



RECONNECT AUSTIN

Sustainable Development & The NEPA Process

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A useful understanding of the current impacts of highways in urban centers depends on a clear definition of sustainability. Sustainability in transportation for cities is defined differently by the many different municipal entities involved in planning these systems. But the principles are mostly uniform and center around several strategies - integration of land use and transportation planning, planning with concern for environmental impact, improving accessibility to multi-modal transit options, and focus on affordability and connectivity.

Urban freeway redesign and removal represents perhaps the greatest interaction of land use and transportation. In removing freeways, or designing their at-grade footprint, cities have a significant opportunity to redefine its use. Removing highways and freeways from urban centers effectively creates new land for cities, a unique benefit that is not gained from other sustainable transportation initiatives. These newly created areas of land provide an opportunity for cities to implement and integrate land use and transportation strategies, create greater density, improve connectivity for other modes of local transit, and reduce impacts of vehicle emissions on city populations and environments.

The current debate surrounding development plans for the I-35 downtown corridor provides a unique opportunity to more clearly define “sustainability” for Austin. What does sustainable development mean for a city experiencing considerable growth and the emerging problems and opportunities associated with it? How are the tenets of sustainable development incorporated into a long-term vision for citizens and the environment?

As an integral part of shaping design and development alternatives for the I-35 corridor, Reconnect Austin has consistently supported a solution that has the ability to address not just current transportation and land use issues, but a solution that can shape sustainable choices for individuals and governing bodies in the future. The vision of Reconnect Austin is a I-35 downtown corridor that promotes greater density, reduces both the economic and environmental impacts of cars and congestion, and reconnects the grid to allow for greater and safer walkability and access in the city center. It is a vision that is deeply rooted in a definition of sustainable development that cuts across public health, social equity, environmental quality, and resource preservation while supporting diversity in individual choice.

The goals of this document are two-fold. First, this work seeks to create a definition of sustainable development that fits the vision of Reconnect Austin and closely follows the main objectives outlined by the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) which will review any design solution for I-35 before it is implemented. By utilizing the NEPA lens to define five sustainable development tenets,

Reconnect Austin ensures that any design solution they support is shaped through these tenets, and will be consistent with NEPA review process that will take place to assess development plans. Second, Reconnect Austin aims to highlight clear connections overlap between their defined design goal and literature on sustainability measures for cities, and planning documents produced by the City of Austin and other local organizations.

It was clear from the start of this endeavor that the fundamental ideals that have shaped the vision of Reconnect Austin are echoed throughout the plans and goals already developed by both the City of Austin and more broad strategies for improving sustainability in urban environments. It is a clear indication that the tenets of this vision are deeply rooted in the broader ideals of a compact and connected city that addresses current needs and problems with solutions that will also help shape a sustainable Austin for the future.

RECONNECT AUSTIN

Sustainable Development & The NEPA Process

GOAL 1

ATTAIN THE WIDEST RANGE OF BENEFICIAL USES OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHILE SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL CYCLES AND FUNCTIONS OF ECOSYSTEMS, RESPECTING BIODIVERSITY, PROTECTING ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, AND ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Policy 10: Improve the air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from motor vehicle use, traffic and congestion, industrial sources, and waste.

Policy 23: Integrate citywide and regional green infrastructure, to including such elements as preserves and parks, trails, stream corridors, green streets, greenways, agricultural lands, and the trail system, into the urban environment and the transportation network.

“Sprawling, low-density development drives up the public costs for roads, water lines, and other infrastructure that must be continually extended to far-flung new development”

“Well-designed new development can create community amenities and make the city more beautiful. City codes can create certainty and shape projects so they fit sensitively into neighborhood contexts. By establishing high sustainability standards—for locating projects, green building practices, site design and landscaping, and multi-modal transportation corridors—Austin can harness the positive, transformative power of redevelopment”

“Ground-level ozone is Central Texas’ primary air quality concern. Poor air quality affects our most vulnerable residents, including children and the elderly, by irritating the respiratory system, reducing lung function, and aggravating asthma”

“Given the city’s population and employment projections for the next three decades, it is clear that Austin’s existing land use pattern must change to accommodate this growth in a more sustainable manner”

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

“Promote a pattern of development that re-engages Waller Creek with the surrounding downtown, and creates a positive and sustainable greenway between UT and Lady Bird Lake”

“With a more compact land area than suburban neighborhoods, Downtown needs many fewer roads and sidewalks to support the same number of people, and is therefore helping to reduce: the amount of impervious surface area that brings contaminated storm water into our creeks and rivers; the number of ‘vehicle miles traveled’ (VMT) that leads directly to the deterioration of air quality; and the acres of pavement and asphalt that create ‘heat islands’”

PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH SMART GROWTH

“...Increased land use mix, density, and street connectivity is associated with reduced per capita levels of volatile organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen which react in sunlight and form harmful ozone (Frank et al 2000)”

“A quartile (25 per cent) increase in the overall range of walkability within King County, Washington was associated with 6.5 per cent fewer vehicle miles traveled (VMT), 5.6 per cent fewer grams of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and 5.5 per cent fewer grams of volatile organic compounds (VOC) per capita (Frank et al. 2006)”

“In tests of a hypothetical long-term model that they developed, Purdue University researchers found the runoff generated by fringe development to be approximately 10 times greater than that produced by infill (Bhaduri et al. 1997; Harbor et al. 2000)”

GOAL 2

ASSURE FOR ALL AMERICANS SAFE, HEALTHFUL, AND LIVABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS THAT ENHANCE FIT BETWEEN PEOPLE AND URBAN FORM, SUPPORT A SENSE OF PLACE, ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY COHESION, AND OFFER DIVERSITY OF CHOICE.

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Policy 1: Align land use and transportation planning and decision-making to achieve a compact and connected city.

Policy 3: Encourage more active lifestyles through new and redevelopment that supports walking and bicycling. Locate retail, services, and public facilities such as parks, health services, and libraries in or near neighborhoods to reduce traffic congestion and contribute to an improved sense of community.

Policy 3: Promote development in compact centers, communities, or along corridors that are connected by roads and transit, are designed to encourage walking and bicycling, and reduce healthcare, housing and transportation costs.

Policy 4: 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.

Policy 7: Encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities that place residential, work, and retail land uses in proximity to each other to maximize walking, bicycling, and transit opportunities.

Policy 11: Promote complete street design that includes features such as traffic calming elements, street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access throughout Austin, considering the safety needs of people of all ages and abilities.

Policy 14: Promote safer routes to schools for students of all ages.

Policy 25: Increase sidewalks and bicycle lanes in neighborhoods to create safer routes to schools, parks, and transit stops.

Policy 26: Reduce noise pollution from transportation, construction, and other sources.

Policy 29: Develop accessible community gathering places such as plazas, parks, farmers' markets, sidewalks, and streets in all parts of Austin, especially within activity centers and along activity corridors including Downtown, future transit oriented Developments, in denser, mixed use communities, and other redevelopment areas, that encourage interaction and provide places for people of all ages to visit and relax.

Policy 32: Assure that new development is walkable and bikeable and preserves the positive characteristics of existing pedestrian-friendly environments.

"Austin is a big city, so it's time to build a "big-city" transportation system. We need good roads, and we need to move people around the city and the region conveniently and safely, with or without a car"

"A compact and connected city reduces the distances that people drive between work, shopping, and home. This reduces stress and frees up precious time for more pleasant and meaningful pursuits"

"Austin's long-term sustainability requires a fresh focus on redevelopment and infill within the city's developed areas. Favoring compact growth presents an alternative direction to earlier decades of sprawling, low-density development"

"In 2010, more than 48 percent of Austin households were non-family households. Seventy-one percent of these were single-person households"

"Austin's major highways have shaped growth patterns in the city and the its extraterritorial jurisdiction. Interstate 35 facilitated Austin's north-south development orientation, but also created a physical barrier between east and west Austin"

"The Sidewalk Master Plan indicated that there were approximately 3,500 linear miles of roads without sidewalks. About 10 percent of these gaps in the sidewalk network are along arterials with the remaining 90 percent along collectors or residential streets"

"As the region's population struggles with rising costs, the shortcomings of the regional transportation system become even more pronounced. The regional transportation network is built for cars, and the growing congestion we see is the direct result of increasingly distant growth with few transportation options. Too many people live and work in places where densities are too low to support regular transit service or are outside of a transit agency's service area"

"To achieve our vision for Austin, the city's activity centers and corridors need to support, and be supported by, an expanded transit network that is efficient, reliable, and cost-effective. The transit network will help to reduce sprawl, decrease congestion and vehicle miles traveled, improve air quality, promote infill and redevelopment, and reduce household transportation costs"

"Coordinating land use, transportation, environmental, and economic development policies to address the inefficiency of infrastructure having to keep up with greenfield development and incentivize infill and redevelopment"

“Transportation congestion consistently ranks as a major concern to Austinites. Addressing this concern requires the City of Austin and its partners to look for solutions beyond how we travel — automobiles, transit (bus and rail), walking, and bicycling — and begin dealing with underlying conditions that make it difficult for Austinites to move around the city. To do so, we need to coordinate the physical form of Austin — how it’s organized and how it is built with our transportation network”

“Neighborhoods built since the late 1950s are more uniform in size and character and are designed in a fashion that increasingly requires an automobile in order to travel between home, work, shopping, and services”

“Over the last sixty years, the growth dynamic in Austin and the surrounding region has been characterized by increasing population, rapid urbanization of land, and outward expansion. Between 2000 and 2010, Austin’s land area grew by more than 19 percent”

“Households with children make up a smaller part of the population in the urban core, compared with the edge of the city and the extra-territorial jurisdiction. A number of factors contribute to this disparity: higher housing costs, fewer quality public schools, walking and biking safety, and access to key amenities such as parks and childcare”

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

AU-1.1: Replace single-use zoning districts with downtown mixed-use zoning designations.

AU-3.2: Promote ground-level retail and restaurant uses along particular Downtown streets.

PR-3.1: Maintain, extend and restore Downtown’s grid system of streets and alleys.

TP-3.1: Establish bicycle priority streets that provide facilities for all levels of bicyclists along key north-south and east-west corridors.

“Lack of mobility options continue to threaten both the economic and environmental well-being of Downtown, as well as its visual attractiveness and quality of life”

“The ‘public realm’, the system of publicly-used streets and open spaces which make up 50% of Downtown’s land area, is in deteriorating condition. Most streets are still uncomfortable places for people to walk or linger”

“Some of the zoning districts within Downtown restrict the full range of residential and non-residential uses that are desirable for a healthy urban district”

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF WALKABILITY – LITMAN

“Walking is a fundamental activity for physical and mental health, providing physical exercise and relaxation. It is a social and recreational activity. Environments that are conducive to walking are conducive to people”

“Often, the best way to improve another form of transportation is to improve walkability”

“Walking conditions therefore have a major impact on how people perceive the transportation system and the local environment, since we experience activities by the amount of time they take, not just distance traveled”

“Walkability has major impacts on community livability. Streets are a major portion of the public realm, that is, places where people interact with their community. More attractive, safe and walkable streets increase community livability”

“Community livability and cohesion provide various direct and indirect benefits. It can affect property values and business activity in an area, which can be measured with various techniques such as hedonic pricing and contingent valuation”

“An increasing portion of the population, including many children, lack regular physical activity. Although there are many ways to be physically active, walking is one of the most practical ways to increase physical activity among a broad population”

“Health experts believe that more balanced transportation systems can contribute to improved public health by accommodating and encouraging active transport”

“Of people with safe places to walk within ten minutes of home, 43% achieve recommended activity levels, compared with just 27% of those who lack safe places to walk”

“Current transportation funding is biased against non-motorized modes. Only a small portion of total transport funds may be used for non-motorized facilities, and financial match requirements are sometimes higher. More neutral investment policies would increase the amount of money available for walking”

“Low-density development with large amounts of land paved for roads and parking imposes various economic, social and environmental costs. Walkability improvements can help reduce these costs by reducing the amount of land required for transport facilities and encouraging more accessible, clustered land use patterns, and supporting Smart Growth development patterns”

“Retail and employment centers are affected by the quality of their pedestrian environment, particularly in urban areas and resort communities. The popularity of retail malls, suburban office campuses, and pedestrian-oriented resort communities are indications of the high values that consumers place on pedestrian environmental quality”

“...A particular walkability improvement may improve accessibility, provide consumer cost savings, increase community livability (and therefore local property values), improve public fitness and health, benefit the local economy (increasing employment, tax revenue and property values), and support strategic land use and equity objectives”

“There is increasing recognition of the value of smart growth land use management to achieve social objectives (“Smart Growth,” VTPI 2008). These strategies place a high value on walkability. This is a timely issue because there is increased recognition of the benefits of transportation diversity (Litman 2001a), and support for creating more walkable communities”

“Motor vehicle use imposes various public costs for road and parking facilities, traffic congestion, crash risk, and environmental damages (Murphy and Delucchi 1998; Litman 2010). Shifting travel from motorized to non-motorized modes reduces these external costs”

“There is increasing recognition of the diminishing economic benefits from increased highway investments, the significant social costs of automobile dependency, and the large potential social benefits of a more diverse transportation system”

PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH SMART GROWTH - LITMAN

“Compact land use patterns with high-quality pedestrian environments and a mix of land uses can improve public health by promoting active forms of transportation, reducing per capita air pollution and associated respiratory ailments, and lowering the risk of car related accidents”

“Streets and buildings that are built from a pedestrian perspective create places that are safe, vibrant and interesting for walkers, bicyclists, and transit users”

“A central focus of the relationship between health and urban form is attributable to the transportation choices that result from different development patterns”

“...A policy that increases land use density, mix and walkability can result in increased levels of active transportation (walking and bicycling) in a population”

“A recent study in Seattle found that each quartile increase in residential density corresponded with a 23 per cent increase in the odds of walking for non-work travel (King County ORTP, 2005)”

“A more connected roadway, walkway and bikeway system reduces the distances that must be traveled to reach a destination. Well-connected walking and cycling networks are crucial to encouraging active transportation. Even a single barrier in a sidewalk and pathway system can be a deterrent”

“Looking at 100 metro areas across the U.S., Sturm and Cohen (2004) correlated the same sprawl index with 16 different chronic diseases, including overweight-related conditions (e.g. hypertension), respiratory ailments (e.g. emphysema and asthma), and other conditions such as abdominal problems and severe headaches. The sprawl index was found to be a significant predictor of the number of chronic medical conditions in a population”

“Research has shown that per capita traffic fatality rates tend to be higher in sprawling communities than in compact, mixed use communities, as indicated in Figure 14 and documented in a major U.S. study by Ewing et al. (2003)”

“...A holistic model of community design that maximizes population health benefits would make active transportation both desirable and safe. Strategies to achieve this goal require more corridors where vehicle travel is calmed or slowed, and where pedestrians can easily make it across even the busy roads – which otherwise act as barriers”

“Noise impacts human health in various ways, including speech and sleep disturbance, startle and defense reactions, increased stress, reduced productivity in the workplace and school, and if very loud, discomfort and hearing impairment (WHO 1999)”

“Evidence that shows that built form which enhances the sense of community, and provides areas of solace and opportunities for safe physical activity, can reduce the burden of mental disease. This effect on prevention and mitigation does not even take into account the influence of social networks on mental health, which can be further supported or undermined by land use patterns”

“Research by Gilbert and O’Brien (2005) and Hertzman (2002) suggest that children’s emotional and intellectual development accelerates in more walkable, mixed use communities, probably due to a combination of increased opportunities for physical activity, independence and community cohesion”

“Building placement, safe walkways and street crossings, and streets designed to slow traffic also matter. The more of these characteristics that exist in a community, the more people will use active transportation and transit instead of driving”

GOAL 3

ACHIEVE A BALANCE BETWEEN POPULATION AND RESOURCE WHERE COMMUNITIES OPERATE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR OWN NATURAL RESOURCE AND WASTE SYSTEMS, WHICH WILL PERMIT HIGH STANDARDS OF LIVING AND A WIDE SHARING OF LIFE’S AMENITIES TO ENHANCE LIVABILITY AND EFFICIENCY.

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

“As a fast-growing city whose population is expected to double over the next three decades, we are becoming more urban and diverse each year. Our attractiveness brings a central challenge; how to accommodate more people, in a considered and sustainable fashion, while preserving what we value so that we get better and not just bigger”

“We get out on our trails and greenways, lakes and rivers, parks and natural lands, and consider them a core part of what makes Austin special. But suburban growth is pushing Austin outward and encroaching upon and consuming these resources”

“In 2010, Austin was more dense (2,653 persons per square mile) than in 2000 (2,477 persons per square mile) but it remains less dense than most major cities in Texas, as well as our peer cities across the country”

“Sprawling, low-density development drives up the public costs for roads, water lines, and other infrastructure that must be continually extended to far-flung new development”

“Well-designed new development can create community amenities and make the city more beautiful. City codes can create certainty and shape projects so they fit sensitively into neighborhood contexts. By establishing high sustainability standards—for locating projects, green building practices, site design and landscaping, and multi-modal transportation corridors—Austin can harness the positive, transformative power of redevelopment”

“Ground-level ozone is Central Texas’ primary air quality concern. Poor air quality affects our most vulnerable residents, including children and the elderly, by irritating the respiratory system, reducing lung function, and aggravating asthma”

“Given the city’s population and employment projections for the next three decades, it is clear that Austin’s existing land use pattern must change to accommodate this growth in a more sustainable manner”

“Neighborhoods built since the late 1950s are more uniform in size and character and are designed in a fashion that increasingly requires an automobile in order to travel between home, work, shopping, and services”

“Over the last sixty years, the growth dynamic in Austin and the surrounding region has been characterized by increasing population, rapid urbanization of land, and outward expansion. Between 2000 and 2010, Austin’s land area grew by more than 19 percent”

“Households with children make up a smaller part of the population in the urban core, compared with the edge of the city and the extra-territorial jurisdiction. A number of factors contribute to this disparity: higher housing costs, fewer quality public schools, walking and biking safety, and access to key amenities such as parks and childcare”

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

“More specifically, the resolution reiterated the goal of 25,000 residents living Downtown in 10 years and therefore, the need to plan for passenger rail; to increase funding for Great Streets, drainage and flood control improvements; to revise and update regulations consistent with more dense urban development and infill; to develop a strategy for affordable workforce housing; and to explore redevelopment of government-owned land”

“With a more compact land area than suburban neighborhoods, Downtown needs many fewer roads and sidewalks to support the same number of people, and is therefore helping to reduce: the amount of impervious surface area that brings contaminated storm water into our creeks and rivers; the number of “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT) that leads directly to the deterioration of air quality; and the acres of pavement and asphalt that create ‘heat islands”

“There are approximately 100 acres of assembled vacant or underutilized property of a quarter-block area or greater in Downtown poised for redevelopment”

“Development in Downtown is much less land-consumptive than that in the outlying parts of the City, and a compact downtown helps to reduce suburban sprawl that is overtaking the countryside and our environmentally-sensitive lands”

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF WALKABILITY

“Low-density development with large amounts of land paved for roads and parking imposes various economic, social and environmental costs. Walkability improvements can help reduce these costs by reducing the amount of land required for transport facilities and encouraging more accessible, clustered land use patterns, and supporting Smart Growth development patterns”

“Retail and employment centers are affected by the quality of their pedestrian environment, particularly in urban areas and resort communities. The popularity of retail malls, suburban office campuses, and pedestrian-oriented resort communities are indications of the high values that consumers place on pedestrian environmental quality”

“...A particular walkability improvement may improve accessibility, provide consumer cost savings, increase community livability (and therefore local property values), improve public fitness and health, benefit the local economy (increasing employment, tax revenue and property values), and support strategic land use and equity objectives”

“There is increasing recognition of the value of smart growth land use management to achieve social objectives (“Smart Growth,”VTPI 2008). These strategies place a high value on walkability”

PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH SMART GROWTH

“Compact residential development puts more people within walking distance of parks, schools, transit, shops and services, and provides the vital market for those services”

“The LUTRAQ (Land Use, Transportation, and Air Quality) study in Portland, Oregon was a landmark study that calculated subjective measures of the built environment, or Pedestrian Environment Factors (PEFs) – ease of street crossing, sidewalk continuity, street connectivity, and topography. These factors were quantified on a scale, and used in the development of statistical models. From this the researchers found that ‘a 10 per cent reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) can be achieved with a region-wide increase in the quality of the pedestrian environment”

“To date, a number of scientific studies have been conducted that investigate relationships between urban form, transportation, and obesity, physical activity, and associated diseases. This research has consistently found that sprawled land use patterns are correlated with increased time spent in cars, and higher likelihood of sedentary, overweight and obese residents”

“Many current policies that stimulate sprawl are arguably market distortions that reduce consumer options, waste land and resources, discount or ignore the health and environmental costs of motor vehicle travel, and reflect planning and investment practices that were developed over a half of a century ago”

GOAL 4

FOSTER EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS THAT UPHOLDS THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND NATURAL ASPECTS OF COMMUNITIES, AND MAINTAINS AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH SUPPORTS DIVERSITY.

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Policy 3: Promote development in compact centers, communities, or along corridors that are connected by roads and transit, are designed to encourage walking and bicycling, and reduce healthcare, housing and transportation costs

Policy 11: Promote complete street design that includes features such as traffic calming elements, street trees, wide sidewalks, and pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access throughout Austin, considering the safety needs of people of all ages and abilities

“We now suffer from serious traffic congestion, loss of natural and open space to urban sprawl, Central Austin housing that is increasingly unaffordable for individuals and families”

“Poverty and people of color both are concentrated east of Interstate 35. overall, Austinites living east of Interstate 35 are poorer, less healthy, lag academically, and share less equally in Austin’s celebrated quality of life. How can we improve their lives while also protecting longtime eastside residents from displacement?”

“The way Austin has grown for the last 60 years comes at a troubling price in terms of social segregation and isolation, public health, air and water quality, loss of natural open space and agricultural lands, and climate change”

“Through incentives and partnerships, the City of Austin can encourage more affordable housing to be distributed throughout the city. new mixed use areas need to have affordably priced housing, be walkable and bikeable, and be linked by transit to jobs and other centers, so residents can choose to avoid the costs of car ownership, matching the needs of Austin’s increasingly diverse households and wooing families back to the city”

“The average household in the Austin-Round Rock region spends 23.3 percent of income on transportation costs. Austin’s transportation expenditure falls within the range of comparable cities such as Dallas (22.6), San Diego (22.9), Portland (23.7), Nashville (25.4), and Seattle (25)”

“Transportation costs have been rising steadily over the past decade due to increased gas prices. This has created financial burdens for many households that moved to Austin’s periphery to secure affordable housing, but now find themselves farther away from jobs and needed services and able only to travel by car”

“In a 2010 report, the Capital Area Council of governments found that more than half of the region’s households spent at least 45 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation costs”

"As Central Texas has welcomed new residents from all parts of the country and the world, demand has increased for service-oriented jobs, such as leisure and hospitality services and business and professional services. These jobs typically require fewer skills, pay lower wages than professional and high-tech jobs, and offer fewer benefits. Households faced with lower-paying jobs and increasing housing and transportation costs are experiencing greater economic stresses"

"In a 2009 report, the Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project estimated that approximately 40 percent of the region's families live 'at the edge of their means' due to the widening gap between household incomes and household expenses"

"Meeting the housing and employment needs of a rapidly growing and demographically changing population in a sustainable manner"

"Increasing the supply and variety of housing in and near employment centers to allow more people to live closer to their jobs"

"Creating a more compact and efficient city is critical to our ability to connect people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to homes, jobs, schools, arts and cultural amenities, and other destinations with a more complete transportation system that is affordable to build, operate, and maintain"

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

TP-1.4: Reduce or remove the barrier of the IH 35 edge

"Ensuring that the supply, type and cost of housing provides opportunities for a wide range of Austinites to live Downtown is crucial to achieving the community's vision of an inclusive and diverse district. Housing in Downtown should be available to a wide range of income groups and lifestyles, including special needs residents, singles and families, Downtown workers and those who contribute to the arts and music community"

"There is concern over the loss of local businesses and historic buildings, that live music and the arts are being "priced-out" by higher paying activities, that housing is affordable only to the affluent, that parks continue to decline and that Downtown's auto-dominated streets do not support the kind of urban public life that its citizens envision"

"Create continuous pedestrian and bicycle access between Lady Bird Lake and UT in/near the Creek corridor"

"Encourage new development that promotes the area as a diverse, livable, and affordable mixed-use district with a distinctly local feel"

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF WALKABILITY

"Non-motorized transportation tends to be more affordable and resource efficient than alternative forms of transportation and recreation..."

“Poor walking conditions can contribute to social exclusion, that is, the physical, economic and social isolation of vulnerable populations. Pedestrian access to public transit is an important accessibility factor”

At a minimum, shifting reduced driving saves fuel and oil, which typically total about 10-15¢ per vehicle-mile reduced, and more under congested conditions”

“Vehicle operating cost savings can be particularly large because walking tends to substitute for short trips when vehicle engines are cold, during which they are less efficient”

“Walkability can help achieve various equity objectives including a fair distribution of public resources to non-drivers, financial savings and improved opportunity for people who are physically and economically disadvantaged, and basic mobility”

“This is a timely issue because there is increased recognition of the benefits of transportation diversity (Litman 2001a), and support for creating more walkable communities”

“Motor vehicle use imposes various public costs for road and parking facilities, traffic congestion, crash risk, and environmental damages (Murphy and Delucchi 1998; Litman 2010). Shifting travel from motorized to non-motorized modes reduces these external costs”

GOAL 5

FULFILL THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH GENERATION AS TRUSTEE OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS, ENSURING THAT COMMUNITIES DO NOT ACT IN THEIR OWN INTEREST TO THE DETRIMENT OF OTHERS.

IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

“Austin’s population grew by 20 percent between 2000 and 2010, making it the 14th most populous city in the U.S. About two-thirds of this growth is attributable to natural expansion (more births than deaths) and new residents moving into Austin, while about one-third of the new population was added through annexation”

“Given the city’s population and employment projections for the next three decades, it is clear that Austin’s existing land use pattern must change to accommodate this growth in a more sustainable manner”

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PLAN

“Development in Downtown is much less land-consumptive than that in the outlying parts of the City, and a compact downtown helps to reduce suburban sprawl that is overtaking the countryside and our environmentally-sensitive lands”

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF WALKABILITY

“Stokes, MacDonald and Ridgeway (2008) developed a model to quantify public health cost savings from a new light rail transit system in Charlotte, NC. Using estimates of future riders, the effects of public transit on physical activity (daily walking to and from the transit stations), and area obesity rates they estimate the potential yearly public health cost savings from this project. They estimate that the light rail system would provide cumulative public health cost savings of \$12.6 million over nine years”

“There is increasing recognition of the diminishing economic benefits from increased highway investments, the significant social costs of automobile dependency, and the large potential social benefits of a more diverse transportation system”



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