

Austin, Minnesota

12/19/16

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Austin, Minnesota

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Austin Today

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AUSTIN TODAY



VISION:

Austin Minnesota is a diverse and welcoming community providing a full range of employment and housing options within attractive, walkable districts and neighborhoods, well maintained parks, and natural areas, convenient shopping, a vibrant mixed use downtown offering multi-generational arts, cultural and entertainment activities, connected by a safe and accessible multimodal transportation network.

Introduction to Austin's Comprehensive Plan

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan for Austin is twofold. The first provides an essential legal basis for land use regulation such as zoning and subdivision control. The second establishes a picture of Austin's future by presenting a unified and compelling vision for the community, derived from the aspirations of its citizens; and establishes specific goals and policies necessary to fulfill that vision. The vision continues to be crucial, as the challenges related to job and population growth affect the future character of Austin.

Authority to Plan

Communities are given the legal authority to adopt a Plan according to Minnesota State Statute 462.353, Subd. 1. The statute enables cities to promote the "public health, safety, and general welfare" of the community. The following describes in detail the State's Municipal Planning and Development Policy Statement (462.351):

"The legislature finds that municipalities are faced with mounting problems in providing means of guiding future development of land so as to insure a safer, more pleasant and more economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial and public activities, to preserve agricultural and other open lands, and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare. Municipalities can prepare for anticipated changes and by such preparations bring about significant savings in both private and public expenditures. Municipal

planning, by providing public guides to future municipal action, enables other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with the municipality's plans. Municipal planning will assist in developing lands more wisely to serve citizens more effectively, will make the provision of public services less costly, and will achieve a more secure tax base. It is the purpose of sections 462.351 to 462.364 to provide municipalities, in a single body of law, with the necessary powers and a uniform procedure for adequately conducting and implementing municipal planning”.

Land use regulations such as zoning ordinances, recognize that people in a community live cooperatively and have certain responsibilities to one another. These regulations establish rules that govern how land is developed within a municipality. A city, however, may not adopt land use ordinances without first adopting a Comprehensive Plan. This requirement derives from the premise that land use decisions should not be arbitrary, but should follow an accepted and reasonable concept of how the city should develop/redevelop.

Use of Plan

The Comprehensive Plan presents a vision for the future of Austin, and an agenda for community action. It is based on locally established visions, goals, and policies derived through public participation. The individual chapters outline in more specific terms the goals and policies to ensure Austin retains live-ability, grows in a way that supports the values of the community, enhances market strength, and continues to be sustainable. The plan is designed as a working document that both defines the future and provides a working program for realizing the City's future potential.

The plan provides specific recommendations to direct and manage Austin's growth and development. Some of the changes will come in the form of reinvestment and redevelopment while others will come as the City expands its land base. As with all land use

decisions, implementation of these growth and redevelopment recommendations will have different levels of benefit and impact on community members.

To realize full potential of the Plan, it should be used to:

- Guide **City officials and staff** to assist with a variety of tasks:
 - i. Communicating Austin's vision for the future;
 - ii. Development and infrastructure decisions;
 - iii. Acquisition and use of land;
 - iv. Budgeting capital improvements;
 - v. Establishing regulatory changes.
- Guide residents, businesses, and property owners to assist them in:
 - i. Determining potential property use;
 - ii. Understanding possible land use changes in the surrounding area;
 - iii. Establishing reasonable land value expectations;
 - iv. Understanding future infrastructure improvements;
 - v. Making improvements and investments to their own properties.
- Guide developers in their property acquisitions and coordinating their development plans with City goals, regulations, and infrastructure plans.
- Assist neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to coordinate issues of mutual interest.

While the Plan provides information and guidance, it depends heavily on appropriate exercise of individual discretion, interpretation, and initiative to fulfill this plan's overall goals, policies, and programs.

Organization of Plan

The Austin Comprehensive Plan is presented in three sections described as follows:

1. **Austin Today – Existing Conditions** – describes Austin's current state, including progress made from previous planning efforts, current economic indicators, and existing challenges and opportunities that are addressed in the Community Vision section.

2. **Community Vision** – includes chapters:

- **Land Use** – identifies issues related to growth and land use, analyzes the current land use pattern and recommends a set of development principles, specific goals and policies.
- **Housing** – provides a summary of existing housing characteristics, identifies potential demand through 2020, and provides goals and policies for future development relative to need and demand.
- **Transportation** – discusses key findings of the current transportation network, including the trail system,

evaluates current and future transportation needs, and provides a number of goals and policies for attaining Austin's transportation vision.

- **Economic Development** – discusses Austin's economic situation, and develops goals and policies for continuing to sustain and improve Austin's economic situation.
- **Community Facilities & Utilities** - discusses key findings of the current facility and utility provisions, including the water, sewer and storm sewer systems, evaluates current and future needs, and provides a number of goals and policies for Austin's facilities and utilities' vision.
- **Parks & Open Space** – summarizes current park and recreation facilities, recommends a park classification system based on national park and recreation standards, and puts forth a set of goals and policies to guide future improvements to the system.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation** – describes current relationships with neighboring and overlapping governmental jurisdictions and NGO's, and puts forth a set of goals and policies to guide future collaboration and coordination.

3. **Achieving the Vision** – provides guidance for maintaining accountability, monitoring activities, developing procedures and regulations, and community involvement in implementation of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.





Planning Process

Planning for the new Comprehensive Plan began in mid - November 2015 with the first round of Community Advisory and Technical Advisory Committee Meetings. Overall, each committee met seven times independently and three times jointly. The Community Advisory Committee was comprised of citizens representing a range of groups and interest such as cycling, sustainability, education and business. The technical Advisory Committee included a representative from the City Council, and staff from City departments, County planning, Austin Utilities, Library and Vision 2020. These committee helped guide the plan preparation process and reviewed and discussed the content of the plan.

1. Additional community input was received through the following efforts and activities:
2. On-line and paper community issues and opportunities survey, receiving 212 responses
3. Two Issues and Opportunities Community Workshops, engaging approximately 45 people in maps mark-ups and informative conversation
4. Two focus group sessions one pertaining to sustainability another focused on housing
5. A community survey pertaining to resiliency focused on non-English speaking and English as a second language residents, receiving 54 responses
6. A project web site displaying interim project documents
7. Two hands on landuse planning sessions with Austin High School students
8. A community open house held at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center for obtaining input on the draft plan
9. A bus tour with Community Advisory Committee members

Vision Statement

Committee members assisted in crafting a new vision statement to guide development of plan goals and policies:

“Austin Minnesota is a diverse and welcoming community providing a full range of employment and housing options within attractive, walkable districts and neighborhoods, well maintained parks, and natural areas, convenient shopping, a vibrant mixed use downtown offering multi-generational arts, cultural and entertainment activities, connected by a safe and accessible multimodal transportation network.”





1. Existing Conditions

Regional Setting

The City of Austin is located in western Mower County. The City is approximately 43 miles southwest of Rochester, 110 miles south of the Twin Cities, and about 15 miles north of the Iowa/Minnesota border.

Brief Community History

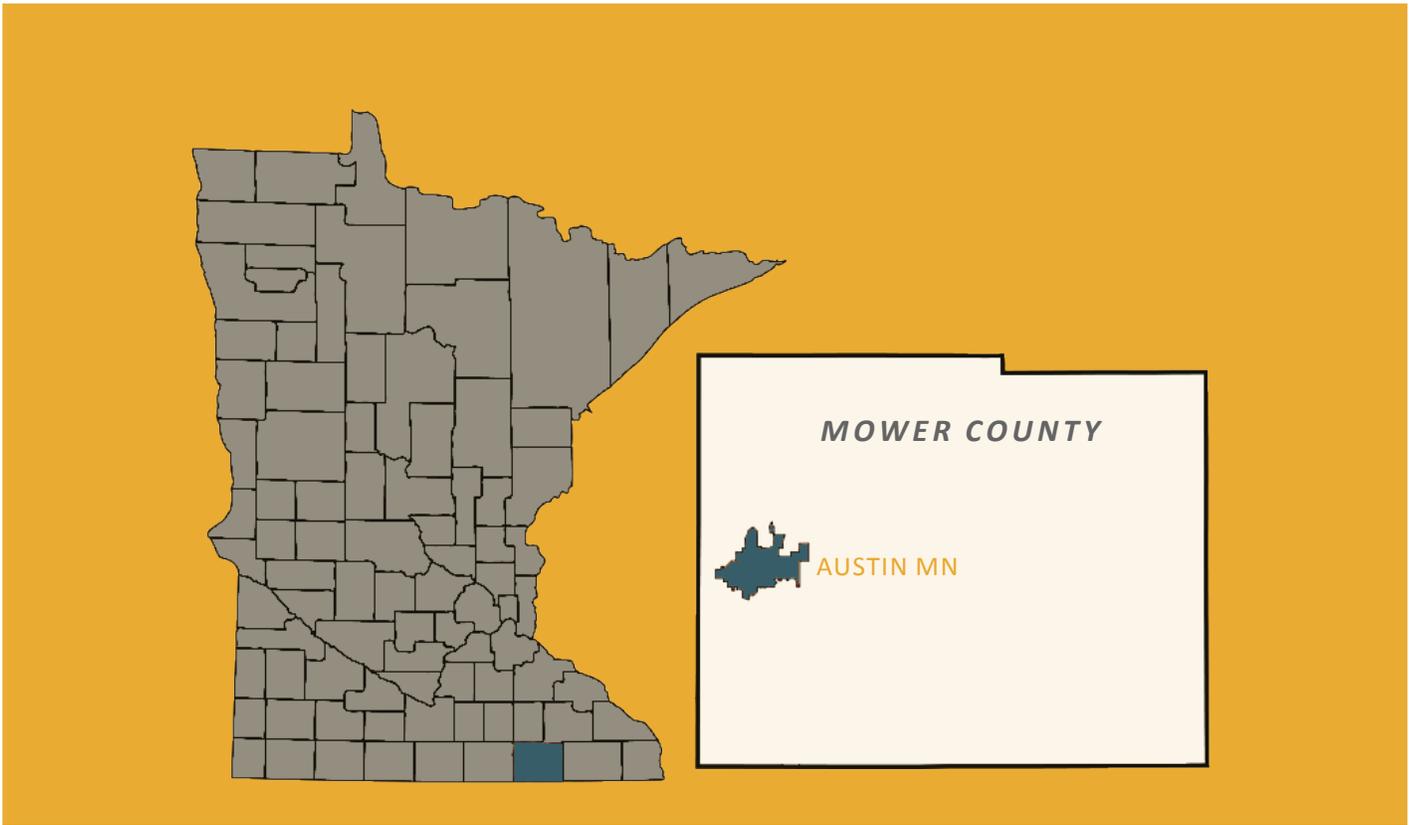
Austin was settled by Austin R. Nichols in 1853 due to the fertile land, trapping and ease of access. The Cedar River powered mills that were developed to assist in the lumbering of the region. In 1891, George Hormel opened a butcher shop in Austin. This eventually grew into today's Hormel Foods, which employs approximately 2,700 people directly, as well as thousands of second-tier jobs through contracts with other local businesses.

Community Development

Today, Austin functions as a complex thriving industrial community, and as a bedroom community for many people working at the Mayo Clinics just west of Austin in Rochester. The City of Austin has recognized its unique position and has capitalized on its location and economy.

Austin, MN lies 20 miles East of the major east-west road intersection of Interstate 35w and HWY 90. Highway 90 connects western Minnesota all the way to Wisconsin. Highway 90 has become a major commuting route to the job market in the south metro area. I-35w is the major north-south route connecting to the Twin Cities, a regional center to the north, as well as the northern Minnesota lakes area, and northern Iowa.

Austin's beautiful setting, accepting, hard-working nature, and prime location will continue to make it a



community with great potential for growth and change over the next 20 years.

Flooding

Austin is located along the banks of the Cedar River. There are two man-made lakes; East Side Lake and Mill Pond. These water resources are what brought people to Austin, but also have been highly influential with the development and redevelopment patterns of the City. Austin has seen repetitive flooding between 1978 and 2010. Major floods have occurred in Austin in 1978, twice, 1983, 1993 2000, 2004 and 2010. These floods led to diverse flood mitigation efforts including the development of a permanent flood wall and buy out of private properties located within the flood plain. The project’s purpose is to protect the downtown and river adjacent neighborhoods from future flood events. The floodwall project was completed in 2014 and property buy out activities are ongoing.

Recreation and Trails

The City of Austin, in protecting their community from future floods, has created well-connected park and

recreation areas. Due to potential flooding along the Cedar River, property has been bought-out and is now green space. Trails connect many of the City’s parks, and significant private foundation investments have been made at the Hormel Nature Center. Intergovernmental coordination has been highly motivated to create regional bicycle trail systems, and there have been large volunteer efforts to establish and promote mountain biking. The City also launched a Red Bike bike share program in April 2016.

Volunteer efforts have been working towards creating additional recreation areas near the Old Mill. City volunteers have worked to include a part of the Cedar River at this location as part of a regional water trail system.

Downtown

Significant façade improvements, redevelopment and long-range planning within Austin’s historic downtown have been taking place for the past decade including preparation of the 2014 Downtown Plan Update. In mid- 2016 the new SPAM Museum opened

in downtown. With its educational exhibits and gift shop, the museum draws visitors from across the county to the downtown, benefitting local shops and restaurants. Downtown continues to present numerous redevelopment opportunities and challenges ranging from enhancements supporting active transportation, continued diversification and densification of housing to strengthening downtown greening.

Existing Plans

The City of Austin has completed several planning documents to help guide development and redevelopment. Some of these plans have been focused on key issues within Austin, while others have been larger in scope and encompass a variety of topics and area of concern. Reviews of these plans, studies and regulations help inform and guide the preparation of goals and policies in this planning document, as well as identify where gaps of implementation efforts may lie.

2000 Comprehensive Plan

Austin's previous Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2000. The public participation included several SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) workshops, as well as focus groups that led to the creation of the planning document. The issues facing Austin back in 2000 are similar to those the City is facing today, including:

- Aging Community
- Lack of housing – lack of new, modern entry-level housing, lack of move-up housing
- Economic Dependency on Hormel
- Ongoing Stormwater Management issues
- Incorporate Downtown Plan
- Cook Farm area appropriate for future business/ industrial activities
- More emphasis on multi-modal transportation options
- Continued expansion of trail systems among and between park and recreation areas

Trail Plan

The City's Trail Map shows both existing, future and in-progress trails. Future trails for regional connectivity have been identified for the Shooting Star Trail to the east of the City, and the Blazing Star Trail west towards Albert Lea. Progress for the Shooting Star Trail has been made.

The City and School District have also worked to incorporate a Safe Routes to School Plan for safe non-motorized transportation modes to get children safely to and from their school destinations. Specific guides are available for Banfield Elementary, Ellis Middle and Holton Intermediate, Sumner Elementary, Neveln Elementary and Southgate Elementary Schools.

Capital Improvement Plan

Through the City's Capital Improvement Plan, ongoing trail improvements are evident. This is important as it connects the City regionally, and generally offers beneficial quality of life improvements for residents and businesses. Continued improvements to flood mitigation and park and recreation facilities are noted in the coming years through the Capital Improvement Plan as well. Other notable items include Industrial Land Acquisition and site clean-up around the I-90 corridor.

Vision 2020

Vision 2020 is a citizen-led movement that began in 2011. Vision 2020 has created 10 Vision Statements to focus the efforts of Austin. The goal of Vision 2020, is to accomplish these ten goals by 2020. They are:

- Expanded Bike/Walk Trail System
- Community Wide Technology
- Community Recreation Center
- Embrace and Maintain Our Waterways
- Business Friendly Environment
- Education Leaders
- Community Pride & Spirit

- Downtown Austin – A Destination Point
- Gateway to Austin Attraction
- Revitalization of Austin Utilities Building

These are all important objectives that will advance Austin’s community and economic development over the next 20 years.

2013 Housing Study

Housing is a large concern for many entities within the City. Austin embarked on a detailed Housing Study in 2013. In Austin, there exists a housing supply and demand imbalance. This is strongly tied to the local labor market, creating a strong demand for low priced homes and less demand for higher priced homes. The existing housing stock is relatively old, with 40% built before 1960. New housing starts have been negligible as developers cannot get sales prices needed to make a profit in Austin. There has been no privately developed multi-family housing constructed in Austin since 2006, and very little single-family dwelling construction either.

FIGURE 1-1.

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS							
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA							
1990 to 2035							
		Population			Households		
		City of Austin	Mower County	Minnesota	City of Austin	Mower County	Minnesota
Census	1990	21,907	37,385	4,375,099	9,347	15,028	1,647,853
	2000	23,314	38,603	4,919,479	9,897	15,582	1,895,127
	2010	24,718	39,163	5,303,925	10,131	15,828	2,087,227
	2015 Est.	25,084	39,405	5,442,213	10,255	15,947	2,157,239
Forecast	2020	26,304	41,229	5,625,619	10,693	16,631	2,236,878
	2030	28,033	43,802	5,974,304	11,442	17,734	2,399,319
	2035	28,887	44,960	6,089,935	11,839	18,351	2,461,574
		Percent Change - Population			Percent Change - Households		
	1990-2000	6.4%	3.3%	12.4%	5.9%	3.7%	15.0%
	2000-2010	6.0%	1.5%	7.8%	2.4%	1.6%	10.1%
	2010-2015	1.5%	0.6%	2.6%	1.2%	0.8%	3.4%
	2015-2020	4.9%	4.6%	3.4%	4.3%	4.3%	3.7%
	2010-2020	6.4%	5.3%	6.1%	5.5%	5.1%	7.2%
	2020-2030	6.6%	6.2%	6.2%	7.0%	6.6%	7.3%
	2015-2035	15.2%	14.1%	11.9%	15.4%	15.1%	14.1%

Sources: MN State Demographic Center; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Rental rates are low compared to state (-22%) and Mower County. In general, rents average between \$500 and \$750 which classifies Austin as a low-rent community. Home values are also low compared to state (-53%) and Mower County. The majority (47%) of single-family homes are valued under \$100,000.

Coordination with private sector is vital to housing improvements in Austin. Employers find the lack of quality housing a challenge to attract top-tier talent. Top-tier talent may opt to live in nearby communities and commute to Austin, or decline employment in Austin due to the poor housing choices. However, the bulk of employment at large Austin employers limits housing choices to low-priced, poor quality housing. This general condition keeps housing costs in Austin relatively low, which in turn makes building in Austin unattractive for local builders. There appears to be:

- Study cites steady demand for 805 new homes: single family, multifamily and senior, to 2020 (seven years)
- New, market-rate rental housing is badly needed
- New, active adult ownership housing needed
- New rental Townhomes
- Small amount of new higher-end single-family homes
- Strong need for housing rehab assistance

FIGURE 1-2.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 1990 to 2035			
	Average Household Size		
	City of Austin	Mower County	Minnesota
1990	2.34	2.49	2.66
2000	2.36	2.48	2.60
2010	2.44	2.47	2.54
2015 Est.	2.45	2.47	2.52
2020	2.46	2.48	2.51
2030	2.45	2.47	2.49
2035	2.44	2.45	2.47
	Percent Change		
1990-2000	0.5%	-0.4%	-2.2%
2000-2010	3.6%	-0.1%	-2.1%
<i>2010-2015</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>-0.1%</i>	<i>-0.7%</i>
<i>2015-2020</i>	<i>0.6%</i>	<i>0.3%</i>	<i>-0.3%</i>
2010-2020	0.8%	0.2%	-1.0%
2020-2030	-0.4%	-0.4%	-1.0%
2015-2035	-0.2%	-0.8%	-1.9%

Sources: MN State Demographic Center; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Demographic Data - Population

Austin has experienced steady population increases over the past several decades, and this relative rate is anticipated to continue. By 2035, Austin is project to grow to a population of 28,887, representing a 15.2% increase from the 2015 population. Comparatively – this is similar to the projected growth of Mower County, and slightly outpaces the projected growth rate for Minnesota as a whole. The housing study from 2013 indicated a 2020 population project of 25,718 – indicating that Austin has grown faster than previously anticipated.

The average household size in Austin is 2.45 persons per household, and projections have this remaining constant through 2035. This, coupled with the population

projections will lead to more occupied homes in Austin. The size of Austin households is slightly smaller than the average household size throughout Minnesota (2.52), but Minnesota’s is projected to decline at a faster rate than Austin’s.

Austin’s population is currently made up of approximately 26.9% under the age of 20, 54% adults from 20 to 64, and 18.7% senior citizens. By 2035, it is projected that the youth population will remain constant, while the senior citizen portion will increase to nearly 25 percent of the City’s population. This would result in more Austin residents aging in place and beginning to move out of the workforce, as well as need and desire different levels of service.



FIGURE 1-3.

AGE DISTRIBUTION AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2000 - 2035									
Age	Census		Estimate	Projection		Change			
	2000	2010	2015	2020	2035	2000-2010		2015-2020	
						No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Austin									
Youth	6,096	6,941	6,743	6,771	7,797	845	13.9	28	0.4
0 to 4	1,482	1,961	1,861	1,827	1,998	479	32.3	-34	-1.8
5 to 9	1,482	1,811	1,751	1,705	1,927	329	22.2	-46	-2.6
10 to 14	1,508	1,578	1,646	1,658	1,893	70	4.6	12	0.7
15 to 19	1,624	1,591	1,485	1,581	1,979	-33	-2.0	96	6.5
Adult	12,080	13,390	13,546	12,935	14,048	1,310	10.8	-611	-4.5
20 to 24	1,369	1,580	1,503	1,335	1,650	211	15.4	-169	-11.2
25 to 34	2,729	3,266	3,399	3,213	3,257	537	19.7	-187	-5.5
35 to 44	3,119	2,749	2,780	2,807	3,223	-370	-11.9	27	1.0
45 to 54	2,889	3,050	2,827	2,622	2,959	161	5.6	-205	-7.3
55 to 64	1,974	2,745	3,037	2,960	2,958	771	39.1	-78	-2.6
Senior	5,138	4,387	4,679	4,989	7,042	-751	-14.6	310	6.6
65 to 74	2,241	1,691	2,086	2,367	2,958	-550	-24.5	280	13.4
75+	2,897	2,696	2,593	2,623	4,084	-201	-6.9	30	1.2
Total	23,314	24,718	25,084	26,304	28,887	1,404	6.0	1,220	4.9
Minnesota									
Youth	1,434,845	1,431,211	1,406,777	1,433,174	1,467,281	-3,634	-0.3	26,397	1.9
0 to 4	329,594	355,504	341,606	346,528	357,633	25,910	7.9	4,922	1.4
5 to 9	355,894	355,536	356,130	348,984	363,670	-358	-0.1	-7,146	-2.0
10 to 14	374,995	352,342	356,557	372,046	369,496	-22,653	-6.0	15,489	4.3
15 to 19	374,362	367,829	352,484	365,616	376,482	-6,533	-1.7	13,132	3.7
Adult	2,890,368	3,189,593	3,245,724	3,252,468	3,306,338	299,225	10.4	6,744	0.2
20 to 24	322,483	355,651	379,169	350,899	368,753	33,168	10.3	-28,270	-7.5
25 to 34	673,138	715,586	727,898	736,754	776,924	42,448	6.3	8,856	1.2
35 to 44	824,182	681,094	668,980	733,881	778,714	-143,088	-17.4	64,901	9.7
45 to 54	665,696	807,898	749,077	679,246	755,551	142,202	21.4	-69,831	-9.3
55 to 64	404,869	629,364	720,600	751,688	626,396	224,495	55.4	31,088	4.3
Senior	594,266	683,121	789,712	939,977	1,316,316	88,855	15.0	150,265	19.0
65 to 74	295,825	354,427	446,896	549,296	619,041	58,602	19.8	102,400	22.9
75+	298,441	328,694	342,816	390,681	697,275	30,253	10.1	47,865	14.0
Total	4,919,479	5,303,925	5,442,213	5,625,619	6,089,935	768,892	15.6	183,406	3.4
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC									

FIGURE 1-4.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY RACE & ETHNICITY AUSTIN, MINNESOTA										
	Census				Estimate		Change			
	2000		2010		2015		2000-2010		2010-2015	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
City of Austin										
Population by Race	23,314	100	24,718	100	25,084	100	1,404	6.0	366	1.5
White	21,589	92.6	21,466	86.8	20,714	82.6	-123	-0.6	-752	-3.5
Black	188	0.8	749	3.0	1,390	5.5	561	298.4	641	85.6
American Indian	43	0.2	79	0.3	111	0.4	36	83.7	32	40.3
Asian	517	2.2	599	2.4	784	3.1	82	15.9	185	30.9
Pacific Islander	4	0.0	39	0.2	80	0.3	35	875.0	41	106.0
Other	720	3.1	1,191	4.8	1,296	5.2	471	65.4	105	8.8
Two or More Races	253	1.1	595	2.4	708	2.8	342	135.2	113	19.0
Population by Ethnicity	23,314	100	24,718	100	25,084	100	1,404	6.0	366	1.5
Hispanic or Latino	1,426	6.1	3,796	15.4	4,089	16.3	2,370	166.2	293	7.7
Not Hispanic	21,888	93.9	20,922	84.6	20,995	83.7	-966	-4.4	73	0.3
Minnesota (in thousands)										
Population by Race	4,919	100	5,304	100	5,442	100	384	7.8	138	2.6
White	4,400	89.4	4,524	85.3	4,545	83.5	124	2.8	21	0.5
Black	172	3.5	274	5.2	317	5.8	103	59.8	42	15.4
American Indian	55	1.1	61	1.1	65	1.2	6	10.8	4	6.4
Asian	142	2.9	214	4.0	253	4.6	72	50.9	39	18.0
Pacific Islander	2	0.0	2	0.0	3	0.0	0	8.9	0	23.1
Other	66	1.3	103	1.9	115	2.1	37	56.5	12	12.0
Two or More Races	83	1.7	125	2.4	145	2.7	42	51.2	20	16.2
Population by Ethnicity	4,919	100	5,304	100	5,442	100	384	7.8	138	2.6
Hispanic or Latino	143	2.9	250	4.7	283	5.2	107	74.4	33	13.2
Not Hispanic or Latino	4,776	97.1	5,054	95.3	5,159	94.8	278	5.8	105	2.1

Sources: US Census Bureau; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

The City of Austin is predominantly self-identified as white, with a strong Hispanic ethnic influence. Approximately 16.3% of Austin residents identify with Hispanic ethnicity. This is significantly higher than

Minnesota as a whole, with roughly 5.2% of residents indicating Hispanic ethnicity. This is an important factor when trying to provide and deliver services to the community.

FIGURE 1-5.

PER CAPITA AND HOUSEHOLD INCOME AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2000 - 2020								
	Austin				Minnesota			
	2000	2010	2014	2020	2000	2010	2014	2020
Median HH Income	\$33,750	\$40,395	\$39,890	\$51,228	\$47,111	\$57,243	\$60,820	\$70,243
Per Capita Income	\$20,651	\$22,551	\$23,649	\$26,809	\$23,198	\$29,582	\$31,642	\$36,105
	Change by Decade				Change by Decade			
	<u>2000-2010</u>		<u>2010-2020</u>		<u>2000-2010</u>		<u>2010-2020</u>	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Median HH Income	\$6,645	19.7%	\$11,338	28.4%	\$10,132	21.5%	\$9,423	15.5%
Per Capita Income	\$1,900	9.2%	\$3,160	13.4%	\$6,384	27.5%	\$4,463	14.1%
Sources: US Census; 2006-2010 and 2010-2014 ACS; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC								

Austin’s household numbers have remained almost stagnant from 2000 to 2014, while Minnesota saw an increase of over 11%. The majority of Austin’s households (59.9%) are family living together, which is slightly lower than Minnesota (64.9%).

FIGURE 1-6.

HOUSEHOLD TYPE AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2000 to 2014						
	Austin			Minnesota		
	2000	2010	2014	2000	2010	2014
Total Households	9,897	10,131	9,903	1,895,127	2,087,227	2,115,337
Non-Family Households	3,817	4,017	3,972	639,986	738,212	743,026
Living Alone	3,307	3,384	3,531	509,468	584,008	597,373
Other (Roommates)	510	633	441	130,518	154,204	145,653
Family Households	6,080	6,114	5,931	1,255,141	1,349,015	1,372,311
Married w/ Children	1,883	1,743	1,643	488,415	443,212	442,999
Married w/o Children	2,926	2,709	2,735	529,830	617,297	637,036
Other Family	1,271	1,662	1,553	236,896	288,506	292,276
Change (2000 -2014)		No.	Pct.		No.	Pct.
Total Households		6	0.1%		220,210	11.6%
Non-Family Households		155	4.1%		103,040	16.1%
Living Alone		224	6.8%		87,905	17.3%
Other (Roommates)		-69	-13.5%		15,135	11.6%
Family Households		-149	-2.5%		117,170	9.3%
Married w/ Children		-240	-12.7%		-45,416	-9.3%
Married w/o Children		-191	-6.5%		107,206	20.2%
Other Family		282	22.2%		55,380	23.4%

Sources: U.S. Census; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

In general, employment is projected to grow by 2035 in Austin (15.1%) at a pace as fast or faster than the overlying geographic areas, including Mower County (14.1%) and Minnesota (10.6%).

FIGURE 1-7.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS AUSTIN, MINNESTOA 2000 to 2035						
Annual Employment	City of Austin		Mower County		Minnesota	
2000	13,128		15,918		2,608,844	
2005	13,433		16,201		2,637,323	
2010	13,542		16,107		2,563,391	
2015*	13,719		16,358		2,795,190	
2020 Forecast	14,383		17,123		2,856,460	
2030 Forecast	15,329		18,191		3,033,508	
2035 Forecast	15,796		18,672		3,092,221	
Change	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
2000 - 2010	414	3.2%	189	1.2%	-45,453	-1.7%
2010 - 2015	177	1.3%	251	1.6%	231,799	9.0%
2015 - 2020	664	4.8%	765	4.7%	61,270	2.2%
2020 - 2030	945	6.6%	1,069	6.2%	177,048	6.2%
2015 - 2035	2,077	15.1%	2,314	14.1%	297,031	10.6%

*Estimate based on second quarter data

Sources: MN DEED; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

The most significant occupation in Austin is production, as represented by jobs provided by Hormel. These positions typically do not require advanced degrees and provide for a lower wage scale, as represented by some of the Austin income figures shown in other tables. Over 16 percent of Austin residents are employed in these types of occupations, while Minnesota as a whole has about 7.1% of residents in these occupations. There are significantly fewer management, business and financial occupations in Austin (9.2%) as compared to Minnesota (16.3%).

FIGURE 1-8.

EMPLOYED POPULATION BY OCCUPATION								
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA								
2010 & 2014								
	Austin				Minnesota			
	2010		2014		2010		2014	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	11,629	100%	11,638	100%	2,730,721	100%	2,781,933	100%
Management, business, science, and arts	3,207	27.6%	2,990	25.7%	1,032,299	37.8%	1,089,675	39.2%
Management, business, and financial	1,215	10.4%	1,067	9.2%	433,854	15.9%	453,099	16.3%
Computer, engineering, and science	388	3.3%	410	3.5%	160,485	5.9%	171,547	6.2%
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media	986	8.5%	875	7.5%	286,069	10.5%	299,782	10.8%
Healthcare practitioner and technical	618	5.3%	638	5.5%	151,891	5.6%	165,247	5.9%
Service	2,019	17.4%	2,104	18.1%	432,687	15.8%	462,796	16.6%
Healthcare support	362	3.1%	335	2.9%	67,387	2.5%	70,767	2.5%
Protective service	161	1.4%	242	2.1%	36,058	1.3%	37,737	1.4%
Food preparation and serving related	547	4.7%	556	4.8%	136,761	5.0%	147,988	5.3%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	437	3.8%	563	4.8%	90,512	3.3%	93,267	3.4%
Personal care and service	512	4.4%	408	3.5%	101,969	3.7%	113,037	4.1%
Sales and office	2,058	17.7%	2,598	22.3%	676,165	24.8%	652,184	23.4%
Sales and related	818	7.0%	1,015	8.7%	300,556	11.0%	289,503	10.4%
Office and administrative support	1,240	10.7%	1,583	13.6%	375,609	13.8%	362,681	13.0%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	875	7.5%	850	7.3%	232,546	8.5%	219,519	7.9%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	20	0.2%	104	0.9%	19,634	0.7%	20,835	0.7%
Construction and extraction	564	4.8%	269	2.3%	129,649	4.7%	117,474	4.2%
Installation, maintenance, and repair	291	2.5%	477	4.1%	83,263	3.0%	81,210	2.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving	3,470	29.8%	3,096	26.6%	357,024	13.1%	357,759	12.9%
Production	1,974	17.0%	1,885	16.2%	199,742	7.3%	197,007	7.1%
Transportation	522	4.5%	308	2.6%	91,520	3.4%	94,140	3.4%
Material moving	974	8.4%	903	7.8%	65,762	2.4%	66,612	2.4%

Sources: US Census American Community Survey; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Austin has seen a significant decrease in the number of business establishments from 2000 through 2015 (20.4%), however those companies that have remained have generally increased the number of jobs in Austin, as there has been a 4.5% increase in employment. Most of this growth has come in the Professional and Business Service industry, while the hardest hit industry in Austin has been the Trade, Transportation and Utilities industry. Throughout Minnesota, the largest employment

increase has been seen in the Education and Health Services industry. Wages throughout nearly all industries lag Minnesota averages in Austin. Some of this may be skewed slightly due to the Twin Cities metro market.

Two-thirds of Austin residents work in the City of Austin itself. About five percent of Austin residents work in Rochester. Nearly 69% of Austin residents travel less 10 miles to their employment. About five percent of Austin residents drive to work in Rochester.

FIGURE 1-9.

QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES												
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA												
2000 - 2015												
Industry	Austin						Minnesota					
	Business Establishments		Industry Employment		Weekly Wage		Business Establishments		Industry Employment		Weekly Wage	
2000												
Total, All Industries	637		13,128		\$533		156,083		2,608,844		\$681	
Natural Resources & Mining	--		--		--		1,989		22,250		\$584	
Construction	--		--		--		16,208		126,892		\$817	
Manufacturing	20		4,069		\$740		9,231		395,519		\$799	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	176		2,383		\$357		40,652		560,154		\$612	
Information	11		188		\$463		3,213		73,467		\$876	
Financial Activities	58		358		\$505		15,756		164,650		\$974	
Professional & Business Services	62		504		\$648		25,240		328,276		\$893	
Education & Health Services	82		3,011		\$516		14,023		497,361		\$621	
Leisure & Hospitality	75		1,056		\$173		12,908		238,509		\$261	
Other Services	70		512		\$229		13,541		87,863		\$406	
Public Administration	22		528		\$621		3,323		113,901		\$667	
2015*												
Total, All Industries	507		13,719		\$814		163,589		2,795,190		\$977	
Natural Resources & Mining	--		--		--		2,832		28,250		\$849	
Construction	--		--		--		15,971		125,599		\$1,107	
Manufacturing	19		3,397		\$810		7,999		317,379		\$1,123	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	118		2,169		\$783		37,786		539,420		\$845	
Information	9		140		\$588		3,504		55,223		\$1,261	
Financial Activities	57		265		\$853		15,087		178,700		\$1,452	
Professional & Business Services	56		1,658		\$1,367		29,208		360,659		\$1,383	
Education & Health Services	63		3,645		\$777		18,054		692,230		\$930	
Leisure & Hospitality	62		1,047		\$260		14,200		279,463		\$370	
Other Services	63		460		\$304		15,644		89,215		\$581	
Public Administration	17		622		\$934		3,304		129,049		\$996	
Change (2000 to 2014)												
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Total, All Industries	(130)	(20.4)	591	4.5	\$281	52.7	7,506	4.8	186,346	7.1	\$296	43.5
Natural Resources & Mining	--	--	--	--	--	--	843	42.4	6,000	27.0	\$265	45.4
Construction	--	--	--	--	--	--	(237)	(1.5)	(1,293)	(1.0)	\$290	35.5
Manufacturing	(1)	(5.0)	(672)	(16.5)	\$70	9.5	(1,232)	(13.3)	(78,140)	(19.8)	\$324	40.6
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	(58)	(33.0)	(214)	(9.0)	\$426	119.3	(2,866)	(7.1)	(20,734)	(3.7)	\$233	38.1
Information	(2)	(18.2)	(48)	(25.5)	\$125	27.0	291	9.1	(18,244)	(24.8)	\$385	43.9
Financial Activities	(1)	(1.7)	(93)	(26.0)	\$348	68.9	(669)	(4.2)	14,050	8.5	\$478	49.1
Professional & Business Services	(6)	(9.7)	1,154	229.0	\$719	111.0	3,968	15.7	32,383	9.9	\$490	54.9
Education & Health Services	(19)	(23.2)	634	21.1	\$261	50.6	4,031	28.7	194,869	39.2	\$309	49.8
Leisure & Hospitality	(13)	(17.3)	(9)	(0.9)	\$87	50.3	1,292	10.0	40,954	17.2	\$109	41.8
Other Services	(7)	(10.0)	(52)	(10.2)	\$75	32.8	2,103	15.5	1,352	1.5	\$175	43.1
Public Administration	(5)	(22.7)	94	18	\$313	50.4	(19)	(0.6)	15,148	13.3	\$329	49.3

* 2015 based on second quarter data

Sources: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

FIGURE 1-10.

COMMUTING PATTERNS CITY OF AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2013					
Home Destination			Work Destination		
Place of Residence	Count	Share	Place of Employment	Count	Share
Austin city, MN	7,289	55.1%	Austin city, MN	7,289	66.6%
Albert Lea city, MN	495	3.7%	Rochester city, MN	538	4.9%
Rochester city, MN	335	2.5%	Albert Lea city, MN	488	4.5%
Brownsdale city, MN	166	1.3%	Owatonna city, MN	246	2.2%
Owatonna city, MN	150	1.1%	Minneapolis city, MN	128	1.2%
Minneapolis city, MN	122	0.9%	Bloomington city, MN	102	0.9%
St. Paul city, MN	115	0.9%	Plymouth city, MN	98	0.9%
Rose Creek city, MN	104	0.8%	St. Paul city, MN	93	0.9%
Le Roy city, MN	85	0.6%	Edina city, MN	90	0.8%
Adams city, MN	70	0.5%	Mankato city, MN	85	0.8%
All Other Locations	4,293	32.5%	All Other Locations	1,783	16.3%
Distance Traveled			Distance Traveled		
Total Primary Jobs	13,224	100.0%	Total Primary Jobs	10,940	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	8,577	64.9%	Less than 10 miles	7,535	68.9%
10 to 24 miles	1,794	13.6%	10 to 24 miles	815	7.4%
25 to 50 miles	1,176	8.9%	25 to 50 miles	1,120	10.2%
Greater than 50 miles	1,677	12.7%	Greater than 50 miles	1,470	13.4%
Home Destination = Where workers live who are employed in the selection area Work Destination = Where workers are employed who live in the selection area					
Sources: US Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC					

FIGURE 1-11.

COMMUTING INFLOW/OUTFLOW CHARACTERISTICS CITY OF AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2013						
	Outflow		Inflow		Interior Flow	
City of Austin	3,651	100.0%	5,935	100.0%	7,289	100.0%
By Age						
Workers Aged 29 or younger	924	25.3%	1,350	22.7%	1,864	25.6%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	2,054	56.3%	3,209	54.1%	3,814	52.3%
Workers Aged 55 or older	673	18.4%	1,376	23.2%	1,611	22.1%
By Monthly Wage						
Workers Earning \$1,250 per month or less	829	22.7%	1,203	20.3%	1,725	23.7%
Workers Earning \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	1,433	39.2%	2,350	39.6%	3,348	45.9%
Workers Earning More than \$3,333 per month	1,389	38.0%	2,382	40.1%	2,216	30.4%
By Industry						
"Goods Producing"	1,053	28.8%	1,519	25.6%	2,239	30.7%
"Trade, Transportation, and Utilities"	642	17.6%	1,293	21.8%	1,132	15.5%
"All Other Services"*	1,956	53.6%	3,123	52.6%	3,918	53.8%
*includes the following sectors: Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, and Public Administration						
Sources: US Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC						

The table on the following two pages shows how much Austin and Minnesota residents spend on particular goods and services on a household basis. Austin residents, on average, spend significantly less in all categories as opposed to Minnesota as a whole.

FIGURE 1-12.

ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES BY SELECTED PRODUCT TYPE					
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA					
2015					
Category	Austin Annual Expenditures		MN Expenditures	Spending Potential Index to USA	
	Total (\$000's)	Average Per HH	Average Per HH	Austin	MN
				Index	Index
Goods & Services					
Apparel & Services	\$17,995	\$1,755	\$2,447	76	106
Entertainment and Recreation	\$26,651	\$2,599	\$3,544	78	107
Nonprescription Drugs	\$1,088	\$106	\$139	82	108
Prescription Drugs	\$4,436	\$433	\$540	87	109
Eye Glasses & Contact Lenses	\$774	\$75	\$98	84	109
Personal Care Products	\$3,673	\$358	\$498	77	107
Child Care	\$3,247	\$317	\$469	71	105
School Books & Supplies	\$1,446	\$141	\$193	78	107
Smoking Products	\$4,426	\$432	\$508	93	109
Computer Hardware	\$1,674	\$163	\$231	75	107
Computer Software	\$141	\$14	\$21	68	105
Pets	\$4,772	\$465	\$622	82	109
Food				Index	Index
Food at Home	\$43,139	\$4,207	\$5,578	81	107
Food Away from Home	\$25,716	\$2,508	\$3,491	76	106
Alcoholic Beverages	\$4,189	\$408	\$587	74	106
Misc. Beverages at Home	\$4,182	\$408	\$534	82	107
Home				Index	Index
Home Mortgage Payment/Rent	\$71,265	\$6,949	\$9,919	74	106
Maintenance & Remodeling Services	\$13,294	\$1,296	\$1,802	77	107
Maintenance & Remodeling Materials	\$2,676	\$261	\$334	87	111
Utilities	\$42,625	\$4,157	\$5,392	82	107
Household Furnishings, Equipment, & Operations				Index	Index
Household Textiles	\$790	\$77	\$105	78	106
Furniture	\$4,100	\$400	\$552	77	107
Floor Coverings	\$209	\$20	\$26	83	107
Major Appliances	\$2,190	\$214	\$289	79	108
Small Appliances	\$378	\$37	\$49	80	107
Housewares	\$576	\$56	\$77	78	107
Luggage	\$63	\$6	\$10	67	104
Telephone & Accessories	\$398	\$39	\$54	77	109
Lawn & Garden	\$3,556	\$347	\$467	80	107
Moving/Storage/Freight Express	\$522	\$51	\$77	69	104
Housekeeping Supplies	\$5,927	\$578	\$773	80	107

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Financial & Insurance				Index	Index
Investments	\$16,427	\$1,602	\$2,870	58	104
Vehicle Loans	\$34,565	\$3,371	\$4,570	80	108
Owners & Renters Insurance	\$4,275	\$417	\$543	83	108
Vehicle Insurance	\$9,738	\$950	\$1,286	78	106
Life/Other Insurance	\$3,775	\$368	\$497	80	108
Health Insurance	\$22,738	\$2,217	\$2,855	84	108
CONTINUED					
TABLE 12 CONTINUED					
ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES BY SELECTED PRODUCT TYPE					
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA					
2014					
Category	Austin Annual Expenditures		MN Expenditures	Spending Potential Index to USA	
	Total (\$000's)	Average Per HH	Average Per HH	Austin	MN
				Index	Index
Transportation					
Cars and Trucks (Net Outlay)	\$33,982	\$3,314	\$4,400	82	109
Gasoline and Motor Oil	\$29,649	\$2,891	\$3,775	82	108
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	\$8,960	\$874	\$1,191	78	107
Travel					
Airline Fares	\$3,359	\$328	\$497	69	104
Lodging	\$3,397	\$331	\$481	73	106
Vehicle Rental	\$230	\$22	\$35	66	105
Food & Drink on Trips	\$3,552	\$346	\$496	74	106
Average Annual Household Expenditures Summary					
Goods & Services	\$70,322	\$6,392	\$8,689		
Food	\$77,225	\$7,530	\$10,190		
Home	\$129,860	\$12,663	\$17,447		
Household	\$18,710	\$1,824	\$2,479		
Financial and Insurance	\$91,517	\$8,924	\$12,621		
Transportation	\$72,591	\$7,079	\$9,366		
Travel	\$10,539	\$1,028	\$1,509		
Total	\$470,764	\$45,441	\$62,302		
Note: The Spending Potential Index is based on households and represents the amount spent for a product or service relative to the national average of 100.					
Sources: ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC					

The following table analyzes retail supply and demand. Over supply is typically not a problem if the businesses are performing well, as this means that the industry is attracting retail consumers from outside the Austin area. These industries include auto parts, accessories and tire stores; grocery stores; beer, wine and liquor stores; gasoline stations; jewelry, luggage and leather goods;

Department stores; office supply stores; and drinking places. All other industries experience leakage – meaning the demand from Austin consumers outpaces the possible supply by existing businesses, resulting in Austin residents procuring these items and non-local establishments.

FIGURE 1-13.

RETAIL DEMAND POTENTIAL AND LEAKAGE AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2015					
Industry Group (NAICS Code)	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap (Demand - Supply)	Surplus/Leakage Factor	Number of Businesses
SUMMARY					
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink (NAICS 44-45, 722)	\$329,977,426	\$310,004,262	\$19,973,164	3.1	197
Total Retail Trade (NAICS 44-45)	\$299,808,124	\$284,594,484	\$15,213,640	2.6	141
Total Food & Drink (NAICS 722)	\$30,169,302	\$25,409,778	\$4,759,523	8.6	56
EXPENDITURE TYPE					
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$70,064,212	\$46,984,310	\$23,079,902	19.7	18
Automobile Dealers	\$56,966,272	\$41,197,500	\$15,768,771	16.1	7
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	\$8,790,598	\$764,155	\$8,026,443	84.0	1
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	\$4,307,342	\$5,022,654	(\$715,312)	(7.7)	10
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$7,931,545	\$4,576,659	\$3,354,885	26.8	6
Furniture Stores	\$5,180,214	\$3,406,168	\$1,774,046	20.7	3
Home Furnishings Stores	\$2,751,330	\$1,170,491	\$1,580,839	40.3	3
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$13,186,788	\$4,827,188	\$8,359,600	46.4	11
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$15,241,899	\$3,541,761	\$11,700,138	62.3	8
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	\$11,943,286	\$1,588,368	\$10,354,918	76.5	5
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	\$3,298,613	\$1,953,392	\$1,345,221	25.6	3
Food & Beverage Stores	\$51,422,158	\$61,159,265	(\$9,737,107)	(8.6)	19
Grocery Stores	\$43,870,355	\$55,523,569	(\$11,653,214)	(11.7)	13
Specialty Food Stores	\$3,017,950	\$465,664	\$2,552,287	73.3	1
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$4,533,852	\$5,170,033	(\$636,180)	(6.6)	5
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$20,767,640	\$13,186,363	\$7,581,278	22.3	20
Gasoline Stations	\$23,228,396	\$40,827,543	(\$17,599,147)	(27.5)	12
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$11,790,823	\$3,721,422	\$8,069,401	52.0	8
Clothing Stores	\$9,114,666	\$2,063,547	\$7,051,119	63.1	4
Shoe Stores	\$1,907,742	\$738,310	\$1,169,432	44.2	2
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$768,415	\$919,565	(\$151,150)	(9.0)	2
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$8,801,341	\$4,243,282	\$4,558,059	34.9	9
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	\$7,308,921	\$3,710,721	\$3,598,200	32.7	7
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$1,492,420	\$532,561	\$959,859	47.4	2
General Merchandise Stores	\$57,567,755	\$91,321,484	(\$33,753,729)	(22.7)	5
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$46,310,437	\$90,382,638	(\$44,072,201)	(32.2)	4
Other General Merchandise Stores	\$11,257,318	\$938,846	\$10,318,472	84.6	1
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$13,109,567	\$9,540,483	\$3,569,084	15.8	24
Florists	\$548,363	\$192,360	\$356,003	48.1	2
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$1,766,232	\$1,947,786	(\$181,554)	(4.9)	7
Used Merchandise Stores	\$1,441,190	\$533,037	\$908,152	46.0	6
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$9,353,783	\$6,867,300	\$2,486,483	15.3	9
Nonstore Retailers	\$6,696,001	\$664,724	\$6,031,278	81.9	1
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	\$5,140,128	\$0	\$5,140,128	100.0	0
Vending Machine Operators	\$360,785	\$0	\$360,785	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	\$1,195,088	\$664,724	\$530,364	28.5	1
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$30,169,302	\$25,409,778	\$4,759,523	8.6	56
Full-Service Restaurants	\$17,095,445	\$13,249,996	\$3,845,449	12.7	27
Limited-Service Eating Places	\$11,476,453	\$10,890,856	\$585,597	2.6	22
Special Food Services	\$730,971	\$69,843	\$661,128	82.6	1
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$866,433	\$1,199,083	(\$332,651)	(16.1)	6

Note: All figures quoted in 2015 dollars. Supply (retail sales) estimates sales to consumers by establishments, sales to businesses are excluded. Demand (retail potential) estimates the expected amount spent by consumers at a retail establishment. Leakage/Surplus factor measures the relationship between supply and demand at ranges from +100 (total leakage) to -100 (total surplus). A positive value represents "leakage" of retail opportunity outside the trade area. A negative value represents a surplus of retail sales, a market where customers are drawn in from outside the trade area.

Sources: ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Resiliency

Resilient communities prepare for, adapt to and thrive in the face of abrupt economic changes, while increasing the use of clean energy sources and enhancing local grid infrastructure to limit risk and accelerate recovery from disaster, now and into the future.

Health & Well Being:

Identify Vulnerable Populations:

- Low-income populations
- Elderly
- Non-English speaking population
- Health Impact Assessment

Identify and Designate a Community Safe Shelter

Assess Food Security

Active Living Opportunities

Economy & Society

Assess Employment Rates

Identify vulnerabilities through existing housing analysis

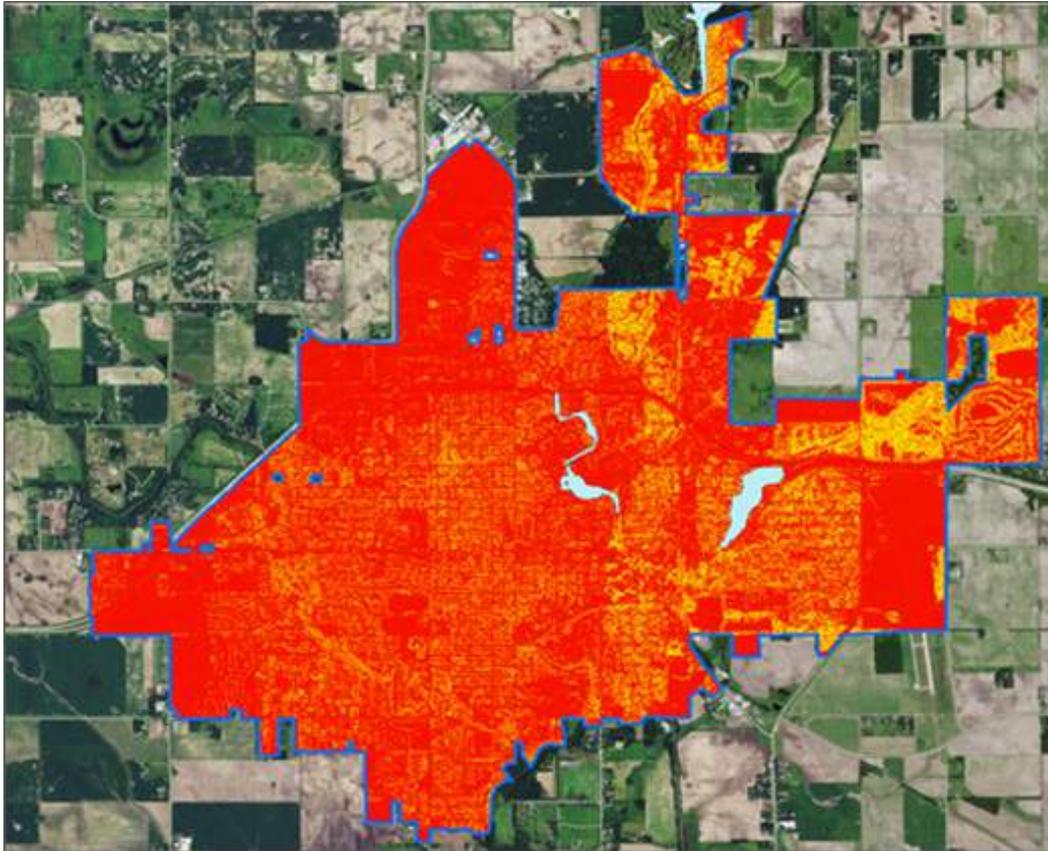
Infrastructure & Environment

Identify Vulnerabilities in Infrastructure and Natural Resources

- Stormwater
- Sewer
- Streets
- Electric and Gas Utilities
- Urban Forest
- Critical Infrastructure

FIGURE 1-14.

Total Solar Resource Potential



Assess Solar Potential
Preliminary maps of the city's solar energy potential illustrate the total solar resource for all surfaces within the city as well as the resource for rooftop solar. The darker the orange, the better the solar resource.



Sustainability

Sustainable communities strive to achieve economic stability, environmental health, and social well-being for all without compromising opportunities for future generations to enjoy the same.

The City of Austin has engaged in a number of sustainability actions through the GreenStep Cities program. Below is an inventory of what the City has done to date, organized by GreenStep City best practice categories.

Buildings and Lighting

Efficient Existing Public Buildings

Action 1. Enter baseline information into the Minnesota B3 Benchmarking database

- Data has been entered and maintained for 18 city buildings

Action 3. Invest in energy efficiency opportunities

- Riverside Arena lighting retrofit

Action 7. Install for one or more city-owned/school buildings one of the following energy efficiency measures:

- Mower County Justice Center: Complete 50 ton GX system
- Packer Ice Arena: Complete 50 ton GX system

Efficient Existing Private Buildings

Action 4. Describe efficiency actions and other green building practices at business located within the city.

- Hormel Food Corp. retrofit of lighting systems at Corporate Office North and Corporate Office South facilities to high efficiency T8 and LED from T12. Implemented water use reduction measures at both facilities as well. Both buildings are benchmarked using Energy Star Portfolio Manager.

Action 5. Conserve drinking/ground water.

- Austin Utilities uses a conservation rate structure utilizing seasonal rates to promote water conservation.

New Green Buildings

Action 4. Provide incentive to private parties who build new buildings that utilize a green building framework.

- Austin Utilities currently offers up to \$25,000 financing for customers to use for green building design assistance.

Efficient Outdoor Lighting and Signals

Action 4. Coordinate Traffic signals and/or optimize signal timing so as to minimize car idling at intersections.

- Over 50% of city traffic signals have loop detectors that allow better flow of traffic. Current policy is for all future city traffic signals to be controlled with loop detectors as they are replaced in the future.

Action 6. Re-lamp/improve exterior building lighting for city-owned buildings/facilities with energy efficient, Dark-Sky compliant lighting.

- When fixtures are replaced they are replaced with Dark Sky compliant fixtures

Action 8. Replace the city's existing traffic signals with LEDs.

- All red and green city traffic signals have been replaced with LED lighting.

Building Redevelopment

Action 2. Implement the Minnesota Main Street model for commercial revitalization.

- Since 2005, the Main Street program has made it possible for 42 buildings to undergo renovations, which allowed for the reuse of existing buildings and avoided the energy and money required to tear down and rebuild.

Land Use

Comprehensive Plan and Implementation

Action 5. Adopt climate protection/adaptation, resiliency or energy independence goals and objectives in the comprehensive plan or separate policy document and link these goals to direct implementation.

- The City has adopted the Minnesota State Energy Code.

Efficient City Growth

Action 3. Encourage a higher intensity of commercial land uses.

- B-3 district, 100% lot coverage allowed in this district, permitted in CBD

Action 4. Provide incentives for infill projects, or for life-cycle housing at or near job or retail centers, or for achieving an average net residential density of seven units per acre.

- Community block grants and TIF or revolving loan funds

Mixed Uses

Action 1. Organize or participate in community planning process for the city, a mixed-use district.

- Implemented in 2004, developed design standards for program: Austin Main Street Program. Working now in Vision 2020 to make Main Street a destination place (have businesses and residential rental space on second floor).

Action 5. Have a downtown zoning district that allows residential and compatible commercial development.

- Currently permitted in zoning ordinance.

Transportation

Complete Green Streets

Action 1. Adopt a complete streets policy that also addresses street trees and storm water.

- Completed and passed by City Council at 6/4/12 meeting

Action 3. Document inclusion/installation of green infrastructure elements as well as grey infrastructure elements in at least one complete streets reconstruction project.

- Completed tree inventory and planned documentation of future installation of trees. Installation of trees is part of Complete Streets policy.

Mobility Options

Action 1. Promote walking, biking and transit use

- 2 Circulators that serve downtown Austin
- Trail signage from the Austin trails system, JC Hormel Nature Center & Shooting Star Trail
- Added 39 bike racks in the city
- Used SHIP funding to purchase free swim times for the Austin pool
- Used SHIP funding to purchase 40 pairs of snowshoes for Shooting Star Trail 30 pairs of skates for Packer arena, 25 sets of snowshoes and 6 sets of skis for the JC Hormel Nature Center.
- City officials did a walking audit around downtown to learn how to be more pedestrian friendly

Action 3. Prominently identify mobility options

- The City has a bus service through SMART.

Environmental Management

Purchasing

Action 2. Purchase energy distributed by a municipal utility from renewable energy source.

- The City purchases electrical power from Austin Utilities, which gets its power from SMMPA. 14.3% of SMMPA's power comes from renewable energy sources, which is less than the requirement, working to get to 15%.

Urban Forests

Action 1. Certify as a Tree City USA

- Austin has been a Tree City USA for 32 years. Just applied for 33rd year (2012)

Efficient Stormwater Management

Action 5. Adopt and implement guidelines for stormwater infiltration/reuse techniques.

- Rain gardens have been constructed at the Mower County Jail, Justice Center, and Mill Pond

Action 6. Adopt an ordinance with erosion and sediment control provisions as well as requirement for permanent stormwater treatment.

- The County has an ordinance to address this. The Cedar River Watershed District has a sediment and runoff policy that is enforced.

Surface Water Quality

Action 3. Adopt and report on measurable, publicly announced surface water improvement targets for water bodies.

- The City of Austin works closely with the Cedar River Watershed District and local conservation groups in promoting and facilitating citizen education and shoreland and water quality management.

Action 4. Adopt a shoreland ordinance for all river and lake shoreland areas

- Section 11.66 Shoreland Overlay District. The uncontrolled use of shorelands of the city affects the public health, safety and general welfare not only by contributing to the pollution of public waters,

but also by impairing the local tax base. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the public health, safety and welfare to provide for the wise subdivision, use and development of shorelands of public waters. Recognized by the City.

Economic and Community Development

Renewable Energy

Action 1. Adopt solar energy standards or a wind energy ordinance that allows or encourages appropriate renewable energy installations.

- The city adopted a wind energy ordinance. In 2013, the City of Austin also adopted solar ordinance based upon the Minnesota solar challenge model ordinance.

Local Food

Action 3. Inventory and promote local food production/distribution within the city.

- Thursday's downtown Main Street Farmers Market.

2. COMMUNITY VISION





“Growth is ‘smart’ when it gives us great communities, with more choices and personal freedom, good return on public investment, greater opportunity across the community, a thriving natural environment, and a legacy we can be proud to leave our children and grandchildren.”

- smartgrowth.org

2. Land Use

Introduction

Land use establishes the foundation for the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. How land within the city is used, determines many aspects of the community. Roads and streets, city services, economic development, housing, and parks and open spaces, are developed and maintained or expanded according to the needs generated by the particular types and characteristics of Austin’s land uses. In addition to establishing specific land use types, this section also establishes the community’s growth strategy and policy framework over the next 20 years.

The Land Use Plan helps the Planning Commission and City Council respond to individual development and redevelopment requests. It is comprised of text and maps that are intended to guide land use, zoning, and physical development within Austin consistent with the

City’s vision. Together the land use text and associated Future Land Use Map (FLUM) are the plan of what the city should look like and how it should function in 2035.

This Plan is implemented through private and public investment in land development, as well as through detailed planning, zoning and subdivision ordinances, public improvements, and public-private-partnerships.

Smart Growth Principles

The Land Use Plan is based on a set of Smart Growth Principles that help to create neighborhoods that are beautiful, safe, affordable, and walkable. Smart Growth promotes the building of urban, suburban and rural communities with housing and transportation near job, businesses, schools, and recreation facilities while protecting the environment. Minnesotan Communities

such as Chaska, Hutchinson, and Duluth have employed Smart Growth principles for a number of years.

Smart growth principles provide Austin with a way to promote efficient and sustainable land development, redevelopment patterns that optimize past infrastructure investments while consuming less land that is otherwise available for agriculture, open space, and natural resource conservation and preservation.

The following overall principles describe how development should use land efficiently, be environmentally and economically sustainable, and reinforce the quality and character of Austin. These principles differ from planning practices that are more reactive to political dynamics or shifting market forces that tend to minimize or disregard long-term socioeconomic, environmental and community choices that alter land use decisions.

“Smart Growth” principles, applied to overall city policy, should be a catalyst for Austin to take advantage of opportunities from which the public will benefit because of environmental sustainability, economic efficiency and enhancement of community and civic life. The principles described below, as well as the goals and policies outlined in this chapter establish patterns that should guide the continued development of Austin. Austin will experience smart growth if it:

Makes Full and Efficient Use of Urban Services

In order maximize investments in civic infrastructure such as sewers and streets, growth should be adjacent to existing development, or take maximum advantage of underutilized “infill” areas in the form of redevelopment to produce a connected and, financially sustainable city.

Encourages “Human-Scaled” Design

Contemporary suburban style development, catering to automobile transportation, typically spreads out over the landscape, and lacks the walkable, human scale found in Austin’s downtown and older, traditional neighborhoods. For example, Downtown Austin and its adjacent neighborhoods have an intimate human scale, with

continuous sidewalks, and street trees. The downtown provides a pleasant walking environment with large picture windows and a mix of on and off street parking. While new development provides valuable services and tax revenue, the large building setbacks, dominant front yard parking lots, wide distance between buildings, and lack of safe pedestrian access creates a far less inviting environment. More compact, accessible patterns of development use land and resources more efficiently while supporting a broader range of transportation options such as walking and cycling. Well-planned larger-scale development can make a positive contribution to Austin’s economy while also exhibiting the level of detail and human scale of the city’s downtown and traditional neighborhoods. In this way, the city’s character works in harmony with its residents and its economy.

Mixes Land Uses

In the center of Austin moving out from Main Street, commercial, civic, service, residential and recreational uses are located relatively close together. Conversely, contemporary development in Austin separates different land uses from one another. The concept of single-use zoning grew out of a need to separate living places from major industries to protect the health of residents, and this practice is still good policy around the large Hormel and Quality Pork Processors facilities. Mixing different yet compatible uses in a modern setting can create more sustainable communities by leveraging infrastructure investments, and reducing environmental impacts while increasing convenience by reducing the distances people must travel by car to conduct their daily lives.

Community plans and land development policies that allow for mixing a range of appropriate uses provide for a broader range of development opportunities. They also provide increased market flexibility allowing the development community to respond to changing trends and shifts in consumer preference.



Creates Housing Opportunities & Choices

Austin has a range of housing needs exacerbated by aging housing stock and a lack of modern, quality rental properties to rising construction costs and competition along its unincorporated rural-urban interface. More diverse housing types and more improved and modernized housing conditions are needed to meet current and future housing needs and preferences. Austin has seen an increase in downtown housing over the past decade as well as a concerted effort by its Housing and Redevelopment Authority to rehabilitate older homes. The city is also exploring ways to raise the bar on rental housing conditions. These efforts as well as additional, more creative policies, programs and partnerships will be needed into the future.

Consequences of the mortgage crisis and subsequent economic downturn of 2008-2011, as well as demographic changes, create greater demand for multi-family development, smaller lot single-family development in innovative design settings, and attached housing for young professionals and empty-nesters. Residential development, in higher densities, should be incorporated into mixed use projects to reduce the separation between living places and activity centers. Overall, Austin should continue to provide opportunities for people at all stages of life to find their place in the city.

Encourages Distinctive Neighborhoods with a Sense of Place

Newer residential development often occurs as single use subdivisions or in isolated pods of apartment buildings or twin homes largely caused by outdated, single use zoning and subdivision regulations and incremental or leap frog development. Many of these areas lack discernible identities and sense of place or character. Austin should promote the building of diverse and walkable neighborhoods providing a mix of uses and housing types designed in an environmentally responsive manner that reflect Austin’s built heritage and character.

Preserves Open Space & Vital Environmental Areas

Austin’s environment including the Cedar River and Turtle Creek corridors, its Park System and its surrounding agricultural lands are its greatest natural assets. By preserving open spaces and environmentally sensitive areas, the city balances the built and natural environment and provides habitat for plants and animals, recreational opportunities, and places of natural beauty. Open spaces whether for recreation, habitat or flood control have also been shown to add measurable financial value to adjacent development.

Creates Transportation Options

Many communities have begun to realize the need to provide a wider range of transportation options. A completely auto-dependent city limits access of such groups as young people and older seniors. An increase in the city's physical size should not reduce access. Techniques that increase the ability of all residents to move freely around the city include better coordination between land use and transportation, increasing connectivity within the street network, and developing multi-modal (or complete) streets that accommodate multiple forms of transportation. This expands transportation options and increases opportunities for social interaction. Equally important, incorporating physical activity into the daily routine of citizens creates a healthier and more physically fit community reducing demands on health care and increasing longevity.

Achieves Community and Stakeholder Collaboration in Development Decisions

Austin is a great place to live, learn, work and play any time of the year. City government should stay close to its constituents through the use of tools and techniques that collect and monitor residents and business owners' needs. Issues and ideas voiced by the community cannot be considered and acted upon without the collaboration of citizens and their government. Partnerships (such as Vision 2020) between neighbors, businesses, foundations, non-profit organizations, schools, developers and the city will support and accelerate the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Land Use Goals and Policies

1. Maintain an official Land Use Plan that embodies principles of smart growth in identifying the most appropriate locations for development and redevelopment.

Policies

- Prepare and adopt a land use plan that designates land use areas and guides development to appropriate areas in order to ensure desirable land use patterns and minimize conflicts.

- Work with Mower County and adjacent Townships to maintain low residential densities within the joint two mile joint boundary to promote the efficient and environmentally sound application of private and public utilities to ensure long-term sustainability and resiliency.
 - Coordinate community growth with Austin Public Utilities to systematically plan for the efficient expansion of services.
 - Identify areas of significant natural resource benefit and protect these areas from premature or incompatible development.
2. The City will promote controlled and orderly growth consistent with its Land Use Plan, Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

Policies

- Continue to administer an orderly annexation plan for areas that are urban or are about to come urban in character. Work cooperatively with Mower County, adjacent cities, townships, and property owners to encourage orderly growth and development.
 - Review all applicable ordinances and policies to ensure that they do not deter desirable, self-supporting development.
3. Encourage traditional patterns and practices of urban design and preserve Austin's identity and sense of place through quality building, site and infrastructure design.



Policies

- Work to retain attractive, historic buildings within the community.
 - Adhere to specific site design restrictions for properties that are environmentally sensitive or have high visibility.
 - Work to improve the attractiveness of highway and roadway corridors within Austin, especially I-90, US 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).
 - Encourage residential developments that link neighborhoods.
 - Assure 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.
 - Review non-conforming uses for adherence to city policies. Enforce regulations that apply to non-conforming uses and review of effectiveness.
 - Adhere to standards that assure proper screening and landscaping of unsightly site uses including surface parking lots.
4. Promote redevelopment and infill when feasible to leverage existing infrastructure investments and strengthen neighborhood vitality and cohesion.

Policies

- Encourage compatible infill residential redevelopment throughout the developed portions of the city, to reduce blight, increase housing choice and improve tax base.
- Encourage compatible mixed use and mixed-income infill redevelopment to enhance neighborhood completeness, promote economic development and strengthen sustainability and resiliency.

5. Support the economic viability of Austin’s historic downtown.



Policies

- Coordinate community growth with the implementation of the 2014 Downtown Master Plan Update.
- Retain and attract the appropriate mix of retail/service business activity and housing opportunities in Downtown.
- Continue to respect and leverage the close proximity of the Cedar River through use of innovative stormwater management techniques, access to open space and nature.
- Continue to enhance and maintain downtown-specific pedestrian, cycling and vehicular infrastructure appropriate to Downtown’s unique and historic stature as Austin’s premier social and cultural district.
- Encourage and support innovative housing opportunities in the Downtown area.
- Promote adequate parking for the Downtown with additional concentration on maintenance and improvement of parking facilities.
- Continue to encourage the use of Federal, State, local, and other financial resources to fund and or incentivize Downtown reinvestment and maintenance of downtown enhancements.

6. Support agriculture practices by guiding development towards less productive agricultural lands and promoting urban agriculture.

Policies

- Ensure urban agriculture practices are an acceptable and compatible use in several land use categories such as industrial and low density residential.
 - Continue to craft, monitor and refine supportive ordinances to effectively regulate urban agricultural practices within undeveloped and developed areas of the city.
7. Identify natural systems and functions prior to designating areas for development, and maintain official controls that protect or integrate natural systems into development or land use changes.

Policies

- Encourage maintaining wetlands and natural drainage systems when accommodating new growth and re-establishing wetlands and natural drainage systems through redevelopment projects, when appropriate.
- Support development patterns that protect both surface and groundwater from hazardous waste, fertilizers, and pesticides.
- Require sedimentation and erosion control techniques during development and redevelopment projects and encourage innovative techniques, such as the use of rain gardens, and other low impact development and best management practices where appropriate.
- Require the management of stormwater runoff in accordance with local and state requirements, as well as drainage needs.
- Retain, enhance or restore vegetative buffers with native plant species along the Cedar River, Turtle Creek, streams, lakes, wetlands, and ponds.
- Support the expansion of clean energy technologies and energy efficiency.

Existing Conditions

Land Use Patterns

Brief narrative description, map, table of uses with acres and revise percentages, short descriptions of current land use categories

Future Needs

Austin has experienced steady population increases over the past several decades, and this relative rate is anticipated to continue. By 2035, Austin is projected to grow to a population of 28,887, representing a 15.2% increase from the 2015 population. Comparatively – this is similar to the projected growth of Mower County, and is slightly outpacing the projected growth rate for Minnesota as a whole. The housing study from 2013 indicated a 2020 population project of 25,718 – indicating that Austin has grown faster than previously anticipated.

Currently, the average household size in Austin is 2.45 persons per household, and projections have this remaining constant through 2035. This, coupled with the population projections are likely to lead to the need for more occupied homes in Austin.

Job growth has also been strong and is expected to continue at a rate of approximately 15% through 2035. Combined with steady population growth, agricultural lands in and adjacent to city boundaries can be expected to be transformed into new neighborhoods and mixed use employment districts.

Land Use Framework

The Framework for this Plan emerges from a program based on the smart growth principles outlined above, market realities, existing projects and priorities, and community-wide goals. The framework establishes the overall structure for the Plan and includes:

- Build out existing platted lots
- Expand housing rehabilitation
- Infill mixed commercial and mixed residential redevelopment

- Strengthen and enhance Downtown neighborhood
- Build out existing industrial parks
- Diversify and expand living wage employment opportunities
- Multi-modal transportation connectivity
- Continued flood control / mitigation

The Framework land use category elements are illustrated in Figure 2-3 – The City of Austin Future Land Use Plan. The Plan is intended to serve as a guide to the Planning Commission and City Council in land use related decisions. The plan identifies growth areas and acreage for each of the land use categories proposed for growth. Residents, businesses, and land owners should understand the future land use plan map is intended to direct development to certain areas where facilities and services are available and where land uses are compatible with one another.

As a decision making tool, it is important that the land use plan and map be regarded as general in nature and should be used in support of larger scale, district growth matters and re-zoning; not for small scale, site-specific decisions. It is for this reason that only general land use designations are described and mapped.

Future Land Use Categories

The Future Land Use Plan contains a variety of categories to address the full range of land use types found in Austin today, as well as those likely to occur in the future. The categories used in the plan are similar to those used in the 1999 Comprehensive Plan with the exception being that the residential categories have been more clearly defined to reflect a wider range of densities. Each land use category is described in detail and illustrated on the Land Use Plan (Figure 2-5). It is recognized that not every parcel of land within each designation will be buildable due to wetlands, floodplains, soils, slopes and other natural constraints. See Figure 2-5 for existing zoning.

Suburban Low Density Residential Neighborhood

Identifies housing with densities that generally range from two to four units per acre. Areas classified as Suburban Residential will be predominately single-family detached homes on 1/2 to 1/4 acre lots with the potential for some twin homes and other low density attached homes. Overall density between 2-5 units/acre.

Traditional Moderate Density Residential Neighborhood

Identifies housing with densities that generally range from five to ten units per acre. Traditional Residential accommodates a mix of housing types including single-family detached, small lot/small house pocket neighborhoods, twin homes, town homes, and 4-8 unit stacked flat apartment or condominium buildings. Overall density between 5-10 units/acre.

Mixed High Density Residential Neighborhood

Identifies a mix of multi-family housing at densities exceeding ten units per acre. Uses in this category include mixed building type pocket neighborhoods, row houses, multi-story stacked flat, condominium or apartment buildings. Overall density exceeds 10 units/acre.

Mixed Use

Identifies areas intended to provide a mix of commercial, office, residential, public/institutional related uses in a walkable, human scale environment. Areas may include a mix of retail and service commercial, office, lodging, public/institutional, higher density residential, park and recreation uses. Mix of uses can be integrated either vertically or horizontally. Mixed use areas are currently found in Downtown Austin, as well as within the 18th Avenue corridor area.

Commercial / Retail – Identifies commercial land uses including retail, personal and professional services, and professional office employment that serve regional, community and neighborhood scale markets. These areas are organized as accessible, walkable, places located to provide convenient access for customers.

Office / Light Industrial - Identifies areas intended for a mix of professional office, office-warehouse, flex office and light industrial uses engaged in assembling, packaging, and shipping previously manufactured components into finished goods / products and similar business that provided wholesale goods and services.

Industrial - Identifies portions of Austin that contain manufacturing and processing of raw materials as well as; assembly, construction, warehousing, and similar businesses that provide wholesale goods and services. The location of these businesses are concentrated and separate from other businesses to reduce the disruption that could be caused if each business was scattered throughout the city.

Public/Institutional – Identifies portions of Austin that contain uses that benefit the public. Includes all publicly-owned uses, such as schools, hospitals, city/ township buildings, water towers, pumping stations, sewage treatment plants, sanitary sewer facilities as well as public utilities, i.e. power plants, electrical substations, and telephone companies. Also includes private institutional uses, i.e. hospitals, colleges, private schools, churches, cemeteries, etc.

Park/Open Space – Identifies portions of Austin that contain official parks and open spaces. Parks and open spaces are used for recreation, relaxation and access to nature. Uses include active and passive parks, nature / wildlife areas, and other outdoor recreation facilities.

FIGURE 2-1.

TABLE POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 1990 to 2035							
		Population			Households		
		City of Austin	Mower County	Minnesota	City of Austin	Mower County	Minnesota
Census	1990	21,907	37,385	4,375,099	9,347	15,028	1,647,853
	2000	23,314	38,603	4,919,479	9,897	15,582	1,895,127
	2010	24,718	39,163	5,303,925	10,131	15,828	2,087,227
	2015 Est.	25,084	39,405	5,442,213	10,255	15,947	2,157,239
Forecast	2020	26,304	41,229	5,625,619	10,693	16,631	2,236,878
	2030	28,033	43,802	5,974,304	11,442	17,734	2,399,319
	2035	28,887	44,960	6,089,935	11,839	18,351	2,461,574
		Percent Change - Population			Percent Change - Households		
	1990-2000	6.4%	3.3%	12.4%	5.9%	3.7%	15.0%
	2000-2010	6.0%	1.5%	7.8%	2.4%	1.6%	10.1%
	2010-2015	1.5%	0.6%	2.6%	1.2%	0.8%	3.4%
	2015-2020	4.9%	4.6%	3.4%	4.3%	4.3%	3.7%
	2010-2020	6.4%	5.3%	6.1%	5.5%	5.1%	7.2%
	2020-2030	6.6%	6.2%	6.2%	7.0%	6.6%	7.3%
	2015-2035	15.2%	14.1%	11.9%	15.4%	15.1%	14.1%

Sources: MN State Demographic Center; ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

FIGURE 2-2.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS AUSTIN, MINNESTOA 2000 to 2035						
Annual Employment	City of Austin		Mower County		Minnesota	
2000	13,128		15,918		2,608,844	
2005	13,433		16,201		2,637,323	
2010	13,542		16,107		2,563,391	
2015*	13,719		16,358		2,795,190	
2020 Forecast	14,383		17,123		2,856,460	
2030 Forecast	15,329		18,191		3,033,508	
2035 Forecast	15,796		18,672		3,092,221	
Change	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
2000 - 2010	414	3.2%	189	1.2%	-45,453	-1.7%
2010 - 2015	177	1.3%	251	1.6%	231,799	9.0%
2015 - 2020	664	4.8%	765	4.7%	61,270	2.2%
2020 - 2030	945	6.6%	1,069	6.2%	177,048	6.2%
2015 - 2035	2,077	15.1%	2,314	14.1%	297,031	10.6%

*Estimate based on second quarter data

Sources: MN DEED; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

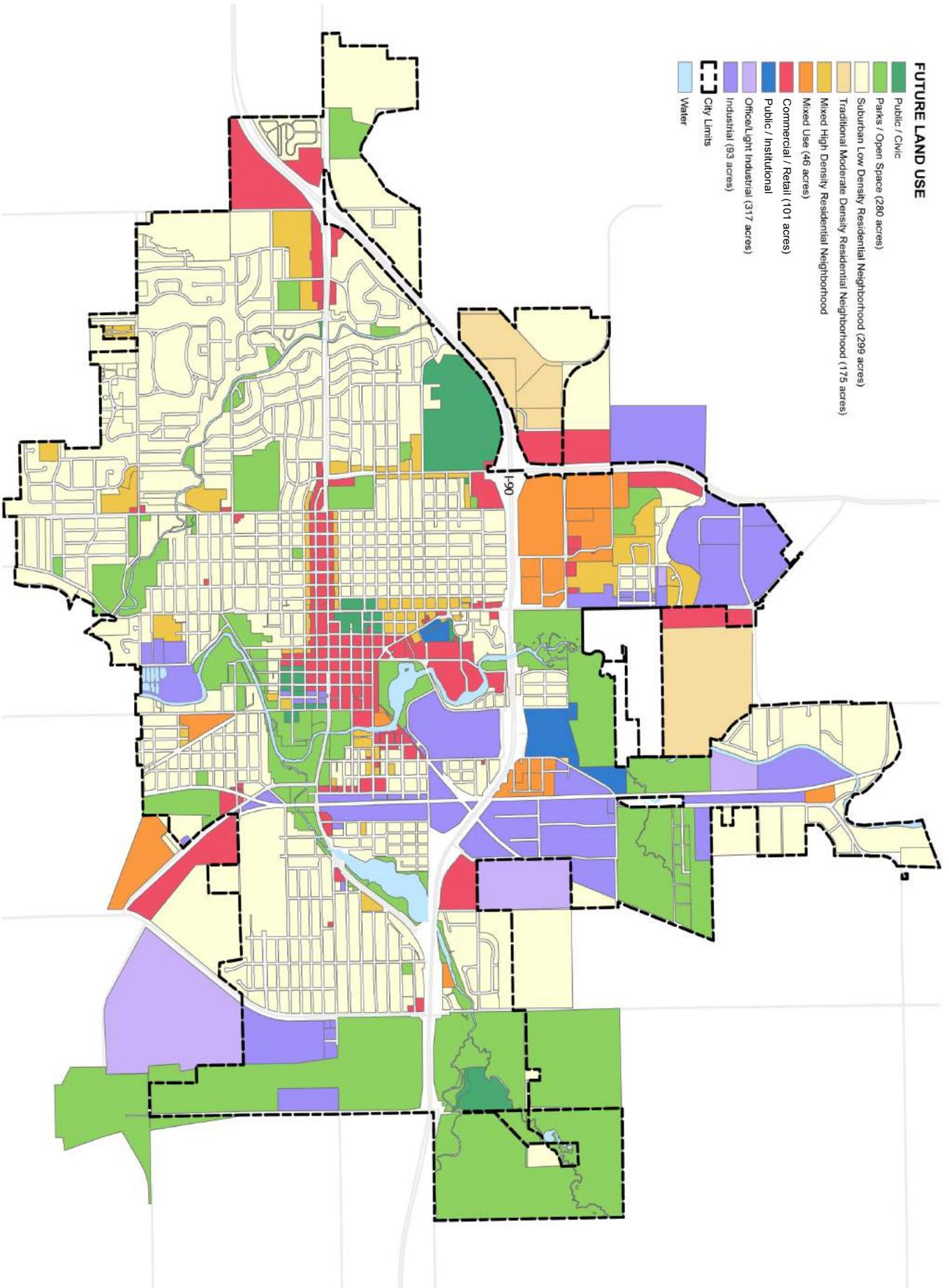
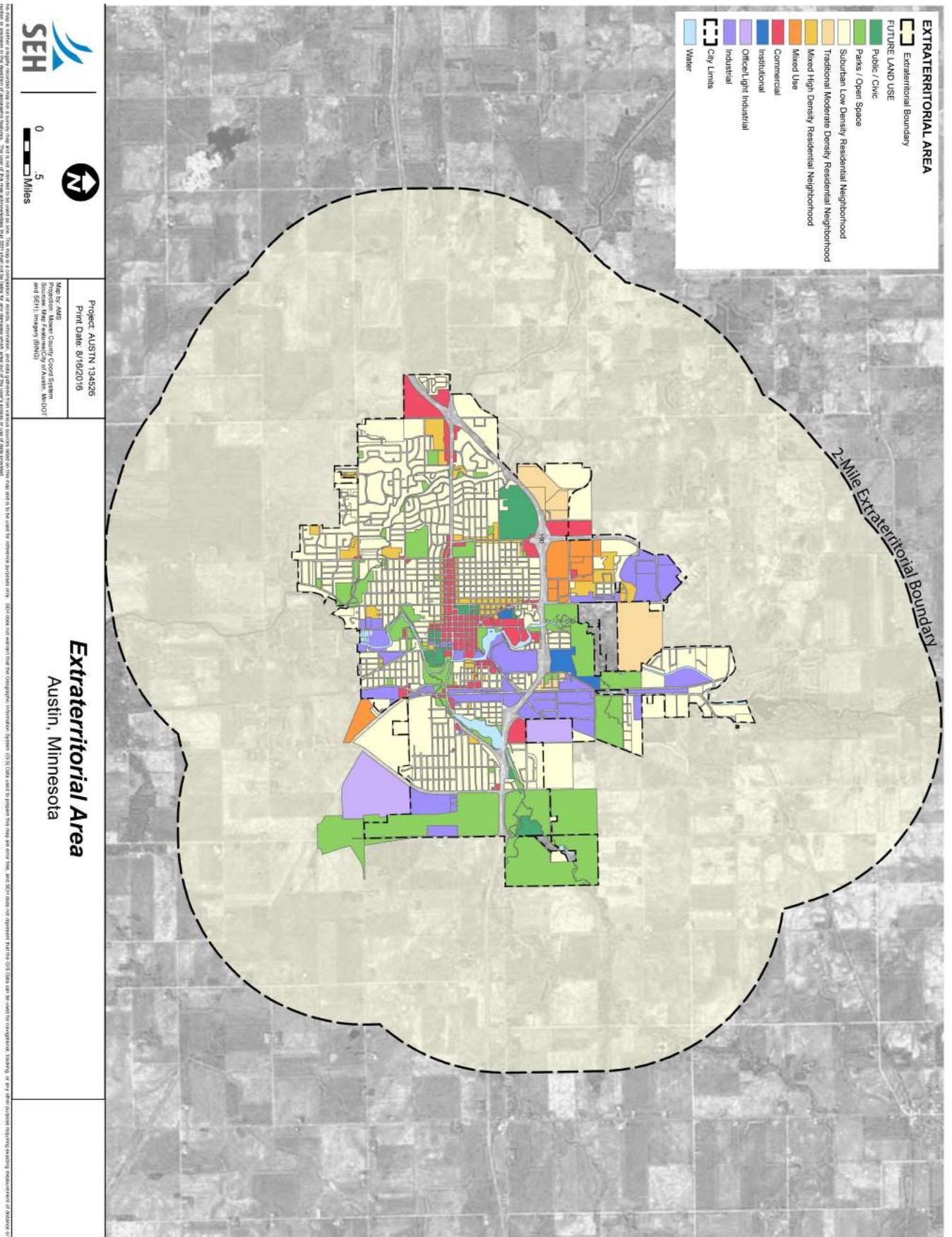


FIGURE 2-4.





“Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.”

CHAPTER OF NEW URBANISM

3. Housing

Introduction

Housing plays a critical role in defining a person’s quality of life. From a new resident or visitor’s perspective, it provides a visual indicator of the community’s character, including prosperity and vitality. From a City’s perspective, housing is typically the largest user of land and City services and provides a significant base for local taxes. Having a clear understanding of current housing inventory (quantity and type) along with current and future population projections will assist Austin in providing ample housing to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Existing Conditions

To assist in determining housing needs, the City hired Maxfield Research Inc. in 2013 to conduct a comprehensive demographic and housing market study. A discussion of the data and findings follows.

More detail may be found by reviewing the complete study which is available on the web at <http://www.austinhra.org/austin-housing-study/>.

Demographics

As of 2015, the City of Austin had a population of 25,084 people, with 10,255 households. Over the next 20 years the City is forecast to add 3,803 people within 1,583 households. Austin’s population is aging. Older age cohorts account for a significant percentage of the total population. Baby boomers (age group 45-54 and 55-64 in 2015) account for an estimated 23.4% of the City’s

total population. Over the next five years, the 65-74 age cohort is estimated to have the highest growth (+13.4%). The housing study attributes this growth to an aging baby boomer generation moving into their early senior years.

Median household income and per capita incomes in Austin lag those of Minnesota as a whole. In 2014, Austin's median household income was \$39,890, while Minnesota's was \$60,820. Per capita income in Austin was \$23,649, while it was \$31,642 in Minnesota. Of particular interest is that non-senior households typically have higher median household incomes as compared to senior households. Thus the trend of increasing senior households portends a decrease in household income.

Figure 3.1 on the following page shows that as a population ages, incomes fluctuate. Younger residents entering the workforce typically begin with a lower wage range then work through their careers with wage advancements until they reach retirement age. Income figures generally decline as retirees move on to fixed incomes.

Between 2000 and 2014, home ownership rates in Austin decreased from 73.8% to 64.7%. In 2010, single occupant households accounted for approximately 33% of all Austin households (the largest household segment). Married without children households accounted for the second highest percentage at 26.7%

City-wide, there is a higher percentage of persons renting housing than compared to Minnesota as a whole. Over the past 15 years Austin has experienced a decline in home ownership in nearly all age categories. Contributing factors include a tighter lending market, as well as a general cooling in household formations by millennials. There is a significantly higher percentage of individuals renting homes in the 25 to 54 age ranges in Austin.

The majority of Austin's residents tend to work within the city (66.6%). Of the 33.4% of Austin residents that commute to jobs outside of the City, they most commonly commute to Rochester, Albert Lea and Owatonna for employment.



FIGURE 3-1.

HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER CITY OF AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2015 & 2020								
Total	Age of Householder							
	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	
2015								
Less than \$15,000	1,524	151	287	181	183	239	154	330
\$15,000 to \$24,999	1,233	66	151	105	73	144	167	527
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,164	75	181	127	124	127	201	328
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,633	94	335	192	228	290	255	239
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,119	74	359	412	418	390	284	182
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,121	29	195	220	196	250	119	111
\$100,000 or more	1,463	26	188	278	364	353	132	121
Total	10,255	516	1,696	1,515	1,587	1,793	1,312	1,837
Median Income	\$45,087	\$29,692	\$44,032	\$56,543	\$58,242	\$54,320	\$41,495	\$26,390
2020								
Less than \$15,000	1,507	155	260	177	163	220	174	358
\$15,000 to \$24,999	994	54	120	83	54	85	151	448
\$25,000 to \$34,999	1,129	73	159	120	106	106	223	342
\$35,000 to \$49,999	1,537	87	298	180	190	262	271	249
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,361	84	384	452	416	438	368	220
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1,391	37	241	253	219	298	179	163
\$100,000 or more	1,774	35	225	340	401	423	193	158
Total	10,693	525	1,685	1,605	1,549	1,832	1,558	1,940
Median Income	\$51,228	\$31,693	\$50,254	\$60,428	\$62,922	\$61,123	\$47,137	\$28,915
Change 2015 - 2020								
Less than \$15,000	-16	4	-27	-4	-20	-19	20	29
\$15,000 to \$24,999	-239	-12	-31	-22	-19	-60	-16	-79
\$25,000 to \$34,999	-35	-2	-22	-7	-18	-21	21	15
\$35,000 to \$49,999	-96	-7	-37	-12	-38	-28	16	10
\$50,000 to \$74,999	242	9	25	40	-3	48	84	38
\$75,000 to \$99,999	270	8	45	34	23	48	60	52
\$100,000 or more	312	9	37	63	37	70	61	37
Total	438	9	-10	90	-38	38	246	103
Median Income	\$6,141	\$2,001	\$6,222	\$3,885	\$4,680	\$6,803	\$5,642	\$2,525

Sources: ESRI; US Census Bureau; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

FIGURE 3-2.

		TENURE BY AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2000 to 2014								
		City of Austin				Minnesota				
Age		2000		2010		2014		2000	2010	2014
		No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Under 25	Own	178	28.4	155	27.5	61	13.0	21.8	19.8	16.8
	Rent	448	71.6	408	72.5	408	87.0	78.2	80.2	83.2
	Total	626	100.0	563	100.0	469	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
25-34	Own	869	61.0	847	51.2	628	43.4	60.1	56.1	53.6
	Rent	556	39.0	806	48.8	818	56.6	39.9	43.9	46.4
	Total	1,425	100.0	1,653	100.0	1,446	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
35-44	Own	1,305	75.9	1,020	67.1	1,031	58.8	79.9	75.0	72.8
	Rent	414	24.1	499	32.9	722	41.2	20.1	25.0	27.2
	Total	1,719	100.0	1,519	100.0	1,753	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
45-54	Own	1,365	82.7	1,294	74.6	1,187	70.1	85.2	81.7	81.0
	Rent	286	17.3	441	25.4	506	29.9	14.8	18.3	19.0
	Total	1,651	100.0	1,735	100.0	1,693	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
55-64	Own	976	84.4	1,341	81.3	1,304	80.2	87.2	84.7	84.0
	Rent	180	15.6	308	18.7	321	19.8	12.8	15.3	16.0
	Total	1,156	100.0	1,649	100.0	1,625	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
65 +	Own	2,611	78.6	2,245	74.5	2,197	75.3	77.1	77.4	78.2
	Rent	709	21.4	767	25.5	720	24.7	22.9	22.6	21.8
	Total	3,320	100.0	3,012	100.0	2,917	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
TOTAL	Own	7,304	73.8	6,902	68.1	6,408	64.7	74.6	73.0	72.1
	Rent	2,593	26.2	3,229	31.9	3,495	35.3	25.4	27.0	27.9
	Total	9,897	100.0	10,131	100.0	9,903	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Housing Characteristics

The City of Austin issued permits for the construction of 65 new housing units from 2010 to 2015.

In total, Austin is reported to have approximately 10,823 housing units, of which about 6,408 are owner-occupied, 3,495 are renter occupied.

Approximately 25% of Austin's housing stock was built prior to 1940 and close to 40% were built between 1940 and 1970. Approximately 8% of Austin's housing stock was built after 2000.

Approximately 62% of Austin homeowners have a mortgage. Comparatively, about 68% of homeowners in the United States have a mortgage. The median price of an owner-occupied home in Austin was \$94,700 in 2014. The estimated value of the majority of Austin's owner-occupied housing stock ranges between \$50,000 and \$149,999. In 2014 the median contract cash rent in Austin was \$724 in 2014.

Current Rental Housing Market

Maxfield Research, Inc. also conducted an inventory of subsidized, affordable, and market rate housing projects within the City to assess current market conditions for rental housing in Austin. The firm inventoried 3,453 rental units in the City.

According to the report, a healthy rental market typically maintains a vacancy rate of about 5%, which is known to promote competitive rental rates, provide consumer choice, and allow for turnover. Market rate rental units accounted for 90% of the total inventory with a vacancy rate of 5.1%.

Current Senior Market

As of June 2013, there were 31 senior housing developments in Austin for a total of 1,031 housing units.

Findings showed that overall vacancy for senior projects in Austin is 9.4%. A healthy senior housing market shows vacancy rates in the 5% to 7% range, depending on the level of resident services provided.

Current For-Sale Housing Market

For sale housing in Austin is comprised of a combination of free standing single family and attached homes (typically townhomes). As of June 2013, the median resale price of single-family homes in Austin was approximately \$90,872, Townhouses were \$118,057. An average of 354 homes have sold annually in Austin since 2005.

The median list price of homes for sale in Austin was about \$99,750 in June 2013. Based on a median list price of \$99,750, a household would need an income of about \$28,500 to \$33,250 based on the industry standard of 3.0 to 3.5 times median income. About 60% of Austin household incomes have annual incomes at or above \$28,500. As of June 2013, Austin had a total of over 71 vacant lots within 8 subdivisions. Lots averaged just over ½ acre for approximately \$50,000 – or slightly over \$1 per square foot with an anticipated average home value of \$250,000.

Future Needs

Housing Demand

Based on the market analysis, the study concludes that demand exists for up to 805 new dwellings over the next 5 to 6 years. Figure 3.3 shows that the greatest demand is for market rate rental and the least demand is for-sale multi-family. Figure 3.4 shows that the great demand for multiple senior housing is for active adult market rate rental, whereas the least demand is for active adult ownership.

In terms of for-sale housing, there is strong demand for many types of housing in Austin. As of 2013, the recommended for-sale options were 75% single family, and 25% multifamily.

Single Family Owner-Occupied

Austin has an overabundance of single family homes priced under \$125,000. Many of these are older (1920-'s -50's) structures that have not been well maintained and are in need of significant repair or replacement. The Housing Study recommended that approximately 15% of single family demand would fall into this category. There is a significant gap in medium priced, move-up housing, ranging between \$125,000 and \$250,000. Approximately 60% of new single family demand has been allocated to this category. The remaining 25% of demand is expected to be for higher priced, executive-type homes priced above \$250,000.

Multi-Family

The multi-family demand in Austin is anticipated to be split equally between modest (less than \$125,000) and move-up (\$125,000-\$250,000) townhomes.



FIGURE 3-3.
General Occupancy Housing Demand

PRODUCT TYPE	HOUSING DEMAND
Market rate rental	199
Affordable rental	43
Subsidized rental	43
For-sale single family	118
For-sale multi-family	39

source: Maxfield Research Inc.

FIGURE 3-4.
Multiple Senior Housing Demand

PRODUCT TYPE	HOUSING DEMAND
Active adult ownership	0
Active adult market rate rental	137
Active adult affordable	60
Active adult subsidized	48
Congregate	46
Assisted living	44
Memory care	28

source: Maxfield Research Inc.

Rental

Much of the existing rental supply is provided by older apartment buildings priced at or below guidelines for affordable housing. This satisfies demand from households that income-qualify for financially assisted-housing however, newer rental properties with updated amenities are not offered in older developments. The study projects that Austin could accommodate approximately 200 new, market rate rental housing units, 43 affordable rental units, and 43 subsidized rental units. Median monthly contract rent in Austin was about \$550 compared with the State median rent rate of \$700.

Challenges

Local employers have expressed a struggle in attracting college educated, well qualified workers to the Austin area due to a lack of newer, higher quality rental housing. The majority of local jobs at major Austin employers are at lower pay grades, which results in a higher demand for lower cost housing. While affordable housing is plentiful in Austin, newer, higher quality rental and for-sale housing is in short supply.

The City recognizes that there are a variety of housing issues within Austin ranging from a lack of quality rental units to an increase in older, smaller homes whose conditions continue to decline. Many of Austin's older, declining condition housing stock has also transitioned into rental properties exacerbating issues associated with blight. A Housing Task Force, comprised of local lenders, realtors, business and community leaders has

been established to address these issues. An additional challenge recognized by this Task Force is the increasing diversity of Austin's population. Obtaining timely and accurate information regarding housing needs and housing violations from immigrant groups due to language, mobility and accessibility barriers will continue to require a concerted effort to ensure these residents' housing needs are being met.

Over the years, rental properties within Austin have been largely undocumented. This has resulted in lack of routine or annual inspections unless complaints or problems are reported. In 2014 a rental registration process was started. There are now approximately 2,000 registered rental units in the City and the City is monitoring the progress of this program to ascertain its effectiveness.

Due to the rising costs of new construction, it has been difficult for market rate apartments to be financially viable in Austin. Average monthly rents in Austin run approximately \$0.82 per square foot, while monthly rents for newly constructed rental units need to be priced upwards of \$1.15 per square foot to be financially viable. This pricing gap has helped stifle construction of new rental apartments within the City.

Existing single-family lots in Austin tend to be at or below current market prices and lot sales and new housing construction has been slow paced at approximately 15 units per year between 2006 and 2012. Housing experts



Examples of existing single family homes in Austin

attribute this to Austin's overall lower than average rental and owner occupied housing values. Additionally, middle to high end wage earners appear more willing to commute into Austin for work due in part to the lack of newer neighborhoods with newer, higher quality construction.

Austin has begun to focus on addressing its housing issues over the past several years through a variety of activities from investing in the 2013 Housing Study to hosting a visit by the Minnesota Chapter of the Urban Land Institute. Austin's Housing and Redevelopment Authority offers several programs to assist residents with housing needs including Section 8 Rental Assistance. Most recently, the City created a program called the Austin Home Initiative (AHI) to provide incentives to encourage the construction of new owner-occupied and rental housing in Austin. Anyone constructing a single family home, duplex or multi-family complex between August 1, 2016 and December 31, 2019 is eligible to receive 100% tax abatement of the City's share of real estate taxes for up to five years.

Goals and Policies

Outlined below are goals and policies, based on public input and recommendations from the housing study that are aimed at guiding the City towards meeting future housing demands for residents of across multiple age and income levels.

1. Provide a variety of market rate and affordable rental housing units to meet the community's current and future needs.



Policies

- Continue to pursue/provide federal housing tax credits to expand affordable housing.
 - Absent of private sector development, the HRA will consider and encourage development projects to meet the housing needs and demand of the community.
 - Pursue development models that are community-driven angel-investment strategies for in-demand housing development projects that meet a community-demand, while being a sound investment strategy.
2. Ensure a variety of housing types, densities, styles and price ranges for all income levels and ages.



Policies

- Work collaboratively with Austin Housing and the Redevelopment Authority to reduce blight and improve housing conditions.
 - Work collaboratively with industry and business to identify and provide safe, decent and affordable housing to meet the needs of their workforces.
 - Engage the Development Community, including builders, lenders and landlords to ensure safe, decent and affordable housing to meet the diverse needs of the community.
3. Strengthen and support Austin's existing neighborhoods.
- Protect neighborhoods from incompatible land uses through effective land use and zoning and building codes.

- Improve transportation connections, particularly bicycle paths/routes and pedestrian facilities, between and within existing neighborhoods and other parts of the City and region.
4. Program expansion to rehabilitate and/or demolish older, blighted residential properties should be explored.

Policies

- Update land development codes to include provisions for the development of compact, walkable, neighborhoods with a mix of residential building types, and sizes.
5. Achieve a consistent, high level of resilient, code compliant, quality housing stock throughout the city.

Policies

- Implementation of additional code enforcement measures, and rental inspection and licensing programs should be evaluated and implemented if feasible.
- Expand programs for rehabilitation and/or demolition of older, blighted residential properties.
- Encourage resilient housing construction design, renovations, and management that maximizes lifecycle cost effective energy efficiency and minimizes exposure to climate risks.

6. Establish Green Zones in underserved and environmentally impaired neighborhoods to reverse negative impacts and improve the quality of life for vulnerable residents. A Green Zone designation provides a local framework to protect the environment and economic health of a neighborhood (or community) heavily affected by industry and local environmental stress or pollution.

Policies

- Identify neighborhoods that are particularly sensitive to environmental and economic hardship through a citywide vulnerability assessment that considers cumulative environmental and economic impacts (i.e. flood buy-out priority properties).
- Engage community members and stakeholders to develop Green Zone strategies that are tailored to address specific needs.
- Incorporate a vulnerability lens into decision-making for existing City programs to ensure equitable delivery of such programs.
- Implement land use policies that eliminate or prevent pollution and enhance quality of life.
- Develop additional interaction and coordination with Welcome Center and Adult Learning Center to ensure resources are available to the diverse ethnic populations throughout the community.



Modern multifamily housing developed to serve the Hormel Institute





Beyond functional purposes of permitting people to get from one place to another...Transportation can and should help bring people together, help build community, cause people to interact, to achieve what they might not alone.

ALLAN B. JACOBS

4. Transportation

Introduction

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan will serve as a reference for residents, city officials, commissioners and staff to utilize as they review development proposals, plan capital improvement project budgets and consider future transportation system improvement needs. Transportation facilities link and, in some cases, separate land uses within the community. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes goals, policies and recommendations to address transportation needs providing a system that accommodates the growth of Austin.

Transportation planning requires continuous monitoring and revision to react to unforeseen changes in the economy and market conditions that impact the community.

Streets Framework

The 2012 adoption of the Complete Streets Policy guides future transportation projects in the City of Austin. The policy outlines the approach to develop a transportation system that is safe, functional and aesthetically pleasing for all users including automobiles, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit. Complete Streets Policy Item 4 also recognizes that the design of streets and the characteristics of adjacent land uses are inextricably linked. Thus the planning and design of streets must consider land use context, prioritizing access to uses such as schools, recreational, commercial and employment areas.

Employing a Complete Streets approach to street design provides for a more holistic and integrated transportation system that ultimately balances needs for multiple modes and supports meaningful place making. FHWA recognizes

several street design resources that promote livability and context sensitive solutions that may be applied in conjunction with more traditional design influences such as jurisdiction and functional classification. (Highway Functional Classification Concepts, Criteria and Procedures, 2013 Edition) As such, while considering the classification of the streets in Austin it is important to understand the adjacent land use context.

For example moderate to low density residential neighborhoods comprise much of Austin's land use. These areas are well served by roadways classified as Local Streets and Collectors which are both present in residential neighborhoods with the same adjacent land use. As one travels from residential area across town to areas of more intense commercial or industrial activity, a different, larger scale street, typically a Minor Arterial, is needed to safely accommodate larger traffic volumes and a mix of trucks, and cars. Transforming a street from one type to another type requires an integrated design approach that addresses both street infrastructure and the uses and design of buildings fronting on that street.

Functional Classification and Austin Context

Functional classification is a system by which roadways are grouped according to the function they are intended to serve. Basic to this process is the recognition that individual roadways do not function independently, but rather most travel involves movement along a network of different functional types of roads. Functional classification assists in determining what role each roadway should perform prior to determining its design features, such as street widths, design speed, and intersection control. However, it is critically important to recognize that there is flexibility in the design of a roadway relative to its functional classification.

Functional classification is also an important consideration in the development of local regulations for land development. As appropriate, the mobility of higher classified roadways should be protected by careful management of site development and access spacing

standards. Transportation problems can occur when a street's design and the management of access to the street are inconsistent with the functional and operating demands imposed by the surrounding land uses. Further, safety challenges often arise when the design of a street does not respond appropriately to the context of the adjacent land uses.

Functional classification is not a one-size fits all approach for roadway design, but rather provides a means for identifying roadways which are oriented toward providing mobility for through-trips (Principal and Minor Arterials) versus those that are oriented more toward providing accessibility or land access (Collectors and local streets). Figure 4.1 shows the Existing Functional Classification for the City of Austin, updated in 2015.

The following sections describe the functional classification of streets and roadways in Austin and also describes the varying land use contexts within each classification to underscore the importance of not applying blanket design guidelines based on functional classification alone.

Interstate and Expressways

Interstates are the highest classification of arterials and were designed and constructed with mobility and long-distance travel in mind with limited access connecting major areas of the country. Roadways in this functional classification category are officially designated as Interstates by the Secretary of Transportation.

Austin Context

Interstate 90 (I-90) travels along the western and northern areas of the City providing an interstate and regional facility as well as a community link for the City of Austin. There are eight exits to the community which are utilized by both visitors and residents. These I-90 exit locations have become home to several commercial and employment centers for the City to which local and regional trips are made using the City street network and the Interstate. Due to the natural Water features across

Austin

Functional Classification

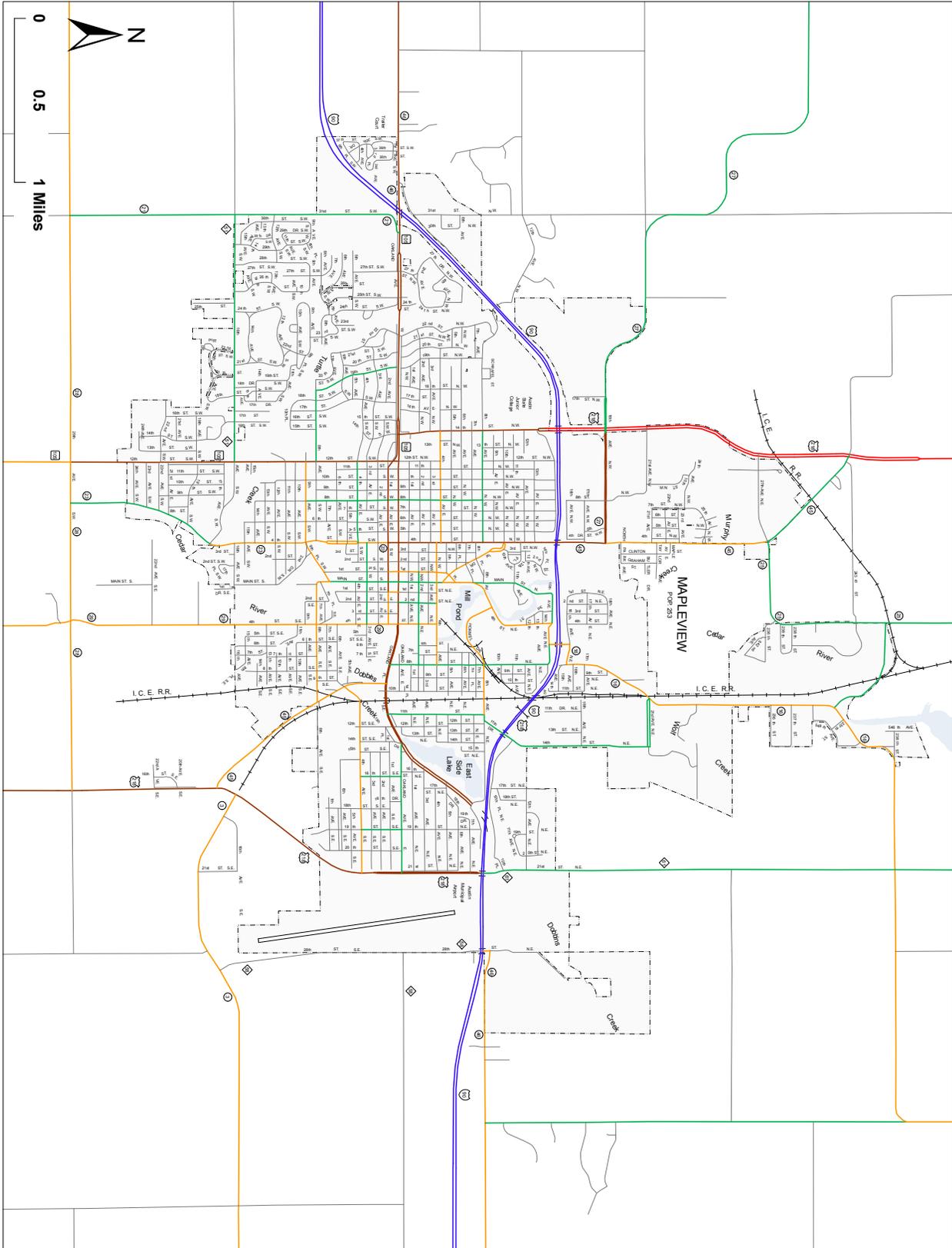
- Interstate
- Other Freeways & Expressways
- Principal Arterial - Other
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local
- - - County Boundary

	INTERSTATE TRUNK HWY
	U.S. TRUNK HWY
	STATE TRUNK HWY
	COUNTY STATE AID HWY
	COUNTY ROAD



FINAL: September 2015

Produced by: Geographic Information and Mapping Section



the City including the meandering Cedar River and Turtle Creek, I-90 provides integral east-west connectivity for the northern portion of the community.

Expressways are a part of this functional class, but are not present in Austin.

Principal Arterials – Other

A primary distinction between other principal arterials and Interstates and Expressways is that direct land access is allowed on other principal arterials. The other principal arterial streets serve longer trips between urbanized areas and across communities, support a high degree of mobility and provide mobility through rural areas.

Austin Context

The only other principal arterial in Austin provides access to I-90 via an interchange at 14th Street NW/US Highway 218. This designation follows the segment from 15th Avenue NW just south of the southern ramp terminal to the north outside the City limits including the divided section of US Highway 218.

Minor Arterials

Minor Arterials are streets that link urban areas and rural principal arterials to larger towns and other major traffic generators capable of attracting trips over similarly long distances. This type of roadway is intended to provide service for trips of moderate length (greater than 2 miles) at a lower level of mobility than principal arterials. However, minor arterials typically have a greater focus on mobility than land access. Minor arterials are of regional importance because they relieve traffic on or substitute for principal arterials where necessary.

Austin Context – Oakland Avenue/1st Avenue

Five minor arterials in Austin provides access to I-90 via an interchange, with the 1st Avenue minor arterial doing so as part of the Oakland Avenue one-way pair (Business 90). While the land use context of these arterials at the interchange is larger scale commercial and industrial development, the character of the land use changes as

they extend beyond Interstate corridor area, significantly so in some cases. Thus in response to the adjacent land use contexts, the functional classification of Minor Arterial does not necessarily result in the same street design or street character.

Oakland Avenue W in the area of I-90 (Exit 175) includes business and multifamily and mobile home residential land uses. West of the interstate the two-lane Rural Roadway and is adjacent to low density residential land uses and transitions to a divided urban section east of I-90. Traveling across Turtle Creek to the east toward town (Business 90), the character of the land uses quickly changes with residential neighborhoods to the north and south and the street transforming from a concrete median divided two-lane roadway with turn lanes to a Parkway with tree-lined boulevards and with access-limiting parallel frontage roads.

As Oakland Avenue approaches the Downtown the adjacent land use includes residential, community businesses and the Central Business District. The street also changes from a two-way street to a One-Way Pair with 1st Avenue with on-street parking allowed and multiple accesses at each block and often at each business driveway.

East of Downtown and the bridge over the Cedar River, Oakland Avenue becomes Oakland Place NE and ultimately connects to I-90 (Exit 180B) via direct ramps. Shortly after these ramps touch down to grade level the street becomes a Parkway complete with mature tree-lined median and boulevards and scenic views of the East Side Lake and park along the north and a residential neighborhood along the south.

Austin Context – 14th Street NW and 4th Street NW

South of I-90 the 14th Street NW and 4th Street NW are each Minor Arterials and are two lane undivided mature Urban Streets with on-street parking, tree-lined boulevards, sidewalks and single family homes lining the corridors. As the corridors approach the Interstate 14th Street NW becomes a principal arterial and 4th Street NW remains a minor arterial.

The interchanges at 14th Street NW and 4th Street NW serve as boundaries for the large scale commercial development north of the Interstate and freeway commercial and institutional land uses immediately to the south. As such the intersections at some of the I-90 ramps, nearby intersections and accesses also include turn lanes and traffic signals to better serve the associated auto traffic demand. While each street has a different functional classification, these two interchanges were identified as primary structures in the structure hierarchy of the I-90 Visual Quality Management Plan (I-90 VQM) completed in January 2016. This designation calls for greater visual wayfinding and aesthetic treatments as well as bicycle and pedestrian facilities across the Interstate on 14th Street NW and 4th Street NW.

North of the Interstate 4th Street NW connects to the large scale commercial developments along 18th Avenue NW, a divided minor arterial between Broadway and US Highway 218.

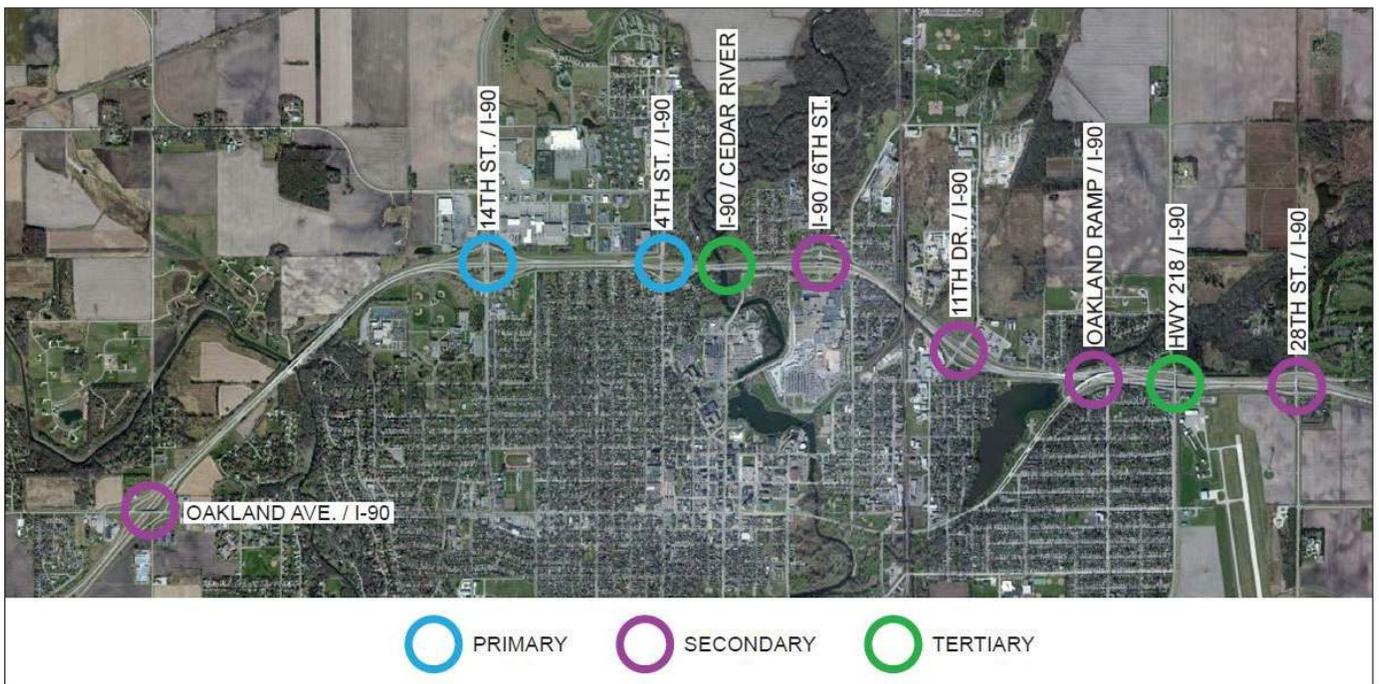
Austin Context – 12th Street SW/Trunk Highway 105 (TH 105)

The minor arterial of 12th Street SW (TH 105) provides connectivity to Oakland Avenue (Business 90) from the residential areas and fairgrounds in the SW quadrant of the City. The two-lane Urban Street includes several single family home driveway accesses along its length.

Austin Context – 21st Street NE/US Highway 218

The minor arterial of 21st Street NE travels from the interchange at I-90 to the south along the airport and a residential area. Direct access to this minor arterial is limited with a segment of frontage road along the west providing circulation for cross streets and connecting to

FIGURE 4-2.
I-90 Visual Quality Structure Hierarchy



I-90 Visual Quality Management Plan, 2016

residential driveways. Further to the south the urban section transitions to a Rural Street cross section with shoulders and the residential land uses are less dense with much undeveloped land along the corridor.

Collectors

Collectors convey traffic from Local Roads to the Arterial network. There are Major Collectors and Minor Collectors. Major Collector routes are longer in length, tend to have fewer direct accesses and higher speed limits resulting in higher traffic volumes. Outside of the urban area, Major Collectors serve primarily intra-county travel with Major Collectors offering more mobility and Minor Collectors offer more access.

Austin Context

Collectors within the urban area of Austin are the streets that link neighborhoods together and link neighborhoods to nodes of commercial and institutional land uses such as schools. They also provide connectivity to the rural edges of the community with the Major Collectors extending greater distances through and across town. In several instances the major and minor collectors are present in the same residential neighborhood with the same cross section and adjacent land uses. A primary difference is that the minor collectors tend to travel shorter distances.

Due to the fact noted above that moderate to low density residential neighborhoods comprise much of Austin's land use, the Collector streets with their linkages to Minor Arterials are very important to the City as they provide relief to the Arterials and their character embodies Austin's standing as a small town.

Local Streets

City streets and rural township roadways, which facilitate the collection of short trips at low speeds and convey them to Collectors and Minor Arterials are considered Local Streets. Their emphasis is to provide direct property access, interconnect residential neighborhoods, secondary commercial and industrial nodes and agricultural lands.

Austin Context

The local street network throughout much of Austin provides circulation and access for the residential neighborhoods. Those in the urban residential neighborhoods are 30-36 feet in width and serve as an interconnected grid. The local streets in the west side of the City tend to meander along the geography with longer blocks but are maintain narrow cross sections.

Roadway Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction over the system of roadways in the City of Austin is shared among three levels of government (state, county, and local/city). Roadway jurisdiction is an important factor because it affects a number of critical organizational functions and obligations including regulatory, maintenance, construction, and financial commitments. The system includes the Interstate and state trunk highway system, managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the County State Aid Highway (CSAH) and County Road system, managed by Mower County, Municipal State Aid streets and local city streets, managed by Austin. In general, the following relationships regarding jurisdictional designations are observed:

- Roadways that serve regional, inter-county or state-wide travel needs are typically owned and maintained by MnDOT. Interstate Highways and Trunk Highways commonly have the highest traffic volumes, accommodate more truck movements, and are typically spaced at intervals consistent with population density, such that all developed areas of the state are within reasonable distance of interstate or state highway.
- Roadways that serve sub-regional needs generally qualify as county state aid highways or county roads and are owned and maintained by Mower County. A county roadway system is often spaced at intervals consistent with population density so as to provide reasonable access to arterial or collector roads.
- Roadways that primarily serve local transportation needs and property access are owned and maintained by Austin. City streets are typically closely spaced shorter routes (city blocks and neighborhood streets) that primarily focus on providing land access and connections between neighborhoods and commercial nodes rather than continuity to outlying rural areas.

Right-of-Way Preservation

There are many different techniques available to protect roadway corridors for future improvements. The basic approaches can be summarized as follows:

- Land acquisition (purchase of easements, title purchase, and eminent domain) – Land acquisition is an approach typically applied when specific improvements are eminent. The applicability of acquisition is linked to the availability of funding.
- Landowner agreements (development agreement, transferable development rights) – Land owner agreements are often limited in effectiveness when dealing with a large project area. By definition these agreements are applied on a parcel-by-parcel basis and are most effective when dealing with larger land holdings.
- Land use regulations (development exactions, ordinance setbacks, official mapping, and subdivision regulations) – Land use regulation techniques are facilitated through the comprehensive planning and zoning process. Certain regulations such as setbacks can be applied, while others such as official maps are typically developed for individual corridors and require a more substantial level of corridor definition.
- Access management (limiting property access) Access management principals should be considered during all transportation planning activities. To be successful, it is important that the guidelines are applied consistently and uniformly at the time development and platting occurs.

In summary, the applicability of these right-of-way preservation options is dependent on many factors including available funding, the immediacy of development, and the timing of the need for a transportation improvement.

Transit

The Downtown is served by Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit – SMART (formerly Austin Mower County Area Transit, AMCAT). Regular transit service in the City of Austin including the Downtown area and greater Austin is provided on the red and purple routes as shown on the route map below (updated January 2016). Service is provided along primary streets such as Oakland Avenue, 14th Street NW, 18th Avenue NW and 4th Street NW as

well as several secondary streets for shorter distances. The service for the red and purple routes is hourly during the days and periods outlined below:

- Purple Route – Monday through Friday 7 AM to 9 PM, Saturday 9 AM to 3 PM
- Red Route – Monday through Friday 7 AM to 9 PM, Saturday 9 AM to 3 PM, Sunday 1 PM to 5 PM
- Demand response for which patrons may call to schedule a ride – Monday through Friday 6 AM to 6 PM, Saturday 9 AM to 3 PM

The cost per ride is \$1.50 for adults, \$1.00 for students 6-17 and free for children under the age of 6. There is also an unlimited monthly pass available at a cost of \$30. The demand response route cost is \$2.00. The website for SMART is <http://smartbusmn.org>



Shared multi-modal street in Austin

Rides on this service are free for senior citizens traveling to and from the Austin Clinic. The Austin Clinic is located near the downtown including the Mayo Clinic facilities along 1st Drive NW. There is an additional service provided free of charge to dialysis patients traveling to Albert Lea.

Lastly, there is a dial-a-ride work route that operates on the following schedule:

- Monday through Friday: 5AM to 7:30AM, 1PM to 4PM and 9:30AM to 2:30AM

There is also a dial-a-ride service available for \$2.00 per ride with two buses operating during the following timeframes:

- Monday through Friday: 6AM to 6PM
- Saturday: Hourly from 9AM to 5PM

Airport

The Austin Municipal Airport is located just east of downtown Austin. The airport has facilities that support aircraft up to 48,000 pounds, including a 5,800 foot concrete runway, full parallel taxiway and a large apron area, including concrete pads for aircraft parking. Additionally, the main runway has an instrument landing system (ILS) and approach lights, providing a high level of reliability for aircraft operations to and from the airport in inclement weather. These facilities allow the Austin Airport to accommodate everything from small general aviation traffic to large corporate jet aircraft. There is a full-service fixed base operator (FBO) located in the administration building at the airport entrance. The FBO offers fueling services, flight training, ground instruction, as well as aircraft maintenance. The airport is also home to Hormel Foods Corporation, who base their aircraft in a large hangar on the southwest side of the airfield.



Railways

The Dakota Minnesota & Eastern Railroad (DM&E) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the CP Rail System, and operates two rail lines in the City of Austin. There is an east-west line that runs along the north edge of Austin which heads to Albert Lea and a north-south line that runs to Owatonna to the north and Mason City, Iowa to the south. Both lines do not serve a large volume of traffic but provide an important service to many of the agricultural related industries in the area. The CP Rail System operates two to four trains per day through the City of Austin hauling primarily agricultural products. There is a rail support yard in the northeast quadrant of the City.

There are 12 rail crossings of public roadways within the City.

Non-Motorized Transportation

The City of Austin currently has a network on sidewalks and trails to serve bicycle and pedestrian traffic throughout the community. There are sidewalks along streets in the more mature areas of the City and fewer sidewalks along streets in the newer areas. As of 2015, the City has over 15 miles of bike trails developed, with

another mile being constructed in 2016. The Existing and planned trails are documented in the Parks and Open Space chapter of the Plan. There are currently no existing or planned on-street bicycle facilities in the City of Austin, however development of an Active Transportation Plan, which may include on-street routes, is recommended within the Goals and Policies section.



Transportation Goals and Policies

Transportation goals and policies reflect a vision of what Austin’s transportation system should provide. They will also help guide priorities for future investment, either as a publicly-maintained local system or in partnership with regional or state transportation agencies. These transportation goals, and policies provide the City with a means to measure the performance of the transportation system over time, and as necessary, an opportunity to reassess, revise and/or supplement the desires of the community.

The goals indicate a specific policy direction and assist in organizing individual objectives and more defined policies. The policies provide more detailed action plans that are necessary to prioritize and initiate a goal and may include initiation or continuation of a program or implementation of a specific project. The following goals and policies are not ranked or presented in order of importance or need.

1. Plan, develop and maintain an integrated, safe and accessible multimodal transportation system to meet existing and future needs.

Policies

- Provide adequate roadway and intersection capacity to accommodate anticipated growth of the community and resulting forecasted vehicular traffic volumes.
- Establish a pedestrian network connecting residential, educational, commercial/retail, employment and recreational destinations throughout the city.
- Establish trails and on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.
- As the community grows, expand public transit services and facilities in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure mobility for all residents and visitors.
- Limit the use of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets for accommodating future street connections.

2. Apply a flexible, innovative, and balanced approach to creating Complete Streets solutions that are appropriate to individual contexts; that best serve the transportation needs of all people using streets and the public right-of-way; and that support the City’s land-use policies.



Policies

- Apply the City of Austin Complete Streets Policy to all transportation related projects.
- Encourage interconnected streets and patterns of development to create more convenient multimodal travel options for residents that will also foster a sense of neighborhoods, while maintaining acceptable traffic volume levels.
- Maintain and, where possible, improve multimodal access to existing and planned land uses that support successful business and residential developments, while also managing safe traffic operations.
- Ensure access into downtown for autos, pedestrians, and bicycles to support public activities and events, private business uses, and residences.
- Review opportunities for multimodal transportation improvements to primary thoroughfares in the community including:
 - i. Oakland Avenue/1st Avenue
 - ii. 4th Street NW
 - iii. 14th Street NW
 - iv. 4th Avenue NE
 - v. 4th Avenue NW

3. Foster a healthy, equitable, and economically vibrant community where all residents have greater mobility choices.

Policies

- Develop an Active Transportation Plan to guide and encourage expansion of the pedestrian and bicycle network including both the trail system and an on-street network.
 - Continue to pursue Safe Routes to School initiatives and funding for non-motorized travel by the community's youth
 - Provide convenient access to the many parks and natural features within the community and opportunities to support active living and healthy lifestyle activities.
 - Target investments in active transportation (interconnected sidewalks and trails) and transit service in low-income neighborhoods and near employment centers.
 - Promote walkability through enhanced connectivity including transit access, a diverse mix of land uses and placemaking and streetscaping features including green infrastructure treatments and climate resilient design.
4. Balance land use and related parking needs to maximize the City's resources to minimize impervious surfaces, storm water runoff, heat island effect and an unpleasant pedestrian experience.



Policies

- Support land uses in existing and emerging town centers and primary thoroughfares with an adequate supply of on-street parking.
 - As new development and redevelopment occur, require a review of shared parking resources to support a “park once” approach.
 - Continue to accommodate alternative fuel vehicles in public parking infrastructure and encourage in private sector parking.
5. Implement the transportation vision through objective and definitive decision making as well as strategic funding, with the collaboration between jurisdictions (City of Austin, MnDOT, Mower County, and surrounding townships)

Policies

- Plan for and preserve future opportunities for necessary transportation system improvements, including multimodal routes and facilities.
 - i. I-90 Bridges – as appropriate ensure that on-street and off-street trail and sidewalk connections are included in bridge projects as defined in the I-90 Visual Quality Management Plan (MnDOT, January 2016) and the recommended future Active Transportation Plan.
- Require adequate right-of-way dedication for new and/or expanded roadways including non-motorized facilities based on the planned function under future conditions.
 - i. 29th Avenue/County Road 28
- Realize necessary transportation system improvements in a cost effective and timely fashion.
- Continue to encourage business owners, residents and community groups such as the Vision 2020 members to be active participants in seeking funding by contacting local, state and federal decision makers in support of transportation funding.

FIGURE 3-3.

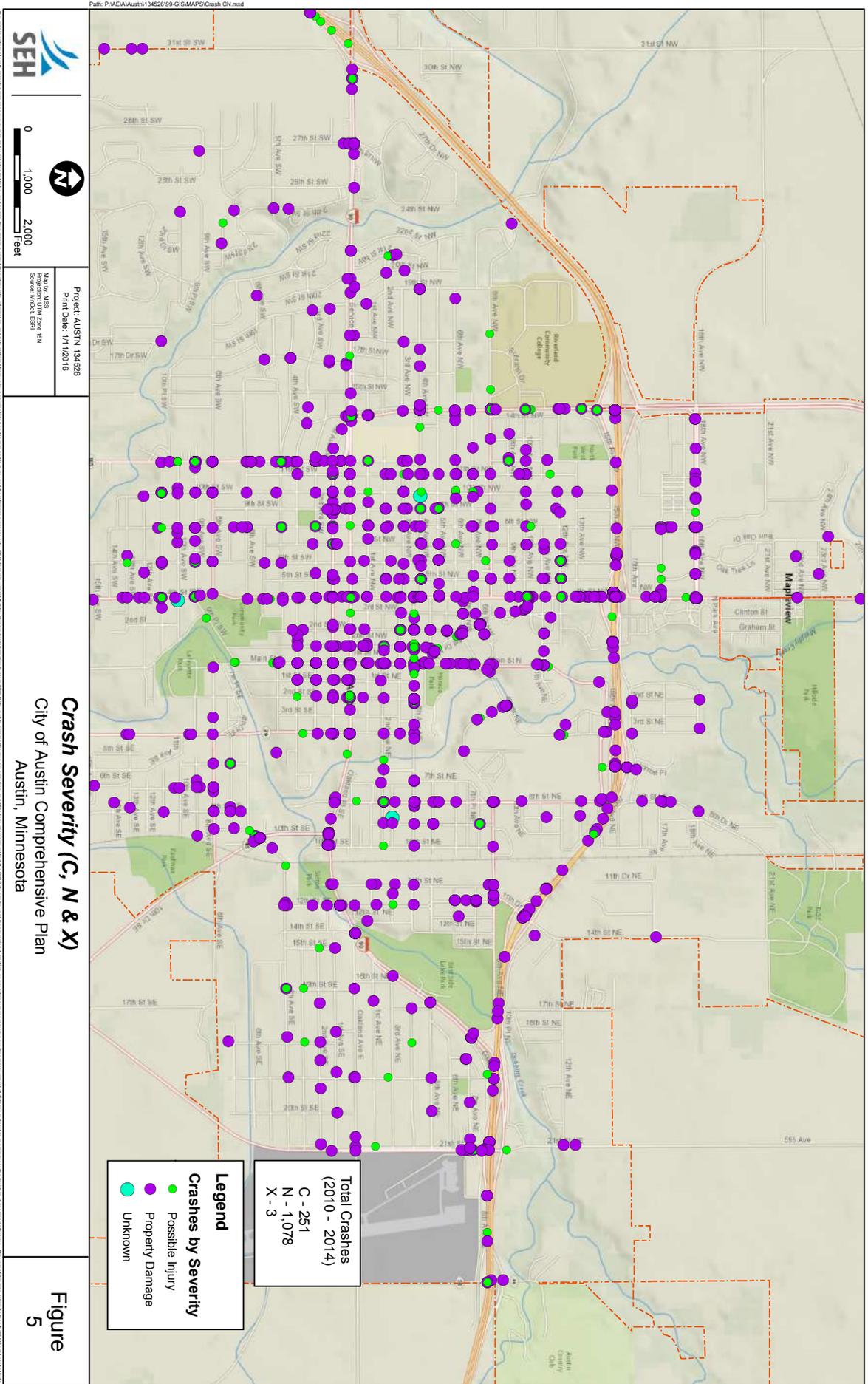


FIGURE 4.4.

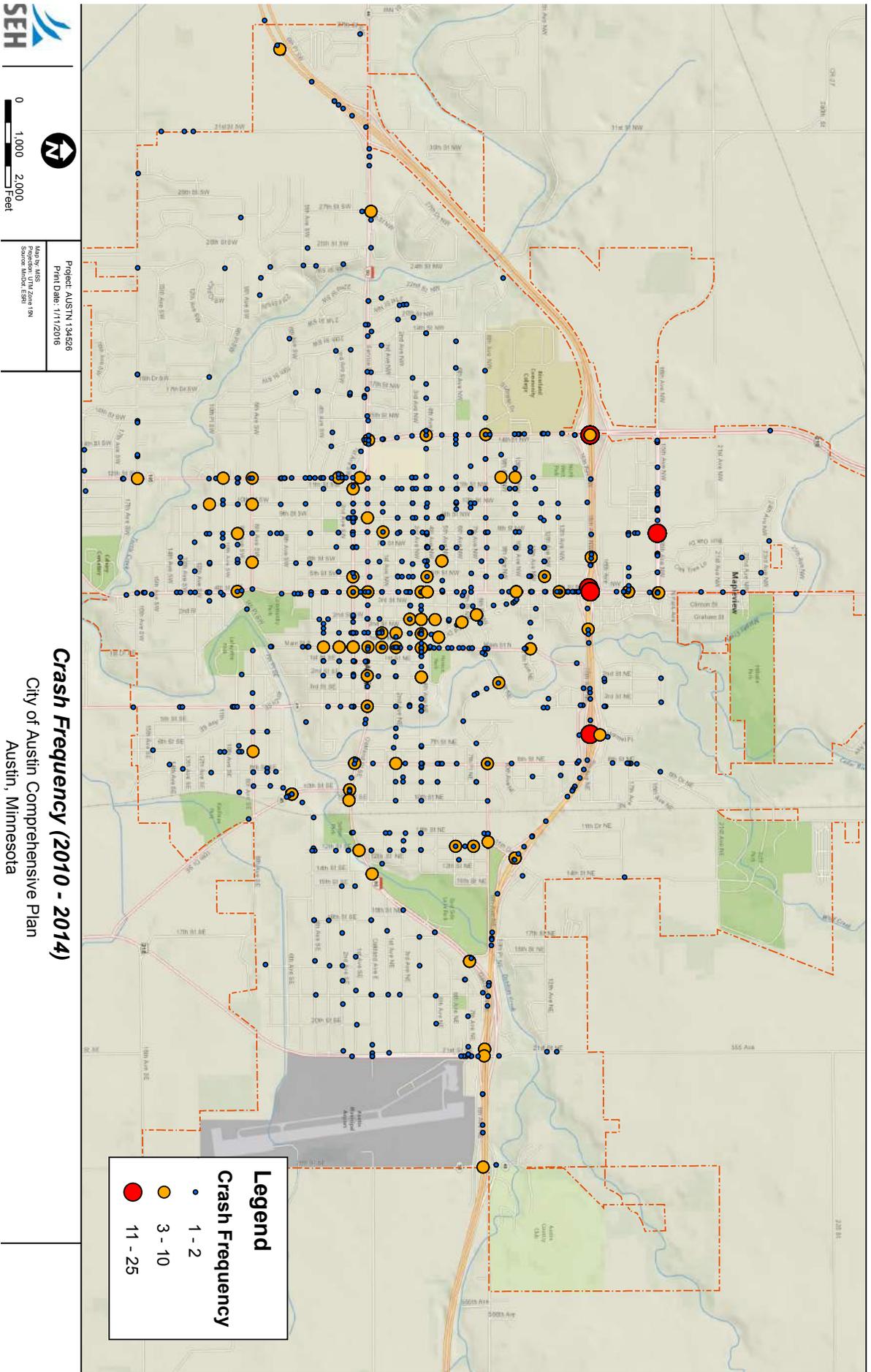


FIGURE 4-5.

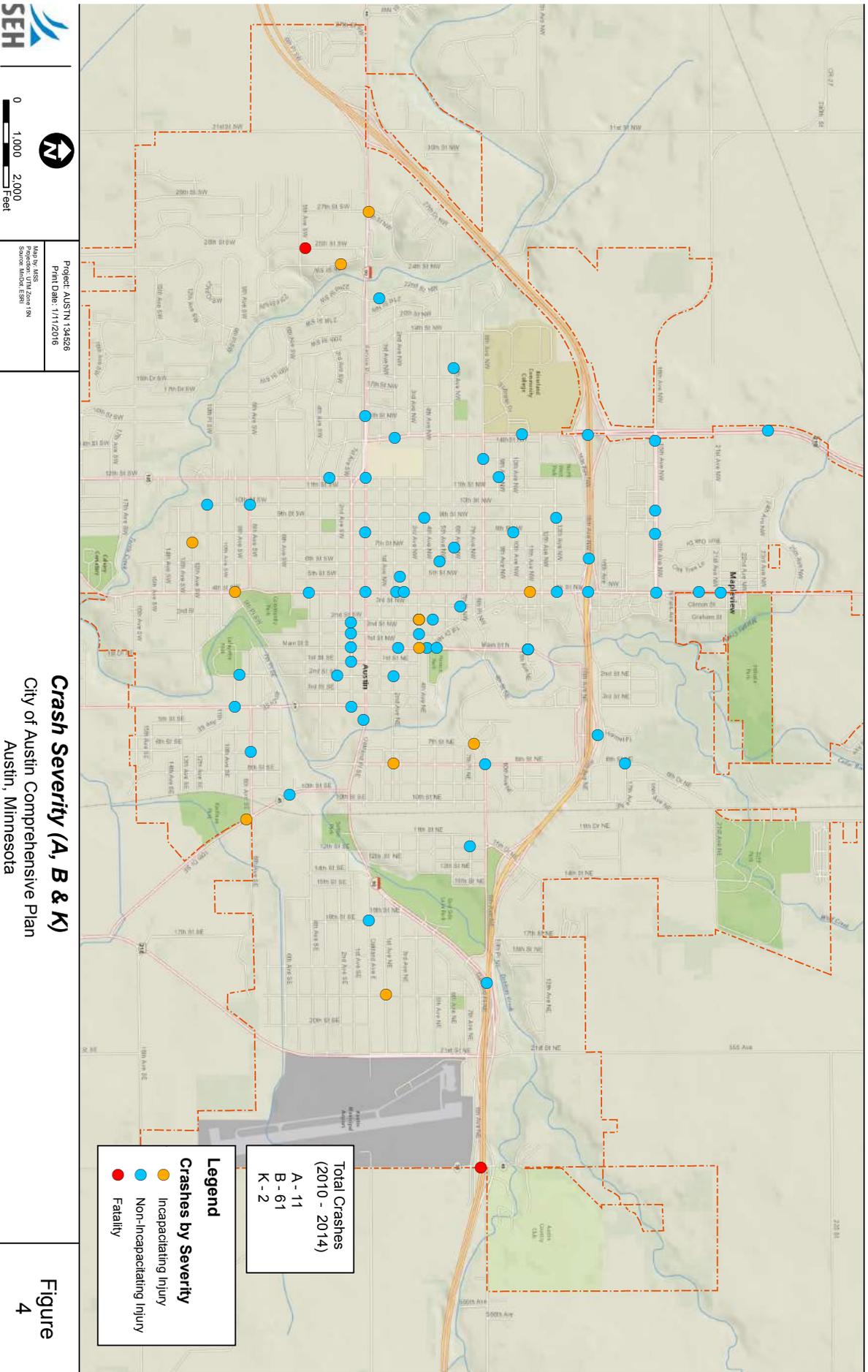


Figure 4



“I believe economic growth should translate into the happiness and progress of all. Along with it, there should be development of art & culture, literature & education, science, and technology. We have to see how to harness the many resources... for achieving common good and for inclusive growth.”

Pratibha Patil - Former President of India

5. Economic Development

Introduction

The economy plays a central role in maintaining the vitality and quality of life within a community. A healthy economy creates good paying jobs, providing economic opportunities to all citizens. The economy also supports the tax base, providing for schools, police, fire protection, parks and many other community facilities and services.

Important factors in Austin’s economic development are fostering growth of current businesses, attracting new businesses and encouraging worker skill building / training. By providing goals and policies in support of its local businesses, potential entrepreneurs and workforce, the City of Austin can help guide its economy towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The purpose of the Economic Development section is to present goals and policies that support and encourage

a strong, vibrant economy. While this Chapter focuses on these specific topics, it is important to recognize that the entire Comprehensive Plan can be considered as an economic development tool.

Existing Conditions

Austin's unemployment rate is currently at 3.5%, with a labor force of 12,623. Austin's labor force participation rate of 50.3% is almost 5% lower than the state's labor participation rate of 55%. In general, Austin's unemployment rate has been 1-2 percentage points under Minnesota's for the past few years.

FIGURE 5-1.

LABOR FORCE AND RESIDENT EMPLOYMENT TRENDS AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2000 - 2015						
Year	Austin			Minnesota		
	Labor Force	Employment	UE Rate	Labor Force	Employment	UE Rate
2015	12,623	12,185	3.5%	3,013,880	2,900,995	3.7%
2014	12,439	11,948	3.9%	2,974,102	2,852,476	4.1%
2013	12,568	11,974	4.7%	2,965,675	2,819,252	4.9%
2012	12,696	12,032	5.2%	2,954,948	2,789,860	5.6%
2011	12,765	12,006	5.9%	2,944,331	2,753,540	6.5%
2010	12,820	12,015	6.3%	2,938,795	2,721,194	7.4%
2009	11,895	11,097	6.7%	2,941,976	2,713,426	7.8%
2008	11,572	11,003	4.9%	2,925,088	2,766,342	5.4%
2007	11,553	11,037	4.5%	2,906,389	2,773,704	4.6%
2006	11,526	11,039	4.2%	2,887,831	2,772,114	4.0%
2005	11,721	11,220	4.3%	2,879,759	2,762,732	4.1%
2004	11,782	11,221	4.8%	2,880,427	2,745,614	4.7%
2003	11,788	11,193	5.0%	2,874,663	2,734,287	4.9%
2002	11,773	11,262	4.3%	2,859,601	2,731,080	4.5%
2001	11,656	11,198	3.9%	2,845,202	2,737,960	3.8%
2000	11,407	11,053	3.1%	2,812,946	2,724,117	3.2%

Sources: Minnesota DEED; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

By 2035, overall employment is projected to grow at about a 15.1% rate which is at pace or faster than the overlying geographic areas, including Mower County (14.1%) and Minnesota (10.6%).

The most significant occupation in Austin is production, as represented by jobs provided by Hormel and related industries. These positions typically do not require advanced degrees and provide for a lower wage scale, as represented by some of the Austin income figures shown in other tables. Over 16% of Austin residents

are employed in these types of occupations, while Minnesota as a whole has about 7.1% of residents in these occupations. There are significantly fewer management, business and financial occupations in Austin (9.2%) as compared to Minnesota (16.3%). These types of positions generally pay better wages than industrial production related jobs. This results in a fairly substantial income gap. When combined with other economic factors such as the cost of owning and operating a motor vehicle, this gap contributes to many families living in less expensive, but often, substandard housing.

FIGURE 5-2.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS AUSTIN, MINNESTOA 2000 to 2035						
Annual Employment	City of Austin		Mower County		Minnesota	
2000	13,128		15,918		2,608,844	
2005	13,433		16,201		2,637,323	
2010	13,542		16,107		2,563,391	
2015*	13,719		16,358		2,795,190	
2020 Forecast	14,383		17,123		2,856,460	
2030 Forecast	15,329		18,191		3,033,508	
2035 Forecast	15,796		18,672		3,092,221	
Change	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
2000 - 2010	414	3.2%	189	1.2%	-45,453	-1.7%
2010 - 2015	177	1.3%	251	1.6%	231,799	9.0%
2015 - 2020	664	4.8%	765	4.7%	61,270	2.2%
2020 - 2030	945	6.6%	1,069	6.2%	177,048	6.2%
2015 - 2035	2,077	15.1%	2,314	14.1%	297,031	10.6%

*Estimate based on second quarter data

Sources: MN DEED; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

FIGURE 5-3.

EMPLOYED POPULATION BY OCCUPATION								
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA								
2010 & 2014								
	Austin				Minnesota			
	2010		2014		2010		2014	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	11,629	100%	11,638	100%	2,730,721	100%	2,781,933	100%
Management, business, science, and arts	3,207	27.6%	2,990	25.7%	1,032,299	37.8%	1,089,675	39.2%
Management, business, and financial	1,215	10.4%	1,067	9.2%	433,854	15.9%	453,099	16.3%
Computer, engineering, and science	388	3.3%	410	3.5%	160,485	5.9%	171,547	6.2%
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media	986	8.5%	875	7.5%	286,069	10.5%	299,782	10.8%
Healthcare practitioner and technical	618	5.3%	638	5.5%	151,891	5.6%	165,247	5.9%
Service	2,019	17.4%	2,104	18.1%	432,687	15.8%	462,796	16.6%
Healthcare support	362	3.1%	335	2.9%	67,387	2.5%	70,767	2.5%
Protective service	161	1.4%	242	2.1%	36,058	1.3%	37,737	1.4%
Food preparation and serving related	547	4.7%	556	4.8%	136,761	5.0%	147,988	5.3%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	437	3.8%	563	4.8%	90,512	3.3%	93,267	3.4%
Personal care and service	512	4.4%	408	3.5%	101,969	3.7%	113,037	4.1%
Sales and office	2,058	17.7%	2,598	22.3%	676,165	24.8%	652,184	23.4%
Sales and related	818	7.0%	1,015	8.7%	300,556	11.0%	289,503	10.4%
Office and administrative support	1,240	10.7%	1,583	13.6%	375,609	13.8%	362,681	13.0%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	875	7.5%	850	7.3%	232,546	8.5%	219,519	7.9%
Farming, fishing, and forestry	20	0.2%	104	0.9%	19,634	0.7%	20,835	0.7%
Construction and extraction	564	4.8%	269	2.3%	129,649	4.7%	117,474	4.2%
Installation, maintenance, and repair	291	2.5%	477	4.1%	83,263	3.0%	81,210	2.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving	3,470	29.8%	3,096	26.6%	357,024	13.1%	357,759	12.9%
Production	1,974	17.0%	1,885	16.2%	199,742	7.3%	197,007	7.1%
Transportation	522	4.5%	308	2.6%	91,520	3.4%	94,140	3.4%
Material moving	974	8.4%	903	7.8%	65,762	2.4%	66,612	2.4%

Sources: US Census American Community Survey; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Austin has seen a significant decrease in the number of business establishments from 2000 through 2015 (20.4%), however those companies that have remained have generally increased the number of jobs in Austin, as there has been a 4.5% increase in employment. Most of this growth has come in the Professional and Business Service industry, while the hardest hit industry in Austin

has been the Trade, Transportation and Utilities industry. Throughout Minnesota, the largest employment increase has been seen in the Education and Health Services industry. Wages throughout nearly all industries lag Minnesota averages in Austin. Some of this may be skewed slightly due to the Twin Cities metro market.

FIGURE 5-4.

QUARTERLY CENSUS OF EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES												
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA												
2000 - 2015												
Industry	Austin						Minnesota					
	Business Establishments		Industry Employment		Weekly Wage		Business Establishments		Industry Employment		Weekly Wage	
2000												
Total, All Industries	637		13,128		\$533		156,083		2,608,844		\$681	
Natural Resources & Mining	--		--		--		1,989		22,250		\$584	
Construction	--		--		--		16,208		126,892		\$817	
Manufacturing	20		4,069		\$740		9,231		395,519		\$799	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	176		2,383		\$357		40,652		560,154		\$612	
Information	11		188		\$463		3,213		73,467		\$876	
Financial Activities	58		358		\$505		15,756		164,650		\$974	
Professional & Business Services	62		504		\$648		25,240		328,276		\$893	
Education & Health Services	82		3,011		\$516		14,023		497,361		\$621	
Leisure & Hospitality	75		1,056		\$173		12,908		238,509		\$261	
Other Services	70		512		\$229		13,541		87,863		\$406	
Public Administration	22		528		\$621		3,323		113,901		\$667	
2015*												
Total, All Industries	507		13,719		\$814		163,589		2,795,190		\$977	
Natural Resources & Mining	--		--		--		2,832		28,250		\$849	
Construction	--		--		--		15,971		125,599		\$1,107	
Manufacturing	19		3,397		\$810		7,999		317,379		\$1,123	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	118		2,169		\$783		37,786		539,420		\$845	
Information	9		140		\$588		3,504		55,223		\$1,261	
Financial Activities	57		265		\$853		15,087		178,700		\$1,452	
Professional & Business Services	56		1,658		\$1,367		29,208		360,659		\$1,383	
Education & Health Services	63		3,645		\$777		18,054		692,230		\$930	
Leisure & Hospitality	62		1,047		\$260		14,200		279,463		\$370	
Other Services	63		460		\$304		15,644		89,215		\$581	
Public Administration	17		622		\$934		3,304		129,049		\$996	
Change (2000 to 2014)												
Total, All Industries	(130) (20.4)		591 4.5		\$281 52.7		7,506 4.8		186,346 7.1		\$296 43.5	
Natural Resources & Mining	-- --		-- --		-- --		843 42.4		6,000 27.0		\$265 45.4	
Construction	-- --		-- --		-- --		(237) (1.5)		(1,293) (1.0)		\$290 35.5	
Manufacturing	(1) (5.0)		(672) (16.5)		\$70 9.5		(1,232) (13.3)		(78,140) (19.8)		\$324 40.6	
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	(58) (33.0)		(214) (9.0)		\$426 119.3		(2,866) (7.1)		(20,734) (3.7)		\$233 38.1	
Information	(2) (18.2)		(48) (25.5)		\$125 27.0		291 9.1		(18,244) (24.8)		\$385 43.9	
Financial Activities	(1) (1.7)		(93) (26.0)		\$348 68.9		(669) (4.2)		14,050 8.5		\$478 49.1	
Professional & Business Services	(6) (9.7)		1,154 229.0		\$719 111.0		3,968 15.7		32,383 9.9		\$490 54.9	
Education & Health Services	(19) (23.2)		634 21.1		\$261 50.6		4,031 28.7		194,869 39.2		\$309 49.8	
Leisure & Hospitality	(13) (17.3)		(9) (0.9)		\$87 50.3		1,292 10.0		40,954 17.2		\$109 41.8	
Other Services	(7) (10.0)		(52) (10.2)		\$75 32.8		2,103 15.5		1,352 1.5		\$175 43.1	
Public Administration	(5) (22.7)		94 18		\$313 50.4		(19) (0.6)		15,148 13.3		\$329 49.3	

*2015 based on second quarter data

Sources: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC

Two-thirds of Austin residents work in the City of Austin itself. About five percent of Austin residents work in Rochester. Nearly 69% of Austin residents travel less than 10 miles to their employment. About five percent of Austin residents drive to work in Rochester.

Austin sees significantly more people driving into Austin (inflow) for employment, rather than people living in Austin commuting outward to work elsewhere (outflow). This bodes well for Austin businesses being able to capture a greater percentage of dollars spent by the local workforce on goods and services.

FIGURE 5-5.

COMMUTING PATTERNS CITY OF AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2013					
Home Destination			Work Destination		
Place of Residence	Count	Share	Place of Employment	Count	Share
Austin city, MN	7,289	55.1%	Austin city, MN	7,289	66.6%
Albert Lea city, MN	495	3.7%	Rochester city, MN	538	4.9%
Rochester city, MN	335	2.5%	Albert Lea city, MN	488	4.5%
Brownsdale city, MN	166	1.3%	Owatonna city, MN	246	2.2%
Owatonna city, MN	150	1.1%	Minneapolis city, MN	128	1.2%
Minneapolis city, MN	122	0.9%	Bloomington city, MN	102	0.9%
St. Paul city, MN	115	0.9%	Plymouth city, MN	98	0.9%
Rose Creek city, MN	104	0.8%	St. Paul city, MN	93	0.9%
Le Roy city, MN	85	0.6%	Edina city, MN	90	0.8%
Adams city, MN	70	0.5%	Mankato city, MN	85	0.8%
All Other Locations	4,293	32.5%	All Other Locations	1,783	16.3%
Distance Traveled			Distance Traveled		
Total Primary Jobs	13,224	100.0%	Total Primary Jobs	10,940	100.0%
Less than 10 miles	8,577	64.9%	Less than 10 miles	7,535	68.9%
10 to 24 miles	1,794	13.6%	10 to 24 miles	815	7.4%
25 to 50 miles	1,176	8.9%	25 to 50 miles	1,120	10.2%
Greater than 50 miles	1,677	12.7%	Greater than 50 miles	1,470	13.4%
Home Destination = Where workers live who are employed in the selection area					
Work Destination = Where workers are employed who live in the selection area					
Sources: US Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC					

FIGURE 5-6.

COMMUTING INFLOW/OUTFLOW CHARACTERISTICS CITY OF AUSTIN, MINNESOTA 2013						
	Outflow		Inflow		Interior Flow	
City of Austin	3,651	100.0%	5,935	100.0%	7,289	100.0%
By Age						
Workers Aged 29 or younger	924	25.3%	1,350	22.7%	1,864	25.6%
Workers Aged 30 to 54	2,054	56.3%	3,209	54.1%	3,814	52.3%
Workers Aged 55 or older	673	18.4%	1,376	23.2%	1,611	22.1%
By Monthly Wage						
Workers Earning \$1,250 per month or less	829	22.7%	1,203	20.3%	1,725	23.7%
Workers Earning \$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	1,433	39.2%	2,350	39.6%	3,348	45.9%
Workers Earning More than \$3,333 per month	1,389	38.0%	2,382	40.1%	2,216	30.4%
By Industry						
"Goods Producing"	1,053	28.8%	1,519	25.6%	2,239	30.7%
"Trade, Transportation, and Utilities"	642	17.6%	1,293	21.8%	1,132	15.5%
"All Other Services"*	1,956	53.6%	3,123	52.6%	3,918	53.8%
*includes the following sectors: Information, Financial Activities, Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services, Leisure & Hospitality, Other Services, and Public Administration						
Sources: US Census Bureau Local Employment Dynamics; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC						

The table on the following two pages shows the amount Austin and Minnesota residents spend on particular goods and services on a household basis. Austin residents, on average, spend significantly less in all categories as opposed to Minnesota as a whole.

FIGURE 5-7.

Category	Austin Annual Expenditures		MN Expenditures	Spending Potential Index to USA	
	Total (\$000's)	Average Per HH	Average Per HH	Austin	MN
Goods & Services				Index	Index
Apparel & Services	\$17,995	\$1,755	\$2,447	76	106
Entertainment and Recreation	\$26,651	\$2,599	\$3,544	78	107
Nonprescription Drugs	\$1,088	\$106	\$139	82	108
Prescription Drugs	\$4,436	\$433	\$540	87	109
Eye Glasses & Contact Lenses	\$774	\$75	\$98	84	109
Personal Care Products	\$3,673	\$358	\$498	77	107
Child Care	\$3,247	\$317	\$469	71	105
School Books & Supplies	\$1,446	\$141	\$193	78	107
Smoking Products	\$4,426	\$432	\$508	93	109
Computer Hardware	\$1,674	\$163	\$231	75	107
Computer Software	\$141	\$14	\$21	68	105
Pets	\$4,772	\$465	\$622	82	109
Food				Index	Index
Food at Home	\$43,139	\$4,207	\$5,578	81	107
Food Away from Home	\$25,716	\$2,508	\$3,491	76	106
Alcoholic Beverages	\$4,189	\$408	\$587	74	106
Misc. Beverages at Home	\$4,182	\$408	\$534	82	107
Home				Index	Index
Home Mortgage Payment/Rent	\$71,265	\$6,949	\$9,919	74	106
Maintenance & Remodeling Services	\$13,294	\$1,296	\$1,802	77	107
Maintenance & Remodeling Materials	\$2,676	\$261	\$334	87	111
Utilities	\$42,625	\$4,157	\$5,392	82	107
Household Furnishings, Equipment, & Operations				Index	Index
Household Textiles	\$790	\$77	\$105	78	106
Furniture	\$4,100	\$400	\$552	77	107
Floor Coverings	\$209	\$20	\$26	83	107
Major Appliances	\$2,190	\$214	\$289	79	108
Small Appliances	\$378	\$37	\$49	80	107
Housewares	\$576	\$56	\$77	78	107
Luggage	\$63	\$6	\$10	67	104
Telephone & Accessories	\$398	\$39	\$54	77	109
Lawn & Garden	\$3,556	\$347	\$467	80	107
Moving/Storage/Freight Express	\$522	\$51	\$77	69	104
Housekeeping Supplies	\$5,927	\$578	\$773	80	107

FIGURE 5-7. CONT.

Financial & Insurance				Index	Index
Investments	\$16,427	\$1,602	\$2,870	58	104
Vehicle Loans	\$34,565	\$3,371	\$4,570	80	108
Owners & Renters Insurance	\$4,275	\$417	\$543	83	108
Vehicle Insurance	\$9,738	\$950	\$1,286	78	106
Life/Other Insurance	\$3,775	\$368	\$497	80	108
Health Insurance	\$22,738	\$2,217	\$2,855	84	108
CONTINUED					
TABLE 12 CONTINUED					
ESTIMATED HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES BY SELECTED PRODUCT TYPE					
AUSTIN, MINNESOTA					
2014					
Category	Austin Annual Expenditures		MN Expenditures	Spending Potential Index to USA	
	Total (\$000's)	Average Per HH	Average Per HH	Austin	MN
Transportation					
				Index	Index
Cars and Trucks (Net Outlay)	\$33,982	\$3,314	\$4,400	82	109
Gasoline and Motor Oil	\$29,649	\$2,891	\$3,775	82	108
Vehicle Maintenance/Repair	\$8,960	\$874	\$1,191	78	107
Travel					
				Index	Index
Airline Fares	\$3,359	\$328	\$497	69	104
Lodging	\$3,397	\$331	\$481	73	106
Vehicle Rental	\$230	\$22	\$35	66	105
Food & Drink on Trips	\$3,552	\$346	\$496	74	106
Average Annual Household Expenditures Summary					
Goods & Services	\$70,322	\$6,392	\$8,689		
Food	\$77,225	\$7,530	\$10,190		
Home	\$129,860	\$12,663	\$17,447		
Household	\$18,710	\$1,824	\$2,479		
Financial and Insurance	\$91,517	\$8,924	\$12,621		
Transportation	\$72,591	\$7,079	\$9,366		
Travel	\$10,539	\$1,028	\$1,509		
Total	\$470,764	\$45,441	\$62,302		
Note: The Spending Potential Index is based on households and represents the amount spent for a product or service relative to the national average of 100.					
Sources: ESRI; Maxfield Research & Consulting, LLC					

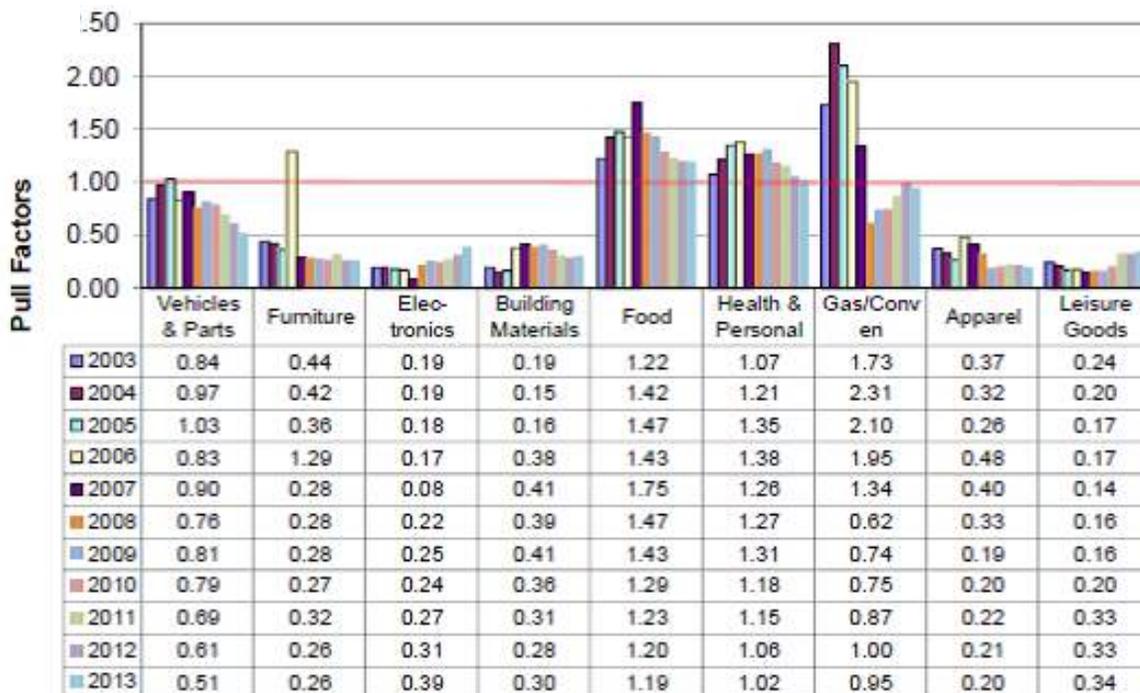
The following table analyzes retail supply and demand. When a Pull Factor is 1.0, it means the retail category is attracting the state average of taxable sales per capita in the community. A Pull Factor of greater than 1.0 means businesses are likely pulling in customers from outside the local community. These industries include food and

beverage, health and personal, general merchandise, and miscellaneous. All other retail categories experience push factors, meaning people from Austin are obtaining these goods and services in other communities.

When comparing Austin to other area trade centers, Austin’s pull factor significantly lags the competing trade centers of similar size. This is shown by Figure 5-8 and Figure 5-9.

FIGURE 5-8.

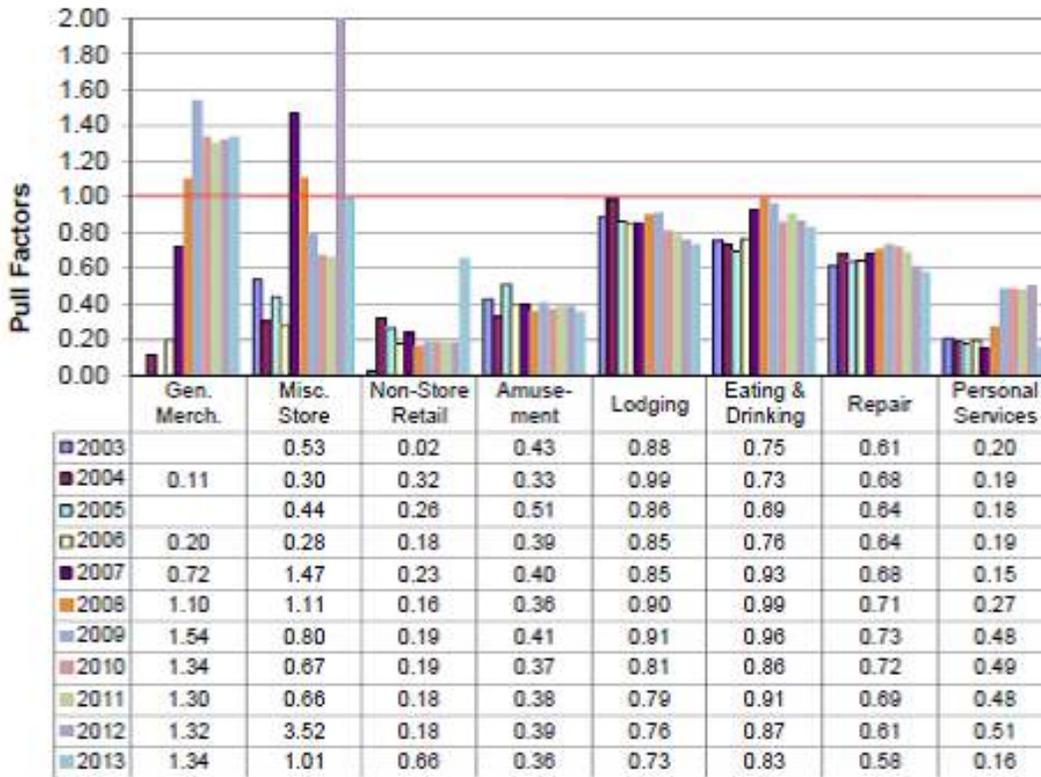
Pull factory by NAICS Merchandise Category (1/2)



Source: University of Minnesota Extension 2013 Retail Trade Analysis Austin and Mower County

FIGURE 5-9.

Pull factory by NAICS Merchandise Category (2/2)



Source: University of Minnesota Extension 2013 Retail Trade Analysis Austin and Mower County

FIGURE 5-10.

Comparison with Competing Trade Centers, 2013

Town	Population	Gross Sales (\$millions)	Taxable Sales (\$millions)	Number of Firms	Per Capita Taxable Sales	Pull Factor (Taxable Sales)
Austin	24,979	\$361.17	\$142.51	401	\$5,705	0.66
Albert Lea	17,951	\$667.87	\$172.78	442	\$9,625	1.12
Owatonna	25,574	\$1,909.35	\$261.45	564	\$10,223	1.19
Winona	27,741	\$683.04	\$278.39	551	\$10,035	1.16

FIGURE 5-11.

2013 Index of “Pulling Power” Cities
 Outside the 7 County Metro Area with Populations between 17,300 & 32,300
 (range: population of Austin +/- 30%. 8 cities)

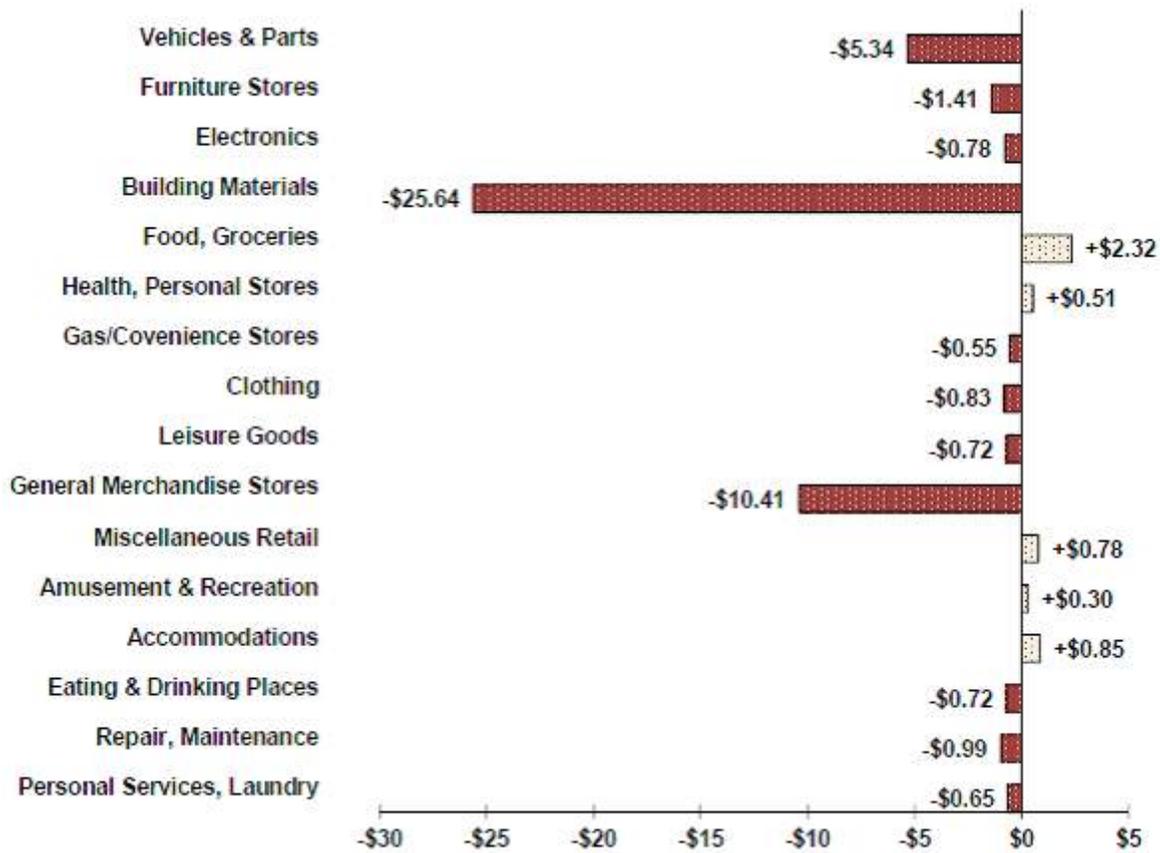
City	Population	Pull Factors															Taxable \$ Pull Factor	
		Vehicles, Parts	Furniture Stores	Electronics	Building Materials	Food	Health, Personal	Gas & Conven.	Clothing	Leisure Goods	General Merch.	Misc.	Amusement	Lodging	Eating & Drinking	Repair, Maint.		Personal Services
Winona	27,741	0.83	0.39	0.83	1.41	1.02	0.89	1.74	0.15	0.47	2.60	0.40	0.23	0.97	1.70	0.49	0.41	1.16
Owatonna	25,574	1.32	0.40	0.11	1.04	1.34	0.85	1.28	0.84	6.29	2.29	0.78	0.68	0.94	1.07	1.13	0.50	1.19
Austin	24,979	0.51	0.26	0.39	0.30	1.19	1.02	0.95	0.20	0.34	1.34	1.01	0.36	0.73	0.83	0.58	0.16	0.66
Fanbault	23,477	0.85	0.46	0.28	0.49	1.29	1.00	0.64	0.68	0.17	1.44	0.30	0.39	0.46	0.89	0.46	0.35	0.87
Elk River	23,370	1.57	1.02	0.18	3.08	1.25	1.12	1.17	0.24	0.74	1.78	1.63	0.40	0.13	0.97	1.50	0.58	1.19
Northfield	20,146	0.81	0.41			0.91	0.84	1.11	0.12	0.15		4.76		0.32	0.96	0.80	0.24	0.81
Willmar	19,717	1.66	2.24	2.34	3.61	1.75	1.49	1.27	0.98	0.71	2.91	2.02	0.33	3.51	1.05	2.21	0.59	1.81
Albert Lea	17,951	2.19	0.82	0.16	1.50	1.28	1.21	3.00	0.62	0.81	1.95	0.53	0.22	1.09	1.10	0.77	0.33	1.12

Source: University of Minnesota Extension 2013 Retail Trade Analysis Austin and Mower County

Based on Austin’s population and related population and income characteristics, as well as “pulling power” of similar rural communities, “expected sales” for retail categories can be projected. These can be used as a guideline in looking at retail strength. The following chart indicates that, for instance, in Building Materials, there is a \$78 million annual gap, or leakage, from expected to actual sales.

FIGURE 5-12.

Millions of Dollars, Above or Below Expected Sales, 2013



Source: University of Minnesota Extension 2013 Retail Trade Analysis Austin and Mower County

Downtown

Austin's Downtown Plan will help shape the continued redevelopment of Austin's downtown. Significant changes will be occurring in the next several years in downtown Austin, including the continued future of the former Austin Utilities plan. With the opening of the SPAM Museum in downtown Austin, tourists and visitors will increase supporting local businesses and making downtown investments more appealing to investors and local businesses.

Commercial

Commercially, Austin is in a highly competitive regional market. Niche retail businesses have thrived in Austin, including those located in the historic downtown that offer specialty goods and services. Big-box retail, however, has struggled significantly, as Austin seeks to compete with other regional retail marketplaces, such as Rochester.

Industrial

The major industrial operation in Austin is Hormel. Hormel and Quality Pork Processors currently provide over 3,000 jobs. There is a large economic gap between entry-level and executive positions within this Austin industry. This has also led to an economic dependency on the pork processing industry.

Industry-leaders in Austin have expressed the challenges they face in attracting a highly skilled labor force to work in their Austin facilities. Some of these challenges include available housing, as well as quality of life offerings in and around Austin, including retail availability and entertainment. Strategically combatting these issues will involve a public-private partnership, as these issues run full-circle, and are directly correlated to the economic conditions offered by industry-leaders.

Economic Development Goals and Policies

1. Create a regulatory review process that supports and encourages sustainable, private sector development.

Policies

- Develop and implement a routine training and maintenance program for City staff/building officials in familiarization of best practices in review and permitting of sustainable, green development, building design and construction.
2. Foster an atmosphere that encourages and supports entrepreneurial activity.

Policies

- Identify and capitalize on existing resources to assist entrepreneurs and early-stage primary-sector businesses. Align existing resources; identify and fill in gaps in service.
 - i. Research and develop a Small Business Incubator Plan
 - ii. Complete business incubation feasibility study
 - iii. Implement a "virtual" business incubator
- Investigate and evaluate the development of incubator space for entrepreneurial activity.
 - iv. Work with local Austin organizations, including churches and non-profits, to organize events and make available otherwise underutilized facilities to small businesses for entrepreneurship.

3. Encourage the development of local renewable and energy efficiency resources.

Policies

- Work with local utility providers to develop resource and materials for private homeowners and business owners to promote available energy efficiency technologies.

4. Facilitate development of a local food system.

Policies

- Work with area vendors, growers and business partners to develop a business plan for community-supported local agriculture.
5. Prioritize recruitment of businesses to those that provide living wage jobs.

Policies

- Work with Austin DCA to develop marketing materials and financial incentives policies to assist with business attraction and recruitment.
6. Continue to diversify the City's economic base to improve resiliency to economic shocks and transformations that are outside the City's control.

Policies

- Support and encourage small-businesses and entrepreneurs. Successful small businesses, particularly in diversified industry sectors will improve Austin's overall economic position.
7. Focus on creating a healthy City that provides for a quality of life that attracts and retains a creative, skilled labor force.

Policies

- Proactively market the assets of the region, including transportation and natural amenities, to stimulate high-quality economic growth.
 - Work with local education systems to continue development of vocational programs that address the labor needs of both existing employers and businesses targeted for recruitment.
 - Work with the Austin Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to promote the development of higher density housing in and around the downtown area.
 - Facilitate Redevelopment of Blighted Properties. In cases of market failure, facilitate the redevelopment of blighted properties through acquisition, demolition, environmental clean-up, and site preparation – making such sites ready for redevelopment.
- ✓ Acquire, demolish and work with owners to facilitate redevelopment of blighted properties, as needed. Prepare sites for redevelopment and market.
- i. Former Austin Utilities Power Plant
 - ii. Ponderosa Site



Commercial

1. Incorporate the Downtown Plan and work to implement its recommendations.



Converting an on-street parking space into a temporary Parklet provides space for outdoor dining

Policies

- Follow the recommendations from the adopted Downtown Plan.
2. Strengthen and enhance the existing business districts.

Policies

- Encourage the clustering of compatible uses; e.g., retail, professional services, lodging, multifamily housing.
- Maintain a balance of industrial, commercial and residential land uses to stabilize and enhance the City's tax base and provide high quality employment opportunities.

- Communicate with business and industry leaders on a regular basis to ensure their needs are being met.
3. Provide properly located and designed neighborhood shopping facilities that offer opportunities for non-motorized commerce activities.

Policies

- Utilize programs to assist new and existing businesses, such as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF), Business Improvement Districts (BID), community development authority and revolving loan programs.
 - By encouraging reinvestment, redevelopment and infill development on vacant or underutilized land in the downtown business district and using cluster and node development concepts for infill development along key corridors.
4. Encourage commercial infill redevelopment in appropriate areas to strengthen the vitality of existing neighborhoods, leverage existing infrastructure investments and support active transportation options.

Policies

- Develop incentives for infill development in target areas.
 - Provide grants & loans, when appropriate, to assist downtown businesses and property owners, aiding in the preservation and maintenance of existing building stock.
 - i. Sign & Awning Grant Program
 - ii. Storefront Revitalization Matching Grant Program
 - iii. Commercial Rehabilitation Loan Program
 - iv. Redevelopment Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District
 - v. Fund downtown revitalization planning & updates to such plans.
5. Encourage compact and mixed-use development and redevelopment opportunities.

Policies

- Promote compact, walkable neighborhoods that provides an environment that can accommodate live-work lifestyles.

6. Support development of commercial enterprises that serve or celebrate Austin’s diverse cultures and peoples.

Policies

- Provide opportunities for entrepreneurs to develop their businesses by having space and resources available. Use these creative individuals to strengthen the bonds among Austin’s neighborhoods.

INDUSTRIAL

1. Promote and support continued development of business and industry that have a local presence and niche in Austin, such as bio-agriculture, bio-energy, and other medical or green technology industries.
2. Continue to strengthen and enhance existing business and industrial park developments.
3. Continue to promote the recruitment of new target industries that foster a strong, diversified economy while providing living wage jobs.



4. Build Capacity and maximize the community’s readiness for economic growth and development in the following areas:

- Workforce availability
- Workforce training & education
- Plan for future industrial and business park space
- Industrial building space
- Utility services (power / water / sanitary sewer)

Policies

- Work with Riverland Community College to provide programs in entrepreneurship and small business start-up.

Future Needs

Business retention is a vital component of any community’s economic development. Many businesses, and in particular Hormel, have made large investments in Austin. Keeping these businesses competitive should be top priority, as they provide an economic base for the community.

Austin has identified several areas of potential business expansion, including the Cook’s Farm area, as well as several redevelopment opportunities within and adjacent to downtown Austin. Several key redevelopment sites will be priorities for Austin to find suitable uses for, including the former Target facility and what will be the former Hy-Vee facility. These are big-box facilities that are or will be soon vacant, and will require creativity to fill or redevelop.

Significant land surrounding the Austin airport is vacant and allows for a possible Airport Business Park. There is significant property available to develop commercial, industrial and office space as needed that can either support, or be supported by the Austin Airport.

Austin’s ethnic diversification provides an opportunity for entrepreneurship and small business creation. Many small businesses begin in garages and basements as cottage industries. This is a nation-wide trend. Because of some of the social and neighborhood fabric of Austin’s

neighborhoods, many of these cottage industries need to be fostered within the local neighborhoods. However, it is important to try to inventory and document these facilities so that assistance and resources may be offered if necessary. Working with local organizations and non-profits, including local church and other groups that may be able to offer office or widget-making space, or access to a commercial kitchen, may help support some of these cottage industries grow into larger small businesses. Alternatively, the City may wish to investigate the development of incubator space as well.

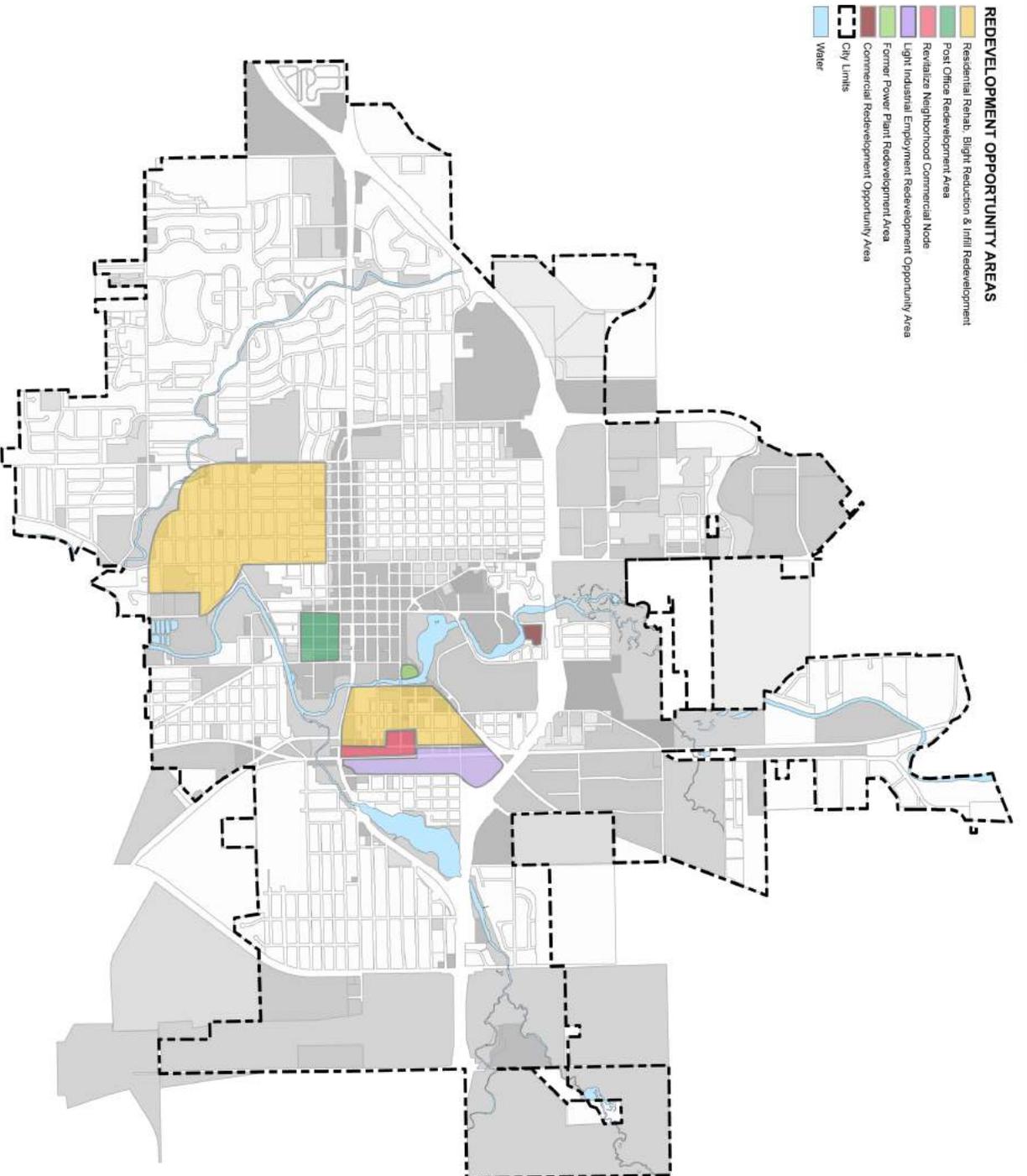
The City of Austin has several area partner organizations that assist with overall economic development of the City.

- Development Corporation of Austin (DCA) - The DCA has served Austin since the late 1980's, and strives to work closely with public and private sector partners to market the Austin area to new businesses and industries, as well as support existing enterprises. They provide services including:
 - i. Business Retention and Expansion
 - ii. New Business Recruitment
 - iii. Supporting Innovation
 - iv. Gap Financing

- Austin Area Chamber of Commerce – The Austin Chamber is an organization formed and led by Austin area business leaders to improve the area's overall business climate.
- Riverland Community College – Riverland Community College works closely with local businesses to develop coursework and vocational training that is targeted for future employees.
- Vision 2020 – Vision 2020 is a grassroots movement of volunteers that seek to implement a shared vision for improving Austin's quality of life. Their Vision Statement for Business and Economic Development is: "Create and implement stand out incentives as part of economic development to position Austin as the region's center for entrepreneurs. Invite, finance, and support existing and new entrepreneurs, encourage retail, while emphasizing reuse of underutilized buildings on both sides of 18th Ave. NW."

An Economic Development Area map is included below. This identifies several areas that have been identified by Austin community leaders as areas that are priorities for development of redevelopment.

FIGURE 5-13.



REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- Residential Rehab, Blight Reduction & Infill Redevelopment
- Post Office Redevelopment Area
- Revitalize Neighborhood Commercial Node
- Light Industrial Employment Redevelopment Opportunity Area
- Former Power Plant Redevelopment Area
- Commercial Redevelopment Opportunity Area
- City Limits
- Water







Project: AUSTIN 134526
Print Date: 01/11/2016

Map by ASG
Projection: NAD83 / Minnesota State Plane
Source: Map Data/MapCity of Austin, MNDOT
and SEH Imagery (SNO)

Redevelopment Opportunity Areas

Austin, Minnesota



“T HROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO TOOK FIRST STEPS, DOWN NEW ROADS, ARMED WITH NOTHING BUT THEIR OWN VISION.”

Ayn Rand

6. Community Facilities & Utilities

Introduction

Utilities and community facilities provide the foundation that communities are built upon. Utilities may include sanitary sewer, water, and storm sewer systems, as well as electrical, natural gas, and telecommunication systems and solid waste disposal. Community facilities vary by community but tend to include schools, libraries, community & recreation centers, swimming pools, ice arenas, the airport and various health and safety providers.

Utilities and community facilities can be used to guide development and encourage growth, as well as establish a community identity. The largest portion of a community’s budget includes the construction maintenance, and operation of the utilities and community facilities along with the roadway and transportation system.

This section contains goals, policies, and recommendations to guide the maintenance and development of utilities and community facilities in the City of Austin.

Existing Conditions

Austin provides multiple utilities and community facilities including sanitary sewer, storm sewer, solid waste transfer facility, police, fire, library, ice arenas, swimming pool, and airport. There are a number of private utilities and community facilities, including water, electric, natural gas, telecommunications, day care centers, healthcare and child care.

This section includes an inventory of existing utilities, community facilities and services. It also identifies the

need for community facilities and utility improvements or new facilities over the next 20 years.

Sanitary Sewer and Wastewater Treatment Plant

The City of Austin owns and maintains both the domestic and industrial wastewater treatment plants. There is a cooperative agreement with Hormel for the maintenance of the industrial treatment plant. An updated facility plan will be created once negotiations with the MPCA for the new discharge permit have taken place. The facility plan should not only take new and future discharge permits into consideration, but it should also look into the plant's capacity in regards to population growth.

The sanitary collection system is comprised of 120 miles of gravity sanitary main and 21 lift stations. Maintenance of the system includes regular maintenance of the lift stations and inspection and lining of the mains in conjunction with the reconstruction of the roadways within the Capital Improvement Plan. Lining and replacement of the sanitary mains has helped to reduce inflow and infiltration into the system.

Stormwater Management

The City of Austin has an extensive storm sewer and flood control system. Austin has a history of flooding and after the flood of 2004, has invested in its flood control system through property acquisition, engineered levees, road blocks, and a portable floodwall system. Construction of 2,600 linear feet of floodwall, 4,900 linear feet of engineered earthen levees, 12 relief wells, 12 gated stormwater outfalls with redundant closures, and 2 pumping stations has been completed along the Cedar River with one phase of construction remaining to fully protect the downtown business area.

The majority of flood protection on Dobbin's Creek and Turtle Creek has been completed by acquisition, which has in turn helped to create a linear park and trail system along these waterways, as well as the Cedar River. There are plans in the works for an engineered levee along Turtle Creek to add protection to homes.

The City of Austin is a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) city and is subject to stormwater regulations under the Clean Water Act. Stormwater discharges are subject to regulation under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System / State Disposal System (NPDES/SDS). The City is required to develop and maintain a stormwater pollution prevention program (SWPPP) that incorporates best management practices (BMPs).



Water Supply

The water system is managed and maintained by Austin Utilities.

Electrical System

The electrical system is managed and maintained by Austin Utilities.

Natural Gas System

The natural gas system is managed and maintained by Austin Utilities.

Telecommunication Facilities

CenturyLink, Charter Communications, and Jaguar Communications provide Austin residents with local telephone service, cable television and high-speed internet access.

One of the Vision 2020 goals includes expanding the fiber network to provide a high speed network throughout the community.

Wastewater System

The WWTP's discharge permit is in limbo right now. A new permit is expected fall 2016 and is expected to include a phosphorus limit, which depending on the limit may mean \$8M - \$22M in improvements (I suspect the

limit will be on the lower end of this range). This cost includes additional sludge storage and clarifier upgrades, which are items currently in their CIP. Implementation around 2018-2019, but that depends on the compliance schedule the City negotiates with the MPCA this fall.

Solid Waste and Recycling

Recycling is managed by Mower County

The City of Austin owns, maintains and leases the solid waste transfer facility which is located at 102 28th Street SE. All solid waste collection companies deliver to the transfer facility and then the waste is hauled to a landfill in Iowa.

Recreational Areas

The City of Austin owns and operates two ice arenas (Riverside and Packer Arenas). Ice is maintained in Riverside Arena from August through May and in Packer Arena from November through February. The Riverside facility is also used during July for a summer hockey camp program.

Austin owns and operates the outdoor swimming pool which is open throughout the summer months of June, July, and August. The facility consists of an eight-lane Olympic sized pool with a separate diving well, tot pool and play area, splash pad, 104 foot water slide, 16' climbing wall, concession area, and bathhouse.

Wescott Field Athletic Complex which is owned and operated by the school district includes tennis courts, track a field facilities, soccer, softball fields and a multi-seasonal domed artificial turf facility. Austin's Park, Recreation and Forestry Department also runs programs at the facility.

Austin has a local YMCA. The facility is open seven-days per week from September through May and is closed on Sundays in the summer months. The YMCA has a student membership program where any student, between 2nd and 12th grades, may obtain a yearly membership based



on income level. The YMCA is currently in talks with the City to build a new joint facility.

Law Enforcement

The Austin Police Department is comprised of 34 sworn personnel and 4 non-sworn personal in addition to the Police Reserves and Police Explorers. The Department is located in the Mower County Law Enforcement Center with the Mower County Sheriff's Office and the Communication Center. Austin's Chief of Police also serves as the City's Emergency Manager.

Fire Department

The Austin Fire Department is comprised of 10 full time fire fighters and 24 part-time fire fighters. The Fire Station is located at 112 1st Avenue NE.

Post Office

The City of Austin Post Office is located at 200 1st Avenue SE.

Public Works Street and Sewer Departments

The Austin Public Works Department is responsible for storm water management, road, alley, sidewalk, street

sign, and sanitary sewer maintenance. The department is located at 1601 11th Drive NE.

City Hall

City Hall is located at 500 4th Avenue NE. It houses the City's administrative staff, Engineering, Planning Zoning and Building Inspection, Parks, Recreation and Forestry Departments. Austin's City Council, Port Authority and Planning Commission also use City Hall for their meetings.

Airport

The City of Austin owns and maintains the public airport. The 5,800 foot concrete runway has had recent improvements and is in good condition.

Library

The City of Austin owns and operates its own public library. The library's current location at 323 4th Avenue NE was constructed in 1996. It houses over 80,000 volumes and serves the citizens of Austin and Mower



County. The library is a member of SELCO (South-Eastern Libraries Cooperating), providing library services to south-eastern Minnesota.

Welcome Center

The Welcome Center serves the City of Austin as the community's multi-cultural center, building community by welcoming newcomers, supporting residents in transition and creating access and opportunity. The Welcome Center is a non-profit organization based in Austin, Minnesota. The agency works with all members of the community to promote the successful integration of newcomers. Community education projects serve to familiarize current residents with the characteristics of the newcomer populations and to promote acceptance. Other programs promote self-sufficiency and help newcomers make a successful transition to their new environment.

Mower County Historical Society and Fair Grounds

The Mower County Historical Society and Fair Grounds are located at 1303 6th Avenue SW. The annual County Fair runs for several days in August. The Historical Society building houses historic artifacts and a library and is open to the public year-round. Several of the buildings on the site are available for rent by the public including the historic Episcopal Church and the Pioneer Building.

Medical/Health Care Facilities

Mayo Clinic Health Systems is the regional medical center with a large hospital and clinic located at 1000 1st Drive NW.

Education

The City of Austin is served by the Austin Public School District and Pacelli Catholic Schools. The public school system is comprised of one district-wide kindergarten center, four elementary schools, one district-wide intermediate school, one district-wide middle school, one district-wide high school and a Community Learning Center, providing pre-K, adult and community education

classes. The Pacelli Catholic School system is comprised of an elementary school and a combined middle/high school.

- Austin High School, 301 3rd Street NW
- Ellis Middle School, 1700 4th Avenue SE
- IJ Holton Intermediate School, 1800 4th Avenue SE
- Banfield Elementary School, 301 17th Street SW
- Neveln Elementary School, 1918 Oakland Avenue E
- Southgate Elementary School, 1601 19th Avenue SW
- Sumner Elementary School, 805 8th Avenue NW
- Woodson Kindergarten Center, 1601 4th Street SE
- Community Learning Center, 912 1st Avenue NE

Austin is home to one of the three Riverland Community College Campuses which provides secondary education to the area.

Goals and Policies

1. Provide city utilities to all residents in a safe, efficient, resilient and cost-effective manner.
2. Prioritize infilling on vacant land and redevelopment of blighted or disused properties to better utilize existing utility facilities, over greenfield expansions or annexations, where facilities and service need to be extended.
3. Improve upon inflow and infiltration (I&I) in the sanitary sewer system.

Policies

- Continue improvements and upgrades to sanitary sewer mains by lining or replacement, including lines that are not located under roadways.
- Create a policy for improvement to sanitary services to minimize I&I.
- Promote education of the public and enforce building codes to curb and prevent illicit connections

4. Avoid environmentally sensitive areas when extending and constructing utilities and community facilities. Develop utilities with concern for aesthetic appearance and integration with surrounding environments.

Policies

- Place overhead utilities underground when feasible
 - Establish proper buffer zones between overhead utilities, substation, and treatment facilities and residential and commercial uses.
 - Require consolidation of utility boxes for more efficient service and maintenance.
 - Encourage consolidation or grouping of street-side mail boxes to promote more efficient service and maintenance.
5. Continue to provide services and facilities necessary to improve the quality of life of Austin's residents, property owners, businesses and visitors.
 - Work with local providers and businesses to ensure access to high-quality, reliable Broadband Internet is widely available to all businesses and residents throughout Austin.
 6. Coordinate infrastructure improvements, such as street reconstructions with sewer, water, power, and functional streetscaping to leverage and maximize the benefits from ecological services.
 7. Continue to build a strong sense of place in the Central Business District through use of arts and culture.

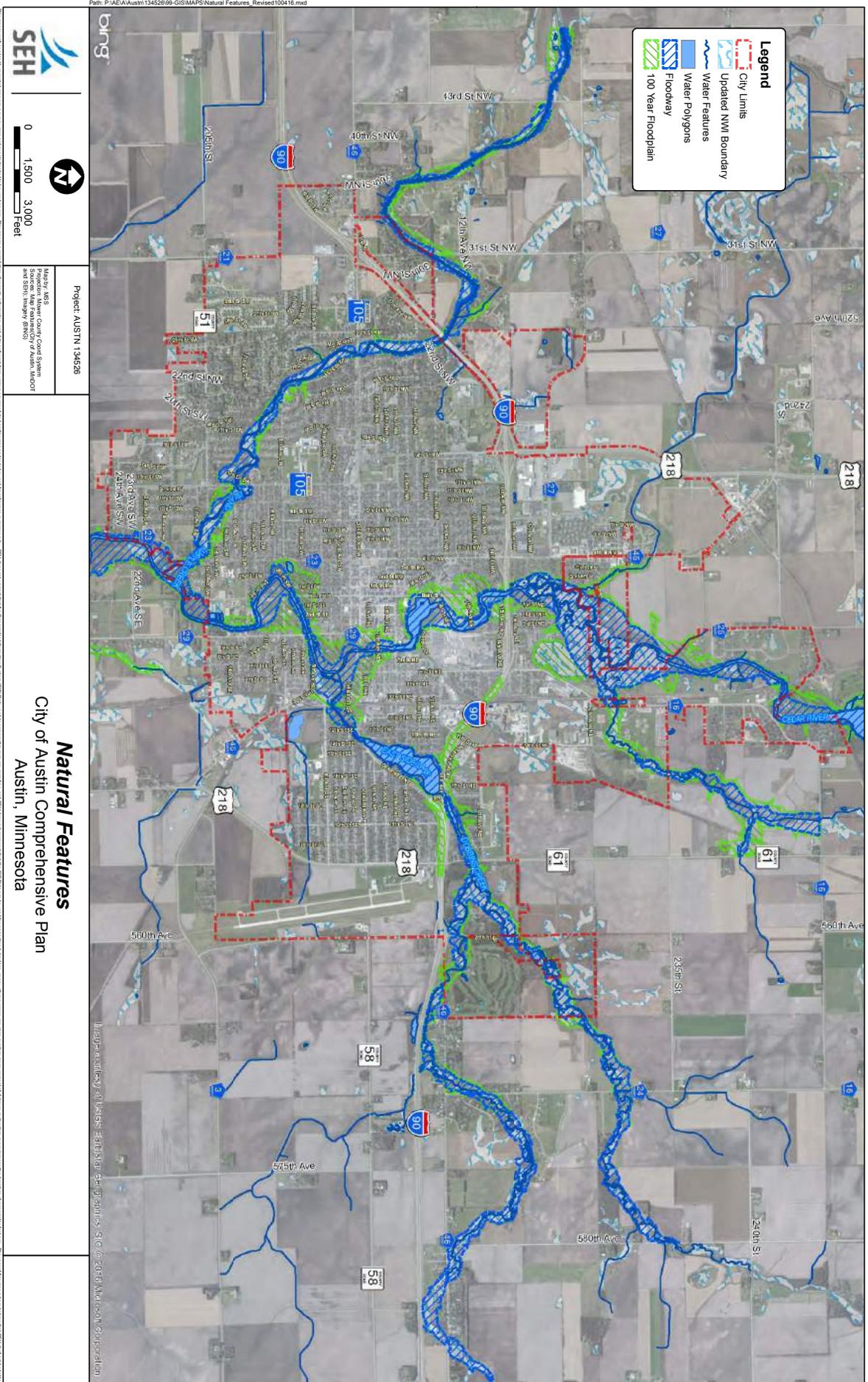
Policies

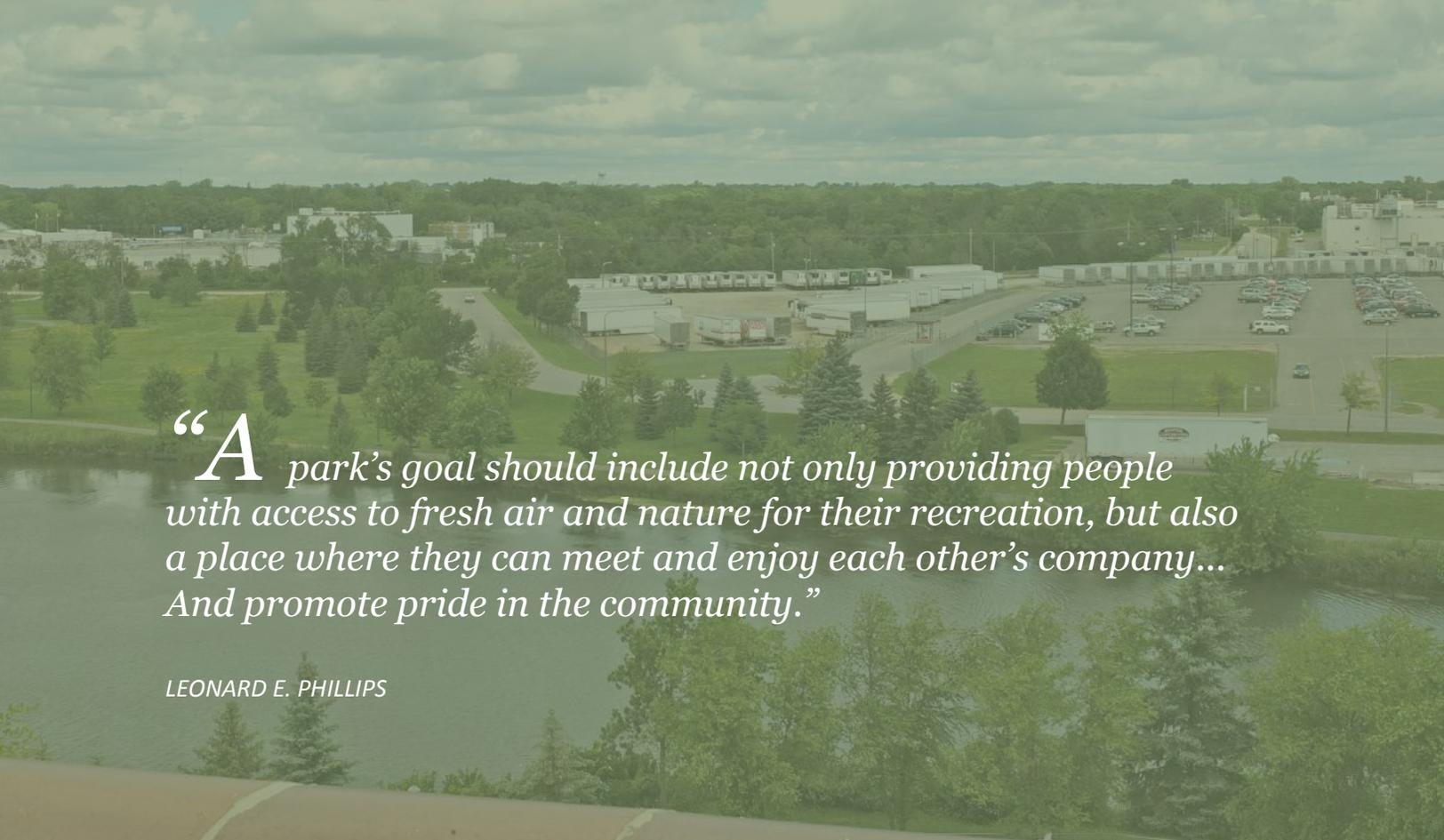
- Strengthen support and cooperation with Austin Area Commission for the Arts to expand the role of the arts within the community, especially within the Central Business District.
8. Continue to work collaboratively with private sector donors to integrate resources for community-wide benefits.
 9. Continue to work collaboratively with the private sector to develop entertainment venues that create active and engaging events to attract and retain Austin residents.
 10. Strive to lead by example with sustainable development, particularly in the area of improved efficiency.

Policies

- Develop sustainable metrics for tracking progress in meeting sustainability targets.
- Develop goals and procedures for communicating progress in meeting sustainability targets with the community.

FIGURE 6-1.





“A park’s goal should include not only providing people with access to fresh air and nature for their recreation, but also a place where they can meet and enjoy each other’s company... And promote pride in the community.”

LEONARD E. PHILLIPS

7. Parks & Open Space

Introduction

Austin’s parks and open space provide excellent recreational opportunities for the community, offer protection from natural disasters, preserve valuable wildlife habitat and scenic landscapes, and maintain a positive image for Austin’s neighborhoods.

As a community continues to become more urbanized, parks and open space provide a measure of visual relieve from the built environment – a value often difficult to quantify in dollars.

Parks and open space also play an important role in the quality-of-life residents and businesses recognize within communities. These features can often be a differentiator when it comes to location decisions for residents and prospective businesses.

Benefits of Parks and Open Space

- Improved public health and community well being
- More attractive neighborhoods and overall community character
- Increased property values, especially for properties adjacent to parks
- More sustainable civic infrastructure by using ecological services provided by preservation, protection and management of natural systems, resources and features
- Increased resilience and decreased vulnerability to natural disasters
- Improved soil, water and air quality

Goals and Policies

1. Continue to establish, administer and maintain a city-wide park and recreational system that provides high-quality facilities to fulfil the expanding needs and expressed desires of the community.

Policies

- Engage with diverse cultural groups to broaden user input towards informing the redesign, modification of development of existing and new park facilities, and programs.
 - Engage with specialized recreational users and sports groups to refine and improve the design of park facilities and recreation programs.
 - Acquire land that fulfils the needs based on future community growth, provide trail connections, or secures a uniquely suited site or facility.
2. Encourage land use patterns and practices that are environmentally sensitive and complement the natural hydrological system, including the balance between ground and surface waters.

Policies

- Continue to acquire and convert flood prone properties, where appropriate into passive parks, trails and open spaces and woodlands.
- Maximize opportunities as appropriate to convert manicured lands to prairie and forest to improve ecological services, habitat and access to nature.



- Engage volunteers in the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the parks system's natural resources and woodlands.
 - Collaborate with local, county, state and federal organizations to plan for and fund ecological management and restoration.
3. Enhance public access, use and enjoyment of Austin's natural and recreational resources.



Policies

- Continue to implement the off street trail system.
 - Collaborate with Public Works to promote active transportation as an alternative to automobile use within Austin.
 - Support Safe Routes to School initiatives that introduce and promote youth to becoming more active through walking and cycling.
4. Explore expanding recreational opportunities outside as well as indoors.

Policies

- Build quality facilities that can adapt to new uses as community needs evolve or change.
- Collaborate with other public and or private entities to expand indoor, year-round recreational opportunities.
- Continue to renew / refurbish aging park facilities with new, modern equipment and support facilities such as play apparatus, site furnishings, bike racks, parking lots, rest rooms, etc.

FIGURE 7-1.

Existing Park System

Number	Park Name	Classification	Acres
1	Honor Guard Memorial	Passive/Garden/Memorial*	0.1
2	Worlein	Passive/Garden/Memorial*	0.1
3	Crane Park	Play Ground/Mini Park	1.6
4	Bustad Park	Neighborhood Park	3
5	Cullen Park	Neighborhood Park	2.3
6	Decker Park	Neighborhood Park	2.1
7	Galloway Park	Neighborhood Park	1.8
8	Kaufman Park	Neighborhood Park	3.2
9	Lafayette East Park	Neighborhood Park	3.5
10	Marcusen Park	Neighborhood Park	4
11	Murphy Creek Park	Neighborhood Park	4
12	Northwest Park	Neighborhood Park	6.6
13	Orchard Creek	Neighborhood Park	3
14	Rotary Centennial Park	Neighborhood Park	6.5
15	Sherman Park	Neighborhood Park	3.1
16	South Grove	Neighborhood Park	3
17	Sterling Park	Neighborhood Park	1.7
18	Sutton Park	Neighborhood Park	2
19	Bandshell Community Park	Community Park	17.6
20	Driesner-North & South Park	Community Park	20.8
21	East Side Lake Park	Community Park	44
22	Early Morning Lions Park	Community Park	15.5
23	Lafayette Park	Community Park	14
24	Shirley Theel Memorial Park	Community Park	10.7
25	Todd Park	Community Park	164
26	Wildwood Park	Community Park	15.9
27	Horace Austin Park / Pool	Special Use Park	9.2
28	Skate Park	Special Use Park	0.5
29	J.C. Hormel Nature Center	Special Use Park	509

* Unique, small-scale facilities for Austin, not an NRPA park category.

FIGURE 7-2.

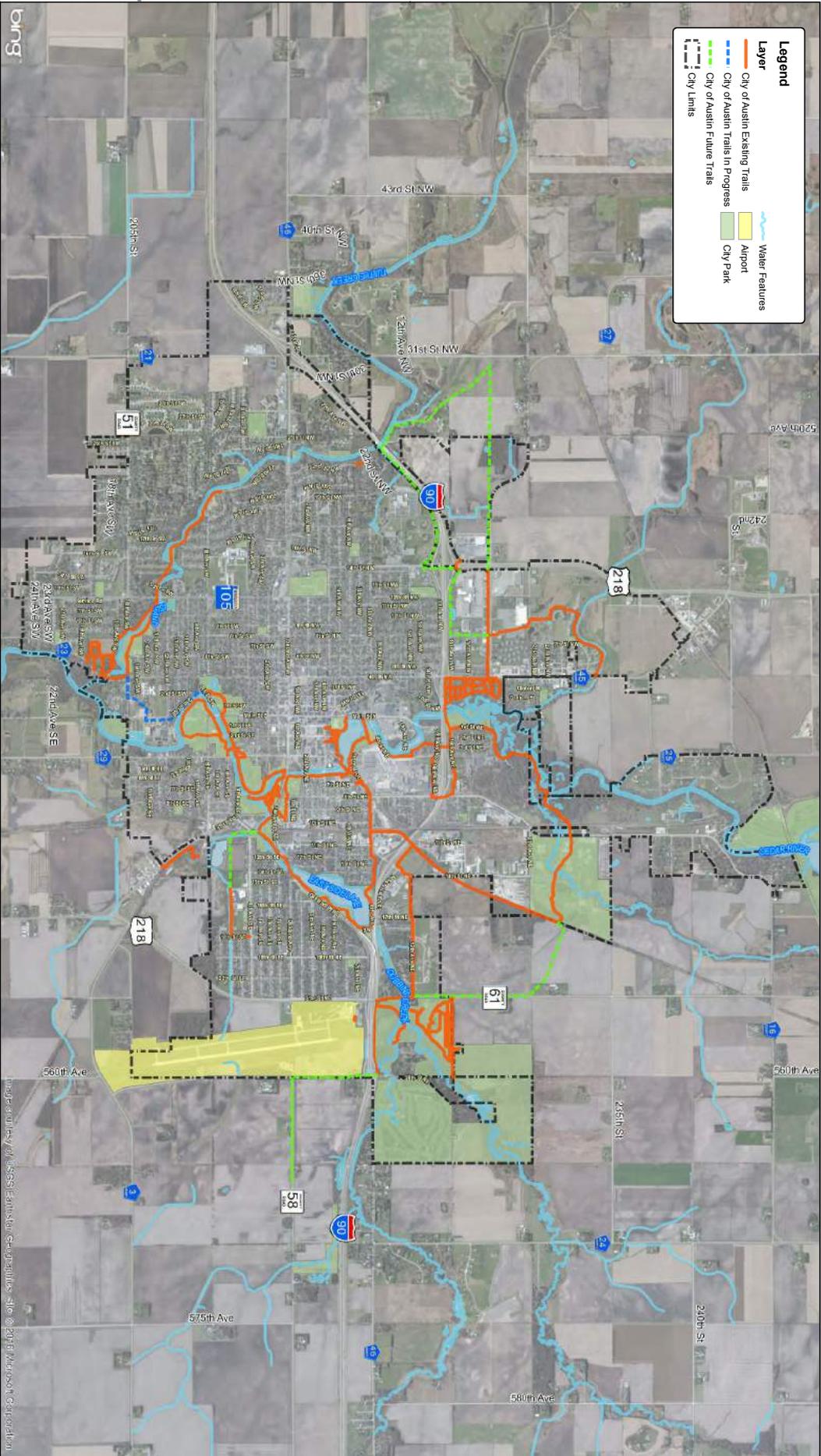
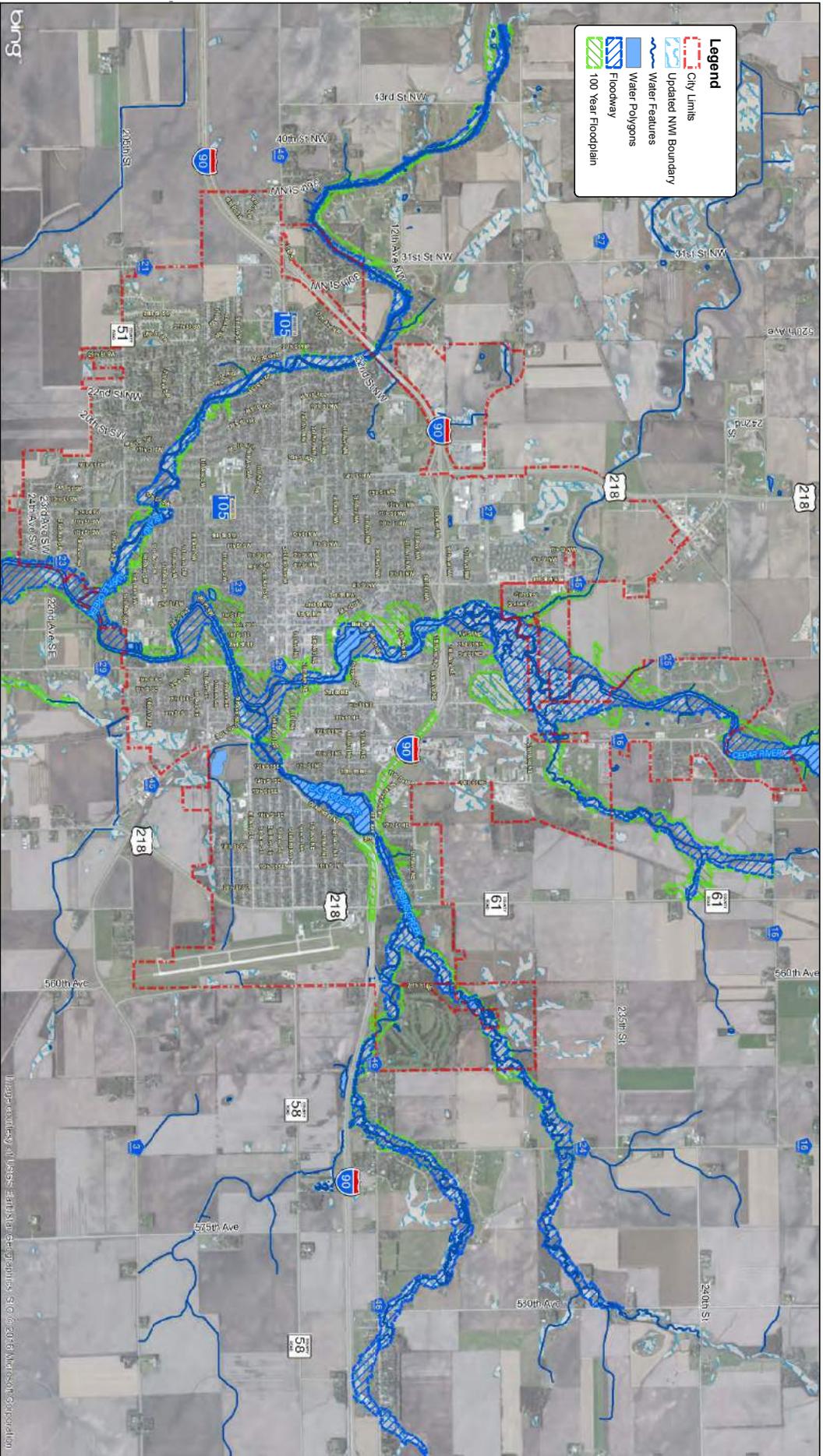


FIGURE 7-4.





Play Ground / Mini-Park

Description: Smallest park classification that is used to address limited or unique recreational needs (example: downtown pocket park)

Location Criteria: < ¼ mile distance in residential setting

Size Criteria: 2,500 sq. ft. to 1 acre in size but can be up to 5 acres.

Site Selection Guidelines:

Site should be easily accessible from surrounding area and should link to the community trail system

Development Guidelines: Park facilities similar to those found in a neighborhood park, however there are generally no programmed activities and no specific design guidelines. Park design can be a function of needed use, i.e., picnic area, shaded seating area, etc.

5. Provide a safe and welcoming environment within the city's park facilities and open spaces.

Policies

- Periodically undertake a safety assessment of park facilities and equipment and make necessary improvements in a timely fashion.
- Coordinate users safety assessments and improvements with Austin Police and Fire Departments to ensure consideration of appropriate response and access by public safety personnel.

Park Classification

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) have developed park and trail system standards-based guidelines to serve as spatial and functional guidelines for communities to use as they develop their park systems. The following is a list of proposed park classifications including Level of Service (LOS) most relevant to Austin's needs. It is important to note that these standards are general guidelines.



Neighborhood Park

Description: Basic unit of park system that serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.

Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for residents of all age groups living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Location Criteria: ¼ mile to ½ mile service area radius

Size Criteria: 2-10 acres (Sizes may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses)

Site Selection Guidelines: Site should be easily accessible from surrounding neighborhood, should be centrally located, and should link to a community greenway system. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreation opportunities. The landscape of the site should possess pre-development aesthetic value and not be a left-over outlot, nor be located within the 100 year flood-plain.

Development Guidelines: Park development should be a balance of 50% active space and 50% passive space for recreational uses on the site and typically not be programmed. Appropriate park elements would include: play equipment, court games, open “non-programmed” play field or open space, tennis courts, volleyball courts, shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating areas, wading pool, or splash pad. Other park facilities should include picnic areas, internal trail system, and general open space for enjoying the “park scenery”. Neighborhood parks should provide at least 7 to 10 parking spaces and limited lighting should be provided for facility illumination, security, and safety.

Community Park

Description: Larger in size and serves a broader purpose than the neighborhood park with the purpose of providing recreational opportunities for several neighborhoods or larger sections of the community. Typically developed to provide both active and passive recreation opportunities for larger groups while preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.

Location Criteria: Should serve two or more neighborhoods with a ½ mile to 3.0 mile service area radius

Size Criteria: 10-50 acres (Size may be determined as needed to accommodate desired uses)

Site Selection Guidelines: Site should be easily accessible from entire service area, should be centrally located, and should have strong connection to other park areas. Site development should provide for both active and passive recreation opportunities. The landscape of the site should possess pre-development aesthetic value and not be a “left-over” outlot or located within a 100 year flood-plain. The site, when possible, should be located adjacent to natural resource areas and greenways. These areas tend to provide landscapes with greater biodiversity thus enhancing the passive recreational experience.

Development Guidelines: While the community park should be designed to accommodate both active and passive recreational opportunities, programming should remain, for the most part, limited. Appropriate active park elements would include: larger play areas with creative play equipment for a range of ages, court games, informal ball fields for youth play, tennis, volleyball and shuffleboard courts, horseshoe pits, ice skating,



FIGURE 7-5.

Existing Park Acreage By Park Type

Park Type	Number of Parks	Acres	% Total
Passive/Garden/Memorial	2	0.2	0.0%
Mini Park/Playground	1	1.6	0.2%
Neighborhood Park	15	49.8	6.1%
Community Park	8	302.5	36.8%
Special Use Park	3	518.7	63.2%
Total	29	821.2	100%

swimming pools and beaches, archery ranges, and disc golf.

Parking lots should be provided to accommodate use and limited lighting should be provided for facility illumination, security, and safety.

Special Use Park

Description: Covers a broad range of parks and recreational facilities oriented toward a single purpose use such as historical, cultural, or social sites. These sites may offer local historical, educational, or cultural recreational opportunities. Examples of this type of park include historic downtowns, performing arts parks and facilities, arboretums, public gardens, indoor theatres, churches and public buildings. Other examples include: community and senior centers, community theatres, hockey arenas, golf courses, and aquatic parks, tennis centers, softball complexes, and sports stadiums. Community centers, however, are typically located in neighborhood or community parks.

Location Criteria: Location is primarily based on recreation need, community interest, facility type and availability of land. These type of parks should service the entire community rather than a defined neighborhood or area within a community. The site should be easily accessible from major transportation routes and traffic light locations where possible.

Size Criteria: Facility space requirements should determine size of park.

Site Selection Guidelines: A central location is optimal and no specific site selection standard is recommended due to diversity of use potential.



FIGURE 7-6.

Future Park Needs - 2035 (pop. 28,887)

Classification	Existing Acres	Standards	Standard Applied to Population	Net
Park System	821.2	10/1000	288.87	532.3
Community Park	302.5	8/1000	231.1	71.4
Neighborhood Park	49.8	4/1000	115.5	<65.7>
Mini-Park/Playground	1.6	.5/1000	14.4	<12.8>

Development Guidelines: Due to the unique quality of this type of recreational facility, community input and focus groups should be used to determine the site development program.

Open Space

Open space, broadly defined, includes woodlands, fields, wetlands, stream banks, floodplains, steep slopes, and unique geological formations—unbuilt areas. Open Space provides protection for scenic areas and endangered habitats. It also continues to provide land for local food production and can help shape the form of urban growth by providing “breathing room”.

Future Park Growth / Expansion

Based on the National Park standard of providing 10 acres of park and open space land per 1,000 people and on having a population of 25,084, Austin far exceeds the 250 acre guideline. It is important to note that this is only a rule-of-thumb guideline. The parks are dispersed well geographically, and the improvements and acquisitions completed of flood-prone properties have served to connect many of the City’s park and recreation facilities.

Figure 7-5 shows park classification acreage ratio guidelines adapted from the National Standards that are

most relevant to serving Austin’s needs. These ratios plan for providing an adequate distribution of park types within the system. These standards typically apply to those parks that offer active recreation opportunities. Standards do not apply for park and open space areas that are more specialized or that provide more passive recreational opportunities. These areas are typically more dependent on the location and size of the feature itself.

Figure 7-6 shows land needed to accommodate future park needs by 2035 applying national park standards. By the year 2035 Austin should have adequate park land acres to serve the needs of the community. In actuality, Austin may still need to add at several neighborhood parks, and additional mini-parks. The table shows that there will be a need for additional neighborhood parks (based on a 4 acres per 1,000 people standard) and mini parks (based on a 0.5 acres per 1,000 population standard). Neighborhood parks are essential to the quality of life for community residents and are considered a “basic unit” or central spine of the park system because they serve as the main recreational and social gathering

place in the neighborhood. They are components of the City infrastructure that are human-scale, pedestrian-oriented, and barrier-free.

Discussions have occurred throughout the planning process that express concern over a lack of neighborhood integration and socializing. Additional, smaller neighborhood parks may be an opportunity to create more social cohesion amongst neighborhoods and populations. There is an abundance of park acreage, and the conversion of some open space into more active uses may be appropriate.

Additional improvements are anticipated to occur near the dam, with the conversion of a former golf course, and currently underutilized property into a trailhead facility for both non-motorized trail systems as well as a water trail.

Trails

Austin promotes walking and biking by offering a variety of public trails and bike paths. The City has been very proactive in developing internal trail systems to connect the City's existing park and recreation facilities. As of 2015, the City has over 15 miles of bike trails developed, with another mile being constructed in 2016. In addition, the Blazing Star and Shooting Star trails, which are regional trail systems connected to the east and west sides of the City respectively, are continuing to be constructed and expand the regional trail systems within southeastern Minnesota.





“Coming together is moving forward, keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”

Henry Ford

8. Intergovernmental Cooperation

Introduction

Intergovernmental cooperation is an important tool needed to operate in an efficient and cost effective manner, as well as to control and promote growth in an orderly fashion for the City of Austin and adjacent units of government. This plan element establishes goals and related policies for guiding future intergovernmental activities.

Existing Conditions

The City of Austin is led by a Mayor-council form of government and is managed by a professional City Administrator. In addition to the Mayor, the City Council includes seven members, each serving a four year term.

Austin is the seat of Mower County and home to the Mower County Justice Center (courthouse) and Jail. The City is bordered to the south by Austin Township while the area to the north is in Lansing Township. The small City of Mapleview (approximate population 177) sits to the north of Austin and shares a border on three sides.

Austin is located in Minnesota’s 1st congressional district, Minnesota Senate District 27, and House District 27B.

Intergovernmental Agreements, & Relationships

Austin maintains several intergovernmental agreements and relationships including:

- An extraterritorial subdivision regulation for areas within Mower County
- Solid waste, recycling and septic regulations and services with Mower County
- Austin Municipal Airport and the Federal Aviation Administration
- MnDot District 6
- MNDNR and FEMA on flood related matters (City is part of the NFIP – CRS program)

Austin together with Mower County have developed the Austin Home Initiative, referred to as AHI to provide incentives to encourage the construction of new owner occupied and rental residential housing units within the City of Austin. This program is intended to run between August 1, 2016 and December 31, 2019. This program is subject to Minnesota Statute 469.1813 Subdivision 8 which places limitations on tax abatement.

Goals and Policies

1. Continue to work cooperatively and maintain excellent relations with all governmental units in and around the region.

Policies

- Frequently communicate with other government officials (staff, elected and appointed officials) both formally (on committees, etc.) and informally (telephone calls, emails, etc.).
- Coordinate with adjacent and, or relevant units of government on planning efforts (e.g., comprehensive, land use, transportation, and natural resource protection), regulations, and specific land use decisions.
- Where practical, share information, equipment, resources, facilities, technology, services and possibly revenue that have cross-jurisdictional use.
- Evaluate existing intergovernmental cooperation efforts on an annual basis and determine the need to maintain, improve, expand or dissolve existing agreements.

2. Continue to cooperate and coordinate transportation system maintenance and enhancements with MnDot and Mower County.

Policies

- Continue working to ensure that Austin’s long-term, multi-modal transportation plans are reflected in MnDot’s plans for I – 90 Highway corridor facilities.

3. Work with Mower County to plan for hazard mitigation, preparation and recovery, including making provisions for vulnerable populations.

Policies

- Encourage and support multilingual communications targeted to immigrant populations.

4. Collaborate with Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit agency to strengthen transit service as a more viable transportation option.

Policies

- Integrate transit facility infrastructure into transportation improvement projects where appropriate.
- Encourage and support multilingual communications targeted to immigrant populations.

5. Coordinate with Mower County to protect appropriate agricultural lands outside City limits within a two mile area surrounding the City.

Policies

- Whenever possible, direct growth and annexation towards areas with poorer quality agricultural lands.
- Recognize land costs will be market-driven.

6. Expand Riverland Community College's community integration.

Policies

- Engage college administration on a routine basis to coordinate and collaborate on aspects of campus expansion, student housing, parking and other matters of joint interest or consequence.
- Promote and support Riverland Community College as an integral economic development asset and partner.

7. Continue to collaborate with Austin Utilities.

Policies

- Promote and develop community growth and redevelopment through infrastructure planning, clean energy, energy conservation, and emergency response and restoration.

8. Continue to collaborate with the Austin Welcome Center as the community's multi-cultural center for welcoming newcomers, supporting residents in transition and creating access and opportunity.

Policies

- Establish a routine (yearly or more often) check-in with Welcome Center administrator to review effectiveness of coordination and collaboration efforts.

9. Involve the school district in long range planning efforts and in reviewing current development proposals.

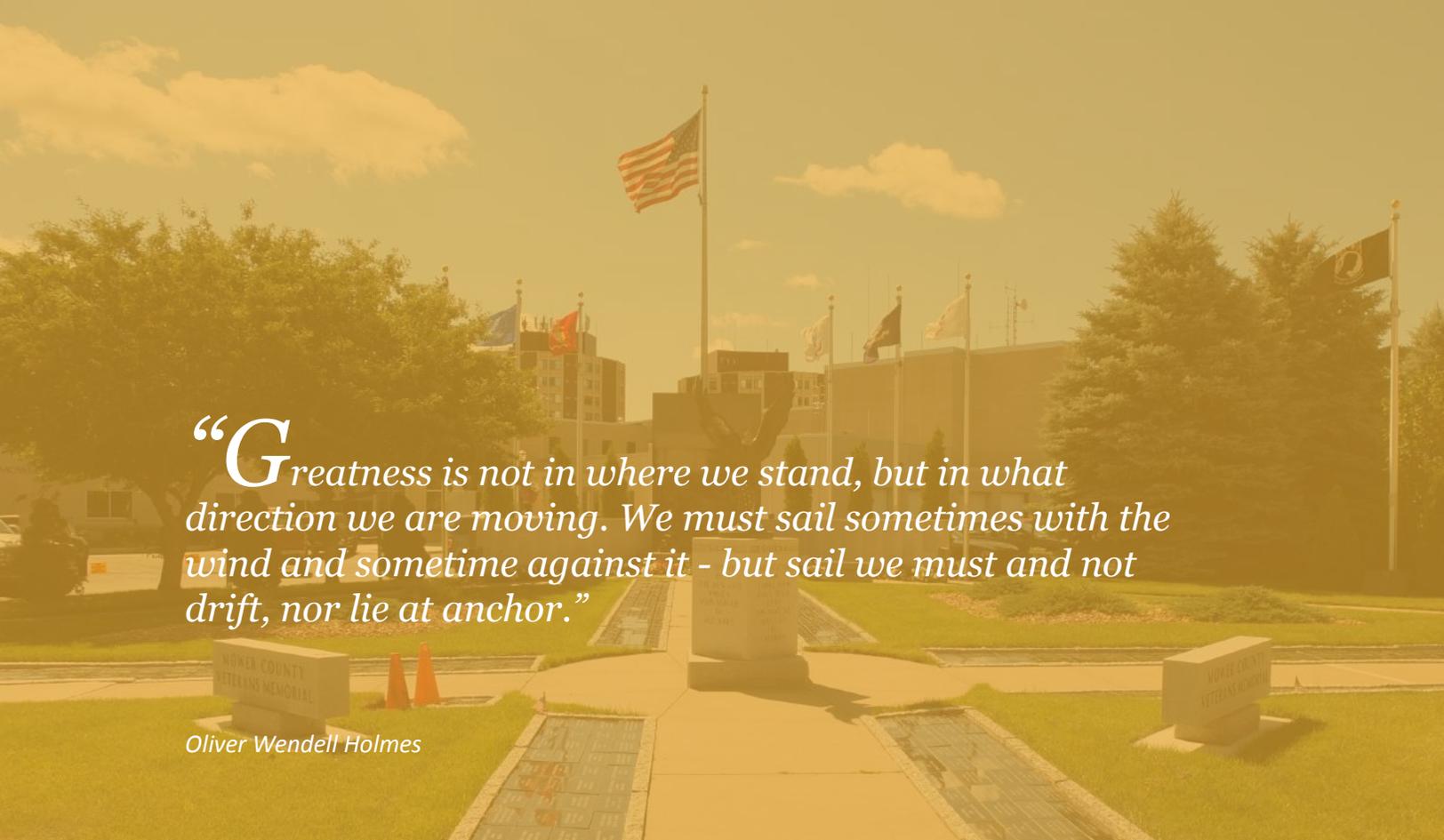
Policies

- Establish a formal, routine communications process with school district to facilitate timely information exchange.

Review effectiveness of communications and collaboration efforts on an annual basis.

3. ACHIEVING THE VISION





“Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometime against it - but sail we must and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

9. Implementation & Action Steps

Introduction

This element serves as an action plan for prioritizing and realizing the goals and policies described in the Comprehensive Plan. The plan is not an end in itself; rather it is the beginning of a new planning cycle. As such it is important that current tools, regulations and programs such as the zoning and subdivision ordinance be reviewed and where necessary made consistent with the goals and policies of the new Comprehensive Plan.

While the Comprehensive Plan is intended to help guide land use and related infrastructure development decisions it is not an attempt to predict the future. Rather it is an expression of the community’s interests and desires for improving upon current conditions and achieving a more prosperous, equitable, healthy and sustainable future.

As change is inevitable, the Comprehensive Plan may need to be amended to appropriately reflect and support changes in land use or other primary community systems. This plan element also outlines the process for amending the Plan. As plan amendments occur, it will be important to review the Plan for consistency. Additionally, the overall Plan should be reviewed for relevance and consistency by staff and Planning Commission on an annual basis.

Elected officials, appointed commissioners and staff should refer to the Comprehensive Plan when reviewing future proposals for private, public and institutional development and redevelopment and develop specific findings of fact to support or deny a given application. As part of any significant proposal, a thorough review of the Plan is necessary with particular attention given to goals

and policies. Where the impact on civic infrastructure and adjacent land uses of a proposed redevelopment or development is minimal, the evaluation may simply be a determination whether the requested action is in conformance with the Plan. Proposals with significant potential impacts will require more in depth analysis and debate in order to determine consistency, community value.

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by local governments to implement planning policies. It consists of the Official Zoning Map and the supporting ordinance text.

The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance is to promote the public health, safety, comfort and general welfare of the people of Austin, MN. The Ordinance regulates a variety of interrelated components including the location of buildings proposed for specific uses, the height, bulk and land coverage of buildings, provides for minimum sanitation standards, off-street loading and parking, and regulates and determines the areas of yards and housing density, to a considerable degree depending on the provision of water and/or sewage treatment facilities.

Within a land use plan designation (per the Comprehensive Plan), there may be several zoning districts that will accomplish the intent of that land use designation. For example, an area designated in the Plan for residential may be zoned any one of several zones that permits residential development. The particular zone will be

based upon the type of conditions in that area and how they apply to the land use goals and policies of the Plan.

Any zoning proposal, whether on a large area basis or an individual property, must be determined to be consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Where a conflict exists between the Plan and existing zoning, the Plan directives must prevail. In cases where the Comprehensive Plan is not followed, the findings of fact for the zoning proposal should explain the reasons for deviating from the Plan and should the zoning proposal be approved, the Comprehensive Plan should be amended to reflect the change.

The Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are amended from time to time to reflect new goals and policies adopted by the City. The City should review its existing Zoning Ordinance and Map for inconsistencies with the adopted new Comprehensive Plan, and create a schedule for amending the zoning documents to reconcile divergences. An important first step is to compare the current zoning map with the adopted Land Use Map and reconcile discrepancies. There may be valid reasons why the two documents are not identical, but these reasons should be clear.

When amending the Comprehensive Plan is needed to accommodate a desired rezoning, the process is as follows:

- Applicant meets with planning and zoning administrator to review reasonableness of rezoning in relation to the surrounding uses as well as compliance with state law and compatibility with the comprehensive plan.
- If the rezoning is acceptable and in the best interest of the City, but is not in compliance with the comprehensive plan, the petitioner will apply for both a rezoning and a comprehensive plan amendment.
- A written application is made with a fee.
- Notice is published and sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property or properties at least 10 days prior to the planning meeting in accordance with state law.

- The zoning administrator prepares findings of fact and a recommendation for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council.
- The matter is presented to the planning commission. The commission makes a recommendation to the council.
- If the commission recommends the rezoning and amendment, notice is published and sent to surrounding property owners within 300 feet of the subject property or properties at least 10 days prior to the council meeting in accordance with state law.
- The matter is presented to council as a proposed ordinance and is subject to ordinance rules, i.e. passes the first time with unanimous vote.

Subdivision Ordinance

The other most widely used land use control mechanism is the subdivision or land division control ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to safeguard the best interest of City, the homeowner, the developer and future owners; encourage well planned subdivisions by the establishment of design and construction criteria; to improve land records by establishing standards for surveys and plats; and protect the environmentally sensitive areas of the City.

Plan Maintenance

To ensure the Plan remains a dynamic and living document, The City should implement an on-going planning process that uses the plan to develop annual improvement programs. Simultaneously, the plan should be reviewed and evaluated to ensure that its goals, policies and programs continue to reflect changing community needs and attitudes.

The most important method of implementing Austin’s new Comprehensive Plan is to use the plan as part of the day-to-day planning routine by committed elected and appointed officials, City staff members, and citizens. The Plan should be referenced in planning studies and

planning staff reports and used when considering each new development, redevelopment and incentive with the intent of achieving the vision and goals set forth in the plan.

Circumstances will continue to change in the future as the City grows and evolves. To that end, Austin’s Comprehensive Plan will need to be modified and refined to remain current. Updates and changes should be identified, carefully noted and thoroughly considered as part of an annual review process.

Annual Plan Amendment Process

While rewrites or major updates are typically made every ten years, and updates are made every five years, annual amendments can provide an opportunity to revisit progress on implementing the plan’s action items as well as maintaining consistency with changed conditions and circumstances. A plan amendment should be prepared and distributed as an addendum to the adopted comprehensive plan. Identification of the potential plan amendments should be an on-going process by the Planning Commission and City staff throughout the year.

Implementation Responsibility

The responsibilities for the actual initiation and monitoring of the goals and implementation action items of the comprehensive plan lie with the following groups:

Citizens

The City’s citizens should continue to be involved in the implementation and maintenance of the comprehensive plan. They are responsible for bringing their concerns and issues to City staff.

City Council

The City Council should receive and act upon recommendations in accordance with the vision, goals, and policies of the plan. It is imperative that the City Council provide overall policy guidance and consider issues and changes when they are consistent with the stated purpose of the comprehensive plan.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission should use the comprehensive plan as a tool for decision making for growth, development and redevelopment to assure the projects, proposals and policies area in accordance with the plan. On an annual basis, the Commission should submit an annual report of the activities and achievements as well as recommendations for future planning initiatives.

City Staff

City Staff should review all development issues associated with zoning and subdivision of land for compliance with stated goals and policies and land use map. Staff should also monitor planning activities to aid in the need for revisions and updates

Action Items

A community's final step in the comprehensive planning process is to set priorities for strategies associated with the specific plan elements to achieve its vision and goals. Just as many distinct policies can speak to a given goal, a community can select a range of strategies or action items – consistent with its policies – to achieve any of its goals. Reaching an understanding of which should be given the highest priority is a key step a community should take to implement the Plan.

Figure 9-1 provides a summarized list of implementation action items to implement policy recommendations in various plan elements over a 1-5 year time frame. As items are well underway or completed, new ones should be identified and brought forward for implementation. Some of the recommended action items may require substantial cooperation with others, including other units of governments and or the private sector. In addition, other City department or City Council priorities may affect the completion of these key actions.

FIGURE 9-1.

Implementation Action Items

Plan Element	Action Item	Primary Responsible Party or Parties
Land Use		
	Update zoning and subdivision regulations to more directly reflect and serve to implement the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan. (will include ghost platting exercise)	Planning, Administration, Public Works staff and Planning Commission
	Annual Review of Comprehensive Plan	Planning and Public Works
Housing		
	Create zoning and subdivision regulations that provide for neighborhoods with a mix of life-cycle housing, sidewalks and interconnected street systems.	Planning, Administration, HRA, Economic Development
	Explore methods and funding options to promote the improvement of the existing housing stock, including retrofitting existing homes to better serve today's families.	HRA, Economic Development
	Actively engage in public-private partnerships to develop new housing options that meet the socioeconomic needs of Austin's current and future residents.	HRA, Economic Development
	Adopt a rental housing license and inspections program.	Planning
	Develop a program for housing infill.	Planning and HRA
Economic Development		
	Continue recruiting businesses to city owned business / industrial parks such as Cooks Farm.	Economic Development, Port Authority
	Continue actively promoting, evaluating and supporting the reuse of the existing vacated commercial buildings.	Economic Development, Port Authority
	Implement recommendations of the Downtown Plan	Planning, Economic Development, Public Works
	Develop additional industrial park facilities.	Economic Development, Port Authority
Transportation		
	Develop a formal Multimodal /Active Transportation Plan	Public Works, Parks, Recreation & Forestry
	Expand on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation.	Public Works and Engineering
	Continue ADA transition plan implementation.	Public Works
	Incorporate aesthetic and multimodal treatments as a part of I-90 bridge replacements.	Public Works
Utilities and Community Facilities		
	Continue renewal of aging city infrastructure / street system.	Public Works
	Continue flood mitigation efforts.	Public Works
	Redevelop former power plant site.	Economic Development, Planning
	Explore expansion towards a city-wide fiber optic network.	Engineering, Economic Development, Public Works
	Advocate for city-wide single sort recycling.	Administration

FIGURE 9-1. CONT.

Implementation Action Items

Plan Element	Action Item	Primary Responsible Party or Parties
Parks and Open Spaces		
	Develop and implement a natural area management plan that ensures natural areas (prairies, shorelines and woodland) are ecologically diverse, sustainable and managed with scientifically based methods.	Parks, Recreation and Forestry
	Explore adding rustic camping at Nature Center	Parks, Recreation and Forestry
	Explore locating camping options near downtown.	Parks, Recreation and Forestry
	Continue to expand on the inclusiveness of Austin's parks	Parks, Recreation and Forestry
	Study and expand park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of all community members.	Parks, Recreation and Forestry

Austin, Minnesota

APPENDIX



Austin Welcome Center Focus Group June 30, 2016

This focus group was done in an effort to engage vulnerable immigrant populations as part of the Austin Comprehensive Planning process. Five Karen families were represented by one family member in the focus group, providing feedback and experience on topics including, climate/weather issues, language barriers, utilities and transportation, and landlord obstacles. All five participants were also engaged in the surveys that were distributed prior to the focus group.

Surveys and the focus group were prepared by The City of Austin and the Great Plains Institute in efforts to enhance sustainability and resilience in the community through the Austin Comprehensive Plan. Notes were taken by GPI staff on flipbooks during the focus group and these notes were then put into a word document.

The following is a record of the questions presented to the group and their answers as given by the interpreter.

1. What brought you to Austin, MN?

Many participants moved to Austin because the rent is lower than in metro areas, and they had family living and working in the area.

2. What do you like about living in Austin?

Many participants liked that Austin is a small town with less traffic and people than metro areas. They love the parks because kids can play at the playground and fish. Lower rent is available and the workplace is a good fit for their family compared to the metro area.

3. In the surveys that were completed, language barriers emerged as a common issue among new residents.

- a. How has having a language barrier affected your life in Austin?**
- b. What are some of the obstacles that prevent you and your community from addressing and solving language barriers?**
- c. Is there a space or a community in Austin where you feel that language barriers are not a problem or where the burden is less?**

Many of the focus group members mentioned problems communicating with their landlords, and cited examples where the landlord apparently was taking advantage of this language barrier to ignore maintenance requests such as broken stoves and flooding, as well as problems concerning utility payments. People also said that it was difficult to make use of the public transportation system, as it



often requires you to call into the system to request a pickup, which is made difficult by the language barrier. The welcome center doesn't feel burdensome in terms of language barriers because of the available interpreters, but people said that anywhere without an interpreter poses a significant challenge.

- 4. Are you familiar with the public transportation system in Austin (SMART Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit)?**
 - a. Are there certain aspects of the transportation system that conflict with your daily schedule?**
 - b. What improvements to the transportation system would be most beneficial to your life?**
 - c. What part of your schedule would transportation be critical to (work, education, etc.)**

All were not familiar with the transportation system. Even our interpreter was not aware that there is a schedule to the SMART route. They thought that the only way to access SMART services was by calling in. This is where the obstacle of language barrier plays into the transportation area since it is difficult to contact the interpreter's office first. Also, in case of an emergency it is often not possible to call an interpreter first. One individual had to walk to the hospital during an emergency because she was unable to contact the bus.

A few participants were able to carpool to the focus group but two had to walk. One individual has to start walking at 8 AM and arrived to the welcome center between 9 and 9:30 AM.

An action item that was identified in the focus group was to look into having a SMART presentation.

Taxi use in Austin has not been attempted by participants but some have tried it in St. Paul.

Police would help one individual when she lived in Chicago and also in Austin. If the individual appears lost, police approach her and offer a ride home. Language barrier was not identified as an obstacle in these scenarios and police interaction is still helpful despite it.

5. Show of hands: how many of you have an air conditioner in your home?

Everyone who participated in the focus group has an air conditioner in their home, but one woman noted that she did not want to use it because her utility bill was too high (around \$400). This led to a conversation about confusion with landlords about whether or not utilities were included in the rent. This appeared to be a common problem, and it seemed as if the landlords in some cases may be taking advantage of the language barrier. Everyone at the focus group appeared interested in learning more about how to reduce their utility bill, and none were aware of any energy efficiency programs or rebates offered by utilities.



6. During heavy rain events, do you have issues with your basement flooding?

Flooding in apartments was a concern. An individual expressed that even when it is not raining her floor is still moist from the damage. She has expressed concern to her landlord but the landlord fails to address the issue. One of the bedrooms in the apartment is no longer livable and thus her family can only sleep in one of two bedrooms. This is a concern even in the wintertime. This issue brought another concern with the manager of the apartment controlling the temperature and not letting individuals turn the heat up during the winter. This is a big concern for them because of their young kids.

7. In the case of a tornado, do you have a place to go at home? Do you have a plan?

Nobody had a set plan of where to go in case of a tornado, and multiple people said that their buildings did not have basements that they could use as shelters.

8. Are the police helpful?

Many participants said that the police were helpful and helped them when they were lost in spite of the language barrier.

9. Where you get your information in regard to city alerts/ public information?

Most people said that they get information through the Welcome Center.

Outcomes and Lessons

A major outcome of this focus group was identifying the conflict between participants and their landlords. Our interpreter also expressed that she has had similar feedback from other families she works with. Holly Wallace will be working with the interpreter to make sure that solutions are found to these conflicts. Many participants identified language barriers as being a leading cause of these problems.

Participants expressed gratitude to the information we provided. We handed out SMART schedules so that they can identify routes that will work for them and so that they can also hand them out to relatives or friends that will also find useful. Holly suggested that perhaps SMART could present to non-English speakers about how to utilize the system, which the participants thought was a good idea. We also provided information to the interpreter on energy efficiency rebate programs. Additionally, Holly asked the fire and police departments to provide the Welcome Center with materials on emergency and weather related concerns. These materials will be available for distribution to all families. Additionally,



participants stated that they would be interested in information about what to do in extreme weather events, and Holly said that she would bring that information to the Welcome Center to be distributed.

It is important to note that solving the climate change problem for participants was not a priority, although many of their concerns, such as utility bill prices, are tied to climate change and will be exacerbated in the future. Language barriers, among other obstacles, make these participants and other similar residents vulnerable to climate change and its impacts. Addressing concerns of all residents will help the City of Austin reach its energy and sustainability goals. One example of such an opportunity is that the participants are concerned about the cost of their utility bill and saving energy to reduce cost. If the City helps inform all residents of energy-efficiency programs and rebates, this concern will be addressed and the City will increase its climate resiliency.

Connection to BP 29: Plan and prepare for extreme weather, adapt to changing climatic conditions, and foster stronger community connectedness and social and economic vitality.

This focus group helps Austin work towards BP 29 in the GreenStep Cities program. Completing the surveys and focus group with non-English speakers at the Welcome Center is linked to **BP 29.4: *Increase social connectedness through consistent and direct engagement and capacity building of communities or populations that are generally underrepresented in community discussions or participation.*** Additionally, the information gleaned from the surveys and focus group, particularly the information pertaining to extreme weather events and heating and cooling concerns, will be included in Austin's comprehensive plan, which is linked to **BP 29.1: *Integrate climate resilience into planning and budgetary processes.*** One of the concerns that arose in the focus group was the lack of knowledge about how to handle extreme weather events, and there is now a plan to distribute that information to vulnerable populations. This is in line with **BP 29.2: *Prepare to maintain public health and safety during extreme weather and climate-change related events, while also taking a preventative approach to reduce risk for community members.***

Prepared by the Great Plains Institute
Emma Ryan and Diana Vega Vega

REVIEW DRAFT
APPENDIX 2



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

AUSTIN, MN

Housing Focus Group Summary

February 11, 2016

Seven members of the City's ad hoc task force on housing participated in a focus group to discuss issues and opportunities pertaining housing conditions and opportunities in Austin. Participants were asked a series of questions which led to additional, follow-on discussion. This information will be combined with additional community input to inform the formulation of goals and policies in the new comprehensive plan.

1. Are there specific housing issues that seem to continue to circulate through the community?

Responses

- Top concern for businesses in attracting and retaining talent is housing.
- Shortage of modern, newer housing in the mid-level price ranges:
 - Single family
 - Condominiums
 - Townhouses
 - Rental apartments
- Used to be known as "City of Homeowners" (well-kept); now lots of blighted housing. Important improve this image but will be difficult and costly.
- Housing needs to be addressed by private enterprise. Housing will be addressed by marketplace as need arises and demand increases.
- Can this be forced with government intervention do we have to allow it to handle itself as economics dictate? Not sure the City has much of a role here.
- Need to ask ourselves what opportunities we might be missing from a market perspective?
- Lots of information has been presented to task force but not sure what do with it all. What is greatest need to strengthen community?
- What type of housing can we provide to attract young professionals? Need to confirm that this is the greatest need.
- Economics are key – how can we make it profitable to get builders excited and have reasonable return on investment.
- Key is "we" need to listen to community which has voiced dissatisfaction with quality rental housing and lack of choice / options.
- Needs of the diverse community – voices are not heard/needs not being understood.
Language/Accessibility

- Lack of good quality rental property for young and not-so-young professionals.
- Lack of new, quality housing ownership housing options. Appears to be adequate supply of high and low-end housing, middle range is missing (\$170-\$200k).

2. Can you expand on some of the details behind these issues?

- Undocumented populations won't reach out for assistance and are left as a vulnerable market segment for housing. They're willing to accept poor / inferior building conditions with low rental rates.
- Most multifamily rental properties are old (built 50's-60's), there are numerous inattentive landlords, and the prevalence of low paying jobs all contribute to a market with depressed rentals rates, i.e. most renters just can't afford to pay Rochester or Twin Cities rates.
- Why were only 6 new homes built in 2015? Numerous opinions and ideas were offered including:
 - Fewer local home builders and construction trades since housing crisis of 2008.
 - No more speculative building going on which provided more choice.
 - Lenders and builders are much more risk-averse, which is probably good in the long run.
 - Financing is tighter. Tougher to finance a home.
 - Track record of most recent builders is spotty, many had issues in '08-'09.
 - Rochester market (middle/high) was easy to finance. Homes flying off market.
 - City building codes, subdivision regulations may be and impediment.
 - 5 of 6 new homes sold/are occupied (most low \$200k's for 1600-1900 sf)
 - Demand may not be as high as thought
 - Approach / attitude to permitting and review by City staff is important (can be a deterrent)
 - Cost per sf – new homes are much more expensive than ever before. Higher end homes are more costly per s.f. to build.
- Two things Hormel's professionals look at before taking a job: 1) Quality of schools; 2) Housing. These can be deal breakers. Entertainment gap is manageable – people will drive to Rochester and/or Twin Cities for entertainment. They'd prefer to live in Austin but many end up in Rochester or out in the countryside / township due to lack of quality, modern housing choices.

2) What is the perception of housing condition in Austin? Has there ever been a housing condition analysis completed for residential structures?

Responses

- General consensus that housing, in general, is significantly blighted. Rents are not sufficient for new housing to be built and "pencil out."

3) Is there a rental licensing or rental listing program in Austin? Has this ever been discussed? If so, where any decisions made?

Responses

- Not licensing – only a registration process. Many City Council members and most landlords will not support licensing.
- City implemented registration process about a year ago and its starting work well.
- Slightly over 2,000 registered rental units in community (map of rental units)
- City has hired a building/zoning person (new dedicated position) but there has always been Council lists for properties needed action.
- Illegal immigrants (Hispanic population) need education – generally good about making improvements to property, but need education/outreach.
- CDBG neighborhood home ownership/provide cash incentives for home improvement.
- CHIP Program through HRA.
- Loan Programs – trying to make it easier for people to make home repairs (through HRA). Good safety net for non-conventional borrowers. High risk has not been an issue.
 - Expanded into rentals – but very cautiously. Strictly for new rental owners for making improvements.
- No inspections unless complaints/problems.
- There would be significant push-back for licensing. Registration process passed by a 4-3 vote and took years to be accomplished.
 - Always a private sector concern for government involvement and increased burdens/accountability.
 - Health and safety issue/one bad house can ruin a neighborhood. Government needs to be more involved.
- Lack of enforcement of codes and laws on the books.
- Banks are cautious – they don't like to lend to those who will not keep up their properties.
- Need some peer pressure on the run down rental unit owners.
- Age of housing stock is significant inhibitor.
- HRA owns 56 scattered site units; plus two large buildings. HRA cannot break even on scattered site homes – cannot charge enough rent to cover costs. ROI does not pencil out. HRA can do that – private sector cannot.
- Certainly has changed. Back in 60's there were no “slummy” areas.
 - Pride of Ownership
- Rental housing likely a bigger issue – but homeowners are getting worse
- Albert Lea may be worse
- Owatanna – looks like Austin 50 years ago
- Austin has always lagged Owatanna for new homes for a long time.
- Property managers are appalled at state of multi-family rental structures – may not be allowed to operate rental properties like in Austin in many other communities.
- Vision 2020 subcommittee trying to get homeowners more invested in making minor cosmetic improvements.

4) What housing products are less readily available in Austin? Either for-sale or rental?

Responses

- Less readily available housing in Austin is the “decent” housing. Applicable to both for-sale and rental properties.

5) What demographic segments of the market are under-served by the current housing stock that exists in the community?

Responses

- Middle to higher wage earners. Some limitations of safe and decent housing for low-income households.

6) What resources are currently available in the community to support residential development? Tax Increment Financing, CDBG Funds, Minnesota Housing Funds, Private Donations or Grants, Other

Responses

- CDBG neighborhood home ownership/provide cash incentives for home improvement.
- CHIP Program through HRA.
- Loan Programs – trying to make it easier for people to make home repairs (through HRA). Good safety net for non-conventional borrowers. High risk has not been an issue.
 - Expanded into rentals – but very cautiously. Strictly for new rental owners for making improvements.

8) What challenges has the community faced recently in trying to secure housing funding or interest in developing new housing in the community?

Responses

- ROI – rents are not sufficient to cover costs of new housing that is strictly privately funded.
- Residential consumers may be willing to pay a higher cost to live elsewhere – provided they have increased amenities.
- Solution likely lies within Public/Private Partnership
- **OLDER HOMES**
 - Money available for buying old homes, make improvements, and renting them out – loans. Lots of 800-900 sf homes + 2 car garages. Not much room to tear down and rebuild anything else. Can add 2nd floors. Governments role can help prime pump with how to successfully upgrade house and provide seed funds.
Example: St. Louis Park Bungalow conversion program
 - Could easily over-improve by sticking too much money into homes on substandard lots.
 - Difficult financially to get a modern/upscale rental in Austin. Hard to prove-up the market.

- Can't build affordable. Rents too low in Austin to build units. \$900/mo. market is more realistic to ROI at \$1,300/mo. Cannot build the \$900 markets.
- People willing to pay more to live in Rochester to be closer to entertainment. They could pay significantly less in Austin – but they get a significantly lesser home.
- Hormel employees look here first – but often can't find the right fit.
- Hormel Foundation housing focused on one group. Cost perspective – their ROI may be non-existent, but they are doing it for other reasons.
- Hard to get people to take jobs in Austin due to housing, schools, entertainment.
- Hormel Institute is building new labs; recruiting people; providing housing on site “we do not have a hard time recruiting to Austin, Minnesota” was statement of executive at recent meeting. While This program is targeted at a highly skilled, well-educated work force and not applicable to the typical Austin resident, it highlights the lack of housing choices in the local market as well as a misunderstanding or ignorance of market demand by the local development / building community.

General Discussion

City is limited in economic growth due to array of housing issues.

- Housing can be a deal-breaker for attracting new college educated talent for local companies. If decent housing is not available in Austin, that could be the difference for successful onboarding of new employees as well.
- Land costs are reasonable – ¼ ac lot for \$30-\$40k – but lots are not selling.
- Plenty of platted lots for builders and home buyers to choose from (more than 100).
- A construction company in town has 4 lots – ready-to-build – but not selling.
- Older homes that have been updated sell quickly.
- Most home buyers do not want to have to take on the burden and cost of renovating / updating Austin's many older, non-code compliant homes.

What are the things young professionals are looking for in housing?

- Mix of 1-2 bedroom; attached or heated parking
 - 700 s.f. min. for 1 BR – 900 s.f. min. for 2 BR
 - Upgraded kitchens; dishwashers; no plastic-real wood cabinets
 - washer/dryer is ideal but people will use communal laundry if clean, roomy
 - Rents should be \$850 - \$900/mo. for 1 BR to \$1,050 - \$1,200/mo. For 2 BR
 - Rochester area offers all this and indoor/covered parking/wood floors/internal laundry, etc.; 2 BR for \$1,400/mo. Along with more arts, culture, nightlife
- Soon to be a commuter bus from Rochester to Hormel on a 3 mo. On trial basis with about 25 people already signed up. Employees are driving this need cost is \$100/mo.
 - Most Austin area young professionals don't want to have to need a roommate in order to afford rent. They're tired of college-style living.

- City should look at public-private partnerships with larger employers to help spur development of higher-end rental housing.
- Look at encouraging and incentivizing development of new affordable rental housing.



Sustainability/Resiliency Focus Group

February 11, 2016

Eight members of Austin’s Sustainability Task Force participated in a focus group session pertaining to the topics of sustainability and resiliency. This information will be combined with additional community input to guide the formulation of goals and policies in the new comprehensive plan. Participants were asked a series of questions which led to additional follow-on discussion.

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear “Austin’s sustainability”?

Responses

- Coasting
- Tell me More
- How we go into the future and maintain
- Good start but more needs to be done
- Maintain and move forward
- Future viability
- In its infancy

Participants were given a hand out prepared by the Great Plains Institute’s Green Step Cities list of Best Practices. Step 4 - Recognition, recently launched, it asks cities to create and maintain metrics for measuring progress on sustainability issues.

2. Look at the five sustainability categories. Which category is most important, in your opinion, for Austin to measure its sustainability performance?

Responses

- **Building/Lighting** - We’ve (Hormel) done everything we can to document what has been done to meet best practices. Now need to break down barriers – to see what the City is doing and be more inclusive. What is City doing to support green best practices?
- Environmental Management – impacts most people in community. Biggest Quality-of-Life impact.
- **Building/Lighting** – need to do more work on economic/community development. Try to succeed at best practices.
- Building/Lighting subcommittee – very large community assets – City needs to set example and engage in these projects – will result in resident and business trickle-down.

- **Land Use** as how things are viewed. Transportation – improvements being made to accommodate alternative transportation methods – complete streets/bicycles.
- **Economic and community development** with renewable energy. There is a real need to make it more accessible and make the process easier. City needs to show leadership by taking on some projects themselves.
- (Hard to pick just one). **Economic and community development** provide foundation to better environmental management, which leads to more income and wealth around community, which will lead to greater community-wide interest to invest in future environmental projects.

3. Is there a particular best practice (out of the 29 listed) that jumps out as particularly important (in your opinion) for Austin to measure its progress?

Responses

- **Building reuse** (mall and power plant) – too much old stuff left behind or going unused.
- **Building reuse** most tangible for people. Easy to create viability perception.
- **Building Reuse** – miss opportunities by not taking serious looks at what can be accomplished/networking with other cities that have successfully done reuse projects.
- **Environmental** – Park and Trails. Many parks connected via trails – City will see more use and people enjoy these assets. Strikes to quality-of-life impacts and are attractive features of the community.
 - Better use of river/Vision 2020 Waterways Community
 - Better recreational use of assets
- **Reuse** – economic impact. If there is something that doesn't fit – but there is a better use of space/land, tearing down a building for redevelopment is still within the broader scope of reuse. Best use of space rather than trying to save all buildings. Sometimes they are not worth saving.
- **#22 Recycling** – last year had opportunity for single sort recycling; County chose not to. Should be readdressed.
- **Local air quality** – Hormel has improved greatly. Other smaller areas of concern. Continue to work on.
 - City/County need to lead on these issues.
- **Pollinator issue** – Task Force has no authority but to make recommendations. Green Steps Cities as a vehicle to use to get focused on the issues. Think a resolution supporting pollinator habitat at City Council is going to be considered. Conversation/having to consider – makes greater knowledge of issue. Public awareness! Community can have an influence on state/federal highway corridor landscaping. Consider including in Vision2020 Gateway initiative.

4. Austin has been participating in the GSC program for several years, and has been addressing sustainability in a variety of ways. What, in your opinion, has been Austin's most significant sustainability gap?

Responses

- At one point there was a drive to measure carbon footprint. Didn't really know how to do successfully.
- How we use "nudge" concept to change behavior with measurements. Could we through utilities show energy usage comparison – i.e. compared to people on block/neighborhood/city/etc.
 - Come separate from bill every couple months.
 - Metric on participation in energy efficiency programs.
- Utilities just put a charging station – ended up with roadblocks due to how system works with engineering and regulatory approvals.
 - How can we make it easier to do good, do better.
- Difficult to incentivize green practices. It's harder through permitting because inspection group is often not familiar with new technologies, techniques, so additional scrutiny, certifications are often required for approval of "green" / high tech. systems or site improvements in building and land development projects.
- Green Step City process – pollinator discussion – we're looking at adopting policies – but wait to make sure there are no conflicts with existing practices before adopting policies/procedures.
 - Need to ensure actions are comprehensive and cohesive. (i.e. pollinators and then pesticide/insecticide – don't invite bees in and then kill them).
 - City practices in maintaining infrastructure – need to know details on before adopting more progressive sustainability policies to ensure they are compatible.

RESILIENCY

Note the City's priority of addressing resiliency and sustainability in the Comprehensive Plan.

What is the first thing that comes to mind when they hear "climate resiliency. (adapting to climate change in its various forms)"

Responses

- Continuity
- Preparing for extremes
- Awareness of issue and how it affects us
- Flood mitigation
- Preparation/planning ahead
- Preparedness
- Expensive
- Adaptability

Process: Hand out the GSC Resiliency Best Practice, and note the adoption standard (noted by Holly in her email) of integrating resilience into City planning and budgetary processes. Note that the first step in resiliency assessment is identifying vulnerabilities.

1. What extreme weather vulnerabilities does Austin face?

- *Localized and large scale flooding*
- *Extreme heat and humidity*
- *Extreme cold and wind chill*

Responses

- Tornados
- High Winds
- Floods
- Bitter cold
- Ice storms (power outages)
- Extreme heat/humidity

2. Which weather vulnerabilities are the highest priority for Austin to address?

Responses

- Flood improvements – Austin has made remarkable progress
- Utilities (gas/electric/water) new plant has a tornado proof room to protect infrastructure (F5)

3. Are there non-weather vulnerabilities that Austin should prepare for? Review examples below if necessary.

- natural systems
- economic base
- community and social integrity
- community health

Responses

- Social connectedness. Large amount of underrepresented community populations. 41 languages in Austin school districts. City rental property/renters – reach and educate underrepresented people and help them to adapt.
 - Hard to help people if you can't talk those languages.
- Lots of diversity (good) but hasn't caught up to being fully integrated into community.
 - People do not know how to approach these community segments.
 - Generational cycle to adapt
 - Leads to other issues
 - Non-supervised kids after school – keeping them engaged
 - Housing/child care – how do we help all communities to achieve their maximum potential.
 - Hormel Foods –
 - Vulnerable to public health issues/swine flu/avian flu/etc.
 - Vulnerable to tornado/fire/etc.
 - Could cripple City (better diversification of economy)
- Epidemics (Hormel)
 - Red-Cross emergency assistance. Emergency action plan.
 - County responsible for hazard management plan
 - City has been active – but waiting for County to connect with City on update.
- Greater opportunity for County coordination – but historical tensions. County not historically inclusive/transparent. Intergovernmental coordination a large opportunity for improvement.

4. What do you think are Austin’s vulnerable populations? Review examples below if necessary:

- *economically vulnerable (unemployed, underemployed, working poor, retired/elderly)*
- *mobility and accessibility barriers (population that can’t drive, that has no access to vehicles, critical services that require a vehicle)*
- *language barriers (barriers for emergency response, emergency preparedness, cultural needs and community integration, participation in assistance/education programs)*
- *locational vulnerabilities (housing located in flood plains, housing difficult to serve with emergency services)*
- *Infrastructural vulnerabilities (housing that doesn’t meet building/energy codes or otherwise substandard)*

Responses:

- Underrepresented due to language barriers
- Economic Dependency on vulnerable industries

5. What information do you believe City officials need to identify vulnerable populations? Data Gaps?

Responses

- Demographic data
 - Age
 - Ethnicity
- Hazard Mitigation Plan, need to better coordinate with County, need more transparency in planning for disasters
- Data for school district on how Austin feeds into Destination Medical Center
 - Demographics
 - 3 commuter buses to Rochester are a concern

6. What are the City of Austin’s vulnerable public facilities? Which facilities are “critical” (requiring the ability to function even in a hazardous event)?

- *identify critical facilities and infrastructure,*
- *discuss opportunities for creating redundancies,*
- *Discuss opportunities for speeding hazard recovery*

Responses:

- New utility plant is going to have a tornado-proof room to ensure operability.

REVIEW DRAFT
APPENDIX 3

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CITY OF AUSTIN, MN

Austin Community Survey Summary

2/9/2016



A 13 question community survey was hosted on the project website from December 16, 2015 until February 8, 2016 for residents and visitors to express their opinions about the current state of the city as well offer ideas about the future. Questions were developed by the project planning team in consultation with City of Austin planning staff. 210 survey responses were provided. The responses will be used together with input obtained in several focus groups, monthly project steering committee meetings and several public issues and opportunities workshops to inform the planning process.

This document provides a summary and graphic representation of the 13 questions and results obtained from this survey. Similar and prevailing “most common” responses have been collectively aggregated and summarized for each question. Responses are listed in order of prevalence. For purposes of this exercise, answers shown represent comments provided least three or more individual mentions times for a specific question. One of a kind comments while interesting, do not constitute common themes or shared ideas and are not included in this summary.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1. What 3 words best describe Austin, Minn. today?

1. Diverse / Diversity
2. Outdated / Ugly / Old / Rundown / Dilapidated / Trashy
3. Segregated / Racist / Small Minded / Wanting
4. SPAM Town USA / Company Town / Hormel
5. Boring / Uneventful/ Stagnant
6. Opportunity / Growing /Artsy / Improving / Energetic / Cultural
7. Community Pride / Family Oriented / Welcoming
8. Parks / Recreation / Trails
9. Poor / Shrinking Middle Class / Welfare Dependent / Inequality / Weak Economy
10. Crime Ridden / Dangerous / Unsafe / Unkempt
11. Floods /Flooding
12. Unhealthy / Underdeveloped/ Vacant
13. Food Barren / Food Desert
14. Aging Community
15. “Recyclophobic” / Anti-Recycling

QUESTION 2. What 3 words would you like to be able to use in describing Austin, Minn. 10 years from now?

1. Attractive / Beautiful / Clean / “Blue Zone” / Environmental / Artsy
2. Economically: independent/sufficient/thriving/growing/employed/high wages
3. Active / Healthy / Healthy Foods + Access / Recreational / Wellness
4. Cohesive / Sustainable / Dynamic / LEED / United / Visionary / Interesting
5. Destination / Revitalized / Progressive / Innovative / Integrated / Bustling / Entertaining
6. Diverse / Diversity / Family / Family-Friendly / Changing / Friendly / Welcoming
7. Growing Population / Livable / Safe / Educated / Thriving
8. Shopping Destination / Retail Hub / New Businesses

QUESTION 3. If you could change one thing about Austin, Minn. What would it be?

1. Economically Stimulated / Wages Increased /Job Diversity / Quality Businesses /Hospitable for Entrepreneurs / Celebrate SPAM
2. Clean it up
3. Make it safer
4. Increase quality of life for residents
5. Better leadership / government personnel should be transparent + visionary /Increase community involvement / more time with elected officials / uphold landlords to upkeep property to follow its ordinances.
6. Inclusive towards new people
7. The smell
8. Make Austin a destination location – embrace spam and spam activities!!
9. More Family-friendly events / Activities / Concerts / Free Outdoor Events / Youth Focused Events / Cultural Events
10. Better educational opportunities
11. Better food / Groceries and Restaurants/ more local owners and no chains
12. More consideration for bike and Pedestrian roads / Curb Cuts/ ADA accessibility should be everywhere
13. Positive community attitude
14. Intergeneration rift and discrepancies in point of view and future of the city

QUESTION 4. What would you NOT want to change in Austin, Minn.?

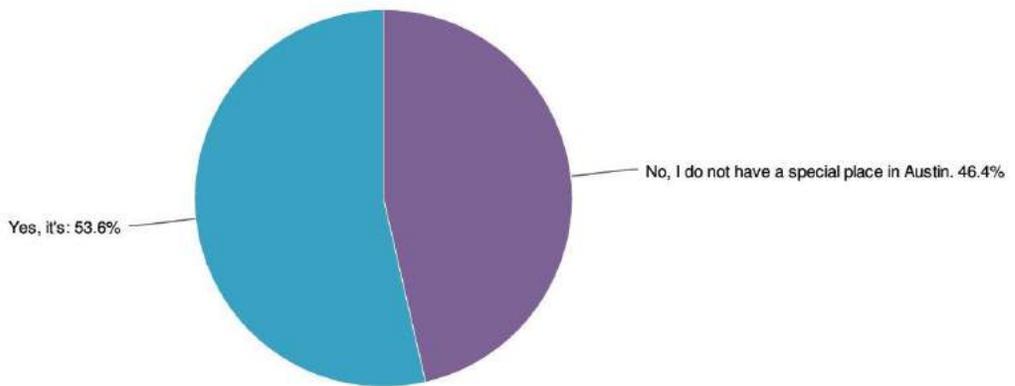
1. Art and cultural opportunities
2. Downtown atmosphere
3. Parks / Trails / Recreation / Tree Canopy
4. Small town feel / Amenities
5. Low cost of living
6. The diversity
7. The Foundation /Hormel / Investor-Benefactor concept of Mayo Clinic and Hormel / Vision 2020
8. Caring and helpful people

QUESTION 5. Please complete the following sentence:

In my neighborhood I'd like to see _____.

1. Better housing / less problem tenants / more upkeep and enforcement for visual standards
2. Cleanliness increased
3. Young and new families
4. Food co-op / markets
5. Reduced criminal activity / Drug Dealers
6. Better snow removal
7. Nicer Sidewalks / Streets / Paths
8. Community Pride / Neighborhood interactions
9. WIFI citywide
10. Recycling / Compost supported by City
11. Block Parties

QUESTION 6. Do you have a special place in Austin, Minn?

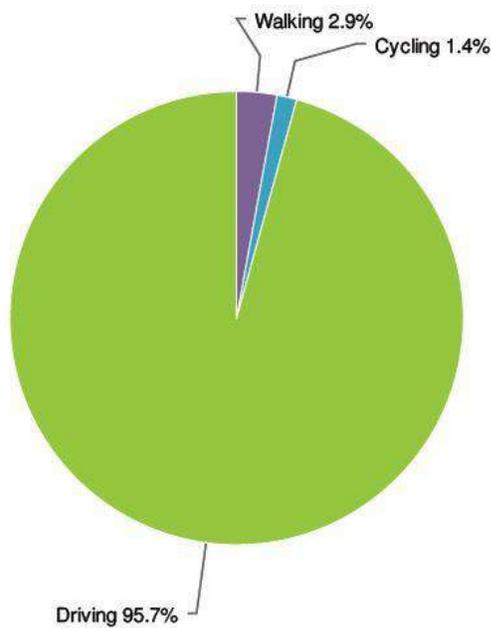


Value	Percent	Count
No, I do not have a special place in Austin.	46.4%	97
Yes, it's:	53.6%	112
Total		209

Some expanded answers if marked “Yes”:

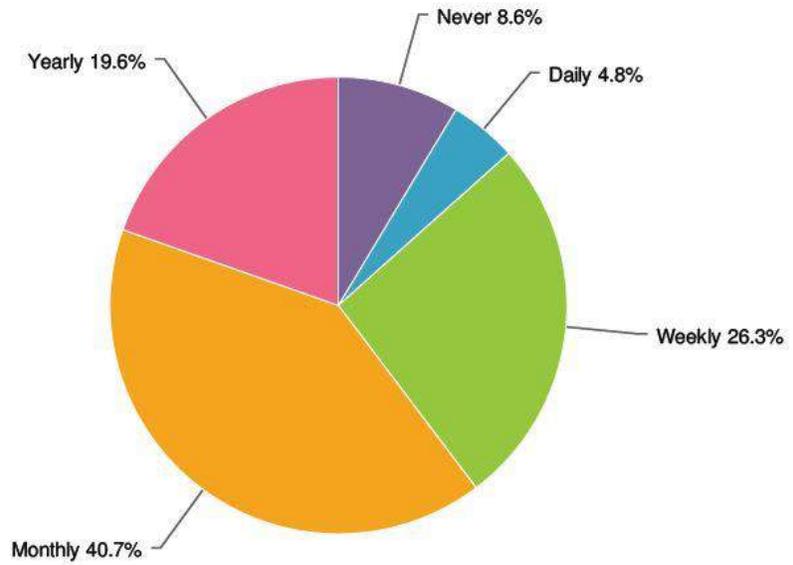
1. Austin Community Learning Center
2. Hormel Nature Center
3. My Home / My Backyard
4. The Library
5. Canoeing / Outdoor Activities / Parks & Trails / Lakes
6. Band Shell
7. Children’s Theatre / Paramount Theatre
8. Churches

QUESTION 7. What's the most common way of traveling within the city?



Value	Percent	Count
Walking	2.9%	6
Cycling	1.4%	3
Driving	95.7%	201
Transit	0.0%	0
Total		210

QUESTION 8. How often do you use the City's parks and trails?

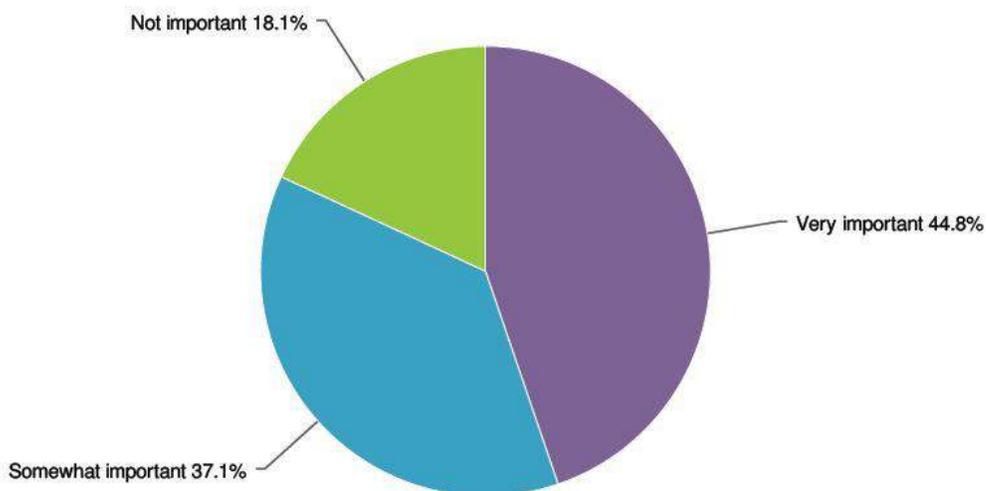


Value	Percent	Count
Never	8.6%	18
Daily	4.8%	10
Weekly	26.3%	55
Monthly	40.7%	85
Yearly	19.6%	41
Total		209

QUESTION 9. Is there an area where when you travel by it appears to have conflicted land use or where problems have arisen due to odor, noise, traffic, or other instances that have you scratching your head about how it came about?

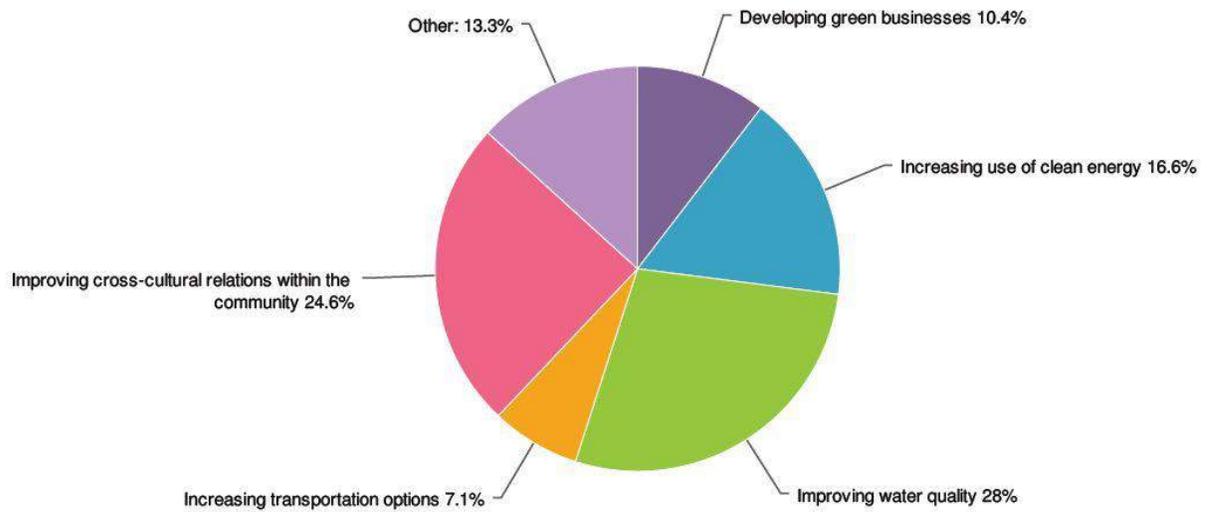
1. Hormel Area
2. Mill Pond
3. The Mall
4. Signage / Graffiti Issues / Street Names
5. East Side Neighborhoods
6. Housing Upgrades
7. Main roadways should be kept up more. Like Oakland Avenue, 4th Street, 14th Street, 8th Street
8. Waste Water Treatment Plant
9. Fill empty buildings
10. Expand sidewalks and bike lanes everywhere, it is a safety issue.

QUESTION 10. How important is having easy access to locally grown (within Mower County or City of Austin) vegetables and meats to you?



Value	Percent		Count
Very important	44.8%		94
Somewhat important	37.1%		78
Not important	18.1%		38
	Total		210

QUESTION 11. Austin is working to be a more sustainable place. What sustainability issue is most important to you?

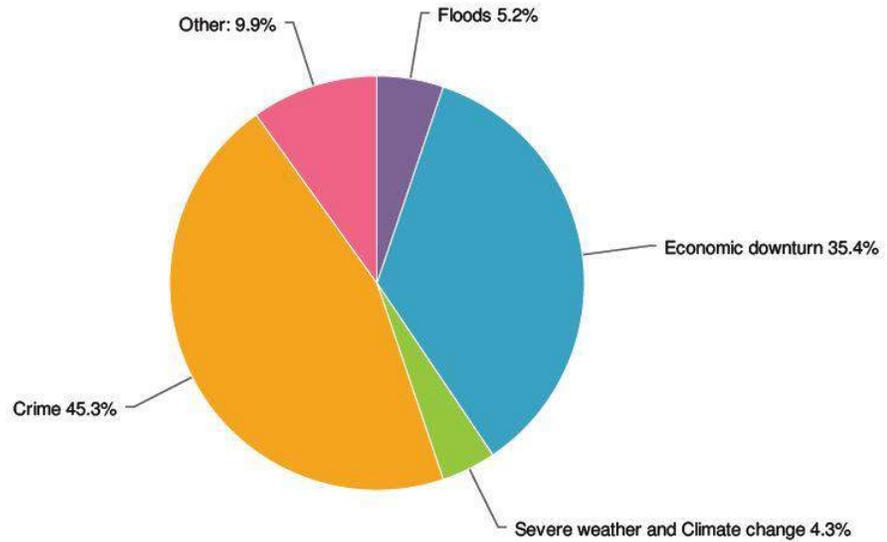


Value	Percent	Count
Developing green businesses	10.4%	22
Increasing use of clean energy	16.6%	35
Improving water quality	28.0%	59
Increasing transportation options	7.1%	15
Improving cross-cultural relations within the community	24.6%	52
Other:	13.3%	28
Total		211

Answers filled in for “other” category include:

1. Less crime
2. More businesses
3. Overall health care / education for everyone
4. Recycling and water efficiency programs
5. All of the above

QUESTION 12. Austin is also studying how to be a more resilient community. Resilient communities plan for future changes and potential emergencies. What future risk do you think Austin is most vulnerable to?



Value	Percent	Count
Floods	5.2%	11
Economic downturn	35.4%	75
Severe weather and Climate change	4.3%	9
Crime	45.3%	96
Other:	9.9%	21
Total		212

Answers filled in for “other” category include:

1. Housing issues
2. Low paying jobs and anti-union attitude
3. Crime
4. Bad economy / Poverty
5. Environmental toxicity
6. Low population retention / aging population
7. Strengthen education

QUESTION 13. Is there a particular issue you think the comprehensive plan needs to address, and if so, what is it?

1. Huge problems with drug abuse, crime rates and safety
2. Bringing in new businesses, newer “21st century” businesses and more job creators
3. Lack of decent housing options
4. Cross cultural relationships and engagement
5. Lack of local shops and retail options
6. Ensure Austin is a destination for art, music and creativity. “Transitional city” for newcomers
7. Aging infrastructure and needing modernization of streetscape
8. Keeping lakes and parks clean
9. Smart, planned growth, making sure zoning is logical
10. Health and health care issues
11. Education campaigns for youth
12. Lack of good healthy food in the city