



## Vision 2020 Passes Baton to Impact Austin

*New initiative designed to continue growth and renewal in Austin, Minn.*

**AUSTIN, Minn.**, (April 8th, 2020) — Vision 2020, the initiative that brought renewed focus and a series of improvements to the quality of life in Austin, Minnesota, has been sunset and the framework for a new community initiative, named Impact Austin, has been created. Under the direction of recently named coordinator Mary Anne Duren and a volunteer board of stakeholders from throughout the community, the mission of Impact Austin is to build a vibrant community where people and resources connect to revitalize, discover and invest to grow Austin in authentic ways. Its four pillars of impact are: housing, economic growth, the downtown district, and identity & connection.

“What excites me most about Impact Austin is the opportunity to work with other community leaders to leverage knowledge gained through our work on Vision 2020 to intentionally and strategically focus on barriers to livability and sustainability,” said Trish Harren, Mower County administrator and one of Impact Austin’s two co-chairs.

Vision 2020 was established nearly 10 years ago to lead the revitalization of the community of Austin. Among the group’s most visible and lasting contributions are: the relocation of the SPAM® Museum to the downtown district, expansion of the Blazing Star trail, the creation of the educational non-profit Austin Aspires, the refocused use of Austin waterways, and the building and 2020 opening of the Austin Community Recreation Center.

With leadership transitions and 2020 approaching, the Vision 2020 Steering Committee began exploring if a community initiative should be developed to provide connection and collaboration for the Austin area in ways that impact livability. Sandy Anderson, a local organizational consultant and coach was hired to facilitate the wrapping up of Vision 2020 to assure active work was connected to organizations and groups for continued growth and to consider what a sustainable framework might look and function like if pursued.

Local research was studied and interviews were conducted to discover what was needed to connect community members and organizations in doing the work of improving livability in Austin. Collating the information from the local research and assessments such as the Comprehensive City Plan, Downtown Master Plan, the Community Health Needs Assessment, and several others, surfaced four themes: housing, economic growth, connection & identity and downtown. It was clear that creating some type of connecting point, a community driven initiative that functioned with sustainable strategies to create a table for community stakeholders to explore, create and experiment on ways to impact the four areas could offer a unique pathway to improving livability in the Austin area.

A framework was created for this initiative, designing how it might function to ensure authenticity and commitment to the local research as well as what community partners and voices needed to be represented at the table. The group leveraged input and insight from The Mower County CEO program on branding and logo development, engaging them in the designing of the name, tagline and logo.

Impact Austin is looking to engage the city & county, businesses, the chamber of commerce, and other public and private stakeholders to focus on the initiative’s mission: building a vibrant community where people and resources connect to revitalize, discover, and invest to grow Austin in authentic ways. It’s start has been a bit organic and somewhat unconventional which makes it authentic in its roots.

Introducing Impact Austin was set for this spring. Now as a community, we find ourselves in a challenging time; a time that is showing just how Austin community members and organizations show up for each other. That connection for the greater good is at the core of Impact Austin. “This pandemic has drastically changed many lives,” says Duren “and we want to acknowledge that we don’t take its impact on our community lightly. Impact Austin will be using this time as an opportunity to roll up our sleeves and continue to build upon and expand partnerships to grow Austin in ways we might not have been able to before.”



The Impact Austin Leadership Team, thanking Sandy Anderson for the work she did in building the framework for Impact Austin.

Pictured:

Front Row: Steven Lang, Sheri Dankert, Mary Anne Duren, Sandy Anderson, Erin Freshwater, Lindsey Haney

Back Row: Mike Postma, Barb Embacher, Melissa Barr, Trish Harren, Craig Clark, Natosha Walsh, Elaine Hansen

Not Pictured: Mike Ankeny, Enrique Camarena, Jon Erichson, John Garry, & Jen Lawhead



Mary Anne Duren (left) and Sandy Anderson (right) celebrate the completion of Sandy's work in consulting to build Impact Austin's framework and the beginning of Mary Anne's work in coordinating Impact Austin's projects.