

## BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

### Downtown Commission

Recommendation Number: 20240626-005:  
**UPDATE TO THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN**

**WHEREAS** in 2005, the Austin City Council passed a resolution calling for the adoption of a Downtown Austin Plan (Original DAP); and

**WHEREAS** in 2011 the City Council adopted the Original DAP; and

**WHEREAS** in 2010, Austin's Downtown population was estimated to be 9,343, by 2020 it had grown to 13,041, and now is estimated to be 15,360; and

**WHEREAS** in 2010, there were 4,675 dwelling units Downtown, by 2020 approximately 9,343 dwelling, and now it is estimated that there are more than 10,300 dwelling units; and

**WHEREAS** there is 7.2 million square feet of construction underway with an additional 14.3 million square feet of space planned for Downtown, including more than 3,000 additional dwelling units; and

**WHEREAS** additional residential, office and hotel developments are likely to occur throughout Downtown over the next 10 years; and

**WHEREAS** the Original DAP was drafted to provide Austin with a roadmap for addressing the anticipated challenges facing Downtown over the subsequent 10 years; and

**WHEREAS** the COVID 19 Pandemic caused an unforeseen shift in how Austinites and visitors use and experience Downtown presenting an array of challenges and opportunities; and

**WHEREAS** the Original DAP was intended as both a vision for Downtown as well an action plan to encourage Downtown to become more economically vibrant, livable, walkable, mobile, inclusive, diverse, and culturally alive; and

**WHEREAS** that Original DAP's 10-year lifecycle ended in 2021; and

**WHEREAS** because of the complexity and breadth of the Original DAP, numerous departments within the City of Austin are charged with accomplishing various aspects of the plan including Transportation and Public Works, Economic Development (+Urban Design), Parks and Recreation, Planning (+Historic Preservation); and

**WHEREAS** responsibility for implementing the various elements of the Original DAP is spread among numerous departments with little centralized control, oversight or accountability; and

**WHEREAS** the charter of the Downtown Commission explicitly states that its charge is to oversee the implementation of the DAP; and

**WHEREAS** the charge of other City of Austin Boards and Commissions intersect with their respective departments without engagement of the Downtown Commission whose charge is specific to the DAP; and

**WHEREAS** significant progress has occurred in accomplishing some of the goals of the Original Dap, elements of that Original DAP are still not realized, viable or relevant; and

**WHEREAS** new challenges and opportunities have arisen in downtown since the Original DAP was adopted and even more such challenges and opportunities are anticipated over the next 10 years; and

**WHEREAS** increasing residential growth downtown requires more amenities for residents including more public space, dog parks, childcare, grocery and other services; and

**WHEREAS** Project Connect may change the way people access Downtown which in turn necessitates integrated planning to ensure adequate connectivity from Downtown stations to all Downtown districts and destinations; and

**WHEREAS** the I-35 Cap and Stich, as envisioned, may create new development opportunities for Downtown, and

**WHEREAS** I-35 Cap and Stich may enhance current connections and restore former connections and historic ties between Downtown and East Austin creating both challenges and opportunities for Downtown; and

**WHEREAS** the expansion of the Dell Medical School, the arrival of MD Anderson, and the continued growth of the healthcare district may be a catalyst for the continued redevelopment of the northeast area of Downtown; and

**WHEREAS** growth on the east side of Downtown will continue to put pressure on live music venues, creative spaces and small businesses requiring proactive solutions to retain the diversity and vibrancy of Downtown; and

**WHEREAS** a thorough, updated evaluation of current as well as anticipated needs and challenges of Downtown is essential; and

**WHEREAS** more centralized control, oversight, and accountability is essential to shepherd Downtown Austin through the next 10 years; and

**WHEREAS** a new 10-year blueprint for Downtown is needed to help it reach its full potential as not only the economic engine of our great city, but also as our cultural and entertainment hub, as well as a great place to live.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Downtown Commission recommends and urges that the Austin City Council pass a resolution:

Directing the City Manager to:

1. Initiate the process of updating the Downtown Austin Plan and Ordinance covering the next 10 years (Updated DAP);
2. Present the Updated DAP draft in 6 months and proposed ordinance for Council approval in 12 months.
3. Work with stakeholders, including but not limited to, the State of Texas, Travis County, the Federal government, Capital Metro, Planning Commission, Design Commission, South Central Waterfront Advisory Board, Historic Landmark Commission, the Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Transit Partnership, Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association, the University of Texas, Austin Neighborhood Council, Old West Austin Neighborhood Association, Judges Hill Neighborhood Association, affordable housing advocates, parks groups and environmental organizations in envisioning the future of Downtown and identifying the needs of those who live and work Downtown and in identifying the substantive issues it faces.
4. Create a separate dedicated division within the Planning Department charged with implementing the elements of the Updated DAP.
5. Empower that division with authority to coordinate with other City departments, work with stakeholders, and oversee implementation of the Updated DAP.
6. Empower the division to hold other city departments and staff accountable for implementing the aspects of an Updated DAP for which they are responsible.
7. Ensure implementation and coordination of recently completed projects and plans that are shaping downtown Austin's future, including but not limited to:
  - a. [Palm District Plan](#) (adopted 2023)
  - b. Great Streets Master Plan update
  - c. [Downtown Historic Resource Survey](#)
  - d. TxDOT I-35 Highway reconstruction/[Capital Express Central](#)
  - e. [Our Future 35/I-35 Highway Caps](#)
  - f. [Project Connect](#)
  - g. [UT Medical Center](#) development
  - h. [Waterloo Greenway Master Plan](#) and creek setbacks
  - i. Downtown Austin Wayfinding Program
  - j. Downtown Austin Parking Strategy
  - k. [Austin Convention Center Expansion and Redevelopment](#)
  - l. [Congress Avenue Urban Design Initiative](#) (street reconstruction)
  - m. [Cypress & Shoal public space strategy](#)
  - n. [Austin Core Transportation Plan](#)
  - o. [South Central Waterfront](#)
  - p. Public sites: Pease School, Palm School, Health South, etc.
  - q. Private redevelopment: E. 6th Street, Rainey, Seaholm, etc.
  - r. Urban Design Guidelines
8. Provide that division with the resources needed to successfully implement the elements of the Updated DAP.
9. Establish a process for reviewing and evaluating progress in implementing the elements of the Updated DAP on an annual basis.

10. Require an Annual Progress Report to be submitted to the Downtown Commission at its November meeting along with budgetary requirements to complete the next budget year's planned objectives.
11. Identify any amendments to current City of Austin Plans and Codes needed to implement the elements of the Updated DAP.
12. Review updates through an equitable lens.

Date of Approval: June 26, 2024

Record of the vote:

For: Chair Harris, Vice Chair Ishmael, Commissioners Carroll, Coufal, Lavigne, Levinson, Ortega, Shifferd

Against: none

Absent: Commissioners Cardona-Beiler and Major

Attest: *Christi Vitela*

(Downtown Commission staff liaison)