



Listening Report: What We Heard During the Visioning Phase



December 2021

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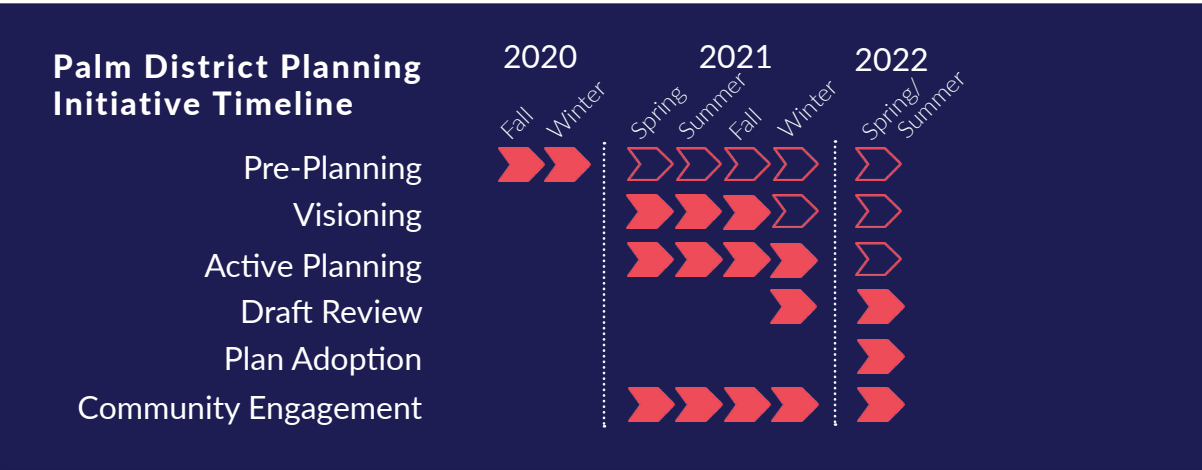
- Appendix A. Online Survey - All Comments and Demographic information
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Palm District Planning Initiative will guide future development in the Eastern portion of downtown Austin, linking land use, urban design, transportation, economic development, housing, public spaces, historic preservation, cultural arts, and social equity. Between June and November of 2021, the City of Austin engaged a broad range of community stakeholders to get their input on the future of the Palm District. This Listening Report provides a summary of what we heard and will be a primary input in the development of a Draft Vision Framework for the District.

PALM DISTRICT PLANNING INITIATIVE VISIONING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Visioning phase of the Plan District Planning Initiative is the kickoff of the planning process and the first opportunity for the public to provide comments on the future of the District. The planning process will continue through early 2022, and will culminate in presentation of a draft plan to the Austin City Council. Through consultation with individuals, stakeholder groups, and organizations, the next phase of the planning process, Active Planning, will explore different aspects of the District and develop strategies and recommendations. Following that phase, the plan will be drafted and reviewed by the community, City of Austin staff, Travis County, and other stakeholders before it begins the adoption phase.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DURING THE VISIONING PROCESS

Community members and stakeholders have been engaged in a variety of ways throughout the pre-planning and visioning phases of this process.

Organizational Briefings and Inter-agency Coordination. Throughout this process, the Housing and Planning Department has conducted its engagement activities through an equity lens and has intentionally taken steps to elevate the voices of the community members that have cultural and historic ties to the district, but who no longer live in the vicinity of the district due to gentrification and displacement caused in part by past planning decisions.

Preparations for the Palm District Planning Initiative began in early to mid-2019 with an anticipated Visioning phase kickoff set for Spring 2020. Beginning in 2019, City staff regularly briefed various city boards and commissions as well as key city departments, external organizations, and community-based organizations and invited them to participate in the process. Staff have directly engaged the following organizations through briefings and other methods:

- Waterloo Greenway Conservancy
- the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA)
- the Red River Cultural District
- Preservation Austin
- Austin History Center
- East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Plan Contact Team
- Capital Metro and Austin Transit Partnership
- Travis County
- UT School of Architecture
- Downtown Commission
- Waller Creek Local Government Corporation
- Design Commission
- Environmental Commission
- ESB-MACC Advisory Board
- Tourism Commission
- LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission
- Small Area Planning Joint Committee
- Mexic-Arte
- Greater East Austin Neighborhood Association
- Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission
- AIA Austin
- Austin Latino Coalition
- Red Line Parkway

Internally, staff convened a City of Austin interdepartmental planning team of departments and offices with interests in the District and included representation from the Convention Center, Parks and Recreation Department,

Watershed Protection Department, Economic Development Department, Office of Sustainability, and the Austin Transportation Department, among others.

SpeakUp Austin Website and Communication Channels. Using the SpeakUp, Austin! web platform, a project website was created: www.speakupaustin.org/palmdistrict. The website is in Spanish and English. It provides information such as a project description, meeting dates and times, recordings of meetings and presentations, reports and documents, and a way for people to sign up for future email notifications. The website also includes interactive features. Embedded in the site is a brief survey asking people their impressions of the district as well as their personal or family's relationship, if any, to it. In addition to the traditional survey, the site also includes an interactive map allowing respondents to provide geographic public input as well as respond to other comments. The project also publicized a customized e-mail address palmdistrictplanning@austintexas.gov, and allowed members of the public to provide comments and questions via mail or 3-1-1.

Notification and Marketing Activities. Staff have used a number of techniques to get the word out about the project:

Palm District Planning Initiative

Sign up here for email updates

Regístrate aquí para recibir las últimas noticias por correo electrónico.
<http://speakup.com/thvN51j>

Key Dates/Fechas Importantes

- Presentation of American Institute of Architects Team Findings and Recommendations (6:30PM-8PM)
July 25 2021
- Public Community Meeting (6PM-8PM)
June 16 2021
- Public Community Meeting (8AM-10AM)
June 15 2021

Videos

del Proyecto

research the planning area in
ing the plan.

mo de 2020
y estudiará el área de
de preparación para crear el

Spring 2021 - Summer 2021
Community engagement activities will begin.
Community input will be used to develop a draft
vision and outline for the plan.

Planificación de la Visión
Primavera de 2021 - verano de 2021
Comenzarán las actividades de participación
comunitaria. Se usarán los comentarios de la
comunidad para crear una visión y bosquejo
preliminares para el plan.

Active Planning
Summer 2021 - Fall 2021
Staff will use the draft vision and outline to develop
several scenarios for the planning area.

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

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

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

Explore the Palm District Study Area

Use this map to provide input on the current Palm District to help shape its future. How to provide input:

1. Click the "Add Pin" tool
2. Drag a tool to the area
3. Add more pins or view someone else's pin!

You can upload photos of things you see in the study area.

If you are unfamiliar with the area, take a look at the Palm District Context Map, or plan a visit to the many public spaces in the district.

Explore el Área de Estudio del Distrito Palm

- **Mailed Notification.** A courtesy informational postcard was mailed to all property owners and utility account holders within 500 feet of the district in May 2021.
- **Press Release.** A press release was issued in May 2021 that provided information about the project and an announcement of the June Visioning Forums. The project and visioning forums received coverage in local print and television news stories.
- **Flyers and Signage.** Flyers and signage were printed and displayed by institutional partners and businesses throughout the district. These included a QR code that directed interested individuals to the project website.
- **Social Media.** Social media content was pushed out by HPD and our partners that announced upcoming project events and materials.
- **Interest List and Email Notification.** The project team maintained an interest list for the project and provided regular updates to this list via e-mail.

Partnership with American Institute of Architects. The resolution (No. 20190523-029) that initiated the Palm District Planning Initiative encouraged staff to apply for an American Institute of Architects/Center for Communities by Design Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT). A R/UDAT is a multi-disciplinary team of experts who develop urban design, architectural, and programmatic recommendations for a given geography. The application was accepted and the R/UDAT team and staff prepared for a series of in-person meetings in Austin. In late February 2020, the R/UDAT team arrived in Austin for a series of tours, informational meetings, and meet-and-greets. This was done in preparation for a multi-day series of workshops and design sessions planned for later in the spring. On March 16, 2020, the City of Austin, in response to the looming global COVID-19 pandemic closed its offices to in-person business and transitioned to conducting business virtually. The R/UDAT program was placed on indefinite hold. With the pandemic still ongoing and in-person meetings not a possibility, HPD staff coordinated with AIA during the Spring and Summer of 2021 to hold a smaller-scale, virtual design event scheduled for late July. This multi-day event resulted in a series of recommendations for the Palm District. These are available on the project's SpeakUp, Austin! Website: www.speakupaustin.org/palmdistrict.

Community Visioning Forums. On June 15th and 16th, 2021, HPD staff held two, well-attended, virtual public meetings. The goal of these was to solicit community input on their impressions of the district as well as their thoughts on its past, present, and future. The meeting's presentation provided an overview of the District. Following this presentation, participants were placed into virtual breakout rooms. At the end of the meeting, participants reconvened in a single group and a representative from each breakout room told the group one thing they learned. Staff provided an overview of next steps in the process before ending the meeting.

Targeted Outreach to East Austin Thought Leaders. In late Summer 2021, the Housing and Planning Department contracted with a local vendor Martha P. Cotera (dba Information Systems Development) to engage East Austin community members with cultural and historic connections to the District. Through a series of interviews, focus groups, and small group meetings with East Austin Mexican American community leaders, current and former elected officials, Palm School alumni, and current and former East Austin residents, the interviewers gathered interviewees' stories, desires, and thoughts about the Palm School and Park, the Rainey Street neighborhood, Waterloo Greenway, the potential 5th Street Heritage Corridor, and other aspects of the Palm District.

Language Access. Throughout the visioning phase, materials and activities have been made accessible in English and Spanish. Core materials have been provided in English and Spanish, including website, survey, flyers, postcard notification, historic timeline and videos. Interpretation services were provided at virtual community visioning forums and AIA Webinar, and Targeted Outreach to East Austin Thought Leaders has included Spanish language interviews and meetings as requested.

SUMMARY OF ONLINE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Due to the worldwide pandemic, community engagement efforts needed to pivot into virtual spaces. The City of Austin's online engagement platform, SpeakUp Austin!, serves as the centralized hub for all the Palm District Planning Initiative online engagement efforts.

The Palm District Planning Initiative's SpeakUp Austin! page launched in May 2021. The page introduces visitors to the Palm District and the Palm District Planning process, and provides videos and background information, key project dates, the process timeline, executive team contact information, and interactive engagement opportunities.

The SpeakUp Austin! site received roughly 3.6 thousand visits since its launch. The most visitors to visit in one single day was 228. Over 2,285 people visited the site at least once. Of the total visitors, 903 people interacted with the site by viewing a video, downloading documents, contributing to an exercise, or clicking on links on the project page. The most downloaded documents on the site were the AIA report with 355 total downloads, the Palm District informational one-pager with 169 downloads, and the Palm District Existing Conditions Report which was downloaded 89 times.

Online survey

The Palm District online survey was launched in May 2021 as one of the features of the SpeakUp! Austin Palm District Planning Initiative website. The results summarized here were collected from May to November 2021. The survey will remain open past this initial visioning phase to allow for input from people joining the process at later stages.

To date (November 2021), 337 individuals have interacted with the online survey. Of the participants who chose to share demographic information, 55% were Hispanic or Latinx, a segment of the community that was targeted for in-depth stakeholder engagement.

The online survey asks for participants' impressions of the district as well as personal or family ties, if any, to it.

The six questions on the survey are:

- Which of these activities do you primarily do in the Palm District?
- How often do you visit?
- Why do you visit?
- Which of the following best describes what the Palm District means to you?
- What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the most?
- What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the least?

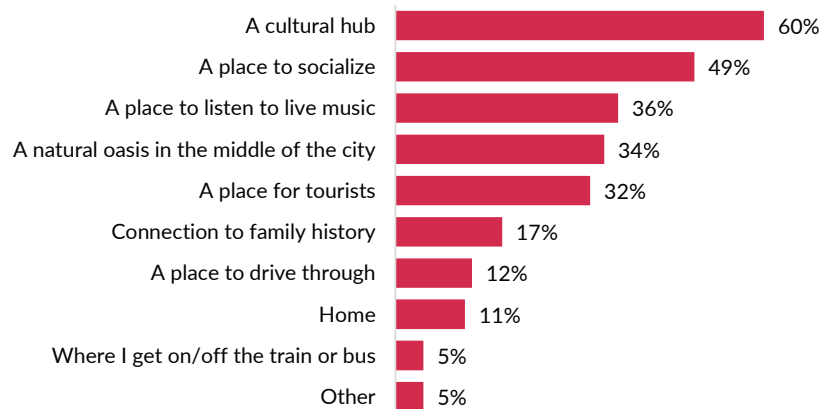
When answering these questions, participants were able to choose multiple

responses from a preset list of answers.

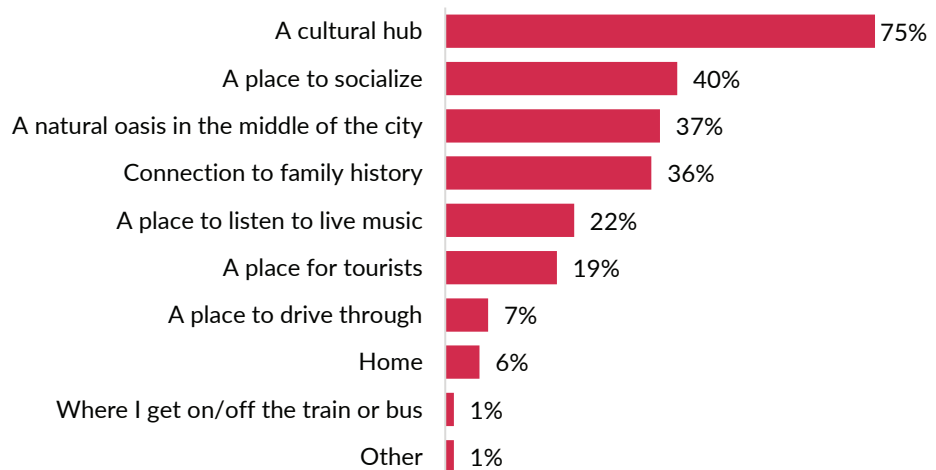
Below are the results of the multiple choice questions. Included for comparison, are the segmented results from only those participants who chose to identify as Hispanic or Latinx.

As seen in the graphs below, the top 2 answers for the question - “Which of the following best describes what the Palm District means to you?” were the same for all participants and for those of Hispanic or Latinx backgrounds. The third and fourth answers do differ with the 3rd choice for 36% of all participants being “A place to listen to live music” as a descriptor of what Palm District means to them, while 37% of Hispanic or Latinx participants chose “A natural oasis in the middle of the city”. The fourth most chosen answer for Hispanic or Latinx participants was “Connection to family history,” while the fourth most popular answer for all participants was “A natural oasis in the middle of the city,” the same answer that ranked slightly higher for Hispanic or Latinx participants.

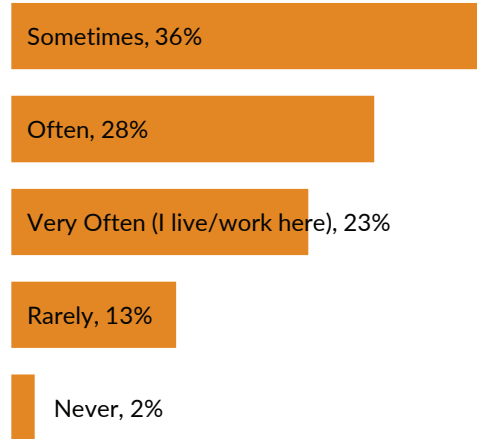
Which of the following best describes what the Palm District means to you?



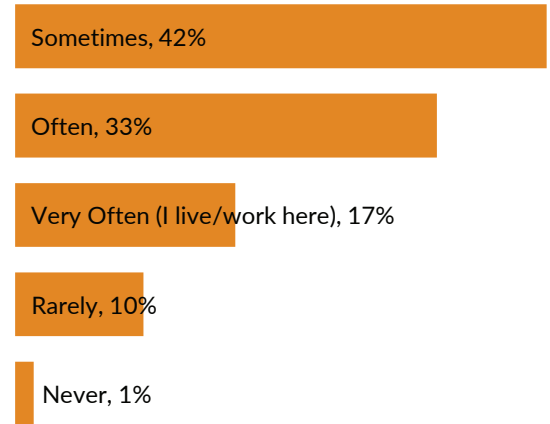
Hispanic or Latinx Response



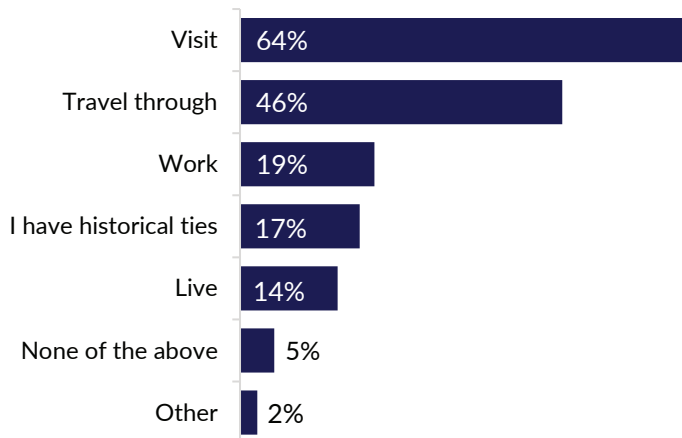
How often do you visit?



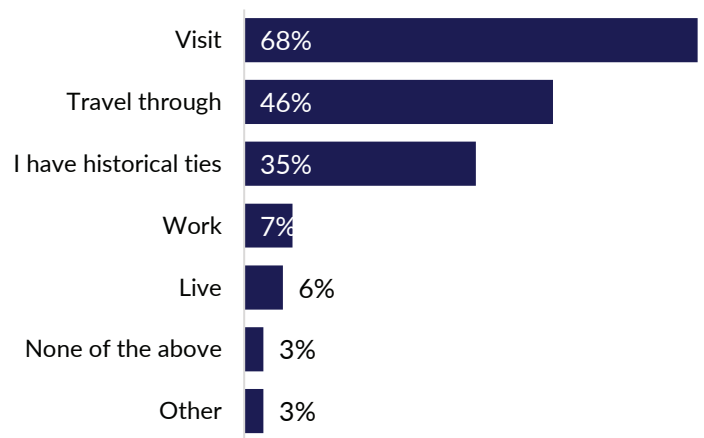
Hispanic or Latinx Response



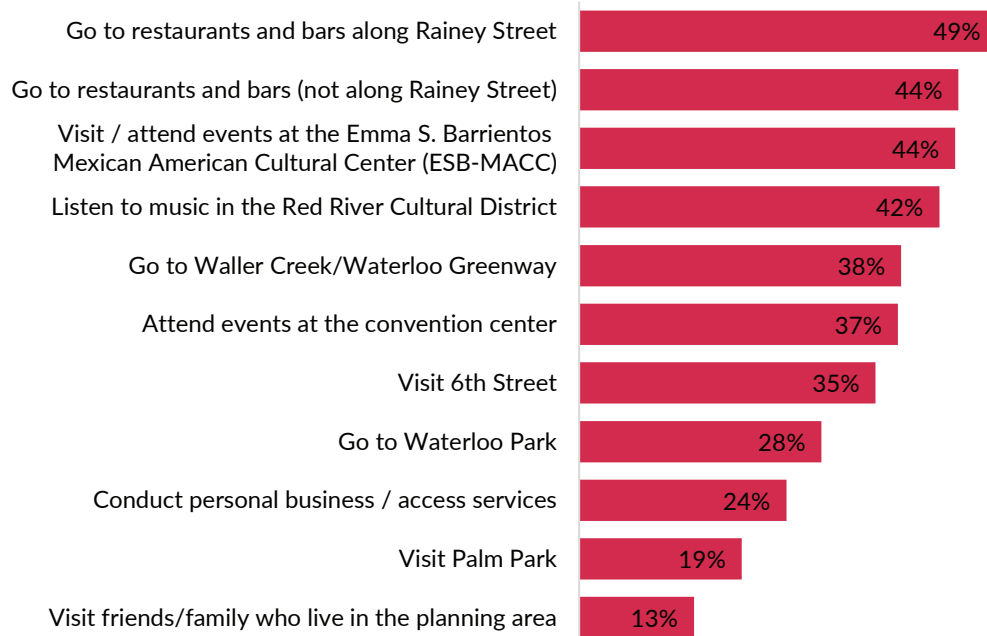
Which of these activities do you primarily do in the Palm District?



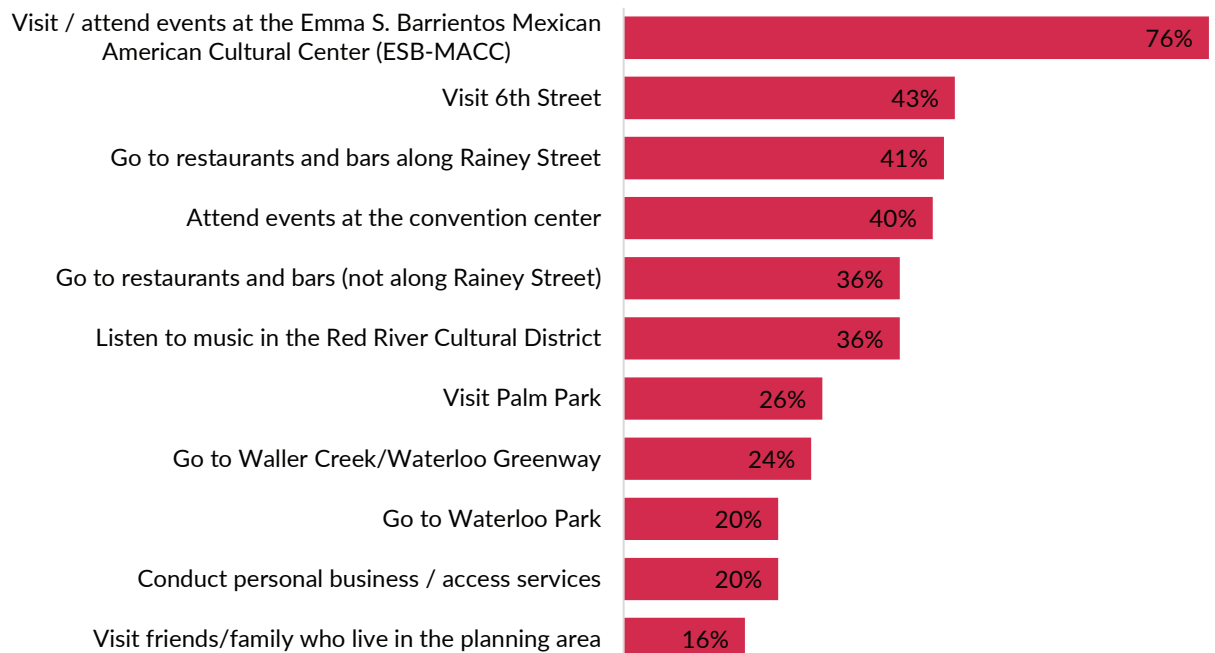
Hispanic or Latinx Response



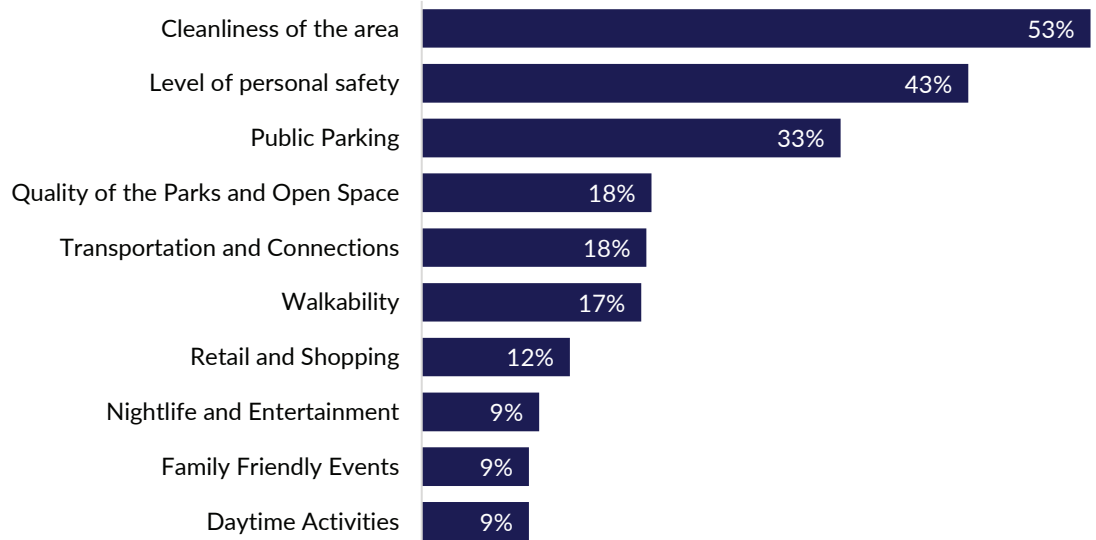
Why do you visit?



Hispanic or Latinx Response



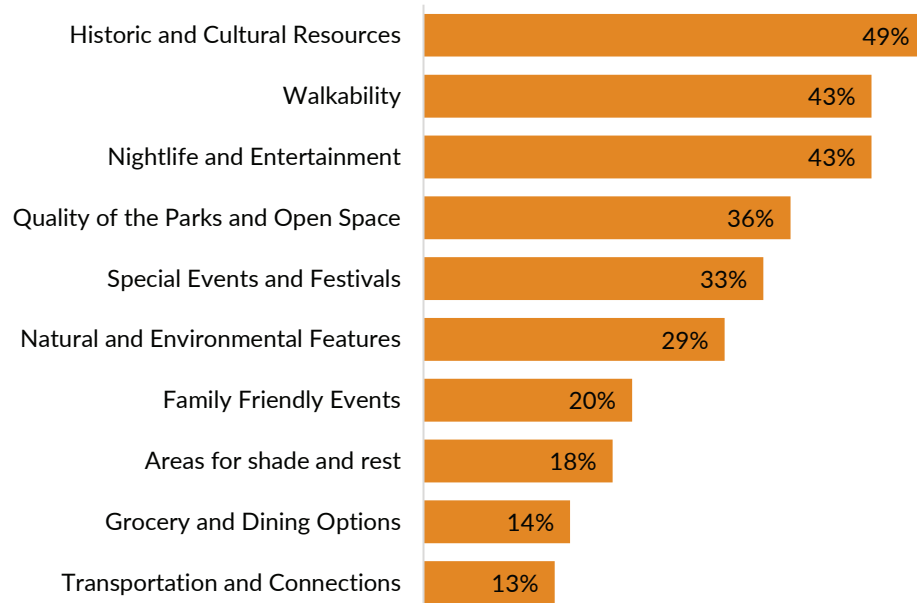
What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the least?



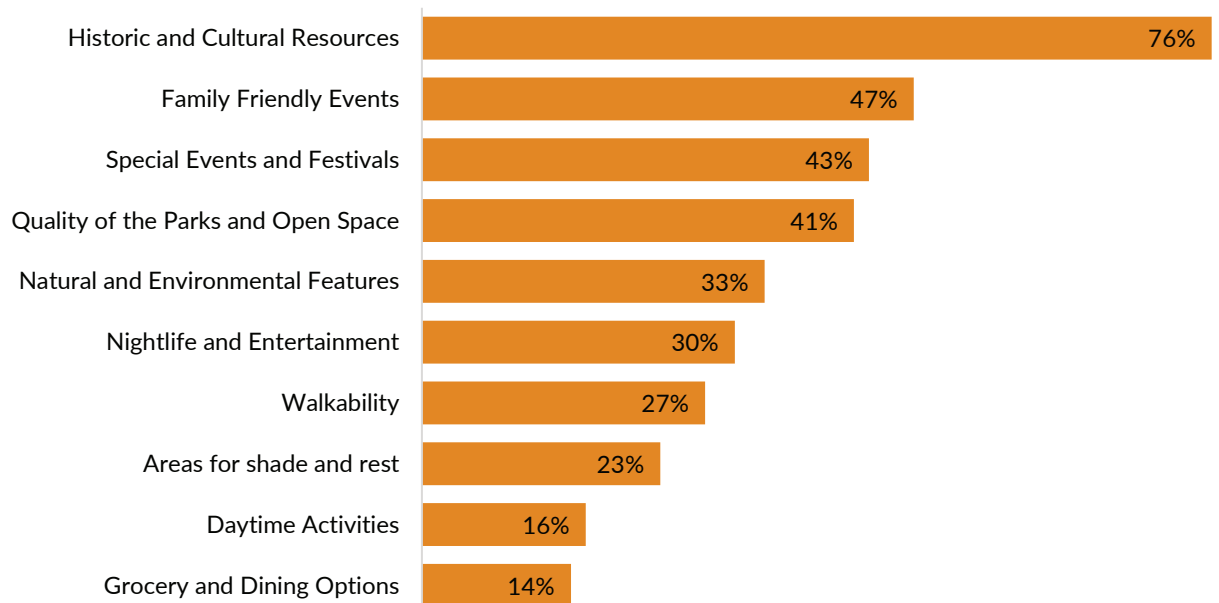
Hispanic or Latinx Response



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



Hispanic or Latinx Response



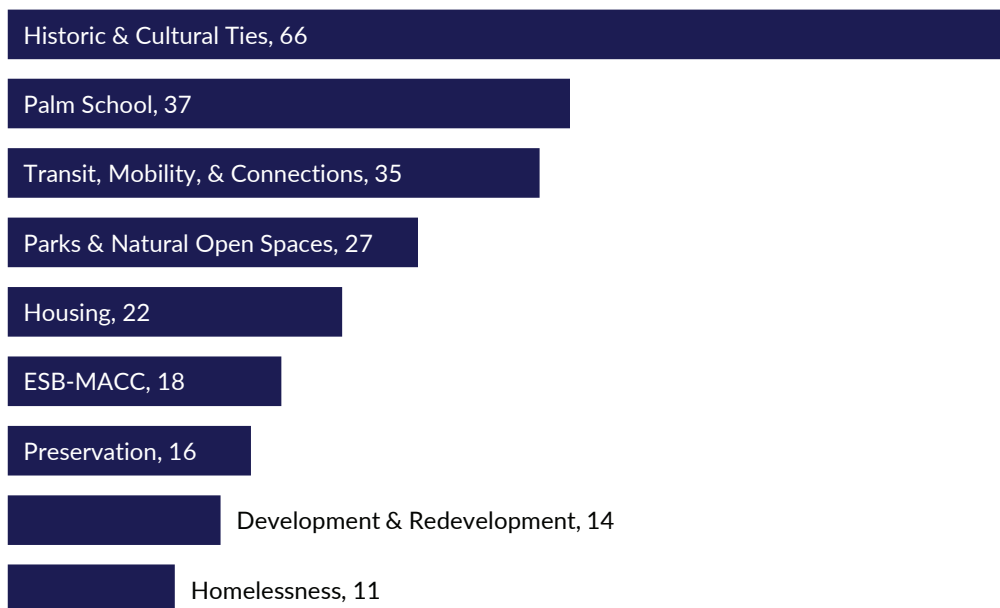
Online Survey Open Comments

The survey also provided space for comments on two open-ended questions:

- Do you or your family have a personal or cultural connection to the planning area?
- Do you have additional comments about the Palm District?

Participants submitted 263 comments to these open-ended questions. The comments were tagged with overarching themes. Many comments were tagged and grouped into several themes groups. The graph below shows the top responses and themes mentioned in the shared open comments sections:

Online Survey Comments



To read all of the shared open comments in their entirety, please Appendix A on page A1.

Selection of Open Comments...

On History & Culture, Preservation, Tourism, and the Arts

“Si, me encantaría qué se preservara pero con mucha innovación cultural . Que se centralice cada esfuerzo para cultura , arte, eventos y tradición que tenemos en la comunidad latina. Que sea para educar a todas la comunidad, de todas las razas y al turismo de Austin. Que la gente que visite no se vaya sin conocer este lugar...” (“Yes, I would love for it [Palm District] to be preserved but with a lot of cultural innovation. That every effort be focused on culture, art, events and tradition that we have in the Latino community. That it be to educate all the community, of all races, and Austin tourists. That the people who visit do not leave without knowing this place ... ”)

On History & Culture, Preservation, Housing, and Parks

"An amazing location! I'd love to see how we can preserve this place's cultural significance, while simultaneously utilizing the space and maximizing density. I'd love to see a max height tower with a majority of units being income restricted housing, underground parking and ground level retail, the original [Palm School] building preserved, and the remaining space as park space."

On Transit, Mobility & Connections, Rainey Street, Palm School & Park, and Housing

"This area is currently poorly planned. There is too much automobile traffic and not enough walkability. The creek is currently inaccessible in most areas. Palm Park is right on the freeway and is not enjoyable to visit. Rainey Street is a mess and deserves a dedicated public parking garage on the site of the muddy surface lot next to IHOP. Palm School and Park should be developed into high density public housing with on site health services."

On Housing and the Homeless

"I've been a homeowner in the area since 2008. It's totally different now, more touristy, but that's to be expected with the growth. The problem with homeless people is out of control. I wish the city would create more housing for them like Community First Village, so they have a safe place to live."

On Palm School and History & Culture

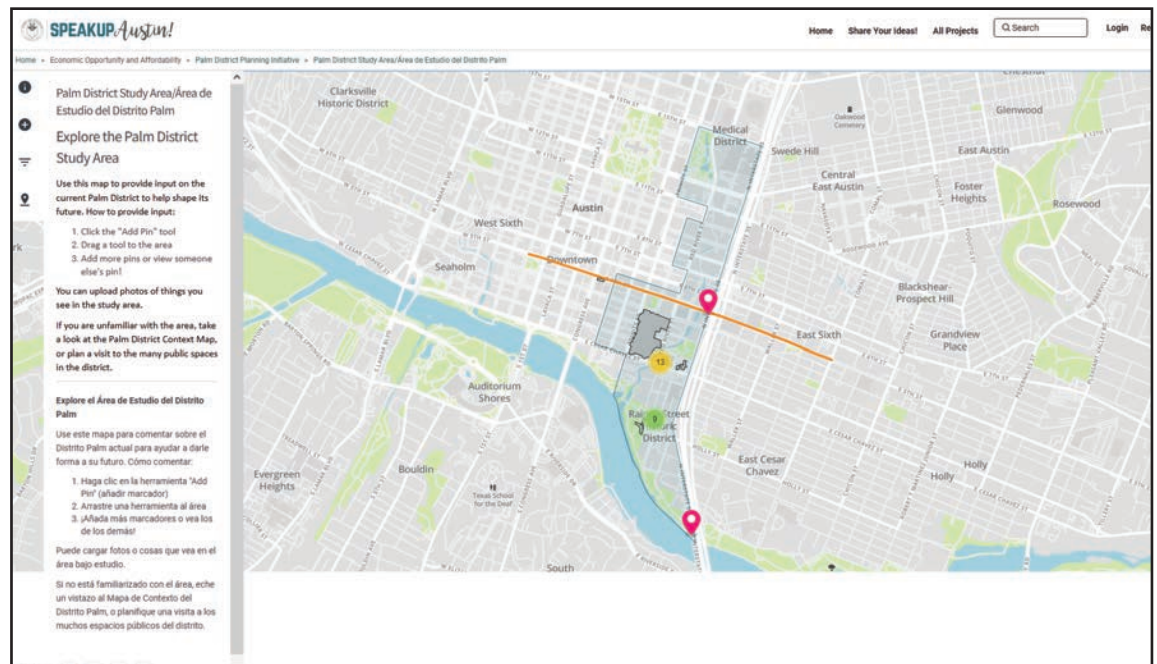
"Yes. My father along with his siblings all attended Palm School. It represents a vital part of the history for many families who grew up in East Austin. The connection from Palm School to UJH to the old Austin High (which has been restored beautifully) is important to recognizing the reality many families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

Map Comment Tool - Explore the Palm District Study Area

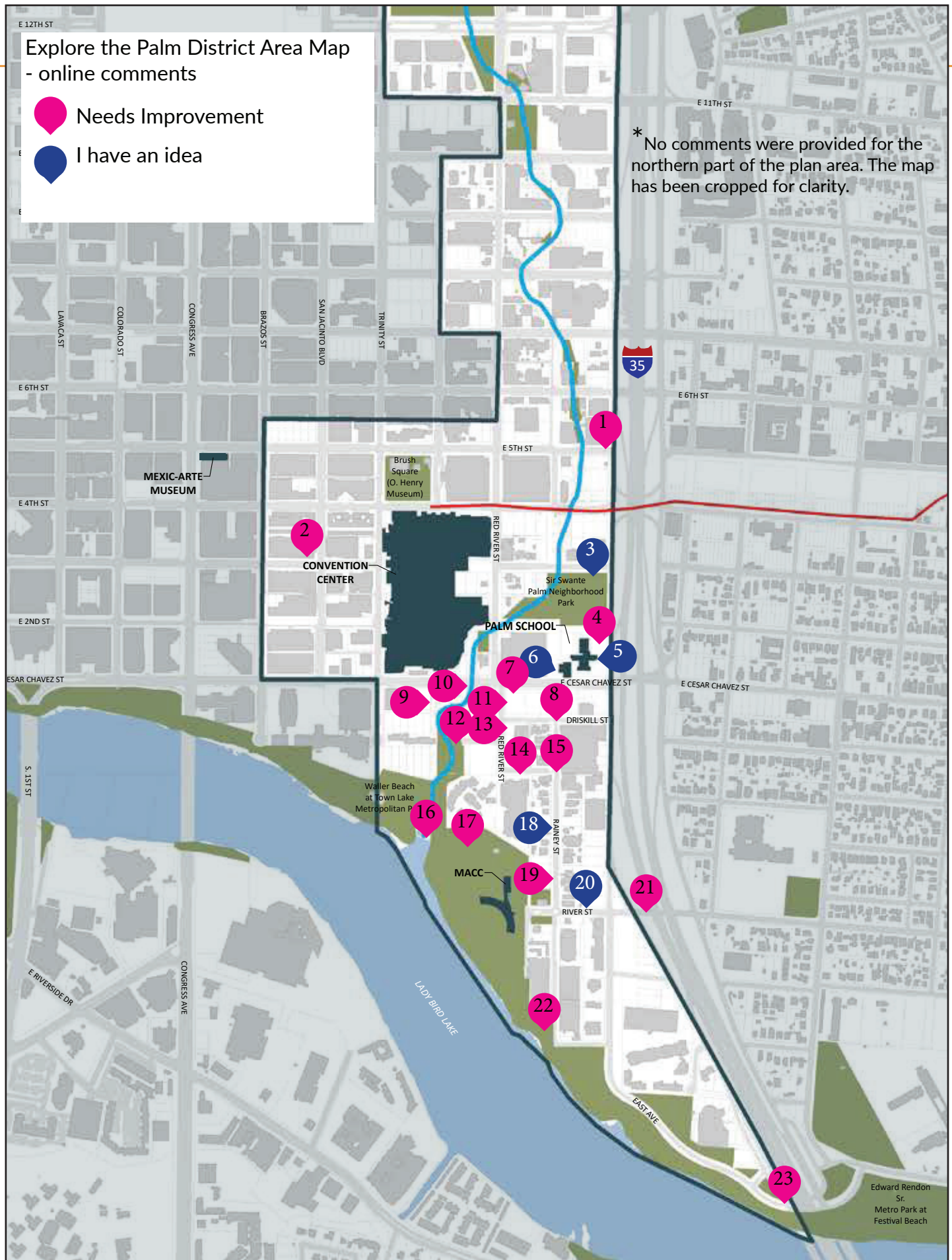
The Palm District Planning Initiative's SpeakUp Austin! page invited participants to "Explore the Palm District Study Area" through a map exercise. This interactive exercise asked participants to share their first hand knowledge and on-the-ground expertise of the Palm District by dropping pins inside the plan area boundaries. Participants were able to choose between three pin categories: Needs Improvement, Protect, and I have an Idea. Three quarters of the comments fell within the "needs improvements" pin category.

Dropped pins and accompanying comments were generally focused on the geography of the Palm District south of East 6th Street (see map below). The pins are clustered around Rainey Street, East Cesar Chavez, the Palm School, the Mexican American Cultural Center, and the Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail. Many of the comments focused on human centered improvements to walking and bicycle connections in the area and on potential uses for the Palm School and park site.

Nine participants dropped a total of 23 pins on this interactive map.



The screenshot above shows how users were able to drop pins and comments into the map. The map on the next page has the exact locations of dropped pins. User comments are on the following page.



Explore the Palm District Area Map Comments

No.	Contribution
1	Not a safe connection to the east side.
2	Allow dense development in all areas west of Trinity Street. Uses should be market driven.
3	The City, PARD, and the Conservancy need to seriously rethink their concept for this park as a "child-oriented" educational/recreational space. It is surrounded by a highway frontage road, new micro-unit apartments for singles, a high rise hotel, and Rainey Street, one of Austin's primary bar and nightlife districts. There is also very limited parking. There is no park in Austin less appropriate for children than Palm Park. This space makes infinitely more sense for downtown events geared toward residents, employees, and visitors. Literally any other park in the City makes a better children's park.
4	Please consider something else besides just preserving this building. Why not housing (it looks like Travis County aka the owner of the property already has a plan for that)? Why not event space? Why not performance space? A potential venue? To be honest, this building has been modified beyond belief and I am not sure any significant historical value remains in the BUILDING itself. Why not use some sort of interpretive landmark/memorial to preserve the history while allowing this space to be used more effectively. Also I have been asked for my input on this small piece of land so many different times. Please just make a decision and move on. The constant ask for input is getting overwhelming.
5	Travis County has put together very well considered design guidelines and restrictive covenants for the restoration and reuse of the historic part of this building and the site. The City of Austin needs to recognize that Travis County committed to historic preservation while finding opportunities for the private sector to leverage the non-historic part of the site's value. Trying to tell Travis County how to manage or convey this property is paternalistic on the part of the City, who is pushing for ownership of the site to appease Waterloo Conservancy, not the site's Mexican-American history.
6	A pedestrian corridor connecting to an extension of Rainey Street here would help connect Palm Park and northern Waller Creek residents with the Palm School site and Rainey District.
7	During heavy rain, the stair turns into a waterfall.
8	At Driskill/Rainey, crosswalks are not clearly marked so vehicles and pedestrians both ignore.
9	Entrance to trail between Cesar Chavez and Lady Bird Lake west of Waller Creek is not clearly marked or well lit at night.
10	Cesar Chavez bridge sidewalks are a major choke point for pedestrians, bikes, scooters, wheelchairs, etc.
11	The skew of this intersection along with the large number of turning vehicles makes this an uncomfortable place to walk. It needs to be a better place as the primary entrance to Rainey street for most of its residents and visitors.
12	This long neglected entrance to the hike & bike trail needs brush clearing and trail surface improvements.
13	Major Pedestrian improvements needed along with Cesar Chavez and connecting streets.
14	Sidewalks do not exist here.
15	At Davis/Rainey, crosswalks are not clearly marked so vehicles and pedestrians both ignore.
16	This transition isn't a very safe experience when pedestrian and bicycles are interacting.
17	"Desire path" exists here where people cut through grass to get to the MACC parking lot. Suggest connection to parking lot and alley/private drive beyond.
18	If street is not closed during peak pedestrian traffic hours, suggest adding at least one clearly defined crossing between River and Davis Street.
19	Needs continuous sidewalk on both sides of River Street
20	Existing TNC (uber/lyft) drop off is underutilized and not clearly marked or lit during evening hours. Suggest expanding and making required during peak hours.
21	Signalization should prioritize pedestrians at River Street. This is generally a low-traffic intersection in the N-S direction. Also, turn lanes and protected bike lanes would better define and direct traffic on this wide ROW.
22	"Desire path" here where residents cut through to get to trail. Current sidewalk connection is curved and not the natural direct connection.
23	As the trail passes under I-35, choke points and blind spots exist for pedestrians and bikers.

PALM DISTRICT PLANNING INITIATIVE PUBLIC VISIONING FORUM SESSIONS 1 & 2: JUNE 15th AND JUNE 16th, 2021

Meeting Process Overview

Staff hosted virtual community visioning forums on the morning of June 15th and the evening June 16th, 2021. Due to the pandemic, these meetings were held over Zoom. Sixty-eight people were present at the morning meeting and 83 were present for the evening one.

Following opening remarks and an overview of the meetings' agendas and ground rules, participants were given a presentation providing a snapshot of the district. Following the presentation, participants were assigned to Zoom breakout rooms. Each room had a staff facilitator and a note taker. Participants were given 15 minutes each to discuss the following questions:

- Thinking about the context of the presentation and your personal experience, what things do you appreciate most about the Palm District PAST or PRESENT? What gives life? What is the best?
- Thinking about what we appreciate most about the past and present within the Palm District, let's consider, what might be? What is the world calling for? (Let's dream big, sky is the limit, nothing is off the table.)
- Considering what you know about the Palm District, let's consider, what SHOULD be? Co-constructing - planning and prioritizing space and ideas that would work well. What should the priorities be for the Palm District? What makes the most sense for the future of the District?

Waller Creek runs behind the Palm School and park. East Avenue with its wide grassy medians runs alongside the school and between the Rainey Street Neighborhood and East Austin. What is now E. Cesar Chavez St. runs perpendicular to East Avenue.

Source: Austin History Center. PICA 21043



The note takers recorded 372 comments. The detailed comments are in Appendix B on page B1. The comments fell into eleven broad categories, which in some instances were further divided into multiple subcategories.

Topic	Count
The Planning Process/COA	85
History and Culture	80
Placemaking	75
Transit & Mobility	26
Parks and Open Space	26
IH	35, 20
Equity and Inclusion	15
Live Music and Entertainment	9
Infrastructure	7
Safety and Homelessness	5
Housing	4
Assorted	17

What we heard...

The Planning Process

"The Palm District is a microcosm of all the issues Downtown faces in a small district. It is very complex."

"As a response, it needs to be socially just"

"Identification of priorities needs to come first from community members"

Convention Center

"Everywhere you go, the convention center dominates and it's hard to walk around without running into the convention center ..more character, identity, unifying theme that makes this area a destination (for both Austinites and visitors). Green spaces and events in those spaces will bring people."

"Growing up in Austin the convention center area used to have more authenticity; now it's a lot of chain restaurants."



History and Culture

"The importance of historic and iconic sites on the red river district for the LGBTQ community. We need to figure out how to preserve that culture here as well. That is where it started here in Austin."

"The neighborhood feel of the district that still exists is unique. It still has an historic neighborhood feel. Would like to see more of the area's history be told and conveyed."

Chances Club, owned and operated by Sandra Martinez, closed its doors in 1995. The Austin Chronicle described the bar as "one of the friendliest, wildest hybrids of underground music and gay culture."
Photo source: Austin History Center



Preserving History

"A lot of the history should be preserved, especially as the district is a popular visitor space, it would be a great way to educate people about the history of the area. A focal point in historic preservation for Austin."

"History here is good and bad, an opportunity to be truthful and acknowledge, opportunity for healing."

Preserving Culturally Significant Places

"Even when a space is made for a community, sometimes it doesn't feel like theirs. WE need to bring the community in and make them front and center, integral to this visioning to have ownership of the space."

"How do you balance development with the necessary retention of authenticity/culture?"

"The district has the character of Austin built into it, but people should be able to walk and feel comfortable moving throughout the district."

"We need to bring forward all the things we are doing together to emphasize the music mile to give it chance to survive the coming storm of I-35 getting capped and continuing to push people out of their area."

Recognizing Racial and Historical Trauma

"The District is tied to the trauma of separation. When the Mexican American community was displaced, east of East Avenue, things were still OK because East Avenue was still a place to cross...then came 35, the great divide and the trauma was complete, and the divide was complete."

"Balancing positives and negatives is going to be a struggle. The displacement for the area has probably already occurred, so how can we reconnect history into the district?"

Palm School and Palm Park

"Have the history preserved, archive the history of palm school, have a material culture museum. we need spaces for ceremony."

"The school serves as an important and powerful history to talk about the history of this area. Watching the city flip to be a white-washed rich person's land."

1940. The last trolley train runs on East 1st Street, now Cesar Chavez Street, in front of the Palm School. Photo source: Austin History Center



Palm School and Palm Park (placemaking)

"There are buildings and structures at Palm that are no longer used the way they were originally, but we should think also about how people will use the space."

"Palm park could be the gateway to downtown"

Acknowledging and Respecting Mexican American Heritage

"This is one small way that this community can be honored. Not in money but in value, heritage, and justice."

Equity and Inclusion

"The spaces feel white and unwelcoming to our community. there are many that don't speak English or have a college education and they don't feel welcome because of the history of gentrification. People should feel free to be indigenous, who they are, speak their language."



Parks and Open Space

"Waller creek connects the area together; it would be an appropriate thing to tie the area together."

"The activation of Palm Park is needed to make it the crown jewel of the area and to be enjoyed by everyone. A revitalized Palm Park can lead the way in the area, and right now the way the park is, is not honoring the history adequately."

Transit and Mobility

"Fairly segmented currently, increased walkability would be a great way to connect people to each other and the spaces."

"People should be able to walk across I35 safely from the east side of Austin so that they can see the Palm area."

"We have to find ways for people to get to this area by public transportation, so we don't devote area to parking garages."

"Mobility is a huge challenge in the area, and solving for that is critical for all modes of transportation. Project Connect will add transit, and Waterloo Greenway make good connections. But Cesar Chavez is not pedestrian friendly."

"Walkability, it's impossible to walk from the MACC into the district or Rainey. Creating the capacity to explore and enjoy the spaces. Signage, wayfinding, history routes."

"Better circulation and connectivity to Rainey."

"Everything starts with 35"



Placemaking

"The micro districts each have different needs and the needs aren't necessarily aligned. A lot of balance and conflict resolution is necessary to create a holistic/high-functioning neighborhood."

"The blend of old and new and amount of change is overwhelming, but also lots of opportunity."

"Encouraging older population to participate in downtown area. Create spaces that are inviting for all age groups."

"Faneuil Hall in Boston would be a good model for an arts district at the palm school."

"Art, murals that speak to the history, present, and future."



TARGETED ENGAGEMENT TO EAST AUSTIN STAKEHOLDERS

Recognizing the historical, cultural, and emotional importance of areas within the Palm District to Austin's Mexican American community, HPD staff contracted Martha Cotera (dba Information Systems Development) to interview members of the East Austin community with interests within the District. The following high-level summary of these interviews is based on ongoing report updates submitted to HPD staff by Ms. Cotera. Once they have completed their interviews, their findings will be included in a stand-alone report which will be made available on the project's SpeakUp! Austin page.

They conducted multiple interviews with people representing themselves and their organizations including:

- La Raza Roundtable
- Former Texas State Senator
- Former Travis County Commissioner
- Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Tejano Democrats
- Palm School Alumni
- The Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)
- Travis County Commissioners Court Commissioner
- La Pena Arts, Inc.
- Nuestro Grupo/Academia Cuauhtli
- AHMIGA (Latina civic and social networking organization)
- Café Con Letras (Organization of musicians who occasionally perform at the ESB-MACC and who organize performances of Latin American musicians in Austin in the Blackerby Theater)
- L.A.C.E.
- La Raza Roundtable and PODER (East Austin environmental justice organization); most participants were Palm School alumni and Palm School legacy stakeholders whose parents or grandparents attended Palm School
- Outreach Report/Focus Group: Nuestro Grupo and Sanchez Elementary School Families and UT Graduate Students from the College of Education volunteers at ESB-MACC working with Sanchez/Metz and Zavala Elementary School parents. The group included 4 teachers, 3 UT professors, 8 graduate students and 4 parents; the events and programs where the group participates are at the ESB-MACC/Indigenous Institute in San Marcos (field trips), and field trips at Mexic Arte Museum.
- Long-time East Austin residents

The comments were organized into eight specific topic categories with a catch-all category, "Assorted", for those not fitting into the other categories. The first three categories contain the overwhelming majority of the comments.

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

Palm School/Palm Park

Comments from the interviews focused on the future of the Palm School and adjacent Palm Park. Most of those interviewed expressed their desire that the school be preserved as a museum, archive, and/or cultural space that tells the story of Austin's Mexican American community and serves as a cultural hub for that community. There are also comments indicating that the City of Austin should purchase the school site for these purposes.



“Use Palm School and Palm Park’s Mexican history to promote spaces and activities that will attract local people to celebrations downtown, and to attract visitors to Austin like San Antonio does. We go to San Antonio with our children, and not to downtown Austin for festivals, because Austin festivals are not relevant and are no fun for us.”

“Acquire Palm School and provide Palm Park for use as outdoor museum space; as Mexican Americans and Latinos we have expectations that spaces that are historic for us, should be preserved for use by the community and by the community at large so the total history of Austin can be known and shared.”

“Palm Museum and Palm Park can flesh out the dynamic history of Austin including our role in the Tonkawa removal (Trail of Tears); our role in the Texas-Mexico Underground Railroad, the history of Afro-Mexicans), and other Texas treasures.”

Palm District Planning Initiative

The second largest number of comments received were regarding the Palm District Planning Initiative and fell into two subsets. The first recommends that the Palm District Planning Initiative should remain in place and serve as a type of local governance structure following the plan's adoption to facilitate implementation. Comments in this grouping also expressed a desire for this structure to provide oversight on public expenditures involving arts funding and the convention center. The second makes specific recommendations for

the planning process. Most of this subset's comments want the Palm District planning process to identify funding streams for arts/cultural groups and activities and to preserve its cultural resources. One comment asked that development of the plan's policies and objectives be "politically neutral" and "open to all".

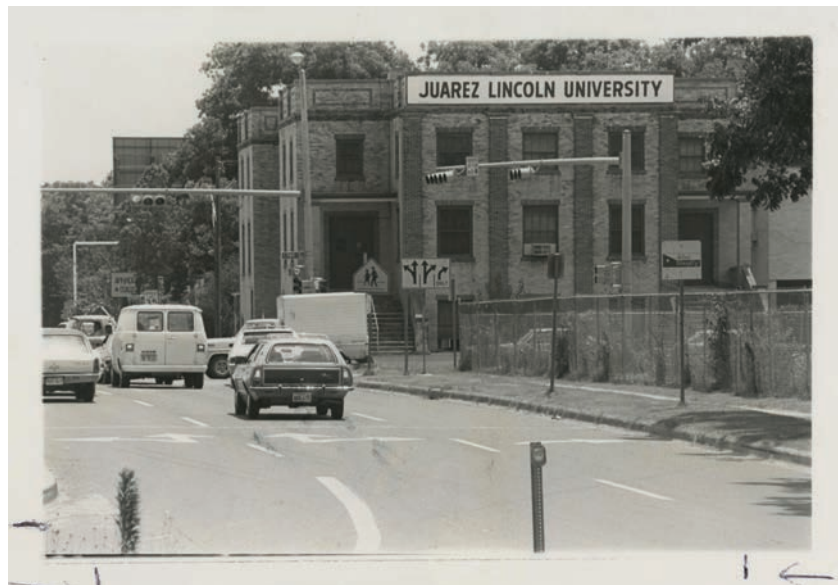
"Recommend that the Palm District Plan establish a standing committee of stakeholders who will make sure the recommendations of the plan are implemented."

"Palm District Planning should include identification of potential revenue sources for cultural entities in the district."

"Ensure that policy and development recommendations are politically neutral (non-partisan, open to all) and that they follow the city's objectives to prevent further degradation of the Rainey Street Historic District by not allowing any through streets like the extension of Red River Street, and encroachments by Waterloo Greenway or others."

Palm District as a Cultural Hub

While many of the comments focused on creating a cultural or museum space at the Palm School and adjacent Palm Park, there were a significant number of them that viewed the Palm District itself as a cultural hub.



Juárez-Lincoln University (Chicano Cultural Center) on what is now Cesar Chavez and I-35.

Photo Source: Austin History Center

"Palm District should focus on its role as Austin's most diverse cultural hub should provide for documentation of the past histories of areas like Red River/6th Street (what was it before it became an Anglo music district?), the Innovation District, etc."

“Recommend that somewhere in the district there could be a building to house non-profits involved in Latino cultural arts programming or in close by East Austin.”

“Palm District should be designated as the CULTURAL HUB of Austin and should be identified as such, and it should focus from now and forever in maintaining the cultural identity of its various areas and institutions.”

Rainey Street/Historic Preservation

Comments about Rainey Street and Historic Preservation centered on preserving what remains of the houses located in the Rainey Street National Register Historic District, particularly the house located at 50 Rainey Street, which is recommended to become a visitor’s center. Other comments requested that Red River Street not be extended into the neighborhood.

“Policies of preservation and development of Rainey Street Historic District should be detailed by the City, reported publicly, and to interested stakeholders (East Austin and visitors), past and present.”

Mexican American Heritage Corridor

The proposed Mexican American Heritage Corridor would extend along 5th Street and link Republic Square to Plaza Saltillo. Of the interviewees who mentioned this, there was strong support for realizing this project.



“Conduct a Comprehensive Economic Impact Study on the Proposed Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor.”

“Explore the feasibility of housing the Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in the Fifth Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor.”

Waterloo Greenway and Historical and Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness

Some of the comments focused on the need for greater cultural sensitivity from organizations in the District, primarily, the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy. Recommendations asked that the Conservancy to better acknowledge the District's history and the cultural ties that it has with different communities in Austin. Recommendations asked that the Conservancy reach out to Austin's communities of color—primarily Mexican American and African American, but also Asian—and offer programming and events for them.

“Waterloo Greenway should on annual basis present a plan of events promoting diversity, with specific outreach to Asian, Mexican American, African American communities city-wide, and to report back to the city on participation of these groups.”

“Use part of Waterloo Greenway to showcase Indigenous and Hispanic history and at a minimum it should host activities throughout the year that support the culture of the Indigenous community that resided in the area, and of the Mexican Americans and Latinos in Austin.”

“Recommend that Waterloo Greenway create a process for reaching out to Austin's diaspora now in the rural areas of the county, and to work on shuttle or other services to bring these communities to enjoy the public spaces that have been granted to Waterloo Greenway from all constituents in the city and county.”

Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC)

There were few comments regarding the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC). One comment was in opposition to extending Red River Street into the parking lot of the ESB-MACC. The other two comments spoke to keeping the Center well-funded.

“No extension of Red River Street due to encroachments into ESB-MACC parking areas needed by event participants and the Academia; also due to safety concerns regarding the children attending throughout the year.”

“Phased funding for the ESB-MACC should be supported by Palm District, including fully completing Phase II and forward planning for Phase III”

Convention Center

The comments regarding the Convention Center focus on it providing a revenue stream to fund arts and cultural activities for Asian, African American, and Mexican American artists.

“Recommend that since the Austin Convention Center is in this cultural hub and since it has local arts funding, it should coordinate programs to attract local visitors and others at Waterloo Greenway, Mexic Arte, La Peña and the ESB-MACC and become involved in the planned use of Palm School and Palm Park..”
“Convention center should be required to submit whatever plans they have for

programs to promote Latino arts in Austin, and Latino arts institutions; they should do the same for other community groups like for African American, and Asian Americans.”

History and Preservation

El Matamoros
Restaurant. 504 East
Avenue. 1957
Photo Source: Austin
History Center



Although most of the comments regarding preservation focused on Palm School and Palm Park, there were a few comments about preserving historic buildings throughout the District.

“Preserve and document the history of institutions within the district and including other parts of downtown Austin which were culturally diverse, but which have no placards or other identifying markers.”

“Preserve every iconic/historic building in Palm District, especially the last two remaining homes in Rainey Street neighborhood, one of which is on 50 Rainey Street; city should buy it and make it a visitor center-may involve letting the owner remain in her home for her lifetime.”

Innovation District

There were three comments regarding the Innovation District, which all focused on diversity and equity.

“Innovation District should develop at least one program initially to provide services to persons below the federal poverty levels, and there should be follow-up by the city to ensure that special programs and services are provided on continued basis.”

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS' (AIA) STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP (July 23rd and July 26th)

Background

Austin City Council Resolution #20190523-029 authorizing staff to begin planning in the Palm District also encouraged staff to apply for an American Institute of Architects/Center for Communities by Design Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) grant to guide the planning efforts in collaboration with key partners. In 2019, the City of Austin's application for a R/UDAT was selected by AIA. In February 2020, a small advance team of AIA staff and volunteers visited Austin in-person for a preliminary orientation visit. This occurred weeks before the closure of City of Austin offices to in-person business due to the domestic onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the R/UDAT was eventually placed on indefinite hold.

City staff continued to coordinate with the AIA during the public launch of the Palm District Planning Initiative in spring 2021, and determined that while a formal in-person R/UDAT visit (charrettes, interview meetings, focus groups, etc.) was not feasible, the AIA team of volunteer experts could participate in the visioning process virtually. They participated in the June community visioning sessions, and conducted their virtual process from Friday, July 23 to Monday, July 26. Over that weekend, they interviewed additional key stakeholders, conducted research and analysis, and developed independent recommendations for the district. The AIA Team presented their recommendations in a public webinar on Monday, July 26, and provided a summary report which is available for review on the Palm District Planning Initiative Speak Up page.

The recommendations of the AIA report were made by an unpaid volunteer team of AIA-affiliated national experts and while the recommendations reflect a talented body of experience and insight from beyond Austin, these recommendations have not been officially endorsed by the City of Austin.

The Meeting Process

Once the AIA and the City of Austin agreed to a scaled-down stakeholder workshop, Housing and Planning Department and AIA staff began working on organizing and scheduling the virtual workshop.



1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

AIA
Communities
by Design

The AIA team consisted of four design and planning experts and three AIA staff:

- Cheryl Morgan, FAIA, Birmingham, Alabama – Team Leader: She is A licensed architect and Emerita Professor of Architecture in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture of Auburn University.
- Rick Reinhard, Washington DC: He has spent more than three decades improving cities, leading organizations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors throughout the U.S. and in Canada and the U.K.
- Sherry Okun-Rudnak, MA, LEED-AP, California: She leads projects across BAE's (an urban economics and public-benefit real estate development consulting practice) California offices and oversees its national practice and specializes in providing development advisory services, as well as market, financial feasibility and impacts analyses for BAE's engagements.
- Desiree Aranda, Phoenix, AZ: She is a planner and independent heritage conservation consultant and specializes in identifying, documenting, evaluating, and designating historic properties, as well as developing community-based cultural heritage programs.
- Paola Capo: She is the Sustainability and Communities by Design Specialist at the AIA.
- Erin Simmons: She is the Senior Director of Design Assistance at the Center for Communities by Design at the AIA.
- Joel Mills: He is Senior Director of the American Institute of Architects' Center for Communities by Design.

The AIA team hosted its stakeholder workshop on Friday July 23rd, 2021 to ask specific questions and conduct research based on the discussions that had taken place in February 2020 and at the June Community Visioning forums. The AIA-hosted stakeholder workshop included 62 attendees representing key district organizational and institutional stakeholders. The meeting agenda consisted of opening remarks, four virtual breakout rooms, and ended with a final wrap up. Following this meeting, the AIA design and planning experts spent the weekend developing recommendations which were reported back to the community during the Monday, July 26th public webinar.

The AIA Report: *The Palm District: Austin's Cultural Hub*

The AIA Teams finding were published in a report, *The Palm District: Austin's Cultural Hub*. This is available at the Palm District Planning Initiative's website: <https://www.speakupaustin.org/palmdistrict>.

The report is divided into seven sections; this summary will cover the first six:

- Introduction
- The Big Picture
- Cultural Heritage
- Real Estate Analysis
- Strategic Considerations
- Now What?
- Team Roster and Acknowledgments.

Introduction

Due to the pandemic, the public input meetings were forced into an online format. The scope of services from AIA was subsequently narrowed:

- Equitable Transit Oriented Development
- Affordability and Cultural Resources
- Urban Design and Land Use Regulations
- Environment and Equity.

In addition to attending the June Visioning meetings and the July 23 AIA-hosted stakeholder meeting, the team also reviewed the preliminary online survey results. Collectively, this gave team members an understanding as to the community's issues and concerns about the Palm District. From these, the team identified key themes:

- Affordable Housing
- The Narrative of Displacement and Identity
- Cultural Heritage
- Perceptions Issues-Safety
- The Public Realm
- The Need for More Public Conversation.



New construction along Waller Creek at 3rd Street and I35 frontage road.

The Big Picture

One of the overarching messages from the AIA recommendations report is that the Palm District planning process should focus on the publicly-owned sites.

"These sites also offer the opportunity to demonstrate best practices and for the city to take leadership in meeting the needs of your citizens, particularly around affordable housing, livability, health outcomes and equity." (p. 6)

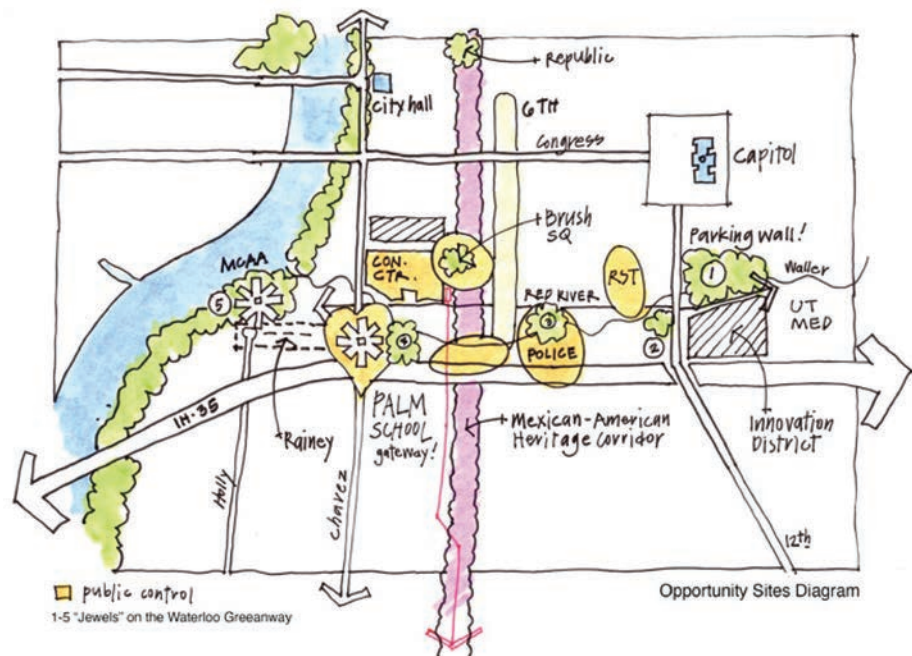
These sites are the:

- Austin Police Department Headquarters
- Brush Square & city property on the Mex-American Heritage Trail at IH-35 & 5th
- Convention Center – extroversion and mix of uses
- Palm School and Park and the Gateway to downtown at IH-35/East Cesar Chavez
- ESB-Mexican American Cultural Center
- The Retirement System of Texas property

The team also identified other key locations within the district: the Red River Cultural District, Waterloo Park, and the Innovation District.

Based on all of the inputs, the AIA team identified additional considerations to inform their study:

- Cultural Heritage
- Displacement and Identity
- Housing
- Safety
- Public Realm
- Move to Action – Concrete Results
- Need for Public Conversations.



Cultural Heritage

Community and stakeholder issues and concerns relating to cultural heritage preservation in the Palm District fall into five main themes. Mexican American heritage was the primary theme, but four others were also identified: African American Heritage, Waller Creek/Waterloo Greenway, Live Music Heritage/Red River Cultural District, and Architectural and Built Heritage.

"It's the de facto gateway to downtown. It should be magical."

This section of the AIA report contains multiple recommendations related to the identified themes.

Mexican American Heritage

- Use public art and urban design features to solidify the area's Mexican American identity. Public art is an excellent way to interpret history in the built environment and create or reinforce a sense of place.
- Partner with the Tejano Trails, the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor, and other nonprofit partners to install new interpretive signage projects throughout the Palm District, especially around the Palm School and Park, ESB-MACC, and the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor, including Republic Square and Brush Square.
- Develop and Implement the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor. The proposed cultural corridor will run along 5th Street between Republic Square just west of the Palm District and Plaza Saltillo in East Austin. The Mexic-Arte Museum will serve as the central anchor between the two points.



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

- Preserve the Palm School and Park for community use.
- Protect historic and cultural assets in threatened East Austin.
- Create a citywide, community-oriented Mexican American Heritage Tourism Program that amplifies the city's Mexican American food, music, culture, public art, cultural organizations, festivals, and history, and contributes to wealth-building among Austin's small businesses, artists, restaurant industry workers, cultural organizations, and historic sites.

African American Heritage

- Identify and preserve remaining historic resources in the Palm District associated with African American history, including the former Freedman community at the northern part of the district and Black-owned businesses along Red River Street.
- Use interpretive/storytelling installations to elevate the African American heritage of the Palm District.
- Engage Huston-Tillotson University, the Sixth Square District, George Washington Carver
- Museum, Cultural and Genealogy Center, and others in these efforts.

Waller Creek/Waterloo Greenway

- Implement an interpretive program along Waller Creek, as discussed in the Waller Creek Master Plan and in Our Austin Story: Interpreting Austin's Historic Squares and Congress Avenue (Downtown Austin Alliance).
- As suggested in the Our Austin Story report, the city should partner with the Texas Historical Commission's Undertold Marker program to honor the presence and experiences of American Indians, Mexican Americans/Tejanos, African Americans, and Asian Americans.
- Gather robust community input to ensure that the historical narrative presented is inclusive, equitable, and representative of the area's history.



Live Music Heritage/Red River Cultural District

- Identify and designate remaining historic buildings within the Red River Cultural District
- as local landmarks or historic districts, which will provide a level of protection from demolition or insensitive alterations.
- Create a Community Land Trust (CLT) for buildings within the Red River Cultural District.
- Create a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for historically designated buildings within the Red River Cultural District, Palm District and throughout Downtown Austin.
- Foster the development of the area's Tejano/Latinx/Spanish-language music culture by making it easier for spaces like ESB-MACC, Palm Park and School, and the Austin Fire Department Building at Brush Square to serve as music venues.

Architectural and Built Heritage

- Complete a comprehensive historic resource survey of the Palm District to identify properties eligible for local designation or national listing.
- Utilize Austin's local historic designation program, which offers the strongest protections for historic buildings.
- Create a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program for locally designated properties within Downtown Austin.
- In keeping with the city's effort to make its historic preservation program



more equitable, survey, landmark, and financial incentive programs should give increased attention to American Indian, Mexican American, African American, and Asian-Pacific Islander American communities whose stories are underrepresented on local, state, and national historic registries.

Real Estate Analysis

This chapter of the AIA report is divided into two parts: Housing Affordability and Homelessness and Opportunities for Equitable TOD.

Housing Affordability and Homelessness

This part of the chapter discusses the need for more, denser housing which stemmed from repeated public comments that additional housing in the District is acceptable if projects provide affordable units. The author, Rick Reinhard, points to Austin and the region's growing population as a driver of the affordability crisis. This population growth is coupled with an increase in new jobs. As evidence of this job growth, he points out that in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, Austin gained 9,883 new jobs from company relocations from places such as New York and Silicon Valley. Although Austin's population grew by an impressive 24% between 2010 and 2021, the Palm District's grew by 92.9%, largely driven by development in the Rainey Street neighborhood. It also worth noting that the household sizes in the District in 2021 are significantly smaller than Austin at large—1.47 persons as compared to 2.37. In terms of median household income, the District outpaces the rest of the City. The median household income was almost twice that of Austin—\$157,838 versus \$77,296, with 73% of the District's households earning over \$100,000 or more.

"I believe the plan for this district can and should preserve the historically and culturally important aspects of the Palm School and Palm Park, while also making efficient use of this critical urban real estate to create more places for people to live, regardless of what their income level may be. The housing crisis in Austin demands that the city make living space for our residents a priority, and that this living space be allocated equitably across income levels."

Another measure of the District's affluence, when compared to the rest of Austin, are the average rental rates. In Q2 2021, the average rent was \$2,771, 73% greater than the City's \$1,491. The for-sale market for the Palm District and nearby neighborhoods across I-35 in East Austin also reflects the area's growing affluence. In June 2021, Austin's median unit price was \$595,000, whereas in the District and nearby East Austin, prices hover in the \$1,000,000 range for single-family houses and \$500,000 or more for townhouse units.

The author notes that the Palm District has an unhoused population and recommends a comprehensive approach to help them:

"Creating a clean and safe Palm District that welcomes residents and visitors alike will depend on the City, County, and State working together to offer enhanced mental health services, create new shelters and permanent supportive housing, and partner with private sector NGOs and philanthropic organizations to address the causes of homelessness." (p. 21)

To address the issues raised in this section of the chapter, the author offers multiple recommendations.

Affordable Housing Strategies

- Create a local funding source for affordable housing using Development Impact Fees charged to new commercial and market rate residential.
- Create a Community Land Trust to ensure long-term affordability of housing projects and subsidize land costs for affordable housing developers.
- Set Annual Affordable Housing Production goals, which can be adopted as a non-binding city policy, but allow the City to track housing development relative to its stated goal.
- Phase out or raise Density Bonus In-Lieu Fees to incentivize on-site unit production.
- Preserve existing affordable housing units.
- Measure outcomes annually through an up-to-date inventory of affordable units and their sunset dates.

Homeless Strategies

- Fund and implement the 2018 Austin Action Plan to End Homelessness.
- Partner with shelter developers to choose locations close to emergency mental health hospitals so that people have somewhere to go when they leave the emergency room.
- Follow national guidelines and best practices for ending chronic

“I live in the Palm District. I purchased a loft downtown to get out of the traffic. I enjoy walking, but in the last two years it has become unsafe to walk downtown. I am unable to enjoy the parks and trails because it has become unsafe even in daylight hours. I am constantly harassed by the homeless. It is so sad that our leaders have let this situation get so out of control.”

homelessness.

- Conduct an annual assessment of the previous year to measure the efficacy of strategies.

Opportunities for Equitable Development (TOD)

The Palm District, upon the build-out of the Project Connect transit system, will become a central node in the transit network. The Red, Green, Gold, Blue, and Expo Lines will converge next to the Convention Center offering opportunities to leverage nearby publicly-owned sites for equitable development. Six opportunity sites are identified along with recommendations.

Police Station

- Assemble key City stakeholders, prioritize public benefit uses for this site, develop a timeline for relocating the Police functions, begin testing feasibility of redevelopment as relocation of the police function approaches.

Fire Station 1

- Identify timeline to relocate fire function and evaluate need for public facilities master plan; begin speaking with music NGOs about logistics and feasibility of reuse as a music venue; consider letting the new Economic Development Corporation lead this initiative, process, and procurement.

Gravel Yard

- Evaluate site potential for new fire station.

Convention Center

- Evaluate physical potential for housing as part of the convention center expansion; engage affordable housing developers and operators to determine their interest in this opportunity and understand financing potential for the affordable housing component; contact Washington Convention Center to learn about their process and lessons learned.

Teacher Retirement System of Texas

- Engage the State to learn about its plans for the site and evaluate the potential to influence redevelopment as a key stakeholder.

Should these sites be leveraged, the authors provide a list of Opportunity Site Development/ Disposition Best Practices and identifies the Austin Economic Development Corporation as the entity that may be best suited for the disposition process:

- Establish and prioritize development goals
- Perform site due diligence
- Determine the best approach for disposition that meets the City's needs based on project goals and City needs
- Conduct financial analysis of proposed projects to understand whether developers will be interested in the opportunity and estimate revenue potential
- Conduct market sounding
- Establish project criteria and draft developer RFQ/P
- Issue RFP, score developer proposals and enter into exclusive negotiations.

Strategic Considerations

The AIA report identifies and discusses six projects in the Palm District that will have generational impacts and declares that these projects must be successful if Downtown is to be successful:

"But these are the sorts of initiatives that make for a world-class Downtown. Austin, even with all of its assets, cannot be a world-class city without having a world-class Downtown—one where people want to live, work, enjoy, and



explore.” (p. 26)

Innovation District

The AIA report suggests that Austin can learn from other such districts across the country:

- Houston’s Texas Medical Center <https://www.tmc.edu/>
- Boston’s MASCO (Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization) <https://www.masco.org/>
- Cleveland’s Health-Tech Corridor <https://www.tmc.edu/>
- Buffalo, New York’s Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus <https://bnmc.org/>.

The AIA report describes other benefits that the Innovation District can address:

- Clean/safe/friendly, business improvement
- District-like programs
- Special events
- Healthy-community initiatives
- Planning and real-estate initiatives
- Workforce development
- Innovation and entrepreneurship programs.

The authors note that care must also be taken as the Innovation District matures to avoid it expanding south to further endanger the Red River Cultural District and spreading east across I-35.

Red River Cultural District

The AIA report recognized that the Red River Cultural District (RRCD) is threatened by development pressures. Without a concerted and focused effort, the “funky” one and two-story buildings in the RRCD will eventually be replaced by towers in locations where they are not affected by the Capitol View Corridor. The authors make several recommendations to help preserve the RRCD:

- Strengthening of current restrictions
- Local historic designation
- National historic designation
- Transfer of development rights (TDR).
- Community land trust <https://cast-sf.org/>.

Waterloo Greenway

The AIA report offers three observations regarding the Greenway (p. 27).

- “Ensuring that abutting properties relate to the Greenway in an appropriate way—and make optimal use of it—is a challenge almost equal to that of building the Greenway.”
- “As such, the Conservancy will need to be opportunistically responsive to the planning and building of abutting properties, often entering into negotiations regarding development. We understand that design guidelines have been promulgated for abutting properties. When a community has a history of turning its back to the water, it is often challenging to get people to “turn themselves” around. Whether and how these guidelines can be enforced will be a top agenda item for the Conservancy.”
- “The Conservancy is on the cusp of moving much more heavily into a mode of maintaining and programming the Greenway. Green spaces, especially urban parks, can be expensive to operate.”

Convention Center Redevelopment

The AIA report makes this recommendation for the convention center:

“We recommend that the Convention Center leadership, when planning the new facility, convene an advisory committee of constituents from the Palm District to ensure that interactivity with its neighbors be one of the priorities of Convention Center design. In addition, construction of the new facility will cause major disruption in the functioning of the Palm District neighborhood, which will require significant coordination with the stakeholders.” (p. 27)

IH-35 Replacement

The AIA report recognizes the significance of the reconstruction of I-35 through Central Austin; however, it also notes that it may spur a “wild west” in land speculation and drive greater displacement in East Austin unless strategies are put in place now. The authors recommend:

“We suggest a panel in the near future dedicated to questions planning, design, development, and regulation along the IH-35 replacement.” (p. 28)

ESB-MACC Addition and Red River Street Extension

The AIA report voices support for the proposed addition to the ESB-MACC.

“The MACC not only commemorates the critical role that Mexicans played in the development of the City, but also celebrates the community’s current presence. The MACC also provides a key anchor in the Rainey Street District, a place that, through lack of protection, has lost much of its character.” (p. 27)

In the latter half of this subsection of the AIA report, the authors discuss the that the work required for all the Palm District’s various elements to succeed will be daunting and draining. They present the characteristics that lead to the successful opening of the Central Library as guidance:

- A strong governing body
- A wise staff
- Experienced consultants
- Adequate financial resources
- A commitment to involve the community.

The AIA report goes on to mention there are value capture approaches that can help pay for improvements in the district, particularly for properties that would gain value generated by proximity to the Waterloo Greenway and/or a “capped and stitched” I-35:

- Tax-increment financing districts
- Business improvement districts
- Flood-control districts
- “Percentage for the arts” legislation
- General legislation sharing increased property-tax revenues for the Palm District area.

Besides the methods bulleted items above, the report recognizes that the public sector alone will not have the resources to realize all the Palm District’s projects. City leadership should reach out to the private sector and private foundations to help with some of these efforts.

Finally, the AIA report recognizes the importance of the Palm School and Park to the Mexican American community, but wonders if the “Palm District” name best serves the other areas of the District:

“The entire district—from the Innovation District at the north to the Rainey Street District at the south—are not necessarily served well by the Palm District moniker. Yet the area does have a certain cachet; it is differentiated from other areas of Downtown, both as it currently exists and as it is planned to be.

- First, the district is meant to be livable and walkable.
- Second, it is rich in Mexican American heritage.
- Third, the district is a focus of Austin-area culture and entertainment.
- Fourth, it is the portion of the dense, urban Downtown that is connected to nature and health, especially through the Waterloo Greenway, LBJ Lake, and the Innovation District.” (p. 29)

Now What?

Prior to the pandemic, many Central Texas households were feeling strains created by Austin’s unprecedented growth, particularly the more vulnerable residents. These stressors were magnified by the ongoing pandemic and February’s winter storm Uri. As Austin’s current building boom continues, these same vulnerable communities will likely find themselves being further stressed and wondering if they can continue living in the city and that their history and culture could be greatly diminished.

“The pace of change in Austin is dramatic, and without concerted efforts from all sectors of the community, treasured cultural assets, community traditions and the places that have defined what it means to be uniquely Austin could vanish.” (p. 31)

The authors state that during their virtual interactions with the community that they could sense and hear “the visceral anxiety in your community about the future.” (p. 31). In making this statement, they offer the rejoinder, that, in so many words says, since we heard what you said, please listen to what we have to say.

The once in a generation or lifetime opportunities occurring in the Palm District are “only opportunities if they seized, and that requires consistent and collective action in the public interest.” (p. 31).

“To mismanage the growth and development of this area now would represent a form of cultural homicide. And it certainly wouldn’t be the first time it happened here. From an urban planning perspective, the history of the Palm District can only be described as notorious. Like other American cities, it is known for its treachery. The narrative of displacement and segregation is well-worn at this point, ingrained in the very fabric of the area. No citizen of East Austin could be faulted for expressing a healthy dose of skepticism toward urban planning today. One is left to imagine what the cultural significance of the Palm would be today if generations of contributors hadn’t been forcibly displaced by the planning policies of the day.” (p.31)

The authors end the AIA report with this call to action:

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

APPENDICES

- A. Online Survey - All Comments and Demographic information
- B. Public Visioning Forum Sessions - All Comments
- C. List of Board and Commission and Organizational Briefings
- D. Downtown Austin Alliance Place and Planning Committee Workshop notes
- E. Marketing Collateral

Online Survey - All Comments

Below are lists of all the comments shared by participants in the online survey's open ended question fields.

Which of these activities do you primarily do in the Palm District?
Invest
Look at it everyday, drive through it
Tejano Trails guided tours from the MACC and by appointment for conventioners

Why do you visit?
I live in Central East Austin
explore on my bike
visit project sites
Walking
work
I live here
I live here
Palm School Veterans Service Office and emergency social services with needy neighbors

Which of the following best describes what the Palm District means to you?
One of the few places in Austin I can experience Latino culture in Austin
Connection to west Austin
A place to explore by bike
Homeless encampment
work
a missed opportunity for significantly more mixed use density that has been significantly under utilized
A scary place to get robbed
History of the Mexican American community and its historic struggles against segregation

Magic
Talk to individuals who live or have lived or whose families were part of the historical makeup of the area
It lacks recognition and a collective feel, as other districts/features have out branded the collective Palm District area
A place to bike through
Work
A historical hub
What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the least?
No sense that this is a "district"
bike infrastructure is non-existent
Whitewashing of history and the sense of entitlement that older white men have (condo residents). Offleash dogs.
Lack of Housing
It's least because there is a lack of
Geographic size
too much traffic
Traffic
Homeless begging and threatening

Do you or your family have a personal or cultural connection to the planning area? [Yes or No]
No
MACC
No
No
No
no

no
no
I attended Palm elementary school
cultural x el museo y los centros de convenciones
no
no
yes
No
No
no
I would like the Palm area to be more pedestrian friendly and less focused on cars.
no
No
No
The park is a disgrace.
There is a disconnect to the businesses that were approved by the City Council to buy out the families that lived on Rainey Street and the Mexican American Cultural Arts Center. The entire area should pay tribute to the local Latinos who lived there.
Yes, we live nearby (East Austin) and went to Waterloo Park before it was closed for 10 years.
I've been involved with it as a downtown resident for many years.
No
I would like to safe and clean in my city and work place
I would like to feel safe and clean in my city
no
Housing. Active transportation. Transit. If we got rid of I-35 we could make the district twice as wide.
No

less cars more pedestrian. clean up the creek and all the overgrowth in weeds and vines choking the trees
no
no
Palm School is so similar to Wooldrige Elementary School that was on Seton Street where my family went to school. It is similar to Pease school, a great design. It was fine without air conditioning! High ceilings and big windows.
no
No
No
No
No
No, but I can see the museum out my window and I never see anyone using it. I just see people walking through for the trail. Might be a great spot for some restaurants or another condo building
Used to work in the area; have been in Austin nearly my whole life and know the area very well. Palm Park could be a gem. Waterloo Park is going to be amazing. MACC is brilliant.
no
Yes, I frequently visited and volunteered at the Mexican American Cultural Center. I also regularly saw live music in the area.
Yes. My father along with his siblings all attended Palm School. It represents a vital part of the history for many families who grew up in East Austin. The connection from Palm School to UJH to the old Austin High (which has been restored beautifully) is important to recognizing the reality many families faced living in East Austin. The Mexican American Cultural Center is also vital to celebrating & recognizing the history of Mexican Americans in our community. There are very few landmarks in Austin that recognize & celebrate the contributions of Mexican Americans to the Austin community.

I've been a homeowner in the area since 2008. It's totally different now, more touristy, but that's to be expected with the growth. The problem with homeless people is out of control. I wish the city would create more housing for them like Community First Village, so they have a safe place to live.

No

No

No

Watching outdoor movies or musical entertainment on the lawn behind the MACC

I live in the Palm District. I purchased a loft downtown to get out of the traffic. I enjoy walking, but in the last two years it has become unsafe to walk downtown. I am unable to enjoy the parks and trails because it has become unsafe even in daylight hours. I am constantly harassed by the homeless. It is so sad that our leaders have let this situation get so out of control.

Yes. Waller creek should be developed as a park system. Think of it like the Emerald Necklace of Boston designed by Olmstead. It needs to be well developed and connect Town Lake to Palm Park to Waterloo Park, and then have a connection through either Capital or UT over to Shoal Creek. Austin needs to very intentionally connect its park spaces and put massive resources into the development and planning of these spaces so that our city can be a leader in park design and urban planning.

The Palm Building is ugly and a blight on the City. It needs to be completely redeveloped. I feel that the "heritage" aspect of the area can be maintained through great signage, memorial, art, interpretive guidance/tours... but not through an ugly old building. We have got to think outside the box here. I'm sick of looking at this ugly building.

No, but had I parents or grandparents that got their public education in Palm School I would be much more passionate about it. Legions of small businesses were launched in East Austin as a result of the education children received at Palm School. It's legacy can't be understated and it should be memorialized in some way that provides a historical context for Austinites at large.

I lived in the area for a long time and advocated on behalf of the Waller Creek chain of parks!

No. It would be cool to see murals painted on the building honoring Latino figures from the community painted by local artists. No more "anytown USA" condos that lack the personality of this city.

I am sad to see this planning effort is physically limited to what has been historically a barrier: I-35. Sadly limited by borders defined in a resolution, this is unintentionally reinforcing the barrier and the equity issues that come along with it.

Family tie to the Palm family.

Own businesses there

No

no. I would love to see it easier to get between downtown and east Austin in a way that feels safer and more natural.

I used to live in the area. But one of my family members (I did not) felt unsafe being solicited by homeless people.

I live here

Am a Tejana, but not a native Austinite, worked in East Austin and know how it feels to loose your neighborhood. Would like to help preserve the Mexican-American history and contributions to Austin.
East Austin

I attended the second Palm School in South Austin when it was relatively new. There was a permanent exhibit about the history of the school's namesake on display in the second school which is where I learned the history of the site. Ever since I have love to visit the original location of Palm School to connect with the history of the site and the larger Austin community.

No

I've lived here for 6 years. I own my condo. The trash, the poorly maintained parks and sidewalks, and the homeless all make it hard to live here. The creek walk is one of the best things here, but it's been abandoned to the homeless and the weeds. Planning all centers around tourists and conventions and SXSW and big events, not quality of life. Expansion of the convention center will kill the last of the flow and connections. Losing the good restaurants like Carmelo's and Chez Nous.

This district should have dense housing and a wealth of transit options being downtown. Give people the option to live, work or play without needing to use their car.

Yes, live nearby

i have lived on rainey, own property on rainey and plan to live on rainey in the near future
My entire family lived there and went to Palm shool
No
No
I would like to see space in this area used for affordable housing, particularly around the Palm School itself, which can still be preserved. It is a great location for public transportation and walkability. If you do not set aside some development for low income people you are going to end up with a monochromatic downtown. It is peverse to say you are honoring the cultural legacy of the former residents while at the same time kicking them out. Affordable housing should be the top priority, do not waste the space that is still available.
No
Own in the area
No
Yes. We live in the planning area
No. We need more affordable housing in this area. Need to clean up green spaces & move unhoused campers out.
No
Build housing and upzone. That's what downtown should be if this city is to stay affordable and friendly
Yes
This area is currently poorly planned. There is too much automobile traffic and not enough walkability. The creek is currently inaccessible in most areas. Palm Park is right on the freeway and is not enjoyable to visit. Rainey Street is a mess and deserves a dedicated public parking garage on the site of the muddy surface lot next to IHOP. Palm School and Park should be developed into high density public housing with on site health services.
No
no

No
My husband attended Palm School and played in Waller Creek. I've been gathering historic research about the Mexican and Tejano communities that used to be downtown and were forced east of East Avenue in the early 1900s for the Tejano Trails project, part of the City's Urban Trails program.
Yes, I live on Rainey Street, and would like to see more public transportation and the difficulty of driving down Rainey Street improved. Also greatly enjoy the paths along the river and would not want to develop the natural areas.
This area needs to be preserved amid development that has already taken so much from the historical ties to my Mexican-American community. My dad and many relatives attended Palm School and live in East Austin from the 1940s to today.
No
I am a frequent visitor to certain of the planning area
Yes, live there
No
No build something that contributes to the tax base not another empty city govt building
Yes -- I had regular work meetings in Palm School as a Travis County employee. I believe it is imperative for this group to remember that Palm School is NOT owned by the City of Austin. It is a valued asset of Travis County, bought for millions of dollars decades ago by the county from AISD. It is ridiculous and disrespectful to act as though this decision-making related to PS is in the hands of City Hall and that it should just be handed over without regard to history or financial investment by the Travis County taxpayers. Play ball. Travis County should be in the lead on everything connected to Palm School, and be a valued partner on everything within the District. The COA loves the millions of dollars you get annually from Travis County from all of the downtown TIFs but act insulted when they seek a speaking role in the area's future. Wow -- just wow. It never ends. Signed, a former Travis County employee who visited this building and area for more than two decades.

Gosh IT is a mess. There is Nothing to SEE INSIDE the school. OH, it is TOO EXPENSIVE to visit. NO Parking. SPEND THE MONEY WHERE ORDINARY CITIZENS CAN VISIT AND EXJOY. instead of impossible to use Trophy Parks.
No
Worked for years in the annex. Poorly built building it needs to go.
I would like the Convention Center expansion over the buried freeway with the park in the middle.
No
No
Yes I live here and it's gross. Disposable the city had let it get so out of hand
No
No
I'm 4th generation Austin, it was nice to see my family's pictures from 1930s
No
I have cultural ties to the area. This district was once made up mostly of Mexican American, Black, and immigrant families.
The MACC is the only place (after the Ruiz. Ranch) where I feel that people like me are why the center exists. Artists, community involved, caring about what other artists, playwrights and educators do, knowing that they are trying to reach and center people like me and my family - Latinos with a deep connection to Mexico and the United States.
No
Yes
Palm School was and should remain a cultural icon to Austin's Mexican-American community. The historic building should be restored and used to serve and commemorate Austin's Mexican-American community (present and past).
No

Yes- I have ties to the Palm school and the original and Indigenous peoples of what is today Austin. We want the Palm district to remain a cultural center and preserve Austin's history and diversity. We want the Palm school to remain a cultural center, a museum and park that serve as educational resources and spaces, for visitors to learn about the history of the Tonkawa and other Indigenous peoples, Mexican, Mexican American, Latino, Afro-Latino communities and more.

no

Me encanta la iniciativa de mejorar y p el Distrito Palm. Sobre todo me emociona la posibilidad de preservar la Escuela Palm para poder ubicar ahí un museo dedicado a cultura y legado de la comunidad mexico-americana, que tan pocas veces ha sido reconocida como factor de desarrollo y cambio positivo en ésta zona de Texas. La preservación de los edificios históricos como éste centro educativo es importante porque los edificios son parte de nuestro patrimonio cultural colectivo. Se trata del edificio, pero también de nosotros mismos. Las conexiones con el pasado brindan a las ciudadanos un sentido de identidad más fuerte, tan necesario hoy en día. Los lugares históricos brindan una sensación de conexión tanto para los residentes como para los visitantes; nos dan la oportunidad de sentir y mostrar de dónde surgimos, de todo aquello que nuestros antepasados vivieron, respiraron, tocaron, aprendieron y crearon. Todo esto es además atractivo porque representa la posibilidad de una mayor derrama económica en la zona derivada del interés de visitantes locales y turistas por conocer más de un lugar tan especial.

No

I grew up on Rainey Street and attended Palm School.

No

Additional Information

Me gustaria Mas peatonal y seguridad.

Se necesitan mas estaciones GRATIS y Seguros cerca. Q promueva caminar x el area.

El Centro Cultural México Americano es el ynico lugar que tenemos los Mexicanos para eventos y se ha luchado mucho para dejar este lugar.

considero que se debe mantener ese lugar por su conexion historica y toristero

con el MACC por mis proyectos artistiros

We need LESS public parking. We need more resources dedicated to pedestrians. Stop building parking garages. Start investing in our parks.

I would like to see the quality of Palm Park improved. Its current state of disrepair leaves it to feel scary. Especially with the homelessness challenge. Securing a solution beyond urban camps is a must to secure the safety and well being of the homeless AND not homeless. The area feels scary which lessens desire to work there and visit there. Tourism is essential for Austin's continued economic stability and development and is negatively impacted by the camps. Better crossing of Cesar Chavez and improved green spaces around the interstate would also be beneficial.

Walkability, transit, and increased residential opportunities are the most important improvements that can be made here. Beautification efforts become almost easy once you establish a critical mass constituency that is not focused on car travel. My biggest complaint about the area as it stands is the profusion of surface parking lots and the absence of separated grade pedestrian/cycling paths in some areas. I'd also say that protected non-motor-vehicle passageways crossing TXDOT's nightmarish interstate are very important as well.

This part of the city is an embarrassment to the city's inability to steward a public property properly. Many other cities in the US would have already figured out how to make this area amazing. Not Austin.

Stop approving residential high rises on rainy st. It is starting to lose its identity and uniqueness of former homes that have turned into bars and restaurants.

Currently do not feel safe walking anymore, also would not bring my children to the park because of needles and trash. It's very sad

The area is getting decimated with homeless. I can't step outside without getting asked for money. The problem has gotten exponentially worse since the start of the pandemic.

It's the de facto gateway to downtown. It should be magical.

To be clear: I said what I like least included Public Parking -- I am NOT seeking additional public parking. I think the level of parking garages DEGRADES the experience of the district.

Safety and cleanliness with the current homeless situation has worsened dramatically and needs to be the City's first step to ensuring it's a safe, welcoming place for residents and visitors.

The area is seen as a great connection to public transportation, where in reality the area is not broadly served aside from the rail station. A free circulator from Rainey to 6th to Red River would help alleviate some of the car/uber/lyft traffic experienced at night.

I believe the plan for this district can and should preserve the historically and culturally important aspects of the Palm School and Palm Park, while also making efficient use of this critical urban real estate to create more places for people to live, regardless of what their income level may be. The housing crisis in Austin demands that the city make living space for our residents a priority, and that this living space be allocated equitably across income levels. There is no reason that this goal need be in tension with preserving the important history of the site, as is evident from Travis County's already-existing plan.

I would like to see public land in this area, especially the historic Palm School property, be developed into affordable housing. This is possible without impacting the historic school. Housing people needs to be a top priority for Austin, given the unaffordability of this city and the growing number of people without homes who now camp nearby.

I would love to see portions of the Palm School site be used as affordable / income restricted housing. This could be done while preserving the school, and may help alleviate the displacement that's occurring on the near east side.

I would like to see a small portion set aside for a park and the rest of the area developed to its highest and best use.

I hope this process is used to provide for many more people to have affordable options to live and work in this walkable, healthy place.

This area needs affordable housing to accommodate all the people who work in this area.

The Palm School property should be developed while leaving the original building intact. Either build subsidized housing or sell the land and use the proceeds for the MACC or social services. We can't afford to waste such valuable land.

An amazing location! I'd love to see how we can preserve this place's cultural significance, while simultaneously utilizing the space and maximizing density. I'd love to see a max height tower with a majority of units being income restricted housing, underground parking and ground level retail, the original building preserved, and the remaining space as park space.

I would like to see a greater emphasis on walkability, cleanliness, and housing.

I would like to see part of the Palm School property used for high density affordable housing.

The city-owned land where the Palm School is represents a great opportunity to build more housing while preserving the existing building and Palm Park. I would encourage the city to utilize this land for as much high-density affordable housing as feasible.

Can we install cameras for safety?

.

I would love to see the park land in this area further developed and maintained so people can make better use of it. The trail could be very nice but is currently not well taken care of.

1. TOO EXPENSIVE TO VISIT.

2. TOO time consumint to visit,

if using bus.

3. TOO EXPENSIVE. fotr such a limited use trophy park.

4 SPEND THE MONEY WHERE PEOPLE LIVE AND CAN USE IT WHITHOUR REASONABLE EFFORT.

ie local parks.

4. The old school. There is nothing ot see insid ethe building that relates to school (a few pictures).

Austin is NOT new york city nor oregon. Make life better for people who LIVE here.

I would like a safer way for pedestrians, bikes, and scooters to cross Cesar Chavez at Red River.

Please focus on walkability, transit options, nature, and safety.

Walkability, safety, cleanliness. I would like to relax with friends at local restaurants without concern.

We need to preserve the culture! I would like to see Palm School become a museum along with Palm Park. Also, it would be great for the district to include the 5th street historic corridor.

Me encantaria poder tener mas puntos que impulsen y difundan la historia Hispana de nuestra ciudad

Me encanta la iniciativa de mejorar y preservar el Distrito Palm. Sobre todo me emociona la posibilidad de preservar la Escuela Palm para poder ubicar ahí un museo dedicado a cultura y legado de la comunidad mexico-americana, que tan pocas veces ha sido reconocida como factor de desarrollo y cambio positivo en ésta zona de Texas.

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Los lugares históricos brindan una sensación de conexión tanto para los residentes como para los visitantes; nos dan la oportunidad de sentir y mostrar de dónde surgimos, de todo aquello que nuestros antepasados vivieron, respiraron, tocaron, aprendieron y crearon. Todo ésto es además atractivo porque representa la posibilidad de una mayor derrama económica en la zona derivada del interés de visitantes locales y turistas por conocer más de un lugar tan especial.

The area has historical significance for Mexican Americans and the Palm building should be preserved and serve as a history and museum.

I would like for the City of Austin to make an effort to stop further gentrification of the historic Palm/ Rainey St. area and to allow our artists to design a huge mural to reflect our history here in Austin.

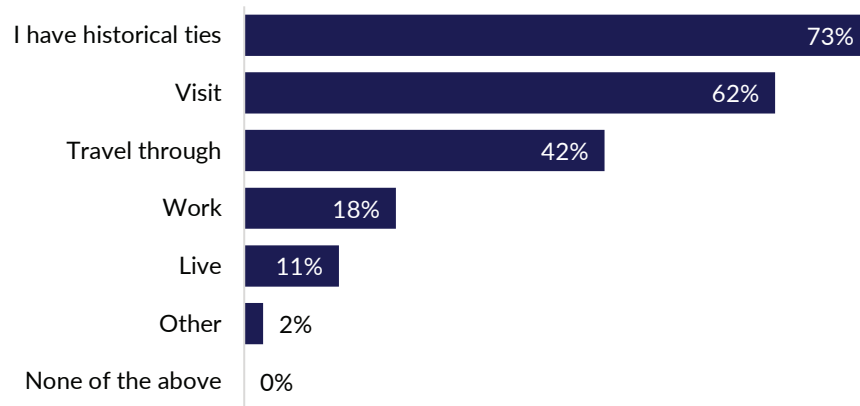
Me gustaría que se conservara este distrito para una área latina en la que podamos asistir más visitar y disfrutar

Me gustaría que no se pierda lo poco que tenemos por rescatar,que se de un enfoque más grande(importancia)que difundas las actividades que hay se realizan para que más gente sepa y puedan asistir y participar,que haya transporte para poder llegar al lugar,se pueden implementar rutas para que la gente que quiera asistir pueda hacerlo y tenga paseos familiares,más estacionamientos y que no sean caros para que la gente pueda asistir en sus autos

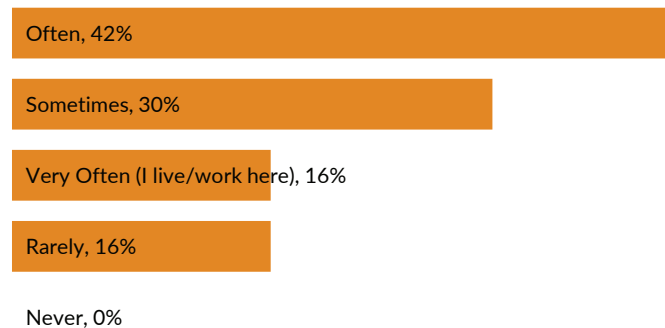
Online Survey - Family Ties Segment Responses

The following charts represent answers from the segment of the survey respondents that identified as having family connections in the Palm District Planning area.

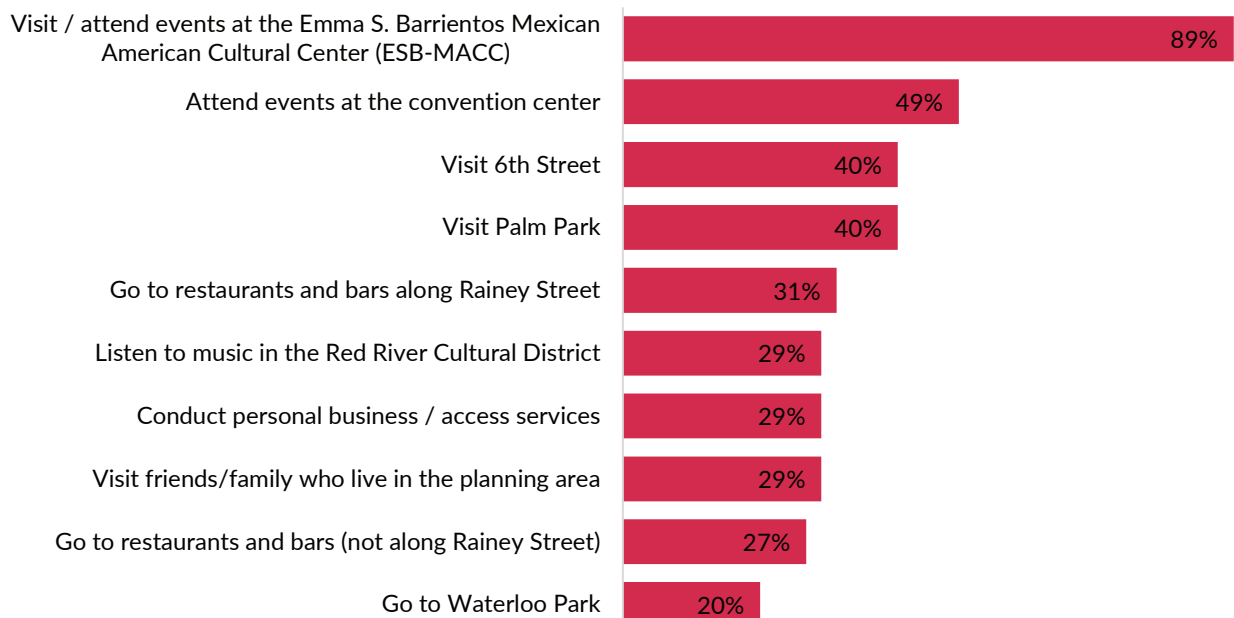
Which of these activities do you primarily do in the Palm District?



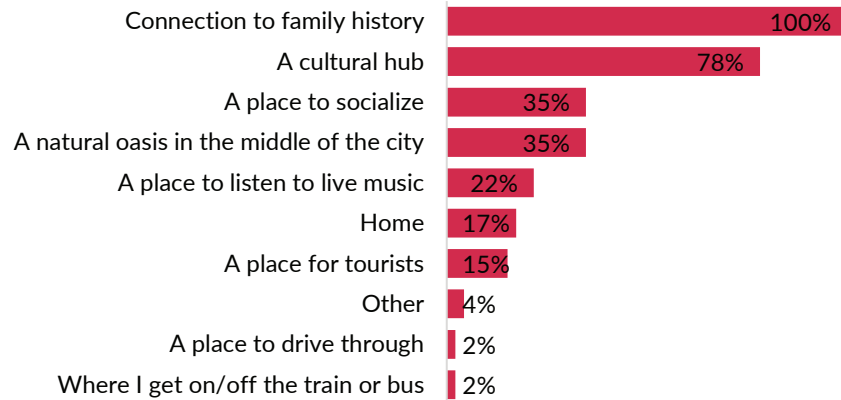
How often do you visit?



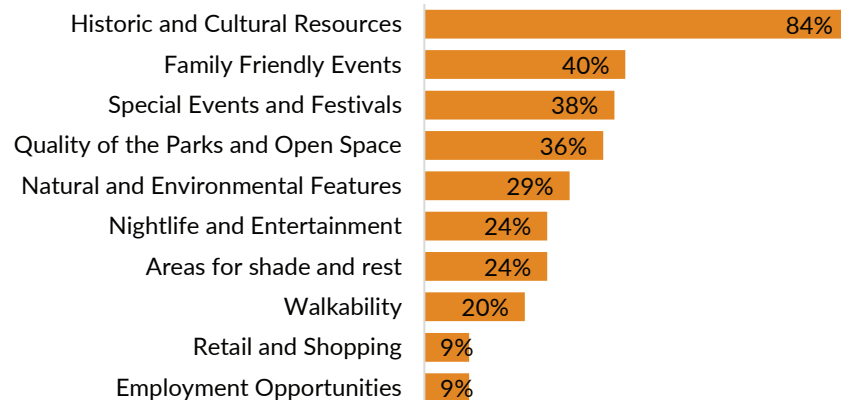
Why do you visit?



Which of the following best describes what the Palm District means to you?



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

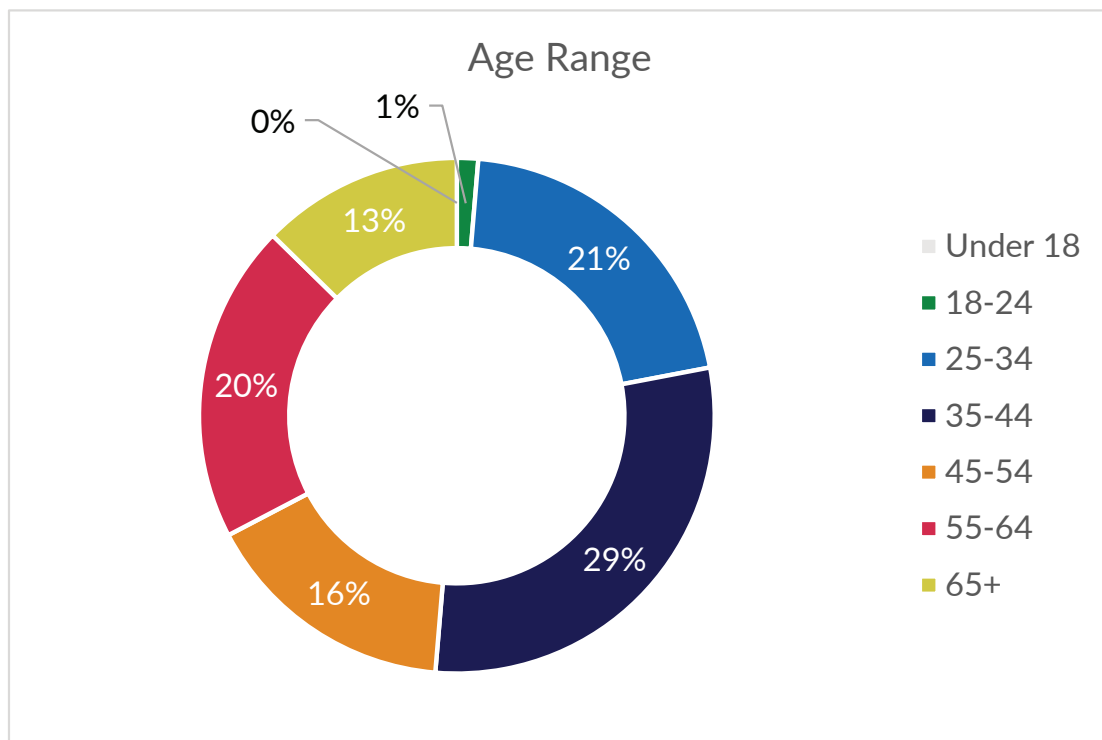
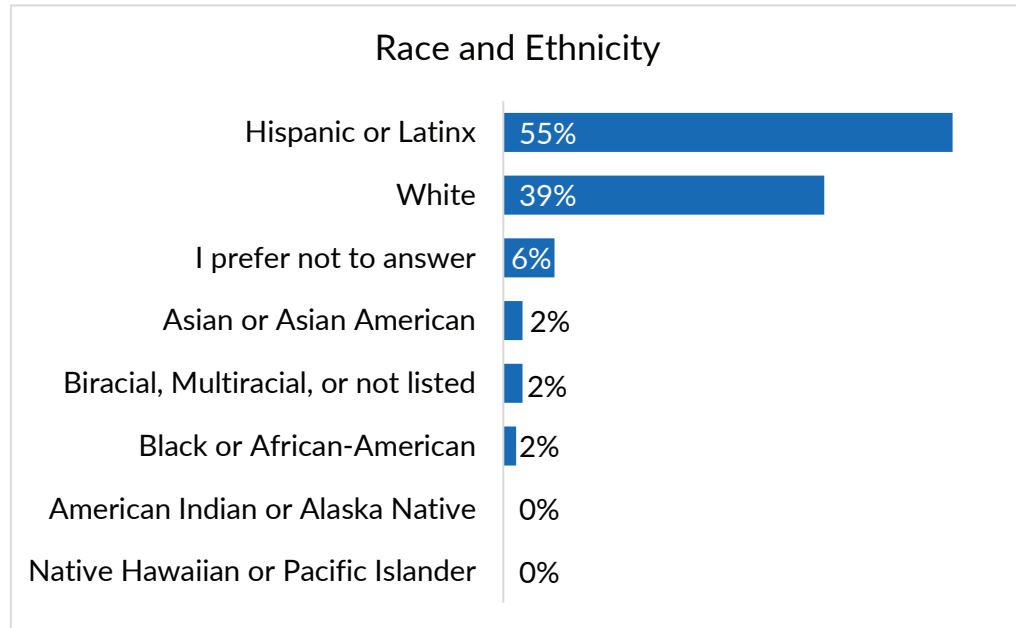


What three aspects of the Palm District do you like the least?

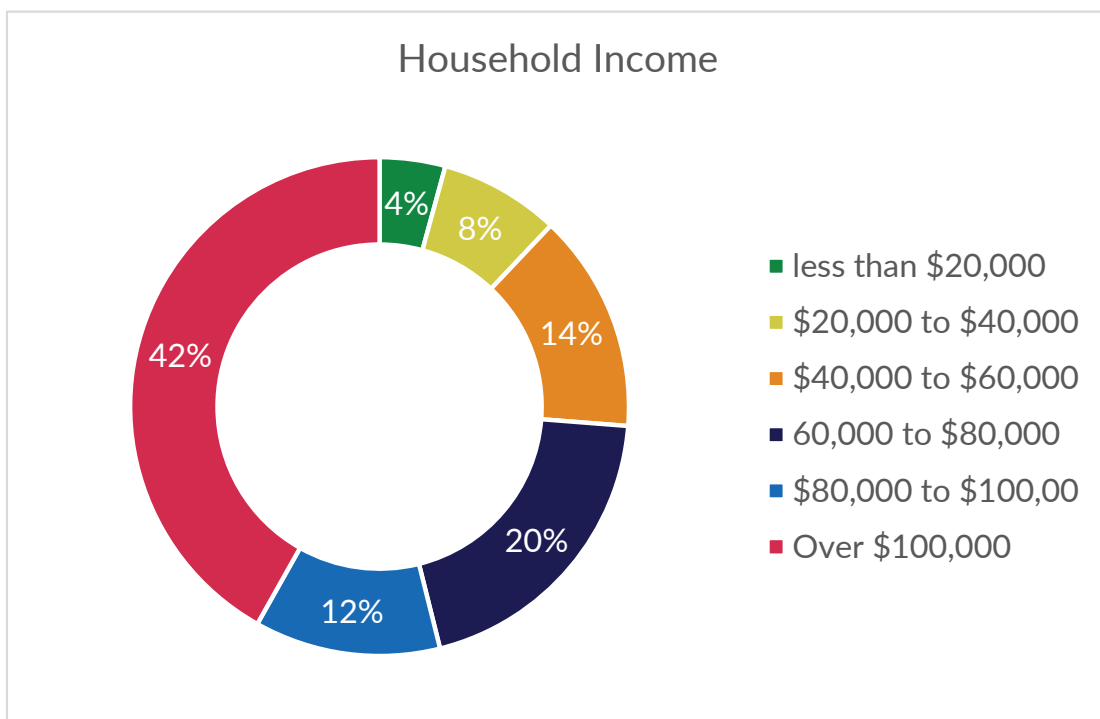
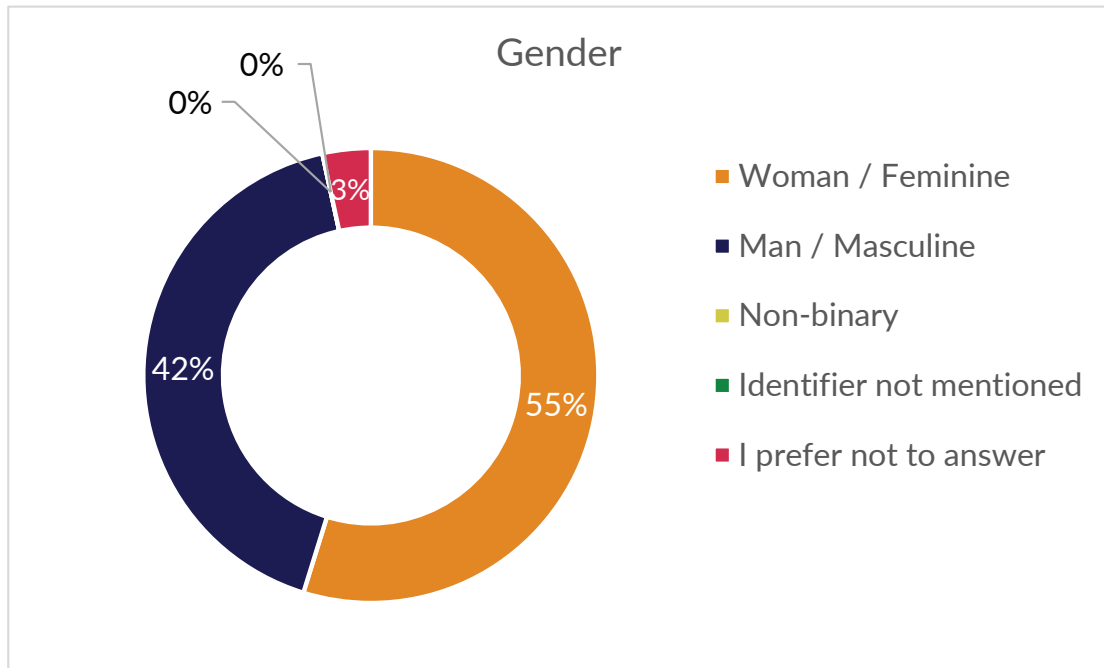


Online Survey - Demographics

Below are the demographics of the 336 unique respondents to the online survey that was open from May 2021 to November 2021.



Online Survey - Participant Demographics



Public Visioning Forum Sessions 1 & 2 - All Comments

Staff hosted virtual community visioning forums on the morning of June 15th and the evening June 16th, 2021. Following the presentation, participants were assigned to Zoom breakout rooms. Each room had a staff facilitator and a note taker. Participants were given 15 minutes each to discuss the following questions:

- Thinking about the context of the presentation and your personal experience, what things do you appreciate most about the Palm District PAST or PRESENT? What gives life? What is the best?
- Thinking about what we appreciate most about the past and present within the Palm District, let's consider, what might be? What is the world calling for? (Let's dream big, sky is the limit, nothing is off the table.)
- Considering what you know about the Palm District, let's consider, what SHOULD be? Co-constructing - planning and prioritizing space and ideas that would work well. What should the priorities be for the Palm District? What makes the most sense for the future of the District?

The note takers recorded 372 comments. A summary of the event is in Section 2. The full comments are in the follow pages categorized by topic:

- The Planning Process/COA
- History and Culture
- Placemaking
- Transit and Mobility
- Parks and Open Space
- IH 35
- Equity and INclusion
- Live Music and Entertainment
- Infrastructure
- Safety and Homelessness
- Assorted

The comments below related to the Palm District Planning Initiative Process and the City of Austin.

PLANNING-COA
Only rich people want to put up with challenges of COA. People who are marginalized aren't going to go up against the COA
Structure in place to have the conversation going. Where did the money go that is for the districts. City of Austin needs to play nice. Try building a building. Try to remodel. Try to get a permit. Why don't we have someone at city of Austin saying this is an important neighborhood, we want to keep it important
With the agency buildings, as they exchange on market, retain places. As the city sell of properties, how do we make sure and hold accountable the city to make sure neighborhood resources are provided, not just cash in hand for the city.
How does the city of Austin incentivize putting cultural resources back if they are sold
City/County partnership wouldn't require the 100 million investment. or a land swap
someone should present a real offer to the county
no one goes to the county meetings, ppl need to take an active role with the county
COA should do research for how other counties lead and contribute to cultural programs
public private partnership of some sort
city & county should be partnering together
Things that we need to recommend to the city: 1 lobby the state and federal to sink 35 Downtown and reclaim that space. 2. looking at the future, we do an overlay on the cultural resources on what will be east avenue so that we can reclaim that greater cultural space where there are art galleries and cultural spots Waller creek and palm, city owned buildings east of 35 should be for public use. WE don't want that space nearby after we save district. We need to look beyond 35 and consider it gone - look beyond to at least chicon, minimum
How do we consider redoing Chapter 380 to incentivize business to stay. Hold accountable the conversation that impact land use. How do we partner with the community?
we need to be very purposeful with the uses we allow in it
regulatory plan should support the economic environment

PLANNING-COA

we need solid funded plans

There are several assets that the City owns in the district, such as the APD headquarters, Central Health. In planning the district, the City should figure out how to monetize those sites for a better use.

COA should be behind us pushing for these goals, rather than thinking Ugh, I have to talk to COA

We loose sight and the district goals go away. This happened with the MACC - we had been promised money, and it never materialized. We need to reclaim that Money - Tovo knows where it is

If there is no funding to back this, it will sadly be a wasted effort. Other than 6-square there is not a funded district in Austin. If you don't have funding and a board, this conversation starts to dissipate. The city needs to put money where its mouth is, and not tokenize the people that live there

Money is like water, and it will find a way. COA sold a plot of land near the MAC. Saltillo plaza was developed by the Domain developers - they wanted to recreate the Domain here in Austin. How do these things happen without the City saying they will give property tax breaks and incentivize. Tovo should be coming to us with money, not us chasing them down.

TIF the area

pre covid i thought the school wasn't going to be sold and the city was going to find funds, what happened with that

city gets historical preservation dollars that can be used for

need to figure out financing tools to support the district

need to figure out a way to buy the palm school

priorities for implementation and going beyond priorities needs to be community led, which is what this process needs to be

City acquisition of IHOP for a pocket park.

All the dreams get crushed. Kids don't make money - why would people fund that. Until the city provides those incentives

The Palm Plan should integrate all the other plans in the area, including the Waller Creek Master Plan.

As a response, it needs to be socially just

Open to community involvement. Looking forward to what this leads to

B3

PLANNING-COA

a lot of micro areas within the district

echo that is complex

Mix of things - MLK, Red River, Innovation Dist., Capital, Rainey, Palm District - cool quilt of things

A variety of issues downtown and in urban core. The Palm District is a microcosm of all the issues Downtown faces in a small district. It is very complex.

palm district is really large

Some sort of oral history component should be integrated into the process, and the history should be told in a way that the built environment can't tell the history of the area. Possibly a museum or other way.

one of planning challenges is that the rent rooted in the market and we create pie in the sky visions that have no implementation budgets/strategies. for this plan to be successful market context must be included

tools for implementation, considering existing assets, future mobility infrastructure must be part of implementation

Need to go out and meet people where they are

Need to have more people in the current conversations. How do we get more people at these meetings? This will result in a healthy input

not a plan that's created for tourists. in process think about Austinites and Central Texans first. DAA plan showed how to welcome the local visitor to help retain the authenticity.

want palm plan to result in policies that make this district "change ready" so we can get projects going

opportunity for connection and pedestrian experience to not be such as assault (Cesar Chavez, I-35, Convention Center expansion)

There's a lot of investment in the area, and multiple plans. There should be sensitivity and solutions to the homeless population in the area.

how much can be done on the southern side w Rainey since it is getting built out so quickly

Palm District should include republic square and Mexican American Heritage Corridor

keeping things the way they are is sometimes exactly what needs to happen

Austin was under 280000 people what needs to be accepted is how much its grown. it wasn't when I got here and a large city needs certain characteristics. we cannot keep thinking of Austin as a village

PLANNING-COA

branding should be cohesive

theme of innovation - how are we being innovative in our approach and planning? Repair past harms, make creative and thoughtful use of downtown, cherished land along the lake, transit stations...has to do a lot of things. Big opportunity and so much that could happen. As connected, inclusive and welcoming as possible.

south central waterfront project and what the COA has done to direct what that will become. Is this plan like that? to locate where we need streets, height, placement of parks?

we will recover, and once we do, we need to be planning for what we want this to be

we should think beyond the pandemic as well

immediate priority: temporally difficult. we need to meet the demands of the day but also plan the district for 20-30 years out

It's like when the animals are becoming extinct and then people try to protect them

interpretative plans that speak to the history and culture of the communities

identifying priorities needs to come first from community members

there are a lot of concurrent City Council resolutions focused on this. A holistic approach is needed

short term opportunities to improve the district while waiting on longer term projects

Convention Center is a positive for the District.

expand the convention center and build affordable houses or other community benefits on top

convention center proposed expansion can be complimentary and shouldn't be opposed to the district

Everywhere you go, the convention center dominates and it's hard to walk around without running into the convention center. more character, identity, unifying theme that makes this area a destination (for both Austinites and visitors). Green spaces and events in those spaces will bring people.

engaging the east side of convention center so it's not just loading/unloading

Greening up the space as much as possible and make it more connected and accessible - THE top priority for this area. It's an island and no one uses right now. Cut off by convention center and construction. Open up the space and merge it into the surrounding areas!

how involved the consideration of the expansion of the convention center. its important for downtown revitalization?

PLANNING-COA

Replace the Police Headquarters with a park. The Headquarters feel like a watch tower.

Police Department is seen as a watch tower and it needs to go

Police Department building needs to go

HISTORY-CULTURE

Highlight the stories that are absent in the physical space in some other kind of activation.

The area has a lot of history that should be conveyed. The Palm School Planning Committee might have some information that can be added to this process.

A lot of the history should be preserved, especially as the district is a popular visitor space, it would be a great way to educate people about the history of the area. A focal point in historic preservation for Austin.

The Palm area should have its history be better known by the general public, including the Palm School.

Historical information should be readily available especially because so many changes are being made in the area.

support institutions around the district that will support this multicultural history

history of the Mexican American community

honor the history of place. the Hispanics- this is where Mexican American community lived and then got pushed further east. honor the Mexican American history along this corridor.

The big thing here is the opportunity that is laid out. History is rich. Present is unfortunate

the photos of the area prior to 35 were striking

Austin resident for 30 years Palm districts has a cultural significance and historical significance, urge that nay development that happens respects that history and culture before the development came in. preserve the history

Historical, this area is very rich in history. It has a strong tie to the east side

Where is it is so integral to the community

History here is good and bad, an opportunity to be truthful and acknowledge, opportunity for healing

The community was scared because they knew it was unsafe for children to cross.

So much history, COA seems to be working to incorporate/interpret history and character but there is some history not being talked about...underground/archaeology, 1830-statehood Texas armory, HQ of union occupation after civil war (all this even before the Palm School was there.

so much history - a real opportunity

HISTORY-CULTURE

The history is part of the larger narrative. it helps the kids move from a sense of marginality to being part of the larger history of America.

our schools do not teach this history and culture. they assimilating kinds of institutions. There has to be a breath of fresh air for the children. We need to build with children in mind.

People who are moving here don't know the rich value of history here

county commissioners need to help COA to support the community

inclusive place for people and celebrating the history

incorporating the past into any and all planning efforts. opportunity to tell the story of Austin from 1839-present. how has downtown changed. Abner Cook had house near convention center, this was "the preferred are" to live in at one time. Was also one of the areas that saw first white flight due to flooding, new layer of business and buildings come in (warehouses) that really changed the face from residential to business. Then Rainey Street importance the Mexican-American Community. Now it's an important gathering place for the unhoused. How to incorporate all that? Maybe a "walk through time"?

"rich tapestry"

People who are moving here don't know the rich value of history here

How do we preserve the history - a cultural archival space. Space for ceremonial space to help educate our young to connect with their heritage. Build with the future (kids) in mind - their ancestors in the area. As new development comes in, it's not being sensitive to the existing culture.

We don't want to get lost the difficult context that we are in at the current moment. This is one small way that this community can be honored. Not in money but in value, heritage, and justice

In the past, we talked about how it can be so situated that it reflects positively on a community that has been ignored, mowed over by gentrification. This is even more of a concern post-pandemic

we need to do something to reflect the past diversity.

one of the most racially and ethnically diverse areas in downtown Austin (Rainey)

For Mexican Americans, downtown where people lived were long gone. but Rainey still existed

Mexican American community has existed for a long time, but there hasn't been interest in the area before

HISTORY-CULTURE

should celebrate Mexican/American culture, which is central to this city

the Mexican American heritage corridor and republic square weren't in the presentation and aren't being represented. the whole history needs to be included

culture ties everything together, past or present, built for locals

RECAP from Jorge: we need to emphasize the existing folks who live here, bring people together to work in conjunction together to provide jobs for people who lived here and who used to live here. It may be too late to hold on to the people who have moved on, but how do we preserve these icons and make the families feel welcome to come back and feel connected. How do we harness the talent but help the community itself, and incentivize the excellence of arts and culture and earn a livelihood, how do we create a culturally coded community where people can come as they are and experience their culture as they come back to the district, how do we create a structure to have that conversation, how does the city play nice?

cultural preservation and history.

if we have to look at history. it needs to be honored and used to honor a Mexican American area

Travis County should support our culture

activities should be indicative of the culture and history

Cultural events are important and good investment for City.

The history is part of the larger narrative. it helps the kids move from a sense of marginality to being part of the larger history of America.

cultural preservation and history.

The city needs to be aggressive in helping us save our culture

The school serves as an important and powerful history to talk about the history of this area. Watching the city flip to be a white-washed rich person's land.

history of the palm school is interesting

presence of palm school and other cultural facilities

Start by preserving Palm School.

HISTORY-CULTURE

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HISTORY-CULTURE

Have the history preserved, archive the history of palm school, have a material culture museum. we need spaces for ceremony

the Mexican American community wants to preserve the building

center for learning or arts and music center

taking a good look at what should be preserved and also repurposing so- palm school at the center to become a functional and accessible place for the community.

Preservation is important...keep the building and the park

Have the history preserved, archive the history of palm school, have a material culture museum. we need spaces for ceremony

Reclaiming the school is important.

The neighborhood feel of the district that still exists is unique. It still has an historic neighborhood feel. Would like to see more of the area's history be told and conveyed

The importance of historic and iconic sites on the red river district for the LGBTQ community. We need to figure out how to preserve that culture here as well. That is where it started here in Austin

important to Mexican American community. the architecture is also important- The building needs to be brought up to code. As a historic cultural amenity to be kept alive.

republic square is an anchor for the Mexican American community and a tourist destination. Missed opportunity if it isn't included

Mexicarte wasn't included and its going through a huge renovation and should be included

Use to be a city, open air market in area where police department is.

celebrating history and places that are there now - Preservation is at the top of the list of priorities. Connectivity is near the top of the list as well.

Tearing down a lot of history...houses, schools like Anderson.

Austin has destroyed best Victorian houses...

Support can be preserved in Rainey Street and East Austin

Preserving the corner lot in front of the MACC was important.

PLACEMAKING

Palm is amazing because it ties together so many different resources and unique districts. People should be able to see that.

Interesting things about this district is it is very recent use for residential

first impression of palm as an outsider was "what is this district? I've never heard of it before"

visitors and locals - consider both users

the micro districts each have different needs and the needs aren't necessarily aligned. A lot of balance and conflict resolution is necessary to create a holistic/high-functioning neighborhood. E.g. the MACC/Palm school needs history amplified, but the RRCD needs live music and entertainment to pick back up after covid

placemaking and gathering for community to connect, an opportunity to think about the in between places for all users and abilities

things are changing a lot

The blend of old and new and amount of change is overwhelming, but also lots of opportunity

The boundary discussion itself is difficult. The locations of cultural, economic, etc. locations almost never end. The significant cultural and economic overlays make this rich

We should recognize the old and new, and preserve the old, but understand the new is coming with significant investment. Mobility is a major challenge, and so is the expansion of the convention center.

People moving through on I35 should be able to see somehow that the area has a lot to offer, so that they'll want to stop and see it.

Rainey is much more than just a place to have drinks.

needs to be a live work play area

some streets in downtown have evolved with an identity (6th, 2nd) but some of the streets in Palm Dist. don't have that yet, opportunity to get more overall streetscape character. Experience from Innovation Hub to River - green streets

downtown has really changed and evolved, so much more vibrant now with residents, etc. if we can do this right and continue connections it's going to be awesome!

Want the district to be so beautiful & attractive that it is the #1 destination for locals, regional people, US visitors, and international visitors; the MOST VISITED PART OF AUSTIN

we need some anchors that can financially support smaller local businesses and local culture

PLACEMAKING

Promenade. this can be an elegant opportunity to walk the space.

walkability, its impossible to walk from the MACC into the district or Rainey. Creating the capacity to explore and enjoy the spaces. Signage, wayfinding, history routes.

Connectivity and placemaking are top priorities

new spaces from project connect offer a lot of economic development opportunities

project connect will be both underground and above ground

priorities are compatibility, retention/preservation, tools for business sustainability, finding ways to leverage transit with economic development

activate the lots along Red River that are just parking lots

Faneuil Hall in Boston would be a good model for an arts district at the palm school

we should have experiential type activities

its overwhelming how many new things are going into palm

Encouraging older population to participate in downtown area. Create spaces that are inviting for all age groups

experiential and engaging buildings, more than just walking past them

think about a gathering place and building upon gathering. to be the most inclusive gathering place would be a feat. There's is no one place where everyone feels welcome. i keep coming back to a market place where there is food, market.

Improvement of physical space. Spaces for people, like public spaces. Spaces for wellness (Health and Fitness).

Use space to elevate the city and people. Health and Wellness test-bed.

Creating state-of-art, flexible space. Live, Work, Create, Entertain spaces

People and Pedestrian focused (Human-centric design). Public Spaces. Built Environment. How do buildings respond to people.

How do we create connective tissue? How do we create walkability for people to explore work and play, how do we incentivize the story telling, promenade to walk the space and be inviting.

the theme and atmosphere of a market. I'm visioning a complete market with music and dining in the evening.

Should be a critical part of the vision.

PLACEMAKING

Huge advocate of art.

There are buildings and structures at Palm that are no longer used the way they were originally, but we should think also about how people will use the space

palm park could be the gateway to downtown

we must acknowledge that Palm can stitch together downtown and the adjacent part of East Austin

palm school could be the arts focus for the county

county can remain owner of the building. no need for city to buy it

Where the building is, scaled down the concrete

build around the palm school a la indeed tower

Community - we have to build community. Having this be a community building space. So important

more art

art and culture along Holly Street - would love to see something big happen at that intersection

Art, murals that speak to the history, present and future

more public art (murals, sculpture)

new arts districts will fail if the businesses that are there aren't supported/don't feel welcome/are priced out/ etc.

Even when a space is made for a community, sometimes it doesn't feel like theirs. WE need to bring the community in and make them front and center, integral to this visioning to have ownership of the space

It should be culturally coded. Have cooperatives to create different types of crafts. Things that people can market. Every single day, not just on holidays. Just part of our regular day. Welcoming, culturally coded

Cultural Hub

how do you balance development with the necessary retention of authenticity/culture?

There are still standing homes on Rainey Street. Is there a way to preserve these homes?

PLACEMAKING

how can we retain what is there now and not just create new things

Have museums

in Chicago as you build buildings they put green space in the roof. do not let this happen to Austin and leave open spaces. do not let this area become a cement forest.

The district has the character of Austin built into it, but people should be able to walk and feel comfortable moving throughout the district.

could have a museum component in addition to artist sales space

we have a need for a local/artist venue to sell and show things

the county doesn't invest in art, but it should

Potential. Gateway to Downtown. Underutilized area. Connection to Waterloo Greenway. New Activity

Create a gateway to downtown, and connections to surrounding areas

Growing up in Austin the convention center area used to have more authenticity; now it's a lot of chain restaurants

TRANSIT-MOBILITY

access point along 4th street. an important way for people to access downtown

Connecting Palm School to community. Activate Palm School / Park Area to make it more engaging for public

Fairly segmented currently, increased walkability would be a great way to connect people to each other and the spaces

Walkability. Small-scale buildings at Pedestrian Scale. Connections to surrounding areas

People should be able to walk across I35 safely from the east side of Austin so that they can see the Palm area.

Disparate parts of the district should be connected, and the fragments of the area should be unified. The space should be accessible 24 hours a day.

massive footprint that should be walkable the whole way

Connection Opportunity. East and West I-35 connection improvement. Public Market/ Mercado

if done right, creating accessibility and walkability around convention center. Convention center is pivot point/ connection to a lot of points of interest in downtown. create opportunity of connection and flow - both outside/around the building and through the building.

People need to be able to move across all modes of transportation

We need boundaries for planning reasons, but we need to allow people to be able to move everywhere: UT, Capitol, etc.

I always say that I like to stay in my little town of south Austin. sometimes it's too congested. I would like a central area with more outdoor space with freedom to move around and meet people. accessible spaces that you can reach by public transportation.

we have to find ways for people to get to this area by public transportation so we don't devote area to parking garages. access from different parts of town

connectivity is huge issue

expand the concept of connectivity to adjacent areas

expand connections outside the district boundaries

connection/access/flow to help spur business to small businesses

Connectivity and placemaking are top priorities

better circulation and connectivity to Rainey

TRANSIT-MOBILITY

walkability, its impossible to walk from the MACC into the district or Rainey. Creating the capacity to explore and enjoy the spaces. Signage, wayfinding, history routes.

Mobility is a huge challenge in the area, and solving for that is critical for all modes of transportation. Project Connect will add transit, and Waterloo greenway make good connections. But Cesar Chavez is not pedestrian friendly.

curious about how the convention center/downtown station/Rainey have better connection with public spaces

PARKS-OPEN SPACE

Waller creek connects the area together; it would be an appropriate thing to tie the area together

the points where the waterloo greenway has connective tissue. symphony square where the urban and the natural interact.

The scope encompasses many parts from medical district down to Rainey district. needs to become a cohesive district. one defining characteristic could be the waterloo greenway.

if you could image what the creek was like it was a natural area. let halfway develop and bring some of the beauty that existed.

restore Waller creek to before Waller and Sam Houston came and showcase the native American history that existed there before.

integration of waterloo greenway to enhance and connect green spaces in the area

upgrade Waller creek into a river walk a la San Antonio

would like to see the place more open. I like the idea of a museum more open museum less traditional. combining a museum concept that could be useable and keeping the area more open along Waller Creek. make Waller Creek area more attractive.

Creek Show has shown that people are interested

Look at San Antonio...reactivated.

The building covers the creek and has destroyed the creek.

Creek is hard to look at in this area. The homelessness and concrete

Park Space. Recreational Opportunity. Past walkability. Past Community Library. Palm School, consider making improvements to enhance cultural importance

The activation of Palm Park is needed to make it the crown jewel of the area and to be enjoyed by everyone. A revitalized Palm Park can lead the way in the area, and right now the way the park is, is not honoring the history adequately.

struck by picture of palm park and i35. the ability for palm park to reengage would be great opportunity to be a literal bridge between two sides. if there are caps that would be an important location for an extension.

make palm park a focal point

waterloo park/greenway is exciting

PARKS-OPEN SPACE

MACC was built on reclaimed land

there is a need for park space on this part of town.

meet the balance of leaving recreational space on this part of downtown similar to shoal creek

DAA thinks that for downtown to thrive post pandemic the public spaces/parks must be activated to create energy to draw people and to support the businesses that will be in these spaces

MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT

We need to bring forward all the things we are doing together to emphasize the music mile to give it chance to survive the coming storm of I-35 getting capped and continuing to push people out of their area

go to RRCD a lot, went to 6th St when younger, now go out on Rainey

the broad area touches three important entertainment districts red river Rainey and 6th street. entertainment districts can be riddled with many challenges. music is very integral part of Austin. needs to be incorporated in moving forward planning process.

Historic zoning should be used if possible. All the buildings on Red River are part of the live music scene and should possibly be preserved.

It's much more than just a place to have fun and have drinks and listening to music.

Aquafest (Past) / Mercado space for small business owners. Bringing back live music. Inclusive Spaces to bring more cultures and create more diversity

red river cultural district also needs to be figured out; must preserve

palm district would be ripe for entertainment and arts investments. would love to see a music and cultural hub

What are you going to do when someone tears down a venue and builds a tower?

I-35

Green space that exists should be preserved and new green space should be added, including through the I35 expansion project (caps).

2-years of work done on I-35 project, can we work with TXDOT to get the highway lowered and capped? This would be game changer for reconnection of the area

huge opportunity with reconfiguring I 35. creating a park is great but cost is a factor. adding street trees would be great to create something that's missing. what can happen west on 4th street where the Red Line trail ends and how to connect it to Rio Grande

huge fan of burying i35 and making it disappear and putting a park above it and reroute truck traffic. i30 does that but its very expensive. bury i35 so that other roads can be used.

the portion that gets capped over I 35 adjacent to palm park could be that market area.

We have the ability to create connective tissue because there is a lot of agency land in the area. there are existing organizations that connect in from the other side of 35: merchant assoc. 6-square, etc. They are talking about the same things we are talking about.

Extreme efforts to lobby the state and fed to cap 35 to reconnect those communities

talking about fixing 35 has happened for a long time

fixing 35 is the game changer for dreaming big.

there should be a way to bury 35 and cap/stitch for parks

not familiar with how 35 will affect everything

capital express project (I-35) is super important to this, and it shouldn't be considered a boundary, but an opportunity/asset

through 35 project, East Austin could be connected to the district and Project Connect

The State is talking about lowering 35. Re-envision East Avenue as a connector.

Things that we need to recommend to the city: 1 lobby the state and federal to sink 35 Downtown and reclaim that space. 2. looking at the future, we do an overlay on the cultural resources on what will be east avenue so that we can reclaim that greater cultural space where there are art galleries and cultural spots Waller creek and palm, city owned buildings east of 35 should be for public use. WE don't want that space nearby after we save district. We need to look beyond 35 and consider it gone - look beyond to at least chicon, minimum

I-35 is an enormous concern for me. the avenue was so easy to cross and now I-35 has become a dividing wall. and now then the placement of the police headquarters is like a watchtower. we have to break that barrier and need to move the police station and provide an easy cross.

35 activates downtown and east Austin, and the sides north and east of convention center

connection across IH35

IH35 is a dividing line. Whatever we do with it, it needs to serve as a storytelling component.

EQUITY & INCLUSION

The spaces feel white and unwelcoming to our community. there are many that don't speak English or have a college education and they don't feel welcome because of the history of gentrification. People should feel free to be indigenous, who they are, speak their language.

Our families need to connect to what they have lost. There needs to be a serious serious outreach to the suburbs. The Mexican population has lost 10% of their population to suburbs and small towns, but still pay county taxes. But we can provide a city where they can stay connected. Urge the county to join the city to be a City-County institution. The County is claiming the residents aren't there. We need to fight really hard that government is together on this.

concept of receivership or reclaiming spaces used in other cities. creating a sustainable culture. if we don't put a stamp of preserving a culture than we lose the Austin that we love. if there is a way to give palm school and the police headquarter back to community with culture and arts

It is too late to recover the communities that have been displaced from E. Austin and Rainey. But so many of them are still in the county. Sustain these iconic places as repositories and interactive. But reach out to the suburbs to areas where people have gone to start new lives

Its important to note that the most important feature is to acknowledge what is existing and thriving on the ground. What are the communities that are already here. Bring people together to use different strengths. MAC + Red River Cultural District. Provide jobs, pay people to be able to live here. WE are loosing this opportunity as neighborhoods change so quickly. If we don't capture this, this process will be a sham.

there is some significance of the cultural heritage of red river going south to the MACC as that was an important Mex-Am neighborhood. there should be some kind of interpretive project along these two corridors that were part of the Mex-Am community. some sort of cohesive thought to recognize and memorialize the culture that used to be there.

making people want to be in a place is about equity and accessibility

welcoming everyone and making it visible/attractive is an equity conversation

a measure of success is achieving equity

we shouldn't have a district that is exclusionary to any age. a strong space will have activities/opportunities for youth, families, seniors, etc., residents

Creating spaces for people to connect (like Public Plazas). Activation of various spaces. Need a variety of spaces that is inviting and welcoming to community and tourist. Create a shared experience of Austin

INFRASTRUCTURE

Complex infrastructure - Waller creek is both asset and liability - the infrastructure improvements have been the impetus for changes in the area, this is one of the ways that you could frame the history story. Story of infra and land use.

we need to think as far forward as possible in considering new autonomous and digital infrastructure

even though infrastructure is new in innovation district, infrastructure needs to include everything (mobility, natural resources, resiliency etc.)

DAA has identified RRCD as the part of downtown that has the most infrastructure need

How can the infrastructure upgrades (Waterloo, MACC, I-35) help to increase/restore ecological function

we need to prioritize the infrastructure projects to make sure they all work well together

SAFETY AND HOMELESSNESS

There's a lot of investment in the area, and multiple plans. There should be sensitivity and solutions to the homeless population in the area.

need more innovative lighting, which adds a lot of energy and makes it safer

need to clean up panhandlers and make it more welcoming

Take it back from police and homelessness, make it for the Austin community again

Safety is important.

HOUSING

Ellis Marseille's community in New Orleans. would love to see if there was a way to prioritize communities of color by providing housing affordability

housing affordability for musicians. EDD has worked to create affordable housing in this area

the cost of housing has outstripped the size. we need to look at how we change that. it should be affordable to live here for middle class. architecture and planning is not going to solve that.

everyone talks about affordable housing, but no one talks about affordable daycare.

ASSORTED COMMENTS

Austin is not leading and we should be in building community

People need to be able to hold on to their properties. There is a sense of desperation

born and bred here;a major evolution in that area

There is so much talent in our city - all these people migrated and are masons, experts, and do amazing structures, and it is a waste in skills and talents in our own community. Incredible skills and talents that people bring with them that they should be making money from. We should support them. WE are supposed to be an arts district. Support them and this will only help fund the city

Spaces for people to learn about what people do in the area - A training ground for people

Austin is doing so much right now (100ft building, project connect), that it is important to remain authentic to oneself

realities and constraints (for public and private sectors) are really important

tourists are going to be coming back which will help create funding

national programs like "save our treasures" can fund things like this

downtown land is 1000-1500/ft, sq/ft 2 acres that's a million dollar site

fix the gravel pit outside the MACC; install public art there

knowing who is coming to this place is going to be so important (age, economic status, education). we shouldnt cater to a small set of demographics

people visiting Palm District should be areflective cross section of Austin/the world

downtown recently published post-covid recovery report, activating parks/public spaces and supporting small and local business are two top priorities in that. also addressing homelessness.

want the district to be flexible to allow and draw in people of all different types, ages, etc

we need to futureproof this district by focusing on tech, mobility, how information is exchanged

we need to immediately recover from covid19 pandemic

with new development comes financial challenges. how is the finance going to work?

Boards & Commissions - Briefing Dates

Below are the Board and Commission meetings where information about the planning process was presented.

Organization/Agency/Commission	Briefing Date
Downtown Austin Alliance Planning and Place Committee	9/10/2019
Downtown Commission	10/16/2019
Red River Cultural District	10/24/2019
Capital Metro (Staff)	11/2/2019
Waller Creek Local Government Corporation	11/4/2019
UT School of Architecture/Center for Sustainable Development	11/14/2019
Historic Landmark Commission	11/18/2019
Travis County (Staff)	11/21/2019
Design Commission	11/25/2019
Environmental Commission	12/4/2019
ESB-MACC Advisory Board	12/4/2019
Tourism Commission	12/9/2019
LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission	12/10/2019
Small Area Planning Joint Committee	12/11/2019
East Cesar Chavez NPCT	1/15/2020
Preservation Austin	1/27/2020

Appendix

Organization/Agency/Commission	Briefing Date
Mexic-Arte	1/29/2020
Greater East Austin Neighborhood Association	2/5/2020
American Institute of Architects R/UDAT Orientation Visit	2/25/2020
Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission	2/25/2020
Capital Metro/DAA/Waterloo Coordination Briefing	2/11/2021
DAA Place and Mobility Committee	3/3/2021
UT School of Architecture/Center for Sustainable Development	5/20/2021
Design Commission	5/24/2021
Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission	5/25/2021
AIA Austin Urban Design Committee	5/26/2021
Environmental Commission	6/2/2021
Austin Latino Coalition	6/2/2021
Red Line Parkway	6/3/2021
Travis County (Staff)	6/14/2021
Community Visioning Forum #1	6/15/2021
Community Visioning Forum #2	6/16/2021

Organization/Agency/Commission	Briefing Date
Downtown Commission	6/17/2021
Downtown Austin Alliance Place and Mobility Committee	6/22/2021
Preservation Austin: Advocacy Committee	7/7/2021
AIA National Stakeholder Meetings	7/23/2021
AIA National Recommendations Webinar	7/26/2021
Waller Creek Local Government Corporation	8/18/2021
Red River Cultural District	9/22/2021
Waterloo Greenway Conservancy and Downtown Austin Alliance	Coordination meetings on-going

DOWN AUSTINTOWN ALLIANCE

Place and Mobility Committee Meeting

June 22, 2021

12:00 – 1:30 PM

Notes

Welcome by Kevin Brown/ Chair

Palm District Planning Initiative Presentation and Visioning
by Stevie Greathouse/ Manager, City of Austin Housing & Planning

Presentation:

- Study area: 15th Street, Trinity Street, I-35, Town Lake
- History: Palm School Mexican American identity, original I-35 construction, Waller Creek
- Recent/Upcoming Transformational Work: Waterloo Greenway/Park Master Plan, Convention Center Expansion, CapMetro Metro Rail Redline Station, Project Connect service lines and stations, Brush Square Improvements, Innovation District, and the Mexican American Heritage Corridor.
- Existing Assets: Sixth Street and Red River Cultural District (entertainment and cultural hubs), The Palm School and MACC (Mexican American history), Convention Center.
- Next Steps:
 - o Upcoming design workshop with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) as well as new engagement activities (to be announced).
 - o If anyone has additional input, [visit the website to take the survey and provide geographic feedback on their interactive map!](#)
 - o There will be a combination of virtual and in-person events moving forward

Discussion:

- The historic/current photographs and future development renderings of the study area are very telling of the potential of the space. The array of various identities, amenities and assets is both the biggest opportunity as well as the biggest challenge. The plan needs to ensure that the various districts, features, assets all work together wholistically.
- *The most impactful image in the presentation is the historic I-35 boulevard. The top priority should be fully capping the corridor so that we don't have bridges and railings that look down to the highway. While the I-35 project isn't within the Palm District Planning Area, it is important to the*

transformation of the space. The Palm District team is aware of the proximity of project scopes is working closely with the I-35 team.

- *What is happening with Sir Swante Pool?* The Palm Park design was placed on hold, pending the convention center redevelopment. This pause in designing the Palm Park will hopefully benefit from the district planning effort. Housing and Planning department continues to coordinate with Parks and other departments to align these efforts.
- The Convention Center does not address the street and is not a successfully designed streetscape. If the space is being redesigned, there is an opportunity to reconnect and revitalize the streets from a pedestrian perspective, so that you are not walking alongside the blank walls of the Convention Center.
- Need to emphasize the social and cultural collision that occurs in the district through improved streetscapes with art and/ or storytelling exhibits. These can contextualize what Austin is and what Austin has been, especially for visitors to downtown.
- It is important to recognize the diversity of the various districts/assets and not try to force a cohesive identity to the entire space. Maybe there is a creative way to recognize each creative element individually, while also knitting together through the full plan?
 - o You can connect the spaces thoughtful storytelling and design.
 - o One cohesive element of the Palm District Plan area is that it is one of the few spaces in downtown Austin where you have past, present, and future – all together, simultaneously occurring – maybe play into this for storytelling?
 - o The Waterloo Greenway Plans are well thought out and paramount to connecting the northern and southern edges of the Palm District. It is also hopeful to see the efforts of the high-rise developers to coordinate with the funding and construction of the greenway to ensure the implementation of north-south green corridor in downtown Austin.
- Is there any type of protection for the single-story buildings in the Red River Cultural District (RRCD)? The grungy, realness of the RRCD is one of the main attractive features of the area, but new development would change the feel of the space. This is what happened with the Rainey Street Development – single story buildings were removed in lieu of new development and existing residents were priced out of the area.
 - o There are Capitol View Corridors that would limit the development heights, however there are not landmark/historic protections in place to prevent against new development.
 - o Maybe there needs to be an innovative design effort to encourage an aesthetic style here? There is not one right or wrong building type for the area. The street and connectivity issue is a great design opportunity that could develop an identity for the area.
- How will a Mexican American Historic Corridor come into the district? How can this be woven into the space without artificial physical items placed in the district, especially since the East Austin community has changed so much? What are you connecting to?
 - o Maybe connection for the corridor is historical – tie the history of spaces together rather than forcing a connection through artificial placement of physical items into the space.
 - o Maybe it is a technological corridor, via an app/AR, that features historical imagery and new virtual art to explore the cultural history and heritage while avoiding the artificial elements of the design space.

- The Palm School has the potential to be an anchor of this Mexican American Identity and if the school was preserved as cultural/historical space, it could be utilized as a center for galleries, markets or exhibits.
 - The Main Plaza at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio is a good precedent example to follow. The contextual style may not be appropriate for Austin, but how the space interacts with the river and urban surroundings is useful.
- If the City obtains ownership of the Palm School, they intend to preserve it as a cultural amenity.
- Is there any discussion regarding the Police Station or ARCH moving out of downtown?
 - There is a council resolution on moving the Police Station and repurposing the site. There is no formal direction on the ARCH moving from downtown.

Project Connect Updates by Amalia Carmona/ Planning Design Coordinator

- Recap of Downtown Working Group Meeting #1
- Announced upcoming July working group meetings and provided sign up link for those interested. <https://www.capmetro.org/project-connect/groups>
- Announced David Bodenman's appointment to the Engineering, Architecture, and Construction Committee, one of three advisory committees that ATP has formed for project connect.

I-35 Cap & Stitch Updates by Emily Risinger/ Planning Design Manager

- As discussed in the previous meeting, TTI is conducting an independent study of community concepts which we hope to review with the committee at a future meeting.
- The staff is continuing to work closely with CoA and TxDOT and will be co-presenting at the upcoming TxDOT meeting on July 13. This will be the third TxDOT CapEX Voice community meeting and will focus on the ULI recommended Caps & Stitches.
- A series of placemaking activations at key locations along the corridors will be implemented this summer to keep engagement momentum going for the project.

Cypress & Shoal Public Space Strategy Updates by Emily Risinger/ Planning Design Manager

- *For the next Place and Mobility meeting (July 28th), the staff is proposing a walk and talk site visit to the Cypress and Shoal project area. We are proposing the group meets in Republic Square, at Salt & Time at 8:30 am for breakfast/coffee, then walk through the the Cypress and Shoal project area with the Shoal Creek Conservancy, Ten Eyck Landscape Architects, and a local historian. The staff will be updating the invite this week. Today we're showing a sneak preview of Ten Eyck's design renderings.*

Attendees: Kevin Brown, chair Jeff Lovaas Sania Shifferd David Bodenman Burke-Kennedy-Savills Janis Daemmrch Stephanie McDonalds Joel Sher Kirk Kirkland Chris Jackson Charles Heimsath	Guests: Stevie Greathouse	Staff: Emily Risinger, staff co-lead Amalia Carmona Angie Tubbs Walter Gonzales Michele Van Hyfte Raven Birk Jenell Moffet Matt Macioge Dewitt Peart Raasin McIntosh Mandi Thomas Pamela Power Samia Burns Molly Alexander Gabriel Shumacher
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Postcards



Yard Signs



PALM DISTRICT PLANNING

Get involved!

Open your phone's camera and hover over this QR code. This will take you to the project webpage.



Your input is needed.
Help shape the future of the area.
SpeakUpAustin.org/palmdistrict



PALM DISTRICT PLANNING

¡Usted puede participar!

Abre la cámara de tu teléfono y apunta la cámara sobre el código de QR. Esto te llevará a la página web del proyecto.



Tus ideas son necesarias.
Ayuda darle forma al futuro de esta área.
SpeakUpAustin.org/palmdistrict



What is the City of Austin doing?

The Housing and Planning Department is leading a planning process to help guide future decisions for the Palm District. Your input is needed to help shape the future of the area.

Why?

To create a safe and welcoming space for all in the district.

To preserve and honor the history of the people and places that make up the district's cultural heritage.

To enhance and create spaces for music, performance, art and education.

To provide economic benefits that promote a thriving local community.

To increase access to housing available to individuals at a variety of income levels.



How can I get involved?

Help shape the future of the Palm District by visiting our website SpeakUpAustin.org/palmdistrict.

Look out for ways to get involved. You will be able to participate in virtual community meetings, surveys, and interactive exercises.

Open your phone camera then hover over this QR Code to visit the project web page.



Contact Us

- SpeakUpAustin.org/palmdistrict
- PalmDistrictPlanning@austintexas.gov
- 311
- Housing & Planning Department
PO Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767



HOUSING & PLANNING

Initiative Timeline

	2020	2021	2022
	Fall Winter	Spring Summer Fall Winter	Spring/Summer
Pre-Planning	➡➡➡	➡➡➡➡➡	➡
Visioning		➡➡➡➡➡	➡
Active Planning		➡➡➡➡➡	➡
Draft Review			➡
Plan Adoption			➡
Community Engagement	➡➡➡➡➡	➡➡➡➡➡	➡

REV.12.01.21



¿Qué está haciendo la Ciudad de Austin?

El Departamento de Vivienda y Planificación está liderando un proceso de planificación para ayudar a guiar las decisiones futuras para el Distrito Palm. Se necesita su opinión para ayudar a darle forma al futuro de esta área.

¿Por qué?

Para crear un espacio seguro y acogedor para todos en el distrito.

Para preservar y honrar la historia de las personas y lugares que componen la herencia cultural del distrito.

Para mejorar y crear nuevos espacios para música, presentaciones, arte y educación.

Para proveer beneficios económicos que promuevan una comunidad local vibrante.

Para mejorar el acceso a viviendas para personas de distintos niveles de ingresos.



¿Cómo puedo participar?





Ayude a darle forma al futuro del Distrito Palm visitando nuestro sitio web SpeakUpAustin.org/palmdistrict.

Busque maneras de participar. Podrá participar en reuniones comunitarias virtuales, encuestas y ejercicios interactivos.

Abra la cámara de su teléfono y apúntela a este Código QR para visitar la página web del proyecto.



Contáctenos

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-  PalmDistrictPlanning@austintexas.gov
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-  Departamento de Vivienda y Planificación
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Austin, Texas 78767



HOUSING & PLANNING

Calendario del Proceso



Rev 12.01.21