



**City of Whittier**  
**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**Regular Meeting Packet**

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**April 6, 2022**



# THE CITY OF WHITTIER

*Gateway to Western Prince William Sound*

P.O. Box 608 • Whittier, Alaska 99693 • (907) 472-2327 • Fax (907) 472-2404

April 6, 2022

6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

Charlene Arneson  
Term Expires 2024

Jamie Loan  
Term Expires 2023

Vacant  
Term Expires 2024

Jean Swingle  
Term Expires 2022

Stephanie Carlson  
Term Expires 2022

James Hunt  
City Manager

Jackie C. Wilde  
Assistant City  
Manager

Naelene Matsumiya  
City Clerk

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **OPENING CEREMONY**
3. **ROLL CALL**
4. **CITIZEN COMMENTS ON ANY SUBJECT EXCEPT THOSE ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING** *[Those who have signed in will be given the first opportunity to speak. Time is limited to 2 minutes per speaker and 36 minutes total time for this agenda item.]*
5. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA** *[Approval of Consent Agenda passes all routine items indicated by asterisk (\*). Consent Agenda items are not considered separately unless a council member so requests. In the event of such a request, the item is returned to the Regular Agenda]*
6. **PRESENTATIONS AND REPORTS – NONE**
7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS (NON-ORDINANCE)-** *[Those who have signed in will be given the first opportunity to speak. Time is limited to 5 minutes per speaker. Anyone wishing to speak a second time may do so only after all other persons have spoken, and then for 1 minute.]*

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- 9. NEW BUSINESS
    - A. ORDINANCES- NONE
    - B. RESOLUTIONS
      - 1. **RESOLUTION 2022-001**- A Resolution Of The Planning And Zoning Commission Of The City Of Whittier, Alaska Adopting Commission Priorities From April 2022 To April 2023.....Pg 3
    - C. Other New Business Items
      - \* 1. Approval of the April 7, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes..... Pg 5
      - 2. Discussion by administration recommending Council approve adding two (2) seats to the Planning and Zoning Commission.
      - 3. Meeting Schedule for May 2022 through April 2023.....Pg 8
  - 10. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS AND REPORTS *(No Action Required)*
    - 1. *APA Quick notes- integrating sustainability into the Comprehensive Plan..... Pg 9*
    - 2. *PAS Memo- Integrating Capital Improvements Planning with the Comprehensive Plan.....Pg 21*
  - 11. COMMISSION COMMENTS
  - 12. CITIZEN COMMENTS *[Those who have signed in will be given the first opportunity to speak. Time is limited to 5 minutes per speaker]*
  - 13. COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE TO CITIZEN COMMENTS
  - 14. ADJOURNMENT

Sponsored by: Planning and Zoning Commission

**CITY OF WHITTIER, ALASKA  
RESOLUTION 2022-001**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION OF  
THE CITY OF WHITTIER, ALASKA ADOPTING COMMISSION  
PRIORITIES FROM APRIL 2022 TO APRIL 2023**

**WHEREAS**, the City Council, City Administration, Planning and Zoning Commission and Port and Harbor Commission held a joint work session; and

**WHEREAS**, the during the March 29, 2022 joint work session administration recommended that each commission have a list of priorities: and

**WHEREAS**, Council will address a resolution adopting these recommendations.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Whittier Planning and Zoning Commission that:

**Section 1.** The following List of Planning and Zoning Priorities is hereby approved and recommended to Council for their adoption:

**Priorities**

**Short and Medium Term- 6 to 24 months**

- 1) Review/ Update the Title 17
  - a. District Regulations 17.16
  - b. Allowed Uses- 17.16.230
  - c. Definitions 17.08.010
  - d. Dimensional requirements 17.16.240
- 2) Long term strategic planning
- 3) Community revitalization and economic development
- 4) Current planning and zoning, including the subdivision of land
- 5) Explore available funding / policy for infrastructure development

**Continuing**

- 1) Assist with action plan update of Comprehensive Plan with the Port and Harbor commission
- 2) Assist with the completion of a Parks & Recreation Plan
- 3) Look at current and future community needs to identify a wide range of strategies and investments that support growth and vitality.

- 4) Continue to pursue compliance with the Whittier City Zoning Code by prioritizing the outstanding health and safety issues, such as code compliance, right of way, variance, etc.
- 5) Identify and implement land use and zoning changes as well as other actions needed to support the short-term recovery and long-term vitality of City
- 6) Seek additional funding for Planning & Zoning Commissioner training.
  - a. Search out and add funding to the budget
  - b. Maintain a commissioner training calendar

**Section 2.** This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** by the Planning and Zoning Commission of Whittier, Alaska this 6<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2022.

**THE CITY OF WHITTIER, ALASKA**

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AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSENT:  
ABSTAIN:  
VACANT:

**ATTEST:**

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Naelene Matsumiya,  
City Clerk

(City Seal)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The April 7, 2021, regular meeting of the Whittier Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order at 6:02p.m. by Chairperson, Charlene Arneson

### **OPENING CEREMONY**

Chairperson Arneson led the pledge of allegiance to the flag

### **ROLL CALL**

There were present:  
Charlene Arneson, presiding, and  
Dyanna Pratt, Lindsey Erk, Jean Swingle,  
and Ed Hedges

Comprising a quorum of the Board; and  
Absent

Also Present:  
Scott Korbe, Public Works Director  
Ben Whipple  
Diana Whipple  
and Alan Larson

### **CITIZENS' COMMENTS ON ANY SUBJECT EXCEPT THOSE ITEMS SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING – None**

### **APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA**

**Motion (Pratt/Hedges) Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda**

**Motion Passed Unanimous**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

November 4, 2020 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion (Erk/Pratt) Approval of November 4, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

**Motion Passed Unanimous**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. Presentation for Lot 7 Block 12, SDP2 – Alan Larson**

Alan Larson gave a brief presentation about the history and ownership of the lot and personal background of his business.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**A. Variance Request for Lot 7, Block 12, Whittier Subdivision Phase 2**

**Motion (Pratt/Hedges)**

**Call Public Hearing to Order at 6:17**

**AYES:** Pratt, Hedges, Swingle, Erk,  
Arneson  
**NAYS:** None

**Motion Passed**

**Unanimous**

Public Works Director Scott Korbe spoke about the property and the conversation about ideas that he had Mr. Larson.

Ben Whipple stated his support and testified in favor of the variance request.

No other public testimony

**Motion (Pratt/Erk)**

**Close Public Hearing and resume regular meeting at 6:19**

**AYES:** Pratt, Hedges, Swingle, Erk,  
Arneson  
**NAYS:** None

**Motion Passed**

**Unanimous**

**Motion (Erk/Swingle)**

**Approval of Variance Request**

**AYES:** Pratt, Hedges, Swingle, Erk,  
Arneson  
**NAYS:** None

**Motion Passed**

**Unanimous**

**MISCELANEOUS BUSINESS**

None

**COMMISSION COMMENTS**

Dyanna Pratt greeted everyone.

**CITIZENS COMMENTS**

None

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE TO CITIZEN  
COMMENTS**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

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Naelene Matsumiya  
City Clerk

(City Seal)

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Charlene Arneson  
Chairperson

DRAFT



**Planning and Zoning Goals Calendar**

**Meeting Schedule**

**RM= Regular Meeting    WS= Work session**

MEETING	SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS
<b>May 4, 2022</b>	<b>Review/Update of title 17</b>
<b>June 1, 2022</b>	<b>Review/Update of title 17 Joint Work session with Port and Harbor- Comp Plan review/update</b>
<b>July 6, 2022</b>	<b>Review/ Update of title 17</b>
<b>August 3, 2022</b>	<b>Review/update of title 17</b>
<b>September 7, 2022</b>	<b>Review/ Update of title 17 for final review</b>
<b>October 5, 2022 October 5, 2022</b>	<b>Draft ordinance of title 17 changes Joint work session with Port and Harbor- Comp Plan review/ update</b>
<b>November 2, 2022</b>	<b>Comp Plan review/update</b>
<b>December 7, 2022</b>	<b>Comp Plan update final draft for council</b>
<b>January 4, 2023</b>	<b>Resolution recommending Comp Plan updates to Council</b>
<b>January 4, 2023</b>	<b>Long Term Strategic Planning</b>
<b>February 1, 2023</b>	<b>Long Term Strategic Planning</b>
<b>March 1, 2023</b>	<b>Long Term Strategic Planning 2023-2024 Priorities list for April approval</b>
<b>April 5, 2023</b>	<b>2023-2024 Priorities list for April approval</b>

# PAS MEMO

## Integrating Capital Improvements Planning With the Comprehensive Plan

By Stevie Greathouse, Liane Miller, AICP, and Ming-ru Chu

Comprehensive plans are generally implemented through a combination of regulations, city expenditures, and partnerships with the private sector. Though many cities focus on implementing their comprehensive plans primarily through regulations, capital investments — in particular strategic infrastructure investments that support the development pattern envisioned by the plan — are just as important to achieve full implementation of the plan.

Unlike land development regulations, however, capital investments are generally planned, designed, funded, and constructed entirely outside of the planning department’s zone of control. Given this reality, it can take a bit of creativity and persistence to ensure that the comprehensive plan influences and informs the capital improvement program (CIP).

With adoption of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* (Austin 2012), the City of Austin, Texas, made a conscious choice to integrate comprehensive planning into the city’s CIP. Over the last several years, the city has explored innovative approaches to this integration, including development of the *Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan* (Austin 2017b).

This *PAS Memo* will provide a detailed summary of the approaches and lessons learned in the City of Austin through its efforts in this area. The *Memo* will also provide a summary of action steps that can be used by planners seeking to integrate their comprehensive plan with capital improvements planning more fully.

### CIP and the Comprehensive Plan

A *capital improvement program* (CIP) plan is a short-range plan, usually spanning four to ten years, that identifies capital projects, provides a planning schedule, and identifies options for financing the plan. The typical CIP planning process is a recurring cycle that begins with identification of needs and funding, then proceeds through development of a five-year CIP plan and annual capital budget before implementing projects (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The CIP planning cycle. Courtesy City of Austin.

A *comprehensive plan* is a long-range plan, usually with a 20- to 50-year horizon, that provides an overarching vision and policies for a community and is intended to guide future actions in order to ensure orderly development and improve quality of life. Actual implementation of the comprehensive plan depends heavily on public and private investments in development and infrastructure. Major investments in public infrastructure are typically sequenced and prioritized within a jurisdiction’s CIP.

The CIP may implement the comprehensive plan by funding one or more strategic infrastructure investments recommended by the comprehensive plan, by prioritizing investments based

on the policy framework of the comprehensive plan, or through some combination of these approaches. Integrating the CIP with the comprehensive plan can help to ensure that capital investments are working in tandem with development regulations and public-private partnerships toward realizing the vision of the comprehensive plan, and that development intensities and infrastructure capacity are in sync over time.

While capital investments are essential to implementation of the comprehensive plan, it can be very difficult to ensure that these investments are achieving that implementation for a number of reasons:

- The CIP plan is typically developed and updated in tandem with the annual municipal budget, which is generally geared toward financial accountability rather than comprehensive planning policies.
- The CIP plan generally has a far shorter funding horizon than the comprehensive plan.
- The CIP must respond to a host of infrastructure drivers including urgent needs, capital renewal needs, and service demands, which may be beyond the scope of the comprehensive plan.
- The CIP plan is often a ledger document, with decisions regarding funding being made by the implementing department or through general obligation bond package development before including funded projects in the plan.

However, with some careful coordination, cities can ensure that CIP planning provides for capital investments that implement the comprehensive plan and appropriately leverage land-use and development decisions.

### Austin’s Experience

Like many major U.S. cities, the City of Austin has always had good intentions about integrating its comprehensive plan and capital improvement program. The Austin City Charter (Austin 1994) requires that the CIP and the land development code be

consistent with the comprehensive plan, and even goes so far as to require that the planning commission provide to the city manager an annual list of recommended capital improvements that are necessary or desirable to implement the comprehensive plan (see sidebar).

However, while this charter requirement has been in place for more than 30 years, integration of the CIP and the comprehensive plan was fairly limited prior to 2010.

In 2010, newly hired City Manager Marc Ott began to take significant actions to change the city’s processes. In addition to shepherding development of the first new comprehensive plan in more than 30 years, Ott partnered with the planning commission and city staff to make several significant changes to the city’s budgeting and capital planning process to support better integration of the CIP and the comprehensive plan. Over time, the changes have led to better coordination across city departments, a more streamlined planning commission process, and construction of strategic capital investments that are helping to build out the vision of the comprehensive plan.

### Establishing the Foundation:

#### The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan

The *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* (Austin 2012) was adopted in 2012 after two years of community engagement and over 18,500 community inputs. *Imagine Austin’s* vision statement — to be “a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all” (Austin 2012, 2) — expresses six core principles for action:

- grow as a compact, connected city
- integrate nature into the city
- provide paths to prosperity for all
- develop as an affordable and healthy community
- sustainably manage water, energy and other environmental resources
- think creatively and work together

These core principles for action point Austin toward becoming a city of complete communities where Austinites of all ages will be able to access employment, shopping, education, open space, recreation, and other services and opportunities that fulfill their needs and enable them to thrive. At the same time, Austin will protect its important environmental resources and preserve its identity, culture, and sense of place.

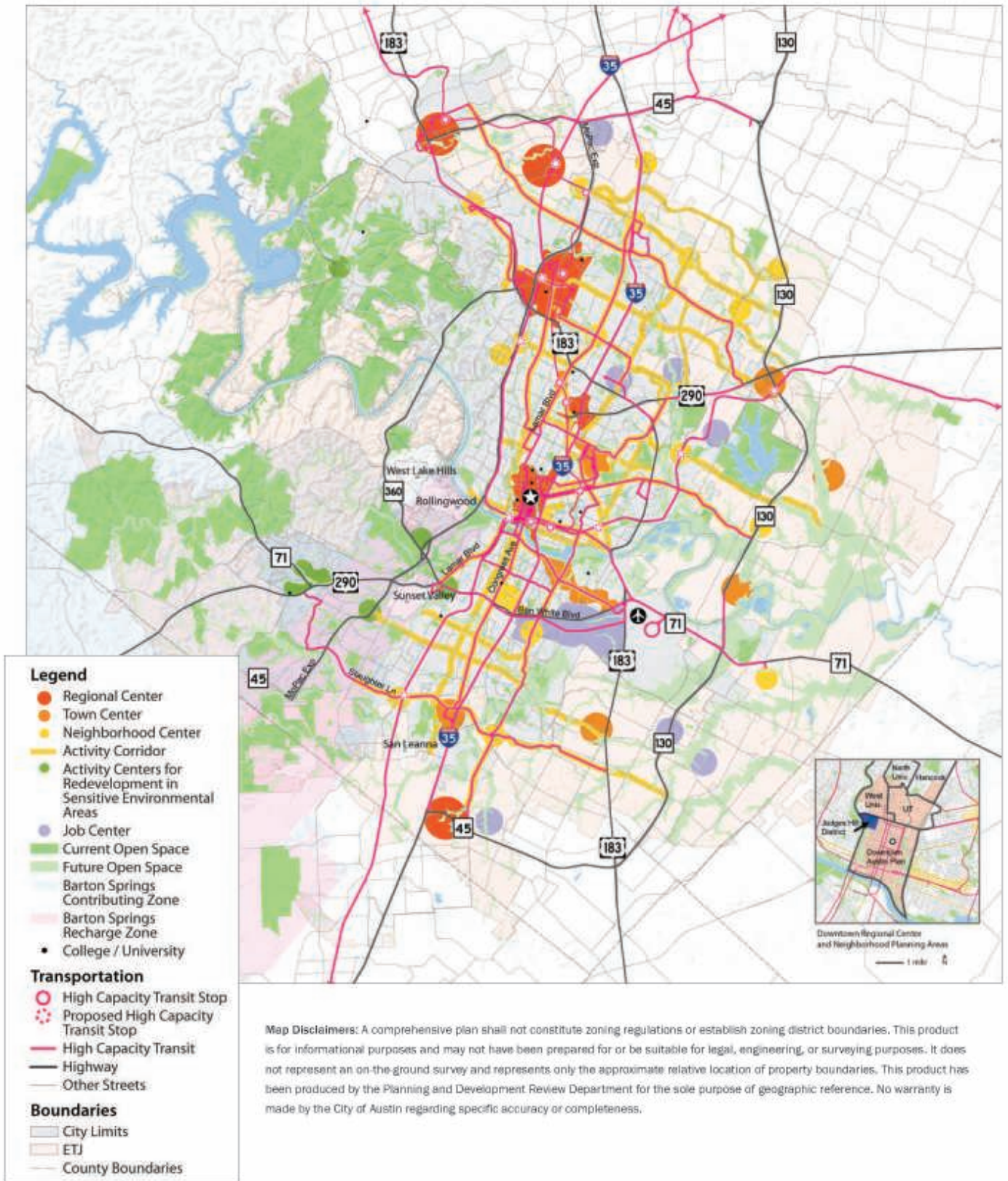
The framework for realizing complete communities throughout Austin is embodied in the Growth Concept Map (Austin 2012, 103). The Growth Concept Map (Figure 2, p. 3) represents areas where the city plans to accommodate more residents, jobs, mixed use areas, open space, and infrastructure over the next 30 years. It identifies activity centers and corridors in and along which the city will focus investments and an expanded transportation system. The corridors and centers designated on the Growth Concept Map provide a geographic

## AUSTIN CITY CHARTER, ARTICLE X

### § 4. THE PLANNING COMMISSION — POWERS AND DUTIES

The planning commission shall:

- (1) Review and make recommendations to the council regarding the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive plan (as defined by Section 5 of this article) or element or portion thereof prepared under authorization of the city council and under the direction of the city manager and responsible city planning staff;
- (4) Submit annually to the city manager, not less than ninety (90) days prior to the beginning of the budget year, a list of recommended capital improvements, which in the opinion of the commission are necessary or desirable to implement the adopted comprehensive plan or element or portion thereof during the forthcoming five-year period; ... (Austin 1994)



**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.

Figure 2. Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map. Courtesy City of Austin.

### Imagine Austin's Priority Programs

Imagine Austin's eight Priority Programs are:

1. Invest in a compact and connected Austin.
2. Sustainably manage our water resources.
3. Continue to grow Austin's economy by investing in our workforce, education systems, entrepreneurs, and local businesses.
4. Use green infrastructure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and integrate nature into the city.
5. Grow and invest in Austin's creative economy.
6. Develop and maintain household affordability throughout Austin.
7. Create a Healthy Austin program.
8. Revise Austin's land development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city. (Austin 2012, 186)

## Priority Programs

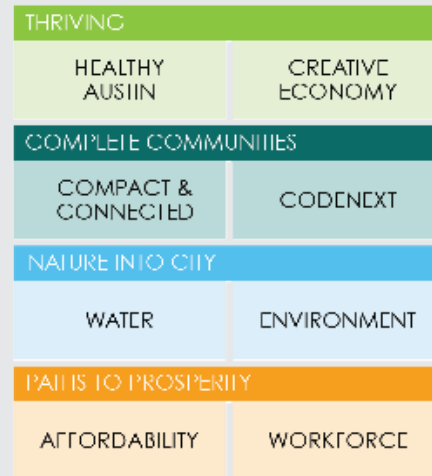


Figure 3. Imagine Austin Priority Programs. Courtesy City of Austin.

guide for where strategic capital investments should be made in tandem with private development and redevelopment in the future.

Imagine Austin's six core principles for action are reflected in eight priority programs that organize key policies and actions into related groups for coordinated implementation (see sidebar). The participants in the *Imagine Austin* process saw alignment of capital investments with the comprehensive plan as essential to plan implementation, and focused one of the eight priority programs on investment to ensure that this work would not be forgotten. The Invest in a Compact and Connected Austin priority program (Austin 2018c) calls for coordination of capital investments, incentives, and regulations to support the *Imagine Austin* vision.

### Setting the Stage: Creating the Capital Planning Office

In addition to launching a process to develop a new comprehensive plan, Ott created the City of Austin's Capital Planning Office (CPO) in 2010. The Capital Planning Office was created to provide program-level preparation for an anticipated 2010 Mobility Bond election, and to help prepare for the CIP plan's role in the implementation of *Imagine Austin* (Austin 2012).

Austin's CPO was established to create a robust, comprehensive, and integrated CIP that supports the city's planning goals and priorities. In the memo establishing the office, Ott called for the creation of CPO to "ensure that the City's entire capital program ... is planned, developed and implemented in a strategic, integrated and effective manner, that is consistent with ... planning and economic development goals and policies" (Ott 2010).

CPO was similar to a capital program or portfolio management office, or PMO, which is a model seen in other cities. A PMO is a group within a larger organization which is responsible for managing the overall portfolio of capital

projects for that organization by prioritizing projects, allocating resources to projects, and identifying which projects to initiate, reprioritize, or terminate. Portfolio management is intended to provide a link between enterprise management and visioning occurring at the executive level, and project management occurring within staff-level capital project teams. Prior to the establishment of the Capital Planning Office, City of Austin portfolio management activities were split between the individual departments developing projects and the budget office.

Ott's intention in creating a separate Capital Planning Office was to provide additional resources to allow for greater transparency and consistency across departments, and to more strongly link portfolio management with planning. By creating a stand-alone office under city management dedicated to capital planning that was distinct from the budget office, portfolio-management decisions could be made on a corporate level (rather than by department). The office was initially staffed with an executive level capital planning officer and approximately five professional staff with expertise in planning, capital project development, public engagement, and information technology.

Ott established several objectives for CPO that framed its work, including:

- **Planning:** CPO assisted in the development of the CIP from an organizational perspective, primarily through the creation of the *Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan*.
- **Coordination:** CPO participated in and led interdepartmental coordination efforts aimed at more strategic and effective capital improvement outcomes.
- **Bond Development and Oversight:** CPO managed the development of several general obligation bond programs. The office provided management and oversight of the city's funded bond programs, including assistance

with project sequencing, development of spending milestones, and ongoing monitoring of progress.

- **Communication:** CPO supported the city’s open government goals by providing information, reports, and updates about the CIP to city management, city council, and the public (Ott 2010).

The Capital Planning Office coordinated a successful 2010 Mobility Bond process supporting early implementation of the vision of the comprehensive plan still under development. Staff from the office also worked to develop a process that would help to connect the comprehensive plan with the annual CIP on an ongoing basis. During the first several years, this work included development of a planning model that was used to evaluate projects included in the five-year CIP plan. However, after several years of experimentation and extensive coordination with other city departments as well as the planning commission, it became apparent that a new level of planning and an additional tool was needed to help integrate the comprehensive plan and CIP beyond the framework provided by the five-year CIP plan. This realization led to development of the first *Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan* by the Capital Planning Office in 2013.

**Connecting the Pieces: City of Austin Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan**

The *Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan* (LRCSP) is intended to bridge the gap between the *Imagine Austin Plan* and the annual CIP plan. The LRCSP provides an opportunity for corporate-level discussion of planning needs and priorities before projects are funded and then set in stone during the annual CIP process.

Prior to 2013, the planning department worked with the planning commission to identify and develop a list of priority CIP projects concurrently with development of the five-year CIP plan. The list was developed based on the adopted comprehensive plan, neighborhood plans, and community engagement conducted by the planning commission. However, because the planning commission’s CIP list was developed on a parallel track late in the CIP planning process, it was not very successful in informing the various funding decisions reflected in the financially constrained five-year CIP plan.

In contrast, the LRCSP provides a robust, data-informed approach to long-range capital planning. Decisions inform current and future capital investments that collectively provide the infrastructure needed to support and shape the city. The plan has three major components: a comprehensive infrastructure assessment, a rolling needs assessment, and a strategic investment analysis.

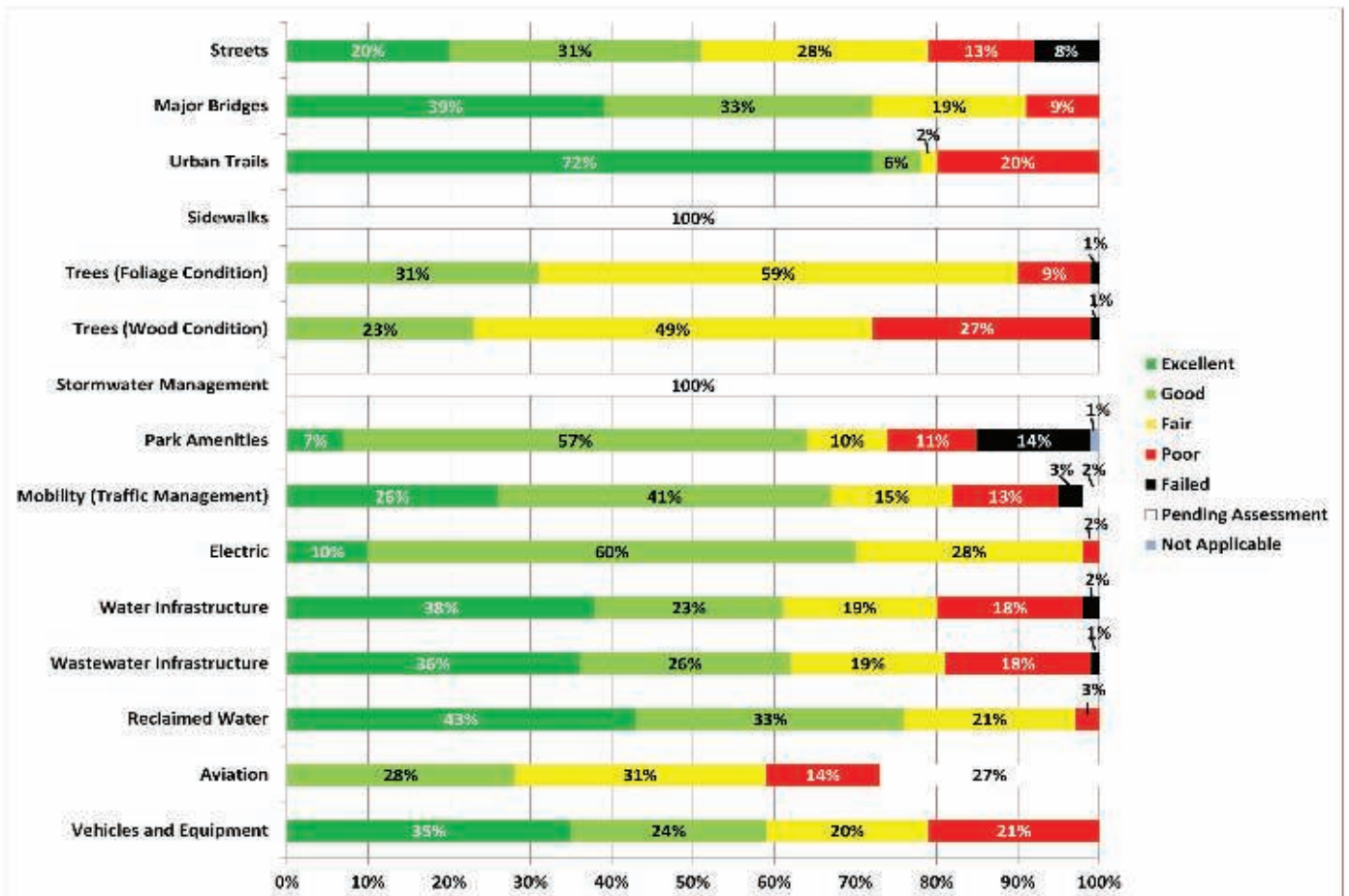


Figure 4. Summary of Infrastructure Condition, 2014 (Austin 2017b, 42–45).

Infrastructure Category	City Department
<b>Area Plans</b>	Planning and Zoning Department Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department Economic Development Department
<b>Aviation</b>	Aviation Department
<b>Electric</b>	Austin Energy
<b>Facilities</b>	Building Services Office of Sustainability All City departments
<b>Housing</b>	Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department
<b>Land Acquisition</b>	Office of Real Estate Services All City departments
<b>Mobility Infrastructure</b>	Austin Transportation Department Public Works Department Parks and Recreation Department Planning and Zoning Department Economic Development Department
<b>Park Amenities</b>	Parks and Recreation Department Public Works Department
<b>Public Art</b>	Economic Development All City departments
<b>Stormwater</b>	Watershed Protection Department Parks and Recreation Department Public Works Department Economic Development Department
<b>Water Infrastructure</b>	Austin Water Utility

Figure 5. Rolling Needs Assessment: Infrastructure Categories and Responsible Departments (Austin 2017b, 62).

**Comprehensive Infrastructure Assessment**

The first component of the LRCSP is the comprehensive infrastructure assessment, which collects citywide infrastructure condition information to help inform future infrastructure needs and funding opportunities (Austin 2017b, 39). The goal of the comprehensive infrastructure assessment is to quantify the state of infrastructure, acceptable levels of service for different types of assets, and where those service levels are achieved.

The comprehensive infrastructure assessment captures information across various infrastructure types on asset inventory, condition, age and expected useful life, and acceptable levels of service.

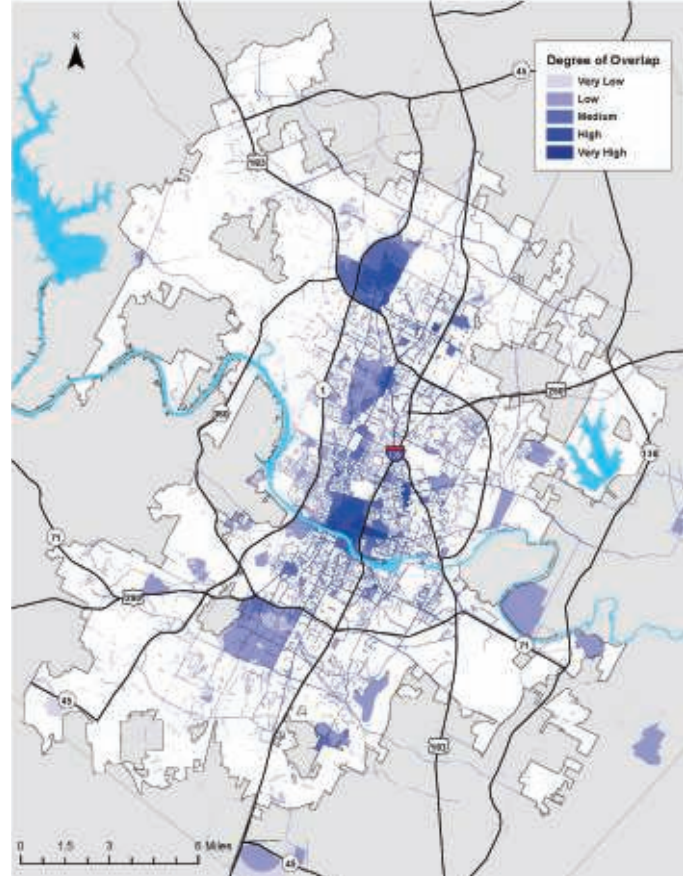
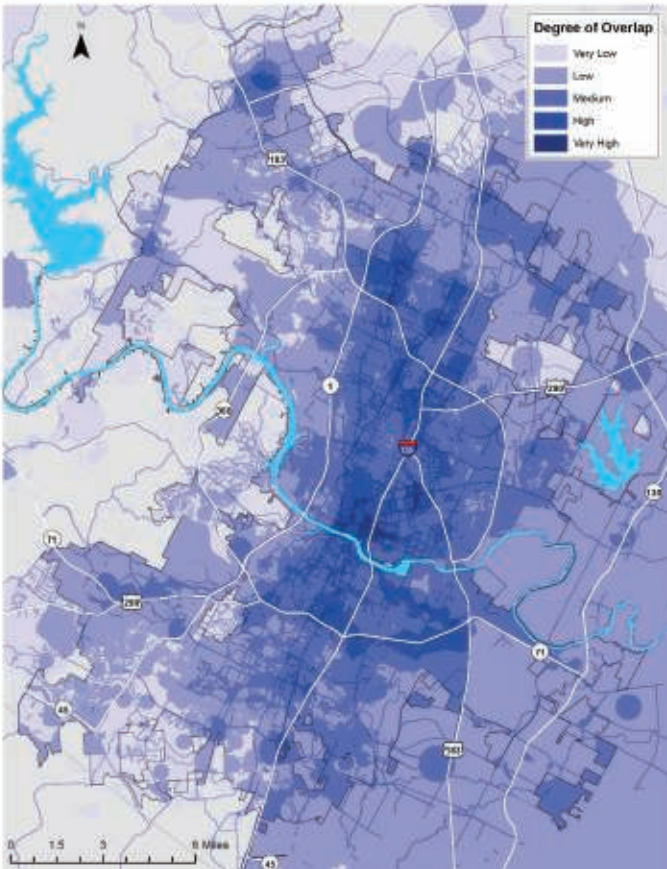
Figure 4 (p. 5) shows a summary of infrastructure condition, utilizing the same rating scale (failed, poor, fair, good, and excellent) across all infrastructure types. Using a consistent scale allows for a comprehensive, easy-to-understand look at the

state of the city’s infrastructure. That data can be used for many purposes, such as informing long-range capital infrastructure need and funding strategies.

In developing the comprehensive infrastructure assessment, city departments collect data across many asset types, which helps them do the work of identifying, prioritizing, and communicating needs. Each department compiles information through a method that works for it. Flexibility in the process is needed because of the varying levels of information available for different asset types.

**Rolling Needs Assessment**

The second component of the LRCSP is the rolling needs assessment (Austin 2017b, 61; Figure 5). This is a catalog of all unfunded infrastructure needs across the city, organized by 13 infrastructure categories, such as water, mobility, facilities, and



Left to right: Figure 6. Strategic Areas Map (Austin 2017b, 51); Figure 7. Strategic Investment Areas Map (Austin 2017b, 53).

park amenities. Figure 5 shows the list of infrastructure categories and which departments are responsible for each.

Each year departments submit their needs for the rolling needs assessment. The assessment includes descriptions and justifications of ongoing programs needing additional funding, key highlighted projects, and strategic investments. As part of this component, departments also map their needs so they can be viewed spatially, creating a rolling needs assessment map that shows all department-identified infrastructure needs.

Departments have an opportunity to update their needs annually to reflect changes in priorities based on changes in CIP drivers, whether it's urgent needs caused by a recent natural disaster or new policy or planning priorities approved by the city council. One example of planning priorities are recommendations from the small area plans, which are adopted as attachments to the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*. The highest priority small area plan recommendations, as determined by the neighborhood organization for that area, are incorporated into the rolling needs assessment and provided to infrastructure departments as a reference layer as they plan their programs and consider various needs. For example, the public works department uses neighborhood plan recommendations in the prioritization process for sidewalk improvements.

### Strategic Investment Analysis

The final component of the LRCSP is the strategic investment analysis (Austin 2017b, 47). This identifies areas where needed capital investments called out in the rolling needs assessment (Austin 2017b, 61) could address recommendations for capital improvements from the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* as well as other adopted city plans and initiatives.

The methodology for this analysis is straightforward. It requires two maps: the rolling needs assessment map plus a strategic areas heat map created using geospatial data for the *Imagine Austin Growth Concept Map* and other city plans and initiatives (Figure 6). Each of the layers included in the strategic areas map represent city council- or department-adopted documents that have recommended some type of capital improvement or investment and established community expectations that these recommendations will be considered in CIP decision making.

Many of these plans and initiatives are also tied directly to the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* as attachments. Each plan or initiative has a geographic target area which can represent a variety of features, from a specified neighborhood planning area boundary to the demographic composition of an area. The geographic areas with the most overlapping initiatives are identified by a dark shade and are designated "very high" strategic areas.



Those areas of overlap between the strategic areas map and rolling needs assessment map become the strategic investment areas map (SIA). This map identifies the intersection of areas of already identified unfunded needs and areas with already identified recommendations and goals (Figure 7, p. 7). These are the areas where the city has the most opportunity to support previously identified goals with new investment. Areas with “very high” and “high” overlap include Downtown, TODs, and *Imagine Austin* corridors. Moving forward, the SIA methodology will be adjusted to address limitations identified to date.

**Implementation and Process Improvement**

Since the creation of the *Long-Range CIP Strategic Plan*, the rolling needs assessment has been successfully used as the basis for bond development processes (Figure 8). Specifically, the needs identified in the rolling needs assessment served as the starting point for development of a 2016 Mobility Bond package (a historic \$720 million transportation bond program approved by Austin voters in November 2016) as well as for a citywide bond package currently in development that could be brought before voters in November 2018 (Austin 2018a). Prior to creation of the long-range plan, departments had been asked to identify needs in an ad hoc manner during development of bond packages. The plan has allowed for a needs assessment to be developed and maintained on an ongoing basis. It is more clearly informed by the comprehensive plan, and it can be used when seeking other funding resources including grants and private partnerships.

In support of the Invest in a Compact and Connected Austin priority program, the City of Austin has developed a “Compact and Connected” curriculum to train and support staff from all departments. Internal alignment and a shared understanding of what compact and connected growth looks like has been crucial for policy changes and projects that support *Imagine Austin*. The city also adopted a complete streets policy (Austin 2014) in support of the notion that all users on Austin’s streets should have connected networks that are safe, comfortable, and beautiful regardless of mode.

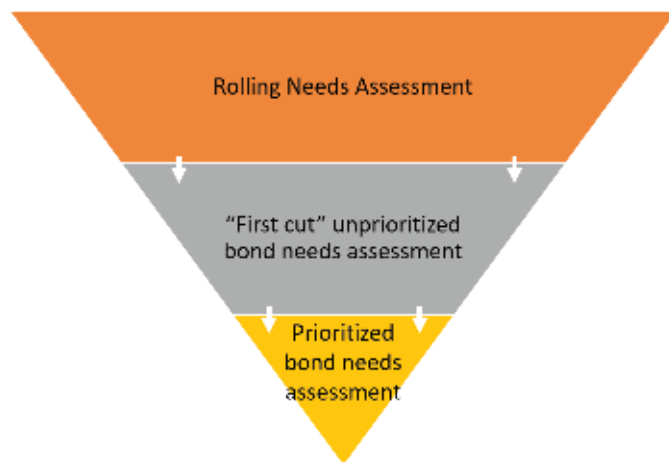


Figure 8. Bond Program Needs Assessment. Courtesy City of Austin.

In early 2017, the Capital Planning Office was reorganized to form a Corridor Program Office focused exclusively on implementing the 2016 Mobility Bond. With that reorganization, the Planning and Zoning Department assumed responsibility for the LRCSP. This organizational shift has provided an opportunity to evaluate and make process improvements.

Future plan updates will be developed on a two-year cycle. The city’s Budget Office will coordinate the rolling needs assessment, the Public Works Department will update the comprehensive infrastructure assessment, and the Planning and Zoning Department will continue to lead the strategic investment analysis and coordinate the overall plan update process. The planning commission reviews the LRCSP and transmits the plan to the city manager on an annual basis with a cover letter outlining planning commission recommendations to ensure alignment between the CIP and the comprehensive plan, as called for in the city charter. For future updates, the City of Austin will also be reassessing the methodology used to develop the strategic investment analysis to improve its efficacy and to bring it into closer alignment with the comprehensive plan.

**What Planners Can Do: Action Steps**

While every organization is different, there are steps that all planners can take to improve the integration of the comprehensive plan with the CIP.

**Understand the Budget and Capital Funding Processes.**

Project needs and funding decisions are often made by many different players well in advance of compiling the five-year CIP plan. In order to effectively integrate comprehensive planning into CIP planning, planners must understand budget and capital funding processes and get to know where the various levers exist to impact those funding processes. Some typical capital funding process levers include:

- department budgeting and prioritization
- general obligation bond development
- grant writing
- city council or city manager discretionary funding prioritization
- land development-related exactions
- public-private partnerships and innovative funding (e.g. TIFs, PIDs, etc.)

**Understand the Capital Delivery Process and Drivers of Capital Investment.**

Planners do a disservice to the community they are planning with and for by providing input into the capital improvement planning and delivery process at the wrong point in that process. Planners should work to understand the different infrastructure systems and the ways they are planned for by each specialty to maximize influence on the project scope.

For example, planning for park improvements is very different than planning for upsizing a water line, yet in both project development processes there are times when coordinating with another project or incorporating planning recommen-

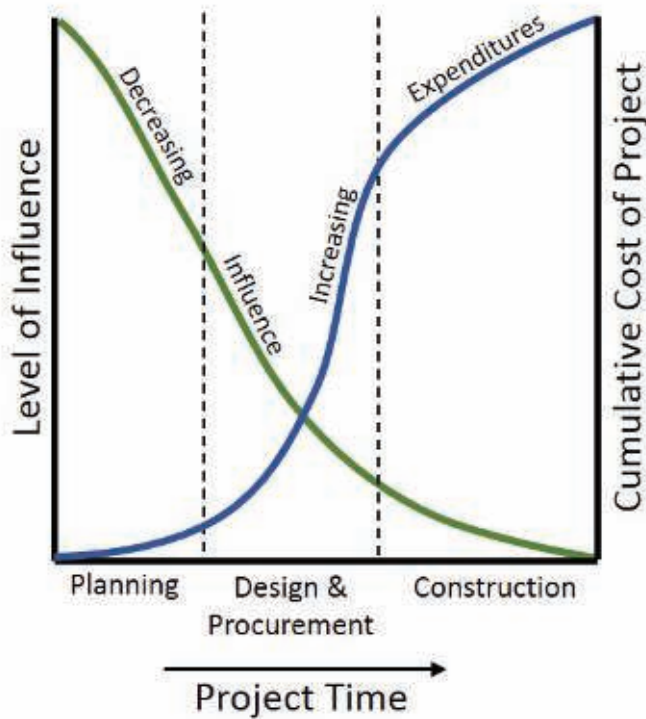


Figure 9. Construction projects cost-influence curve (based on Paulson 1976)

dations would be possible and most impactful. It can be very costly to a capital project, both financially and in potential delays, to add or change design elements later in the development process.

This concept is illustrated in the cost-influence curve (Figure 9), originally introduced by Boyd C. Paulson in 1976, which is routinely used when describing how the ability to influence a construction project with minimal cost implications decreases as the project moves from the planning phase to construction (Paulson 1976).

It is also helpful for planners to understand the different drivers of capital investments. With this knowledge, planners can determine what the process will be for policy and planning priorities to be included and considered among urgent needs and those based on capital renewal and service demands.

**Build on Existing Data, Use It, and Share It.** Planners should familiarize themselves with the CIP-related data sources already available to their cities, and build on this data as they work to coordinate CIP with comprehensive planning.

**CIP Data.** Many cities maintain a CIP database of record which may or may not feature geographic data. This data can form the core of the CIP coordination engine.

The City of Austin relies on a web-based project management system called eCAPRIS (City of Austin Project Reporting and Information System). The database provides tracking and reporting functions for planning, funding, appropriations, and spending on capital improvement projects. It stream-

lines interdepartmental communication and coordination by allowing staff to check eCAPRIS for project information once project managers have entered information and updates. eCAPRIS data can also be pulled together for sophisticated analysis and reporting in several ways. A GIS component furthers analysis capabilities by allowing projects to be defined spatially and viewed through CIVIC, an online, interactive visualization tool (Austin 2015). The City of Austin also uses eCAPRIS data in combination with the geographic data to power an internal GIS viewer, IMMPECT, which is used by CIP project managers to better coordinate future projects and identify “dig once” opportunities.

**Plan Implementation Data.** Planners can translate adopted plans into a comprehensive data set which allows for easier tracking of plan implementation and better coordination with CIP departments.

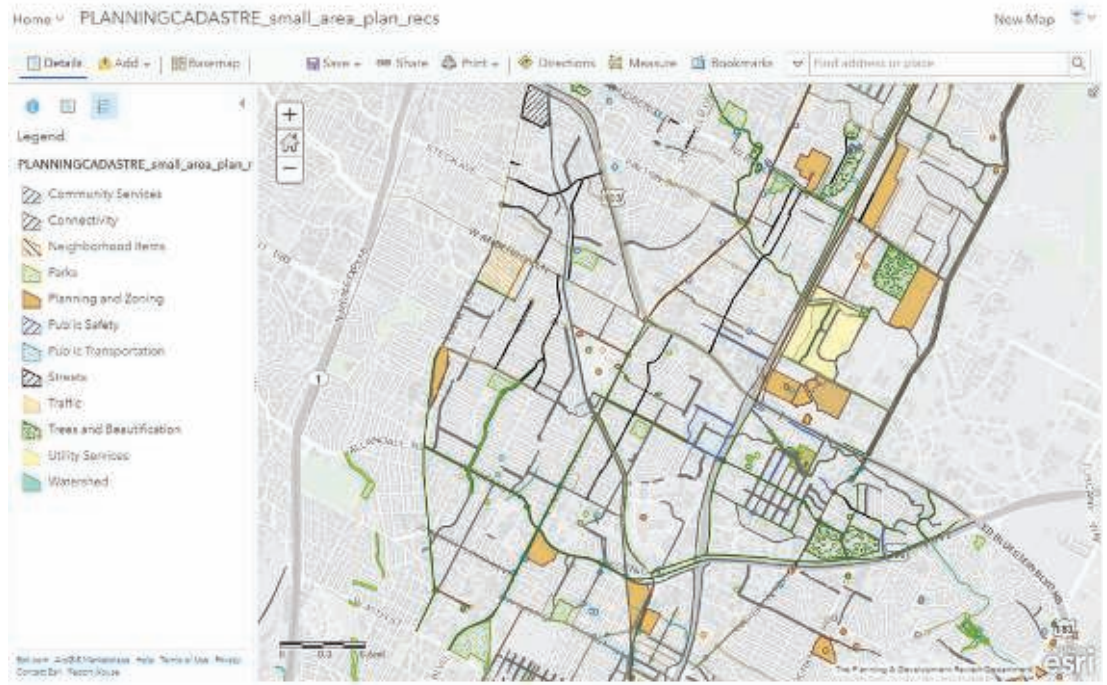
The City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department tracks all adopted small area plan action items in a relational database which is linked to spatial data. The spatial data is available to all City of Austin staff via an internal GIS server (Figure 10, p. 10). The spatial data is also available to CIP project managers as a reference layer within the IMMPECT viewer. Action item status updates come from a variety of sources including eCAPRIS and individual departments’ GIS data. Analyses and reports can be run on implementation status, type of action item, primary responsible department, or prioritized by neighborhood or other characteristic. The City of Austin Planning and Zoning Department also produces a *Small Area Plan Implementation Annual Report* (Austin 2018d) and other reporting based on this database, and makes the data available to the public through an online viewer and other means.

**Take Stock of Infrastructure Conditions.** Data-driven planning and decision making is becoming more prevalent and desired by our communities. The reality is that infrastructure needs almost always exceed available funding. With funding constraints, it is important to have data to help identify infrastructure needs, including the inventory and condition of the assets. Understanding infrastructure conditions also enables planners to compare needs across asset types and make the case for additional or more sustainable investment in a certain infrastructure category to improve the level of service. Developing the capability to report on infrastructure condition will also allow planners to establish performance measures by which we can measure progress toward community goals.

**Be Flexible About Organizational Structure.** Capital planning lies in an area of overlap between planning, financial services, and infrastructure services, and there is no one “right” way to organize your city around this work. Figure 11 (p. 10) offers one example. You may consider:

- establishing a single high-level “capital planning” or “portfolio management” office

Figure 10. Small area plan recommendations — ArcGIS online map (Austin 2018e).



- designating resources within an existing department (including planning, financial services, or infrastructure services)
- creating a capital planning strike team within the city manager’s office or a council office
- establishing a collaborative approach where one department is responsible for overall coordination, while other departments provide specific support based on their expertise and function

**Manage Public Expectations.** There will never be enough funding to build every needed project, and even funded capital investments can take many years to fully develop and implement. It is easy for public stakeholders to become disappointed and feel like the plan they worked on “didn’t do anything” when they don’t see immediate results. This can have a negative impact on overall public trust in government. Planners may not be able to increase the funding available, but they can work to manage public expectations by:

- educating the public on the capital delivery process and how the plan’s recommendations will guide that process
- showcasing capital renewal needs as well as strategic investment priorities during the planning process
- providing a realistic picture of how one neighborhood’s desired project ranks against other priorities across the city (it might not be a high priority for the city overall)
- providing transparent, open data and reporting so that the public can see what is getting built
- providing funding visualizations

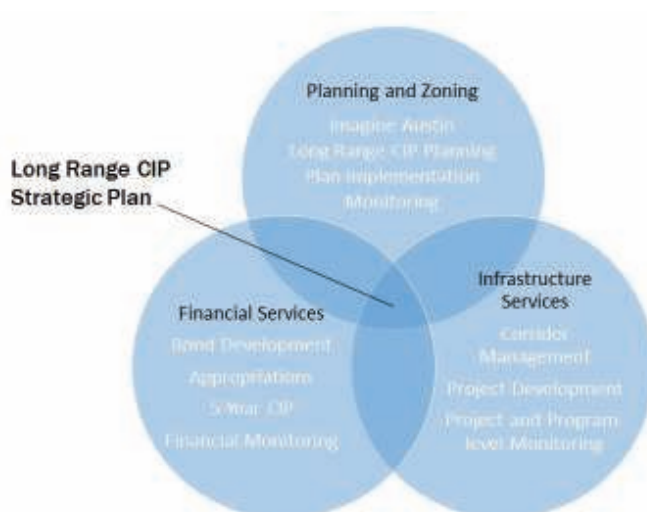


Figure 11. Sample organizational structure for long-range CIP planning. Courtesy City of Austin.

**Focus on Key Strategies and Connect the Dots.** Planners are well suited to the task of convening discussions across multiple disciplines and interest groups, and most planners, particularly those involved in comprehensive planning, are “dot connectors” by nature. Planners can use these skills in myriad ways to help their communities better align investments with the comprehensive plan, including:

- analyzing geographic data and developing maps that identify where particular investments could have the biggest impact on achieving the community’s vision

- convening departments to discuss opportunities for leveraging strategic investments through forums and roundtables
- bringing funding to the table, making tactical improvements, and coordinating pilot projects
- coordinating with city management to build future bond package recommendations or grant applications around strategic investments implementing the comprehensive plan
- looking for opportunities in every project that comes down the investment pipeline
- coordinating on an ongoing basis with capital project development and financial services staff to identify ways to integrate the comprehensive plan into CIP decision making
- using annual reporting to demonstrate how investments are implementing plans

## Conclusion

While it can be challenging to integrate capital improvements planning with the comprehensive plan, the ability for cities to fully implement the vision laid out in their comprehensive plans depends on this integration. The City of Austin has experimented with how to approach this integration over the last several years, and looks forward to learning from others.

## About the Authors

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# QUICKNOTES

## Integrating Sustainability into the Comprehensive Plan

The comprehensive plan is a guiding document for the future of an entire community. It establishes goals and policies and lays out action steps for meeting those goals.

While sustainability has often been an implied goal of comprehensive plans, communities are increasingly placing a new emphasis and focus on making sustainability a clear part of their comprehensive plans. They have done this through new goals and policies that establish sustainability as an objective and create the foundation for programs and steps to implement these goals. Some communities have created entire new elements in their comprehensive plan to incorporate these goals, while others have integrated sustainability throughout their existing plan elements.

### DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

One of the first steps in updating a comprehensive plan to incorporate sustainability is to decide what sustainability means to your community and what new issues and concerns might be addressed under the umbrella of sustainability. Communities may choose to reference other commonly accepted definitions of sustainability or draw upon community input and the community vision to state what sustainability means to their community in particular. Also, decide if your community will use the common triple-bottom-line approach to sustainability, which encompasses environmental, economic, and social equity concerns as the three prongs to sustainability. Alternatively, you may choose to focus on one or two of these or different areas, to reflect what is not currently in the comprehensive plan and what is important to your community.

Communities should also decide what sustainability issues will be reflected in new goals and policies. This list could include climate change, renewable energy, green building, green infrastructure, water, food access, alternative transportation, land conservation, habitat protection, and more. Assessing what policies are currently in your plan, which of those need to be updated, and what is missing from the plan will help you determine where to focus your efforts.

### A SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT

One approach to updating the comprehensive plan to include sustainability measures is to add a new element to the plan that focuses on this topic area. Communities may choose this approach for a variety of reasons, one of which may be the desire to add this area before the next comprehensive update of their plan. While this new element should follow a similar format to other elements of the plan and comply with any state-specific requirements for comprehensive plans, here are some guidelines for incorporating a sustainability element:

- Provide an overview of the issue, the rationale for addressing sustainability in the plan, and the relationship to other elements of the plan. Also include a definition of what sustainability means to your community, as described above.
- Summarize existing conditions and any baseline assessments. For example, if your community has completed a greenhouse gas inventory or an assessment of energy use, those could be summarized here as background information.

James C. Schwab



*The City of Greensburg, Kansas, adopted a Sustainable Comprehensive Plan in 2008. The 5.4.7 Arts Center in Greensburg, the first LEED Platinum building in Kansas, reflects the community's commitment to becoming more sustainable.*



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**Page 21 of 22**

- Establish sustainability goals and then develop policies to support those goals. Consider connections to land use, transportation, infrastructure, and other important aspects of the plan.
- Create implementation or action steps to achieve the sustainability goals, identifying who will lead the implementation, what the timelines will be, and any known resources or funding sources that could help with the implementation. You may also include metrics to assess and track your progress toward your sustainability goals.

## INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGHOUT THE PLAN

Other communities have taken a different approach to addressing aspects of sustainability by incorporating sustainability goals and policies throughout existing plan elements, such as land use, transportation, and housing. Communities may prefer this approach if they already have a separate sustainability plan that comprehensively addresses this topic. In this case, communities may choose to focus on integrating major goals and policies from that plan into the respective elements and reference the sustainability plan for background information and details. Other communities may prefer this approach in order to ensure compatible goals and policies and integrate sustainability as a theme. Marin County, California, for example, used sustainability as the overarching theme for their countywide plan.

Even if your community has already been addressing aspects of sustainability such as climate change, energy concerns, and green building through other programs, integrating these priorities into your comprehensive plan is a good idea. The comprehensive plan is one of the most important documents that the planning department and the planning commission uses, and including your priorities for a sustainable future for your city is integral to ensuring that these priorities are part of your community's long-term vision. The comprehensive plan is also a useful tool for establishing new policies and priorities related to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable development. In addition, revisiting goals and policies that are already in your plan to see how they might fit into your new sustainability vision—or be updated to help achieve that vision—will improve the likelihood of successful implementation.

Regardless of which approach your community chooses to take, planners and planning commissioners should ensure that new goals and policies related to sustainability are supported by other elements of your plan. For example, if reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled is a stated goal, closely examine your land-use and transportation elements to ensure that future plans for accommodating growth will not work against your goal.

## CONCLUSION

Communities are increasingly recognizing the importance of becoming more sustainable and thinking about sustainability in planning for the future of their communities. Planners and planning commissioners should review their comprehensive plan to see to what extent sustainability is incorporated, and update plans when needed to integrate a sustainability vision as well as goals, policies, and action items to help the community become more sustainable. Planners and commissioners should also ensure consistency between elements and be mindful of how other plan elements, such as transportation and land use, may affect your sustainability goals.

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