

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Complete Community Matrix



LIVABLE



NATURAL AND SUSTAINABLE



CREATIVE



EDUCATED



PROSPEROUS



MOBILE AND INTERCONNECTED



VALUES AND RESPECTS PEOPLE

FROM THE VISION STATEMENT - AUSTIN IS LIVABLE:

One of Austin's foundations is its safe, well-maintained, stable, and attractive neighborhoods and places whose character and history are preserved. Economically mixed and diverse neighborhoods across all parts of the city have a range of affordable housing options. All residents have a variety of urban, suburban, and semi-rural lifestyle choices with access to quality schools, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human services, and other outstanding public facilities and services.

Austin is a city of diverse neighborhoods that contribute to our community's character and our residents' quality of life. While these neighborhoods offer a mix of housing, single-family houses are the most common. The city has lower rates of homeownership than most other Texas cities. In addition, housing affordability is a major issue in Austin. Over the last 10 years, median housing costs have risen by 85 percent, while household incomes have remained stagnant or declined. Centrally located neighborhoods in east and south Austin have experienced reinvestment that has also led to increasing housing costs and has resulted in renters and some long-time residents having to move to more affordable neighborhoods. Consistent with other goals in the plan, preserving a wide range of household affordability is essential to preserving the character of neighborhoods

National demographic trends and housing preferences could significantly impact the local housing market and affect the provision of public and health services. An increasing number of "Generation Y" or "Millennials"—born between 1980 and 1995—are entering the housing market. This group has demonstrated a demand for more urban lifestyles. In addition, the growing number of "Baby Boomers"—born between 1946 and 1964—retiring and downsizing their homes will also affect housing and social service needs.

In 1997, the City initiated the neighborhood planning program to protect, enhance, and ensure the stability of neighborhoods—mostly located in the urban core. Currently, 48 neighborhood planning areas have completed the planning process and have adopted neighborhood plans (see Appendix G). Challenges and opportunities unique to individual neighborhoods are met through the neighborhood planning process.

KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS:

- Austin’s population is projected to almost double over the next 30 years, requiring new and redeveloped housing to accommodate the City’s growing population.
- Austin still has strong patterns of racial, ethnic, and income segregation.
- Median housing and transportation costs are higher in Austin than most Texas cities.
- As the housing market has become more expensive, the location of affordable housing units has shifted to increasingly distant suburban areas, leading to more expensive transportation costs.
- Austin is a majority renter city, due in large part to the high number of college students, recent graduates, and an overall younger population.
- Higher housing costs and slower-growing incomes may prompt more families to rent rather than purchase a home.
- High demand for rental units translates into demand for housing types other than single-family detached houses.
- Infill development may be used to meet the growing demand for higher-density, closer-in affordable housing.

Austin must provide a range of energy and resource-efficient housing options and prices in all parts of the City to sustainably meet the housing needs of all segments of our diverse population. In addition, we need to sustain distinct, stable, and attractive neighborhoods that preserve and reinforce the livability, character, and special sense of place in Austin.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

- Fostering mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods with a range of housing and transportation choices for our diverse population, community services, facilities, and amenities, in which Austinites can afford to live.
- Maintaining the unique and diverse character of Austin’s neighborhoods, while meeting the market demands for close-in housing.
- Balancing new development and redevelopment in lower-income neighborhoods while maintaining the essential character of those neighborhoods.
- Making existing automobile-oriented neighborhoods more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
- Developing regulations that create better and context-specific transitions between more intense housing, commercial and office uses, mixed use development, and adjacent, established neighborhoods.
- Encouraging the preservation of affordable housing in neighborhoods across the city and in activity centers and corridors.
- Increasing the diversity of housing choices to reflect the needs of all types of households.
- Improving student stability by preserving existing affordable housing and increasing access to new affordable housing.
- Addressing the housing needs for the homeless and those who are about to become homeless.

HOUSING POLICIES

HN P1. Distribute a variety of housing types throughout the City to expand the choices available to meet the financial and lifestyle needs of Austin’s diverse population.

(See also LUT P5, S P12)

HN P2. Expand the availability of affordable housing throughout Austin by preserving existing affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons.

(See also LUT P10)

HN P3. Increase the availability of affordable housing, including housing for very low-income persons, through new and innovative funding mechanisms, such as public/private partnerships. (See also LUT P10, S P4, S P13, C P10)

HN P4. Connect housing to jobs, child care, schools, retail, and other amenities and services needed on a daily basis, by strategies such as:

- Directing housing and employment growth to sites appropriate for Transit Oriented Development.
- Coordinating and planning for housing near public transportation networks and employment centers to reduce household transportation costs and vehicle miles traveled. (See also LUT P3, LUT P6, LUT P12, S P22, C P9, C P10)

HN P5. Promote a diversity of land uses throughout Austin to allow a variety of housing types including rental and ownership opportunities for singles, families with and without children, seniors, persons with disabilities, and multi-generational families.

(See also LUT P5, S P13)

HN P6. Address accessibility issues and other housing barriers to persons with disabilities or special needs.

HN P7. Reuse former brownfields, grayfields and vacant building sites to reduce negative impacts of vacancy and provide new mixed use and/or housing options. (See also LUT P7, E P6)

HN P8. Encourage green practices in housing construction and rehabilitation that support durable, healthy, and energy-efficient homes.

(See also CE P11, CFS P22)

HN P9. Renovate the existing housing stock to reduce utility and maintenance costs for owners and occupants, conserve energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

(See also CFS P22)



Chestnut Commons, located in the Chestnut neighborhood, is a successful example of infill development.

BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY LAND TRUST | WASHINGTON, DC

A Community Land Trust is a private nonprofit corporation created to acquire and hold land for the benefit of a community and provide secure affordable access to land and housing for community residents. The New Columbia Community Land Trust, Inc. is a community-based land acquisition, housing development, and community education organization. The Land Trust serves as housing development coordinator/consultant to tenant groups seeking to exercise their “first-right-to-purchase” single-family or multifamily buildings when their landlords put them up for sale. In addition to a ground lease, the Land Trust provides tenant organization support, project feasibility, financial packaging and loan applications, architect and contractor selection, construction monitoring, and permanent financing and close-out.

Reference: <http://www.cdsc.org/ncclt/>.

In 2039, I would like Austin to be “a city with many small neighborhoods, each having a distinct, preserved character, that are affordable.”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant responding to the question “How has the city improved by 2039?”

I would like to see “self-sufficient neighborhood sustainability: mixed use throughout neighborhoods (walk to food/produce, daily needs, parks, everywhere).”

Community Forum Series #1
Participant

NEIGHBORHOODS POLICIES

HN P10. Create complete neighborhoods across Austin that have a mix of housing types and land uses, affordable housing and transportation options, and access to healthy food, schools, retail, employment, community services, and parks and recreation options. (See also LUT P5, CFS P41, CFS P42)

HN P11. Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change and ensuring context sensitive infill in such locations as designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites. (See also LUT P4, LUT P7)

HN P12. Identify and assess the infrastructure needs of older neighborhoods and provide for improvements needed to maintain their sustainability. (See also LUT P30, E P6, CFS P2)

HN P13. Strengthen Austin’s neighborhoods by connecting to other neighborhoods, quality schools, parks, environmental features, and other community-serving uses that are accessible by transit, walking, and bicycling. (See also LUT P15)

HN P14. Strengthen planning processes by recognizing that the Comprehensive Plan and small-area plans, such as neighborhood plans, corridor plans, and station area plans, need to respect, inform, and draw from each other.

HN P15. Protect neighborhood character by providing opportunities for existing residents who are struggling with rising housing costs to continue living in their existing neighborhoods. (See also LUT P4)

BEST PRACTICE: PRESERVING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEAR TRANSIT STATIONS | DENVER, CO

Denver is in the process of a major transit expansion that will include new light rail, bus rapid transit, and transit stations. Housing and transportation costs are high in the region and residents are willing to pay more to live close to transit stations, resulting in higher rents and home values. To specifically combat rising housing prices near transit, the City of Denver is working with public/private partners to create a Transit Oriented Development Fund with a goal of building or preserving more than 1,000 affordable units. In a recent success, the redevelopment of South Lincoln Homes (located across from an existing light rail station) will triple the number of affordable units on site and add amenities for residents. *Reference: Reconnecting America: Preserving Affordable Housing Near Transit, Enterprise, 2010; Photo Courtesy of Denver Housing Authority.*





Neighborhoods should include a mix of housing types.

BEST PRACTICE: “THE WORLD’S GREENEST NEIGHBORHOOD”: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AT DOCKSIDE GREEN | VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Built on the waterfront sites of a former paint factory and shipyard, Dockside Green is a 1.3 million square foot mixed-use development project that embodies best practices in sustainable design. At completion, Dockside Green will have approximately 2,500 residents, office and retail space, a central greenway and creek, and a waterfront park. The design promotes walkability and transit use, but its use of “green building” techniques and low impact design are its most notable features. Dockside Green is constructed of renewable, eco-friendly materials, and aims to reduce its energy footprint through an on-site sewage treatment plant and graywater reuse program, an on-site plant that uses local wood waste to generate heat and hot water, wind turbines, solar panels, green roofs, water- and energy-efficient appliances, and real-time unit energy meters that can be adjusted remotely. Other features include bioretention facilities, pervious paving, and innovative stormwater controls. Named one of the top ten “green building” projects in 2009, the development has the distinction of achieving the world’s highest LEED Platinum scores and becoming the first LEED Neighborhood Development Platinum project. *Reference: <http://www.theatlantic.com>;*

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