

**AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
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**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA
August, 2000**

INTRODUCTION

Austin is a many-faceted community whose composition ranges from fine cultural activities to heavy industry. From scenic parks to diverse neighborhoods, the community embraces all these aspects as it provides a quality, safe environment in which to grow up, raise a family, and retire.

Austin points with pride to its “hometown” atmosphere. Its residents do not want to create a fast growth city like a Twin Cities suburb. But, by the same token, Austin is not a backward, laid-back community. Austin is a self-sustaining, self-supporting, independent, full-service community that responsibly addresses the needs of its residents. Austin is willing to embrace changes that reflect added quality characteristics.

Planning History

Austin completed its last comprehensive plan in 1988. In the year 2000, Austin has accomplished many community improvements identified in the 1988 plan that are the result of effective communication with its residents and commitment to a vision for the future. Recent park improvements and housing opportunities in the central business district and renewed interest in commercial development are symptoms of a proactive, successful planning process.

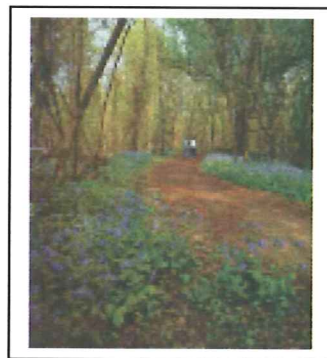
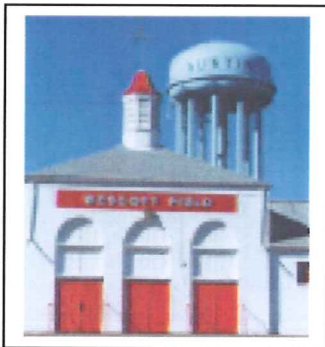
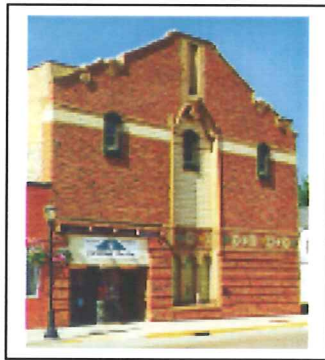
Continued reinvestment has been made in the Central Business District (CBD) including new multiple-family residential facilities, a new library, a senior citizen center, and improvements to Mill Pond Park and Main Street. This has had the effect of stabilizing the base of commercial activity in the CBD. Additional achievements in Austin include an update to the wastewater treatment plan, an on-going airport expansion, multi-purpose ice arena, and expansions of local and regional recreational trail systems.

Austin has once again proven to itself that it can be successful in accomplishing significant community improvements while creating a cohesive community spirit. Many exciting, new developments have occurred that have now resulted in Austin being poised for the physical growth and expansion of the community.

"Austin is a self-sustaining, self-supporting, independent, full-service community that responsibly addresses the needs of its residents."

Purpose of Current Planning Effort

The purpose of this comprehensive plan is to acknowledge past achievements and establish a proper framework for future accomplishments and community growth. Goals, policies, and specific tools for improvement will be provided through this comprehensive planning effort. Austin is planning for growth requiring proactive plans and policies that preserve the quality of life and the hometown atmosphere.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The process of planning a community is ongoing and dynamic. Many opportunities to plan various aspects of a community occur on a regular basis. Frequently, these opportunities are presented as fragmented, individual portions of the various elements that compose a comprehensive community plan.

Examples of these planning decision opportunities include:

- iii Rezonings
- iii Annexation Approvals
- iii Annual Budgeting
- iii Capital Improvement Plans
- iii Annual Scheduled Street Maintenance and Reconstruction
- iii Updating Utility Infrastructure Projects
- iii Subdivision Plat Approvals
- iii Park Improvements
- iii Applications for Grant and Loan Programs
- iii Tax Increment Financing Plans
- iii Public Building Improvements
- iii Traffic Plans
- iii Downtown Revitalization
- iii Wastewater Treatment Plant Updates

A comprehensive planning process allows concurrent review of many of these divergent elements of community planning to assure that the wide ranging, diverse nature of community life can be properly evaluated.

Putting it Together

As a starting point, the basis for long-range planning must include a comprehensive review of the characteristics of the community. The use of demographic trends, historic and future retail sales, and other data, will help establish a basis of understanding of the composition of the city. Demographics portray a snapshot of a community's character and potential for growth. To be of use to a community, the raw data must be interpreted and trends indicated by this data must be analyzed.

This current plan revision is relying, in part, on data collected by the 1990 US Census. The 2000 US Census is being completed at the time of this plan preparation. This portion of the plan will require revision when new census data becomes available.

Population

Evaluating population growth is an important part of planning for the future. The need for development land, whether industrial, commercial, residential, or recreational, is based on the number of people expected to live and work in, or near the community. The age of the population can affect shopping trends and the types of amounts of commercial and professional services demanded. Anticipated population changes also affects the number of jobs that will be available, the labor supply, the number of new housing units required, and the quality and type of additional public services that will need to be required.

1990 Census: Population Profiles

"Predicting a future population total is as much of an art as it is a science."

	1970	1980	1990	'80-'90 % of change	1997	'90-'97 % of change
Household	--	9,136	9,347	2.31	9,566	2.34
Population	26,210	23,020	21,907	-4.83	22,008	0.46
Housing Counts	8,617	9,457	9,798	3.61	--	--

Predicting a future population total is as much of an art as it is a science. Numerous factors can influence where people choose to live, some of which can be controlled and some of which cannot. Historically, Austin's population has decreased 15% since 1970.

Studies completed for the city of Austin that rely on population to help predict the future include housing and water distribution studies. They have indicated the following future population levels:

Study	Population (Year)
Market Rate Rental Housing Study, 1999	25,270 (2004)
For-Sale Housing Market Study, 2000	25,270 (2004)
Water Distribution Study, 1999	20,844 (2020)

The community survey reflected the community's vision for population growth as follows:

Choice	Percent
Population of 22,000	19%
Population of 22,000 – 24,000	18%
Population of 24,000 – 26,000	40%
Population of 26,000 – 28,000	23%

This response shows that the community has encouragement and tolerance for growth at a faster pace than that projected for Austin.

A high level of tolerance for growth can help guide and embolden community leaders to make proactive decisions that influence future population levels. As noted, population may increase or decrease based on the perspective of who is making the projection. The key to the future resides in the ability of Austin to embrace change in a way that is dynamic and responsibly addresses the needs of the community.

1990 Census: Persons by Gender

Persons by Gender	Persons	Percent of Total
Male	10,260	46.8
Female	11,647	53.2

The gender profile shows the split between male and female populations slightly favoring the female population. This trend is similar to that experienced throughout the Midwest.

1990 Census: Persons by Age

Persons by Age	Persons	Percent of Total
4 and under	1,348	6.15
5-9	1,519	6.93
10-14	1,464	6.68
15-19	1,338	6.11
20-24	1,152	5.26
25-29	1,428	6.52
30-39	2,997	13.68
40-49	2,286	10.44
50-59	2,092	9.55
60-64	1,321	6.03
65-69	1,389	6.34
70-79	2,215	10.11
80 and over	1,358	6.20
Total Population	21,907	

The population shows a baby boomer bulge of approximately 24% of the residents being between 30-50 years of age. Over the next 20-30 years, this group will be in, or entering their retirement years.

The demographic changes have implications for the growth and vitality of Austin. For example, as the population ages, change can create new pressures in employment levels unless sustained growth can occur that ensures an available workforce.

Housing

Housing is an important component of community life. The quality, age and location of its housing stock often form perceptions of a city by its residents and visitors. Historic growth of housing can illustrate the impact of major economic forces such as business locations and/or expansions. Understanding the type of housing and its age is important to help predict trends and demands on housing in the future. For example, a large percentage of dwellings constructed prior to 1939 might indicate the need for reinvestment and preservation programs to improve and preserve the housing stock.

1990 Census: Households by Persons

Household Composite	Number
One person households:	
Male householder	954
Female householder	2,027
Two or more person households:	
Married couple family	5,025
One Parent Family:	
Male parent	194
Female parent	791
Non-family Households:	
Male householder	211
Female householder	145
Total	9,347



1990 Census: Number of Owned and Rented Units

Status	Units	Percent
Owned	6,820	73.0
Rented	2,527	27.0
Total	9,347	

1990 Census: Number of Persons Per Unit

1970	1980	1990	1997
3.04	2.52	2.34	2.30

The trend of sharp reductions in people per household experienced in Austin during the 1970's and 1980's has leveled out. While continuing to decline, the rate of reduction is slowing. This reflects a national trend of smaller family size and a desire to postpone childbirth until couples have reached an older age.

1990 Census: Housing Units With One or More Persons Age 65+

Age	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
Householder under 65	4,296	1,784
Householder over 65	2,254	743
Total	6,550	2,527

1990 Census: Housing Units by Year Build and Occupancy Status

Year Built	Total	%	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
1989 - 1990	53	1%	28	25
1980 - 1988	470	5%	210	221
1970 - 1979	1,165	12%	373	754
1960 - 1969	600	6%	353	201
1950 - 1959	2,688	27%	2,020	397
1940 - 1949	1,784	18%	1,532	207
1939 or earlier	3,038	37%	2,122	722
Total	9,798		6,820	2,527

The age of Austin's housing stock is illustrated in the above data. Some 37% of the current housing units were constructed prior to 1940, 55% before 1950, and 82% were constructed before 1960. More single family homes were built in the decade from 1950-1959 than all those built in all the time between 1940-1949, or 1960-1990, combined. That was the end of Austin's building boom. Some 1000 single family homes, only 10% of the current total housing stock have been constructed in the last 40 years.

Austin has a percentage of dwellings constructed prior to 1940 that is similar to other communities in the upper Midwest. Concern for the possible condition of those dwellings and substandard plumbing and electrical standards may suggest a need for aggressive programs aimed at rehabilitation and preservation.

"Industrial development and the success of the CBD are interrelated and interdependent."

Economic Base

Where do people work and how do they spend their money? An understanding of Austin's attractiveness as an employment and retail destination can be gleaned from employment numbers and retail sales figures. Regionally, Austin is a commercial and employment center. How can Austin position itself to make itself more attractive and build on that fact? An understanding of Austin's strengths and attractions can help answer that question and provide encouragement to pursue policies and activities to strengthen its position.

Industrial development and the success of the CBD are interrelated and interdependent. A positive relationship between the labor force, housing-stock, and new industry is the key to successfully attracting new businesses. To fully benefit from industrial and commercial expansion, Austin needs to have an available labor force and housing stock for new employees. It is possible for Austin to expand its residential base without expanding its commercial and industrial base. The inverse can also occur. In order for Austin to fully benefit from growth, it should expand both its industrial/commercial base in a ratio similar to its residential growth.

As Austin looks towards the future, it must focus on the changing nature of development and a realization that there is more than "chasing smokestacks." Communities today have become very sophisticated in defining their "target market" and focused in attracting the right mix of development opportunities, both industrial and commercial. Austin has an opportunity to redefine and market itself for uses that may seem "non-traditional" from a historic perspective, but fitting with its current status as a regional trade and employment center with excellent retail, educational and workforce opportunities.

As designation of new land use areas are considered, community leaders should consider the range of development opportunities including:

- **Heavy Industry:** An industry which is capital- and/or labor-intensive, such as automobile, industrial machinery, steel, rubber, mining or petroleum. Traditional workhorse of the economy producing durable goods that may require high cost of traditional infrastructure and labor force monopoly.
- **Technology:** Creation and movement of data and data related products. Limited impact on traditional infrastructure. May require integrated educational support system.
- **Commercial:** Movement and processing of goods and services, "back office" operations. Requires a well-educated labor force, limited impact to traditional infrastructure.

The labor profile for Austin according to the US Census is listed below.

1990 Census: Labor Force by Sex for Persons 16 Years and Over

Status	Total	Male	%	Female	%
In labor force	10,696	5,664	53.0	5,032	47.0
Not in labor force	6,623	2,227	33.6	4,396	66.4

1990 Census: Land Area in Community

	1970	1980	1990
Land Area (sq. mile)	4.90	8.56	9.69
Density (persons per sq. mile)	5,349	2,689	2,261

This trend of lower population density reflects the mid-western trend of fewer people per household, and larger homes and larger lots in subdivision.

Manufacturing

Austin is connected to the agricultural community through manufacturing processes that “add value” to a raw agricultural commodity that is grown “locally”. Manufacturing is a very important economic sector of a community. The job and tax base combined with the many spin-off benefits makes manufacturing a key component of any economy. Austin’s level of employment in the manufacturing sector is compared to state totals:

1990 Census: Comparison of Labor Profile

Item	Minnesota	Austin
Percent in Labor Force	69.7%	56.3%
Males 16 Years / Over	77.4%	65.5%
Females 16 Years / Over	62.5%	48.6%
% Manufacturing Employees (Durable and Non-Durable Goods)	18%	22%

The US Chamber of Commerce has estimated the following impact to employment profiles when 100 new jobs are created in a manufacturing sector:

Employment Sector	# of New Jobs
Wholesale and retail trade	45
Transportation	7
Finance, insurance and real estate	3
Business repairs and services	3
Construction	3
Public administration	3

"Austin's commercial base is diversified between meeting the needs of the area agricultural community, and serving the needs of a growing residential community and larger retail trade area adjacent to the city of Austin."

Minnesota has a large and strong manufacturing base. One in five workers in the state are employed in manufacturing representing Minnesota's third largest employing sector and second highest paying industry. Manufacturing employs over 400,000 individuals statewide and accounts for the largest portion of gross state product (\$9.8 billion) and the largest payroll (\$12.3 billion). The manufacturing sector and its employees help pay a very large part of the societal needs that all Minnesotans enjoy.

It is important to retain and attract industrial jobs to Austin because they generally pay far more than other jobs and contribute to a higher standard of living.

Industrial and manufacturing businesses can have a very positive impact on a community because of the jobs they create, taxes they pay, goods and services they consume, and the many spin off benefits they provide. Austin must balance its industrial development efforts with environmental, financial, labor force, and housing issues.

Retail Sales Activity

Commercial structure and retail activity in Austin has undergone some dramatic changes over the past 20 years. Although the number of retail establishments has remained fairly stable, the amount of gross sales has increased from \$104 million to \$207 million. In addition, per capita spending and spending per household has increased 52% and 57%, respectively. Austin's commercial base is diversified between meeting the needs of the area agricultural community, and serving the needs of a growing residential community and larger retail trade area adjacent to the city of Austin.

Over the past decades, the importance of the Central Business District (CBD) as the center of regional retailing activity has diminished. Present retail activities have become dispersed throughout several areas of the community. After several years of slow growth in commercial development, new investment in retailing has occurred in the northwest

portion of the city. This new investment has repositioned Austin as the retailing “hub” for a much larger retail trade area. This new investment in the Oak Park Mall area promises to encourage further future investment.

Investment in retail creates jobs and income. The following table illustrates the number of jobs created from \$1 Million in New Retail Sales.

of Jobs Created from an Increase of \$1,000,000 in Retail Sales

Industry	County	State
Construction	0.3	0.5
Manufacturing	1.4	1.8
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	0.9	1.2
Wholesale Trade	0.5	0.7
Retail Trade	25.1	28.9
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	1.0	1.2
Services	5.9	7.8
Other	0.0	0.3
Totals	35.1	42.4

The following table portrays the Household Earnings, by trade sector, from \$1 Million in New Retail Sales (thousands of dollars)

Industry	County	State
Construction	\$8.7	\$13.4
Manufacturing	\$39.6	\$48.9
Transportation, Communication and Utilities	\$29.1	\$41.2
Wholesale Trade	\$17.9	\$24.0
Retail Trade	\$461.7	\$532.3
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	\$30.9	\$37.8
Services	\$128.8	\$166.2
Other	\$2.9	\$7.7
Totals	\$719.6	\$971.5

Historic retail trade data shows the position Austin has held in the past with food stores and auto dealers as consistent category leaders. Retail employment drives a significant portion of the Austin labor market jobs in retailing, and the translation of those jobs to household income can easily be documented.

Retail Sales Database: Total-Retail Sales

Year	# of Establishments	Gross Sales X (\$1,000,000)	Per Capita	Per Household
1979	356	104	4,938	--
1980	381	114	4,938	12,441
1981	386	115	5,097	--
1982	399	123	5,440	--
1983	404	129	5,693	13,910
1984	429	145	6,426	15,642
1985	417	141	6,243	15,166
1986	406	143	6,379	15,395
1987	387	151	6,795	16,265
1988	388	150	6,836	16,023
1989	376	156	7,133	16,719
1990	385	161	7,366	17,265
1991	--	--	--	--
1992	--	--	--	--
1993	--	--	--	--
1994	389	213	9,677	22,517
1995	363	207	9,402	21,794



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Understanding a community often relies on perceptions of community life by its leaders and residents. This process is built around an understanding of the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats present within the community. Analysis of the strengths from which a city can improve, and weaknesses that must be overcome, provides guidance for Goal setting. Evaluation of present opportunities for community improvement and an understanding of the dynamics of such opportunities create a focus for the improvement process. Such aspects as threats or impediments to success are important to understand to be successful in the creation of long-term strategies for community development.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

To gain this insight, a series of meetings and focus groups were held over a period of several months. The first meeting was held as a joint meeting of the city council and Planning commission. This meeting was preceded by individual interviews with these same members. The intent of the discussions was to find the significant attitudes of appointed and elected officials and understand their perceptions of the primary issues facing Austin.

City Council and Planning Commission Results

The following summary of the May 8, 1998 strategic evaluation of the community's characteristics by the council and commission is provided:

Strengths

- Communication among community leaders
- Physical environment
- Feed lot control
- Access to community leaders
- Hormel Foods Corporation
- Hormel Foundation
- Hormel Nature Center
- YMCA
- Volunteers
- Medical services and affiliation with Mayo Clinic
- Internet access through SMIG
- Diverse retail
- Community pride
- Austin utilities
- Austin Development Corporation
- Cultural diversity
- Religion
- High percentage of home ownership (first time)
- Low unemployment

- Salvation Army
- Religious community
- Great human services providers
- County seat
- Good relationship with city/schools/county
- Surrounding Agricultural Resources
 - > Full economy
 - > Small community
- People
- Public safety
- Educational system
- Transportation system
- Quality of life
- Library
- Hard working labor force
- Arts
- Excellent Health Care incl.: dental, vision and chiropractic

Weaknesses

- Lack of diverse economic base
- Fragile tax base (limited base)
- Lack of available work force
- Out state vs. in Twin Cities
- Unstable labor history
- Employment of spouse
- Retaining / returning work force
- Aging population
- Oak Park Mall vacancy
- Variety in child care
- Council/city relationship (Owatonna, Rochester)
- 3000 less trees as a result of summer storms
- Albert Lea/Austin relationship (Owatonna, Rochester)
- Legislative redistricting
- Lack of affordable housing

Opportunities

- Technology center
- Northwest Commercial Area / Target
- Develop Cook Farm / Austin Business Park
- Aesthetics
- Recreational trail opportunity between Austin / Albert Lea
- Recreational trails in Austin
- I-90
- Downtown revitalization

- Regional retail center
- Cultural diversity

Community Survey

To further assess attitudes, values, and thoughts about the future, a community attitude survey was conducted. The survey was designed to seek input about issues affecting Austin's growth and development. A copy of the survey and complete results are provided in Appendix A.

Over 2900 survey responses were received representing more than 30 percent of the community.

Survey Summary

Respondent Profile

Average Age: 40 (40.5 is average per US Census)
Years at Present Address: 21

Disadvantages

Respondents were asked to identify disadvantages to living in Austin. The predominant responses include:

- Lack of employment opportunities
- Lack of industrial diversity
- Low salaries
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of available housing
- Lack of variety in retail businesses
- Lack of public transportation

Barriers to Growth

When asked to list issues impacting growth and development of Austin, the top responses were noted:

- Industrial reinvestment
- Provision of additional employment opportunities
- Provision of high paying jobs
- Recruitment of new businesses
- Provision of affordable housing
- Promote youth activities
- Improve educational opportunities

Needs

Many ideas were shared for new businesses or services that need to be created in Austin. The most significant responses were for more single family homes and rental apartments, primary and specialty retail, and recreational facilities. By far, the strongest response was the need for more diversified industry. Very few people felt a need for fewer provisions of the various services.

The most frequently listed retail services include a fabric store, a home improvement store, general retail, and restaurants. A grocery store in the southwest portion of town, a craft store, and generally improving the occupancy of Oak Park Mall were also noted.

General satisfaction was expressed for existing utilities and public services. Very few responses ranked such services poor. Most responses were good ratings. The weakest positive responses were in the categories of streets and recreational facilities.

Future Population

The community vision for population growth in Austin over the next 20 to 30 years was wide ranging. The following table summarizes the results regarding future population totals:

Choice	Percent
Population of 22,000	19%
Population of 22,000 – 24,000	18%
Population of 24,000 – 26,000	40%
Population of 26,000 – 28,000	23%

This vision would indicate the community has high expectations and a tolerance for growth and change. A total of 81% of the population favor population growth of 10% to 30% percent.

Community Betterment Issues

Several specific community issues were addressed. The attitudes of these specific issues are as follows:

1. Wescott Field should be restored and improved.
2. The city should develop the Austin Business Park. (Cook Farm)
3. The city should work with Riverland Community College to create a Technology Park.
4. The city should invest in more recreational trails and work with Albert Lea, and other local communities, to create a link between the communities.

Needs:

Diversified Industry
Single-Family Homes
Rental Apartments
Primary Retail
Specialty Retail
Recreational Facilities

5. The redevelopment and historic preservation of downtown Austin is important.

As for the use of public funding to assist in the creation of affordable housing, the message is less clear. Although some support is present (31.4% of respondents) uncertainty exists for those that are undecided (28.7%) or those not in agreement (39.9%). This suggests that the nature of funding needs to be clearly defined and effectively communicated when projects are proposed so that each project can be judged on its own costs and benefits to the community.

Focus Groups

The perception of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing a community often differ depending upon the vantage point of an individual representing the city, group or agency. For that reason, community leaders and stakeholders were divided into “focus groups” to evaluate various characteristics of Austin. To gain a more complete vision of issues facing the city, focus group meetings were held throughout the community.

The primary focus group issue and groups and agencies that hosted discussions included:

Issue	Hosted By
Community Development	League of Women Voters
Downtown Revitalization and Historic Preservation	Austin Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Committee
Oak Park Mall/Northwest Development Area	Oak Park Mall Merchants Association
Economic Development	Development Corporation of Austin
Housing	Housing Redevelopment Authority and Board of Realtors
Education and Job Training	Riverland Community College and Austin Independent School District #492
Recreational Facilities and Programming	Austin Park Board
Development in the Urban Fringe and Partnerships	Township Boards and Mower County Board of Supervisors

League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters met on September 28, 1998, to discuss issues related to community development. The group observed the following:

Strengths:

- Parks
- Pride in appearance
- Educational systems
 - > Public
 - > Independent
- Municipal utility
- Churches
- Recreational facilities
 - > Pool
- Symphony/Community band
- Artist series-the arts
- Friendly community
- Historical building and preservation
- Medical Services
- Library
- Transportation/heartland
- Community based human services
 - > Mental health
 - > Welfare
- Interstate 90
- Senior center
- Twin Towers
- Elderly housing/rest home facilities

Weaknesses:

- Lack of funding for parks
- Littering
- Grocery retail locations
- Concepts in revitalization of downtown/Main St.
- Lack of low-moderate income businesses
- Maintaining existing local businesses
- Entry level employment for youth of community

Opportunities:

- Improve communication of local government to citizens

North West Area Business Group

The North West Area Business Group met on October 13, 1998. The group observed the following:

Strengths:

- Accessible to various population groups
- Interstate 90 access/visual and traffic access
- Adjacent businesses
- Additional room for growth
- Financial setting
- Past Growth
- Hormel Foods
- Corporate offices
- Education
- Medical
- Progressive/clean
- Chamber and committees
- Population

Weaknesses:

- More industries
 - > Keep family in community
- Industry tied to Riverland programs offered
- Population base concern of cost
- Need for more youth activities-a place to go
- Traffic congestion
- Ingress/egress
 - > Mall and K-Mart
 - > Term Solutions
 - > Responsibility of traffic congestion
- The Oaks-vehicle and pedestrian traffic
- Prairie Sky Apartments

Opportunities

- Mall occupancy
- Desire availability to various goods
- Regional retail market
 - > Albert Lea
 - > Northern Iowa
- Need to improve efforts for industrial development
- Revitalization of downtown
- Pursue fabric and crafts
- Bagel store

Central Business District

The Central Business District group met on October 14, 1998. They observed the following:

Strengths-Downtown:

- Heart of community
- Changes taken place
- Face of business has changed-character
- Financial businesses
- Library
- Clean downtown/flowers

Strengths-Residential:

- Education
- Child friendly
- Cost of living compared to other areas
- Highly educated pool of volunteers
- Senior citizen friendly
- Attitude of community
- Cultural opportunities
- Infrastructure-Interstate 90
- Access to water/sewer

Weaknesses-Downtown:

- Property values decreasing
- Surviving as business
- Organization taking stand on helping small business
- Parking availability and location/time limitation
- Customer/business owners
- Fragmented business areas
- Lack of or losing retail in downtown
- Evening/night characteristics (bar crowd-youth)
- Connection between downtown and Oak Park Mall merchants
- Support for historic preservation and revitalization of existing structures downtown

Development Corporation of Austin

The Development Corporation of Austin met on October 21, 1998, and observed the following:

Strengths:

- Ethnic diversity
 - > Labor supply
 - > Home purchases
 - > Builds understanding/acceptance
- Proximity to Rochester-more strength than weakness
 - > Jobs
 - > Shopping/entertainment
 - > Medical
- Hormel Foundation/Corporation
- Located at intersection of I-90 and I-35
- RCC-good relationship for job training
- Good Midwest work ethics
- Labor
- Affordable housing
- Comparatively high income
- Rich farm land-strong agricultural
- Diverse
- Ease of access to community
- Safe "small community" atmosphere
- Care of seniors
- Youth activities
- Good schools/library/public facilities
- "Quality of Life"
- DCA

Weaknesses:

- Ethnic diversity
 - > Potential for inter-racial conflict
- Proximity to Rochester
 - > Shopping loss
- Too far from Twin Cities
 - > "No Man's Land"
- Higher taxes than Iowa
- Shortage of labor, especially skilled
- Small trade area
- No unique "draw" to community
- "Union-Town"
- WWTP-specialized needs

- Lack of “cultural” community-wide support
- Lack of downtown focus
- Loss of young labor force
- Misperception of DCA primary role

Opportunity/Threats/Avoidance of Change:

- Austin Business Park (Cook Farm)
- Out of industrial land
- Residential development west of Target
- Threat-lack of utilities
- Low perception of lot value



Austin Independent School District #492

The Austin Independent School District #492 met on November 4, 1998.
They observed the following:

Strengths:

- School system
- Balance of being outstate, but also close to larger communities
 - > Good family atmosphere
- Citizens commitment to community
- Enrollment
- Support of bond issues
- Pride and tradition of community
- Support of recreation for youth
- Hormel Foundation and Company
- RCC Campus/Employer
- Local business relationship
- Work ethic
- Stable income
- Medical center facilities
- Downtown
- Public facilities
- Community adult education Pedestrian trail system
- Willingness of groups to work together to improve community
- Community cleanliness
- Mayor Community leader, school board, council
- Financial resources Religious community Change?
- Ethnic diversity
- I-90 corridor
- Positive attitude Cultural opportunities Utility services

Weaknesses:

- Downtown parking availability
- Workforce for elderly care facilities
- Cultural diversity
- Lack of workforce
- Infrastructure not available Austin Business Park (Cook Farm)
- Employment opportunities
- Directional Signage for visitors
- Community regarding Hormel Foods Corporation community support
- Fear of change and lack of appreciation of community
- Short golf system
- North/South major highway

- Planning of community focused sometimes in wrong direction or addressing wrong issues
- Land use layout of community
- Consideration of groups - strengths and weaknesses
- Welcoming of newcomers to community
- Lack of public transportation (access to)
- Utilization of all floors of downtown businesses
- Responsibilities of rental property owners to tenants

Opportunities:

- Pedestrian trail in place and planned
- Hormel museum
- RCC campus/technology park/4-year college
- To share recreational facilities/school districts
- City of Austin fear of controlling or losing control
- Paramount Mill Pond Funding
- Promote the growth of existing businesses and industry
- Encourage local businesses to provide service or promotion of pedestrian trail
- Reduce land use restrictions on developing new businesses

Austin Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Board of Realtors

For this meeting, an informal discussion format was used where participants shared their personal stories about their role in housing. Kermit Mahan, HRA Director, provided an overview of housing plans prepared for the City of Austin in 1983, 1995, and 1997. Mr. Mahan indicated that there were two principles which guide housing demand: 1) economic growth creates demand for housing; and 2) replacement needs, 12-15 houses needed annually to replace structures that are removed.

Mr. Mahan also indicated that there are six different types of buyers in Austin that include:

- Entry level buyers in their early 20s
- First time homebuyers in their late 20s
- Move up buyers in their 30s-40s
- Empty nesters in their 50s-60s
- Young seniors 60s-70s
- Older seniors in their 70s+

The City of Austin has many programs to address housing needs. The greatest shortage for assistance is for the move-up buyers in the 25-30 age group category looking for their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th home. There is also a shortage of housing for the empty nesters. A need for more market rate rental units in the upper categories from \$800 to \$1000 has also been documented.

Representatives of local businesses provided an overview of their greatest need. They acknowledged the fact that the housing redevelopment authority has done a great job in Austin. However the effort still falls short of needs for entry-level housing. Companies indicated the desire to hire employees if they had the housing to support the types of workers they hire. They also indicated that the average employee makes approximately \$18,000 to \$20,000 per year. This does not allow them to qualify for rental income assistance units and their ability to purchase a single-family residence is non-existent. Finally, a shortage of market-rate apartments compounds their dilemma.

Various opportunities were discussed for creating affordable housing for the community including side by side duplexes. Participants observed that the Housing Redevelopment Authority was addressing most housing issues within the community. The First Time Home Buyers Program has been very effective and well received. Opportunities to create rental units in the downtown area, such as the Austin Plaza, were also well received.

Riverland Community College

The Riverland Community College group met on November 12, 1998. The group observed the following:

Strengths:

- Riverland Community College Campus
- Comprehensive college/technical degree programs
- Partnership with SWS
- Relationship with Austin public schools/high school
- Relationship with community
- Willingness of community commitment
- English as a second language program
- Role of RCC working with DCA
- Cultural values/theatre
- Use of facilities and grounds by various groups
- Economic impact
- Providing workforce
- Room for expansion
- Hormel institute
- SMIG
- Mayo health system
- Public TV station on campus
- KAAL

Weaknesses:

- Access to campus (public and private)
- Lack of master plan for future development
- Road/ROW maintenance
- Fiber optics/lack of knowledge
- Digital service
- Limitations placed by State of Minnesota for future development
- Coordination and utilization of education and recreation
- Not responsible enough to business and industry needs
- Work force availability
- Housing availability
- Lack of regional scope
- College alumni base to community vs. that what exists with 4-year school
- Teach tech students business ownership (limits governed by State of Minnesota)
- Be more creative with education offered

Opportunities:

- Technology Park
 - > Limitations on area offered
 - > Advantage to students, staff and administration
 - > DCA offices and other speculative office space in west campus
 - > Meeting to discuss the avenues that may be taken to proceed with this concept
- Fiber optics installed within highway ROW



Park and Recreation Department

The Park and Recreation department met on November 18, 1998.
Members of the group observed the following:

Strengths:

- Nature Center
- Lineal park system/all parks
- Pedestrian trail
- Mill Pond
- Diversity of youth recreational and educational programs, adult also
- Overall facilities
- Todd Park
- Native Prairie
- Observatory
- Trees and community/citizen involvement with landscaping
- Marcussen Ball Park
- Municipal pool
- Riverside Arena
- Council support and recognition of needs
- Hormel Foods Corporation

Weaknesses:

- Cooperation of facility uses
- Lack of community center
- Armory poorly located
- Park expansion not keeping pace with residential expansion
- Financial side of park dedication ordinance too low
- Short staff
- Under utilization of Eastside Lake
- Bike/auto interface
- Lack of preparedness for new diversity

Opportunities:

- Connections to regional trails linking Albert Lea to Rose Creek
Threat: funding/planning
- Trail connecting to Eastside Lake
Threat: funding
- Ice arena at fairgrounds/reuse
- Reuse of Riverside as community center
- Central Park/St. Paul's church
- Acquire land north of Nature Center, manage for prairie

- Acquire golf course
- Acquire east Hormel home
- Boat on Mill Pond
- Create better interaction with schools
- Expand groomed cross country ski trails at Nature Center

Mower County Board of Supervisors

Mower County Board of Supervisors met on December 22, 1998. The board observed the following:

Strengths:

- Agriculture
- Interstate 90/future development
- County pro-active
 - > Housing needs
 - > Working with other governments
 - > Transportation
- Relationship with city council improved
- Good relationship with surrounding townships
- Fire department cooperation with local volunteer department
- Public safety awareness
- Law enforcement -- crime rate low
- Hormel Foods Corporation
- Medical and educational facilities
- Financial institutions
- Communication/TV, radio
- Mower County government center/networking
- Communication with annexations

Weaknesses:

- Economic diversity
 - > Industry
- Location of county seat
- Distance of law enforcement and snow removal from eastern county areas
- Infrastructure extensions to Bellmans and Dinsmoor
- Airport expansion/handling of
- Fear of change
- Industrial development Non-development of Cook farm
- Elderly population
- Regional location from metro area

Opportunity:

- Pedestrian trail (regional)
- Lyle (location of pedestrian trail)
- Campground facilities/private

Summary Planning Session

Following the completion of the focus group meetings, and compilation of the survey, the city council hosted a community forum to review the primary findings. Input from the focus group meetings was reviewed and evaluated. At the end of the meeting, the group voted for their highest priority issues that Austin must address. The votes were cast as follows:

Austin Priority Issues

Downtown Redevelopment	18
Create Better Paying Jobs	9
Expand Recreational Opportunities	7
Create Affordable Family Housing	6
Address Cultural Diversity	5
Cook Farm Development	5
Attract New Businesses	5
Industrial Development	5
Control Urban Sprawl	4
Improve Streets/Transportation	3
Create Youth Activity Opportunities	2
Fire Department	2
Reinforce Zoning Codes (housing)	2
Create Affordable Senior Housing	1
Create Market-Rate Housing	1
Improve Higher Education Opportunities	0

Austin, like most communities, faces numerous challenges. The value of providing an opportunity for community residents and leaders to become involved in the process of change creates a cohesive vision for future opportunities. Each community is faced with the prospect of limited resources such as city staff, financial capacity, and political will with which to focus on issues of change. For these reasons, a process of establishing priorities provides valuable guidance to elected and appointed officials for wise management of these resources.

COMMUNITY PLANS AND POLICIES

The Goal of comprehensive planning is to define and create a clear vision for the future.

Overview

Austin has a strong history of planning for its future and reinforces the planning process everyday through formal planning programs for the review and analysis of individual projects. At times, Austin's efforts result in a careful, conscious, thoughtful decision-making process such as parking studies, rezoning recommendations, site development review, to name but a few. At other times, reactive decisions and inadequately planned actions have dictated undesirable outcomes of the community's growth process. Regardless, much direction has been provided for the type and level of growth that has occurred since the comprehensive plan was last updated in 1988.

"Austin has a strong history of planning for its future..."

The planning commission and city council are the official public bodies formally charged with planning for the community's physical growth and implementing plans. Other boards, groups and agencies can also directly or indirectly impact the development of Austin. However, the planning commission and city council have the greatest burden for directing growth through the implementation of plans and policies. One of their most important tools in meeting this need is a comprehensive plan.

What is a Plan?

It should be understood; a comprehensive plan is not a rigid set of rules by which Austin must make its growth decisions over the next 10 to 20 years. Rather, it is a framework intended to guide development; a measuring point from which proposals, opportunities, and discussions can be evaluated. As such, policies defined by the plan need to be sufficiently specific to guide solutions in the community's best interest. A plan should be used to foster communication among community leaders, residents and organizations. Through discussion and resolution of important issues, the plan should be updated to reflect impacts upon the community and its future direction.

At a minimum, Austin's Goals and policies should be reviewed and updated to include an annual review of the comprehensive plan to assure that it keeps pace with changing attitudes, opportunities, fiscal conditions, internal and external influences.

Implementation of the plan must take into account all aspects of the city's environment including anticipated population, employment, land use, and facilities requirements. It must also take into account the role of industrial areas, the Central Business District (CBD) and other commercial areas,

and residential neighborhoods. These elements, working together, will create an opportunity to direct compact, orderly growth at the most efficient cost to the public and developers. The comprehensive plan raises many important issues. The solutions will emerge through the political process to reflect the city's commitment and vision for the future.

Core Issues

The strategic planning and public participation process resulted in the identification of seven core issues that include:










1. Residential Development
2. Commercial Development
3. Industrial Development
4. Transportation
5. Utilities
6. Parks and Recreation
7. Natural Environment

The following sections provide documentation, maps, and specific Goals and policies suggested for affecting the future course of the core issues. Implementing and achieving elements of policies will help enable realization of Austin's vision for the future. The Goals, policies, and one-year action plan strategies are intended to focus and define the comprehensive plan and are not listed in any specific order relative to need or importance.



RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

A recurring theme of need in Austin is housing. A majority of responses and observations collected through the public participation process identified housing as a key need, including various aspects including:

-  Construction of affordable housing
-  Construction of in-fill
-  Construction of market rate and affordable rental housing
-  Rehabilitation of existing housing
-  Preservation of historic housing
-  Construction of housing in central business district
-  Retirement housing
-  Relaxed development standards
-  More options for housing styles and density levels

"In today's tight employment market, existing and new businesses and industries are making expansion and growth decisions based on workforce availability"

Participants are also keenly aware of the relationship between housing and the ability to attract and maintain a workforce. In today's tight employment market, existing and new businesses and industries are making expansion and growth decisions based on workforce availability. Cities are viewing available housing to be as important as available industrial development parcels and incentive packages in influencing business decisions. More and more communities are recognizing the relationships between available housing and maintaining an adequate labor supply.

The city of Austin and the Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA) work closely to address a broad range of housing issues. A recently completed study of the "For Sale Housing Market" confirms many of the observations made by participants of the focus groups. Like much of the Midwest, the need for a wider variety of residential developments, especially affordable housing, is of primary importance.

The study confirmed a demand for new, for-sale housing units in Austin. Specifically, a need for 275 new housing units through the year 2004 was noted. (This need comprises new dwelling units needed for an increased labor force and "replacement" housing for units constructed prior to 1940.) Of the 275 units, it is estimated that 50%, or 135 units, need to be priced at \$100,000 or less. The study noted that an adequate lot supply for "high-end" housing in active development exists. However, lots for affordable housing construction are scarce.

A similar study completed in 1999 recognizes the need for rental housing in the community. The study specifically addresses the flexibility of market rate rental housing in the central business district and reinforces the effectiveness of multi-family housing efforts as one aspect of "redefining" downtown Austin.

Overall, the effects of the HRA and the city of Austin appear to be addressing the comprehensive needs of housing for all types of land users. Proposed developments, if built, are projected to provide an adequate supply of more affordable purchase and rental options through 2004.

Housing issues in Austin revolve around choices, availability, and affordability. The city should consider policies that provide and support a balance of housing types for all ages, incomes, and family types. To preserve quality neighborhoods, residents will continue to be encouraged to maintain, improve, and rehabilitate their properties.

The city will continue to encourage seniors to retire in the community by ensuring availability of appropriate housing choices, goods, and services for seniors. As a means to redefine the CBD, and create senior housing near essential goods and services, the downtown area should continue to be a focus for housing of this type. The following is a list of Goals and policies for housing development.

Changes to the Land Use Plan Map

Significant changes and updates have been made to the land use map. Single-family housing areas have been pushed out to accommodate new housing growth necessary to support existing and expanding industrial needs for housing. Growth areas have been identified throughout the community to provide a broad range of locations and possibilities for development.

High-density residential areas have been expanded to encourage the development of multi-family and mixed-use neighborhoods with higher densities. These areas were designated using the following criteria:

- Adjacent to major arterial collectors
- Adjacent to areas of employment
- Adjacent to areas of commercial activity
- To act as a transition from more intensive land use types (commercial, industrial) to less intensive land use types (single-family residential).

Goal 1.1

Encourage a variety of market rate and affordable rental housing units that are appropriate and compatible with community.

Policies

1.1 P.1

Promote rental rehabilitation to better accommodate rental housing needs.

1.1 P.2

Remove substandard rental units that cannot be repaired or renovated.

1.1 P.3

Encourage construction of new rental units at an affordable level for segments of the population currently not addressed.

1.1P.4

Encourage market rate and subsidized rental housing near places of employment and sources of goods and services.

1.1P.5

Provide flexibility within the zoning ordinance and building codes to allow for the conversion and renovation of rental units in an affordable manner.

1.1 P.6

Accommodate the need for market rate rental units through modification of land development regulations, such as density to accomplish Goals.




1.1 P.7

Consider greater flexibility in zoning restrictions to create “medium density housing” to act as a buffer between single-family uses and higher intensity land uses.

1.1 P.8

Encourage the creation of creative housing styles such as “zero lot line”, cooperatives and rent-to-own to provide cost saving, affordable alternatives for first time homebuyers.

Recommendations

- 1.1 R.1: The city should review and change existing land use regulations to avoid unnecessary cost, provide greater energy efficiency and provide more flexibility in rental housing construction while maintaining a high level of urban design and public safety.
- 1.1 R.2: The city should pursue proactive opportunities to attract rental housing owners and developers such as the use of TIF to “buy down” land cost.
- 1.1 R.3: The city should continue to seek alternative housing styles and promote the development of residential land uses in and adjacent to the central business district.
- 1.1 R.4: The city should create greater control over multifamily uses by defining more detailed zoning districts for multifamily housing that include:
 -  Low Density Multi-family such as zero-lot line units and duplexes.
 -  Medium Density Multi-family that would include units up to a 4-plex.
 -  High Density Multi-family that would include large-scale multi-family developments and high rises.

Goal 1.2

Encourage additional variety of single-family homes and building lots in all price ranges.

Policies

1.2 P.1

Establish areas that are attractive both aesthetically and financially for single-family residential units.

1.2.P.2

Provide street and utility extensions in a manner conducive to new construction of single-family homes.

1.2.P.3

Continue to strengthen the efforts to attract new families to construct homes in the community.

1.2.P.4

Encourage homeowners to “move up” into larger, new homes, or “move down” into smaller, lower maintenance housing as income and needs change.

1.2.P.5

Review and revise Austin’s City Code and Zoning Ordinance, as needed, to encourage construction of single-family homes.

1.2 P.6

Address needs of “established” neighborhoods by seeking efforts to preserve the housing stock and character of residential units.

Recommendations

- 1.2 R.1: The city should review subdivision ordinances and land use regulations to assure that they promote orderly development of single-family homes consistent with the comprehensive plan for the community. Practices that result in increased development costs should be evaluated for their effectiveness and necessity.
- 1.2 R.2: Explore opportunities to establish “neighborhood plans” to specifically target issues better relating to needs based on character of neighborhood.

Goal 1.3

Continue to identify areas most appropriate for future residential growth.

Policies

1.3.P.1

Encourage new residential growth consistent with the Future Land Use map and Zoning Map.

1.3.P.2

Annex additional territory, as necessary, to accommodate future residential growth that is consistent with the city's Comprehensive Plan.

1.3.P.3

Assist in the extension of utilities to accommodate future residential growth.

1.3 P.4

Encourage the reuse and redevelopment of land within the current city limits.

1.3 P.5

Encourage the development of multi-family and mixed-use neighborhoods with higher densities under the following criteria:

- Adjacent to major arterial collectors
- Adjacent to areas of employment
- Adjacent to areas of commercial activity
- To act as a transition from more intensive land use types (commercial, industrial) to less intensive land use types (single-family residential).

Goal 1.4

Continue to work closely with the Austin HRA in ways that fit the needs of the community.

Policies

1.4.P.1

The city should continue to cultivate a positive working relationship with the HRA. Work to implement the recommendations of Austin Housing Study completed in 1996, 1999 and 2000 in ways that are consistent with the city's Comprehensive Plan.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Austin's commercial areas are in the midst of transition. Historically, Austin was organized with a strong Central Business District (CBD) and small neighborhood commercial areas scattered throughout the community to provide local services to neighborhoods. Through the years, the CBD has lost its importance as the "primary" focus of regional retail commercial activity. Similarly, many of the neighborhood retail commercial facilities have also suffered from a lack of reinvestment.

In recent years, Austin's retail commercial focus has shifted to the northern part of the community. This shift has been influenced by significant changes in the transportation system with the construction of Interstate 90 and the relocation of US 218. Led by Oak Park Mall, most of the new retail commercial investment is oriented to the I-90 corridor, providing regional offerings and local retail commercial facilities. After an initial "build out" followed by many years of somewhat stagnant growth, this area has seen substantial investment in recent years. As a result, traffic volumes have expanded to the point of creating problems in the neighborhood.

Downtown Austin is not the regional retail attraction that it once was. This change has resulted in the need to redefine the purpose of the CBD. Retention of governmental services, banking and professional offices, specialty commercial and community services has been successful and will continue to be important to a vital central core. In addition, the recent trend toward expanding high-density residential activities in the CBD has provided an excellent reuse for underutilized properties and has created new demand for downtown goods and services. Downtown Austin is recreating itself with many positive factors such as the new Library, Mill Pond Park, Town Centre Building, Paramount Theater, the SPAM Museum, and multi-family housing opportunities. In addition, the city has created a vision for redevelopment of portions of the CBD such as Wold Drug and is working closely with other agencies to solve parking issues, conditions of blight and additional redevelopment opportunities.

Historic preservation of cultural attractions in the central business district has become an important focus of community groups in Austin. The process of preservation can be accomplished in many ways from a formal declaration of a "historic preservation area" to a more modest approach of creating development standards and "overlay" zones that promote redevelopment that considers Goals of historic preservation. Outside of the central business district, other areas exist such as "Dutchtown", Sterling Mall and "turn of the century" residential neighborhoods that provide a historical context for the progress of Austin over time.

Financial tools are available to encourage commercial development and redevelopment, including tax credits that can also be used to benefit housing. Tax credits represent a dollar for dollar reduction in tax liability for investments made in certain types of developments. Rehabilitation tax credits come in two forms: Historic and Pre-1936 Building Rehabilitation.

Historic Rehabilitation includes:

20%, one-time credit on rehabilitation costs for a certified historic structure or “contributing building” within a historic district. The building can be used for commercial, industrial or rental housing with rehabilitation required within 2 years, or phased-in over a five year plan. To receive credits, the applicant must comply with the Secretary of Interior Preservation Standards and 75% of the interior of the structure must be retained.

Pre-1936 Building Rehabilitation includes:

10%, one-time credit on rehabilitation costs for commercial or industrial uses only. The building must have been placed in service prior to 1936, but does not necessarily have to be designated as “historic”.

Shifts, changes and recent commercial developments have re-established Austin’s prominence as a regional center for commerce and created excitement for realizing a new vision for the CBD. The community will need to capitalize on this recent reinvestment in Austin’s commercial base and plan properly to accommodate additional growth. At the same time, a revitalized focus on neighborhood commercial centers can benefit redevelopment activities in established parts of the community, but only if properly planned and located.

Changes to the Land Use Plan Map

Commercial areas have been identified to support the growing regional importance of Austin as a retail destination. The designated areas are easily served by utilities and accessible without placing a burden on existing traffic systems.

The following Goals and policies will guide the community’s approach to commercial development.

Goal 2.1

The CBD should remain a focus of retail, business, commerce and cultural activity in the community.

Policies

2.1P.1

Encourage the availability of a wide array of goods and services especially for the high-density residential uses that are developing.

2.1P.2

Ensure that the CBD is attractive, safe, friendly, easy to access and convenient to shoppers and consumers.

2.1P.3

Promote the retention and attraction of public service buildings, i.e. post office, city hall, county courthouse and library within the CBD.

2.1P.4

Encourage additional high-density housing opportunities in and near the CBD, close to needed goods and services.

2.1P.5

Promote efforts to attract and encourage people into the CBD during visits to other parts of the community.

2.1P.6

Promote the occupancy of vacant storefronts and buildings in the CBD through active use of financial incentives and public-private development partnerships.

2.1P.7

Provide convenient customer and employee parking in the CBD.

2.1P.8

Continue to support the use of Tax Increment Financing and State of Minnesota Small Cities Development Program to support progressive development/redevelopment within the CBD.

Goals 2.2

Maintain and improve the appearance, continuity, and functional design of the CBD.

Policies

2.2 P.1

Improve the appearance and functional design of the CBD by promoting visual improvements including landscaping, lighting, storefront renovations, etc.

2.2P.2

Promote the preservation and restoration of historic buildings within and adjacent to the CBD through historic designation of buildings and adoption of a “historic overlay” to promote preservation activities.

2.2 P.3

Promote the improvements of rear entrances in the CBD including the rehabilitation of backs of stores, storage areas, rear parking areas, and alleys.

2.2P.4

Facilitate the repair or removal of substandard and blighted buildings.

2.2P.5

Encourage the construction of new commercial developments in the CBD that complement and blend into the CBD.

2.1 P.6

Provide better directional signage to downtown CBD from I-90 and other points on entry within the community such as US 218 and C.S.A.H. 105, and Oakland Avenue.

2.1 P.7

Enhance the physical link to the I-90 corridor with improved gateway entrance.

2.1P.8

Enhance the physical link to Wescott Field and the Old Railway depot with a tie that strengthens downtown.

Recommendations

2.2 R.1: The city should implement a CBD redevelopment project using federal, state, and regional incentive programs to improve the appearance, function, and character of CBD. Specific issues to address include:

1. Streetscapes
2. Pocket Parks
3. New Housing Opportunities
4. Linkages to Other Community Attractions
5. Historic Restoration / Preservation

2.2 R.2: The city should establish design standards for building renovation, new building construction and parking lot design in the CBD.

2.2 R.3: The city should explore the creation of a “historic district” or overlay zone to promote the quality redevelopment of existing structures within the downtown and adjacent residential neighborhoods to the north and west. Consideration of similar action could be taken for the Sterling Mall area.

Goal 2.3

Accommodate and encourage expansion of the regional commercial center in northwest Austin.

Policies

2.3 P.1

Work to improve vehicular traffic circulation to accommodate existing commercial development and future growth including improvements:

- Reconstruction of C.S.A.H. 27
- Intersection Controls of 4th Street NW and 18th Ave. NW

2.3 P.2

Improve site development standards to create a uniform approach to development.

2.3 P.3

Adopt a philosophy toward development that restricts the introduction of incompatible land uses adjacent to commercial areas.

2.3 P.4

Develop land use plans that provide for adequate separation and protection of existing residential neighborhoods and properties from commercial developments.

2.3 P.5

Enhance the public right of ways with a design quality that coordinates throughout the commercial area, uses a high quality approach to materials and generates safe and effective pedestrian movement.

Recommendations

- 2.3 R.1: The city should create site development regulations that define site access control, site development standards and provision of ample amenities in commercial development.
- 2.3 R.2: The city should develop regulations that adequately provide for proper assignment of responsibilities for the cost of public improvements that result from new commercial development.

Goal 2.4

Provide properly located and designed neighborhood shopping facilities.

Policies

2.4 P.1

Encourage appropriately located neighborhood commercial facilities in close proximity to residential neighborhoods. Such facilities will be properly screened from residential properties, provide for adequate accommodations of traffic and on-site parking and provision of site and neighborhood amenities.

Recommendation

- 2.4 R.1: The city should identify “neighborhood” retail areas and work with neighborhoods (Recommendation 1.2 R.2) to define development / redevelopment standards that maintain and enhance the positive impact they may have on neighborhood residents.



INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Austin has an excellent industrial base anchored by Hormel Foods Corporation. The surrounding economy is based on agricultural production with an acknowledgment by community leaders of the “interconnectedness” of it all. Austin provides important employment opportunities to the region with manufacturers that “add value” to agricultural commodities. Austin’s industries diversify the local tax base of an otherwise overwhelmingly agricultural community.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the impact of 100 manufacturing jobs is shown below.

"Austin provides important employment opportunities to the region with manufacturers that 'add value' to agricultural commodities. "

Aggregate personal income	\$1,948,353
New retail establishments	7
Non-manufacturing jobs	64
Population Increase	202
Family units	102
School enrollment	61
Retail sales	\$1,477,453

Many leaders observed Austin’s dependence on Hormel Food Corporation’s continued success and presence in the community. Through time, a need to achieve greater diversity in the industrial fabric of the city was noted. It is important to retain and attract new industrial jobs to a community because they generally pay higher wage rates than existing jobs and contribute to a higher standard of living. As noted, industrial development, adequate housing and the success of commercial development are interrelated and interdependent.

The types of industries and manufacturers Austin would like to attract to the community should be based on the following concerns:

- Labor force
- Work ethics
- Type of industry
- Available housing stock
- Salary, pay range, and benefits
- Ability to increase and diversify the tax base
- Environmental concerns
- Utility demands and capacity
- Aesthetics
- Commitment to location
- Stability of industry

Industrial Resources

In recent years, Austin has used most of the available, developed commercial and industrial development sites for creation and/or expansions of businesses and industries. The table below lists the development areas in Austin and remaining acreage:

Development Area	Number of Remaining Acres
N.E. Industrial Area	16.31
Lone Oak Addition	31.97
Austin Business Park (w/utilities)	10
Austin Business Park (w/o utilities)	120
Railroad Property (between East Oakland and Whittier Townhomes)	5
East Side Development	5.53
C.M.C. Heartland Partners	14

At present, very few development sites remain for large-scale development projects. This has placed Austin at a disadvantage when compared to other communities in the industrial/ commercial recruitment process. As existing industrial development sites have become occupied, several areas for possible industrial expansion have been explored.





The Austin Business Park north and west of the city's existing industrial park is one such area targeted for new industrial growth. The availability of land, the ease of utility extensions, and good access to US Highway 218 and Interstate 90 are key reasons for such a decision.

Other areas within the community should be explored for development of possible industrial sites. Evaluation of possible development sites should consider numerous factors including:

- Existing inventory of industrial land and type of preferred development within existing area(s)
- Targeted business type for proposed facility(s)
- Accessibility of utilities, roadways and railway
- Adjacent land use
- Ownership patterns
- Topography

Assistance

Many programs exist to enhance Austin's efforts in industrial development. Economic development programs are administered on four levels: federal, state, regional, and local. The programs provide varying degrees of assistance depending on need, but typically address the following categories of required assistance:

-  Financial Incentives: Assistance to minimize overall start-up of expansions to lower financing costs.
-  Technical Assistance: Programs designed to provide businesses and local jurisdictions with assistance through research, training and information regarding marketing, regulations, and financial assistance programs.
-  Tax Incentives: Tax credits and deductions, which lower the tax liability of businesses and individuals who have contributed in some way to increase economic activity in the state.
-  Promotion/Coordination: Activities, often with the cooperation of the private sector that promotes the state or local economy or a specific sector of an economy.

Local incentives in the form of revolving loan funds and tax increment finance (TIF) proceeds, to name a few, are also available to community leaders. The existence and balanced use of these local resources provides a highly proactive and flexible tool in meeting many various and diverse economic development needs.

The use of TIF was made possible when the city of Austin adopted its first urban renewal plan and tax increment district in 1974. Since that time, Austin has added ten additional tax increment districts to meet overall development objectives throughout the city. In Minnesota, an Urban Renewal Area can be established for the following purposes:

1. Housing
2. Redevelopment
3. Renewal and Renovation
4. Economic Development
5. Soil Correction and Environmental Remediation

Projects in Austin that have been funded, in part, through the mechanism of TIF over the past few years include:

District #	Project Type
1	Industrial Speculative Building
2	Hormel Employees Credit Union
3	East Side Lake Condominiums
4	Cedars of Austin
5	Water Extension Project
6	Holiday Inn
7	Austin Industrial Park NE
8	Cedar View Housing
9	Palleton of Minnesota, Inc.
10	CBD Redevelopment
11	Cooperative Response Center

Austin should continue to position itself and its resources to remain competitive in the region, offering the full range of programs necessary to attract and retain businesses and industries. The community, in particular, is well positioned to attract high tech jobs because of facilities like Riverland Community College and leaders should continue to forge proactive relationships to build on the newly emerging “cyber economy.”

Industrial and manufacturing businesses can have a very positive impact on a community because of the jobs they create, the value they add to local commodities, taxes they pay, goods and services they consume, and the many “spin off” benefits they provide. Austin must strive to balance its industrial development efforts with environmental, financial, labor force, and housing issues.

Changes to the Land Use Plan Map

Existing industrial areas in portions of the northeast part of the community have been abandoned and replaced with residential designations. This change has been made in favor of industrial designation in the northwest part of Austin based on numerous factors including accessibility, utility services and visibility. Other changes have been made in an effort to “tighten” existing areas a make a more uniform and compact area.

Goal 3.1

The city should continue to promote industrial retention and expansion of existing industries.

Policies

3.1P.1

Use available federal, state, and local development tools to assist existing local industrial expansions and improvements. Continue to forge effective relationships with representatives from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

3.2P.2

Work toward attracting and retaining a well-educated, sound, trained industrial workforce through the creation of effective partnerships with area businesses and the Riverland Community College.

3.1P.3

Work to maintain the city's strong relationship with the Development Corporation of Austin to assist and support industrial / commercial projects.

3.1P.4

Continue to annually review the taxation and utility rate practices to ensure that they are not discouraging business attraction, expansion, and/or retention.

3.1P.5

Get to know area businesses through visitation teams that encourage open dialogue about employment and development issues within Austin.

Recommendations

- 3.1 R.1: Continue and expand the business visitation and retention program.
- 3.1 R.2 Continue to review and revise the Urban Renewal Plans for Austin and ensure they reflect current and future needs for the community.

- 3.1 R.3 Explore the opportunity to hold round table discussions on a periodic basis with the business and industry community to improve lines of communication with elected community leaders.

Goal 3.2

The city should continue to promote the recruitment of new targeted industries to the community.

Policies

3.2P.1

Identify and target specific industries and businesses for recruitment that consider Austin's strengths and weaknesses.

3.2P.2

- ✓ Keep marketing materials and community information up to date.

3.2P.3

Continue efforts to attract new industry, especially those that may provide linkages or strategic alliances with existing industries.

3.2P.4

Use available development tools to assist new industries and structure assistance offered in a way that attracts industries that provide high wage and salary structures.

3.2P.5

Pursue high environmental and aesthetic factors when considering industrial expansion and recruitment efforts.

3.2P.6

Aggressively market and recruit new industrial tenants to any vacant industrial buildings and sites.

Recommendations

- 3.2 R.1: Budget for and staff an aggressive industrial development targeted marketing program.
- 3.2 R.2: Maintain a website for Austin's industrial development and recruitment efforts.

- 3.2 R.3: Identify and target market specific industrial and business types to meet Austin’s development criteria.
- 3.2 R.4: Prepare an “Industrial Park Feasibility Study” to define areas of preferred development within the community based on numerous considerations including:
- Existing inventory of industrial land and type of preferred development within existing area(s)
 - Targeted business type for proposed facility(s)
 - Accessibility of utilities, roadways and railway
 - Adjacent land use
 - Ownership patterns
 - Topography

Goal 3.3

The city should work towards implementing strategies to achieve a new industrial park area on the Cook Farm in the general area adjacent to Highway 218.

Policies

3.3P.1

Identify areas available for industrial development through the Future Land Use Map, Zoning Map, Utility Service Area Map, and Transportation System Map.

3.3P.2

Use available federal, state, regional and local, technical and financial tools to develop new industrial areas.

3.3P.3

Develop new industrial development areas in a manner consistent with the needs of new and expanding businesses.

Recommendations

- 3.3 R.1: Develop an aggressive plan and timeline for extension of utilities, streets and other public services to begin development of the Cook Farm/Austin Business Park as the primary industrial development resource of the community.

- 3.3 R.2 Create a financing plan that includes grants and loans, local investments and a balanced use of TIF funds to help assure success of the project.



TRANSPORTATION

A good transportation system is vital to Austin's residential and business growth and stability. The Goal of a transportation system is to provide safe and efficient access to and from all areas of the community. As Austin continues to position itself for growth, it is essential to examine existing and future transportation infrastructure and systems.

Highways

"The continuation and expansion of the walking/bike trail system throughout the city will be an asset to the transportation network and to the recreation and park system."




An important part of the city's potential growth is dependent on transportation. Highway access for residents, commuters, and businesses is very important. Austin has good highway access with I-90 and US Highways 218. This highway system provides a vital link with Rochester, Albert Lea, and Winona, Minnesota, and La Crosse, Wisconsin. This system provides access for goods and services and links many commuters to and from the community for employment.

Local Service

City streets and other transportation infrastructure should continue to be properly maintained to assure public health and safety. Austin's transportation system has been key to its growth and success. People's dependence on the automobile and desire for convenience will further dictate future transportation systems. Presently, the city is experiencing some congestion and safety problems during peak usage in a few areas. As the community grows, the importance of a good internal transportation system will increase.

Convenient parking for downtown businesses is vital to the future success of the CBD. Employers and employees should continue to be reminded that prime parking areas should be kept available for customer use.

Major roadway collectors within the community should become a point of focus to preserve the level of service and safety. These roadway include, among others:

-  16th Avenue SW
-  12th Street SW (Highway 105)
-  14th Street NW (Oakland Avenue to I-90)
-  4th Street NW
-  Oakland Avenue (I-90 Business Loop)

These roadways act as major "traffic movers" and in some cases, an important entranceway into the community. Land use activities that take place adjacent to these roadways should limit access and seek to improve the overall functionality and appearance.

Trails

The continuation and expansion of the walking/bike trail system throughout the city will be an asset to the transportation network and to the recreation and park system. This system can be connected to the larger community of S.E. Minnesota through extensions to the regional trail system including the Shooting Star, Blazing Star and Blooming Prairie trails that are currently under development.

Airport and Air Service

Austin's airport provides a safe and convenient facility for corporate and private use. To accommodate jet aircraft, reinvestment in the facility is occurring including a lengthening of the runway, and improvements in approach and landing controls and communication. Between 1990 and 1994, Austin Airport averaged 25,420 flight operations per year. This number is anticipated to increase to between 32,318 to 33,334 operations per year by 2014. This expansion will solidify the airports' presence as a regional transportation facility and enhance industrial retention and recruitment initiatives.

The Rochester International Airport is located 35 miles northeast of Austin. Two major airlines, American and Northwest Airlines serve the airport. American Airlines has direct flights to five major airports and connecting flights to and from 69 airports across the United States and 19 foreign airports. Northwest Airlines has direct flights from five major airports and to two major airports. Northwest has connecting flights to over 200 domestic airports and 32 foreign airports. Air cargo service is provided by a variety of national and regional companies.

Changes to the Land Use Plan Map

New transportation corridors have been suggested to provide effective connections necessary for the safe and efficient movement of traffic.

Goal 4.1

Plan, develop, and maintain a safe and efficient transportation system to meet existing and future needs.

Policies

4.1 P.1

Identify major transportation routes and necessary rights-of-way and easements needed to meet the long-term needs of the community.

4.1 P.2

Plan the overall transportation system to comply with widely accepted design and safety standards.

4.1 P.3

Base the local roadway system to comply with widely accepted design and safety standards.

4.1 P.4

Adhere to a maintenance plan to ensure that existing curbs, gutter, and road surfaces are well maintained.

Recommendations

- 4.1 R.1: The city should develop a capital improvement plan, which will interlink evaluation to replace and maintain city streets with an underground utility replacement program.

Goal 4.2

Encourage alternate transportation methods less dependent on motor vehicles.

Policies

4.2 P.1

Promote and encourage walking and biking as an alternate transportation link and expand the trail system to accommodate internal uses and connection to the regional trail system.

4.2 P.2

Encourage and promote car-pooling and ride sharing

4.2 P.3

Improve pedestrian access, movement, and crossing to provide both convenience and safety.

4.2 P.4

Review the need for local bus or van service outside the city.

Recommendations

- 4.2 R.1: The city should review its sidewalk, bike path, and trail systems annually in order to encourage expansion of its pedestrian and bike path system.

UTILITIES

The availability of utilities, and their cost for extension is often an effective means to control the pace of development. This fact, together with sound annexation policies and firm control of urban fringe areas, can provide an excellent method of defining urban expansion.

"Existing utility systems and their ability to in cost effective ways are key to Austin's future growth."

Existing utility systems and their ability to expand in cost effective ways are key to Austin's future growth. Local utility systems have been well maintained, but expansion will be required to adequately serve future growth. Recent improvement of the city's wastewater treatment plant will serve the community's needs well into the future. Future development of the city should be encouraged in areas where utility extensions can occur in a planned manner, keeping safety, efficiency and financial feasibility issues in mind.

A water distribution study completed in 1999 provides an overview of projected usage and distribution considerations for the year 2020. Recommended improvements to serve growth areas include water-main replacements and "up-sizings" for areas throughout the community. The proposed improvements occur in growth areas identified in the future land use plan including the northwest area—designated for future possible industrial and residential expansion. Utilities need to be provided in a safe, efficient and equitable manner. Few areas were identified as major concerns.

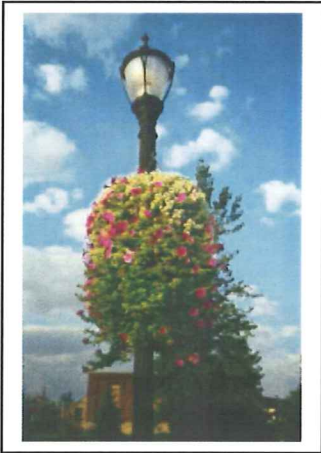
The city's present maintenance and upkeep of existing utilities is adequate. As new problems arise, the city will promptly review the situations and take appropriate actions. New federal, state, and local environmental standards could have a big impact on future utility expansions

The following considerations should be used when determining the type and size of utility extensions:

1. Utility systems are designed for the ultimate population or potential development style such as:
 - a. Residential, low and high density
 - b. Commercial
 - c. Industrial
 - d. Public
2. The design is determined by:
 - a. Maximum hourly usage
 - b. Ground water infiltration
 - c. Topography (slope)
 - d. Location of main system
 - e. Depth and type of excavation

The questions of future growth and/or major renovation depends on several factors including:

1. Population growth
2. Residential development
3. Commercial development
4. Industrial development
5. Continued satisfactory operation of the existing system
6. Future federal and state requirements



The city should continue to establish clear policies on future utility extensions and expansions. These policies should address size and capacity of an extension, who pays for what, and established procedures on reviewing and granting utility extensions.

Goal 5.1

Provide city utilities to all residents in a safe, reliable, and affordable manner.

Policies

5.1P.1

Expand and maintain city utility systems in the most cost-effective manner using connection fees as a means to help fund costs associated with system extensions and capacity enhancements.

5.1.A P.2

Develop a long-range maintenance plan for the city utility systems to ensure that the city's investment in infrastructure is well maintained.

5.1 P.3

Develop a practiced stance toward utility extensions that direct growth to beneficial areas within the community to support industrial and commercial development.

5.1 P.4

Explore federal, state, regional, county, and alternative local funding sources to assist in the replacement, expansion, and maintenance of the city's utility systems.

Recommendations

- 5.1 R.1: The city should continue to review its present development policies and set clear guidelines for future utility extensions and upgrades.
- 5.1 R.2: The city should improve water flows for fire protection and to encourage industrial development in Northwest Austin recommended as part of the water distribution study.

Goal 5.2

Due consideration should be given to aesthetic values and the natural environment when replacing and expanding city utilities.

Policies

5.2 P.1

Place overhead utilities underground when feasible.

5.2 P.2

Establish proper buffer zones should be established between overhead utilities, substation, and treatment facilities and residential and commercial uses.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

Storm water management has become a primary development concern at the federal, state, and local level. As Austin continues to develop, effective storm water management practices will be an issue. In planning for growth, Austin should identify drainage and detention areas that can best address possible drainage needs.

Recent History of Flooding in Austin

The need for effective storm water management is not a new issue in the city of Austin. As a result of flooding in 1978, 159 homes and businesses have been removed from the city's floodways. However, the impacts of inadequate storm water management still plague the city as recently as July 2000. Although the Cedar River rose to a level 1.5 feet higher than the 1978 flood, a portion of damage in July 2000 came from surface runoff and backup of the sanitary sewer system. These factors, along with other relevant factors, should be analyzed in preparing the Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan.

Why Plan?

The need for storm water management practices is heightened by concern for the environment. When land is cleared for the construction of roads and buildings, significant erosion can occur to clog existing storm drain systems. Even small construction sites have the potential to cause severe damage to water quality with sediment loading as high as 100 times that of agricultural lands, and 1,000 to 2,000 times that of forest lands. Unmanaged construction sites can contribute more sediment to surface waters than was previously deposited over several decades.

Sediment can cause many other problems including:

- drinking water contamination,
- smothered aquatic habitats (which hinders or eliminates successful fish spawning)
- diminished plant productivity
- reduced or eliminated accessibility of oxygen to fish
- degraded water quality for recreation and economic activity.

Storm runoff throughout a community can also contribute pollutants to the natural environment including: phosphorous, nitrogen, petroleum products, construction chemicals, and solid wastes. In urban areas, streets and other paved areas carry polluted storm water into storm sewer systems that may be released directly into surface waters. In rural areas, storm water runs off agricultural areas into drainage ditches and other

conveyances where it is directly released into rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.

In response to these problems, the U.S. Congress amended the Clean Water Act in 1987 to develop more stringent regulations for storm water discharges. EPA's storm water regulations and Minnesota's storm water program are designed to protect the quality of surface waters by preventing or reducing soil erosion and other pollutants from leaving construction sites both during and after construction.

Under Minnesota law, anyone conducting a construction activity that disturbs five or more acres of total land area is required to apply for coverage under the MPCA's General NPDES Construction Storm Water Permit. Construction activity includes the following:

- Clearing
- Grading
- Excavation
- Road Building
- Construction of:
 - Residential houses
 - Office buildings
 - Commercial facilities
 - Industrial buildings
 - Landfills
 - Airports
 - Feedlots

The General Construction Storm Water Permit requires that a Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control Plan be developed for the project, in accordance with Appendix A of the permit. The Goals of this plan are to:

1. Prevent erosion from occurring
2. Keep sediment on the site during construction
3. Minimize the tracking of soil and other sediment from the construction site onto paved surfaces by vehicles

The permit also requires that a Permanent Erosion and Sediment Control Plan be developed for the project in accordance with Appendix B of the permit. The Goal of this plan is to minimize negative impacts caused by storm water runoff from the project's ultimate development.

The city of Austin can also seek to create local or regional collection, retention / detention systems to help minimize the effects of heavy rain events. The first step in the process would be the completion of a storm water management study to define areas within the community that are impacted by storm water. From this, effective strategies can be developed

to guide new developments and minimize their impacts on the existing storm water collection systems.

Functionally, the city can work with County and Township Boards to establish Storm Water Districts outside of the city limits. Within the corporate limits, the city can seek to establish a storm sewer utility and user impact fees for new developments to help pay for necessary improvements.

Goal 6.1

The city should develop a Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan for the community.

Policies

6.1 P.1

Work with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and other state and regional groups to ensure storm water management needs are being met in the community.

6.1 P.2

Support the efforts to reduce sediment and erosion issues and polluted storm water run off issues.

6.1 P.3

Explore creation of larger regional storm water detention areas as the community continues to grow.

Recommendations

- 6.1 R.1: The city should begin to develop a process to adopt and implement a Comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan.
- 6.1 R.2: The city should explore the feasibility of adopting a storm water utility or storm water management assessment policy, or impact fees, that supports the associated costs of a citywide storm water management plan.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Austin has a well-planned recreational system to meet the needs of its residents. Recent expansions of the recreational trail system throughout the community have helped to create effective physical links between park facilities. Recreational facilities that provide for specific uses such as Riverside Arena, the Mill Pond Park amphitheater, and the Hornel Nature Center complete the system that addresses the need of a wide spectrum of users. These various recreational facilities could be categorized as: neighborhood parks, community parks, athletic complexes, natural area preserves and greenways.

A community must plan to meet the needs of all ages and types of users. It is important to recognize the relationship of active and passive recreation. Recreation facilities need to separate and enhance the relationship between active and passive recreation.

Active recreation includes leisure activities usually performed with others, often requiring equipment and taking place at prescribed places, sites, or fields. These activities may include swimming, tennis, baseball, soccer, golf, football, handball, and playground activities to name but a few. Passive Recreation may includes any leisure time activity considered less strenuous such as bike riding, hiking, walking, and picnicking.

Open space and facilities for recreational opportunities are important aspects of a community and the perceived “quality of life”. Many of the responses generated through the public participation process centered on recreational activities. Overall, general support is present in the city of Austin for continued investment of recreational facilities as illustrated through the support of Westcott Field or plans to connect to a regional trail system.

It should be recognized that recreation facilities are important in attracting visitors and new residents to Austin.

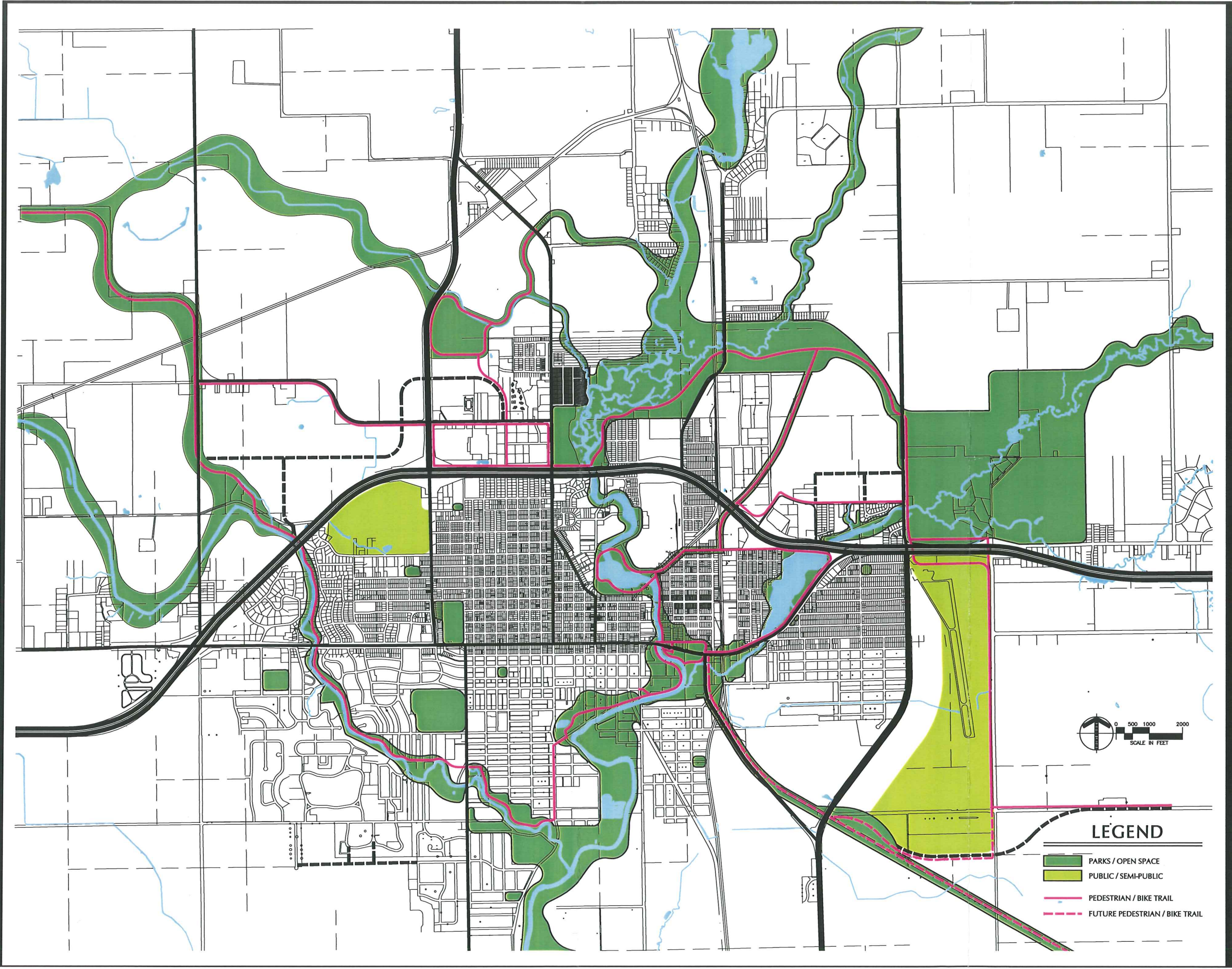
Goal 7.1

Create and maintain a balanced system of interconnected local and regional parks, recreational facilities, and open spaces

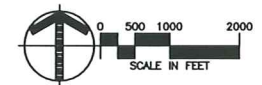
Policies

7.1 P.1





Continue to utilize the Park Board as the responsible agency for updating and implementing the park plan priorities.



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA
TRAILS & OPEN SPACE



LEGEND

	PARKS / OPEN SPACE
	PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC
	PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL
	FUTURE PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL

PROJECT NUMBER	6037
COMPUTER FILE	6037FLUS
DATE	06/13/00
DRAWN BY	B.J.B.
CHECKED BY	R.L.F.
REVISIONS	
06/26/00	
08/15/00	
SHEET NUMBER	

7.1 P.2

Direct the Park Board to annually review the city's park and recreation system to assure it meets the changing needs of the community.

7.1 P.3

Continue to promote a trail system that interconnects park and recreation areas to each other, both within the city and regionally.

7.1 P.4

Continue encouragement of intergovernmental cooperation with Mower County, the school district and nearby communities.

7.1 P.5

Encourage continued use of school property and other public and private facilities and playgrounds for public use.

7.1 P.6

Provide adequate funding to maintain existing park and recreational systems. An acceptable balance should exist between maintenance and capital improvement expenditures.

7.1 P.7

Explore the use of park development fees to assist in the creation of new parks and maintenance of existing parks.

Recommendations

- 7.1 R.1: The city and Park Board should maintain and annually update a five-year plan for park revenue and expenditures. The plan should address parkland dedication and funding through user fees, tax appropriations and developer impact fees.
- 7.1 R.2: The Park Board should develop a master plan for each park area to guide future development of each area.
- 7.1 R.3: The city should recognize the importance of open spaces adjacent to the various waterways in Austin and work toward improving and enhancing these areas. In particular, improvements to The Central Community Park in the form of expanded facilities

and conversion of the former St. Paul Lutheran Church to a Park Pavilion should be completed.

- 7.1 R.4: The city and Park Board should analyze the need for natural park areas/greenways within the community. Recommended areas for these natural park areas may be developed within the linear park system, (the floodplain and areas adjacent to proposed pedestrian trails) and the possible expansion of the Nature Center.
- 7.1 R.5: The city should continue to pursue and support the creation of inter-community recreational trails to enhance and connect to existing recreational trails in Southeast Minnesota.

LAND USE

Austin has a wide range of diverse land uses arranged in a way that reflects the community's age. Much of the city was developed before contemporary land use theory and regulations were developed. As a result, many incompatible uses are located adjacent or in close proximity to each other. Localized neighborhood retail areas are an example of this older style development pattern.

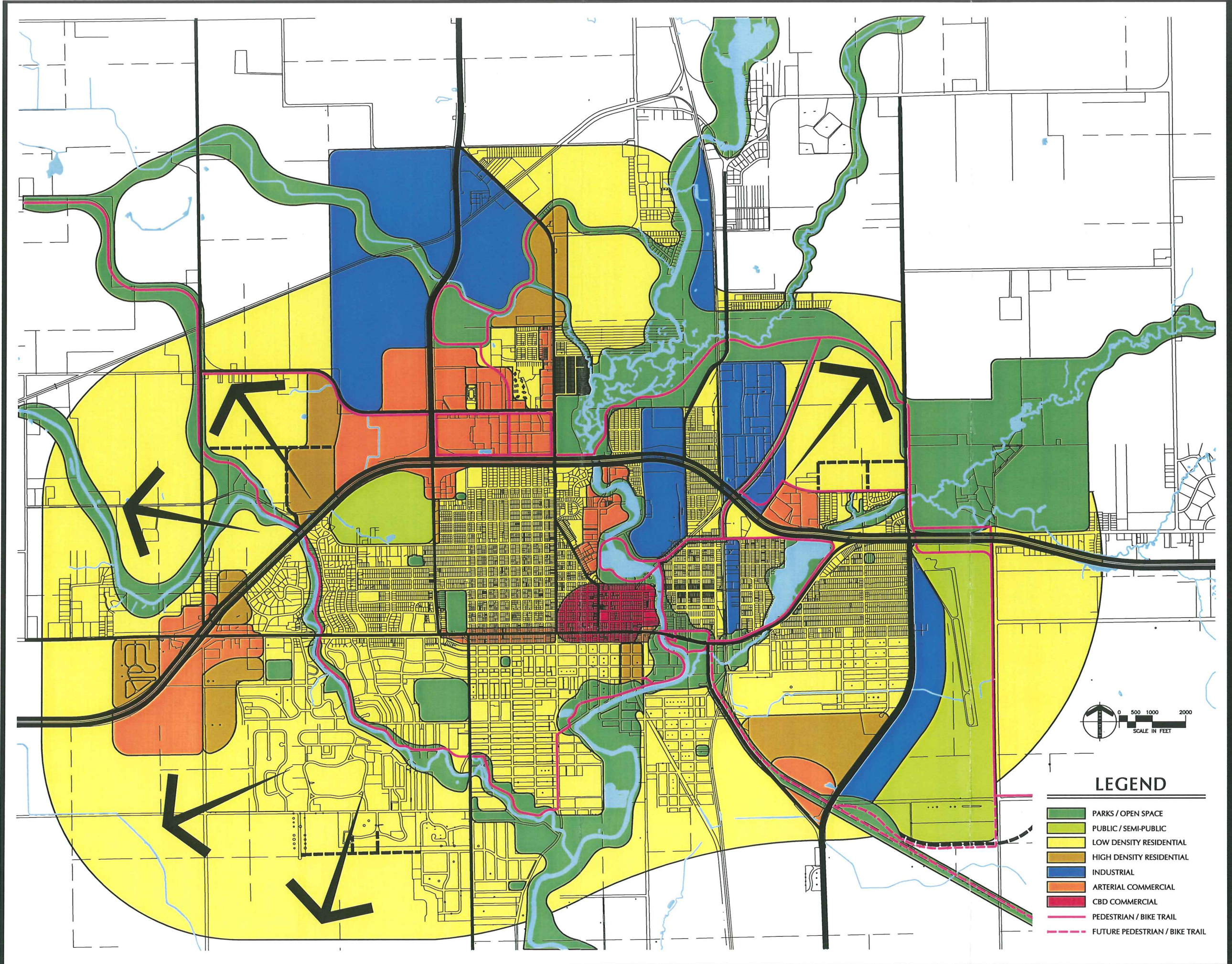
"Austin has a well-balanced mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses."

The rivers and flood plain areas within and adjacent to Austin provide an attractive natural setting. These areas also impact the city's growth patterns, transportation system, and ability to extend city utilities. The Federal Emergencies Management Agency and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regulations control much of the flood plain area. Flood plain areas must also meet designated wetland criteria and comply with state wetland regulations. As a result, these rules and restrictions within these and other areas will have an impact on how the city grows in the future and how individual projects respond to environmental needs protected under the law. These areas are important because they provide valuable open space, wildlife habitat, and storm water runoff areas.

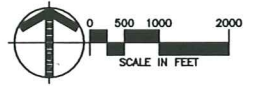
Austin's built land uses consist of a variety of types ranging from single-family residential to industrial. The local economy, historical trends, physical limitations and policies have influenced the pattern of growth and relationships between existing land uses. As the community continues to grow, it is important to review existing, proposed, and future land uses.

The need for housing is well documented in this plan and through various efforts of the city of Austin in recent years. Future solutions for residential housing needs and demand may require changes in land uses to accommodate new housing types. New trends include a wider market acceptance for town homes and condominium units. When developers attempt to build these units on existing lots, there is sometimes difficulty in meeting existing zoning ordinances. To better explore this problem, greater flexibility in land development controls would be beneficial. In addition, future land use requirements and residential needs also may be influenced by employment trends, actual employment levels, and compensation because future employees will need places to live that meet their needs and ability to pay.

Austin has a well-balanced mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses. This mix is beneficial in helping to distribute the property tax burden among a wide variety of land uses without being too dependent on a single source or class of property for revenue. Recent trends in commercial development on the city's northwest side will continue to enhance this beneficial mix and maintain a stable property tax profile for Austin. As Austin grows, efforts to maintain a proper mix of land uses should be pursued to help ensure that the property tax burden continues to



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
 AUSTIN, MINNESOTA
FUTURE LAND USE

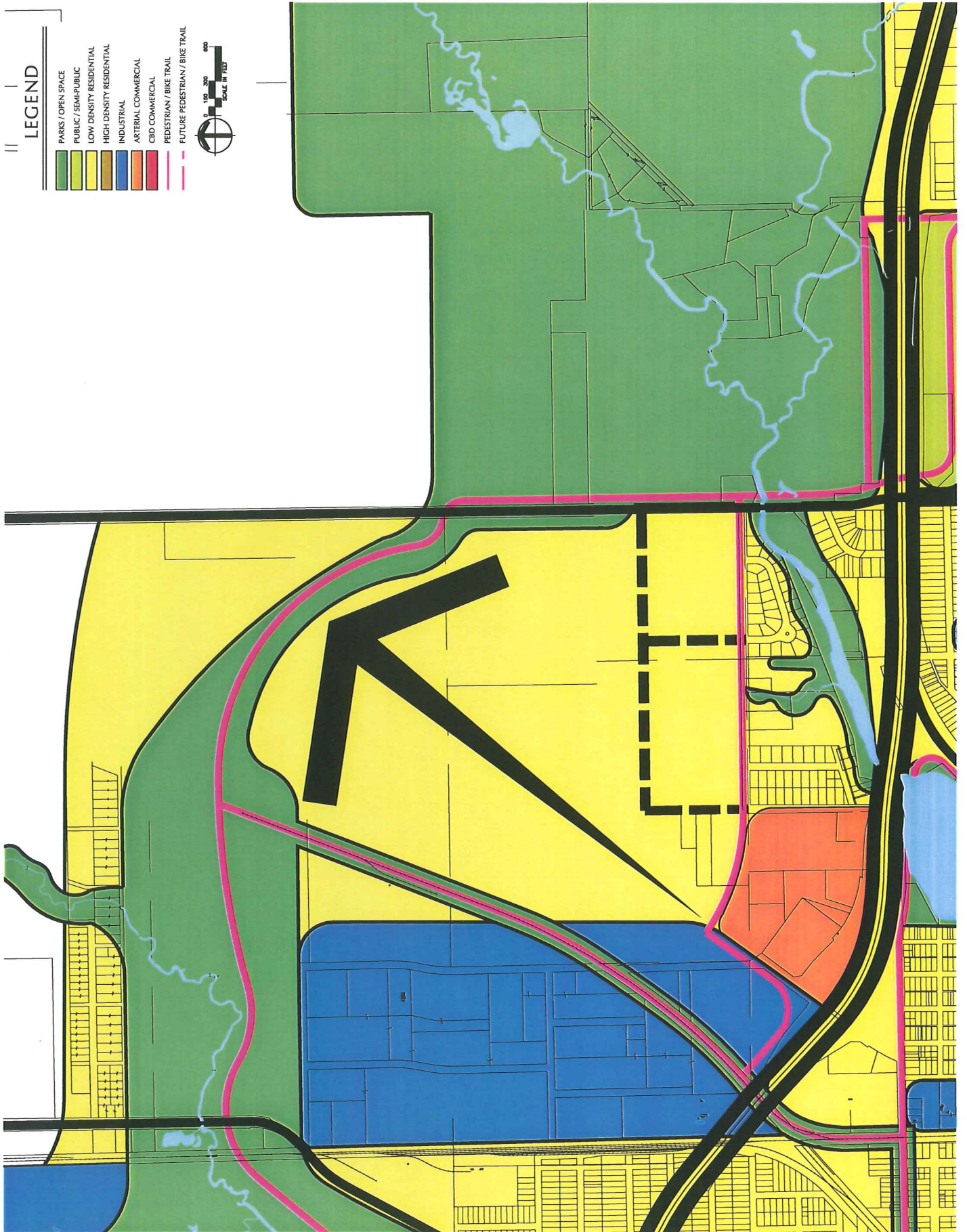


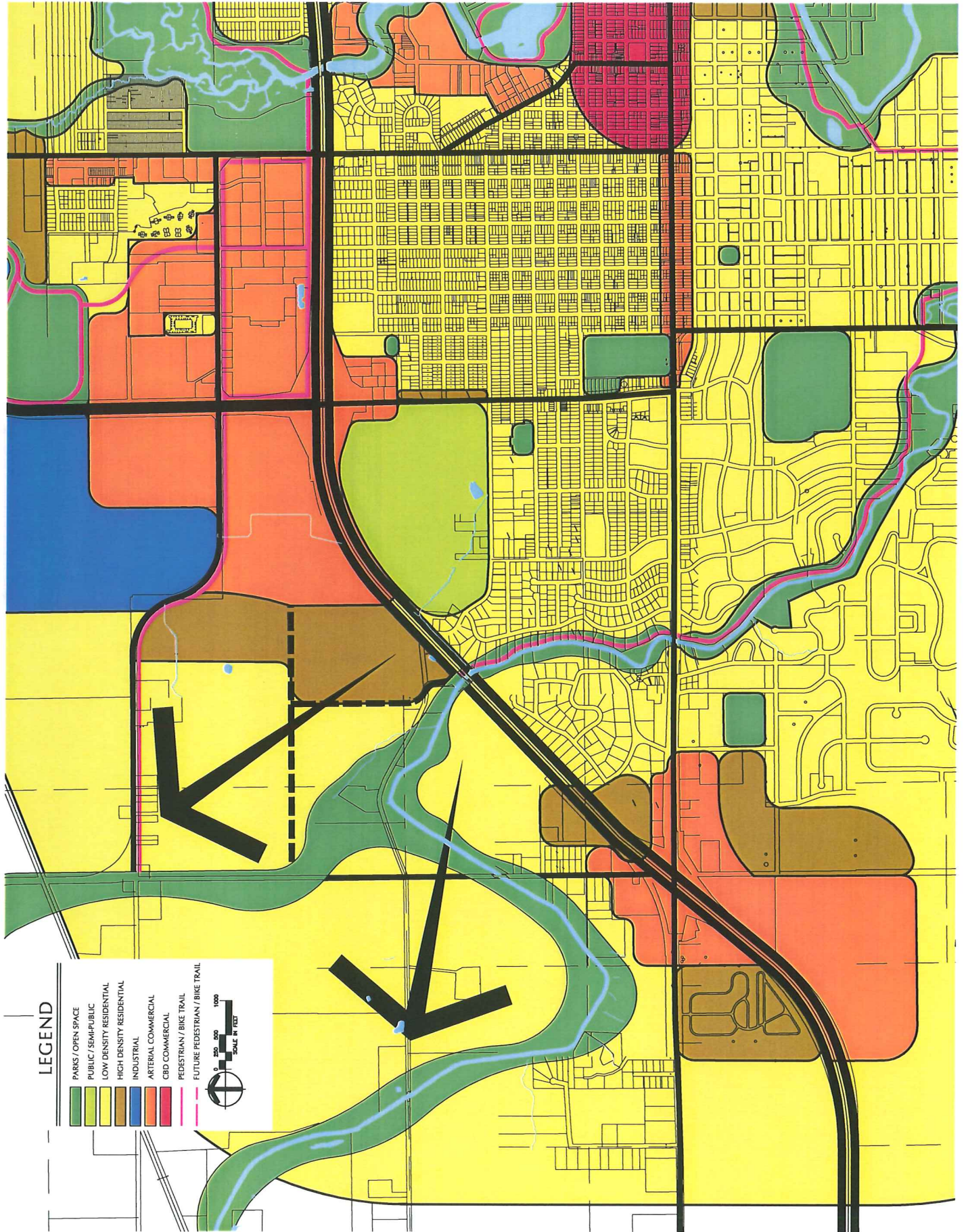
LEGEND

- PARKS / OPEN SPACE
- PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC
- LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- ARTERIAL COMMERCIAL
- CBD COMMERCIAL
- PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL
- FUTURE PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL

PROJECT NUMBER	6037
COMPUTER FILE	6037FLUS
DATE	12/08/99
DRAWN BY	B.J.B.
CHECKED BY	R.L.F.
REVISIONS	
01/13/00	06/26/00
04/07/00	07/26/00
05/22/00	06/15/00
06/13/00	

SHEET NUMBER







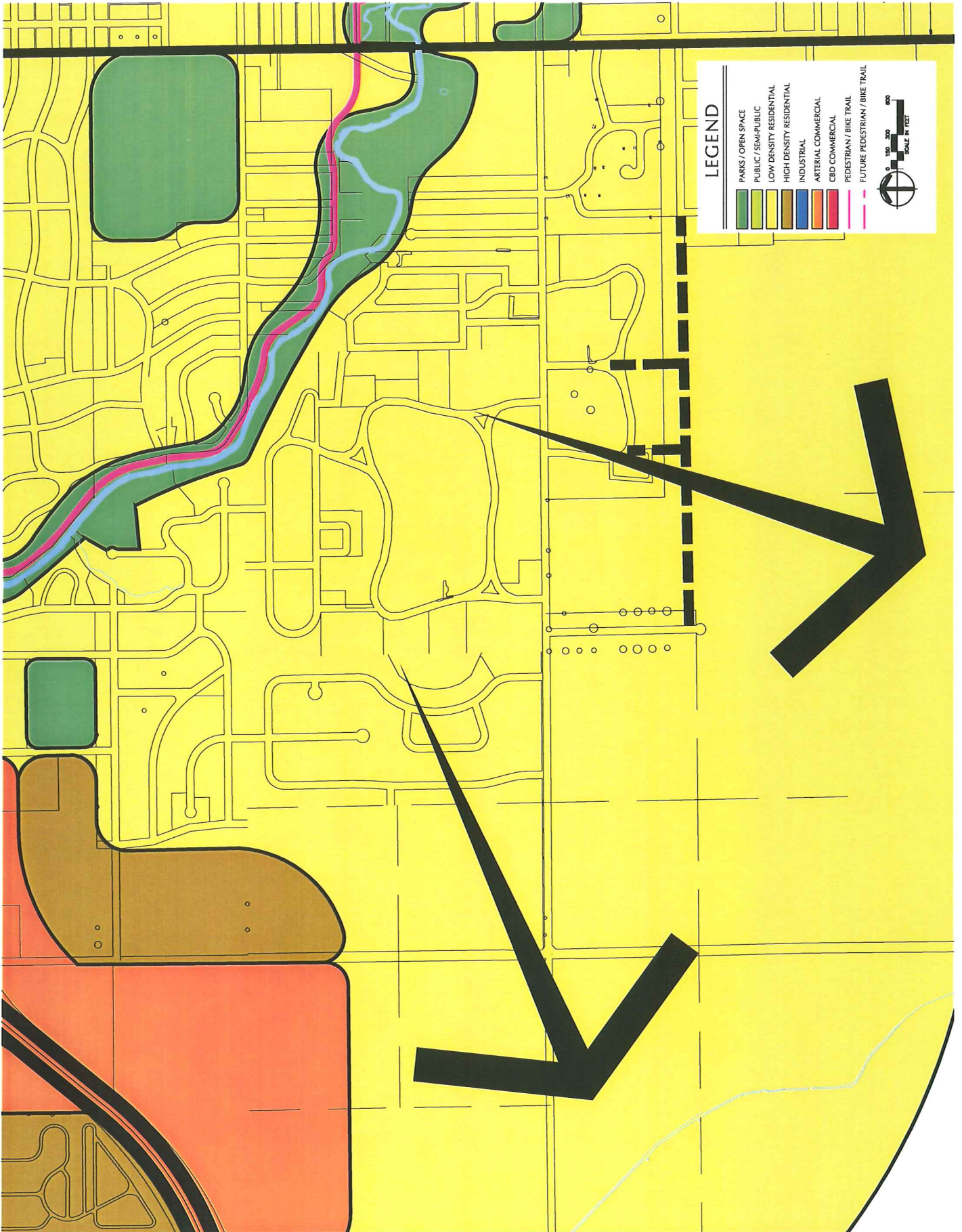
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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

SOUTHWEST GROWTH AREA



be distributed in an equitable way. Tools available to the city for maintaining a proper mix and relationship between different land uses are the city zoning ordinance, zoning map, and future land use map.

Goal 8.1

Develop a land use plan that properly allocates land for a balanced variety of land uses to encourage new development and redevelopment in appropriate areas.

Policies

8.1 P.1

Provide adequate, properly zoned land to accommodate housing needs of all styles and price ranges.

8.1 P.2

Encourage additional commercial land use in the northwest commercial development area in the Oak Park Mall vicinity.

8.1 P.3

Ensure zoning and land use considerations address water, ground, air, and noise pollution issues.

8.1 P.4

Improve the function and appearance of the community by encouraging and promoting appropriate types of land uses compatibility of adjacent land uses, landscaping, and screening.

8.1 P.5

Encourage the removal of existing buildings that have exceeded their useful life and promote the redevelopment of sites or conversion of sites to open space uses such as parks, trails, parking, etc.

8.1 P.6

Require that new development and redevelopment is landscaped to preserve existing trees and vegetation, protect steep slopes, and maintain natural drainage features.

8.1 P.7

Support and preserve existing neighborhoods through zoning, subdivision, and building controls. Continue to review and refine the performance of the zoning ordinance to respond to trends and issues in land use.

8.1 P.8

Support efforts to eliminate the impact of nuisance properties, (i.e., junk and dilapidated properties) on the health and safety of area residents.

8.1 P.9

Continue to support efforts to protect wetlands and other natural areas consistent with federal and state laws and guidelines.

Recommendations

- 8.1 R.1: The city should periodically review its zoning ordinance and map to ensure that new factors, trends, and market conditions are reflected.
- 8.1 R.2: On a periodic basis, the city should review and analyze granted variances and permitted non-conforming uses to determine their effect on current land uses in the city of Austin.
- 8.1 R.3: The city should monitor and review land use changes in Mower County, specifically those relating to the urban fringe areas.
- 8.1 R.4: The city should initiate a process to identify unique and historical areas and structures within the community and examine methods to protect, preserve, and promote those areas.

Goal 8.2

The city will promote controlled growth consistent with its Future Land Use Map, Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Policies:

8.2 P.1

Complete annexation of surrounding urban land in a manner consistent with the city's comprehensive plan, using the following guidelines:

- 1) Areas to be annexed will be a logical extension of the city's existing boundary and utilities.
- 2) A plan will be developed for specific undeveloped areas to be annexed.
- 3) The existing and future development of the annexed areas should be in the best interest of the community. Cost and benefit examples that should be considered may include the following:
 - a) The short and long-term impact of extending all city utilities and services.
 - b) The impact that the developed area will have on the balance of the city if it is not annexed.
 - c) The impact of needed capital improvements and the general revenues of the area to be developed.
 - d) Business and employment opportunities.
 - e) Improved ability to manage wastewater treatment.
 - f) Improved drainage control.
 - g) Expanded residential growth opportunities.
 - h) Improved transportation systems.
 - i) Stability and diversity of the community's economic base.
 - j) Impact on community's population growth.
 - k) The efficiencies of adding small developments to the city.
 - l) Impact on environment.

Recommendations

- 8.2 R.1: The city should work with adjacent townships and Mower County to identify areas and issues pertaining to the future growth of the city. The phasing of infrastructure extension and necessary municipal services should relate to needs of the annexed areas and the city's ability to provide services in a safe, cost-effective, and well planned manner.

Goal 8.3

Develop a coordinated approach to planning for urban growth in the urban fringe areas.

Policies:

8.3 P.1

Encourage cooperative intergovernmental planning within the urban fringe area to:

- 1) Avoid urban development with inadequate extension of city services and infrastructure.
- 2) Coordinated long-range plans for transportation systems, parks, open spaces, trail systems, environmental protection, fire and police protection, utilities, infrastructure, and other needed services.
- 3) Develop commonly accepted planning and development standards with the adjacent townships and Mower County.

Goal 8.4

Accomplish improvement in the urban design of the community through better appearance and function.

Policies:

8.4 P.1

Adhere to standards that will assure proper landscaping and screening of parking lots and unsightly site uses.

8.4 P.2

Work to retain attractive, historic buildings within the community.

8.4 P.3

Adhere to specific site design restrictions for properties that are environmentally sensitive or have high visibility.

8.4 P.4

Work to develop attractive, welcoming points of entry to the community.

8.4 P.5

Work to improve the attractiveness of highway and roadway corridors within Austin, especially I-90, U.S. Highway 218, 16th Avenue SW, 12th Street SW (Highway 105), 14th Street NW (Oakland Avenue to I-90), 4th Street NW, Oakland Avenue (I-90 Business Loop).

8.4 P.6

Encourage residential developments that link neighborhoods.

8.4 P.7

Assure that roadway widths are adequate for the type of development served, but not wider than necessary to assure proper scale, reduction of hard surfacing and reduced costs to the developer and the city.

8.4 P.8

Review non-conforming uses for adherence to city policies. Enforce regulations that apply to non-conforming uses and review of effectiveness.

Recommendations

8.4 R.1: Improve the appearance and function of all arterial corridors within the community such I-90, U.S. Highway 218, 16th Avenue SW, 12th Street SW (Highway 105), 14th Street NW (Oakland Avenue to I-90), 4th Street NW, Oakland Avenue (I-90 Business Loop). This could be accomplished by reducing or eliminating the proliferation of over-utilized, poorly planned commercial areas through adherence to zoning requirements and land use plan policies.

8.4 R.2: Strive to eliminate non-conforming uses when appropriate and valid. Enforce existing laws regarding non-conforming uses.

ONE YEAR ACTION STRATEGIES

Each community has a definite amount of resources with which it can address needs and issues. When all such needs within a community are identified, the amount of time and financial resources required to address the issues can seem overwhelming. For that reason, priorities must be set to arrive at a manageable list of tasks.

Through the community survey, focus group discussions and open forum meetings, a list of community priorities has been identified as part of this plan. These priorities were established at a community forum following completion of the survey and focus group meetings. To be of use, this plan must be ratified by the city council and implemented. This portion of the plan identifies specific needs and specific assignments of responsibility that must be made in order to establish accountability for future change.

The following strategies are established for action:

1. **Industrial Development**

The Cook Farm/Austin Business Park site in northern Austin represents an opportunity to create an additional industrial development resource. Currently, Austin has a limited amount and variety of properties ready for industrial expansion.

To date, several plans have been developed to provide utilities and a workable development layout to the Austin Business Park. If implemented, these improvements would provide a greater benefit to the entire northwest development area through increased fire protection and available water and sewer access through the construction of "regional" systems.

At times, "investments" in issues like this become delayed waiting for the "right timing" or for a significant development prospect to drive an inevitable groundbreaking. In reality, if communities wait for an industrial development prospect to provide the impetus to move the project ahead, it is too late. Few industries have the time or patience to wait for utility extensions and street paving. To be competitive and successful, Austin needs to create ample developed areas that are available and fully serviced.

The Austin Business Park site is an attractive, well-located, easily developed and accessed property under control of the city. Strategies can be set to minimize the expense to the extent possible. Excellent funding sources exist by which financial resources from outside the community can supplement local funding to make the project achievable.

Responsible Parties:

Mayor and City Council
City Administration and Engineer
Planning Commission
Development Corporation of Austin

Timeline:

2000

Research funding sources
Prepare development concepts and cost estimates
Prepare development controls

2001

Design and bid public improvements
Obtain financing commitments
Begin construction

- Extend sewer along 218 north to west entrance
- Complete water loop from Lone Oak, north, west and south to north of connection at Target center
- Complete initial phase of sewer and street extensions for facility

Prepare marketing program

2002

Construct well and water tower
Implement marketing

2003

Complete additional extension of roadway and sewer improvements.

2. S/F Residential Development

Demand appears to exist for additional residential development in the Southwest and Northeast portions of the city. These areas appear to be very logical extensions of development. Concern exists that these developments be properly connected to existing adjacent developments by streets that will link the new developments to existing neighborhoods.

Encouragement of these developments should occur, together with an expression of the expectation that proper street linkages are created. The city should be prepared to require that these linkages occur and even facilitate the acquisition of street right-of-way for that purpose if necessary.

Responsible Parties:

City Council
Planning Commission
City Engineer and City Planner

Timeline:

2000

Prioritize areas of preferred development based on:

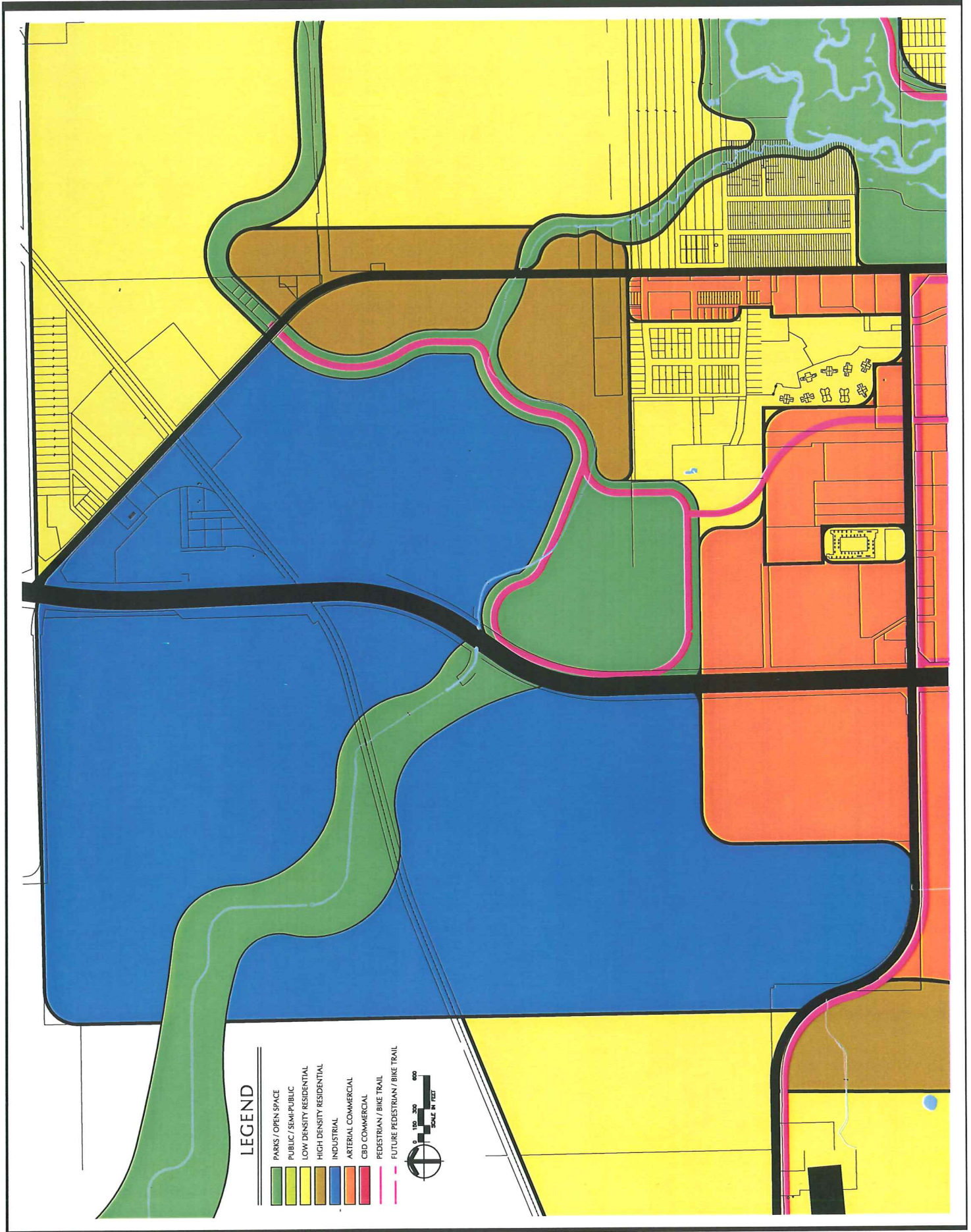
- Infrastructure capacity
- Housing need
- Landowner and developer interest

Review development standards to define impacts on development costs










Define possible incentive opportunities.

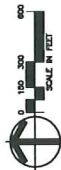
2001

Share expectation with developers and neighborhoods



LEGEND

-  PARKS / OPEN SPACE
-  PUBLIC / SEMI-PUBLIC
-  LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  ARTERIAL COMMERCIAL
-  CBD COMMERCIAL
-  PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL
-  FUTURE PEDESTRIAN / BIKE TRAIL



3. Recreation

Recreational trail usage is increasing in southeast Minnesota. Several excellent models with proven usage exist. An opportunity exists to link Austin's internal trail system with trails extending west to Albert Lea and eastward to Mower and Fillmore Counties. Funding programs exist to assist in trail creation. Austin should lead in the creation of the linkages.

Responsible Party:

Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Timeline:

2000

Identify Regional Partners

Establish framework for cooperative development of regional trails

Create concepts and funding options

2001

Prepare and market regional strategy

Expend political capital to receive funding commitments

2001-2005

Implement in phases

4. M/F Residential Development

An opportunity exists to create additional multiple-family housing in the CBD and throughout the community. Based upon the success of prior projects and evidence of unmet demand that exists for such units, such projects would be timely.

A variety of financial resources exist for these projects. Excellent sites on the east side of the CBD can be assembled for a sizable housing project. Improvements to utilities to support commercial, industrial, or single-family development throughout the balance of the community can also support M/F development.

The projects should include excellent design, high quality building materials, and amenities that will benefit the residents living in and adjacent to the developments. Such projects will achieve needed development of east-side downtown sites and will expand the downtown resident base. They will also provide opportunities to locate new residents close to areas of employment and create cost effective, affordable housing.

Responsible Parties:

City Council
Planning Commission
Planning and Engineering Department
City Administrator
Austin Housing and Redevelopment Authority

Timeline:

Central Business District

2000

Assemble funding and design concepts for CBD M/F/ Projects

2001

Acquire properties and construct

Community-Wide

2000

Prioritize areas preferred development based on:

Infrastructure capacity and availability

Housing need

Landowner and developer interest

Review development standard to define impacts on development costs

Define possible incentive opportunities
Explore the development of medium-density zoning guideline to support alternative types of transitional housing uses

2001

Share expectations with developers and landowners

Northwest Austin / Lone Oak Addition

Conversion of the Lone Oak Addition from industrial use to a mixed-use residential development including multi-family units and single family lots, is a critical issue facing the community. Lone Oak has existed as a “development ready” industrial park for over five years, with little interest from developers or manufacturers for expansion purposes. Existing businesses and industries within the community are currently facing a severe labor shortage that is driven, in part, by a lack of affordable housing. Lone Oak provides an immediate resource of land under the city’s control that can be easily adapted for multi-family housing development. It is well suited for this type of use because of its proximity excellent transportation linkages, retail and future employment areas.

Conversion of Lone Oak to residential use will create a need to accelerate plans for the creation of new industrial properties in the near future. The Austin Business Park provides a ready-made candidate because of its visibility and accessibility to US 218 and its control by the city.

2000

Consider adaptive reuse of Lone Oak Addition for use as a mixed-use residential development based on:

- Relationship to major arterial collector
- Utilities
- Relationship to areas of employment and commercial activity
- Ability to provide an effective transition from a more intensive land use (industrial, commercial) to a less intensive land use (single-family residential)

Rezone Property

Actively market for mixed-use residential development

2001

Secure development agreement with developer

5. Diversity

Austin is facing the challenge of increasing diversity in its population. Additional action must be taken to exhibit a welcoming, accommodating character by the community. People new to the community face many challenges becoming acclimated to new surroundings. Resources to help them fit in must be directly located and easily accessed.

Hormel Foundation has committed some \$5 million to assist in the process. The city, working with other governmental bodies and agencies, needs to be a leader in the process of developing meaningful programs and facilities to address the diversity issue.

Responsible Parties:

Mayor and City Council
City Administration

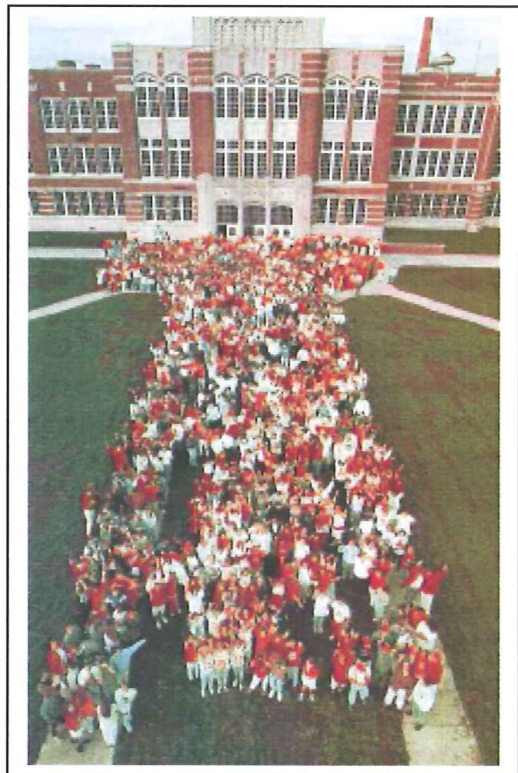
Timeline:

2000

Identify Needs
Create program strategy
Establish permanent facility

2001

Refine programs



APPENDIX A

**COMMUNITY SURVEY FORM
AND RESPONSE TABULATION**

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 1:

- Write in the number of people in your household that fits the corresponding age category.

15 or under:	783	13%
16-21:	487	8%
22-39:	858	14%
40-59:	1,415	29%
60-64:	411	7%
65-85:	1,920	32%
85 and older:	110	2%
	<hr/>	
	5,984	

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 2:

- How long have you lived at you present address?

Less than one year	160	(5.5%)
1-10 Years	914	(31.5%)
11-20 Years	571	(19.7%)
21-30 Years	365	(12.6%)
31-40 Years	284	(9.8%)
Over 40 Years	606	(20.9%)

- Where do you live in Austin?

Northeast	484	(16.7%)
Northwest	583	(20.1%)
Southeast	638	(22%)
Southwest	1,195	(41.2%)

- Why have you chosen Austin as a place to live?

Born/Raised in Austin	33.1%
Work	28.6%
Family/Friends	8.9%
Hornel	6.3%
Size of town	3.7%
Good place to raise family	2.6%
Schools	2.6%
Like Austin	1.9%
Churches	1.5%
Quality of Life	1.5%
Friendly people	1.1%
Clean community	1.1%
Low cost of living	1.1%
Less crime	0.7%
Job Opportunities	0.7%
College	0.7%
Amenities	0.4%
Fresh air	0.4%
Retired here	0.4%
Good businesses	0.4%
Slow pace of life	0.4%
Moved with parents	0.4%
Married Austinite	0.4%
Retirement housing	0.4%
Medical facilities	0.4%

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 3: Can you name any mayor difficulty or disadvantage for someone living or seeking to live In Austin?

Responses:

- Employment Issues:

Lack of Employment Opportunities	174	(6%)
Lack of Industrial Diversity	174	(6%)
Low Salaries of Employment Opportunities	261	(9%)
Lack of Employment Opportunities for Youth	23	(.8%)
Lack of Professional/Technical Employment Opportunities	52	(1.8%)
Lack of Employment Opportunities for Spouse	12	(.4%)
Commuting Workforce	6	(.2%)
Labor Unions	6	(.2%)
Employment Security	3	(.1%)

- Business

Lack of Variety in Community Retail Business	87	(3%)
Location of Grocery Retail Businesses In Northwest	20	(.7%)
Lack of Variety in Dining Establishments	12	(.4%)
Local Movie Theatre	4	(.15%)
Excessive Number of Bars	3	(.1%)
Day Care Facilities	3	(.1%)
Downtown Retail	3	(.1%)
Newspaper	3	(.1%)
Retail Business Hours	1	(.05%)
Need for Additional Office Space	1	(.05%)
Need for an Affordable Health Club	1	(.05%)

- Housing

Lack of Affordable Housing	145	(5%)
Lack of Available Housing	81	(2.8%)
Lack of Available Rental Housing	58	(2%)
Lack of Property Maintenance/Community Pride	29	(1%)
Lack of Housing for Elderly Population	4	(.15%)
Lot Costs	1	(.05%)

- Local Government

High Taxes	58	(2%)
Increasing Crime Rate	29	(1%)
Attitude of City Council	12	(.4%)
Utility Rates and Water	12	(.4%)
Cost of Living	12	(.4%)
Building/Development Codes	6	(.2%)
Drug Issues	6	(.2%)

- Transportation

Public Transportation (Taxi or Bus)	87	(3%)
Traffic Congestion (18 th Avenue NW)	17	(.6%)
Facilities/Accessible Routes for Handicapped	6	(.2%)
Snow Removal	3	(.1%)
Road Maintenance	3	(.1%)
Traffic Noise	3	(.1%)
Pedestrian Sidewalk in Northwest (18 th Avenue NW)	1	(.05%)
Lack of Parking Areas	1	(.05%)
Excessive parking Areas	1	(.05%)

- Recreation

Teen Center/Lack of Youth Activities	46	(1.6%)
Lack of Recreational Activities	29	(1%)
Lakes	3	(.1%)

- Demographics

Elderly Age of Community Population	32	(1.1%)
Lack of Community/Economic Growth	20	(.7%)
Unfriendly	20	(.7%)
Ethnic Diversities	17	(.6%)
Cost of Living	13	(.4%)
Retirement Town	3	(.1%)
Closed Community	1	(.05%)
Community Unity	1	(.05%)

- Education

Educational facilities	15	(.5%)
No four (4) year college	9	(.3%)

- Community Civic Issues

Lack of Social Activities	58	(2%)
Cultural Diversities	17	(.6%)
Lack of Arts/Cultural	6	(.2%)
Single Adult Activities	3	(.1%)

- Environmental

Air Quality	20	(.7%)
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- Others

Winter Climate	9	(.3%)
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1098 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 4: What do you think is the Most Important Growth and Development Issue for Austin?

Responses:

- Employment Issues:

Provide Additional Employment Opportunities for the Community	232	(8%)
Provide Employment Opportunities with Higher Income Scale	145	(5%)
Provide Employment for the Young Adults of the Community	58	(2%)
Diversify Employment	23	(.8%)
Provide Employment Opportunities above the Minimum Wage Scale	15	(.5%)
Provide Additional Workforce to Community	12	(.4%)
Provide High Technology Employment Opportunities	9	(.3%)
Provide Additional Employment With Family Working Hours	3	(.1%)
Provide Additional Local Employment Opportunities	2	(.6%)
Provide Job Opportunities for Women	1	(.05%)
Provide Employment With Security	1	(.05%)

- Industrial/Economic Growth

Recruit More Industrial to the Community	406	(14%)
Recruit High Technology Industry to Community	46	(1.6%)
Diversify Industry	29	(1%)
Support Agricultural industrial	29	(1%)
Support Hormel	9	(.3%)
Recruit Low Technology Industry	6	(.2%)
Recruit Small Companies to the Community	1	(.05%)
Support Unions	1	(.05%)

- Business/Community Growth

Recruit New Businesses to Austin	145	(5%)
Recruit Business for the Oak Park Mall	41	(1.4%)
Provide More Retail Businesses	35	(1.2%)
Provide Grocery Store In Southwest Austin	20	(.7%)
Recruit Small Businesses to Community	15	(.5%)
Provide Economic/Business Diversity	15	(.5%)
Less Retail	12	(.4%)
Recruit Additional Restaurants	9	(.3%)
Promote Sterling Businesses	6	(.2%)
Promote New Businesses Outside Northwest Austin Area	6	(.2%)

Fill Empty Buildings	4	(.15%)
Reduce Number of Liquor Establishments	4	(.15%)
Fabric Store	3	(.1%)
Maintain Local Businesses In Austin	3	(.1%)
Menards	3	(.1%)
Women's Retail	2	(.07%)
Construct New Mall	2	(.07%)
Construct Parking Ramp	2	(.07%)
New Hotel	2	(.07%)
Address Medical Center Parking	2	(.07%)
Wall Mart	2	(.07%)
Less Fast Food Restaurants	1	(.05%)
Craft Store	1	(.05%)
No More Targa/Rainbow	1	(.05%)
Retail in Southeast Austin	1	(.05%)
New Liquor Establishments	1	(.05%)
• Education		
Improve Education	29	(1%)
Four Year College	9	(.3%)
Enforce More Discipline In Schools	9	(.3%)
Support Riverland Community College	4	(.15%)
Support Providing More Tax Dollars to Education	3	(.1%)
Reduce Over Crowded Classrooms	1	(.05%)
• Economic Development		
Develop Cook Farm	4	(.15%)
Diversify Economy	2	(.06%)
Active D.C.A.	1	(.05%)
• Government		
Reduce Taxes	12	(.4%)
Update WWTP	12	(.4%)
Increase Police Force	15	(.5%)
Broaden Tax Bases	3	(.1%)
Less Welfare	3	(.1%)
Recognize Citizen Input	3	(.1%)
Reduce Spending Reduce Government Employee Salaries	1	(.05%)
New Government Management	1	(.05%)
Government Decisions Should Not Be Influenced by Hormel	1	(.05%)
Address Needs of All	1	(.05%)
Government Should Not Be Involved in Private Enterprise	1	(.05%)
Improve Integrity of Leadership	1	(.05%)
Address Drug Problem in Community	1	(.05%)
Community Planning	1	(.05%)

Utility Cost to High	1	(.05%)
• Community		
Provide More Opportunities for Youth	52	(1.2%)
Promote Youth Activities	35	(1.2%)
Revitalize Downtown	18	(.6%)
Promote Existence of Teen Center	14	(.5%)
Promote Tourism to Community	9	(.3%)
Population Growth	9	(.3%)
Improve Community Moral	7	(.25%)
Occupy Vacant Buildings	6	(.15%)
Promote Paramount Theatre	4	(.15%)
Improve Newspaper	3	(.15%)
Promote Medical Facilities	3	(.1%)
Business Growth Outside Oak Park Mall	3	(.1%)
Business Growth on Eastside	3	(.1%)
Malotain Small Town Image	3	(.1%)
Promote Community	3	(.1%)
Too Much Assistance Given to Senior Population	2	(.07%)
Air Quality	2	(.07%)
Reduce Real Estate Costs	1	(.05%)
Plant Trees	1	(.05%)
Keep Community As Is	2	(.07%)
Establish Industrial Council	1	(.05%)
Improve Access to Downtown	1	(.05%)
Too Many Geese	1	(.05%)
Provide More Parking	1	(.05%)
Support Growth	1	(.05%)
Support Single Parents	1	(.05%)
Continue City Beautification	1	(.05%)
• Housing		
Provide Affordable Housing	23	(.8%)
Provide Housing for Elderly	13	(.45%)
Provide Available Housing	12	(.4%)
Provide Low Income Housing	12	(.4%)
Provide Single Family blousing	7	(.24%)
Provide Additional Rental Housing	6	(.2%)
Renovate Sub Standard Housing	6	(.2%)
Provide Middle Income Housing	6	(.2%)
Provide Assisted Living Facilities	2	(.07%)
Eliminate Downtown Housing	1	(.05%)

- Civic Issues

Provide Additional Cultural Activities	12	(.4%)
Address Ethnic Diversity	6	(.2%)
Provide Non-Alcoholic Activities	3	(.1%)
Provide Additional Social Activities	2	(.07%)
Provide Assistance to Human Society	2	(.07%)

- Recreation

Maintain Current Park	6	(.2%)
Support New Arena	4	(.13%)
Continue Mill Pond Development	3	(.1%)
Support Recreational Activities	2	(.07%)
Support Pedestrian Trails	2	(.07%)
Clean Up Eastside Lake	1	(.05%)
Clean Up Cedar River	1	(.05%)
Support Stature Center	1	(.05%)

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 5: Please complete the statements that apply to you.

- I am retired:

Yes	1,167	(48.7%)
No	1,230	(51.3%)

- If no, when you do retire, do you plan to live in the Austin area?

Yes	665	(58.6%)
No	470	(41.4%)

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 6: What business or services do you think need to be added or improved in Austin?

- Retail Businesses:

Fabric Store	421	(14.5%)
Menards, Home Depot, Fleet Farm	354	(12.2%)
Retail (General)	319	(11%)
Southwest Grocer	218	(7.5%)
Oak Park Mall Occupancy	151	(5.2%)
Craft Store	107	(3.7%)
Wal-Mart	49	(1.7%)
Shoe Store	44	(1.5%)
Clothing Retail	41	(1.4%)
Electronics, Computer, Office Supply	38	(1.3%)
Women's Clothing	26	(.9%)
Farm Supply Store	23	(.8%)
Downtown Business Development	23	(.8%)
Hardware	17	(.6%)
Sporting Goods	17	(.6%)
J.C. Penney's	15	(.5%)
Hotels	15	(.5%)
Eastside Business Development	15	(.5%)
Sears	12	(.4%)
Eastside Grocer	12	(.4%)
Office Max	12	(.4%)
Best Buy	9	(.3%)
Appliance Store	9	(.3%)
Bakery	9	(.3%)
Book Store	9	(.3%)
Sterling Business Support	6	(.2%)
Drug Store	6	(.2%)
Sam's Club	6	(.2%)
Foreign Car Dealership	6	(.2%)
Locally Owned Lumber	3	(.1%)
Old Navy	3	(.1%)
Dry Goods	3	(.1%)
Bridal Store	3	(.1%)
Unique Shopping Mall	3	(.1%)
Eddie Bauer	3	(.1%)
Paper Store	3	(.1%)
Organic Food Store	3	(.1%)
Home Lighting Store	3	(.1%)
Herbergers	3	(.1%)
Record Store	3	(.1%)

- Eating/Dining Establishments:

Restaurants	142	(4.9%)
Entertainment Establishments	35	(1.2%)
Long John Silvers	15	(.5%)
Arby's	6	(.2%)
Steakhouse	6	(.2%)
T.G.I.F.	3	(.1%)
Sports Bar	3	(.1%)
Bakers Square	3	(.1%)
Pizza	3	(.1%)
Buffet Restaurant	3	(.1%)
Golden Corral	3	(.1%)

- Government Issue

Industrial Development	455	(15.7%)
Additional Police Force	348	(12%)
Taxi/Bus Service	281	(9.7%)
Teen/Youth Center	197	(6.8%)
Professional/High Tech Jobs	90	(3.1%)
Airport Expansion	44	(1.5%)
Street Repair	26	(.9%)
Humane Society Building	23	(.8%)
City Government	20	(.7%)
4-Year College	12	(.4%)
Fire Department Force	9	(.3%)
Downtown Parking	6	(.2%)
Arena Expansion	6	(.2%)
Animal Control	6	(.2%)
Utilities Personnel	6	(.2%)
Wastewater Treatment Plant	6	(.2%)
Federal Prison	1	(.03%)
Low Cost Housing	1	(.03%)
Shelter for Homeless	1	(.03%)

- Miscellaneous

Movie Theatre	70	(2.4%)
Child Care/A.M. & P.M.	52	(1.8%)
Employment Opportunities	44	(1.5%)
Cultural Activities	20	(.7%)
IBM	12	(.4%)
Newspaper	9	(.3%)
Cable TV	9	(.3%)
Casino	6	(.2%)
Dance Hall	1	(.03%)
Handicap Retail	1	(.03%)

Elderly Employment	1	(.03%)
Camping	1	(.03%)
Driving Range	1	(.03%)
Farm Elevator	1	(.03%)
Bowling Alley	1	(.03%)
Rooting Business	1	(.03%)
Mall Service	1	(.03%)
Laundromat	1	(.03%)
Archery Equipment	1	(.03%)
Singles Club	1	(.03%)
Shoe Repair	1	(.03%)
Elderly Needs	1	(.03%)
Spam Museum	1	(.03%)
Mini Golf	1	(.03%)

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 7: The population of Austin In 1900 was 22,000. What do you see as a goal in the next twenty (20) years?

22,000	Limited or no Growth in Community	Total 464 (16%)
22,000 to 24,000	Stand alone, controlled Growth in Community	Total 460 (21%)
24,000 to 26,000	Active, a More Low Key Growth Community	Total 986 (34%)
26,000 to 28,000	Bustling, An Aggressive High Growth Community	Total 580 (20%)

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 8: Please rank the following growth areas: Does the City need more or less of the following in the future?

	<u>1</u> Less	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u> More	<u>4</u>
Single Family Residence	203 (7%)	386 (13.3%)	1653 (57%)	658 (22.7%)
Rental Apartments	267 (9.2%)	551 (19%)	1572 (54.2%)	510 (17.6%)
Condo/Townhomes	371 (12.8%)	882 (30.4%)	1206 (41.6%)	441 (15.2%)
Primary Retail	296 (10.2%)	534 (18.4%)	1224 (42.2%)	847 (29.2%)
Specialty Retail	284 (9.8%)	624 (21.5%)	1291 (44.5%)	702 (24.2%)
Overnight Lodging	386 (13.3%)	943 (32.5%)	1154 (39.8%)	418 (14.4%)
Recreational Facility	119 (4.1%)	464 (16%)	1470 (50.7%)	847 (29.2%)
Tourism	191 (6.6%)	394 (13.6%)	1427 (49.2%)	887 (30.6%)
Industry	148 (5.1%)	119 (4.1%)	876 (30.2%)	1757 (60.6%)

1998 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS
(2,900 SURVEYS)

Question No. 9: Rate the public utilities and services, if they apply to you

	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Utilities	1856 (64%)	232 (8%)	52 (1.8%)
Water	1894 (65.3%)	493 (17%)	78 (2.7%)
Sanitary Sewer	1842 (63.5%)	392 (13.5%)	116 (4%)
Electrical	1960 (67.6%)	392 (13.5%)	90 (3.1%)
Gas	1943 (67%)	406 (14%)	52 (1.8%)
Storm Drainage	1357 (46.8%)	690 (23.8%)	183 (6.3%)
Streets	940 (32.4%)	1044 (36%)	377 (13%)
Snow Removal	1392 (48%)	769 (26.5%)	339 (11.7%)
Police Protection	1659 (57.2%)	795 (27.4%)	90 (3.1%)
Fire Department	1711 (59%)	493 (17%)	64 (2.2%)
Ambulance Service	1566 (54%)	609 (21%)	87 (7%)
Recreational Facilities	742 (25.6%)	1073 (37%)	522 (18%)
Library	2320 (80%)	247 (19%)	52 (1.8%)
Governing Body	1175 (40.5%)	1030 (35.5%)	168 (5.8%)