

# CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM

## CENTRAL TEXAS CHAPTER

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November 29, 2011

To: Imagine Austin Citizen's Advisory Task Force

CC: Mayor Lee Leffingwell, Mayor Pro-tem Sheryl Cole, Council Member Mike Martinez, Council Member Laura Morrison, Council Member Chris Riley, Council Member Bill Spelman, Council Member Kathy Tovo, Planning Commission

From: CNU CTX Board of Directors

### **Re: Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (IACP)— Suggested Revisions**

The Congress for New Urbanism - Central Texas Chapter (CNU-CTX) applauds the emerging Imagine Austin comprehensive plan as a critical tool for developing Austin into an increasingly compact, connected city. CNU-CTX has carefully reviewed the September 7 draft provided for community review, and now appreciates the opportunity to submit comments.

Input received from the general public, stakeholders and constituencies, as framed by the City's professional planning staff and consultant, led to the first Core Principle for Action that we strongly endorse: "Grow as a compact, connected city." (p. 9, Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan draft) We believe that this guiding principle has drawn overwhelming support because of its many benefits. Compact neighborhoods can:

1. reduce environmental impacts of new development and redevelopment particularly water and air pollution
2. promote more responsible resource use relative to energy, waste, water and materials,
3. contribute to our economic vitality by encouraging more interaction that promotes greater creativity and innovation among the city's resident workforce,
4. provide opportunities for more housing units, and consequently for more affordable housing within the central city.

As the exact language of the plan will be referenced for many years to come, we believe it is important to strengthen the language within the plan to ensure it fully expresses this core principle. We advocate that language describing priority actions under "Development Regulations and Processes" be revised as follows (revisions in italics):

Promote diverse infill housing that encourages the *establishment and maintenance of a compact, connected city*, while complementing and enhancing the character of existing neighborhoods (LUT Action-2)

Promote affordable housing throughout Austin by allowing diverse housing types, *especially housing types that encourage the development of Austin as a compact, connected city* (HN Action-3)

Change development regulations and processes to foster a business-friendly and *infill friendly* environment, *so as to reduce both the time and cost required to*

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*gain city approval of projects that promote a compact, connected city (ECON Action-3)*

Similarly, priority actions under Transportation and Other Infrastructure Priorities) should be revised as follows:

*Prioritize City of Austin investments to support mixed use, transit, and the advancement of a compact, connected city and compact and walkable places within the city (LUT Action-1)*

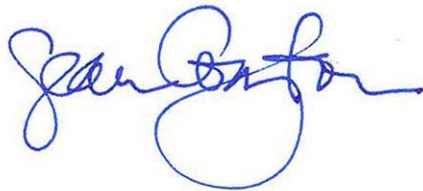
*Support the construction of a public rail transit and a first-class bus transit infrastructure, with associated construction of compact development as well as a regional and statewide rail network (ECON Action-5)*

*Align policies, incentives, regulations, service area extensions, and infrastructure to promote the creation and maintenance of a compact, connected city and to coordinate with the Growth Concept Map (CFS Action-36)*

CNU-CTX commends the City for the draft plan developed to date, and the commitment to Austin's future that it demonstrates. We now advocate for City staff and consultants to take one more fine-grained pass at embedding the "compact, connected city" principle into the language of the plan in every section.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Sean Compton, LEED AP  
President  
Congress for the New Urbanism - Central Texas Chapter

Attachment: Charter of New Urbanism