

AUSTIN, TEXAS: THE LIVE MUSIC CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

RYAN LOOMIS
MICHELE LARIMER
JOSIE TEODOSIJEVA

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INTRODUCTION

In this study of Austin, Texas certain spatial, physical, cultural and developmental aspects of the City has been taken into consideration in order to compare trends with Denver, Colorado during a ten-year period (1990-2000). By looking at zoning, boundaries, population growth, development, retail and parking, a better description of the character of Austin's downtown business district was possible. Whenever more recent data was available from agencies such as the Downtown Austin Association, the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the City of Austin and the U.S. Census Bureau it was used to make more current comparisons with Denver.

Maps are provided to describe the physical and spatial relationships of the data and how it relates to the real issues of planning on the ground. In addition collected data is provided through tables to give shape to the actual outcomes in terms of development and demographic considerations. In response to this information the agencies involved in keeping downtown Austin vital have implemented many measures to spur growth and interest through transit planning, retail, residential and commercial construction, and support of existing positive elements of the city's social fabric. There is a definite tendency for these agencies to capitalize on the multicultural character of Austin as well as student consumers, potential downtown residents, the population's penchant for music, entertainment, and high tech entrepreneurship to name a few. Austin's unique qualities are what define and determine the plans for future growth and this study attempts to give a more detailed version of available data used in making planning decisions.

At the conclusion of the study there will be a comparison between Austin and Denver to highlight strengths and areas needing more attention for both cities. Austin often compares itself to Denver, Seattle, and Raleigh-Durham and the competition for attracting business and residents is spirited. There are many commonalities in regional planning authorities and trends to strengthen Austin by tapping into nearby cities along with the assets they offer. It is interesting to note the similarities between cities and how they might have prompted each other to adopt some of the same strategies to encourage and promote growth.

LOCATION

Austin is located in the heart of Travis County in central Texas. The downtown boundaries are located in the heart of the Austin Metropolitan area. Metropolitan Austin has a population of roughly 1.5 million people and a land area of about 4,285 square miles.¹ The City of Austin is a small portion of the metropolitan area at 294 square miles, but houses approximately half the metropolitan's total population. The City is shaped like an hourglass, with downtown Austin located at the belt of the hourglass. There are numerous growing communities surrounding Austin, including: Round Rock, Pflugerville, and Cedar Park to the north, Lakeway, West Lake Hills, Largo Vista, and Rolling Wood to the west, Sunset Valley, Mustang Ridge, Creedmoor, and Kyle to the south and Elgin, Bastrop, and Manor to the east.² Local neighborhoods encircle the downtown area, including: the University of Texas and West University to the north, Central East Austin and East Cesar Chavez to the east, South River City and Bouldin to the south, and Old West Austin to the west.³

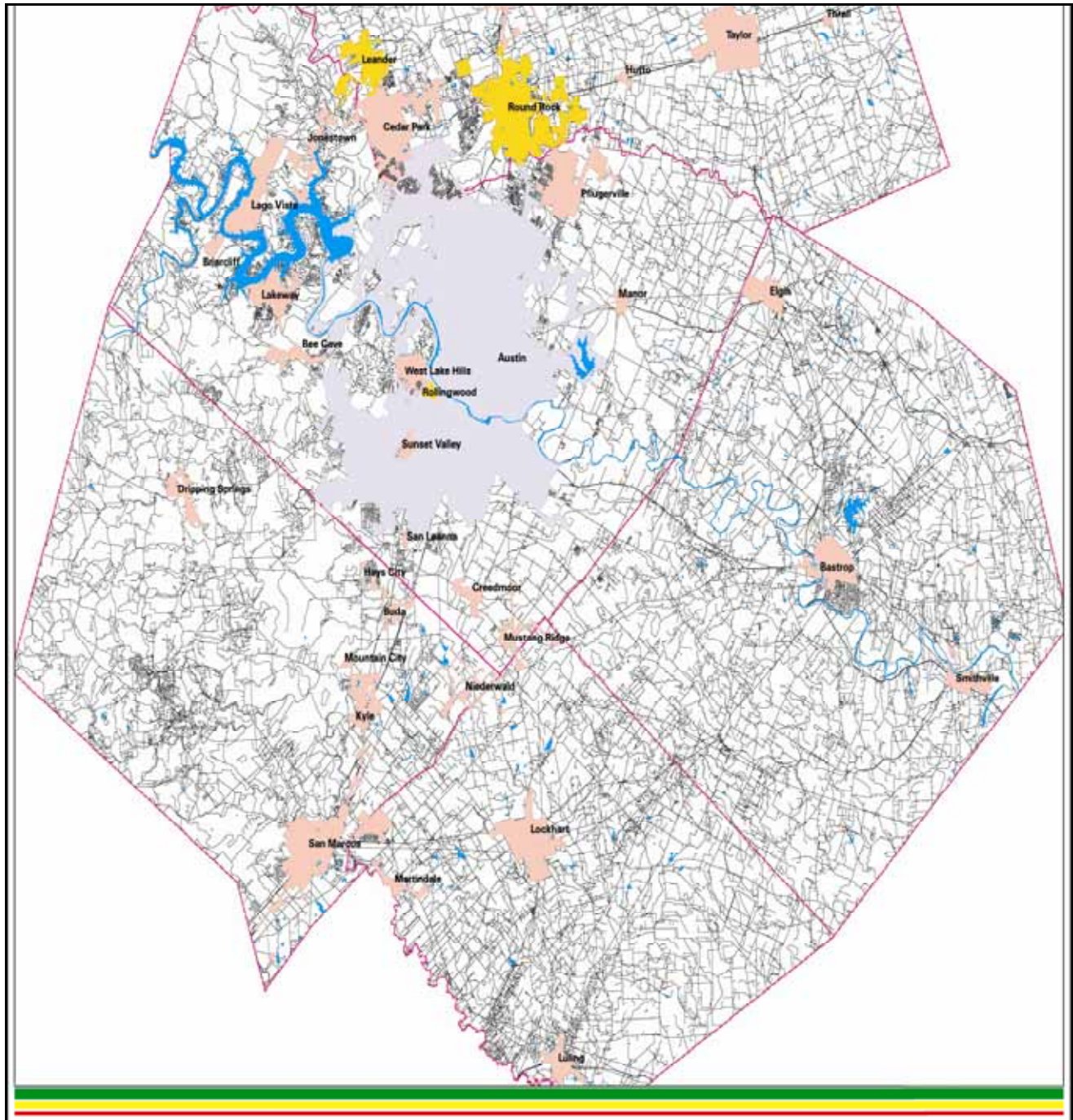
Downtown Austin is the political center of Texas. The Texas State Capitol is located in Downtown, and the other civic uses including the City of Austin and Travis County government offices make there home here. The University of Texas is located just north of Downtown and is the largest single employer in Austin. Approximately 51,000 students call University of Texas home and the university employs 20,000 workers.⁴ The City of Austin is the third largest employer in the downtown area with 12,000 workers. The large workforce and student population in the downtown area has had an impact to the region's growth and development. Downtown Austin has seen an increase demand for residential and commercial services. The combination of a large workforce and close proximity to Interstate 35 also makes growth in surrounding communities inevitable. Interstate 35 is a major north south corridor that runs the entire length of Austin and provides easy access for the downtown commuting workforce to live in more affordable suburban areas. According to Austin's housing and population forecast, the majority of the growth occurs on the northern and southern fringes of the city. The greatest

¹ Robinson, Ryan. "City of Austin Demographics." Austin City Connection. 1 April 2006. City of Austin. 15 November 2006 <<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/>>.

² See MSA map.

³ See downtown neighbors map.

⁴ "Austin Area Top 40 Major Employers by Rank." Austin City Connection. 31 May 2003. City of Austin. 15 November 2006 <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/growth/top40_2002.htm>.

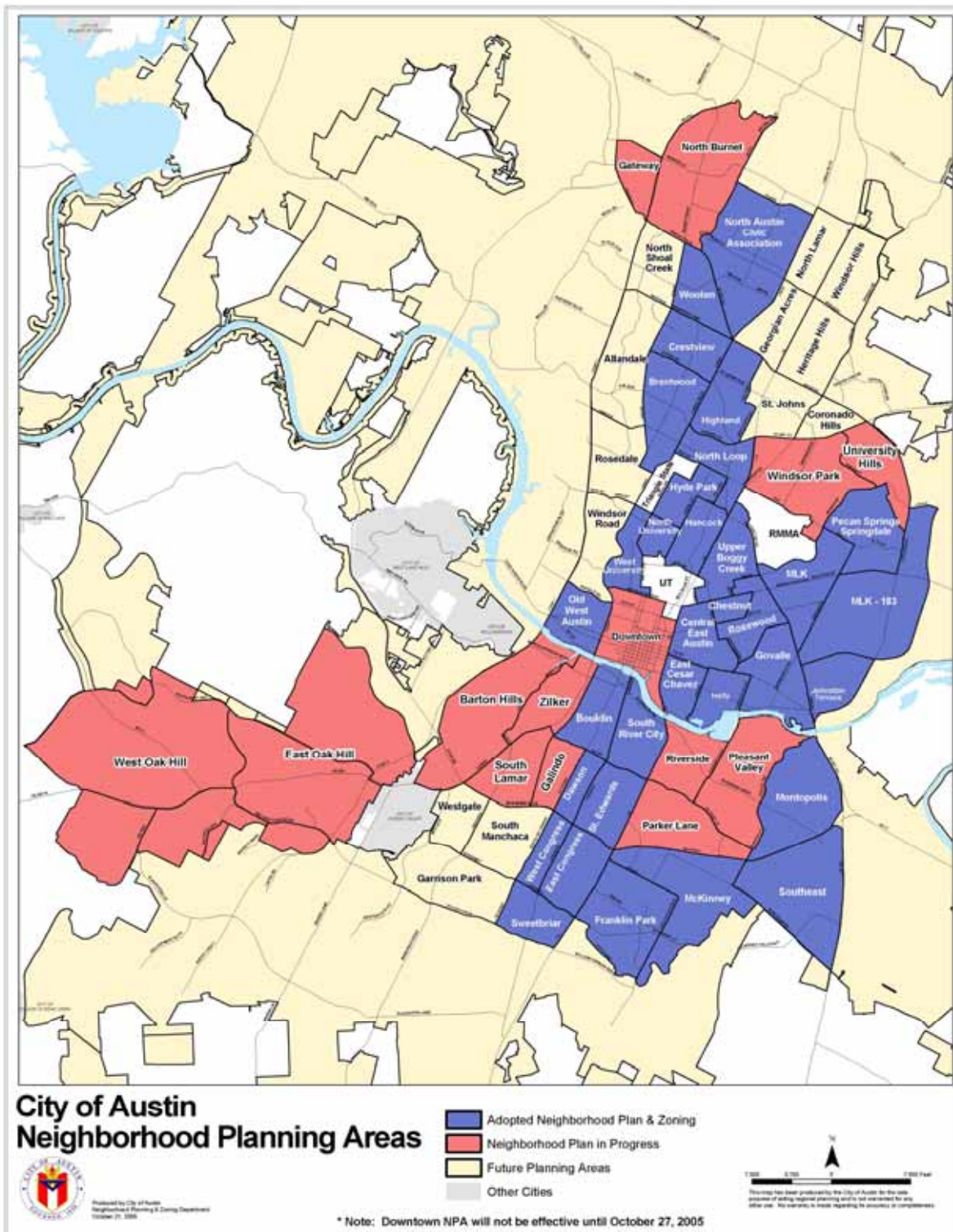


Austin MSA Municipal Jurisdictions

As of April 1, 2000

Census 2000 Block Geography from The Redistricting TIGER Files

Map developed by The City Development Department of Planning, City of Austin, January 2001



amount of population growth is expected to occur in south central Austin and is expected to house 10,000 more residents.⁵ This same region saw a 2,000 unit increase in single-family homes between 2000 and 2004. The growth cycle is not a one-way street, however, as the booming growth in the outlying areas have had a significant impact on downtown Austin development. The downtown area has always been an entertainment mecca and lures in visitors from the outlying areas. As the region continues to grow and change, more people will continue to flock into downtown Austin for entertainment, dining and shopping.

BOUNDARIES

Downtown Austin is located in the heart of the city and includes the area that surrounds the State Capital north of the Colorado River. The Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) created an official boundary of Downtown through the establishment of a Public Improvement District (PID). The boundaries of the PID include Martin Luther King Boulevard to the north, Interstate 35 to the east, Riverside Drive and the Colorado River to the south, and San Antonio Street to the west.⁶ The University of Texas campus is located directly north of the PID boundary and was not included due to the campus's independent development objectives.

The Austin City Council created the PID in April 1993 to address the needs of downtown Austin, and later developed Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) to manage the district. The DAA was specifically created to market the PID, promote economic development, and make the PID clean, safe, and enjoyable. The PID boundary was formed based upon larger properties with values greater than \$500,000. Each property within the PID has a special assessment used to supplement city services and promote downtown.⁷ The jagged boundary on the western side reflects where owners of some properties opposed the creation of the PID. Texas law requires half of the value and half of the land area or half of the property owners to approve the creation of the PID.⁸ The areas outside the PID are smaller residential areas not conducive to the PID objectives.

⁵ Robinson, Ryan. "City of Austin Population and Household Forecast by Zip Code." Austin City Connection. October 2004. City of Austin. 15 Nov. 2006 <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/downloads/zip_forecast.pdf>.

⁶ See Downtown aerial map.

⁷"The DAA: Who We Are." Downtown: As Austin As It Gets. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <<http://www.downtownaustin.com/daa/whoweare/mission>>.

⁸ Fitch, Julie. "Re: Research Information for Report on Downtown Austin." E-mail interview. 15 November 2006.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN AERIAL MAP



CHARACTERISTICS

Downtown Austin is comprised of eight unique districts within the DAA jurisdiction. The PID delineates the jurisdiction of the DAA and is not considered one of the unique districts. The eight districts within Downtown include: Arts District, Congress District, Red River District, 6th Street District, Convention Center District, 2nd Street District, Market District, and the Warehouse District.⁹

The Arts District is the cultural center of Downtown and is located on Guadalupe Street, northwest of the State Capitol. The Arts District is home to many small galleries and artist's studios including the Guadalupe Arts Center, Women and Their Work Studio, and the dberman gallery. The dberman gallery specializes in contemporary American painting, sculpture, and photography, with an emphasis on regional artists. Located in the 1930 Chapline Building, dberman gallery is a contemporary urban exhibition space that preserves the Commercial Deco feel of the historic building. The gallery strives to promote an appreciation for art in Austin, forges relationships with artists and collectors, and assists corporate collectors in expanding their collections.¹⁰

The Congress District is referred to as the "Main Street of Texas". The district is located along Congress Avenue between the Colorado River and the State Capitol. Home to many shops, galleries and restaurants, Congress Avenue provides beautiful views northward toward the Capitol. On South Congress Avenue, two to three blocks are filled with a diverse selection of quirky shops featuring everything from '50s-style furniture to folk art. Boot shops, galleries, antiques and other curiosities fill quaint boutiques. A wide variety of culinary delights are found between the shops in the Congress District. Additionally, Austin Museum of Art, Mexic-Arte Museum, Arthouse at the Jones Center, the Paramount and State Theatres are located in the Congress District.¹¹

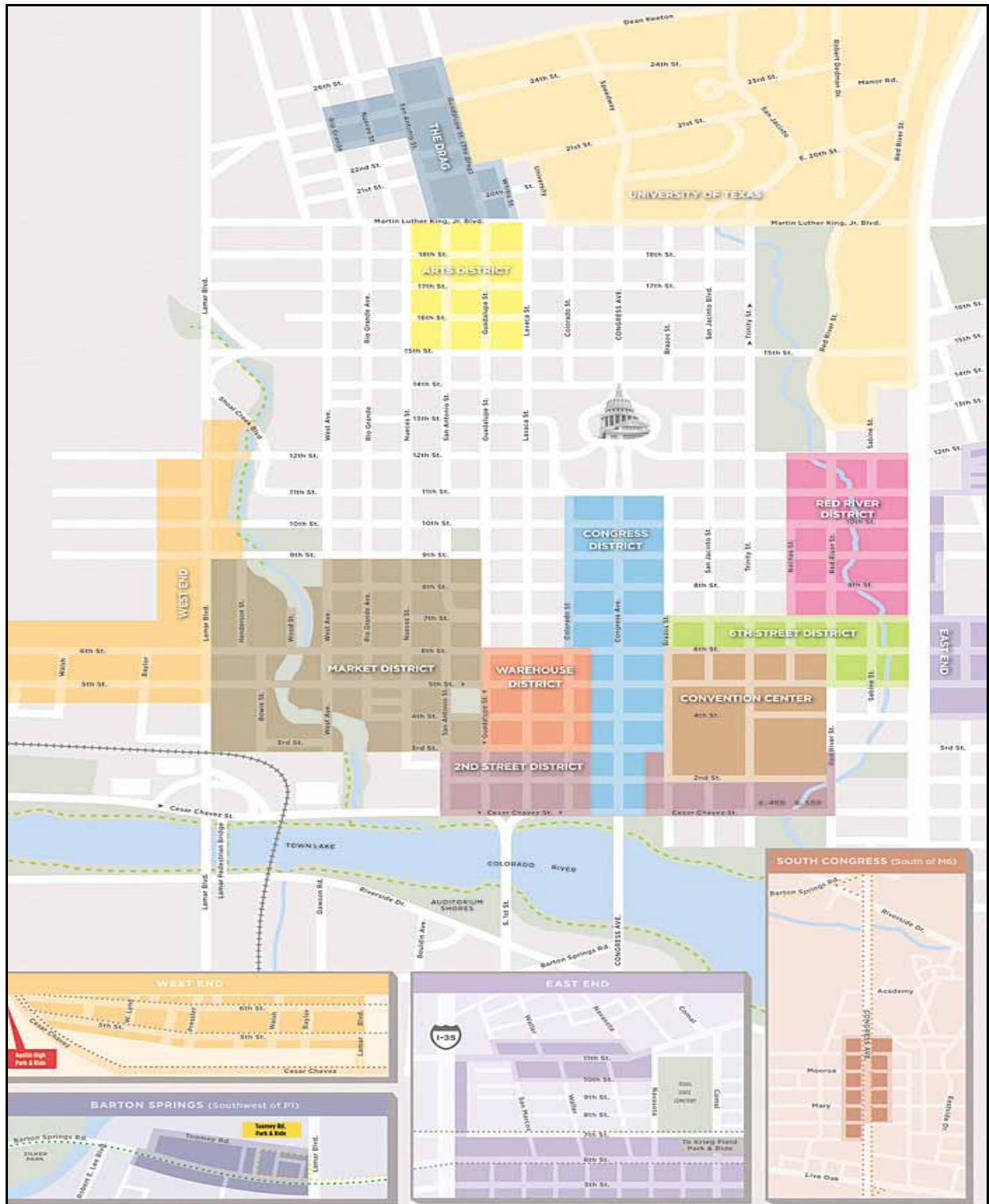
The Red River District is an emerging district that is home to Symphony Square and the famous Stubb's BBQ. The district is becoming home to one of Austin's hottest live music scenes for

⁹ See district map, <<http://www.downtownaustin.com/directory/>>.

¹⁰ "Arts & Culture." Downtown: As Austin As It Gets. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <<http://www.downtownaustin.com/fun/arts/galleries/>>.

¹¹ "Downtown Directory." Downtown: as Austin as It Gets. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <<http://www.downtownaustin.com/directory/>>.

Austin District Map



punk, rock, and alternative country. The scale and architecture in the Red River District is similar to the 6th Street District.¹²

The 6th Street District is the most famous district in Austin and is Austin's entertainment showpiece. The District host great events such as: Austin Mardi Gras celebration, South by Southwest, The Republic of Texas Bikers Rally, the Pecan Street Festival and 6th Street's infamous Halloween celebration.¹³ Many historical houses and commercial buildings dating from the late 1800's and early 1900's line 6th Street. The district is in the National Register Historic District and is internationally known as a unique and lively entertainment area. The storied old buildings now house numerous bars, a host of live entertainment venues, tattoo parlors, art galleries, casual cafes, upscale restaurants, and the elegant Driskill Hotel. Architecturally speaking, the small scale of 6th Street's District buildings provides an intimate feeling for pedestrians. Majority of the buildings are only one to three stories tall and are built to the edge of the sidewalk. Live music of every genre, including: jazz, blues, and country to rock, hip-hop, beat, progressive, metal, and punk abounds in this district. Great food is a staple on 6th Street, featuring such regional staples as chili, ribs, and Tex-Mex plus steak, seafood, Cajun-cooking, and sandwiches. West 6th Street offers another surprise with antique stores, art galleries, hair salons, restaurants, and eclectic shops.

The 2nd Street District is where fashion hits the road. This district is the retail center of Downtown Austin with 225,000 square feet of well-integrated retail, restaurants and entertainment. Nestled on the edge of Austin's skyline, the 2nd Street District lies just north of the Colorado River. The area is built with the feel of New York's SoHo and Boston's Back Bay with residential space, great restaurants, outdoor cafes, art films and museums. The district is pedestrian oriented with people walking all hours of the day.¹⁴

Market District is named after Whole Foods Grocery Store. The Whole Foods Corporate Headquarters are located in this district and is one of the largest employers in Austin's

¹² "about 6street.com: austin entertainment." [6street.com](http://www.6street.com/6s_pg_about.htm). 15 November 2006 <http://www.6street.com/6s_pg_about.htm>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Second Street District." [Austin City Connection](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm#ssdsp). 2006. City of Austin. 15 November 2006. <<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm#ssdsp>>.

downtown. The Market District also provides places for live, work and play. The District hosts numerous urban chic living, shopping and dining in the heart of downtown.¹⁵

The Warehouse District is located on the western fringes of downtown. This District is more upscale and trendier than 6th Street District. The restaurants and clubs in this district have been renovated from former warehouses into hip restaurants, top-notch concert halls, and distinctive bars. Live music is everywhere in the Warehouse District and great restaurants are easy to find in this district that caters to a slightly more mature crowd.¹⁶

Each District has its own challenges, but according to the DAA, the eastern third of the Districts, including 6th Street, Convention Center, and Red River is hindered by several aspects. First is the Capitol View Corridor where City and State laws protect views of the State Capitol from several vantage points, including the upper deck of Interstate 35, severely limiting building height in the area. Second, there is a concentration of social service agencies one block from 6th Street. Thirdly, Waller Creek has a wide floodplain that hinders development in the area. The DAA has been an advocate in addressing these mentioned issues. In regards to the view corridor, the long-term goal is to reconstruct Interstate 35 to remove the upper deck and have the frontage roads and bridges at street level, with highway below grade. If the upper deck were removed, this would alleviate some of the view corridor restriction in the area and also help connect Downtown to East Austin. As far as social services, the DAA has lobbied for enhanced public order ordinances, which have passed in 2005. The East 6th Street merchants have also established their own public improvement district to help redevelop the area and make it more aesthetically pleasing. In regards to the floodplain issues along Waller Creek, the DAA has been a longtime supporter of a flood control tunnel that would bring this land out of the floodplain, enhance water quality, decrease erosion, and keep a constant flow of water within four to five feet enabling development that faces a natural amenity, system of trails, peacemaking opportunity, etc. This project is escalating in cost, but the projected incremental revenue keeps increasing as well. DAA is working closely with City staff, City Council Members, and Travis County Commissioners to get this project funded and underway.

¹⁵ "Downtown Directory." Downtown: as Austin as It Gets. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <http://www.downtownaustin.com/directory/>.

¹⁶ "Warehouse District." About6street.Com. 15 November 2006 <http://www.6street.com/6s_pg_warehouse.htm>.

ZONING

The zoning in downtown Austin is made up of three base districts including residential, commercial and industrial districts. Within each base district are zoning designations.¹⁷

Downtown has three zoning designations within the residential district including Family Residence SF-3, Multifamily Residence MF-4 and MF-5. The SF-3 zone is a moderate density single-family use and duplex zone with minimum 5,750 square foot lots and maximum height of thirty-five feet. Duplex development must maintain single-family neighborhood characteristics. The MF-4 and MF-5 zones are high density residential that allow between thirty-six and fifty-four units per acre. These units must maintain a minimum lot size of 8,000 square feet and may be built to sixty feet.¹⁸

Downtown has eight zoning designations for commercial districts. The majority of Downtown is zoned central business district (CBD). The CBD zone allows office, commercial, residential, and civic uses downtown. It is different than most zones in that a site plan must be approved by City Council, which establishes the site development regulations. A public hearing is required for all development in the CBD zone. Other prominent commercial zones include the general office (GO) zone, which allows sixty foot buildings on 5,750 square foot minimum lot sizes and 1:1 floor area ratio, and the DMU (Downtown Mixed Use) zone, which is an intermediate density zone used as a transition between the downtown area and surrounding districts. The DMU limits height to 120 feet and has a 5:1 maximum floor area ratio. Finally, within the industrial district, the downtown area has some LI (Limited Industrial) zones and P (Public) zones. The LI zone allows for commercial service use or limited manufacturing use on moderately sized lots with a 1:1 maximum floor area ratio. The P zone is designated for governmental, civic, public service, or public institution uses. Development in the P zone must follow separate development regulations highlighted in Section 25-2-625 of the Code.¹⁹

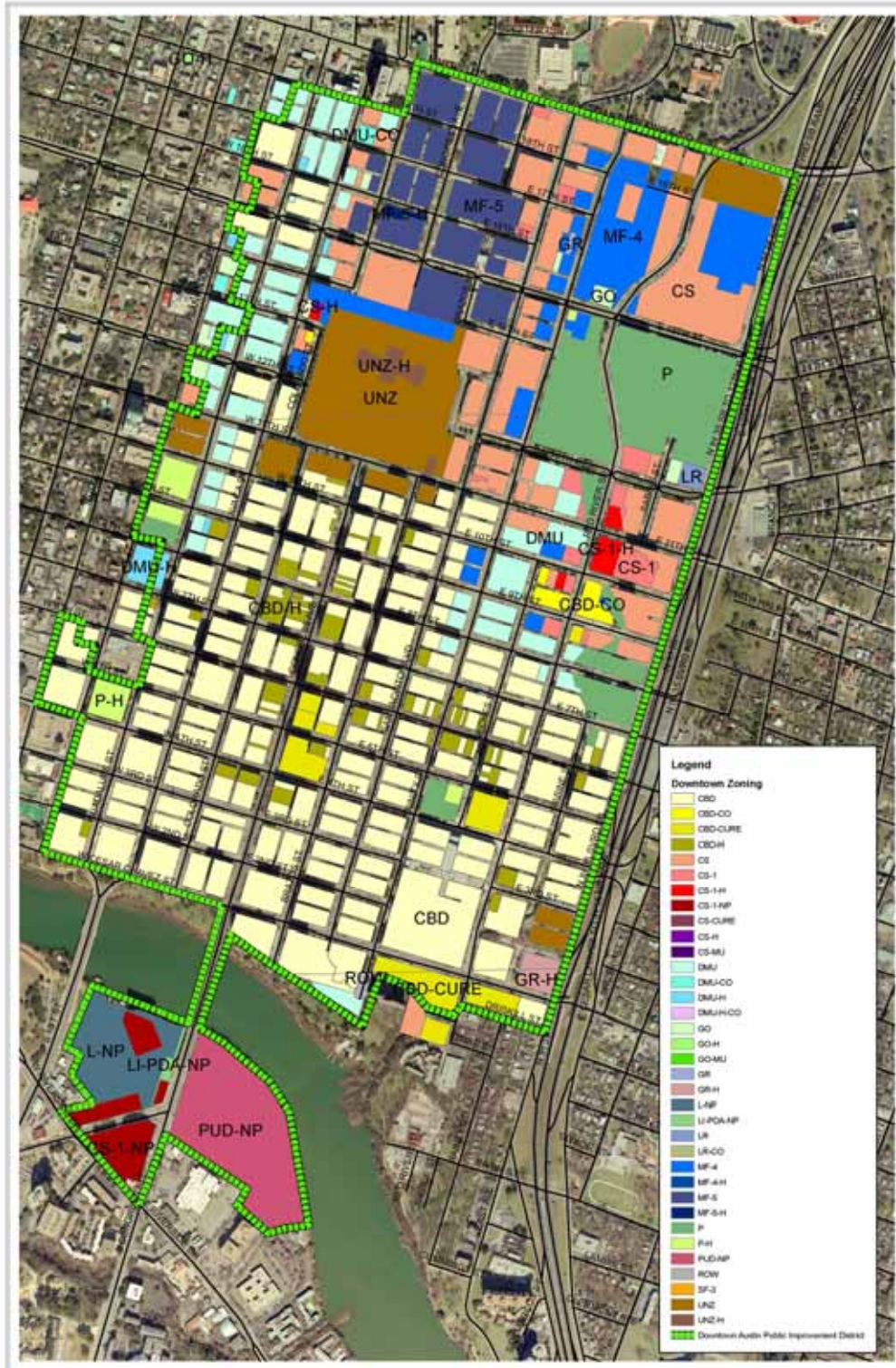
Downtown Austin has a few Overlay Districts that affect development. The Capitol Dominance (CD) Overlay District is used to protect the visual and symbolic significance of the State Capitol by keeping buildings in close proximity to the Capitol from dominating the structure. The CD

¹⁷ See zoning map.

¹⁸ "Chapter 25-2. Zoning." *American Legal Publishing Corporation*. 2002. City of Austin. 15 November 2006. <http://www.amlegal.com/austin_nxt/gateway.dll?f=templates&fn=default.htm&vid=amlegal:austin_tx>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN ZONING MAP



Overlay applies to all property within a mile of the Capitol. Another overlay used to protect the views of the Capitol is the Capitol View Corridor (CVC) Overlay which preserves the view of the State Capitol Building by limiting height of structures located in the capitol view corridors. Other overlays within the Downtown include the Downtown Parks (DP), Downtown Creeks (DC), and the Waterfront Overlay (WO).²⁰

POPULATION

After an extreme downturn in the local economy that reflected a national trend in 2001, the City of Austin experienced consistent but slow population growth during the first half of the decade. Households have grown steadily during the past decade, despite deep job cuts with only a recent upturn in job growth.

Growth is witnessed in single-family home construction in the central urban core but usually a preexisting structure was demolished to make way for a larger building. With a few exceptions, the overall density of single-family structures in most inner-city neighborhoods has not increased greatly in recent years; however the urban core has witnessed population growth and heavy investment in the existing housing stock. The rate of move-offs and demolitions in the City of Austin support this information.²¹

Within the central business district or urban core population growth is predominately from new multi-family projects and incoming Hispanic families who tend to have larger household sizes. The City of Austin serves as a portal for immigrants coming into the United States from Mexico, Central and South America as well as China, India and Southeast Asia. The influx of immigrants creates a majority-minority community where no single ethnic group holds the majority. Additionally, Austin's downtown area has a strong sub-market for condo and high-end apartment construction that emerged during the first half of the decade. This is evidenced by the large amount of condominium and mixed use projects either underway or planned for the near future in the immediate downtown zone. Mayor Will Wynn of Austin is on record as saying "My goal is to have 25,000 people living in Downtown in 10 years," and judging by the amount of projects slated for development this trend is fully supported by the City.²²

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See demolition and move off map.

²² DAA. "Why Downtown?" <http://www.downtownaustin.com>, 19 September 2006.

In 2006 the central downtown population stands at 5,300 people according to the DAA.²³ It is estimated by the City Demographer’s Office that the Anglo share of total population for the City sits at just under 50% as of April 1, 2004 and will decrease further throughout the decade to 45.9% by 2010.²⁴

The City’s share of total population that is Hispanic surged during the 1990’s climbing from 23% in 1990 to almost 31% in 2000 and the Latino share of the total would more than likely show the same dramatic growth. The increasing Hispanic community presents demographic characteristics such as more members per household and a larger population less than 18 years of age, which will have a significant impact on growth in upcoming decades.²⁵

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN – ETHNICITY 2005				
	Downtown	Downtown and Nearby Neighborhoods	City of Austin	MSA
Non-Hispanic white	64.3%	53.0%	52.9%	60.7%
Non-Hispanic Black	11.7%	8.0%	9.8%	7.7%
Hispanic	18.4%	29.7%	30.5%	26.2%
Non-Hispanic Asian	3.6%	7.0%	4.7%	3.5%
Non-Hispanic Other	2.0%	2.2%	2.0%	1.8%

City of Austin, Demographer’s Office, Census tracts 7 and 11.

This data was taken from Census 2000 data for population, households and from ZIP codes that fall within the City of Austin, including any annexations and populations within these areas during the first half of the decade. Future annexations were not taken into consideration for these calculations, but it is not improbable that this could occur. In fill housing construction and

²³ DAA, “Downtown Demographics”, <http://www.downtownaustin.com/business/demographics/> 19 September 2006.

²⁴ City of Austin Demographers Office, “Population and Forecast by Zip”, http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/downloads/zip_forecast.pdf, 29 October 2006.

²⁵ City of Austin Demographers Office, <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/tabular.htm>, 29 September 2006.

urban renewal was assumed, but the current trend of growth in suburban areas in contrast to slower growth in the urban core shows no signs of abating.²⁶

City of Austin – Population Growth from 1990-2006		
Year	Population	Annualized Growth Rate
1990	465,622	3.0%
2000	656,562	3.5%
2005	700,407	1.2%
2006	718,912	2.6%

Austin has seven million visitors annually and has a student population of 51,000 enrolled at the University of Texas.²⁷ These numbers are expected to increase along with economic development and other quality of life considerations such as recreation and the cultural amenities Austin offers (these trends will be discussed later).

DEVELOPMENT

Austin creates a healthy business climate by encouraging investment, innovation, and maintaining its unique character. The *Texas Enterprise Fund* and *Emerging Technology Fund* were created by the state legislature to give businesses incentives to relocate and grow in Austin. In addition the *Austin Technology Incubator* created under the aegis of the University of Texas provides a co-investment opportunity for the development of high tech businesses. In 2005, \$438 million of venture capital was poured into Austin. Patent activity during the 1990's in Austin-San Marcos produced 2,143 patents earned.²⁸ Denver has 4,290 and Boulder (Boulder County) had 2,798 during the same period.²⁹

Austin benefits from the lack of state income, business or property taxes, but the local property tax on business equipment hits capital intensive industries harder than others. Studies show

²⁶ City Demographers Office, <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/tabular.htm>, 29 October 2006.

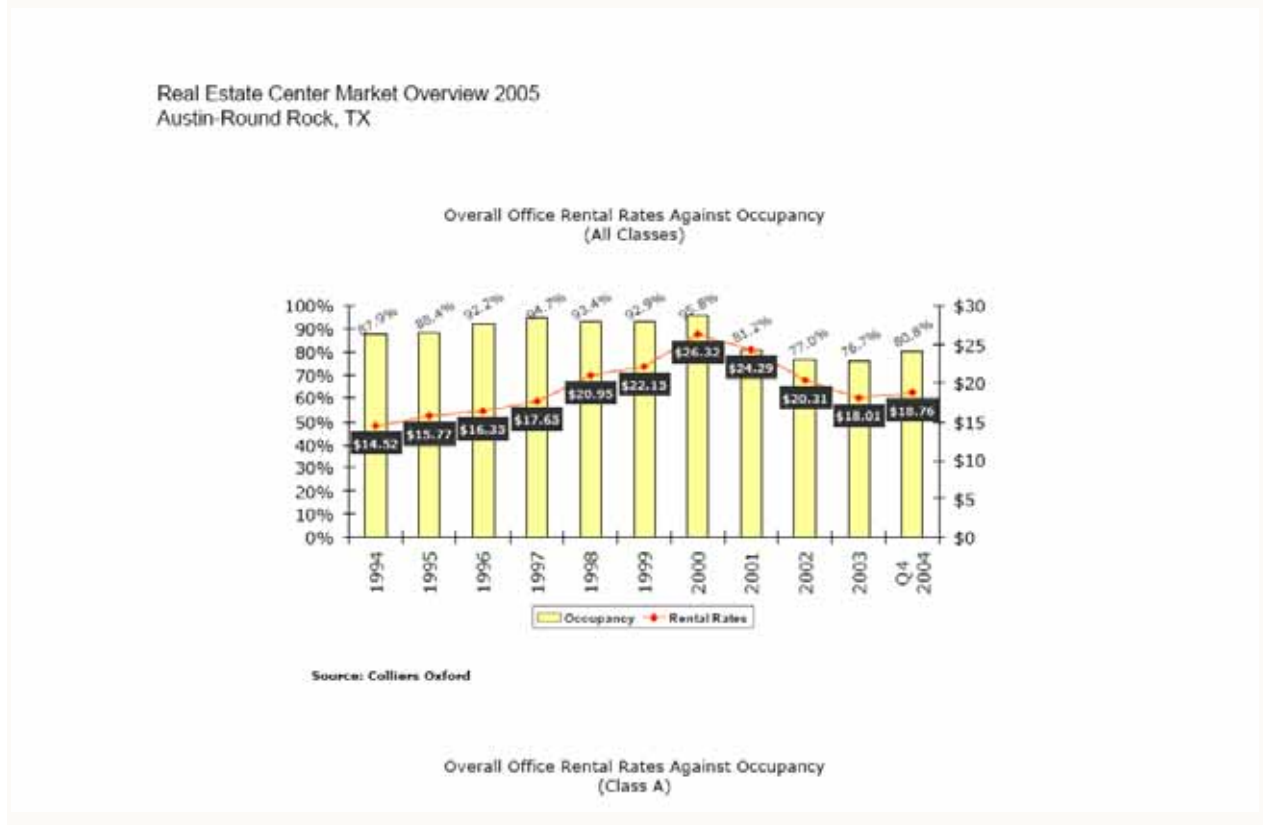
²⁷ Chamber of Commerce, "Business Climate Assessment, Austin, Texas", <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSExecSum.pdf> 23 June 2003. p.2, 5 November 2006.

²⁸ Chamber of Commerce, "Business and Industry" web page.

<http://www.austin-chamber.org/DoBusiness/GreaterAustinProfile/business.html>, 19 September 2006.

²⁹ US Patent Office, "United States Patent Grants by State, County and Metropolitan Area", United States of America and Possessions, 1990-1999. p. 19 <http://www.uspto.gov/go/taf/county.pdf>, 3 November 2006.

that Austin's tax structure was very similar to Seattle's, but more forgiving than Denver and Raleigh-Durham.³⁰



The permitting process in Austin can be archaic. The waiting period is long and the application of regulations is not consistent with between agencies. Competitor cities exemplify a process that is much more streamlined to keep the process both friendly and efficient.³¹ The City decided to make the permit process easier by setting up a “One Stop Shop” attempting expedite the process. The city website contains a page devoted to permitting and the review process and is designed to be user friendly. One can access information about current projects by entering the project number which opens up the data about the status of the job, contact people within

³⁰ Chamber of Commerce, “Business Climate Assessment, Austin, Texas”, <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSEExecSum.pdf> 23 June 2003. p.4, 5 November 2006.

³¹ Chamber of Commerce, “Business Climate Assessment, Austin, <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSEExecSum.pdf> Texas”, 23 June 2003. p.4, 5 November 2006.

the city and so forth. Austin does have a City Council but no district representation.³² This becomes a factor in development that proves to be somewhat daunting at times due to the regular involvement of neighborhood and environmental groups in planning decisions.

Land use and changing priorities have a significant impact on the future plans of Austin's urban core. In addition to programs already in place through the DAA and the Chamber of Commerce a few other guidelines are being implemented to ensure smart growth such as: mixed use, housing variety within adjacent areas, consumer oriented retail at street level, public use considerations and thematic districts in the downtown to foster musical, artistic, and cultural expression. All of these measures are intended to revitalize downtown and stem peripheral growth in adjacent metro areas by giving priority to downtown as the dominant center in the region.

The *Downtown Arts Master Plan* was developed to provide a framework for the development of cultural areas and public spaces to attract residents and visitors. *Citi Arts*, a firm from North Carolina, was hired as a consultant to direct urban design and public art policy. *Great Streets* program was recommended by the architectural community, funded through a voter approved bond issue of \$5 million, and has been implemented by the DAA to enhance streets and sidewalks to make the downtown pedestrian experience more engaging. In addition there are numerous plans to develop special districts throughout the city such as the *6th Street Plan*, park and recreation areas, etc....³³

³² Chamber of Commerce, "Business Climate Assessment, Austin, Texas", <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSExecSum.pdf>
23 June 2006, p.4, 5 November 2006.

³³ City of Austin "Downtown Redevelopment" 2006, <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown>, 5 November 2006, p.8.

Austin Residential Occupancy and Rental Rates 1990-2000		
Year	Renter Occupied Housing Units	Median Rent
1990	114,174	409.
2000	146,547	724.
Numerical Change	32,373	315.
Percentage Change	28.35%	77.0%

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The downtown residential loft market is showing signs of booming for the central high-end sub-market to meet a growing demand for construction of this type of housing. It is not clear whether or not Austin can keep up with the demand for affordable housing for its burgeoning immigrant population. Commercial office buildings, museum expansions and hotels to meet convention and tourism needs are also being planned. Austin has 4800 hotel rooms presently with 900+ soon to come.³⁵ Among Austin's downtown projects under construction there are four commercial developments and ten residential buildings (with many as mixed-use) adding nearly 2,000 units. Also under construction is a Mexican American Cultural Center (126,000 square feet) and Town Lake Park (fifty-four acres). The University of Texas recently completed a new 182,000 square foot art museum as a mixed-use facility that includes an auditorium, meeting rooms and restaurants. An Executive Education Center (70,000 square feet) is also due to be completed on the campus in the spring of 2009. Twenty-six projects are in the planning stage for downtown Austin which are in mostly commercial and residential (many mixed-use) sectors. Also among those projects are plans for a number of governmental offices or facilities. Four non-profits are also planning facilities for a ballet company, a music venue and an historic residence.³⁶

³⁴ Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer. *Texas Population Estimates Program* (online), <http://txsdc.utsa.edu/tpepp/txpopest.php>, San Antonio, TX: Texas State Data Center and Office of the State Demographer, Institute for Demographic and Socioeconomic Research, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 11 November 2006.

³⁵ Downtown Austin Alliance, 2006 "Why Downtown?" <http://www.downtownaustin.com>, 19 September 2006. p.5

³⁶ City of Austin, "Downtown Austin Emerging Projects", 2006, http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/downloads/ep_data_1006.pdf, 21 October 2006.

Austin – Retail Occupancy and Rental Rates – 1994-2004				
Year	Total Square Feet	Average Monthly Base Rent 50-100,000 s.f.	Average Monthly Base Rent 100,000+ s.f.	Overall Occupancy Rate %
1994	11,544,013	\$.90	\$1.10	88.02%
2004	18,619,585	\$1.45	\$1.75	93.89%

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Voter approved a transit oriented development initiative passed in 2005 creating more opportunities for multi-modal transit infrastructure to bring people in and out of the urban core for employment, business and recreation points. The DAA has implemented a *Streetscapes & Transportation Committee* to enhance transportation routes. The regional transportation authority, Capital Metro, is implementing “*All Systems Go*”, an *Urban Commuter Rail* due for completion in 2008, *Rapid Bus Service* and *Second Street Streetscaping* (due to be completed in 2007). Other projects include the *Austin-San Antonio Corridor Regional Rail*, *Pfluger Bridge Extension* and the *Lance Armstrong Crosstown Bikeway*. Capital Metro is also responsible for the *Saltillo District Master Plan* (extension of existing services) and *Future Connections Study* to connect downtown to the University of Texas and other nearby neighborhoods. Capital Metro is also investigating the feasibility of a streetcar circulator as a ballot initiative and advocates a downtown transit transfer station. There is a free trolley ride north and south between the downtown district, the capitol and the University of Texas campus (blue, red and gold routes). The silver route runs east and west. Additionally Capital Metro is struggling to increase ridership revenue and relieve the commuter volume on metro area highways.³⁸

The Austin-Bergstrom Airport (ABIA) is smaller than competitor airports with inferior road, air, and rail infrastructure resulting in smaller shipping, warehousing, as well as employment and wage sectors in the Austin Metro area. The passenger data for ABIA is increased to 7.2 million in 2004 and the volume of air cargo shipments continues to grow reaching 254 million pounds in 2004. Austin location is ideal for logistical connections to Mexico, four of the nation’s largest ports and four of the largest cities in Texas.³⁹

³⁷ Texas Real Estate Market Overview/Austin-Round Rock, 2005, <http://recenter.tamu.edu/mreports/2005/AustinRRock.pdf>, Real Estate Center, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, 11 November 2006.

³⁸ Capital Metro, Austin, Texas, <http://www.capmetro.org/riding/schedulesandmaps.asp>.

³⁹ Chamber of Commerce, “Business Climate Assessment, Austin, Texas”, <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSEExecSum.pdf> 23 June 2003. p.3. 5 November 2006.

Austin is home to many large corporations such as Apple, 3M, Dell, Time Warner Cable, State Farm, Samsung Austin Semiconductor, Whole Foods Market, and numerous organizations in the healthcare, government and educational sector. There are many developments in general R&D but not in biotechnology and nanotechnology due to the lack of skilled employees and infrastructure necessary for this type of business.⁴⁰

Downtown Austin Tourist Attractions	
Attraction	Visitors per Year
Bullock Texas State History Museum	532,942
LBJ Library and Museum	250,000
Texas State Capitol/Capitol Tours	200,000
Capitol Visitor Center	109,000
Austin Children’s Museum	118,000
Congress Avenue Bats	100,000
Austin visitor Center	100,000
Austin Duck Adventure Tours	30,000
Austin Museum of Art	38,500
Texas Governor’s Mansion	18,000

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A significant characteristic in regards to the quality of life in Austin is the well-developed local and international audience for music unique to this city. In 1974 Willie Nelson recorded the pilot episode for *Austin City Limits* in studio 6A at KLRU, the PBS channel for the University of Texas, and the show has been going strong ever since.⁴² By offering a great variety of blues, country, bluegrass, conjunto music, romanticizing the “cosmic cowboy” and showcasing related genres of music the program has been synonymous with the culture of Austin for decades. Another major attraction since 1987 is the *South by Southwest Music and Media Conference and Festival* (SXSW, is a privately held company) that brought 13,500 attendees, \$249,000,000

⁴⁰ Chamber of Commerce, “Business Climate Assessment, Austin, Texas”, <http://www.austin-chamber.org/TheChamber/SmallBusinessResources/reports/MSExecSum.pdf> 23 June 2003. p. 3. 5 November 2006.

⁴¹ Downtown Austin Alliance, “Why Downtown?” 2006. p.5.

⁴² PBS Austin City Limits <http://www.pbs.org/klru/austin/about/history.html>, 9 November 2006.

and 21,879 room nights in 45 local hotels to Austin last year.⁴³ In 1994 the SXSW Film Festival and the SXSW Interactive Festival were added to the mix. Last year the Film/Interactive component brought in \$13 million and 10,000 attendees. In addition a North by Northeast (NXNE) counterpart has been created with the city of Toronto as the venue.⁴⁴

The 2nd and 4th Street restaurant/entertainment district has been popular since General Custer and his troops congregated there after the Civil War.⁴⁵ Due to its proximity to the border of Mexico, Austin is rich with the history of the Southwest and celebrates its multicultural past and present. In consideration of the pressures brought by change and growth there is a local effort recently underway to "Keep Austin Weird" to maintain the unique character of Austin's cultural scene.⁴⁶

DOWNTOWN RETAIL

Downtown Austin is a thriving community. There are approximately 5,300 people who live Downtown, more than 363,000 people living in the primary market area, 67,000 workers working Downtown, 90,000 employees within a mile radius of 6th Street and Congress Avenue, and approximately 7 million visitors who visit Downtown for conventions, trade shows, and tourist attractions.⁴⁷ The exposure that Downtown receives makes it a retailer's paradise. Over the last ten years, however, Downtown Austin has surfaced as an entertainment and cultural experience rather than a retail center. The success that Austin has received along 6th Street District has not translated over into the retail sector. Sales receipts gathered over a seven year period tell a story of the decline in retail and a surge in entertainment. The yearly sales from mixed beverage sales shows a doubling of revenue from \$64 million in 1998 to \$117 million in 2005 generated from local bars and restaurants in Downtown.⁴⁸ The yearly sales from apparel and accessory stores, on the other hand, have declined by 76% from \$12 million to \$3 million over the same period.⁴⁹

⁴³ South by Southwest festivals and conferences <http://2007.swsw.com/about/>, 9 November 2006.

⁴⁴ PBS Austin City Limits <http://www.pbs.org/klru/austin/about/history.html>, 9 November 2006.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "Downtown Demographics." *Downtown: as Austin as It Gets*. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006. <<http://www.downtownaustin.com/business/demographics/>>.

⁴⁸ "Quarterly Mixed Beverage Tax Historical Data Downtown Austin, 1998-2006." *Downtown: as Austin as It Gets*. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <http://downtownaustin.com/downloads/MixedBeverage_78701_98-06.xls>.

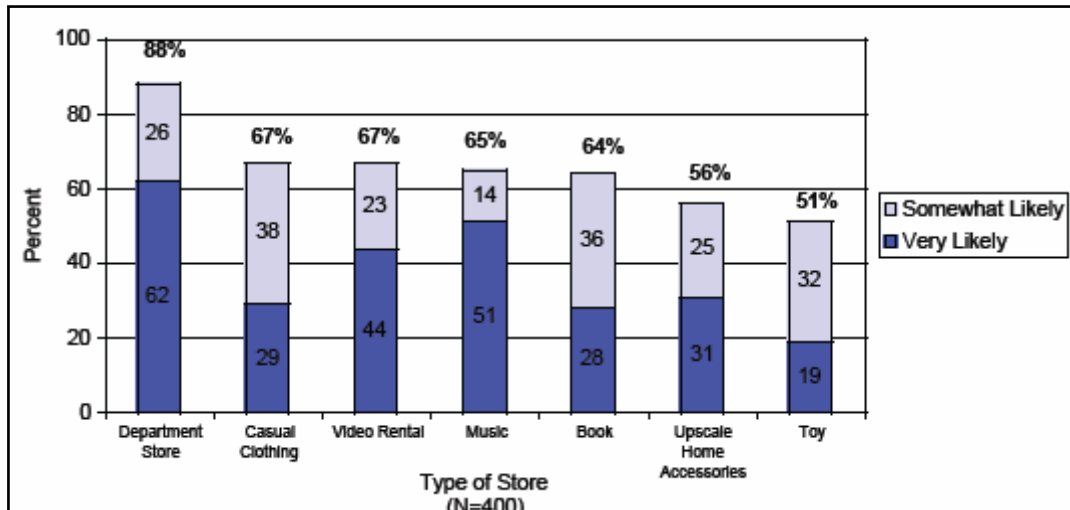
⁴⁹ "Quarterly Sales Tax Historical Data for Downtown Austin by SIC Code, 1998-2005." *Downtown: as Austin as It Gets*. 2006. Downtown Austin Alliance. 15 November 2006 <http://downtownaustin.com/downloads/DTAustin_SalesTax_98-05.xls>.

The problem with retail in Austin is not due to a lack of demand but a lack of retail. The Downtown Alliance and City of Austin have consulted with Economic Research Associates to prepare a Downtown Austin Retail Market Strategy. The Retail Market Strategy was prepared in 2005 to analyze the current Downtown market and highlight ways to encourage retail development. The study found that current demand for retail space Downtown is between 605,000 and 830,000 square feet. Currently, it is estimated that there are only 300,000 square feet of retail in downtown area that mainly serve the restaurant and entertainment sectors. The study found that Downtown Austin is significantly under-supplied in a number of retail categories including apparel and accessories for men and women, shoes, gifts and furnishings, and resident and office oriented service businesses. It also estimated that retail space could increase to between 723,000 and 990,000 square feet by 2008. The study pointed to the large consumer groups in Downtown that would encourage retail demand including the large University student population, the seven million visitors, downtown employees, and a growing residential community.⁵⁰

In a 2004 survey prepared by M. Crane & Associates, Inc, 400 people living near Downtown were surveyed in a retail demand study. The study found that most people would patronize regular department stores, casual clothing stores, music stores, video stores, and book stores. The graph below is from the M. Crane & Associates study that shows the percentages of nearby residents likely to shop at each particular store if downtown. The survey found that a strong

⁵⁰ Economics Research Associates, "Downtown Austin Retail Market Strategy", April 2005, p.14

Percent of Nearby Residents Likely to Shop at Various Types of Stores (If located Downtown)



Source: Economics Research Associates, 2005

retail demand exists in Downtown.⁵¹ According to the Downtown Retail Market Strategy Report, however, the biggest obstacle facing retail downtown was not the lack of parking, but the lack of retail shops.⁵² The region hosts numerous bars and restaurants but is significantly undersupplied in men and women’s apparel, shoes and accessories, gifts, furnishings and residential and office oriented retail.

The Downtown Austin Retail Market Strategy also pointed to private market barriers, public sector barriers and infrastructure barriers that affect retail. With private market barriers, the greatest retail challenge has been marketing and positioning Downtown as a shopping destination. Other private market barriers include the lack of user friendly parking, lack of unified signage, and the need for a more pedestrian friendly environment. In regards to public sector barriers, the challenges faced include conflicts within Land Development and Zoning Codes, the amount of time to get projects approved by the City, the need to provide better management and regulation of public safety, and panhandling and social service issues. Lastly, the infrastructure barriers include water supply, storm capacity and management issues affecting

⁵¹Economics Research Associates, “Downtown Austin Retail Market Strategy”, April 2005, p.12.

⁵² M. Crane & Associates, “Downtown Retail Demand Study Selected Findings”, 2004, p.4.

the east side of the Central Business District, transportation and traffic management are major barriers to development, and the need for alternative modes of transportation into Downtown.⁵³

The Downtown Retail Market Strategy Report provides three implementation strategies learned from other cities for the Downtown Austin Alliance and City of Austin to use for enhancing retail. The first strategy is for there to be two roles with the Downtown Alliance, one being a centralized point of contact and coordination for retail information with partner entities, and the other acting as a retail recruiter. The second strategy involves recognizing Downtown as a priority economic development area by encouraging the City to modify conflicting codes and ordinances, updating infrastructure needs, and creating a single vision for long-range planning. The third strategy involves creating financial incentives such as tax increment financing, creating special authorities, or Chapter 380 Economic Development Entities to generate private investment and attract tenants that will encourage a strong retail economy.⁵⁴

Downtown Austin is beginning to benefit from the increasing focus on retail investment. The establishment of the Public Improvement District and the Downtown Austin Alliance has contributed to the growth. Although the Downtown has no separate entity managing retail properties, the programs established by the City and Downtown Alliance have helped transform Downtown's economy. The East Sixth Street Public Improvement District, for example, was passed on August 6, 2004 by the Austin City Council. This additional PID within the DAA jurisdiction assesses properties in the District an additional \$.10 per \$100 in assessed value to pay for a variety of programs that help create a vibrant mixed-use district, an important economic and cultural asset to the community, and preserving historical character⁵⁵. The Second Street District Streetscape Improvement Project is another program adopted by the City of Austin to transform the Second Street District into a positive retail experience. The project is to help achieve the vision of a dense mixed use downtown portrayed in the Downtown Austin Design Guidelines, by creating a streetscape that encourages and includes pedestrian oriented uses along Second Street. The project will extend from City Hall to the Convention Center Complex. The Second Street Streetscape project will become a model for other streetscape projects throughout the downtown area. The City selected the design team for design and

⁵³ Economics Research Associates, "Downtown Austin Retail Market Strategy", April 2005, p.18-19.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pg 20.

⁵⁵ <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm#6stpid>.

construction of the streetscape improvements in July 2003. Finally, the City of Austin, the Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Parks Foundation, and the Texas Commission on the Arts are working together to transform Republic Square into a beautiful place buzzing with people and activity. This new initiative will bring public and private resources to create physical improvements and programs that attract, engage, and reflect Austin's diverse community.⁵⁶

PARKING

In 2000 a *Downtown Austin Comprehensive Parking Study* was completed, presenting an analysis of current parking trends and recommendations for future parking policies for the City of Austin. Furthermore, the *Parking Study* focused upon Austin's goal to create less traffic and congestion in the Downtown area, confront Austin's unique parking and loading zone needs, and evaluate private and public needs for both on-street and off-street parking. Currently, parking regulation is controlled by city zoning laws. The city zoning laws apply rules that standardize the amount, location, and type of parking amenities to be provided.⁵⁷ Additionally, Austin relies upon the private and commercial sector to provide off-street parking, mostly of which are parking garages.

Austin has developed and implemented a couple policies to lessen traffic and congestion and parking needs in their downtown area. First, to encourage increased public transit ridership Austin built peripheral parking lots on the outskirts of town and increased bus service to and from these lots. To compliment commuting bus service, Austin provides a free downtown circulatory shuttle, called the 'Dillo. Beginning in 2008 light-rail will eventually substitute the commuter buses, courtesy of the voter passed initiative to fund new light rail lines and services.

For nine to fivers Austin took a recommendation from the *Parking Study* and encouraged a "Cash-Out" program, provided by employers to their employees. The program allows employers to either pay for their employees parking (the traditional method) or to give their employees cash and no subsidized parking. The "Cash-Out" program creates two new important benefits. First, the program has ability to change the employee's psychology to behave as if they are paying for

⁵⁶ <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm#ssdsip>.

⁵⁷ City of Austin, *Downtown Austin Comprehensive Parking Study*, (Austin; 2000) 4-4.

parking themselves and evaluate their need to drive a single-passenger vehicle. Secondly, it allows employees to pick and choose which days to drive or frees up cash for a bus pass, creating a flexibility of choices for employees.

Currently, off-street parking is not required for a use occupying a designated historic landmark or historic district. Also, off-street parking is not required for a use occupying 6,000 square feet of floor space in a structure that existed before April 7, 1997.⁵⁸ Another recommendation from the *Parking Study* is the creation of diagonal street parking spaces rather than traditional parallel spaces. This creates more on-street parking spots and is helpful in locations such as the Travis County Court House.⁵⁹

Finally, in response to Austin's unique loading needs due to its entertainment industry the city has made adjustments to their loading zone policies, particularly in their 6th Street and Warehouse entertainment districts by engaging business owners in these districts to find out their loading needs centered on frequency and time.⁶⁰ The goal is to create consistency in loading zone locations and times, thus alleviating congestion in both the 6th Street and Warehouse districts.

According to David Acuna, City of Austin Building Services, there are two surface parking lots managed by the City of Austin, Building Services. Profits from the lot allow the Building Services to contract a vendor for nightly operations. The remainder of profits from the surface parking lots is recycled into the budget for safety, maintenance, and future improvements to the facility.⁶¹ With that said, surface parking lots are generally discouraged and are prohibited in many areas, such as: Congress Avenue, 6th Street, streets adjacent to a downtown park or Town Lake, and along the downtown creek. The rare exceptions to the prohibition are if it is impractical or if consorted precautions have been made for safety, convenience, and aesthetic values of location.⁶²

⁵⁸ Knox, Michael, E-mail interview, 29 September 2006.

⁵⁹ City of Austin, *Downtown Austin Comprehensive Parking Study*, (Austin; 2000) 4-2.

⁶⁰ City of Austin, *Downtown Austin Comprehensive Parking Study*, (Austin; 2000) 4-3.

⁶¹ Acuna, David, E-mail interview, 6 October 2006.

⁶² Knox, Michael, E-mail interview, 29 September 2006.

Austin generally relies upon the private and commercial sector to provide off-street parking, most of which are parking garages, with subterranean parking encouraged for new developments. In order to unify the cost of downtown parking, Austin is encouraging private and commercial parking garages to charge the same amount as street parking meters. The unification of prices creates predictability of parking expense and indirectly encourages other modes of transportation.

AUSTIN CITY PARKING OPTIONS:		
2000 Parking Space Inventory		
Type of Parking	Spaces	Percent
Curb Unmetered	1,392	3.65%
Curb Metered	3,278	8.61%
Off-Street Public	7,836	20.57%
Off-Street Private	25,580	67.16%
Total	38,086	100.00%

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⁶³ City of Austin, *Downtown Austin Comprehensive Parking Study*, (Austin; 2000) 1-2,3.

AUSTIN CITY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARKING:		
2000 Off-Street Parking		
Type	Spaces	Percent
Public Surface Lots	3,006	7.89%
Public Garages	4,830	12.68%
Private Surface Lots	9,835	25.82%
Private Garages	15,745	41.34%
Total	33,416	87.73%

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POLITICS AND POLICIES

Austin, aside from being the governmental capital of Texas is the unofficial liberal and progressive capital of Texas. As stated before, Austin has a large student population and artistic community; the result is a city that pushes for progressive policies. On the other hand, Austin confronts problems that exist in just about every other city in the nation: quality of life, living wages, homelessness, affordable housing, and cultural support. Will Wynn is Austin's beloved mayor. A young leader, Wynn represents Austin's dynamic community. Wynn has helped bring investment into the city and encourage growth without sacrificing commitment to creating a more sustainable city. The constituents of Austin seem to be pleased with his leadership and ability to adjust to Austin's ever-changing needs.

Strategic Choices was implemented in 1993, and created four aspects of livability in Austin, that are implemented in the "Goals of the City". The four aspects of livability in Austin's *Strategic Choices* are: family and children, public safety, sustainable community, and affordability.⁶⁵ To rate these four goals Austin combines data from sources such as the FBI, City Police Department, and the United States Census with public surveys. The result is a comprehensive annual report based upon an examination of Austin's strengths and weaknesses. The first aspect of livability, family and children, finds that eighty-nine percent of Austin's citizens are happy with the livability of their neighborhood. This includes neighborhood resources, safety, planning, high school dropout rates and number of usable public parks. Austin second aspect

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ City of Austin, *Texas Report on Performance Information for Fiscal Year ended September 30, 2004*. (Austin; 2004) 5.

of livability is public safety. Austin excels, placing itself below the national average in both violent and property crime. Additionally, Austin has low fire death rates and traffic fatalities. In regards to sustainability, Austin experienced only five days of non-compliance of the Clean Air Act ozone standards in 2004. Additionally, only forty-five percent of Austenite are happy with pedestrian accessibility. Finally, Austin is least successful in their goal of affordability, coinciding with national trends of inflated and unattainable housing costs. While the city has the lowest unemployment rate in the state of Texas and the highest median income of five major cities in Texas, only twenty-three percent of Austin is happy with the affordability their housing.

On March 25, 2001, City Council decided to up the minimum wage for City workers from the federal amount of \$5.15 per hour to \$9.00 per hour. This wage is available for full-time city employees only. Additionally, the Austin creates incentives for builders and developers to set their minimum wage at \$10.00 per hour.

As mentioned in the *Strategic Choices* report, affordable housing is an issue in Austin. The city's homelessness rate has steadily inclined and diversified, developing a need for Austin to increase and adjust its current resources to better accommodate females and families. In March of 1998 Austin presented a *Self-Sufficiency and Responsibility Initiative* in an effort to confront homelessness.⁶⁶ The *Self-Sufficiency* leg of the program has increased number of beds available for men, women, and dependent children. Also, the city is expanding both transitional and affordable housing programs. To aid in self-sufficiency, the city offers: health clinic, job training and placement, mental health care, substance abuse treatment, adult education, ESL classes, child care, life-training skills, showers, laundry, telephone, mail, and life-skills training. The *Responsibility* leg of the initiative is a combination of legal adjustments and city engagement. Legally, the courts have more leeway to examine repeat offenders and sentence to treatment centers, rather than jail. Conversely, if a repeat offender over exceeds four convictions within a 24-month period, the courts are allowed to punish more severely and intervene with harsher sentences. *Responsibility* is also improving day-labor resources and creating Coordinating Council to oversee all programs. Unfortunately, it seems as if there is little follow-up to this initiative, as data is unavailable in regards to success rates.

⁶⁶ *Self-Sufficiency and Responsibility Initiative*, Austin City Connect, <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/health/me_homeless_ss.htm>, 29 October 2006.

The cost of homes has increased nearly 200% since 1998.⁶⁷ In response to this escalating prices Austin has incorporated several new policies. First, the city changed their policy in regards to the distribution of housing funds to supplement safe and affordable rentals. Historically, Austin used federal housing funds for “target areas”, creating inflexibility when funding was needed outside of the “target area”. Needless to say, the program was not self-sustaining and eventually altered to a “priority” system. Now property owners are able to access funds based upon need rather than geographic location.⁶⁸ Austin also implemented a program for low and moderate income residents called S.M.A.R.T. Housing. S.M.A.R.T. (Safe, Mixed Income, Accessible, Reasonably Priced, and Transit Oriented) stimulates the creation of reasonably priced homes in Austin. The program succeeds by offering incentives to developers in turn for reasonably priced units. Aside from affordability, all S.M.A.R.T. housing must meet green building standards. Lower income families receive the benefit of affordable housing while Austin receives the benefit of extra revenue and coordination of: fire, police, housing, environmental, and health inspectors on all S.M.A.R.T. projects.

S.M.A.R.T. HOUSING IN AUSTIN:	
Builder Provides	Austin Provides
10% reasonably priced units	25% fee waiver
20% reasonably priced unit	50% fee waiver
30% reasonably priced units	75% fee waiver
40% reasonably priced units	100% fee waiver

⁶⁹

Finally, one must take into account Austin’s commitment to supporting music and sustaining its motto, “The Live Music Capital of the World”. The impact of Austin’s commitment to supporting independent musicians creates \$616 million in annual economic activity, which breaks down to \$11 million in annual city tax revenue. Ten percent of Austin’s annual hotel stays are due to the music industry. Also, the music industry is believed to create over 11,200 jobs.⁷⁰ Austin has numerous programs in which to support local musicians, the table below highlights several of the more innovative programs.

⁶⁷ City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department, *Community Preservation and Revitalization Program*, (Austin; 2004) 4.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ *Housing*, Austin City Connect, < <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/housing/>>, 29 October 2006.

⁷⁰ *Music*, Austin City Connect, <<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/music/default.htm>>, 29 October 2006.

CITY OF AUSTIN SUPPORT OF LOCAL MUSIC:	
Program	Description
Band of the Week	City web-site weekly highlights local musicians
Live Music at ABIA	Local musicians greet incoming visitors to Austin
Music Marketing Office	Promotes local musicians on the local, regional, national, and international levels
Music and Entertainment Television	City partially subsidizes a public access channel to showcase local music talent
Creative Industries Loan Program	Loans are generated for all arts
City Council	Local musicians perform for weekly City Council meetings
Hire a Musician	City web-site lists local musicians for hire

⁷¹

⁷¹ Ibid.

COMPARISONS BETWEEN DENVER AND AUSTIN	
DENVER	AUSTIN
Downtown Denver is managed by the Downtown Denver Partnership	Downtown Austin is managed by Downtown Austin Alliance
Downtown Denver has Business 120-block Improvement District	Downtown Austin has 715 acre Public Improvement District
50,000 students attend local colleges surrounding Downtown	University of Texas has 51,000 student population just north of Downtown
Denver has 110,000 employees in downtown area	Downtown Austin has 67,000 employees
Downtown Denver has 3.5 million square feet of retail space in downtown	Downtown Austin has 300,000 square feet of retail in downtown
2005 Downtown population – 7,000 (CBD & Upper Downtown)	2005 Downtown Population - 5,300
Patent activity from 1990-1999 – 4,290 patents earned (Denver County)	Patent activity from 1990-1999 – 7,761 patents earned (Austin/San Marcos)
Denver Regional Council of Governments (9 member counties, 50 years old, www.drcog.org) Less interactive and comprehensive in providing information. More focused on infrastructure but beginning to expand in the last few years.	Capitol Council of Governments (10 member counties, 36 years old, www.capcog.org) more comprehensive by providing information and interdependencies between regional entities regarding human services, environmental issues, mapping resources, economic development, transportation, etc..
Planning Commission - Yes	Planning Commission - Yes
Planning information on city website not as interactive.	Planning information on city website interactive, well presented and upbeat?
Surface parking lots- Yes	Surface parking lots-Yes
Public transportation incentives to employers- Yes	Public transport incentives to employers- Yes
Minimum wage above \$5.15- Yes (for full-time city employees)	Minimum wage above \$5.15- Yes (for the entire state)
Homelessness programs- Yes	Homelessness programs- Yes
Affordable housing programs- Yes	Affordable housing programs- Yes
Progressive cultural support- No	Progressive cultural support- Yes

SUMMARY

In conclusion, Denver and Austin have many characteristics in common in regard to population growth, natural environment, and the desire to attract certain kinds of business activity. Both cities have experienced dramatic growth in populations from Mexico, Central and South America and the impact that these groups have on the capacity of the city to provide human services, housing, and education. The environmental issues are similar for both cities as water resources for a growing population become an issue.

Denver has been very successful in bringing people back to living in the Central Business District whereas Austin has further to go. In Austin the reality doesn't quite match the hope for a vital central urban core. By looking at the transit plans it is clear that Denver is more successful in having achieved transit accessibility in the multi modal realm in advance of Austin.

Austin has been able to attract a notable amount of venture capital and has earned more patents because of the high tech sector however, Denver with the help of Boulder and Longmont has made headway into the bio and nano technology field.

Denver does have lessons to learn from Austin in terms of supporting cutting edge musicians and the market that inevitably follows this sort of development. Culture is well supported at all levels and Denver should continue to move in that direction as to enhance quality of life and economic development.

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