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FROM THE ALDERMAN

Our community urgently needs a comprehensive strategy that can not only be attractive to investors but also honor the concerns and priorities of our community.

We don’t need a top-down plan developed and imposed on the residents. Instead we need a grassroots, community-driven process to yield a plan that everyone can feel deeply invested in and committed to - that has the community heartbeat at the center.

That is why I convened this community planning dialogue - to launch a process to give voice to the hopes and dreams of neighbors and residents and identify our shared priorities.

Thank you for joining in this process of re-imagining our community.

We will be celebrating Austin’s 150th Anniversary in 2015. In anticipation, I am looking forward to working with you throughout 2014 to move Austin forward with this roadmap as we realize our dreams and recommended actions for a more sustainable future.

-Alderman Deborah Graham

Community Sustainability Roadmap Process
September - November 2013

Session I: VISIONING

The first community gathering to create an Austin Sustainability Roadmap to foster healthy business districts and neighborhoods was convened at the Columbus Park Refectory September 4, 2013. One hundred residents talked about their hopes and dreams for the future of the Ward and community answering, “What do you want to see in place by 2015? What are the values that are behind this vision? What do you imagine would make this community more economically, environmentally and socially sustainable?”

Session II: RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

At the Shriners Hospitals for Children October 2nd, residents self-selected the topic they had most passion about implementing from the vision. They considered how they could support Austin assets and potential actions to realize their vision.

Two representatives from each of the eight areas met October 23rd at the North Avenue Branch Library to review the draft and envision action planning and implementation in 2014.

Session III: PRIORITY FOCUS

First residents reviewed and revised their action areas. Then they focused on the top three priorities for 2014 action to realize a healthier and more resilient community.

In January dates for the monthly team meetings will be published to implement this plan in 2014.

Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA-USA) Facilitation

Nina Winn, ICA Accelerate 77 Coordinator, and Karen Snyder, ICA Associate, facilitated the launch of the Austin - Galewood Community Sustainability Roadmap. The ICA, an international non-profit, has been involved in community development and organizational change for 50 years.

The Accelerate 77 program is now in its third year identifying, connecting, and accelerating sustainability in all 77 Chicago communities. Nine hundred sustainable Chicago initiatives are mapped on www.accelerate77.org.

ICA’s processes integrate economic, social and environmental community dynamics. By catalyzing small steps, residents find they have power to make a difference in the changes they identify.

Community thinking that is broad and inclusive allows a systems-based approach to implementation to emerge. Integrated into the community roadmap are appreciative inquiry (developed by Dr. David Cooperrider at Case Western University) and an asset-based community development approaches (ABCD pioneered by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann at Northwestern University).
Make no little plans.
They have no magic to stir our blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans in hope and work. Remember that a noble, logical plan once recorded will not die.

Daniel H. Burnham
Chicago architect and planner
Austin History

Austin was founded in 1865 by Henry W. Austin, who purchased 470-acres for the purpose of having home ownership, public amenities such as tree-lined parkways, and gracious living.

Thanks in part to some of the best commuter services in Chicago, Austin grew rapidly, attracting Germans, Scandinavians, Irish, Italians and Greeks. By 1920 Austin was one of Chicago's best-served commuter areas, with street railways to downtown Chicago every half mile. The area was also served by the Lake Street "L" rapid transit.

Commerce in Austin followed transit lines, with significant business development along Madison Street, Chicago Avenue, and Lake Street.

The Austin Town Hall was constructed in 1929, modeled on Philadelphia's Independence Hall. Austin's crown jewel was Columbus Park. Designed in a prairie mode by renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen, the park featured a lagoon, a golf course, athletic fields, winding paths, a refectory overlooking the lagoon, and a swimming pool. The park was extensively restored in 1992.

Dense housing development almost completely supplanted the village landscape of large frame homes in the early twentieth century. Added since then have been brick two and three-flats, small frame houses, bungalows, corner apartment blocks, and courtyard apartment buildings.

In the 1960-1970s African Americans immigrated into the community drawn by the employment opportunities of the surrounding industries of Zenith, Western Electric, Sears, International Harvester and three candy companies.

Since the 1980s, these industries have closed, resulting in rising unemployment and crime, declining home ownership and property values, and the shrinking of the retail sector.

Austin is now the largest community in Chicago in terms of geography and its population of some 100,000 people with 90% African American. The median age in Austin is 29.5 (city average 31.5). The median household income is $33,663 (city average $43,223) with 24.1% living in poverty. In June 2013 four Chicago public schools elementary schools were closed: Armstrong, Emmett, Key and May.

In the midst of multiple challenges, residents value the community housing, transit options and being close-knit with their neighbors.
Austin Community Assets

This list was originally compiled by Field Museum staff who wrote the 2011 Austin report (http://fieldmuseum.org/sites/default/files/DOE%20Austin%20Full%20Report.pdf). The list will be continuously updated throughout the Sustainability Roadmap process.

**Businesses**
- Alice’s Restaurant
- Channing’s Childcare
- Golden Start Daycare
- Impress Urban Wear
- Lemington Foods
- MacArthur’s Restaurant
- Quench Restaurant
- Uncle Remus Restaurant
- Wal-Mart

**Community Organizations**
- Austin African American Business Networking Association
- Austin Career Education Center
- Austin Childcare Providers Network
- Austin Coming Together (ACT)
- Austin Community Ministry
- Austin Family Counseling Center
- Austin Peoples Action Center (APAC)
- Austin Safety Net Works (ASNW)
- Austin YMCA
- Bethel New Life
- ChildServ
- Circle Urban Ministries
- Community Support Advisory Council (SCAC)
- Eyes on Austin
- Ferrer Foundation
- Fresh Moves
- Good City
- Greater Austin Development Association
- Love Foundation Phalanx Family Services
- Power Peace Block Club
- Prevention Partnership
- Sankofa Cultural Arts and Business Center
- Shriner’s Hospitals for Children
- South Austin Coalition Community Council (SACCC)
- Van Buren Street Block Clubs
- Westside Art Space
- Westside Health Authority (WHA)
- Westside Historical Society
- Westside Ministers Coalition
- Youth Outreach Services

**Gardens**
- Austin Green Team
- BT’s Garden
- Kneeland’s Garden
- LaClair Garden
- Memorial Garden
- Paradise Garden
- Peace in the Valley Garden
- Root Riot Harambee
- Serenity Garden
- Unity Garden

**Government Agencies**
- 8th District State Representative LaShawn Ford
- 15th District Police Station
- 28th Ward Alderman Jason Irvin’s Office
- 29th Ward Alderman Deborah Graham’s Office
- 37th Ward Alderman Emma Mitts’ Office
- Austin Satellite Senior Center
- CAPS
- Chicago Department of Housing
- Chicago Department of Human Services
- Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation
- Chicago Public Library - Austin and North Avenue Branches
- CTA Blue and Green Lines

**Health**
- Austin Family Health Center (PCC Wellness Center)
- Circle Family Health Care Network
- Lorretto Hospital
- St. Anne’s Hospital of Chicago
- westside Health Authority
- West Suburban Hospital

**Schools**
- Academy of Scholastic Achievement
- Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy
- Austin Polytechnical Academy
- Catalyst Circle Rock Charter
- Christ the King Jesuit College Preparatory School
- Depriest Elementary
- Frederick Douglass Academy High School
- Ellington Elementary
- Howe Elementary School
- Michelle Clark High School
- Milton Brunson Math & Science Specialty School
- Nash Elementary
- Plato Learning Academy
- Spencer Technical Academy
- St. Angela School
- St. Paul Lutheran School
- VOISE Academy High School
- Westside Alternative High School
- Westside Holistic Leadership Academy

**Green Building**
- Bethel New Life Center
- Austin Family health Center
- PEACE Corner Youth Center

**Local Media**
- * AustinTalks
- * Austin Voice
- * Austin Weekly News
- * Progress Illinois

**Public Parks/ Natural Areas**
- Austin Town Hall Park and Cultural Center
- Clark Park
- Columbus Park
- La Folette Park
- Levin Park
- Riis Park

**Religious**
- Friendship Baptist Church
- Greater St. John Bible Church
- Heirs of the Promise Church
- New Mount Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church
- St. Angela Church
ACTION TEAM I
Reweaving the Economic Fabric
Jobs and Industry

Background
There were significant industrial corridors, including the current Pulaski Industrial Corridor, to the North, East, and South. In 1950 Austin was a predominantly residential community, with major industrial corridors to the east, north, and south.

Vision
- Jobs here
- Rethink industrial land use
- No vacant lots
- Training Center
- Professional services
- Theater and arts district
- Economic loans for commercial and residential developments
- Improved upkeep of abandoned buildings for businesses and job training
- Regional dollars spent in Austin in a planned business district
- Well planned training, mentoring, accountability for performance and results

Community Assets
- Community newspapers
- Transportation
- Business development resources
- Commercial streets and industrial districts

Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Get word out through various media to businesses about opportunities available in community!

Collaboration Recommendations
1. Encouraging small business to go online/Twitter/Facebook - Collaborating with Austin Coming Together, Bethel New Life, and local churches.
2. Small business Tuesday
3. Representatives helping ensure that public works project job opportunities are made available to people in community - Collaborating with local elected officials.

Additional Actions Brainstormed
- Link and collaborate among business development resources and workforce training organizations
- Schedule more frequent planning meeting
- Research to bring information to the community
ACTION TEAM II
Better Business Boosters
Healthy Businesses

Background

Major employers in Austin are education, health, social, manufacturing, and retail services plus small restaurant and childcare businesses. Austin Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings now include the Austin Family Health Center, Bethel New Life’s Bethel Center, and Peace Corner.

Vision

An overarching aspect of having healthy businesses in the community is to help spur local job creation and keep money flowing within the community. This may include:

- Insuring quality food stores (e.g., full service grocery)
- Revitalizing business districts with improvements along North and Chicago Avenues (e.g., a drug store, quality businesses, street-scaping and dealing with dilapidated buildings and vacant/abandoned properties)
- Focusing planning and input on attracting new businesses.
- Look at Madison Street in Forest Park and Roosevelt Road redevelopment projects as models for North Avenue taking what works west of Harlem and translate East of Harlem.
- Streamlining the process for obtaining new business permits/licenses making it easier to own a business, but not too easy
- Enabling walkable business accessibility (e.g., pedestrian safety with traffic calming enabling people to walk to shop and making busy streets more pedestrian-friendly instead of high speed traffic)
- Setting up small business incubators

Community Assets

- Positive demographics (income, population)
- Parks and recreation facilities (Austin Town Hall, Columbus Park)
- Community organizations (e.g., job training)
- Available properties (vacancies)
- Population density
Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Strengthen existing businesses - through beautification, cleanup, convenient hours of operation.

Second Priority: Open new lines of communication between business and community.

Third Priority: Plan for and recruit desirable businesses.

Collaboration Recommendations

1. Connect farmers markets, food trucks and community gardens - Collaborating with community members, Alderman, Chamber of Commerce, City Council
2. Enforce existing building and zoning codes and adapt as needed - Collaboration as above.
3. Develop marketing plan and program to identify focus areas for targeted business development and recruit new businesses to fit the plan and community needs. - Collaboration as above.

Additional Actions Brainstormed

• Open new lines of communication with businesses and community groups
• Make community a destination to shop and live
• Emulate successes of other communities. Work across boundaries of neighborhoods within Austin (e.g., Galewood, North and South Austin)
• Increase community input re zoning and businesses. Ensure zoning code enforcement of liquor and grocery stores (Be careful about allowing certain businesses to call themselves ‘grocery stores’).
• Centralize information source on available properties
• Strengthen local chambers and improve communication between them
• Create business district destinations (e.g., Uptown has become a music destination) and hold special events to attract visitors
• Strengthen existing businesses (e.g., beautifying building facades, limiting window sign, and improving accessibility to businesses with increased parking)
• Encourage business owners to live in the community
• Plan and recruit desirable businesses
• Offer healthy affordable fruits and vegetables and healthy cooking classes
• Do traffic count of North Avenue, Chicago Avenue, Madison and Harlem
ACTION TEAM III
The Safety Transportation Advisory
Transportation

Vision
- Bicycle lanes
- Metra train stop
- DIVVY bike stations
- Bus lines that run at night
- Transit oriented communities
- Pedestrian friendly (N Avenue dangerous)
- Parking for residents that residents feel safe to walk, bike and use transit
- Frequent and reliable transit services that serve all users including night workers
- Improved infrastructure for more active and livable community

Community Assets
- CLOCC
- CAPS
- Westside Health Authority
- Building Healthier Chicago
- Outstanding public transportation access with Metra, Blue and Green Lines

Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Complete 2006 CDOT North Avenue Streetscape Project, including medians, street trees, countdown timers, restricted crossways, pedestrian friendly and fully accessible.

Second priority: Extend bike lanes on Lake Street to Austin Boulevard and work with Oak Park to extend to Harlem.

Third priority: Extend hours of Austin bus line and add lighting at bus shelters.

Collaboration Recommendations
1. Schedule walkability/accessibility assessment on North Avenue - Collaborating with Active Transportation Alliance, CLOCC and CDOT (early spring).
2. Schedule a bike route drive (preliminary) followed by a group bike ride survey along Lake Street - Collaborating with Active Transportation Alliance, CDOT, biking organizations in Chicago and Oak Park (winter).
3. Complete station/stop assessments along Austin - Collaboration with Active Transportation Alliance, CTA, CDOT (spring).
(Safety Transportation Advisory continued)

**Additional Actions Brainstormed**

- Working with Active Transportation Alliance (ATA), schedule a date to do a community walkability assessment and traffic observation.
- Reduce car travel speed on North Avenue
- Install countdown pedestrian timer on North Avenue
- Restripe crosswalks on North Avenue (high visibility)
- Extend hours of Austin bus operations
- More lighting on bus stops
- Add more Westside stops on Metra Pacific Westline between Kedzie and Oak Park
- Extend protected bike lanes on Lake Street
- Add DIVVY stations
- Pedestrian shopping for North Avenue
ACTION TEAM IV

The V.I.P.s:
Vision, Integrity and Purpose

Youth

Background

Community centers are valuable assets for youth programs that include sports, exercise, wellness education and health screenings. Environmental programs centered on youth steer them from negative social influences to promoting positive character development, healthier eating, nutrition, benefits of physical activity, and making education more engaging.

Vision

The vision for youth is to expand access to job opportunities and adult role models, as well as establish more youth spaces/centers for gathering and engagement (e.g., service projects).

Community Assets

- Chicago Park District
- Job Corps
- Lincoln’s Challenge Academy
- Sports Care Center
- West Cook YMCA
- Gear Up

Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Work with Chicago Park District - baseball diamonds, football, soccer. Goodman Theater @ Austin Town Hall. Amundsen Park football field.

Priority 2: Develop a community map that identifies resources available for youth. Also identify youth organizations in the community and what is available in each program.

Priority 3: Create a survey for community youth to identify their desires and what community leaders can do differently.

Additional Actions Brainstormed

- Develop a community mapping
- Identify youth leaders
- Offer training opportunities
- Create a youth summit
- Setup outreach teams for youth
- Expand male and female adult mentors
- Network with high schools
- Identify areas of peer pressure
- Bring the youth to the table to talk
- Identify a safe location and resources needed
- Identify youth organizations in the community and find out what is available in each program
Background

Austin has the largest student population of any Chicago community. In the past ten years many changes have been happening in education in the community, particularly with the Chicago public schools. During Chicago Public School’s (CPS) Renaissance 2010 period (2000-2010), the Austin Community Academy High School was closed, rehabbled and replaced with three small schools: Austin Business and Entrepreneurship Academy, Austin Polytechnic Academy and Voise Academy (a virtual high school). In August 2011 the Austin Community Action Council (CAC) submitted a report to CPS about residents’ desires to improve education in Austin. In 2010 and 2011 Austin students increasing reading and math scores outpaced students in any other Chicago community. This resulted in shifting students from 405 to 67.4% meeting expectations. However, with the decreasing number of students attending CPS schools (7,610 students were attending CPS out of 11,839), four elementary schools were closed in 2013.

Vision

The educational vision is to ensure excellence in Austin formal and informal educational structures through:

- Improving the quality of schools by supporting the staff and local school councils
- Insuring schools provide modern technology
- Creating a selection of quality schools with different approaches to learning
- Training parents to support their children’s education
- Increasing the percentage of Austin children attending Austin schools

Community Assets

Educational assets include concerned residents interested in ensuring quality education for the students of Austin, the land resources surrounding the schools, and the vacated buildings closed in June., which create an opportunity for transformation.

Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Inventory education assets.

Second priority: Make sure students have wrap around services.

Third priority: Build relationships for businesses and schools to work together.

Additional Actions Brainstormed

- Support ‘high performing schools’
- Assist schools in strengthening their LSCs
- Increase using libraries and park districts
- Identify where the children of Austin are being educated
ACTION TEAM VI
The Cultured Crew
Cultural Resources

Background

The vision is to ensure the development of the arts, culture and heritage of the community in order to learn from the past to build a better community future. Beginnings of representing its African American history are known with Benny Goodman’s jazz career and murals depicting themes of Chicago, African influences, and African American and South African civil rights struggles. Cultural events like the annual Green Team Tour and Juneteenth Festival play a key role in building positive community images.

Vision

The vision emphasis here is to create destination points that represent community markers to develop community pride and positive feelings about the community. The conversation revolved around creating destination points such as:

• Designating an African-American business district (like Chinatown, Greektown, Little Italy)
• Designing a nature center with community garden where students could give volunteer hours
• Establishing a blues center or concert center utilizing local artists like Muddy Waters son
• Displaying public works of art (e.g., murals, Black History monuments)
• Organizing a Community Arts Council to implement ideas
• Finding ways to rehearse old fashioned values and principles
• Recognizing that our cultural assets influence our becoming a neighborhood of choice

Community Assets

- Amundsen Park
- Austin Green Team
- Austin Townhall
- Columbus Park
- Gardens
- Libraries
- Rutherford Sayre Park
- Sankofa Cultural Arts Center

Anticipating 2014

#1 Priority: Form Community Arts Council.

Priority 2: Work with social media for communicating about community cultural assets

Priority 3: Start an inventory of Austin’s cultural resources.

Additional Actions Brainstormed

• Take a full inventory of resources, e.g., parks, libraries, schools, gardens
• Create a website with a social networking page for the community
• Creation of public art
ACTION TEAM VII

The Righteous Warriors

Peace and Safety

Vision

The vision to have a walkable community where people feel safe and at peace with one another can practically be seen as vacant property is repaired or torn down, more police patrol the streets preventing drug activities and loitering, business owners care for their property, and more residents participate in CAP meetings and neighborhood watches.

Community Assets

- Working with the alderman and caps office (caps sergeant)
- Religious organizations (churches)
- Street and Sanitation (Ward Super)
- Troubled building officers

Anticipating 2014

Priority #1: Hold landlords and owners accountable for their tenants to include abandoned buildings.

Priority 2: Work with police and Department of Sanitation related to safety and cleanliness by enforcing no loitering in front of businesses and fewer signs in front of business windows.

Priority 3: Increase use of under-utilized facilities (e.g., Austin Town Hall) and get religious organizations more involved.

Collaboration Recommendations

2. Work with Ward Superintendent and Police Departments to enforce fines. Collaborating with the Police Department and Streets and Sanitation.
3. Work with local ministers and outreach programs. Collaborating with Austin CARE Collaborative, churches.

Additional Actions Recommended

- Ward superintendent get more involved with residents problems on their block (lights out, tree trimming) to make it a safer place
- Neighborhood businesses to keep area clean and the loitering from in front of their business
- Increase policing to improve public safety, enforcing no loitering in front of businesses and fewer signs in front of businesses
- Hold landlords and owners accountable for their tenants
- Increase resident attendance at CAPS meetings, Alderman meetings, and get to know CAPS officers
- Increase use of underutilized facilities (e.g., Austin Town Hall and YMCA)
- Work on building block clubs and neighborhood watch groups
ACTION TEAM VIII

Allure!
Sharing Our Vision: The Journey to Aesthetic Community
Community Beautification

Background
Austin organizations and residents concerned with enhancing the community’s image and building solidarity among community residents see beautification as key to community building. Through activities like community cleanups, mural painting, and community gardening.

Vision
Becoming an aesthetic community can be instilled through community pride with block by block beautification throughout Austin, such as adding more trees with regular tree trimming, having cleaner streets and alleys, increasing community gardens, developing rain gardens, painting murals under viaducts, and scheduling community and block cleanups.

Community Assets
- Alderman
- Austin Green Team
- Block Clubs
- Bureau of Forestry Churches
- Fire department
- Galewood community organizations
- Law enforcement
- Library
- Neighborhood businesses
- Shriners Hospital for Children
- Ward superintendent

Anticipating 2014
1st Priority: Set up monthly block cleanups.

Second priority: Trees trimmed on city property where needed.

Third priority: Better lighting in public areas where needed and requested.

Additional Actions Brainstormed
- Organize block clubs
- Attend community meetings
- Partner with schools, churches, businesses and neighbors
- Publicize what is happening in the parks and connect them better
- Share the vision and be open minded
- Actively participate in creating community buy-in
- Track and evaluate progress
- Communicate regularly
- Celebrate accomplishments
What is a Sustainable Community?

In this document 150 residents in the Austin community have drafted an initial plan to serve as a roadmap toward community sustainability in the next two years. Definitions of sustainability vary, but in this case it is referring to a holistic community perspective of which the common elements are:

- a healthy environment,
- a strong economy, and
- the well-being of the people living in the community.

According to STAR (Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating Communities), when sustainability areas are addressed in tandem with each other, they have a powerful, positive effect on the quality of life and future of a community. By overlapping work in these areas, efficiencies emerge and better results are achieved. It’s an approach that solves local problems while being innovative about progress. The characteristics of a sustainable community include:

- **THINKS AND ACTS SYSTEMICALLY**
- **FOSTERS INNOVATION**
- **CULTIVATES COLLABORATION**
- **ENSURES EQUITY**
- **INSPIRES LEADERSHIP**
- **INSTALLS RESILIENCY**
- **REDEFINES PROGRESS**
- **LIVES WITHIN MEANS**
- **EMBRACES DIVERSITY**
- **CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVES**

Austin residents articulated a unified vision of eight areas and created action teams for 2014 implementation reflected on pages 7-14 of this document. The STAR rating goals and objectives shown below ([www.starcommunities.org](http://www.starcommunities.org)) are a resource for dialogue with the Austin plan as it develops in the coming year.

### STAR Goals and Objectives

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<td>• Working lands</td>
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**Community Beautification**
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**Education**
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Dudley, Carla
Edwards, Charmin
Elem, Gary
Ellis, Cassandra
Kimble, Ruth
Millan, Iris
Murphy, Mary
Myles, Randy
Troelstrup, John
Truss, Cata

*Working Group
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