



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Economic Opportunity Committee

**Through:** Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Assistant City Manager

**From:** Lauren Middleton-Pratt, Austin Planning Director

**Date:** March 20, 2026

**Subject:** **Status Update on the Imagine Austin Update**

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the City's Imagine Austin comprehensive plan update as directed by City Council [Resolution No. 20250828-074](#).

### **Background**

The City Council adopted the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan in 2012. Since that time, many plans, programs, and priorities have been adopted by the City Council, guided by elements of Imagine Austin. However, 14 years have passed since the Plan's original adoption date, and it has become harder to create meaningful connections between newer plans and Imagine Austin. Updating the plan now will allow us to formally incorporate current plans, programs, and priorities, thus providing clearer direction and consistency for planning and investments across the city.

### **Overview of the Past Six Months**

In November 2025, the City Council reallocated \$1.5 million of the project's original \$3 million budget. As a result of this modification, staff paused work with the consultants to rescope the project. This process clarified which tasks would be staff-led and which would remain consultant-led under the revised budget.

### **Project Goals**

Through the rescoping process, staff identified a set of focused project goals:

- Develop a Place Types map to support consistent land use planning throughout Austin that helps achieve citywide goals while recognizing the needs of different communities.
- Create regular engagement opportunities with the community.
- Update policies to provide clear guidance for current and future planning and decision-making.
- Refine the plan document for clearer organization and to be more user-friendly.
- Strengthen alignment between Imagine Austin and other citywide strategic plans to provide clearer direction and consistency.

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### Scope of Work

Following the budget reduction, staff worked closely with the consultant team to identify the most critical components of the plan for consultant guidance. Tasks listed below that are marked with an asterisk (\*) will remain consultant-led. City staff will be solely responsible for all other tasks and will continue supporting consultant-led efforts.

- Task 1: Outreach and Engagement
- Task 2: Existing Conditions and Future Trends Assessment \*
- Task 3: Vision and Goals
- Task 4: Priority Program and Policies
- Task 5: Land Use Goals and Policies \*
- Task 6: Place Types Palette and Methodology \*
- Task 7: Place Types Map \*
- Task 8: Plan Alignment
- Task 9: Implementation
- Task 10: Plan Writing
- Task 11: Document Design \*

### Imagine Austin Plan Framework

Staff intends to streamline and simplify the structure of the Imagine Austin plan. This will make it easier for all users to understand and increase its use as a key reference point and decision-making tool in the years to come.

- The **Vision** is our “why.” It paints a picture of the aspirational but achievable success we are working toward.
- The **Goals** are our “how.” These statements further define the city we want to be and how we want to get there. Goals in the current plan include:
  - Austin is Livable;
  - Austin is Mobile and Interconnected;
  - Austin Values and Respects its People;
  - Austin is Natural and Sustainable;
  - Austin is Prosperous;
  - Austin is Educated; and
  - Austin is Creative.

The Imagine Austin Vision and Goals will inform the two main deliverables of the plan:

- The **Citywide Place Types Map** will be the city’s first comprehensive future land use map. It will guide growth, development, and infrastructure provision.
- The **Priority Programs** support the plan’s Vision and Goals and organize the plan’s key policies and actions for collaborative implementation across City departments.

### Plan Alignment and Implementation

Alignment between the comprehensive plan, departmental system plans, the Citywide Strategic Plan, and implementation mechanisms (e.g. the Capital Improvement Program, Bond Program, the annual City budget, the City Manager’s Annual Goals, etc.) is crucial to the successful implementation of Imagine Austin’s Priority Programs. Austin Planning is working with the City Manager’s Office, department directors, and Austin Budget and Organizational Excellence to develop an improved framework for aligning these plans and their implementation actions.

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### **Outreach and Engagement**

The outreach and engagement plan reflects current expectations, while acknowledging the need to remain flexible and responsive as we hear from the community and incorporate what we learn throughout the process. The outreach and engagement strategies will reach a wide variety of external and internal stakeholders:

- External engagement strategies include Imagine Austin Community Working Group meetings, public surveys, community open houses, focus groups, and tabling events.
- Internal engagement strategies with staff from City departments and partner agencies include Imagine Austin Interagency Technical Advisory Group (ITAG) meetings, collaborative work sessions, interdepartmental meetings, and presentations to departmental and City leadership.

The project timeline and engagement phases may evolve as the process moves forward.

### **Looking Ahead**

Work on the plan update has started, and existing conditions research is underway. The 45 Imagine Austin Community Working Group members have been selected through a robust application and evaluation process. The group should have its first meeting in late May or early June. Development of the Plan and associated community outreach will continue from now through late 2027, with anticipated City Council consideration in Spring 2028.

By refining the scope, prioritizing key deliverables such as the Place Types Map, and maintaining consistent engagement with both internal partners and the community, updating the city's comprehensive plan will provide clearer guidance for future planning, policy decisions, and public investment.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Evelyn Mitchell, Principal Planner with Austin Planning, at [evelyn.mitchell@austintexas.gov](mailto:evelyn.mitchell@austintexas.gov).

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