 2020, the City suspended the LDC Revision Project and is not currently pursuing a comprehensive update of the LDC.

Workforce, Small Business, and Education

The Continue to Grow Austin's Economy by Investing in our Workforce, Education Systems, Entrepreneurs, and Local Businesses priority program seeks to ensure Austin's continued economic health by developing a widely skilled workforce, recruiting new businesses, retaining and growing existing businesses, and tapping into our entrepreneurial spirit. In particular, this priority program seeks to increase job opportunities for Austin residents and increase small businesses and entrepreneurship.

Workforce is what keeps this city buzzing. Whether it is the creative scene, startup scene, advanced manufacturing, or any number of businesses that employ people – Austin has talented locals. There are disparities in earnings though, which means not everyone is enjoying the prosperity of industry growth. To thrive in Austin as of 2020, supporting even the smallest family of one infant and one parent requires earning $24.12 per hour (City of Austin Open Data Portal, October 2020). While Austin's median household income is $99,250 for a 3-person household (City of Austin Open Data Portal, August 2020), there are 43% (U.S. Census, 2020) of Austin area residents earning less than $24.12/hour. These Austinites earning less than what is required to sustain a family are the focus of the workforce development programming of the City of Austin.

Game Changer

Albert DeLuna
Photo from wfscapitalarea.com

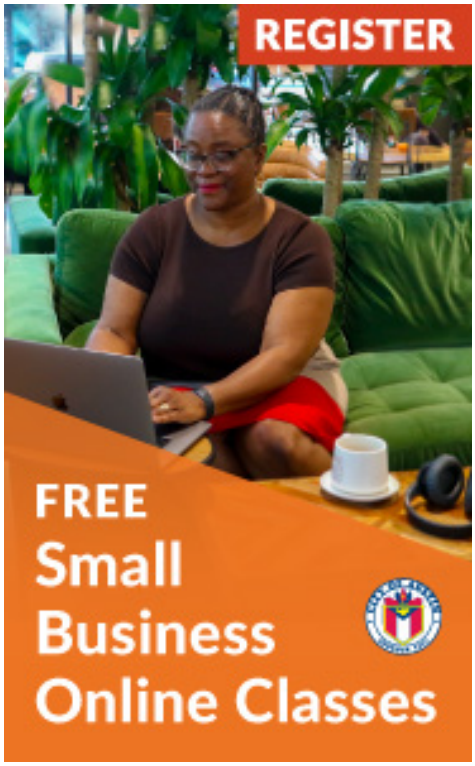
In 2022, Austin City Council appropriated $15 million from the American Rescue Plan Act as additional funds to support the workforce development initiatives already underway. With these boosted dollars the City will be able to support an additional 827 people in workforce development trainings over the next two years. These training sessions offered by our partners lead to career paths where the earnings are far greater than $24.12/hour and in industries where the region is experiencing tremendous growth: healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and skilled trades.

In addition to the surge of funds towards workforce development, the City and County look to Workforce Solutions Capital Area in their capacity as the local workforce board to coordinate area training providers and act as the central hub for locals seeking training opportunities to further their careers

and earn higher wages. This coordination is no small feat – it required the adoption of the Austin Metro Area Community Workforce Plan – which Austin City Council adopted via ordinance in 2018 and Travis County Commissioners Court adopted in 2017.

Highlights

The Austin Metro Area Community Workforce Plan for 2017 – 2021 was announced to the public in May 2017, when City, County and local business officials unveiled a regional workforce training plan that laid out a common agenda and established a framework for collaboration to coordinate the region's workforce development organizations and educational institutions. This initiative was and continues to be led by Workforce Solutions Capital Area. The plan aimed to align education and training providers' training programs with industry needs. The workforce plan had an ambitious goal of supporting 10,000 economically disadvantaged individuals to secure middle-skill jobs by 2021. The outcomes from 2018-2019 have proven successful: "Year Two completers received a 224% increase in median earnings when compared to their income prior to enrolling in a program. These higher median earnings led to a higher number (595) and a greater share (36%) of Year Two completers earning 200% above Federal Poverty Guidelines compared to Year One participants' first quarter outcomes (517 and 31%)" (University of Texas at Austin Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, September 2020). A new, updated Austin Metro Area Community Workforce Plan for 2021- 2024, called The Hire Local Plan, was announced to the public in June 2022.



Another highlight was the rollout of the Business Expansion Incentive for local businesses to support targeted hiring of local Austinites who have barriers to employment. Two businesses, All Pro Hospitality and L'Oca d'Oro, LLC, took advantage of that incentive and employed 20 people who have hiring barriers (City of Austin Open Data Portal, 2022).

Finally, without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic was not only a health crisis, but it also threw a wrench into the economy. Thankfully the federal government and City of Austin financial reserves provided needed resources in the amount of $60 million to support local creatives, businesses, and nonprofits in the Austin area between 2020 and 2022.

Challenges

Prior to the Austin Metro Area Community Workforce Plan, the City of Austin and Travis County contracted independently with multiple vendors to deliver workforce development training. Some of these contracts have been around for many decades, so adapting the contracts to meet this coordinated need has been a challenge. The City of Austin Economic Development Department was named lead of workforce development as result of a 2017 audit and the department continues to work to collaborate and coordinate across more than 15 departments that have workforce development activities. This level of communication and organization and goal setting is a challenge and does take time.

Unifying workforce development efforts among the contracted chambers of commerce has also been a challenge. Each chamber has a defined audience of membership and goals for recruiting and retaining businesses in Austin. At times we were out of sync by recruiting businesses to Austin in fields that do not typically hire employees with barriers. This is a work in progress and we are beginning to see employers recruited from industries like healthcare and manufacturing that select the Austin area to operate. One example of unified workforce development efforts between local government, chambers of commerce, and Workforce Solutions Capital Area is an agreement made to foster Tesla's expansion in Travis County. Following recruitment efforts from Austin's chambers of commerce, the City of Austin and Travis County negotiated a workforce development incentive agreement resulting in the creation of a direct Tesla recruiting and workforce training pipeline, which is operated in collaboration with Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Austin Community College.

Program Champion:
Casey Smith

Economic Development
Housing and Planning
Parks and Recreation
Austin Public Library
Human Resources
Austin Public Health

Measuring Success

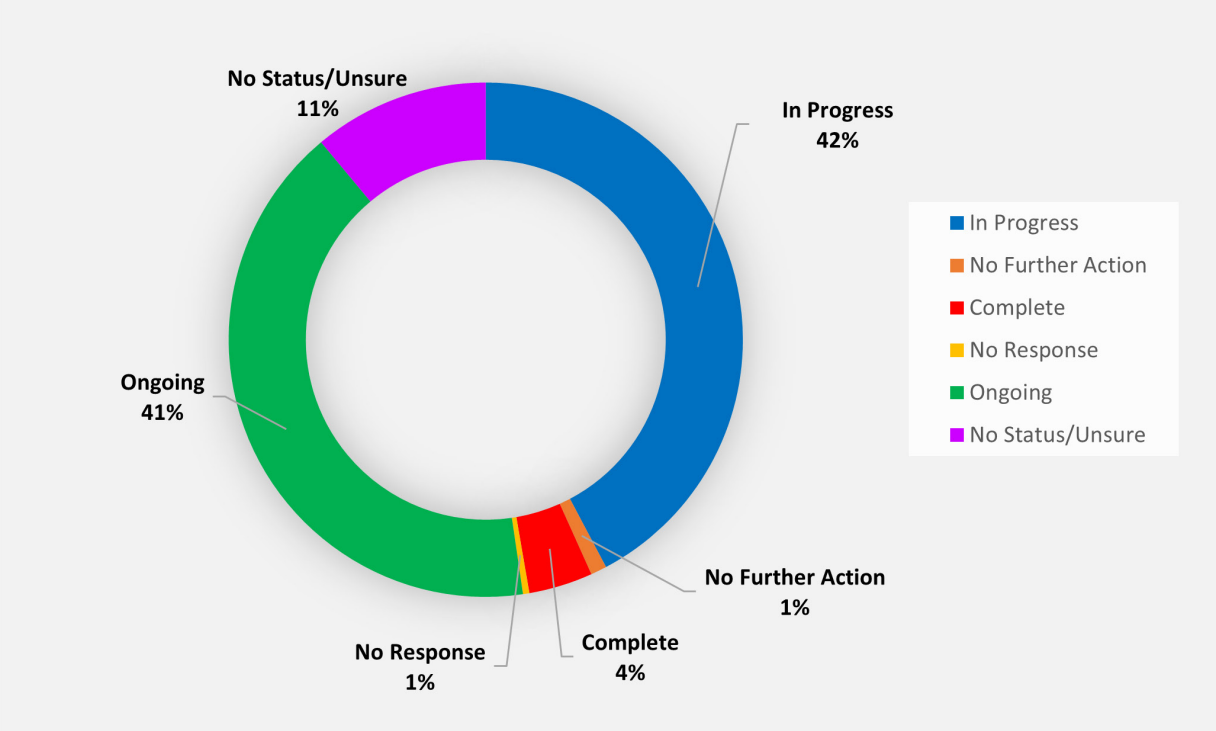
The Imagine Austin Year 10 Report is an opportunity to evaluate and assess progress toward plan implementation. To provide a broad spectrum of accomplishments and challenges, this section provides a high-level summary of actions on specific Imagine Austin recommendations as well as important planning work completed by City of Austin departments.

Priority program teams monitor plan implementation performance using the actions and indicators in Imagine Austin. The plan's actions (also known as plan recommendations) are monitored and reported on a regular basis. A set of indicators - or measures - are reported on every five years to assess implementation progress over time. It should be noted that indicators and actions do not have a one-to-one relationship. Reporting on Imagine Austin's performance is specific to the comprehensive plan and is not intended to represent a City department's complete portfolio of work.

Imagine Austin Actions

The multi-year horizon of long-range planning work results in projects spanning long periods of time. Significant progress towards one component of the action does not necessarily result in completed status. As a result, numerous actions remain "in progress" or "ongoing" for multiple reporting cycles.

The chart below summarizes the implementation status of the 237 Imagine Austin actions, as of August 2022:



“Complete” actions have been fully implemented. “Ongoing” actions have been initiated and are of a continuing nature. “In Progress” actions have been partially completed or are underway. “No Further Action Planned” actions are those that City departments will no longer be working on. “No Status Available” actions are those in which City staff has not yet been able to verify an implementation status or assignment to a City department.

Since Imagine Austin’s adoption, the priority program teams’ completed work includes but is not limited to:

- Creating…
    - an ongoing Vision Zero Task Force and developing a Vision Zero Action Plan.
    - a comprehensive building condition report to assess the need for remodeling, expansion, replacement, or consolidation of City-owned facilities.
    - a regional planning initiative to encourage local governments in Central Texas to promote a mix of housing and land uses for diverse populations and income groups, located near work, shopping, and services.
    - an integrated transportation plan that encompasses driving, transit, bicycling, walking, and roadway and rail freight.
- Developing…
    - an Urban Trails Master Plan to increase connectivity throughout the city and region and improve consistency across multimodal transportation goals.
    - a program and funding source to retrofit existing, incomplete roadways into complete streets.
- Adopting…
    - a Watershed Protection Ordinance to strengthen protections for Austin’s creeks and floodplains.
    - a Parkland Dedication Ordinance to help address gaps in access to parks and green space.
- Expanding programs providing discounted transit fares for economically disadvantaged citizens, disabled individuals, and seniors.
- Collaborating with sponsoring organizations, sponsors, and transportation companies to develop special event transportation plans to mitigate traffic congestion associated with these events.
- Strengthening tree protection regulations.

The above list is a summary of just some of the actions that have been

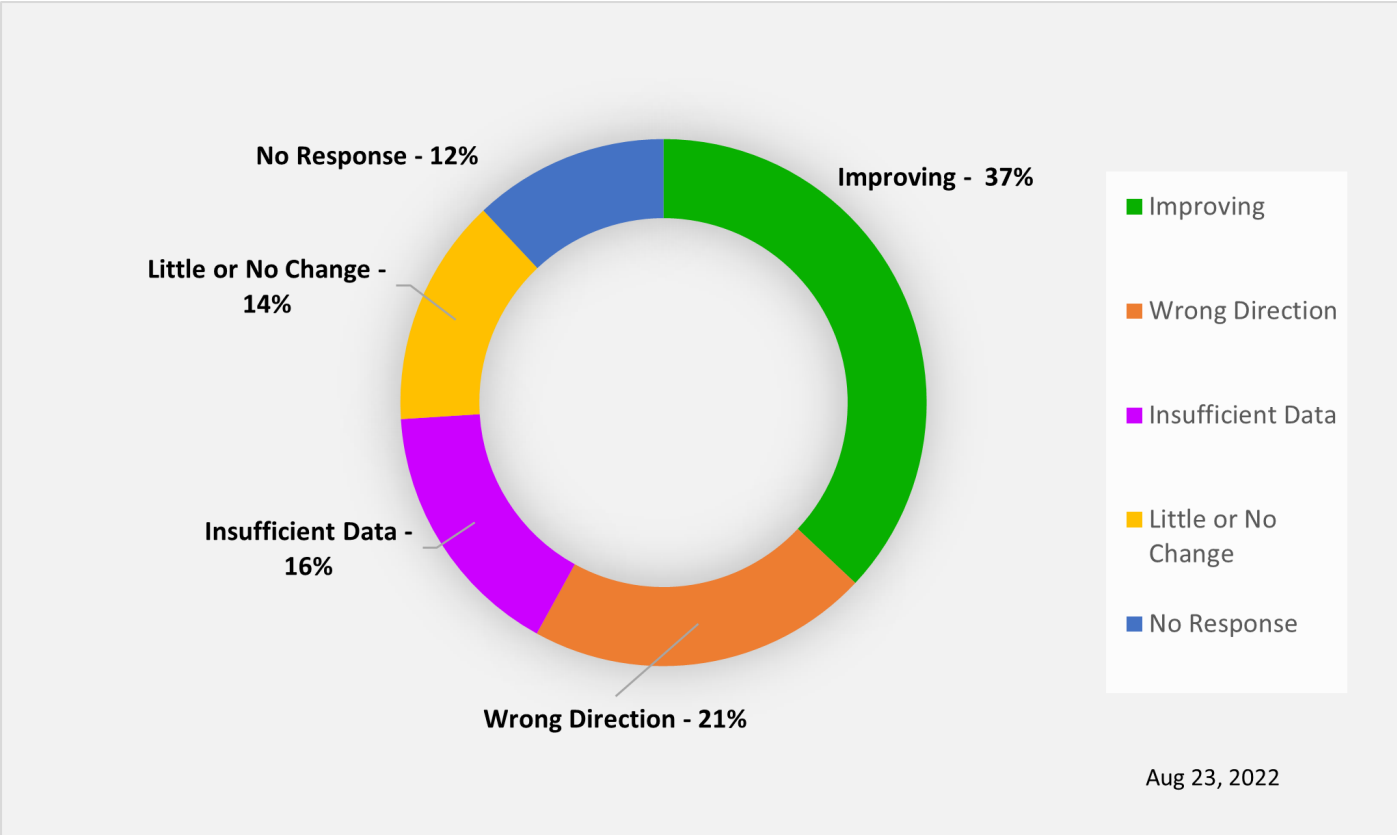
completed over the first 10 years of Imagine Austin implementation. For an update on the complete set of actions, including detailed descriptions and status updates, visit the Imagine Austin Year 10 Report website.

Imagine Austin Indicator Data

Collecting data on a regular basis is important to measuring progress towards implementing Imagine Austin. A set of indicators were chosen based on the availability of data sources and their relationship to the Imagine Austin vision, priority programs, policies, and actions.

The City of Austin as an organization has a varying ability to directly influence the indicators. Some of the indicators are directly responsive to City regulation and investment, while others have only minimal reactivity to the City's influence. Taken as a whole, they can provide a gauge for measuring if we are making progress towards our goals from Imagine Austin, but they do not paint the complete picture.

The chart below summarizes the status of the 44 Imagine Austin indicators, as of August 2022:



Since the adoption of Imagine Austin in 2012, the indicator data reveals relatively positive or improved conditions in environmental health, life-long learning opportunities, land preservation, non-residential construction, employment, small business development, and public sidewalks and bike lane construction. Worsening conditions were found in household affordability, investments in the arts, community health, physical activity, and transit ridership.

To view the complete set of indicator data (detailed descriptions, methodology, data sources, analysis, and status updates), visit the Imagine Austin Year 10 Report website.

Internal Alignment

Imagine Austin is a high-level, long-range planning document operating on a 30-year planning horizon. Implementation of the plan requires the creation of additional plans operating on shorter planning horizons. These plans are typically topic-specific and strategic in nature. Staff recognizes this work as significant to Imagine Austin's progress and sees opportunities to strengthen the implementation relationship between Imagine Austin and the following plans, which include, but are not limited to:

- The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan
- The Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint (for Progress Reporting, click here.)
- The Austin Area Master Community Workforce Plan
- Parks and Recreation Department Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs
- Water Forward Integrated Water Resource Plan
- Austin Climate Equity Plan (for Progress Reporting, click here.)

The Strategic Performance Dashboard, which tracks indicators and measures regarding the plan, can be accessed here.

Looking Ahead

As the Imagine Austin (IA) Year 10 Report indicates, there are several next steps that need to occur to address the challenges of a rapidly growing city in an equitable way, which includes assessing past exclusionary and harmful policies and practices (e.g. 1928 Master Plan and subsequent redlining) and considering ways to change them.

The City is prepared to take action to begin to address the key findings and challenges found at the year 10 mark:

- affordability and cost of living
- inequitable access to economic opportunities, goods, and services
- urban development pressures on natural resources
- need to improve comprehensive plan implementation and center equity in the work

To address these challenges, the Imagine Austin Team will oversee the following recommended actions by staff in the **next five-year period**:

1. ***Coordinate Imagine Austin Next Steps Holistically:*** *Achieving the Imagine Austin vision and equitably managing growth in the City of Austin do not happen in isolation. How can all pertinent city stakeholders come together meaningfully to discuss needed alignment and priorities forward to achieve equitable outcomes?*

   The IA Team will work to bolster coordination efforts to ensure that partner departments are in alignment for next steps in IA implementation and planning – described in further detail within this memo.

   a. The IA Team will coordinate more regularly with Priority Program Champions and other partner departments to identify and coordinate next steps, ensuring priority projects and implementation are aligned not only with IA, but also with one another as an organization.

   b. The IA Team will work with IA Priority Program Champions and partner organizations to encourage identifying their own Action Plan, or targeted next steps, for IA Priority Program implementation. These program next steps will be the 5-year work plan for IA planning and implementation.

2. ***Update and Implement Imagine Austin:*** *The Imagine Austin Vision remains relevant today. However, some of the aspects of Imagine Austin*

likely need to be reviewed in order to keep IA a relevant guiding framework for the future vision for our City. How might we update and implement IA to speak to envisioning the future of Austin based on current challenges?

Beyond coordinating next steps with Priority Program Champions, the Imagine Austin Team's first order priority is to conduct an update of IA, complete with (at minimum):

a. An equity assessment in partnership with the City's Equity Office.
b. Review of alignment of Imagine Austin to other strategic and long range planning including budgeting and strategic planning, including the Capital Improvement Program Planning, citywide strategic plans (e.g. Climate Equity Plan, anticipated citywide resilience planning), and other long-range plans (e.g. Small Area Plans, District Plans, etc.).
c. The creation of a citywide Future Land Use Map (FLUM), starting with areas of the city that do not currently have a FLUM. This FLUM will directly support effectively accomplishing other eff orts mentioned within this document, including items related to the Land Development Code update / rewrite (items 4.a-c).
d. Make recommendations and updates to IA and implementation based on outcomes of 2a, 2b, and 2c. This is likely to include, but is not limited to:
    i. Recommendations for: aligning the City's Strategic Plan with Imagine Austin; an updated review schedule and process to better inform and align with capital improvement planning and implementation.
    ii. Recommendations for a process by which other targeted strategic plans, such as the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint, and the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, are informed by the comprehensive plan.
    iii. Recommendations for a process by which long-range plans are informed by the comprehensive plan.
    iv. Updated content to Imagine Austin based on the equity assessment and (internal and external) best planning practices.
    v. A specified Imagine Austin Update Schedule so that it remains relevant to inform and guide other relevant City plans.
e. Development and coordination of prioritized IA implementation action items as a result of plan updates.
f. To reduce redundant reporting systems, and create more transparency in progress, implementation of a modified approach to optimize Imagine Austin monitoring, tracking, and reporting on Comprehensive

Plan performance, including alignment with related reporting needs.

3. ***Establish Equitable Planning Processes and Investments:*** *How might we ensure racial equity is at the center of the City of Austin's planning efforts? How might we ensure that the City's investments benefit all Austin community members? How might we ensure that affordable housing and economic opportunities are available across Austin?*
   a. Establish unified interdepartmental approach to center equity in all new planning.
   b. Assess the equity of engagement in current planning process. Establish processes that achieve equitable ends for community input and engagement with city activity.
   c. Coordinate interdepartmentally to identify capital projects 1) from plans generated equitably, or 2) through needs identified with an equity lens.

4. ***Update Development Regulations:*** *How might we revise and streamline Austin's development regulations to realize the vision of Imagine Austin in an equitable way?*
   a. Evaluate key land development regulations to determine whether the standards and process requirements have disparate impacts on disproportionally impacted Austinites (e.g. low-income, people of color). Identify options to modify regulations to achieve the City's policy goals equitably.
   b. Determine a new approach to amend the Land Development Code. For example, consider adopting new zones or uses in the zoning code to function as a toolbox to be available through rezoning processes and as equitable planning processes are completed.
   c. Per the ETOD resolution and ETOD Policy Plan, amend the Land Development Code to support the implementation of Equitable Transit Oriented Development.