



The North Loop Neighborhood Plan

An amendment to the City of Austin's Comprehensive Plan

The Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 5

Section 5-11

Exhibit A

May 23, 2002

Census statistics also show that median family income figures for the tracts in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area reveal that the area fits the criteria for a “low to moderate income neighborhood”. This is based on the definition of low to moderate-income neighborhood as when 51% or more of families in the area earn 80% or less of median family income.

The Mueller site will likely continue to affect the desirability and affordability of the North Loop planning area. As the Airport site is redeveloped, the character of this part of the City will continue to change. The long-term effects of future development such as the Mueller Airport redevelopment and the Triangle (at 45th and Lamar), and the possibility of light rail, are factors in considering the changing character of the North Loop area in the years to come.

The North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area enjoys its self-described “funky” and eclectic character. This funkiness is embodied in some of the local businesses such as Forbidden Fruit, The Parlor, Hog Wild, and Room Service. Small, independently owned stores such as Mrs. Johnson’s Donuts, Tamale House, McGuire’s Clocks, Gene Johnson’s Garage, and I Love Video are neighborhood institutions that are spoken of with a genuine fondness by neighborhood residents. Generally speaking North Loop sees itself as more laid-back and diverse than its Hyde Park neighbor to the south. The North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area prides itself on its lack of pretension and its acceptance and encouragement of a wide range of people and businesses.

The “in transition” status creates a dilemma for many neighbors. There is a strong desire to enhance the neighborhood and to make it an even more enjoyable place to live; but there is also awareness that with neighborhood improvement comes increased financial cost. These increased costs can have a gentrifying impact and can act to force out those people and businesses that attracted many people to the neighborhood in the first place.

The North Loop Neighborhood Planning Team recognizes this dilemma and, in developing this plan, has attempted to strike a balance between neighborhood enhancement and preservation of the character that has defined North Loop to date. This Neighborhood Plan recognizes that change will occur and sees this Neighborhood Plan as offering a visionary blueprint and guide for what form that change will take.

Land use and zoning statistics

Table 3: Existing Land Use Comparison between North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area and the urban core of the City of Austin² (Source: 1995 Land Use Survey)

| | Single Family | Mobile Home | Multi Family | Comm-ercial | Off-ice | Indust-rial | Civic | Open Space | Trans port | Undeve loped |
|---|---------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|---------|-------------|-------|------------|------------|--------------|
| North Loop sum acres³ | 220.6 | 0 | 28.4 | 118.0 | 10.6 | 16.1 | 14.2 | 0 | 194.3 | 12.8 |
| North Loop % acres | 35.9% | 0% | 4.6% | 19.2% | 1.7% | 2.6% | 2.3% | 0% | 31.6% | 2.1% |
| Austin core % acres | 27.5% | 0.5% | 6.3% | 6.6% | 2.9% | 6.1% | 7.2% | 5.3% | 20.8% | 16.2% |

Table 3 shows the number and percentage of acres in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning area used for single family, multi family, commercial, etc. Highlights from the Land Use Comparison table include:

- A **higher percentage** of land used for **single family** in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (35.9%), compared to an urban core average of 27.5%
- A **less than average** percentage of land use for **multi-family** in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (4.6%), compared to an urban core average of 6.3%
- A **significantly higher percentage** of land used for **commercial** purposes in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (19.2%), compared to 6.6% for the urban core
- A **lower percentage** of land used for **industrial** purposes in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (2.6%), compared to 6.1% for the urban core.
- A **lower percentage** of land used for **civic** purposes in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (2.3%), compared to 7.2% for the urban core
- **No land** in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area used for **open space**, compared to an urban core average of 5.3%. The lack of open space, and also the lack of civic facilities, and the impact of both of these deficits on the capacity to build a strong neighborhood, is a key issue throughout this plan.
- A **significantly higher percentage** of land used for **transportation** (mainly roadway) in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (31.6%), compared to 20.8% for urban core neighborhoods. Major roadways such as Airport Blvd, a rail

² The boundaries of the urban core of the City of Austin are Braker Lane to the north, 183/Ed Bluestein and Dessau Road/Cameron Road to the east, Stassney Lane to the south, and MOPAC/Loop 1 to the west.

³ Total acreage for the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area is 614.97 acres.

corridor, and several major interchanges (US290 and Airport, I-35 and 51st St etc.) contribute to the planning area's high land use devotion to transportation. This is also an issue explored later in the plan as these major roadways border, and bisect (in the case of Airport Blvd), the neighborhoods. These roads act as major barriers and affect the capacity of residents to walk or bike to nearby areas, and to access facilities that are not found in the neighborhood such as parks.

- A **significantly less percentage** of land is **vacant** in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area (2.1%), compared to an average of 16.2% for all urban core neighborhoods. The small percentage of vacant land sets the stage for the nature of land use and zoning recommendations in this plan that will focus on redevelopment and infill options.

Table 4: Existing zoning comparison between North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area and the urban core of the City of Austin

| | Single Family | Mobile Home | Multi Family | Comm -ercial | Office | Indust -rial | Right of Way | Unzoned or Public |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| North Loop sum acres | 228.3 | 0 | 21.4 | 156.4 | 11.0 | 0 | 194.7 | 3.2 |
| North Loop % acres | 37.1% | 0% | 3.5% | 25.4% | 1.8% | 0% | 31.7% | 0.5% |
| Austin core % acres | 35.7% | 0.1% | 6.8% | 12.5% | 2.5% | 10.9% | 19.2% | 8.3% |

Table 4 shows the number and percentage of acres in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning area zoned for single family, multi family, commercial, etc. prior to the rezoning that will take place after adoption of this Neighborhood Plan. Highlights from the Zoning Comparison table include:

- In the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area 228.3 acres or 37.1% of total were zoned as **single family**. This percentage is **slightly above the urban core average** of 35.7%.
- In the planning area 21.4 acres or 3.5% of total were zoned for **multi-family**. This percentage is **below the urban core average** of 6.8%.
- In the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area 156.4 acres or 25.4% of total were zoned **commercial**. This percentage is **significantly above the urban core average** of 12.5%. However, this figure is somewhat misleading as only a small percentage of this commercial property could be described as neighborhood serving. Many larger sites situated on the I-35 frontage road such as a number of motels, Southern Union Gas on Koenig (which is situated on a lot zoned Commercial Services), etc. take up significant acreage but do not necessarily contribute to greater commercial options available for the neighborhood. Furthermore, significant amounts of the land that is zoned commercial (especially Chair King, Chick Packaging/Builders Square, Randalls) is devoted to car parking.

Transportation

The Neighborhood Planning Team recognizes the link between land use planning and transportation and sees that an increase in density, if accompanied by comparative increases in public space, could help to achieve the vision of the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area as a vibrant, mixed use community where a range of activities, destinations and transit options are available within walking distance.

The neighborhood also favors transportation that is human-powered and therefore, emphasizes both pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The neighborhood's vision is for a place where a network of sidewalks and bike paths lead to local destinations and to transit stops where access to downtown, UT or other parts of the City can be reached.

Connectivity is an important feature of the future the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area with the neighborhood having safe and direct pedestrian linkages to key neighborhood destinations and institutions. Ridgetop Elementary School is an example of an important destination for many neighborhood children, and the neighborhood envisions improved access to the school for their children by an enhanced sidewalk network and improved capacity for safe pedestrian crossing of Airport Boulevard.

The design of the pedestrian environment is important with the desire being for varied ground cover and not just concrete and asphalt. In the future there will also be a buffer between the pedestrian environment of the sidewalk and the street.

Safety is a key part of the vision for the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area. The future North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area will be a place where all people, but children in particular, are able to travel freely and safely throughout the neighborhood. Safer crossings of busy streets, such as Airport Boulevard, 51st, 53rd, Koenig, and Lamar are features of the future North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area.

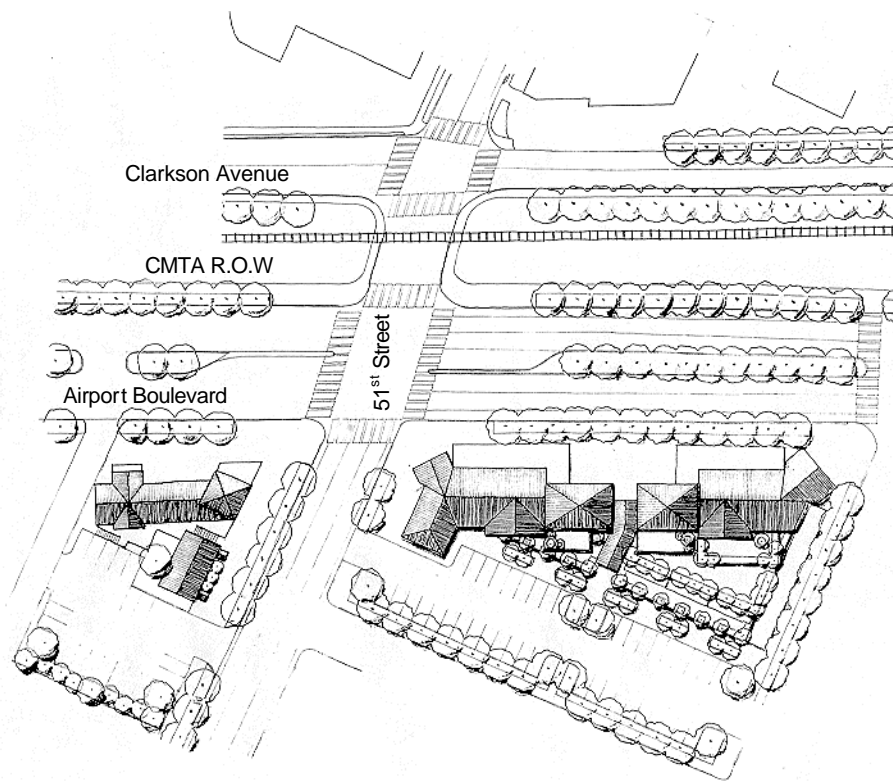
The future North Loop Neighbourhood Planning Area will have reduced cut through traffic and the streets will be traffic calmed to create a safer pedestrian and driving environment for everyone. Liveability is a continuing theme for the neighbourhood and efforts to reduce cut-through traffic on local streets will add to neighbourhood safety and enhance pedestrian activity. The future North Loop Neighbourhood Planning Area will also be insulated from traffic noise from I-35 by the construction of berms and other sound insulation devices. In the future, neighbours will be able to hear the noises of people on the street – walking, talking and playing.

The accessibility of transportation options for adults and children is also an important feature of the future North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area. Transit, whether bus or light rail, will be user friendly and safe. Bicycle infrastructure such as secure bike parking and bike racks at major transit stops and businesses is available. In the interest of further encouraging public transit use, the neighborhood sees transit stops in the future as being safe, covered, well lit, well maintained, and having easy to read route information.

Buses and light rail will be key elements of an integrated transit system for the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area and beyond. Land use decisions will be framed in a way that considers support for transit infrastructure. Connectivity within the neighborhood is a key feature, but linkages to adjacent neighborhoods, and to other parts of the City, is also important.

As well as large-scale transit, bike lanes particularly along, or linking with, major corridors are central to the vision for the future North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area. The future North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area will better utilize alleys for biking and walking. The neighborhood would like to see hike and bike pathways throughout the neighborhood, including investigation of how a hike and bike path could be incorporated into the rail corridor that runs parallel to Airport Boulevard and Clarkson.

This neighborhood sees light rail as part of the neighborhood vision, and recognizes the important link between mixed-use development, increased residential densities, access to services, greater use of non-automobile transport and access to public transit such as light rail, as well as to buses.



The intersection of Airport Boulevard and 51st Street is seen as one of the most important in the neighborhood planning area. The North Loop Neighborhood Planning Team would like to see this area develop as more of a pedestrian friendly mixed-use area. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements are recommended for the Airport/CMTA/Clarkson Corridor.

Illustration by John Giusto and Kirsten Bartel.

Land Use Actions for residential areas

Rezoning

- Action 1.1. Rezone properties in the residential areas of the neighborhood according to the following general principles:
- For properties that are currently used for residential but have a commercial base zoning (e.g. Limited Office LO or Commercial Services CS) add the Mixed Use Combining District and
 - Add the North Loop Blvd Conditional Overlay (see Action 1.2. for details) to all properties with commercial base zoning that are in the residential areas of the neighborhood.
- Action 1.2. For commercially zoned property (NO, LO, GO, LR, GR, CS) that is located in the North Loop Neighborhood Planning Area boundary **west of the railway line**, the North Loop Blvd Conditional Overlay applies. That overlay prohibits the following uses:
- Adult Oriented Businesses
 - Agricultural Sales and Services
 - Automotive Rentals
 - Automotive Repair Services
 - Automotive Sales
 - Campground
 - Commercial Blood Plasma Center
 - Construction Sales and Services (with the exception of those that have a site area of 8,000 square feet or less)
 - Convenience Storage
 - Equipment Repair Services
 - Equipment Sales
 - Exterminating Services
 - Funeral Services
 - Hospital Services – General
 - Kennels
 - Laundry Services
 - Limited Warehousing and Distribution
 - Medical Offices exceeding 5,000 square feet
 - Pawn Shop Services
 - Residential Treatment
 - Service Station
 - Transitional Housing
 - Transportation Terminal (except for those uses associated with light rail should it occur in the future – e.g. a light rail station or interchange)**
 - Vehicle Storage

A variety of businesses are appropriate for the ground floor spaces along Lamar Blvd. While there is a preference for active uses that can be pedestrian-oriented such as restaurants, bookshops, laundry, beauty and barbershops; it is also recognized that an arterial road with over 30,000 vehicles passing a day is also an appropriate location for a wide range of commercial uses. However, the Neighborhood Planning team recommends that: close attention be paid to compatibility between the commercial premises and the adjacent residential lots; all development along this strip be strongly encouraged to comply with the design guidelines for this section of Lamar (as outlined in the design considerations noted on this page); and that consideration also be given to the Neighborhood Plan's objective of encouraging business diversity by ensuring that no one particular use comes to dominate this strip.

The intersection of Lamar and Koenig Lane/RM 2222 is envisioned as a future Neighborhood Urban Center. This center will include a mixture of commercial, office, residential and civic uses. Community open space is also an important requirement of the Neighborhood Urban Center option. This intersection is anticipated as a future option for a transit stop and neighborhood center that will support a mix of residential and commercial development.

While the development of a transit stop would enhance the prospects of the development of this mixed use center, the Neighborhood Planning Team believes that development of this type would be beneficial and viable, whether or not light rail or another type of transit stop locates there. (Design suggestions for this Neighborhood Urban Center are offered in the next section – Design considerations).

Design considerations

- Improved pedestrian environment
- Landscaping
- Bring buildings to the street with parking in rear
- Neighborhood Urban Center
- Importance of the corners

The Neighborhood Plan's vision for this section of Lamar is retail and other commercial activity along the corridor and pedestrian and transit improvements such as wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, and other amenities.

Neighborhood Urban Center

This center, to be located at the southeast corner of Koenig and Lamar, will serve as a community focal point and will support a variety of uses and activities. The design of this center will encourage residents, workers, and shoppers to drive their cars less and ride transit or walk more. The design, configuration, and mix of buildings and activities will emphasize a pedestrian orientation. Uses within this neighborhood urban center will be linked to each other and to the surrounding neighborhood by direct pedestrian pathways and bicycle routes.