



Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan: Neighborhood Perspective

Presentation to Northwest Austin Civic Ass'n
by Steven Aleman
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Presentation Overview

This presentation includes (i) background on Imagine Austin, with a brief review of elements of the plan; (ii) aspects of the plan focused on northwest Austin; and (iii) time for questions and answers.



Background

In June, 2012, the Austin City Council approved Imagine Austin as the comprehensive plan for the city.

Imagine Austin is a 30-year vision for growth of the city and how that growth should occur.

Work on Imagine Austin lasted for almost three years. The plan is primarily the product of two bodies: the Citizens Advisory Task Force and the Planning Commission.



Background

Under the City Charter, Austin must have a comprehensive plan. A comprehensive plan is a long-range plan intended to direct the growth and physical development of the community. The comprehensive plan is intended as a prescription for future development patterns.

Future zoning decisions may not disregard the comprehensive plan and must be made in accordance with the comprehensive plan. Preexisting zoning, however, continues to control development on a tract of land.



Background

Comprehensive planning is a process by which the community assesses what it has and wants.

Imagine Austin includes a vision statement for what we want: "As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equality, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens; and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all." (pg. 82)



Background

The vision statement continues and identifies 7 components for the physical and social evolution of Austin into “complete communities”:

Austin is livable

Austin is natural and sustainable

Austin is creative

Austin is educated

Austin is mobile and interconnected

Austin is prosperous

Austin values and respects its people
(pg. 84–87)



Background

Imagine Austin identifies 7 “building blocks” for realizing the vision for Austin:

- Land use and transportation

- Housing and neighborhoods

- Economy

- Conservation and environment

- City facilities and services

- Society

- Creativity

Building blocks are the policy areas for implementation of Imagine Austin.

(pg. 95)



Background

Imagine Austin sets out a framework for the task of revising and creating city policies to implement the plan. Eight “priority action programs” are outlined as the next steps in the process.

These priority action programs are directed actions identified as the most important first steps following adoption of the plan. They encompass budgetary priorities as well as policy making. Various city departments and boards must assume leadership and follow through over the coming years.



Background

The 8 priority action programs are:

Invest in a compact and connected Austin.
Sustainably manage our water resources.
Continue to grow Austin's economy.
Use green infrastructure.
Grow and invest in the creative economy.
Develop and maintain household affordability.
Create a Healthy Austin Program.
Revise Austin's development regulations.

(pg. 186)



Background

In moving forward on the 8 priority action programs, Imagine Austin states that there are four guiding principles for the road ahead:

- Get to work

- Act for the whole

- Expand the growth-shaping toolkit

- Measure progress and adapt

(pg. 12-15)

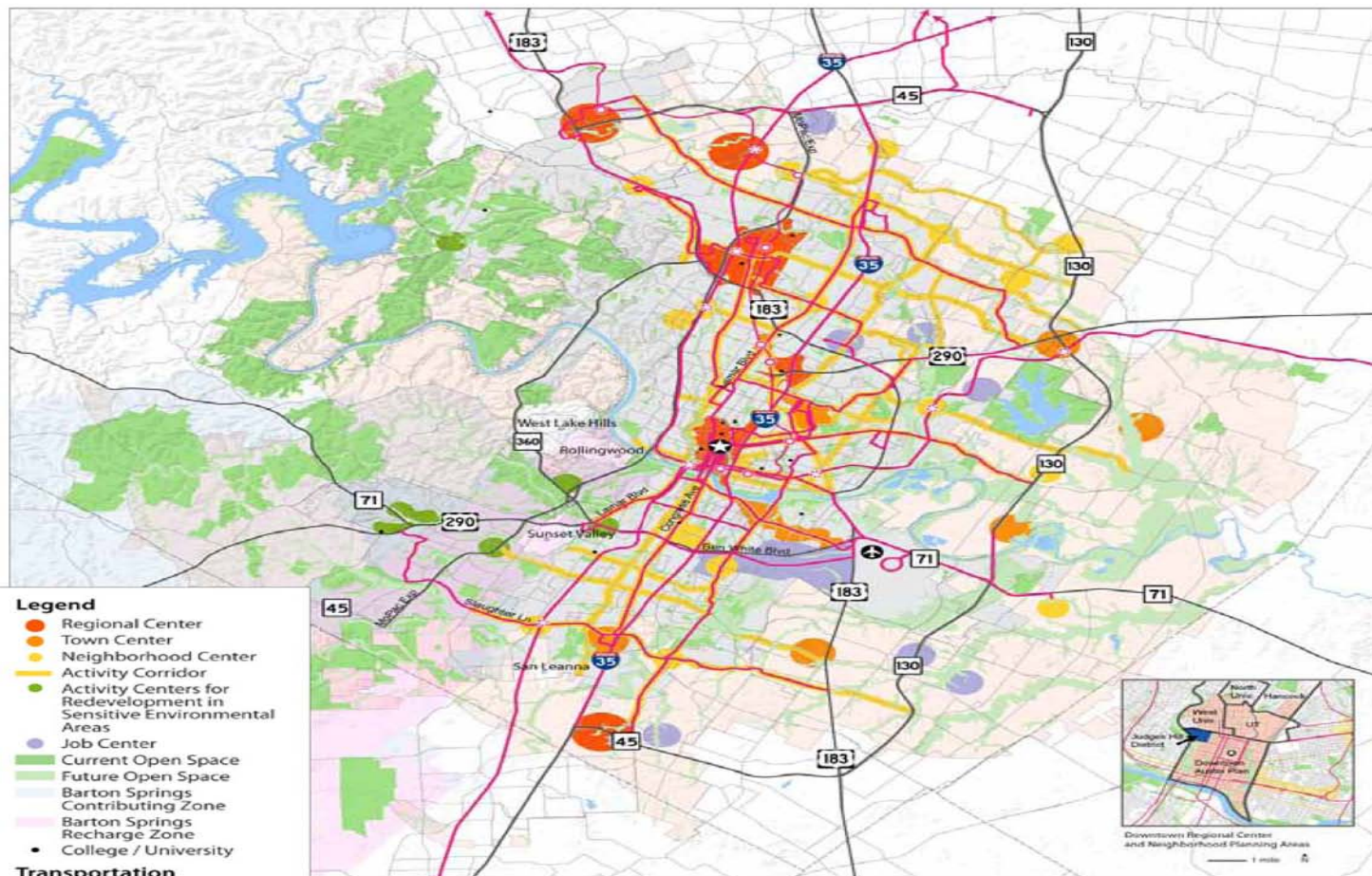


Imagine Austin and Northwest Austin

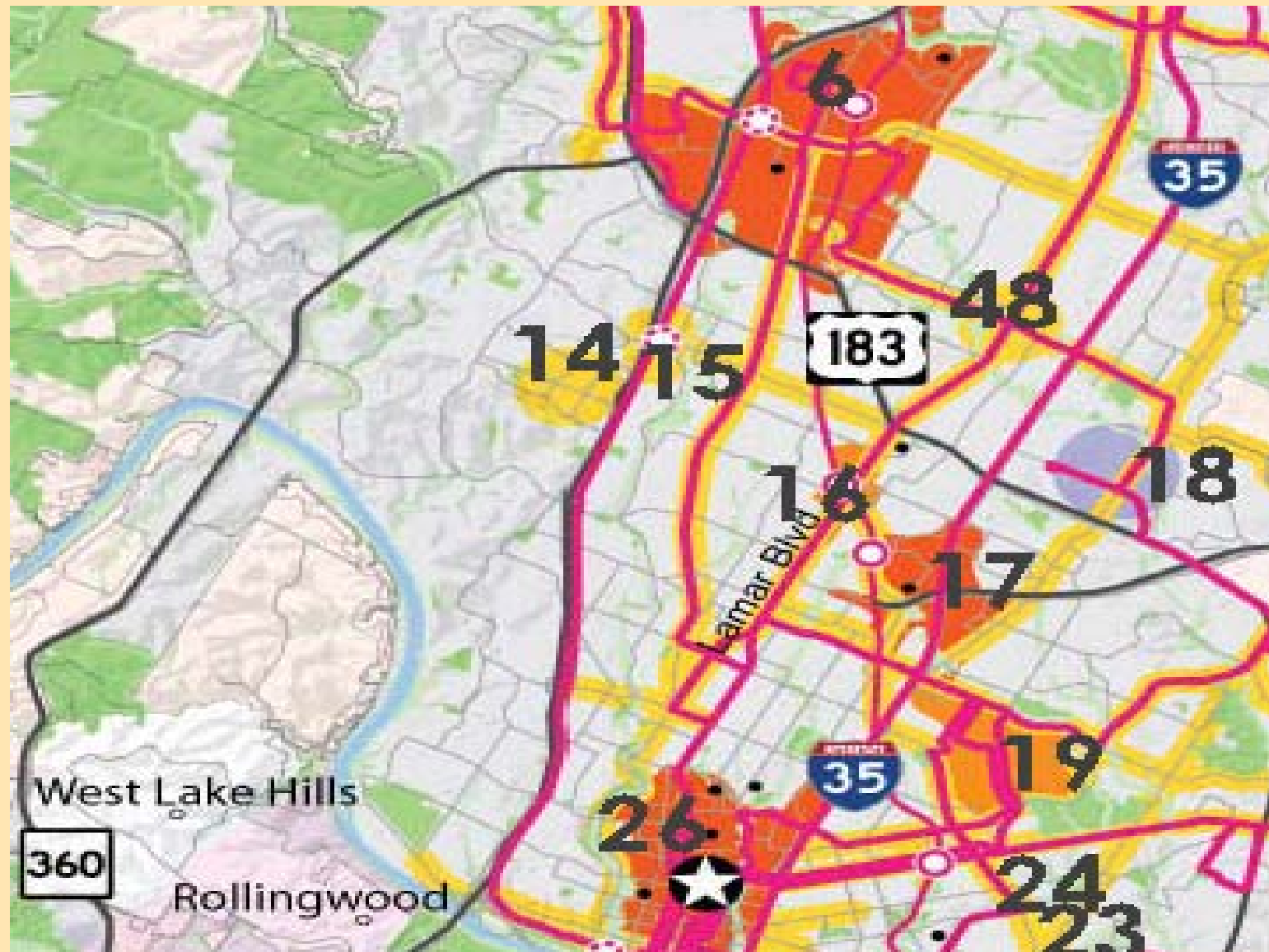
Imagine Austin incorporates a "Growth Concept Map." The Growth Concept Map distributes anticipated growth to targeted areas. It maps specific parts of town for absorbing development.

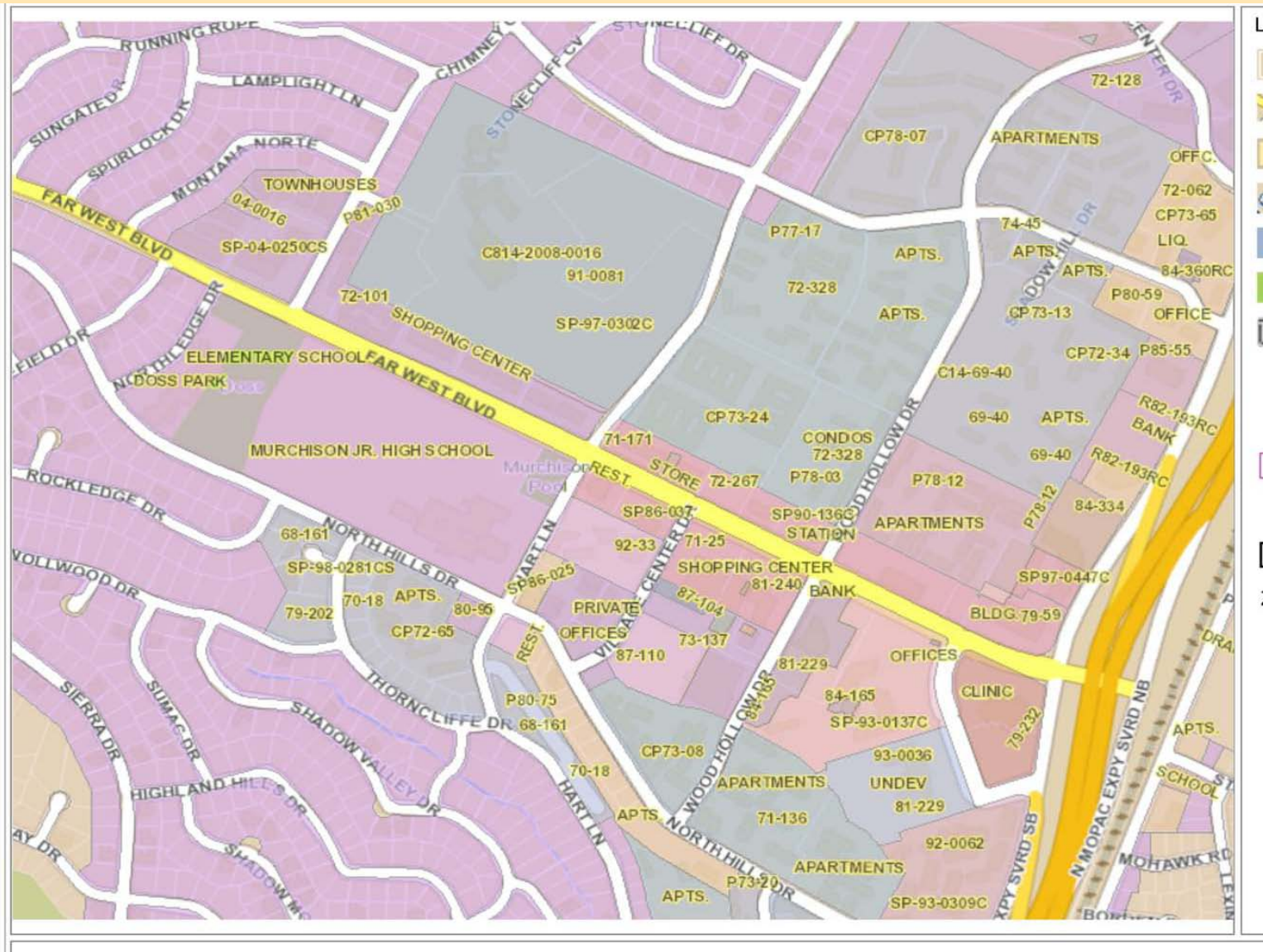
The Growth Concept Map addresses northwest Austin. The highlights are the targeting of Far West Blvd. as the site for a "neighborhood center" and Anderson Lane/Spicewood Springs at Mo-Pac as the site for a "high-capacity transit stop."

(pg. 103)



Map Disclaimers: A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries. This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries. This product has been produced by the Planning and Development Review Department for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.





14	Far West	Neighborhood Center
15	Anderson Lane Station	Neighborhood Center

Neighborhood Centers

The smallest and least intense of the three mixed-use centers are neighborhood centers. As with the regional and town centers, neighborhood centers are walkable, bikable, and supported by transit. The greatest density of people and activities in neighborhood centers will likely be concentrated on several blocks or around one or two intersections. However, depending on localized conditions, different neighborhood centers can be very different places. If a neighborhood center is designated on an existing commercial area, such as a shopping center or mall, it could represent redevelopment or the addition of housing.

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There may be major employers within a neighborhood center; but more likely, the types of businesses and services found will serve the center and the surrounding communities—doctors and dentists, shops, branch libraries, dry cleaners, hair salons, coffee shops, restaurants, and the like. People living within this type of center will reside in mixed-use buildings, smaller apartment buildings, townhouses, rowhouses, duplexes, and single-family houses.

Neighborhood centers range in size between approximately 5,000-10,000 people and 2,500-7,500 jobs.



CENTRAL TEXAS HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT VISION

(not to scale)

-  TRANSFER/STOP
-  URBAN RAIL
-  COMMUTER/REGIONAL RAIL
-  RAPID BUS
-  EXPRESS LANES
-  ROW PRESERVATION

PROJECT CONNECT

CAMPO Transit Working Group
Consensus Map; June 2012

Alignments shown for conceptual purposes and subject
to environmental impact, regulatory changes and route
refinement.





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What Next?

Under Priority Action Program No. 8 – revise Austin’s development regulations – the City has officially started a review and rewrite the Land Development Code (LDC). The LDC contains the rules for zoning and the construction of development projects. The LDC rewrite is expected to take a few years and is under the purview of the Planning Commission and an advisory group.



Imagine Austin and Northwest Austin

What Next?

The LDC rewrite is expected to include changes to zoning regulations and the transition between existing neighborhoods and new development. For the Far West Neighborhood Center and the Mo-Pac Transit Station, new zoning districts might be created. The goal of such zoning changes would be to foster the type of development identified in Imagine Austin.

Residents may wish to track the LDC rewrite and participate in the public input process.



Imagine Austin and Northwest Austin

What Next?

Under Priority Action Program No. 1 – invest in a compact and connected Austin – the City, in partnership with Capital Metro, has started “Project Connect.” Among other things, Project Connect includes a proposal for Lone Star Rail -- a regional commuter train service with stop(s) along Mo-Pac.

Residents may wish to track Project Connect and participate in the public input process.



Questions?

For More Information

www.austintexas.gov/departments/Imagine-Austin

www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=171793

www.ancweb.org



Presenter

Steven Aleman is an attorney and mediator in Austin. He is active in local civic affairs. Most recently he served as president of the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) for two years. He and his wife live in East Austin.

Disclaimer

This is an independent presentation. It has neither been reviewed nor approved by the City of Austin. All statements represent the opinion of the presenter. This presentation is a summary and not an exhaustive review of all details.