

CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

CENTRAL TEXAS CHAPTER

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November 9, 2010

Mayor Lee Leffingwell
City of Austin
301 W. 2nd St., 2nd Floor
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan – Linking Land Use & Transportation

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Dear Mayor Leffingwell,

On behalf of the Congress for the New Urbanism - Central Texas, we commend the City of Austin for its commitment and approach to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. By providing the community with data on sustainability indicators, to be considered with the alternative Growth Scenarios in Community Forum Series #3, this planning process is serving an important educational role.

We have been impressed by the City's efforts to provide hard data, and the exhaustive outreach efforts made by City staff and consultants to reach all constituents within the community. No process is ever perfect; but we appreciate the tremendous effort made to help people understand the choices we face, and to listen to input on how to shape the plan.

By considering the various growth scenarios, people are realizing that the development patterns we chose do make a difference for things we all care about – complete and walkable neighborhoods, a healthy downtown, the environment, sustainability, clean air and climate action, and quality of life and economic impact for the next generation.

This process of considering a range of growth scenarios has helped Austinites to better understand the link between Land Use and Transportation, which should be considered together as a single issue. At CNU, we refer to the combination of these two core issues as "Development Patterns".

CNU - Central Texas call on the city to continue to emphasize this link, in its next phase of work, by addressing Land Use and Transportation together – as a single "Development Patterns" building block. We understand that the current plan is to address them as two separate building blocks. For too long in Austin, we have not connected these issues fully, and we have paid the price. This is our big chance to integrate them fully in the Comprehensive Plan – and the way they are broken down (or linked up) for discussion in the next phase will make a difference.

Recently CNU invited Peter Park, Denver's planning director, to speak in Austin. One of the points he emphasized was that Blueprint Denver was successful (and helped get a major transit system funded) because it addressed land-use-and-transportation as a *fully integrated* issue. He made the point that better decisions

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emerged, and a different course got charted, because the two were *always* discussed in tandem. We thus call upon the City of Austin to form a single “Development Patterns” working group for the next phase of comprehensive planning.

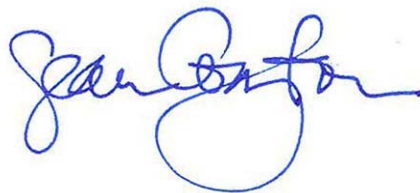
As the leading organization promoting walkable, mixed-use neighborhood development, sustainable communities, and healthy living conditions, CNU strongly supports the City in its pro-active comprehensive planning for desired future growth patterns. We hope to see the Preferred Growth Scenario ultimately selected, and the final Comprehensive Plan adopted, support these core CNU principles:

- Traditional neighborhood development patterns, which can sustainably conserve resources, by co-locating homes, jobs, services and amenities in neighborhoods and dense centers linked by transit
- A range of housing choices, to serve people of diverse ages and income levels.
- Schools, stores and other nearby destinations reachable by walking, bicycling or transit
- An affirming, human-scaled public realm where appropriately designed buildings define and enliven streets and create welcoming public spaces.

CNU has engaged many of its members in Imagine Austin and completing surveys. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do, such as hosting a special event, before the current survey period closes. We also are available to assist in finding technical experts and community members to participate in the next phase of work. CNU will present this letter to Comprehensive Citizen’s Advisory Task Force at its next meeting.

Again, our thanks to City staff for providing so many useful data points on which to base critical decisions about our future.

Sincerely,



Sean Compton, LEED AP
President, Central Texas Chapter CNU

CC: City Council Members
Marc Ott, Sue Edwards, Greg Guernsey, Garner Stoll
Margaret Cooper, Chair, Comprehensive Plan Citizen Task Force