



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** City Manager T.C. Broadnax

**FROM:** The City of Austin Planning Commission

**DATE:** May 30, 2024

**SUBJECT:** **FY 2024-2025 Capital Improvement Memo of Recommendations**

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### Introduction

The Planning Commission is pleased to transmit the FY 24-25 Capital Improvement Memo of Recommendations. Transmittal of the recommendations to the City Manager allows the Planning Commission to meet its [Charter requirement](#) to submit a list of capital improvements to the City Manager that implement the City's Comprehensive Plan, [Imagine Austin](#).

These capital improvements are intended to further the City's long-term vision and aspiration of being 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 and accessible to all"* (*Imagine Austin Vision*, p.2).

*Imagine Austin* has eight Priority Programs that provide the structure and direction to implement the plan's policies and actions:

- ❖ Invest in a compact and connected Austin
- ❖ Sustainably manage our water resources
- ❖ Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses
- ❖ Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city
- ❖ Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy
- ❖ Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin
- ❖ Create a Healthy Austin Program
- ❖ Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city

This Memo of Recommendations is organized by these eight Priority Programs. Additionally, the City of Austin is committed to the advancement of equity in all aspects of City operations, and equity will be a core theme of the update to *Imagine Austin* that the Planning Department is currently leading.

In the lists below, items with an asterisk (\*) are substantially the same from the [FY 23-24 Capital Improvement Memo of Recommendations](#) and remain relevant today.

## Invest in a Compact and Connected Austin

- Implement the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP). \*
- Align investments with the updated Bicycle Plan, Urban Trails Plan, and new Sidewalks, Crossings, and Shared Streets Plan. \*
- Continue to deliver Mobility Bond improvements funded in 2016, 2018, and 2020. \*
- Expand the amount of Vision Zero safety improvements to address the disproportionate share of people of color among severe crash victims in Austin. \*
- Prioritize capital renewal and maintenance of infrastructure that supports our mobility goals. \*
- Focus capital improvements and maintenance of infrastructure within areas that are intended to be compact and connected, such as Imagine Austin Activity Centers & Activity Corridors and Equitable Transit-Oriented Development station areas.

## Sustainably manage our water resources

- Review the city's resilience to extreme weather events and other impacts of climate change to ensure the safety of city residents, ensure the reliability of electric, water and other critical infrastructure, and identify long-range capital improvements to improve resiliency in an equitable manner. \*
- Continue to design and implement 2018 bond projects for Flood Mitigation, Open Space, and Water Quality Protection.
- Per the direction in [Council Resolution No. 20240215-025](#), staff is actively working to solicit community input and prepare options and associated costs of capital improvements or programs that would reduce carbon emissions, decrease water usage, improve water quality and water detention, advance the sustainability of City operations, and improve community resiliency. Once complete, support capital improvements or programs identified as a result of this initiative.
- Support implementation of Austin's [Water Forward Plan](#) strategies including:
  - Enhancements to the City's centralized reclaimed water system to meet growing non-drinking water demands in the future.
  - Infrastructure enhancing Austin Water's current water loss reduction program - focusing on leak response, leak detection through tried and tested techniques, pilot testing emerging leak detection technologies, and, through its Renewing Austin program, repairing and replacing water mains.

## Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses

- Support active studies, such as the Art in Public Places Study, and the African American Heritage Facility Study, to ensure programmatic and infrastructure recommendations are carried out in line with Imagine Austin.
- Support the implementation of capital improvements recommended by the [Austin Public Library Comprehensive Strategic + Facilities Plan](#).
- Prioritize and advance capital improvement projects regarding [Council Resolution No. 20220324-056](#) in proximity to the Colony Park Sustainable Community.
- Support the implementation of [park vision plans and concept plans](#) through parkland capital improvements.
- Invest in aquatic facilities as outlined in the [Aquatic Vision Plan](#).
- Equitably invest in the maintenance, renovation, and replacement of existing buildings and support the creation of new buildings in areas lacking recreation centers, senior centers, activity centers, and administrative buildings.
- Align with the Citywide Strategic Plan by promoting a resilient local economy that prioritizes small and BIPOC-owned businesses through defined programs and services that enable upward economic mobility.
- Support the recommendations outlined in the [2022 Disparity Study](#) to ensure programmatic enhancements are carried out in line with Imagine Austin.
- Promote access and equity on City procurement opportunities, by providing more supportive services to small-, minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged businesses.
- Support placing workforce development and childcare services in one-department to create a continuum of service delivery (e.g., readiness, digital proficiency, hard-skills training, and credentialing) with wrap-around support to create a workforce to job pipeline to address the workforce shortage for in-demand occupations.

## Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city

- Properly evaluate the impacts of capital investments to ensure the equitable mitigation of environmental risks across the city. \*
- Invest in green infrastructure that creates or enhances Austin's network of natural lands and other open spaces. Examples include stream and shoreline restoration, the construction of trails and green streets, open space acquisition, park improvements, community agriculture, and green stormwater retrofits. \*
- Integrate nature into the city by supporting, maintaining, and expanding parks and our urban trail network. \*
- Continue to design and implement 2018 bond projects for Flood Mitigation, Open Space, and Water Quality Protection.

- Per the direction in [Council Resolution No. 20240215-025](#), staff is actively working to solicit community input and prepare options and associated costs of capital improvements or programs that would reduce carbon emissions, decrease water usage, improve water quality and water detention, advance the sustainability of City operations, and improve community resiliency. Once complete, support capital improvements or programs identified as a result of this initiative.

## Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy

- Support the ~\$38M of underfunded needs for the construction of the Dougherty Arts Center Replacement project. The project is designed and scheduled to go into construction in the summer of 2024, but is currently being reassessed. \*
- Fund the value engineered portions of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Phase 2 Project, such as the children's playground and outdoor stage, estimated at ~\$18M. Phase 2 is currently underway, but the value engineered elements of the project are currently underfunded. \*
- Fully fund Phase 2 of the Asian American Resource Center's Performing Arts Center. Phase 2 is designed and estimated at ~\$46M according to the architect and contractor team, however, construction is underfunded at this time. \$7 million in 2018 bond funding is in place to be used for this project. \*
- Support the underfunded needs (~\$55M) of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center. For Phase 1, completion of design and full construction cost is estimated at \$15 million. Phase 2 facility expansion is estimated to be around \$40 million.
- Fund the renovation of the Doris Miller Auditorium (~\$40M). The building is reaching its end of useful life and needs a major renovation that can re-establish the space for use as an auditorium/performance center.

## Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin

- Increase funding for *I Belong in Austin* (IBIA), the City's rental assistance program that directly protects households from eviction, from entering homelessness, and from dislocation in emergencies.
- Continue to support and fund the Family Stabilization Grant Program for direct investment in families at risk of displacement due to unaffordability, as the program directly increases housing stability and economic prosperity.
- Prioritize future infrastructure investments (like community land trusts, funding local development corporations, land banking for deeply affordable housing, etc.) that support the City of Austin's goals of anti-displacement, ending homelessness, affordable housing (especially for households at or below 30% Median Family Income), creating housing in high opportunity areas, areas with access to transit, and social mobility. \*
- Support the rehabilitation of rental properties purchased by the Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) as part of the strategic land banking recommendation outlined in the [Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint \(ASHB\)](#). \*

- Coordinate the City of Austin’s capital infrastructure investments with AHFC’s capital expenditures such as land acquisition, development assistance, and the repositioning of publicly owned land for affordable housing. \*
- Provide funding for infrastructure in low-income areas undergoing planning processes, such as the Northeast Austin Planning District.
- Provide additional funding for current anti-displacement efforts, including the land acquisition, land development, and community-initiated solutions associated with Project Connect.
- Continue to support programs that assist existing homeowners to maintain and remain in their homes such as the Home Repair Program and the Displacement Prevention Navigator pilot program.
- Continue to support the Austin Community Land Trust in providing homeownership opportunities to Austinites earning 80% of the median Family Income or less.

## Create a Healthy Austin Program

- Align funding with priority program goals, objectives, and action items to promote healthier living by increasing opportunities for physical activity through improvements in active transportation infrastructure and improvements to trail systems; increasing access to basic needs services including food access and preventative health services; and increasing opportunities for recreation by co-locating Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) neighborhood centers with the Parks and Recreation Department’s (PARC’s) recreation services.
- Prioritize investments related to public health and safety, and capital renewal such as project rehabilitation and restoration. Maintenance and repair prevention need to be funded appropriately and equitably to minimize premature failures, unacceptable levels of service, and far more expensive replacement of assets. \*
- Considering recent extreme weather events, additional funding is needed to harden critical infrastructure with a priority on facilities that serve as warming/cooling centers and to support other sheltering needs. Upgrades including purchasing and installing backup power, energy efficiency updates, building hardening and other items connected to the Resilience Hub Network should also be prioritized.

## Revise Austin’s development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city

- Planning Staff is coordinating with Council to prioritize code updates and, at this time, based on current efforts, do not require CIP funding. However, what is necessary to effectively support staff work and guide equitable land use regulations is to support the update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan, *Imagine Austin*. \*

## Other Recommendations

The following area, though it does not fall under a specific Priority Program, is relevant across all programs and for the effective implementation of *Imagine Austin*.

- Invest in data infrastructure to support regularly updated implementation progress tracking for *Imagine Austin*.

## Conclusion

The above recommendations present capital improvements that are necessary or desirable to implement the adopted Comprehensive Plan. These recommendations highlight not only the importance of improving the City's system of asset management to get the most out of the investments we make as a community, but also the need for the use of an equity lens in the investments we make across the city.

Furthermore, updating Imagine Austin presents an opportunity to improve long-term alignment between City budget and CIP processes, and to promote the interdepartmental identification of capital projects through an equity lens.

Regards,

Claire E Hempel  
Chair, Planning Commission

Cc: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members  
Veronica Briseño, Assistant City Manager  
Lauren Middleton-Pratt, Director, Planning Department