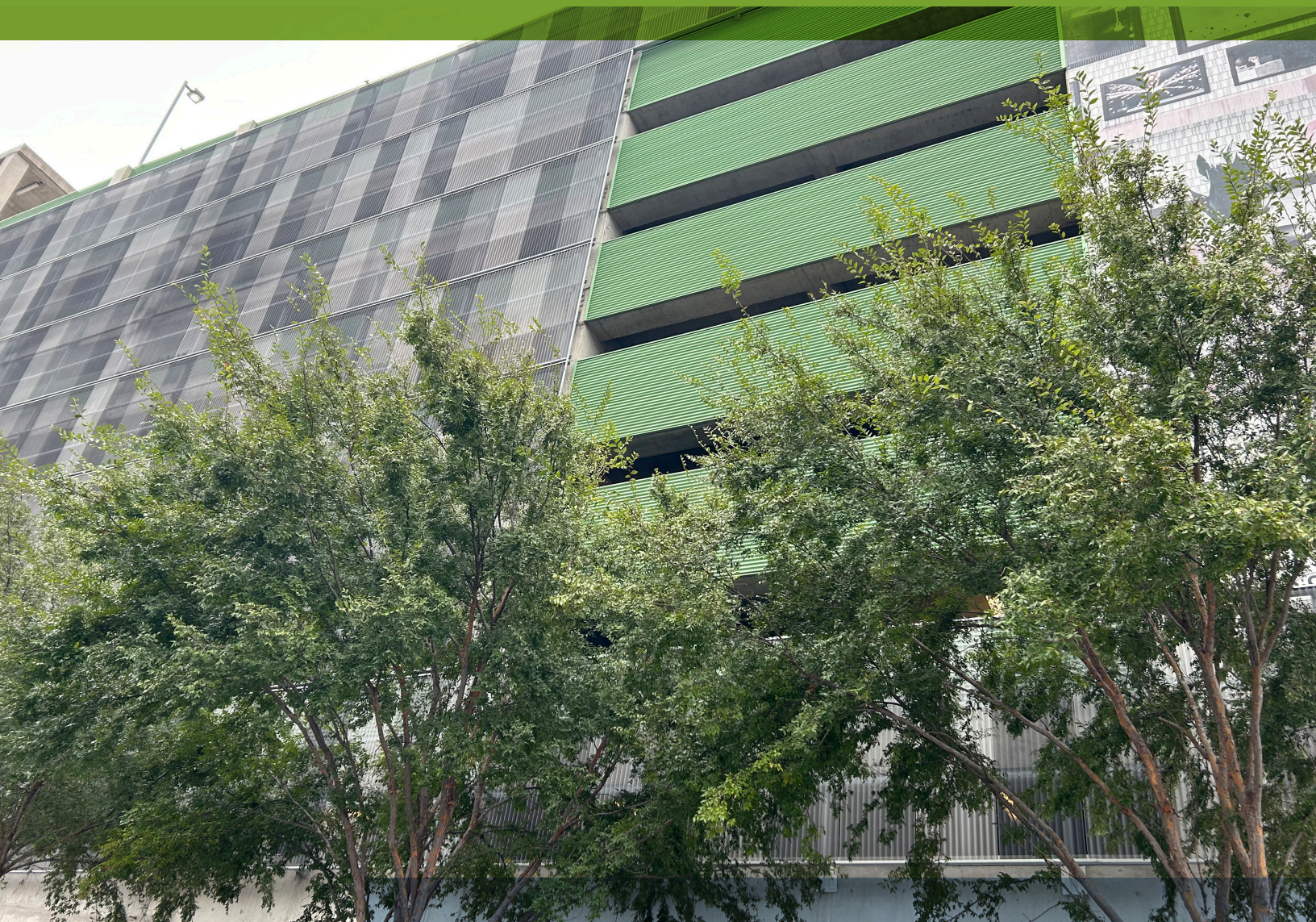


DOWNTOWN AUSTIN PARKING

Strategies to Encourage Less Vehicular Transportation and Parking in Developments



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THIS REPORT IS SPONSORED BY:

City of Austin Transportation & Public Works Department

Austin City Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison [District 1]

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with input from

Austin Transit Partnership, CapMetro, and Downtown Austin Alliance

ON THE COVER: A single-use parking structure in downtown Austin.



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About ULI Austin

The ULI Austin District Council brings together real estate professionals, civic leaders, and the Austin community for educational programs, initiatives affecting the region, and networking events, all in the pursuit of advancing responsible and equitable land use throughout the region. With over 1,100 members locally, ULI Austin provides a unique venue to convene and share best practices in the region. ULI Austin believes everyone needs to be at the table when the region's future is at stake, so ULI serves the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines—from architects to developers, CEOs to analysts, builders, property owners, investors, public officials, and everyone in between. Using this interdisciplinary approach, ULI examines land use issues, impartially reports findings, and convenes forums to find solutions.

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ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

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Urban Land Institute harnesses its members' technical expertise to help communities solve complex land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical assistance panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Austin region. Drawing from its professional membership base, ULI Austin offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and present it to the panel. TAP panelists spend two days interviewing stakeholders, evaluating the challenges, and ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations that the sponsoring organization can use to guide development going forward.

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Garage parking under construction in downtown Austin being built to serve the anticipated 20 floors of commercial office above.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The city of Austin is booming and nowhere is that more apparent than in the city's downtown. With that boom and the related real estate development comes a need to define the urban experience. As new buildings rise above the city's streetscape, levels and levels of parking decking are layered into the building's foundation, creating a meaningful void in activation along downtown streets. Pedestrians pass these new shiny buildings and are met with garage entrances leading to multiple levels of parking before any human experience—whether residential or commercial—can be seen on the floors far above. In some cases, street-level retail is factored into the first floor of the building, but in many other instances, there is no opportunity for human interaction.

Understanding the impact that unfettered parking construction is having and will continue to have on the streetscape experience in downtown Austin, City of Austin (the City) leadership turned to the Urban Land Institute–Austin district council (ULI Austin) for guidance in encouraging a reduction in new parking construction across the entire downtown geography.

Using its trusted and objective Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) process, ULI Austin convened a panel of real estate professionals with experience in the areas of urban planning, real estate development, architecture, and engineering to study the parking issues facing the City and deliver a set of recommendations City leadership can consider as it works to curb new parking construction and improve the downtown experience. The following guidance is intended to set the City on a path toward incremental improvement in the near term while laying the foundation for more transformative impact in the long term.

What is Working Well

This is not the first time Austin has addressed the need to reduce parking construction downtown. In 2017, the Downtown Austin Alliance released its [Parking Strategy](#), outlining recommendations to holistically redefine parking strategies for downtown. The recommendations in this guidance document are strong and should be implemented.

While the public sector works to curb new parking construction, the market in downtown Austin is already

moving, however slowly, in that direction. There are recently completed buildings downtown that feature significantly reduced parking ratios or, in some cases, no dedicated parking spaces.

Barriers to Parking Reduction

There are a number of factors that will continue to impact developers' interest in delivering reduced- or zero-parking buildings. From an auto-centric culture to infrastructure that does not yet include regionally connected public transit and real estate industry concerns about delivering a zero-parking project before the market is ready, there are several factors that are still curbing transit mode shifts and parking reduction efforts.

Policy Changes

Using both incentives and regulations, the City can update policies that impact development and will positively influence reduced parking construction over time.

- In the short-term, use “soft” parking caps to begin to limit new parking construction and establish a fee for parking capacity built above the caps. Periodic recalibration of the soft caps will be needed as the market shifts to continually encourage a decrease in incorporated parking.
- Modify the floor area ratio (FAR) formula to include above-ground structured parking, and recalibrate the base FAR allowable by right accordingly

with consideration for other recommendations implemented, especially soft caps.

- Decouple parking from residential and commercial assets to allow spaces to be leveraged separately from the associated residential or commercial uses.
- Encourage private partnerships between owners to share existing structures via long-term use agreements.
- Allow valet parking on non-transit-priority streets to pull cars off key corridors.
- Prioritize alley access and shared driveways to minimize curb cuts and make the pedestrian experience safer.
- Improve wayfinding to facilitate use of existing garage parking.
- Require Great Street standards across downtown, making it a priority when coordinating between departments, to create an environment more inviting for pedestrians, further inducing those moving around downtown to do so on foot.
- Expand policy changes to other transit-oriented developments and core transit corridors beyond downtown.

Parking Management Reform

The City should prioritize leveraging existing spaces and consider the following recommendations as a means to better manage existing street and garage parking.

- Increase on-street parking fees.
- Prioritize on-street spaces for other mobilities and short-term parking.
- Streamline the Affordable Parking Program application process, make the program an opt-out system for employers rather than the current opt-in system, and increase awareness of and access to the program across industries.
- Expand the parking management geography beyond downtown to potential spillover areas.

Improve the Human Experience

Walking around downtown Austin should be a pleasure.



New development in downtown Austin still incorporates multiple levels of garage parking for tenants.

- Prioritize shade to provide pedestrians with breaks from the heat.
- Improve accessibility in curb interactions, sidewalk widths, and ADA accessibility so that using the sidewalk and walking becomes the first, easiest, and safest choice.
- Activate storefronts to create a more interesting and appealing pedestrian experience.
- Encourage complete communities featuring a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses.

Improve Other Mobility Options

To encourage more drivers to rely on other transportation options, it is critical to expand options that are cheaper, faster, and provide more flexibility than driving a personal vehicle.

- Expand downtown public transit by bringing back the downtown circulator, improving the current system's reliability, expanding free student rides, better utilizing Park-N-Ride facilities, improving the bus stop and shelter experience, and improving wayfinding and information sharing on transit system improvements.
- Increase funding for separated bike lanes, shade, and secure bike parking.
- Improve crosswalks at intersections to prioritize pedestrians and improve safety in all downtown pedestrian spaces.
- Check frequently for ADA compliance along downtown sidewalks.
- Encourage car sharing by incentivizing provider companies' return to Austin and supporting car-share parking in developments.
- Encourage better managed micromobility by providing scooter corrals in public spaces and expanding MetroBike.
- Simplify transportation demand management (TDM) plan process and provide consistent reviews of the TDM measures.
- Support transportation management association (TMA) coordination with employer programs and create a downtown TMA charged with coordinating parking across developments.

Promote Education and Cultural Shift

The culture in Texas regularly elevates the importance of a personal vehicle over all other forms of transportation. CapMetro and the City are encouraged to promote and support alternative modes of transit in pursuit of individual mode shifts.

- Make transit more present and obvious through improved wayfinding and signage across downtown.
- Better integrate transit stops with new real estate developments in order to better connect people to transit.
- Provide information and education on how and where to use transit.
- Update and improve CapMetro's transit mobile app.

Improve City Collaboration and Processes

Improved collaboration across City departments and multiple agencies is paramount as it will improve efficiencies and better support the initiatives underway across Austin.

- Communicate a singular vision for improving the experience of living and working in Austin.
- Identify and communicate a mobility mode hierarchy prioritizing pedestrians first.
- Encourage non-auto commutes by City employees.
- For those visiting City Hall, offer incentives for all modes of transportation, beyond simple parking validation, with options such as transit pass redemption.

Moving Forward

Significant improvements in parking reduction in downtown Austin will be a long time coming, yet the market is already slowly moving in the right direction. With additional incentives, policy adjustments, and improvements in CapMetro's transit network, transformative change is possible. The groundwork must be laid today to enhance the streetscape, walkability, and appeal of the future downtown Austin.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Downtown Austin, Texas, is in the midst of a prolonged real estate boom, with residential, retail, and office construction bringing new businesses and new residents to downtown. As construction continues, each new tower brings with it additional levels of parking, catering to the new building tenants but also creating vast layers of parking decking, interrupting streetscapes, and further separating inhabitants from the street and separating pedestrians on sidewalks from any vibrant life inside the new building.

Recognizing this continual push to build more parking in a downtown known to have thousands of unused spaces on any given day, City of Austin (the City) leadership called on ULI Austin to study the parking construction disconnect and make recommendations for guiding future development downtown. Specifically, City leadership asked ULI Austin to provide recommendations to help Austin balance the market's apparent need for parking for personal vehicles

with the City's goals for a walkable, inviting streetscape and downtown population that leverages other mobility options, reducing the need for more parking spaces and additional new garages.

Involved in the study was the City's Transportation & Public Works Department, the office of Austin City Council Member Natasha Harper-Madison, and the office of Austin City Council Member Zohaib "Zo" Qadri. Additional entities

TAP Panel Scope

The Austin Strategic Mobility Plan (ASMP) seeks 50/50 mode share (50% drive-alone, 50% all other options combined) by 2039 to manage congestion based on Austin's forecasted growth. ASMP's "primary objective is to track reducing our dependence on driving alone while keeping an eye on the trends of individual modes." In downtown Austin, parking minimums have been removed since 2013 and much parking is still incorporated in developments. What can the City of Austin do to facilitate and encourage less vehicular transportation and parking incorporated within developments?

TAP Questions

What can be done to maximize building allocation for uses other than parking and positively affect affordability and street activation?

What shifts within the development industry, especially development and funding trends, are needed to minimize parking in developments and what can the City do to affect these shifts?

How can parking be minimized in developments while maintaining equitable access to downtown, especially for the region, workers, and disabled?

How can current underutilized parking assets be incorporated in the recommendations?

How can these recommendations be applied to other areas of Austin?

provided critical input and included the Austin Transit Partnership, CapMetro, and the Downtown Austin Alliance. ULI Austin convened a panel of real estate professionals to study the challenge posed by these agencies (collectively referred to as the sponsors). Equipped with a range of relevant professional expertise the panel reviewed briefing materials supplied by the sponsors, toured key development areas, and interviewed a wide variety of downtown and community stakeholders to better understand the market forces and challenges unique to the Austin market.

The stakeholder interviews, which included representatives from City agencies, elected leadership, downtown developers, and community organizations, confirmed the complexities of reducing parking in a community that places high value on easy access to personal vehicles.

Insights from Stakeholder Interviews

The following key themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews:

Remove all parking minimums. City-required parking minimums were eliminated in downtown Austin in 2013 and minimums citywide were eliminated during the preparation of this report. Stakeholders, across the board, endorsed this effort including the elimination of parking minimums citywide.

Parking ratios remain high. Although parking ratio demands—from commercial and residential tenants, financial institutions, and developers—are decreasing, the built ratios in Austin, and specifically downtown, are still higher than in other major cities.

Parking demand across residential uses is variable. In particular, stakeholders noted the difference in parking demand in for-sale versus for-rent developments, with for-sale developments seeing stronger demand for dedicated personal parking spaces.

Quality urban spaces feel disconnected. The presence of parking garages and multiple levels of parking rising above the streetscape detracts from the pedestrian experience and interrupts quality urban experiences downtown.

Downtown is over-parked. With nearly every new development delivering corresponding tenant parking, regardless of commercial or residential use, there are thousands of parking spaces left unused at any point in time. Office workers do not typically use parking spaces at night and residents may use their space in the evening, their residence may be part-time, or they may not own cars to fill the spaces tied to their unit.

City departments' priorities do not always align. The City has a number of important initiatives underway, and



The panel interviewed a wide variety of stakeholders to better understand the complexities of reducing parking in downtown Austin.

with each department striving to meet its own goals—whether sustainability, mobility, economic development, etc.—there are times when priorities across departments do not functionally align. This regularly leads to developers’ confusion as to the right/best path forward.

The source of parking demand is unclear. Across all interviewed stakeholders, there was a distinct lack of clarity as to which group is demanding parking. Lenders pointed to market and investors’ demands, developers pointed to lenders’ demands, commercial tenants pointed to talent attraction pressures, and individual residents were unsure how much parking was needed downtown but wanted a dedicated space in their building.

Project Connect is coming but is still several years away. The promise of a more robust public transportation system is on the horizon for Austin, but full implementation remains ten years in the future. In the meantime, stakeholders are reticent to reduce parking before more robust transportation alternatives are readily available.

On-street parking limits are not enforced. Street parking, governed by meters and largely available across downtown, is loosely managed. Many noted a willingness to park on the street and either pay the meter—or not and take the chance of receiving a ticket for an expired meter. Others

noted that the cost of a parking ticket was oftentimes still cheaper than garage parking, making street parking, even with a potential fine, a reasonable financial decision.

ADA spaces are poorly managed. For those navigating downtown who need ADA parking spaces, the choices are dismal. ADA spaces on the street are not well protected, often blocked by delivery vehicles, and ADA spaces in garages can be difficult to access as ticketing machinery may not be well-positioned for ADA-accessible vehicles.

A non-car culture shift is required. “This is Texas,” was heard in a number of stakeholder interviews. Ownership of or access to a personal vehicle is the norm, large vehicles and trucks are common, and proximate parking is expected. Austin is becoming a big city and will require a community culture shift away from personal automobiles as space becomes less and less available.

A shift in transportation friction is needed. As one stakeholder noted, Austin needs to “increase the friction for cars and minimize the friction for all other users.” Making it easy to use public transit, bicycles, scooters, and other non-vehicular modalities should be a priority. Personal automobiles are not going away any time soon, but the era of catering to personal auto use should be over.



Traveling by pedicab, the panel toured key areas downtown to see the scope of development underway and the impacts of garage parking.

WHAT IS WORKING WELL

The City of Austin previously recognized that downtown does not lack parking resources and eliminated all parking minimums downtown in 2013. Broadening that measure, the City eliminated parking minimums across the rest of Austin during the preparation of this report. These efforts, along with others identified by the panel below, represent movement in the right direction and efforts that are working well in Austin.

Downtown Austin Alliance

In 2017, the Downtown Austin Alliance released its [Parking Strategy](#), outlining recommendations to holistically redefine parking strategies for downtown. The panel strongly recommends the City focus on implementing the following six initiatives from the study:

1. **Maximize use of existing parking supply.** The study identified thousands of unused parking spaces downtown. Focus should be on the design and implementation of a performance-based parking management; piloting a shared parking program; expanding and diversifying existing the Affordable Parking Program; enhancing pedestrian access to parking facilities; and exploring opportunities to expand and clarify on-street supply.
2. **Strategically invest in information and technology.** Technology solutions can assist the City in implementing a comprehensive parking signage and wayfinding system. The City will also need to define an overall strategy that ensures technology tools are in place to support its broader parking and mobility goals.
3. **Improve mobility options to reduce parking demand.** Parking revenues should be reinvested into downtown and multimodal improvements, the option to implement a park-n-ride or circulator shuttle should be explored, and improvements in employee-focused mobility services should be encouraged across downtown employers.
4. **Simplify and leverage the zoning code.** The City should revise the zoning code to support walkable, mixed-use development and incentivize shared parking. Enforcement of a transportation demand management (TDM) program should also be required for new developments above a certain size.
5. **Enhance parking administration and operations.** Performance-based management and a dynamic inventory of parking resources can support better use of existing resources and maximize flexibility at the curb. Formal collaboration between parking stakeholders, parking system flexibility and predictability, and a plan for long-term trends in mobility and parking will also further leverage existing supply.
6. **Provide additional public parking as needed.** When new parking is needed, the City should strategically invest in public and shared parking supply in key locations.

Market Movements

The panel was encouraged to learn that there are new buildings in the market with more under development that feature significantly reduced parking ratios or, in some cases, no dedicated parking spaces.

- **Zero-parking hotel properties.** The last eight hotels added to downtown Austin do not have associated dedicated parking for guests and only a small number of spaces for executive-level employees.
- **Office parking ratios are declining.** While the market norm has typically featured office buildings with 2.4

to 3 spaces per 1,000 square feet (SF) of office space, some new office buildings are reducing those ratios to 1.1, 1.5, or 2 spaces per 1,000 SF.

- **Multifamily parking ratios are declining.** While the market typically calls for at least one parking space per bedroom in multifamily developments, at least one residential for-sale project is being delivered at 0.7 spaces per bedroom. Within the range of apartment developments in downtown Austin, some developers are experimenting with apartments that have no associated dedicated parking. Success within these projects has been mixed, yet the factors influencing market success are primarily related to capital markets forces and other project factors rather than low parking allowances.

In the West Campus neighborhood, the University Neighborhood Ordinance (UNO) district is a good example of the market reducing parking demand. In this area, walkability, proximity of buildings and services, and ease of non-vehicular mobility have created an environment where tenants are not using nor demanding dedicated parking facilities.



The current commuter rail system works well in the one direction it serves.



Groundfloor retail and expansive patios can enliven the street in ways that parking spaces, ramps, and parking garages cannot.

BARRIERS TO PARKING REDUCTION

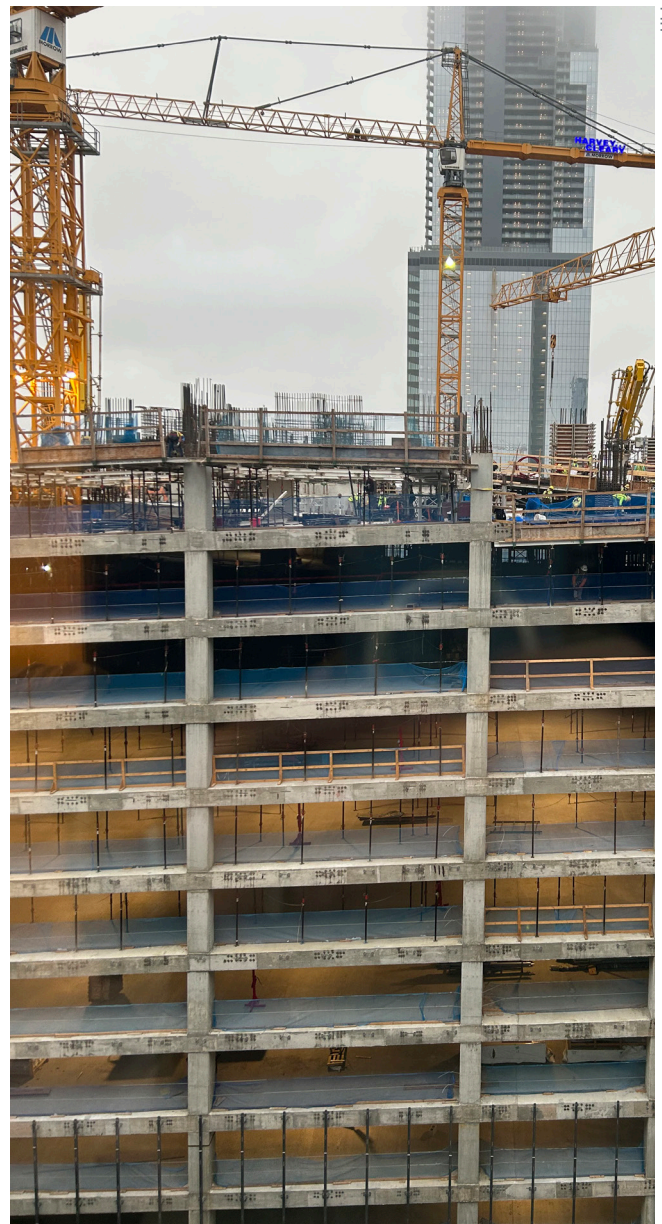
Progress is being made in parking reduction downtown, yet barriers remain. From personal preferences to weak transportation alternatives to fear of market acceptance, there is not just one factor preventing a more frequent shift to zero-parking development.

Culture and Climate

Culture plays a significant role in the public's mobility choices and access to a personal vehicle in Texas remains a typical expectation. "We're in Texas," was the response of many stakeholders when asked why so many people insist on driving a personal vehicle. Moving away from a car and truck culture in Texas is further challenged by the state's extreme heat. It is much easier to drive a car and enjoy air conditioning while commuting than to stand at a transit stop or bike several miles to work in 100-degree temperatures. The climate also plays a role in Austin residents' general unwillingness to walk more than a few blocks with five blocks considered "too far." Texans also have an expectation of ready access to one's personal vehicle and will often drive between proximate locations rather than walk between destinations. Finally, cultural influences extend to corporate partners as well. Sharing parking across buildings, while an obvious choice for many (particularly between residential and office users), is still a new concept in Austin, and the hesitation to rely on a partnership for parking leads many developers to take control of a building's future by instead building levels and levels of parking into a new building.

Infrastructure

"There is no transit." This sentiment, voiced by a stakeholder interviewed for the TAP, sums up a key barrier to reducing parking. Before Austinites can be expected to rely less on personal vehicles, viable transit alternatives must be expanded. Project Connect, Austin's answer to enhanced public transit, is underway and will expand transit options



Multiple levels of parking garage under-gird this new development in downtown Austin.

across downtown and beyond through light rail lines, additional CapMetro Rapid lines, and more services across the city. These improvements, however, are still years away from completion. There are additional infrastructure challenges in other parts of the city, particularly the area near Judges' Hill, that also make supporting transit difficult. Low density regulations cannot support transit and can act as a barrier to multimodal connectivity to downtown.

For those who are interested in using other modes of transportation, inconsistent pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure can make walking or biking around downtown challenging. These options should be the easy first choice over driving and parking. Presently, however, parking options across downtown are over-supplied, making the use of a personal vehicle the easiest first choice.

Social infrastructure is also important downtown. Many stakeholders noted a diminished sense of safety downtown. Moving around downtown today on foot, by scooter, or bike feels less safe for many, leaving them to turn to a personal vehicle as the perceived safer choice.

Market and Industry Concerns

There is a distinct lack of clarity around who or which industry is driving the perceived need for parking. Lenders, developers, brokers, and appraisers each point to one another when asked who is requiring associated parking and at what level. Without this clarity, and without clear data on the potential market response to lower parking ratios, most developers are defaulting to past parking ratio norms based on a fear that under-parking a project will not succeed in the market or will result in reduced rents.

Cities like Austin, with a strong real estate market in a growing economy, can benefit from pushing boundaries and finding innovative solutions. The current volatility in the capital markets, however, makes this type of innovation and risk-taking more difficult for developers and investors, which leads many to fall back on historic or conservative development patterns.



Screens and other architectural treatments can help to hide layers of parked cars but the lack of engagement with the street remains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the City evaluates how it may encourage the further reduction of new parking facility construction downtown, the panel set forth the following recommendations, which take into consideration market forces, developer/lender/tenants' needs, and the City's stated goals of reducing vehicular congestion and supporting street activation.

Parking Policy Changes for New Development

The City has a number of policy options it can pursue to encourage fewer parking spaces in new projects.

Use parking caps to limit parking facilities in new developments. The panel is sensitive to the impacts of hard limits on what the real estate industry believes the market needs. Using "soft" parking caps, the City can allow a certain level of parking while also calibrating the caps periodically, to ensure a proper balance between reductions in allowable parking and market trends. An initial soft cap pattern could include:

- Hotel parking cap – 0.25 spaces per room
- Office parking cap – 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet
- Residential parking cap – 1 space per unit
- Retail parking cap – 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet

For those developers wishing to build facilities beyond the limits of the soft caps, the City is encouraged to establish a fee for parking capacity built above these soft caps. Revenue from these fees could then be directed to the Great Streets program to fund initiatives to improve the pedestrian experience downtown.

In the medium to long term, the City should also consider taking a firmer stance on parking limits and institute hard caps downtown and in other parts of the city.

Modify floor area ratio (FAR) to limit new parking construction. Downtown zoning dictates the volume of allowable building on any given lot. This calculation does not currently include parking areas. By including above-ground structured parking in a building's FAR, developers

will be encouraged to consider the cost/benefit analysis of below-ground parking in place of structured parking above, without reducing developable space. The FAR allowable by right will need to be recalibrated to incorporate parking with consideration for any other recommendations included, especially any soft caps enacted, and should adjust as the market shifts in order to continually encourage a decrease in incorporated parking. To further support this update, the City should also remove the FAR caps associated with Austin's downtown density bonus program.

Encourage decoupling parking from residential assets.

Developers who wish to participate in the Downtown Density Bonus program provide certain concessions to help advance City goals in exchange for additional development tools or capacities. By requiring the decoupling of parking as a part of the basic requirements to participate in the Downtown Density Bonus program, parking can then become an asset to be leveraged, shared, sold, or reduced separately from the rest of the building's activities.

Encourage shared parking. Knowing that there is already an abundance of parking downtown, every effort should be made to encourage shared parking resources. The City should encourage private partnerships between owners to share parking—whether through sharing existing structures via long-term use agreements or planning for shared parking facilities at the outset of project design. Movability, Austin's Transit Management Association, may be a resource for coordinating shared parking.

Allow flexible uses of public rights-of-way. Valet services can help ease some of the tension felt by individual drivers seeking proximate parking. By allowing valet parking on non-transit-priority streets, valet companies can provide

services across downtown. Flexibility in and prioritizing alley access and shared driveways can help minimize curb cuts and make the pedestrian experience safer and more welcoming.

Improve wayfinding. The City should encourage better wayfinding and increased signage to help drivers find available parking, parking fee information, and spaces that are ADA accessible.

Require Great Street standards across downtown.

The Great Streets initiative supports the creation of a more walkable and inviting downtown by more equitably balancing the space between sidewalks and roadways. Spread across downtown, a network of Great Streets-designed streets and public realm would be more inviting for pedestrians, further inducing those moving around downtown to do so on foot instead of in a car.

Expand policy changes beyond downtown. In the long term, the City is encouraged to expand these policy changes to other transit-oriented developments and core transit corridors in other parts of the city. By expanding cultural change from car to transit across the city, fewer people will utilize personal vehicles to access downtown.

Parking Management Reform

With 25,000 unused parking spaces estimated across downtown, there is a compelling opportunity to better manage the parking that is already in place to better serve residents, employees, and visitors and discourage new parking construction.

Increase on-street parking fees. Off-street parking spaces should be the more cost-effective choice over on-street parking. For short-term parking, it is presently much cheaper to pay for on-street parking than to pay to park in a garage and does not reflect the true cost of providing the available parking. This imbalance, coupled with the lax enforcement of unpaid or expired on-street meters and low parking ticket rates, encourages more on-street parking, often far beyond the metered time. The panel agrees with the DDA plan's recommendation for the

design an implementation of performance-based parking management.

Free on-street spaces for other mobilities and short-term parking only. By pushing longer-term parking into garages, on-street spaces are more readily available for short trips, rideshare loading and unloading, accessible parking, and access by other forms of mobility such as bikes, scooters, and pedicabs.

Expand the Affordable Parking Program. The City's Affordable Parking Program, which provides parking in specific downtown garages at a reduced rate, was designed to reduce economic barriers to working downtown. The program's application process should be streamlined and turned into an opt-out system for employers rather than its current opt-in setup. The program would also benefit from expanded visibility and additional access points to assist a wider population of cost-burdened employees who work downtown. These updates should be tackled in advance of the upcoming Interstate 35 improvement and light rail construction.

Expand parking management geography. The parking policies and regulations will positively impact the downtown streetscape and should be applied in the areas beyond the downtown boundary to potential spillover areas. Particularly in areas east of downtown, this expanded parking management geography will provide some buffered space around downtown and prevent the directly adjacent neighborhoods from becoming choice destinations for free parking.

Improve the Human Experience

People who can drive will continue to do so downtown until the pedestrian experience is prioritized and improves. From sidewalk facilities to shade opportunities, there is room for improvement in downtown Austin's human experience.

Prioritize shade. Downtown needs additional trees and shade opportunities to provide pedestrians with breaks from the heat. Individual business and property owners should also be encouraged to provide shade where

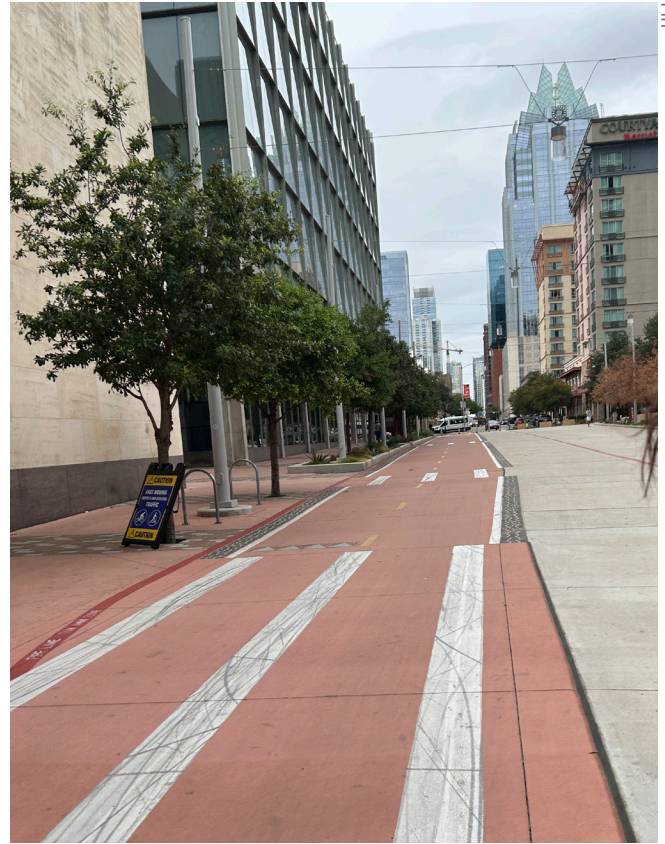


Scooters, motorbikes, and pedicabs can park easily in a space typically reserved for one car.

possible, and building awnings should be encouraged. Even people driving downtown and parking will still be subjected to the sun and heat when walking from the car and into a building.

Improve accessibility. Sidewalks are critical infrastructure downtown and older parts of the district feature sidewalk designs that require updating. From curb interactions to sidewalk widths to ADA accessibility, the sidewalk should be the first, easiest, and safest mobility choice. Enforcement of the use of ADA parking spaces and ensuring that ramps are not blocked by carelessly parked vehicles will also help support accessibility downtown.

Activate street fronts. Walking around downtown is far more interesting and appealing when the street edges and storefronts are activated and engaging. This work would benefit from an active partnership with building owners and the City can lead the way.



The separated trail network that runs through downtown provides bicyclists and other non-vehicular users with a safe path to travel.

Encourage complete communities. Downtown vibrancy hinges on a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses. Density also plays a critical role in enlivening the district, pulling people downtown to live and work in walkable areas and supporting the case for enhanced public transportation services.

Improving Other Mobility Options

People who can drive will continue to do so until there are robust transportation options that are cheaper, faster, or provide more flexibility than driving a personal vehicle. Improvements are needed to the city's public transit, biking, and pedestrian infrastructure.

Expand downtown public transit. While the City waits for Project Connect to be fully realized, there are a number of other public transit opportunities that CapMetro can implement to get people out of personal vehicles.



Parking for individual cars along the street edge is inefficient, consuming valuable sidewalk space and further disconnecting the streetscape from the storefronts.

- Bring back the downtown circulator shuttle to better connect people across the downtown landscape.
 - Improve the efficiencies, reliability, and frequencies of the current transit system.
 - Expand free student rides to all universities and explore transit subsidies for employees of downtown businesses. The current day pass system works well and should be expanded.
 - Better utilize and promote Park-N-Ride facilities citywide to encourage consolidation of the number of cars coming downtown.
 - Improve the bus stop and shelter experience, ensuring that seating, shade, and trash receptacles are available.
 - Improve transit wayfinding, making it easy to find stops, read the schedule, and navigate connections.
 - Share information on upcoming transit infrastructure at existing transit stops. While Project Connect is the most visible aspect of CapMetro’s transit system, the forthcoming transit options could be shared and promoted as today’s riders wait.
- Improve the biking and walking experience.** In order to meet the [Strategic Mobility Plan](#) of a citywide 50/50 mode split by 2039, which envisions 50% of commutes to take place via mobilities other than personal vehicles, greater priority must be placed on walking and biking infrastructure.
- Increase the priority of and funding for the implementation of separated bike lanes. Current funding will need to increase by three or four times to provide robust bike facilities across downtown and increase bicyclists’ sense of safety along city streets.
 - Increase bicyclist and pedestrian comfort by providing shaded bike lanes and sidewalks through increased tree plantings along high-traffic bike corridors.
 - Expand the long-term bike parking requirement in the [Transportation Criteria Manual](#) to prioritize secure bike parking in commercial and residential areas.
 - Explore new funding opportunities beyond bonds to support improved bus service, a downtown circulator, etc. Using parking districts could assist with supportive funding for infrastructure improvements.



Planning for more frequent use of alternative mobility options, such as scooters, car-share, and pedicabs, can encourage residents, employees, and visitors to leave their personal automobile at home.

- Improve crosswalks at intersections to better protect and prioritize pedestrian movement across streets. Signals should be programmed to activate during every traffic light change, not relying on the manual pressing of the Walk signal button, and should remain lit for the duration of the light change rather than time out with a countdown function.
 - Provide more frequent City checks for ADA compliance along sidewalks across downtown.
 - Improve the sense of safety in downtown pedestrian spaces at all hours. Many metropolitan areas have seen a shift downward in pedestrians' feelings of safety in downtown spaces following the COVID-19 pandemic and similar concerns about Austin were expressed in the interviews. More intentional measures are required to help improve the pedestrian experience.
- Encourage car-share and micro-mobility options.** There are a number of private companies that can play an important role in expanding mobility options downtown. While the City may not be the direct supplier of these transportation modes, it can help support their return to the Austin market.
- Incentivize car-share companies to enter, or in some cases, return to Austin. Enterprise CarShare provides large employers with car-share opportunities and Zipcar and Getaround, which operate in other markets, may be interested in incentives to return to Austin.
 - Support car-share provider parking in new developments. This development support could come in the form of a street impact fee credit or omitting the shared parking area from the soft cap on parking spaces.
 - Provide scooter corrals in public spaces to help riders find a quick and easy ride around downtown and contain scooters in areas that are out of pedestrian rights-of-way.
 - Expand MetroBike across downtown. Employer subsidies, particularly for service industry workers, could be of particular interest to downtown employees as a MetroBike pass is cheaper than a parking pass.

Explore transportation demand management (TDM) and transportation management associations (TMA). Other cities have robust TMA networks that support mobility across geographies. These organizations are dedicated to helping employers and individuals find and create commuting solutions that save time and money. Austin has just one such association, [Movability](#), which has difficulty serving the entire city. Working with TDM and supporting the formation of additional TMAs, the City can further encourage the regular use of alternative transportation modes.

- Explore subsidized transit passes and mobility wallets for employers to share with employees as a mechanism for encouraging alternative commuting options.
- Incentivize carpool/vanpool programs for regular downtown commuters, and encourage shuttle or circulator usage for employees once they are downtown.
- Simplify the TDM plan process as part of the transportation impact analysis that accompanies new developments, and provide consistent reviews of the TDM measures and their potential impacts on street impact fees.
- Act on the TMA recommendations included in the [2017 Downtown Austin Parking Strategy](#).
- Support TMA coordination with employer buy-in and follow-on programs, potentially hiring staff to manage the program and using the TMA to coordinate programs across downtown employers and tenants.
- Create TMA districts, specifically a downtown TMA, charged with coordinating parking across developments, cooperative shuttles, commuting options, and a shared parking approach.

Promote Education and Cultural Shift

Culture is a strong influencer of individual actions, and the culture in Texas regularly elevates the importance of a personal vehicle over all other forms of transportation. To shift this cultural pattern and provide the public with additional information, the City is encouraged to more actively promote and support alternative modes of transit.



Real estate developments are experimenting with different levels of parking availability.

- Make transit options more visible through improved wayfinding and signage across downtown. Riders should not have to hunt for bus or shuttle stops.
- Better integrate transit stops with new real estate developments in order to directly connect people to transit, and elevate transit proximity as a building amenity. Additional services, such as providing real-time schedule information in building lobbies, can further encourage transit usage.
- Inexperience with the transit system or a general lack of knowledge about how to navigate the transit network can limit public adoption. Providing information and education on how and where to use transit, potentially instituting a buddy program, and pairing seasoned

riders with new riders can increase public acceptance and use of transit.

- CapMetro's transit mobile app needs attention. Ghost buses—buses that do not show up as scheduled—and zombie buses—buses that show up unscheduled—reduce the system's reliability and leave the public unsure if they can trust the app or the broader network.

Improve City Collaboration and Processes

Better collaboration across City departments and more efficient City processes are required to fully support developers' efforts at parking reduction. Policies should be evaluated across departments to ensure that myriad other initiatives underway across Austin are not operating at cross purposes. In all efforts, the pedestrian should be prioritized and the City should lead by example.

Communicate a singular vision. All City departments should share a singular vision for improving the experience of living and working in Austin. This should include departments working with a clear understanding of City priorities and goal of improving collaboration and processes.

Collaborate across the public and private sectors. Developers are interested in pursuing design and building elements that enhance connectivity to the street, yet they often run into utility challenges and other regulatory requirements that curb creativity. The City can take the lead

in hosting conversations about the design ideas and work toward a more collaborative development process.

Identify and communicate a mobility mode hierarchy.

All City departments should be following a mobility mode hierarchy that recognizes that pedestrians are the most vulnerable people within the streetscape, then bicyclists and micro-mobility users (e.g., scooters), then public transit riders (e.g., bus and light rail riders), and then automobile drivers. This hierarchy should come into play when planning infrastructure improvements across downtown, making sure to protect the most vulnerable users first.

Lead by example. The City should encourage non-auto commutes by City employees and consider how it can make transit the option of choice for City employees.

Expand the parking validation system to support transit riders. The current parking validation system in the garage at City Hall makes parking free for those driving to City Hall, yet bus riders and users of other transportation modes are not reimbursed and thus incur greater expenses than those driving downtown. Providing a free bus pass to bus riders or similar passes for other modes would be an equitable way to support visitors using alternative modes of transportation to City Hall.

NEXT STEPS

As the City considers modifications and additions to its policies and regulations guiding new parking facility construction downtown, there are several steps it can take in the near-term to impact development in the next twelve months while laying a foundation for more transformative, longer-term impact in the years ahead.

Starting Immediately

Enforce curb management policies. Policies are in place to limit the duration and location of on-street parking. Enforcing these policies should be a priority and an easy first step for the City.

Revise on-street parking prices. Similar to enforcing the parking rules in place, another near-term improvement should include increasing on-street parking prices. When faced with similar or more expensive on-street spaces, drivers may be encouraged to seek garage parking instead, freeing the street for other transit uses and making good use of the abundant garages.

Initiate changes to adjust FAR. Regulations governing the metrics around floor area ratios may take time to change, yet the work needed to enact those changes should begin immediately. These new adjustments, including above-ground parking in FAR calculations and instituting soft caps on new parking space construction, recalibrated periodically, should have a meaningful impact on the amount of new above-ground parking planned for downtown.

Update the Affordable Parking Program. Adjustments to this important program, such as streamlining the application process, making the program an opt-out scenario, and expanding the visibility and access points can have positive near-term impacts and help support the mobility needs of downtown's lower-income employees.

Accelerate build-out of separated bike lanes. Safety while biking is one of the most important considerations for those choosing to commute or move around downtown on a bicycle. The presence of bike lanes that are clearly and

safely separate from vehicle lanes will support those biking today and further encourage those considering a mode shift in the future.

Reintroduce the downtown circulator. DDA and the City should explore bringing back a dedicated shuttle service, providing mobility for employees, residents, and visitors across downtown.

Improve wayfinding. Working with partners who have expressed an interest in collaborating on the effort, the City should update and improve the wayfinding associated with public transit.

Educate residents on existing transit opportunities. It is critical that residents, employees, and visitors see and understand how to access public transit. Updating these same constituents on the upcoming infrastructure and Project Connect improvements will also support greater public adoption when those transit options become available.

Improve collaboration between City departments. A newly-defined singular vision for downtown parking can help unite all City departments around the ultimate goals for parking, transit, infrastructure, streetscape improvements, and more. Working in collaboration, all departments can better understand how each particular department, and their individual role, can positively impact the efforts and help advance the City's mobility goals.

There is no one solution to reducing new parking construction in downtown Austin. The market is driving many development decisions and continuing to support a case for new parking construction even after the

elimination of parking minimums downtown. At the same time, other market forces are beginning to embrace alternative transportation modes and recognize their value in new development planning. Austin is quickly becoming a big city that is attracting new residents who would prefer to not own and maintain a personal vehicle. As the city grows, and particularly as it grows vertically and in

density, public transit should become norm. Using the tools and recommendations presented by the panel, the City can further support this movement, continue to provide residents, employees, and visitors with the transportation access they need, and eventually move toward a more walkable, vibrant streetscape that is no longer dominated by personal vehicles.

	Incorporate Immediately. <i>City has direct control/influence to make progress.</i>	Between Now and Project Connect Rail <i>City has influence/control but the improvement will take time.</i>	After Project Connect Rail Construction. <i>More complex processes that require time and collaboration.</i>
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish "soft" parking caps and fees for building above limits Initiate changes to adjust FAR (include above-ground parking in FAR and recalibrate FAR allowable by right) and provide for periodic recalibration Remove FAR caps Decouple parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage private partnerships to share existing parking Allow valet on non-transit-priority streets Prioritize alley access and shared driveways to minimize curb cuts Improve wayfinding Require Great Street standards across downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider expanding policy changes beyond downtown to other transit corridors Consider parking maximums downtown
Parking Management Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce curb management policies Revise on-street parking prices Update and expand the Affordable Parking Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize on-street spaces for short-term parking Expand parking management geography to spillover areas, particularly in areas east of downtown 	
Improve the Human Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize shade Improve sidewalk accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate street fronts Encourage complete communities Initiate expanding prioritizing of shade and sidewalk accessibility beyond downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within construction, ensure shade and sidewalk connectivity extends along transit corridors and connects into neighborhoods
Improve Other Mobility Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accelerate build-out of separated bike lanes Improve crosswalks to prioritize pedestrians Check sidewalks frequently for ADA compliance Encourage car-sharing Bring back the downtown circulator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand downtown public transit Increase funding for improved biking infrastructure. Explore other funding including leveraging parking districts Provide scooter corrals and expand MetroBike across downtown and into neighborhoods outside of downtown Simplify the TDM process Support TMA coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand TMA to districts
Promote Education and Culture Shift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve transit wayfinding and signage Provide transit information and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better integrate transit stops with new developments Update and improve CapMetro's transit mobile app 	
Improve City Collaboration and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve collaboration between City departments Offer incentives beyond parking validation for all modes of transportation to City Hall Identify and communicate a singular vision Identify and communicate a mobility hierarchy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage non-auto commutes by City employees 	

* Recommendations within each section are not listed in a manner to indicate priority.

ABOUT THE PANEL



David Carroll
TAP Panel Chair
**Partner and Director of
Multifamily
Urban Foundry Architecture**

David Carroll is a Partner and Director and founder of the Multifamily Architecture Studio at Urban Foundry Architecture in Austin. He has an expertise in working in the urban environment and has served on the City of Austin Design Commission for the last nine years. In this capacity, he is currently leading the effort to rewrite the City's Urban Design Guidelines. In 2019, City Council also appointed Mr. Carroll to the Joint Sustainability Committee to oversee the development of the new

Climate Equity Plan. For his work in advocacy and urban design related issues, Mr. Carroll was awarded the AIA Austin President's Award in 2016 and in 2018 received the AIA Austin John Nyfeler Award for Community Service for his work with Austin's Land Development Code Revision. For his continual efforts in local advocacy, AIA National recognized Mr. Carroll as one of their Citizen Architects for 2021. Throughout his career, Mr. Carroll has been a leader in multifamily architecture and affordable housing. To this end, he also serves on the Board of the Chestnut Neighborhood Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit dedicated to developing affordable housing. In 2021, they received the AIA Community Vision Award for their work in bringing affordable homes to east Austin.



Jackson Archer, AICP
Senior Associate
Nelson\Nygaard

Jackson leads several private development site parking reform and TDM implementation projects at Nelson\Nygaard in

Austin. His passion for multimodal transportation and shared parking guides these projects—Jackson firmly believes that a shared parking analysis is a key lever to prevent overbuilding parking supply. He works with local public agencies to advise on deployment of TDM tools to meet project and city goals. Local TDM and parking projects typically involve circulation details (transit, bike, pedestrian, and complete streets) and close coordination with traffic engineers, land use attorneys, site designers, public agencies, and development and owner teams. Nelson\Nygaard helped create TDM protocol for new development in Austin, and Jackson helps create workable standards for new projects that advance TDM and mode split goals in Austin.



Awais Azhar
Deputy Director
HousingWorks Austin

Awais Azhar is Deputy Director of HousingWorks Austin and is a Community and Regional Planning Ph.D. Candidate and

Teaching Assistant at The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. His research focuses on affordable housing, financialization, and tenant experiences.

Awais is an affordable housing, land use, and transit advocate. He currently serves on the City of Austin Planning Commission, Project Connect Community Advisory Committee, Austin Economic Development Corporation Board, HousingWorks Austin Advocacy Committee, Capital Metro Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Community Advisory Group, and Planning Our Communities Leadership Team. Awais served on the Planning Commission during the 2019 Land Development Code Revision process in Austin and was involved in the CodeNEXT process before that as a housing advocate.

In the past he has also served on the Austin Housing Coalition Executive Committee, City of Austin Community Development Commission, ECHO Continuum of Care Membership Council, Community Advancement Network Dashboard Steering Committee, LGBTQI+ Census Complete Count Committee, Equality Texas Board, City of Austin LGBTQ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, and as a 2017 Central Health Community Health Champion. Previously, Awais worked as a Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant at the University of Texas at Austin and as Research Coordinator and Program Manager at HousingWorks Austin. Awais has a Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning and a Master of Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin, with a portfolio in Nonprofit Studies.



Leah Bojo
Director of Land Use & Entitlements
Drenner Group

Leah Bojo is a Director of Land Use and Entitlements for Drenner Group, working with property

owners and developers throughout the development process. Prior to joining the world of land use consulting in 2015, she worked for two Austin City Council Members, most recently as Policy Director over land use and transportation policy, building a strong foundation of both political and policy experience. In addition to her work on rezoning cases, neighborhood plan amendments, and City Code amendments, she participated in the rewrite of the City of Austin’s vested rights ordinance, the approval of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and the approval of the Downtown Austin Plan.

Ms. Bojo has completed Masters degrees in Public Policy and Community and Regional Planning from the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the School of Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin, as well as a Portfolio in Dispute Resolution from the School of Law. Ms. Bojo holds a B.S. in Environmental Studies from Mount Holyoke College. She has experience working with and building consensus among stakeholders in connection with a broad array of land use decisions and has worked with City council members, county commis-

sioners, City of Austin boards and commissions, governmental staff, environmental interest groups, neighborhood associations, and other stakeholders throughout the land development entitlement process. Leah is a registered lobbyist with the City of Austin and a certified planner through the American Institute of Certified Planners.

Leah has a particular interest in placemaking as an integral component of the development process and is dedicated to helping clients create active, inspiring places through the built environment. After living in Austin for over 20 years, Leah moved to New York City in 2021 becoming Drenner Group's longest super commuter. This relocation allows Leah to live and work in each of her favorite cities, and to consume a healthy balance of tacos and bagels.



Bill Leedom
Managing Director
URG / Touchstone

Bill Leedom is a Senior Development Manager at Touchstone and brings more than 15+ years of asset management, acquisition, disposition and development experience to the team. At Touchstone, Bill is involved in the entire lifecycle of a development project, including land acquisition, feasibility, entitlements, development, construction, leasing and disposition.

Prior to Touchstone, Bill worked for over a decade at Talon Private Capital. During his tenure, Bill completed several million square feet of acquisitions and dispositions, managed a 2.7M SF portfolio of 13 Seattle area assets that was the largest receivership in Washington state history, and was responsible for the successful development of Kirkland Urban – a 750,000 SF mixed use project that was ultimately sold to Google. Before Talon, Bill worked for over five years at Metzler Real Estate, asset-managing properties across the United States. Bill also interned at Schnitzer West and spent four years in investment banking prior to attending business school.



Jake Levitas
Planning Supervisor
(Urban Projects Group)
City of Raleigh, NC

Jake Levitas is a Planning Supervisor in the City of Raleigh's Urban Projects Group,

which works to bring visionary plans to reality through interdisciplinary coordination and public-private partnerships. Jake brings over 15 years of experience in urban planning, economic development, and civic engagement to the City. Prior to joining the City he worked as a Senior Analyst at HR&A Advisors, conducting advanced financial and policy analysis to help make cities more resilient, equitable, and dynamic, including projects in New York, Boston, Nashville, Washington, DC, Charlotte, Raleigh, and Tampa.

He completed dual master's degrees in city and regional planning and public administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he focused on economic development, real estate, and urban resilience. Prior to graduate school Jake founded the non-profit initiative Our City, which worked with cities around the country on placemaking initiatives. As a Fellow in the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Civic Innovation, Jake consulted with multiple city agencies on technology projects and promoted creative approaches and policies for public spaces. He also served as Research Director at Gray Area, a civic-oriented arts and technology nonprofit in San Francisco, where his initiatives fostered over 40,000 hours of civic engagement. He began his planning career as a sustainability consultant at Arup leading sustainability analysis for large-scale master planning projects.

A Raleigh native, he previously served on the Raleigh Appearance Commission for four years as an advocate for good design in the city.



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