



# IMAGINEAUSTON

Vibrant. Livable. Connected.

## Year 10 Report Executive Summary January 2023

# IMAGINEAUSTON

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
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City Council Adopted  
June 15, 2012

Amended 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017,  
2018

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# Comprehensive Planning: Background

## City Charter & Planning Commission Powers and Duties

### City Charter Article X. Planning

Comprehensive planning as a continuous function

Policies for growth, development, and beautification

All land development regulations and all public improvement shall be consistent with the comprehensive plan

Planning Commission powers and duties **in Part:**

*Prepare periodic evaluation and appraisal reports on the comprehensive plan...at least once every five years after the adoption of the comprehensive plan*



# Imagine Austin is the city's Comprehensive Plan



## First adopted in 2012

30-year vision: “As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens, and where the necessities of life are affordable for all. “

Stated goal of “Complete Communities”.

Implementation broken down by 8 Priority Programs & overseen by Priority Program teams.



# A City of “Complete Communities\*”



\*Areas that provide amenities, transportation, services, and opportunities that fulfill all residents' material, social, and economic needs. (*Imagine Austin*, p. A-17)

# IA Priority Programs

- Invest in a **COMPACT & CONNECTED** Austin
- **REVISE** Austin's **DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS** and processes to promote a compact and connected city
- **SUSTAINABLY** manage our **WATER** resources
- Use **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE** to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature in the city
- Develop and maintain **HOUSEHOLD AFFORDABILITY**
- Create a **HEALTHY AUSTIN** program
- Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our **WORKFORCE, EDUCATION** systems, entrepreneurs, **AND** local **BUSINESSES**
- Grow and invest in Austin's **CREATIVE ECONOMY**



# Imagine Austin: Year 10 Report

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## Summary of Findings

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# Follow-up to Year 5 Report, the Year 10 Report includes:

**Population + Jobs Forecast:** How have we grown?

**Priority Program Updates:** What have we accomplished and learned?

**Measuring Success:** What are the implementation metrics?

**Looking Ahead:** What comes next for IA?



# Year 10: Population + Jobs

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### How have we grown?

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# Population & Jobs

Austin is projected to reach 1 million in population in 2023.

The Austin metro area was the fastest-growing large metro in the country every year since 2010.

The city continues to employ the majority of workers in the metro area. Of the 1.1 million jobs in the Austin metro area, over two-thirds, or 734,000, are jobs in the city of Austin.



# Population & Jobs

More than 60 percent of census tracts with the greatest development\* from 2010 to 2020 saw increased diversity in their racial/ethnic composition. These areas were dispersed around the city.

\*Those that added over 1,000 housing units

## Median House Price Changes

- Increased by 275% from \$230,000 in 2012 to \$633,000 in 2022

• Sources: Texas A&M Real Estate Center, 2022 and Austin Board of Realtors, 2022

## Rental Market Changes

- Increased by 50.8% from 2012 to 2022

• Source: Austin Board of Realtors, 2022

# Year 10: Priority Program Updates

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**What have we  
accomplished and  
learned?**

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# Compact + Connected: Successes

## Related Funding Allocations

**2016 Mobility Bond  
(\$720M)**

**2018 Transportation  
Infrastructure Funding  
(\$160M)**

**2020 'Proposition A'  
passage:**

- Project Connect operation and maintenance taxes
- \$300M for transit-supported anti-displacement

**2020 'Proposition B'  
passage:**

- \$460M for transportation infrastructure

## Implementation Progress

### In the last 5 years:

- ✓ Austin Strategic Mobility Plan approved in 2019 with 50/50 goals
- ✓ 30% reduction in total crashes with Vision Zero improvements
- ✓ 50% completion of All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Network
- ✓ In 2021, 30 new linear miles of Safe Routes to School sidewalks and safe crossings
- ✓ Corridor Construction Program delivering mobility, safety and connectivity improvements
- ✓ Colony Park Master Plan

### Upcoming:

- ❑ Northeast Austin District Plan
- ❑ 2023 - Equitable Transit Oriented Development Policy and Planning



# Compact + Connected: Known Challenges

Lowering the risk of travel-related injury and death

Supplying multi-modal transportation network to meet growing demands and equitable access

Preparing and leading in rapidly evolving technology

Having a financially and environmentally sustainable transportation network

Collaborating effectively with other agencies, organizations and the Austin Community

# Creative Economy: Successes

## Related Funding Allocations

### 2018 Bond Election 'Proposition B' (\$128M)

- Seven projects to enhance existing City Facilities with additional theaters, galleries, and arts education facilities

## Implementation Progress

- ✓ 2022 36-month Cultural Funding Review Process Complete
- ✓ \$28M in pandemic relief to the local creative economy
- ✓ 2018 Bond projects underway, first completion expected 2025
- ✓ 2017-2022 Only US City Designed under UNESCO Creative Cities Network
- ✓ 2019 PARD Artists Access Program launched with 60 residencies in five Cultural Centers to date
- ✓ Central Library and Oakwood Cemetery Chapel opening and programming

### Upcoming:

- ❑ 2025 First 2018 Bond Project Complete

# Creative Economy: Known Challenges

Affordability of commercial space, property tax increases, and cost of living for the creative economy:

- Displacing creatives at a rapid rate
- Loss of performing, production, and exhibition space

Disparities in digital access



# Green Infrastructure: Successes

Related Funding Allocations	Implementation Progress
<p><b>2018 Bond Passage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- \$43M for the Parkland Dedication and Acquisition Program</li><li>- Permanent preservation of 5,800 acres of wildlands</li></ul> <p><b>Food Justice Grant launched</b></p>	<p><b>In the last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Green Infrastructure Strengths and Gap Assessment</li><li>✓ Blackland Prairie Stream Corridor study</li><li>✓ Urban Forest inventory</li><li>✓ 2018's Our Parks, Our Future Plan</li><li>✓ 2021 Climate Equity Plan</li><li>✓ 2020 establishment of Austin Civilian Conservation Corps</li><li>✓ Floodplain Reforestation Program</li><li>✓ 2021 implementation of updated International Wildland-Urban Interface Program</li><li>✓ 2020 PARD's Land Management Program</li><li>✓ Rain Catcher Pilot Program launched</li><li>✓ Youth Forest Council</li></ul>

# Green Infrastructure: Known Challenges

More frequent and severe events will strain natural resources; mitigation is key to minimize impact to Austinites

Rapid population growth and urbanization needs to be managed effectively to Austin's natural systems and green infrastructure

# Sustainable Water: Successes

Related Funding Allocations	Implementation Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- \$500,000 pilot program for voluntary installation of onsite water reuse systems</li><li>- \$1M Winter Storm Uri support<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To income-qualified residents with plumbing damage and leaks</li></ul></li></ul>	<p><b>In the last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 2018 Water Forward Plan Adoption – 100-year integrated water resource plan to adapt to growth, drought, and climate change to ensure sustainable, resilient, equitable, and affordable water future</li><li>✓ 290 acres transformation of Lower Onion Creek in 2019 to an amenity - active and passive parkland</li><li>✓ 2019 Floodplain regulation updates</li><li>✓ 2020 adoption of regulations for design, permitting, operation, and maintenance of onsite water reuse systems</li><li>✓ Blackwater reuse system piloted within city facility</li></ul> <p><b>Upcoming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ 2024 initial scheduled update to Water Forward Plan</li><li>❑ December 2023 requirement for various development of water reuse systems</li><li>❑ New floodplain studies for all City watersheds</li></ul>

# Sustainable Water: Known Challenges

Continued climate change impacts on water utility operations and floodplains

Continued changing patterns of drought and flooding

- Drought Contingency Plan initiated in July 2022

Sustained flexibility in climate events

Future development must be sufficiently resilient to protect lives and property of residents

Continued development of the Edwards Aquifer Recharge and Contributing zones

# Healthy Austin: Successes

Related Funding Allocations	Implementation Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)</li><li>- \$1M Winter Storm Uri support<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To income-qualified residents with plumbing damage and leaks</li></ul></li></ul>	<p><b>In the last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Health disparities considered within key reports and plans:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 2017 Mayor's Taskforce on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report</li><li>✓ Climate Equity Plan</li><li>✓ Austin Strategic Mobility Plan</li><li>✓ Vision Zero</li><li>✓ Fast Track Cities</li><li>✓ Age-Friendly Action Plan</li><li>✓ Austin's Action Plan to End Homelessness</li></ul></li><li>✓ 2020-2022 Pandemic health response</li><li>✓ Pandemic &amp; winter storm food accessibility programs</li><li>✓ 2021 Breath with Pride Coalition</li><li>✓ 2020 Active Living Plan for Austin &amp; Travis County</li><li>✓ 25 miles of bicycle and trail facilities</li></ul> <p><b>Upcoming:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❑ Colony Park Health and Wellness Center (ground breaking 2023)</li></ul>



# Healthy Austin: Known Challenges

Individuals' ability to achieve better health and quality of life are impacted in Austin by:

- Neighborhoods & built environment; access to healthcare; social and community connections; access to quality education; and economic stability

Dramatic health disparities remain in Austin among many communities, such as:

- Communities of color; low-income residents; older adults; individuals with physical and developmental disabilities; LBGTQIA+ identifying populations; those experiencing poor mental health; persons experiencing homelessness; recent immigrants; refugees; and undocumented residents

Moving further from the city currently limits access to Complete Communities

# Household Affordability: Successes

Related Funding Allocations	Implementation Progress
<p><b>\$77.7M distributed to community members in emergency rental assistance related to COVID-19</b></p> <p><b>Project Connect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>\$300 million to mitigate displacement of vulnerable populations</li></ul>	<p><b>In the last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Nothing About Us Without Us Report</li><li>✓ Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Tool &amp; Racial Equity Catalyst team</li><li>✓ 2017 Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint &amp; Scorecards identifying 75% of new housing within ½ mile of Imagine Austin activity corridor</li><li>✓ 91% of affordable housing units built within ½ mile of Imagine Austin Centers and Corridors</li><li>✓ 2019's Affordability Unlocked development bonus program resulting in 282 built affordable housing units</li><li>✓ COVID-19 response:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 18,883 households served by emergency rental relief</li><li>✓ Temporary moratorium on housing evictions</li><li>✓ Relief in a State of Emergency (RISE) program</li></ul></li></ul>

# Household Affordability: Known Challenges

Need for updated land development code

Median home sales price increases based on stalled production of units in 2010

Significantly smaller number of lower-income housing units built than high-income units

Restrictive land-use policies and regulations prohibiting the creation of more housing and a variety of housing types

# Workforce, Small Business & Education: Successes

Related Funding Allocations	Implementation Progress
<p><b>\$15M ARPA funds to support existing workforce development initiatives</b></p> <p><b>\$60M ARPA funds to support local creatives, businesses, and nonprofits</b></p>	<p><b>In the last 5 years:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ 2017 Adoption of Austin Metro Area Community Workforce Plan &amp; subsequent 2021 Hire Local Plan</li><li>✓ 224% increase in median earnings</li><li>✓ Business Expansion Incentive Program hiring those with barriers to employment</li><li>✓ Workforce development incentive agreement with Tesla for recruiting and training pipeline in collaboration with Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Austin Community College</li></ul>

# Workforce, Small Business & Education: Known Challenges

Adapting existing city workforce development contracts to meet a coordinated need

Continued unification of workforce development efforts among contracted chambers of commerce



# Revise Development Regulations: Successes & Known Challenges

The Land Development Code (LDC) determines how land can be used throughout the city, including what can be built, where it can be built, and how much can (or cannot) be built.

- Current Land Development Code is nearly 40 years old
- Imagine Austin calls for updates to the Land Development Code
- Land Development Code update initiated in 2019
- In March 2020, the City suspended the LDC Revision Project and is not currently pursuing a comprehensive update of the LDC

# Year 10: Measuring Success

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## Implementation Metrics

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# IA Implementation: Status / Challenges

**There are 189 policies and 231 actions in Imagine Austin**

4% are designated “complete,” 1% as no further action to be taken.

Implementation categories are not easily understood or clearly defined.

With the way some implementation actions are written, it is hard to measure completion (e.g., general aspiration versus tangible action).

Prioritization of next steps beyond the initial years is not clearly identified within the plan.



# Year 10: Looking Ahead

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### What comes next?

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# Imagine Austin: Looking Ahead

Key challenges exist at the 10-year mark of the comprehensive plan:

- Affordability and cost of living is a primary challenge for Austinites
- Inequitable access to economic opportunities, goods, city resources and services exist
- There are urban development pressures on natural resources
- Comprehensive plan implementation activities need to be improved; the work must be centered in equity

The Imagine Austin Team will **in the next five years...**

# Imagine Austin: 5 Year Action Plan

1

## **Coordinate Imagine Austin Next Steps**

**Holistically.** Achieving the Imagine Austin vision and equitably managing growth in the City of Austin do not happen in isolation. *How can we actively address known issues to produce more equitable outcomes? How can all pertinent city stakeholders come together meaningfully to discuss needed alignment and priorities?*

1. Coordinate more regularly with IA Priority Program Champions and partner organizations to identify and synchronize next steps and ensure alignment of activity and priority setting.
2. Priority Programs will establish and execute an Action Plan for the next five years.

# Imagine Austin: 5 Year Action Plan

## 2

**Update & Implement Imagine Austin.** The Imagine Austin Vision remains relevant today. However, some of the aspects of Imagine Austin likely need to be reviewed in order to keep IA a relevant guiding framework for the future vision for our City. *How might we update and implement IA to speak to envisioning the future of Austin based on current challenges?*

1. Recommend alignment for strategic and long-range planning in the City.
2. Create citywide Future Land Use Map.
3. Update IA, including for equity, affordability, resilience, and sustainability.
4. Develop & coordinate prioritized IA implementation.
5. Simplify reporting for user-ease and transparency.

# Imagine Austin: 5 Year Action Plan

**3 Establish Equitable Planning Processes and Investments.** *How might we ensure: racial equity is at the center of the City of Austin's planning efforts? The City's investments benefit all Austin community members? Affordable housing and economic opportunities are available across Austin?*

1. Establish unified approach to center equity in all new planning.
2. Establish processes that achieve equitable ends for engagement with city activity.
3. Coordinate interdepartmentally to identify capital projects and spending decisions from equitable plans, or through needs identified with an equity lens.



# Imagine Austin: 5 Year Action Plan

**4 Update Development Regulations.** *How might we revise and streamline Austin's development regulations to realize the vision of Imagine Austin in an equitable way?*

1. Evaluate key land development regulations pertaining to disparate impacts on areas of historical exclusion. Identify options to modify equitably.
2. Determine a new approach to amend the Land Development Code.
3. Amend the Land Development Code to support the implementation of Equitable Transit Oriented Development.