

APPENDIX VI : ECT GUIDING PRINCIPLES



The Board of Directors of Envision Central Texas has adopted a set of guiding principles for the Central Texas Regional Visioning Project. These principles are a statement of values on policy choices concerning land use in Central Texas. They are intended to be stated and used as a set; no one principle stands alone. As a coherent whole, these principles expand the overarching principles:

The region's transportation system, environmental planning and preservation goals, social equity aspirations, and economic foundation should be coordinated to support a sustainable regional community.

Regional policy choices should support choices of housing, transportation, and employment.

Central Texas values diversity in all policy choices.

All decisions should promote enhanced quality of life for the residents of Central Texas.

Many of these principles include reference to others, including references to those in other areas. This interdependence reflects the Board's discussions and in no way implies a dominance of any one principle, or subset of principles.

Many of the guiding principles are measurable and can be quantified; some are not. In general, principles that can be associated with different land use and transportation choices can be associated with different scenarios.

The following are the guiding principles, divided into sections on transportation, environment, social equity, and economics (jobs and housing).

TRANSPORTATION

Sustainable regional community requires transportation planning to be synchronized with land use policies to provide mobility choices for the community. (Choices should include, but are not limited to, living close to work, working close to transit, living in a walkable or bikable city or town, or working out of one's home.)

Transportation should be safe and reliable for all to use.

The transportation system should be cost-effective and efficient.

The transportation system should provide appropriate choices so that all segments of the community can meet their needs for daily living. (These needs include, but are not limited to, housing, jobs, education, and health care.)

Planning for the region will be based on the understanding that all cities and counties and other governmental entities are members of the same transportation region.

Central Texas should have a transportation system that appropriately addresses environmental concerns, striving to improve the environment of the region. (Environmental concerns include air quality, water quality, noise, and visual quality.)

Central Texas should devise and implement adequate and efficient new transportation infrastructure, and assure adequate and timely maintenance of existing needed infrastructure.

The transportation system needs to provide adequate and efficient movement of freight as part of a sustainable regional economy.

ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable regional community requires development patterns that protect and conserve environmental resources.

Growth should enhance, if possible, rather than degrade, the quality of the region's air and water. (Water resources include aquifers, sources of drinking water, and rivers, streams, creeks, springs, and ground water.)

Central Texas should provide a regional greenspace network, comprised of connected open spaces, trails, and extensive parks. (Greenspace includes both non-accessible private property and publicly accessible properties.)

Development patterns should preserve important environmentally sensitive, agricultural, and plentiful scenic lands; farmers and ranchers, developers, homeowners, and business will be good environmental stewards.

Preservation efforts should include open space, green belts, unique habitats, historic and cultural resources and the rural character of outlying communities.

Central Texas should place a premium on neighborhood safety from crime and environmental degradation.

Open space should be considered essential infrastructure on par with sewer, water and roadways.

SOCIAL EQUITY

Sustainable regional community means that access to quality childcare, housing, jobs, healthcare, education, and basic needs shall be available to all.

Central Texas will act to narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots.

Central Texas is a place where all ethnicities and cultures are recognized as valuable assets.

Communities shall strive for inclusivity, a variety of income levels, and be accessible to all races, cultures, and ethnicities.

All individuals will have access to quality lifelong education.

Intolerance and prejudice, explicit or covert, will not be used in the formation of land use and other public policy.

Central Texas should strive for greater engagement in government and other civic institutions for all people.

Everyone should have access to publicly owned green and open spaces.

All people and places should benefit from the region's prosperity while preserving a sense of place in Central Texas' many unique cities, town and rural areas.

ECONOMICS: JOBS AND HOUSING

Sustainable regional community requires that planning for the region will be based on the understanding that all cities and counties are members of the same economic region; prosperity should be shared across the region.

Continued economic success and prosperity for Central Texas residents, and the ability to compete effectively in the global economy, require a continuous, sustained and coordinated economic development effort by public and private entities throughout the region.

Economic development efforts should recognize the important role that the quality of life, natural beauty, diversity and uniqueness of the region play in attracting and keeping businesses and employees, and every effort should be taken to preserve and enhance these qualities.

Economic success requires long-range planning and infrastructure investment necessary to attract and keep companies in the region, including transportation, water, electric power and telecommunications, without overburdening taxpayers of the region.

New centers of employment should be located so as to make efficient use of existing transportation and other infrastructure and minimize the travel time and distance for employees.

Economic success requires a lifelong educational system that provides an educated workforce from all segments of the community with a wide-range of job skills and the ability to adapt to changing economic circumstances.

Economic success requires the creation of an ongoing partnership with the colleges and universities in the region to provide the research that generates economic development opportunities.

Public and private entities in the region must cooperate with each other in attracting and keeping employers and jobs within the region, and should avoid competition among themselves that does not result in new opportunities that benefit the region.

Economic success and prosperity are at risk if Central Texas residents do not have an opportunity to obtain affordable housing that is conveniently located near their places of employment, or if other living costs substantially exceed those of competing regions.

Each city and town in the region should be given the opportunity to participate in the development of a regional economic development program that incorporates the goals and aspirations of that community, and gives each community the opportunity to attract companies and employees to fulfill its goals.

Public and private entities in the region should strive to attract companies that bring a wide range of job opportunities to Central Texas residents.

BOARD DISCUSSION

In all of the Board's discussions, a few central concerns appeared, representing shared values. Choices, diversity, and opportunity were all mentioned in virtually every area under discussion. Preservation of those aspects of Central Texas that attract people to live here was a topic at every table. Some values, such as social equity, were included in all discussions, and not separated from concerns about transportation, the economy, etc.

The discussion of the four areas reflects all of the Board and committee discussions to date. The principles with their associated evaluation criteria follow the discussions.

Transportation - Transportation issues concerned everyone. It was agreed that existing infrastructure is inadequate for existing needs even before significant additional growth. There was agreement that Central Texas needs a better transportation system, with more choices, less travel time, and more cost effectiveness. 'Multi-modal' and 'walkable' were an adjective used by several tables. The centrality of transportation choices to economic, environmental, social equity, and etc. values was emphasized repeatedly. Interestingly, reducing congestion was not mentioned as a goal in and of itself, but rather, less travel time and transportation efficiency and safety were seen as the primary values.

Environment - Environmental concerns were equally ubiquitous. The value of the natural environment, in terms of health, economic attraction, and community character, was stressed in a variety of ways. Air quality, water quality, and adequate green space are all important for Central Texas. Specific areas mentioned were almost exclusively water related, such as: preserving aquifers, rivers, streams, creeks, wetlands and floodplains. Some tables mentioned preserving land without addressing ownership, while some talked specifically about public access and ownership of a regional open space system.

There is a strong desire to avoid becoming Anywhere, USA. Although there was no specific discussion about 'sprawl', concerns were expressed about related topics, such as the urban areas growing together, loss of scenic lands, loss of agricultural and natural lands to urbanization, etc. There was common discussion on greenspace protection, rural character, encouraging higher density and infill and separation of communities in regards to urban form. A balance between vacant land and redevelopment was mentioned on multiple occasions.

Social Equity - Social equity was included in many tables' results with topics such as, tolerance, acceptance, diversity, equal access to everything from housing to government, and inclusiveness to a variety of lifestyles. When combined with the desire to keep the 'flavors' of Central Texas, it is clear the board feels that social equity should not result in homogenization. The committee that met on social equity agreed that the essence of social equity is opportunity for all people in the region to access jobs, housing, education, childcare, healthcare, and basic needs. The problem of balancing individual preferences with the ideal of an inclusive community was considered at length.

The connections between social equity and other areas were also discussed. Social equity includes access to green spaces, clean air and water, as well as economic opportunities.

Economy - Economy and prosperity were discussed, encouraging job growth and treating it regionally and ensuring the prosperity was spread equitably. There was no mention of encouraging or promoting greater growth. It appears that continuing economic growth was an underlying assumption in the November meeting. Community character and quality of life concerns are strong Central Texas values. The diversity of communities, as well as the diversity within communities, is seen as an asset to be preserved.

Perhaps reflecting the strong regional economy of the past decade, economic concerns were primarily expressed in terms of the quality of jobs, the equity of their distribution, and maintenance of adequate infrastructure. The most frequently expressed concern was that prosperity be distributed equitably across the region. The only “will we have enough” concern expressed in the first meeting focused on adequacy of water and power. In subsequent discussions, continued economic growth was given more concern, with the feeling that enough good jobs for the region’s population should not be taken for granted. (It was noted that, even without continued substantial immigration to Central Texas, there will be substantial population growth, given the demographics of the existing population.)

There was some discussion of counties needing to play a larger role in growth management for Central Texas, along with the regional agencies involved with particular aspects of growth.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following evaluation criteria will be reviewed by the Board of ECT as the scenario development and evaluation proceeds.

TRANSPORTATION

- * Amount of development in areas that can already be served by transit and roadways
- * Vehicle Miles Traveled per capita
- * Average Trip time
- * Vehicle Minutes Traveled per capita, by mode
- * Vehicle Hours under Congestion or Vehicle Hours of Delay (VHC or VHD) region wide (“Hours spent in congestion”).
- * Miles of Congested Arterial (% of system total miles)
- * Jobs housing balance measured by individual community and by sub region
- * Amount of new development located within proximity of transit
- * Percent trips by all modes and working at home
- * Connectivity index (street and path connectivity and intersections)
- * Index of urban amenities (connectivity + job density + population density)
- * Total time traveled per capita, by travel mode
- * Average speed by travel mode
- * Air pollution caused by transportation sources
- * Consumption of fuel
- * Greenhouse gas emissions
- * Total cost of transportation improvements and maintenance (public and private costs, not financially constrained)
- * Public and private total cost by travel mode
- * Public and private marginal costs by mode
- * Travel by mode, by trip purpose

ENVIRONMENT

- * Amount of acreage of wetlands, riparian areas, aquifer recharge zones and floodplains that become developed
- * Air quality measures - total mobile emissions
- * Per capita water use - calculated from characteristic development types used to create the scenario
- * Number of new well and septic systems installed
- * Change in amount of impervious surface, measured in acres or percentage
- * Measure of non point source pollution and effect on water quality
- * Open space per capita - Acres of parks per 1000 people
- * Connectivity of open space
- * Access of population to open space - number of people with access, varying by time, to different classes of open space
- * Acreage of land urbanized
- * Acres of endangered species habitat preserved.
- * Amount of impervious cover in the aquifer recharge and contributing zones
- * Amount of agricultural land consumed by development
- * Amount of tree coverage

SOCIAL EQUITY

- * Share of people living in concentrated low-income areas
- * Displacement of existing housing resulting from redevelopment, especially displacement of low-income housing
- * Jobs-housing balance by sub region
- * Accessibility to regional jobs from neighborhoods earning below 80% of the regional median income
- * Location of employment relative to existing moderate-income neighborhoods
- * Accessibility to green space of low-income neighborhoods.

ECONOMICS: JOBS AND HOUSING

- * Diversity of employment, measured by percentage of new jobs per sector
- * Location of employment relative to existing neighborhoods earning below 80% of the mean income
- * Jobs-housing balance by employment type measured by sub-region
- * Percent of new homes affordable to buyers earning Central Texas's median income
- * Ratio of owner occupied to rental units
- * Discrepancy between housing supply and demand by housing type
- * Ratio of jobs to rental units and affordable units by community and subregion
- * The variety of housing styles and sizes by community and subregion
- * Housing and job density of land urbanized