



Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

Meeting Date: July 3, 2012

Prepared By: Randy Nicholson, Planning Manager, TNR Phone #: 854-4603

Division Director/Manager:

Department Head: Steven M. Manilla, P.E., County Executive-TNR

Sponsoring Court Member: Commissioner Eckhardt, Precinct Two

AGENDA LANGUAGE: Consider and take appropriate action on the following regarding Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan:

- A) A proposed resolution in support of the shared values, geographic framework and policies as common ground to guide collaboration with the City of Austin as it begins to implement its newly adopted Comprehensive Plan; and
- B) To publicly express appreciation to the Court's appointed Imagine Austin Task Force members who helped guide the development of the plan.

BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

On June 14, the City of Austin adopted the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. The Citizens Advisory Task Force endorsed the plan by a vote of 21-3. Travis County was represented on the Task Force by appointees Jack Gullahorn, Mark Lind, Carol Torgimson, and Ira Yates. In addition to the Task Force members working throughout the process, formal interactions with the Commissioners Court regarding Imagine Austin occurred as follows:

- April 20, 2010: Update on plan and vision statement
- September 7, 2010: Update on plan and upcoming community forums
- December 7, 2010: Update on plan and alternative future growth scenarios
- December 14, 2010: Court adopted Resolution Regarding the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (Exhibit 3)
- January 7, 2011: Court assigned nine staff members to serve on the Working Groups

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends the Court's adoption of the resolution and forward to the Austin City Council.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:

The Imagine Austin Plan presents numerous opportunities for collaboration which are outlined in Exhibit 2 relative to Land, Water, Transportation, and Partnerships. Additionally, there are issues and needs which are highlighted below.

To develop shared values.

The diverse region requires differing approaches to growth. The goals for the preferred plans for the City of Austin and Travis County should have as it guides a set of shared values that cut across geographic boundaries. The shared values provide a focus for and measure of the plan's success. These shared values are what the greater community wants for its future. The County and the City should strive for convergence and consistency in planning capacity to embrace growth in the Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

To govern collaboratively.

The public's assets should be managed cooperatively and effectively. The County and City should leverage resources to meet increasing demands on the transportation system, recreational services, the protection of our natural resources, and preservation of cultural resources.

To formulate a geographic planning framework to continue leveraging investment.

The larger market seeking affordable housing will drive development within the eastern ETJ of the City. While Travis County has not adopted a growth management policy, it has invested millions of dollars in capital improvements within the City's "Desired Development Zone", including \$100 million in right-of-way for SH 130. Other private investments in land development are emerging in the SH 130 corridor. It is this SH 130 corridor and eastern Travis County where county and city interests are converging. The City's Austin Plan and Smart Growth Initiative created incentives to encourage new development east of IH 35 within its "Desired Development Zone". The State and Travis County supported this initiative through participation in public private partnerships and funded added roadway capacity improvements such as SH 130 and lateral arterial roadways between IH 35 and SH 130 that total over \$1.4 billion. These strategies continue to align with Imagine Austin's geographic framework of centers, corridors and green areas to guide community planning and growth through 2035.

To grow compact and connected.

Growth can have tremendous benefits, but it also has substantial impacts. There is the need to grow smarter and not repeat past actions which did not fully address environmental, fiscal, and social costs. The CAMPO Centers concept assumes that the region prioritizes transportation projects that support the concept of higher density mixed use centers in the region. Some of these centers are found in Travis County outside of the City's municipal limits. Growing in accordance with Imagine

Austin plan offers more choices about where you live and how you travel. A compact and connected city reduces the distances to work, shopping, and recreation. This reduces travel time, cost, and frees up time for meaningful pursuits in the community. More compact growth contains costs by capitalizing on existing infrastructure and reduces the need to constantly expand services.

To implement greenways.

The development of a comprehensive network of green space in the Imagine Austin Plan is consistent with policies set in Travis County Parks and Natural Areas Master Plan (2006), the Concept Plan for the Onion Creek Greenway (2010), the Colorado River Corridor Plan (2012). And the Conservation Easement Program (2012).

To seek new partnerships with municipalities and the private sector to meet the demands of growth in the ETJ.

The City and County are in a constant state of change. Some areas are growing and other areas are losing diversity of its population. The various conditions that are the cause for change require different planning approaches. The common ground is they all will require governments and agencies to work together at the regional scale to find solutions that maintain the quality of life that is desired for all concerned.

To sustainably manage our water resources.

The City and County have a strong environmental ethic, but suburban growth is encroaching upon and consuming more of our land and water resources. Common issues include how to protect waterways and watersheds. How can we ensure maintenance of our water quality and provide ample water supply? There is need to develop relationships with Central Texas agencies to enact public policies that conserve and protect our water resources. There is also the need to grow greener by reducing individual, household, and commercial water use.

To provide transportation Choices.

As Austin and Travis County continues to grow, cost effective and efficient transportation is needed. We need to move about in the region conveniently and safely. There are challenges and opportunities to build a transportation system that is sustainable. Sustainability means considering not only the needs of today, but also meeting the needs in ways that conserve resources for future generations.

To develop an affordable community.

Often regulations seeking to preserve and protect resources can have an impact on the cost of living. An affordable community can only exist when you continue to provide housing for all who live and work there. Through incentives and partnerships, the City and County will need to encourage a distribution of workforce housing that increases quality jobs and wages that meets employer needs.

FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

None

ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS:

Exhibit 1- Draft Resolution

Exhibit 2- Imagine Austin Plan Collaboration Opportunities for Travis County

Exhibit 3- Adopted Court Resolution on Imagine Austin Plan December 14, 2010.

REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:

Cynthia McDonald	Financial Manager	TNR	854-4239
Steve Manilla	County Executive	TNR	854-9429
Anna Bowlin	Development Services	TNR	854-7561
Jon White	Natural Resources	TNR	854-7212
Carol Joseph	Assistant Director	TNR	854-9418

CC:

: :

EXHIBIT 1

Draft Resolution

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHEREAS, the City of Austin (City) and Travis County (County) have independent authorities to regulate land development within the unincorporated area including the City's five mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ); and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan has been carefully considered by the City's Imagine Austin Task force, including County appointees, for over two years, involving over one-hundred meetings and input from thousands of Travis County residents; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan recognizes the fact that Austin's unique attractiveness will bring hundreds of thousands of new residents and thousands of new business opportunities to Travis County over the term of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan contains areas of critical importance to the County, including natural resource protection, cultural resource preservation, and water quality, the need for affordable housing opportunities, the need for transportation choices, and the focus on collaboration between the County and the City of Austin on planning in the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan creates new tools and incentives through coordination and partnering opportunities that will enhance the planning processes for growth in the ETJ;

WHEREAS, the City and County recognize the importance of natural resources and the development of a comprehensive network of parks and greenways; and

WHEREAS, the City and County seek new partnerships with municipalities and the private sector to meet the demands of growth in the ETJ; and

WHEREAS, the City and County recognize that the statutory constraints of the regulatory environment in their joint review of development within the ETJ; and

WHEREAS, significant growth historically have favored areas with limited constraints and therefore less cost;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT, OF TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS, THAT TRAVIS COUNTY:

DRAFT EXHIBIT 1

Commends the City for the creation of a farsighted and creative long term vision and policy plan; and

Intends to pursue with the City the implementation of the City's Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and its strategic recommendations for land use in the ETJ of the City and the County including but not limited to:

1. Coordinated policies on permits, development agreements, public improvement districts, Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts, etc. and
2. Collaborative analysis of and financing strategies for infrastructure necessary to achieve the identified growth preferences; and

Seeks to leverage County resources with the City in order to meet increasing demands on the transportation systems, recreational services, and protection and preservation of our cultural and natural resources within the unincorporated areas; and

Seeks to develop a set of shared values that bridges jurisdictional boundaries, acknowledges the limits of local government and the forces of private markets, and that will provide consistency among the City and County in their policies toward growth in the ETJ and unincorporated areas.

Approved this ____ day of _____, 2012 by the Commissioners Court of Travis County, Texas.

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

Samuel T. Biscoe, County Judge

Ron Davis, Commissioner, Precinct 1

Sarah Eckhardt, Commissioner, Precinct 2

Karen Huber, Commissioner, Precinct 3

Margaret Gomez, Commissioner, Precinct 4

EXHIBIT 2

Travis County Collaboration Opportunities

Imagine Austin Comprehensive Travis County Collaboration Opportunities

PRIORITY PROGRAMS

Invest in a compact and connected Austin Work Program.

Short Term (1-3yrs) Page 170

1. Develop criteria and guidelines for coordinating business recruitment, expansion, and retention to support activity centers and corridors, transit, and urban trails plans in line with Imagine Austin and the growth concept map.

Ongoing and Long Term (3+yrs) Page 174

2. Work with federal, state, and local public and private agencies, organizations, and businesses to identify potential funding sources for partnerships to implement transportation improvements.
3. Coordinate with **Travis County** and local school districts to manage infrastructure investments.

Sustainably manage our water resources.

Short Term (1-3yrs) Page 173

1. Enact a new watershed protection ordinance to streamline, expand protection of headwaters and to promote low-impact stormwater management strategies, and to reduce capital expenditures required to mitigate water quality problems, erosion, and flooding.

Ongoing and Long Term (3+yrs) Page 174

2. Participate in state and regional water resources planning, including regional efforts to improve water quality and quantity of the Edwards Aquifer.

Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.

Short Term (1-3yrs) Pages 177-178

1. Create an integrated green infrastructure plan and ongoing green infrastructure program.
2. The plan should:
 - a. Perform an initial inventory and evaluation of existing green infrastructure resources, such as conserved land, the urban forest, habitat, trails and bike paths, greenbelts, community gardens, urban farms, parks and recreation areas, and green streets. Identify current plans, such as the **Travis** and Hays County Greenprint plans, networks, and identify gaps.

- b. Develop green infrastructure targets (such as percentage of tree cover, connectivity, or current or anticipated residents within walking distance of parks, see Figure 4.11) and priorities for new areas for conservation, parks and open space, green streets, and urban trails.
 - c. Include a series of interactive maps illustrating the components of the green infrastructure network, along with priority c
 - d. Include implementation strategies and approaches to promote interdepartmental, intergovernmental, and interagency coordination.
 - e. Calculate direct and indirect costs and savings from green infrastructure projects, when compared with traditional “grey” infrastructure, including the asset value of ecosystem services and contribution to long-term risk management.
 - f. Develop and implement unified, comprehensive land management of all City of Austin lands for integrated environmental sustainability, including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, and education.
 - g. Identify a lead to oversee ongoing implementation of the plan and program conservation and restoration areas.
3. Continue funding support and acquisition of land in the Balcones Canyonlands Preserves and in other environmentally significant areas to protect water quality conserve endangered species habitat, and provide open space for passive public use.
4. Protect farmland and conduct and stimulate research to facilitate growing techniques that minimize water usage and build healthy soils accounting for regional climate change.
5. Identify approaches to track and monitor the costs and savings associated with green infrastructure projects. Solicit research and funding partners, such as the University of Texas’ Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Research Center and the Trust for Public Lands. (Travis County?)

Related County Initiatives

- Colorado River Corridor Plan

Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin.

Ongoing and Long Term (3+yrs) Page 185

1. Replicate and adopt best practice models for affordable housing in Texas to make state lawmakers aware of the statutory barriers that impede household affordability, such as the inability of cities to provide property tax relief to low-income renters and the challenges of meeting market demand.

Create a “Healthy Austin” program.

Short Term (1-3yrs) Page 187

1. Create a Healthy Austin Program plan to develop and document program priorities,

Findings, recommendations, and outcomes related to:

- a. Increasing healthy behaviors;

- b. Educating the public and providing better access to information on healthy lifestyles and community health resources;
 - c. Expanding access to health care services in underserved populations;
 - d. Promoting healthy foods and discouraging unhealthy ones; and
 - e. Improving coordination between the Health and Human Services Department, other City of Austin and **Travis County departments**, non-profits, and the community.
2. Create a healthy community code, including revisions to Austin's land development ordinances that make it easier to produce and access healthy, sustainable food and to lead a more active lifestyle.
 - a. Support and expand farm direct programs that link local farmers and food vendors to consumers.
 - b. Expand the market for local food producers by connection them to hunger-relief organizations, community institutions, restaurants, and retail food markets.
 3. Encourage use of public land for community gardens.

Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.

Generally, these actions:

- Integrate nature into the city and protect environmental sensitive areas.

ANNEXATION

Page 201

Annexation is an important tool to guide growth and development and is the only way to expand municipal boundaries. The City of Austin uses annexation to apply zoning and development regulations, to protect and expand the tax base, to more efficiently deliver municipal services such as public safety and utilities, and to provide these services to developing areas. To be consistent with Imagine Austin, provide efficient, equitable, and environmentally sensitive utility services, and coordinate the extension of municipal services, the City of Austin should continue to maintain its annexation program. This program should be based on the following policies:

1. Annex areas that can be the most economically served with existing and proposed infrastructure and services.
2. Annex areas that will be provided with municipal services and utilities through coordinated municipal utility and service extension plans and the capital improvements program.
3. Continue to annex major industrial and commercial areas on the periphery of the city.
4. Use limited purpose annexation in cooperation with landowners to expand environmental, land use, and development regulations on land currently **in the extraterritorial jurisdictions**.

5. Consider annexing areas served by aging or substandard septic systems where quality degradation is probable or citizens have submitted petitions for annexation.
6. Annex residential areas to broadly distribute the cost of services.
7. Provide City consent to independent utility or improvement districts only where the City is the water and wastewater utility provider. The districts must promote sustainable development in accordance with the growth concept map. Proposed districts must be financially viable, located entirely within Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction, and provide extraordinary public benefits.

PARTNERSHIPS

Page 201

The City of Austin cannot implement Imagine Austin by itself. It will need to enter into Partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations and develop coalitions with our regional neighbors to address mutual concerns. The City of Austin currently has relationships with a number of surrounding local governments and agencies such as **Travis County**, the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency, and Central Health. To implement Imagine Austin these relationships may need to be strengthened and those with other organizations such as area school districts, colleges, and universities made more firm. For example, to achieve the desired land use patterns, transportation improvements, environmental protections, and service coordination within Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction, coordination with **Travis County** is essential.

EXHIBIT 3

Previously Adopted Resolution
Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan

12/14

RESOLUTION REGARDING THE IMAGINE AUSTIN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2010 DEC 14 PM 5:36
TRAVIS COUNTY
CLERK OF COURTS

WHEREAS, the City of Austin (City) and Travis County (County) have independent authorities to regulate land development within the unincorporated area including the City's five mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and both entities are preparing comprehensive plans for that area; and

WHEREAS, the eastern ETJ currently includes the City's Desired Development Zone where the City's comprehensive plan and Smart Growth initiatives have created incentives to encourage new development; and

WHEREAS, Travis County has made significant investments within the City's Preferred Growth Corridor over the past three decades, including participating with the State in the funding of SH 130, creating metropolitan parks and greenways, and constructing arterial roadways between IH 35 and SH 130; and

WHEREAS, SH 130 has become and will continue to be a significant catalyst to private land development in the eastern corridor; and

WHEREAS, Travis County supports the implementation the CAMPO Centers urban development concept; and

WHEREAS, Travis County recognizes the importance of natural resources, preservation of flood plains, and the development of greenways along riparian corridors; and

WHEREAS, the City and County seek new partnerships with municipalities and the private sector to meet the demands of growth in the ETJ; and

WHEREAS, the County recognizes the constraints on the statutory authority of local governments (including municipalities) to regulate land use in the unincorporated areas; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin will be convening expert working groups in March to develop recommendations for evaluating the feasibility of and strategies for achieving the land use preferences;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSOINERS COURT OF TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS, THAT TRAVIS COUNTY:

Pursue with the City the inclusion of County staff and expertise in the feasibility analysis and strategic recommendations for land use in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the City and the County including but not limited to analysis and recommendations for:

- 1. Coordinated policies on permits, development agreements, public improvement districts, etc; and**


2. Collaborative analysis of and financing strategies for infrastructure necessary to achieve the identified land use preferences; and

Seek to leverage its resources with the City in order to meet increasing demands on the transportation system, recreational services, and the protection and preservation of our environment within the unincorporated areas; and

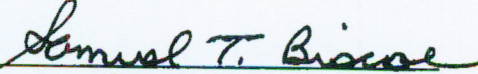
Seek to develop a set of shared values that cut across jurisdictional boundaries, acknowledge the limits of local government and the forces of the private markets, and that will provide consistency among the City and County in their policies toward growth in the ETJ.

APPROVED THIS 14th day of December , 2010, by the Commissioners Court of Travis County, Texas.

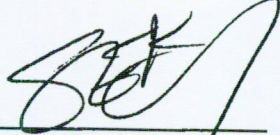
TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS



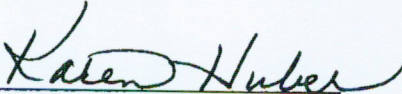
Ron Davis
Commissioner, Precinct 1



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