

May 24, 2002

TO: John Fregonese  
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FROM: Adam Davis  
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RE: Central Texas Regional Visioning Project - Focus Group Results

## **I. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Davis, Hibbitts & McCaig, Inc. (DHM) is pleased to present the results of a qualitative research project conducted for the Central Texas Regional Visioning Project Focus Group Results. The overall purpose of the research was to solicit opinions about issues related to future growth in the Austin area. The focus group research also will help frame issues and questions for survey research which will validate and expand on the focus group research findings.

The research involved two small group discussions on May 18, 2002. Participants were randomly recruited from across the five-county Austin region (Travis, Williamson, Hays, Caldwell, Bastrop). Both groups represented a mix of ages, occupations, and gender. Appendix A has participant demographic information. A total of 18 people participated.

Participants were screened to exclude anyone whose occupation was government, home builder, architect, news media, or advertising or market research. They also were excluded if they were active in organizations with strong views on the environment, government services, growth, development, or politics, or if they were involved with land use issues or residential, commercial, or industrial development.

Participants were asked their opinions and attitudes about population growth generally, livability preferences, and land use options. Response results and participant comments to all written questions are in Appendixes B-G.

Statement of Limitations. This study was designed to qualitatively explore the range of opinions of a designated population and to gain insight into what underlies these attitudes. It is not in the scope of a study of this kind to quantitatively measure with statistical reliability the attitudes of the populations from which the samples were drawn, or to correlate any attitudes with demographic, geographic, or behavioral variables. However, in addition to gathering qualitative information to supplement and possibly help validate other primary and secondary research, the information reported below is the result of multiple discussions and group-to-group validation which can be helpful in establishing quantitative boundaries for the attitudes expressed by participants.

Some written questions asked participants to offer a quantitative response in addition to written comments. Readers are reminded that the average ratings are not a statistically valid measurement of views regarding the rated issues. However, the ratings, when read in combination with the written comments, help illustrate the range and extent of consistency of views from group to group and within each group.

Report Format. Each of the following sections reviews a different major topic that was taken up during the group discussions. A few representative quotations are set out first, followed by evaluative commentary. Where applicable, differences between the two groups are noted.

The quotes and commentary are drawn from both the group discussion and the written exercises. The quotations were selected to represent the range of opinions regarding a topic, and not to represent quantitatively the expressed attitudes. Readers should refer to the indicated appendixes for specific wording of and complete responses to the written exercises.

## II. LIVABILITY AND PREFERENCES

“I love the trees, the beauty, I can see the hills.”

“My neighbors are respectful of each other.”

“Where I live is really convenient to everything.”

When asked about what they liked about where they lived, participants often mentioned:

- Friendly, respectful neighbors
- Peaceful and quiet
- Safe, community feeling
- Beauty of the area –trees, lake areas, hills, river, forested areas
- Shopping and other amenities convenient and accessible
- Live close to work

Many participants had an especially strong attachment to the natural surroundings of their area. They also highly valued neighbors showing respect by keeping noise levels down, driving slowly, and wanting to meet each other.

Several talked about the choices they made about where to live. Those choosing the city emphasized convenience and city amenities. Those living further out of town were willing to trade off convenience for having more open space and proximity to water and trees. As one participant who lived in the country said, “I can see the stars at night.”

When asked about what they *didn't* like about where they lived, many mentioned traffic congestion near where they lived or worked. Other mentions included inconvenience to shopping, no places to walk, and noise from barking dogs, loud music, and traffic. Some participants said one of the consequences of living in an appealing area was losing hills, vistas, and open space to new housing developments.

Although nearly all participants liked where they lived, they also talked about other places in the Austin area they would find appealing. Most talked about areas in the country that had “elbow room” with open space, wooded areas, or near a lake. A few talked about central areas of Austin.

Participants also talked about work places they found appealing. Several talked about settings that had open space, trees, appealing outside settings for employee breaks, and placement next to water (lake or river), all with ample parking. On the other hand, because of parking and traffic congestion problems one said, “If I have to work downtown, I ask what have I done to get punished.”

### III. POPULATION GROWTH, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND RELATED ISSUES

“Along with population growth comes responsibility on the part of government to steer it in the right direction.”

“Improved roads, housing and infrastructure are imperative. Large companies will leave and/or stop coming if we don’t improve these items.”

“I feel the rate of population growth is out of control. If we allow it then all the unique aspects of the Austin area are slowly going to be diluted and eventually driven away.”

“Additional luxuries come with bigger population, but it’s a hard trade off for crowding.”

“Make growth stop!”

Participants were asked to record what came to mind when they thought about population growth in the Austin area (Appendix B). Common responses were about the pace of growth (“too much,” “too big,” “a lot,” and “two million”) and traffic congestion. Several participants, especially in the first group, had strong positive associations with population growth, recognizing the connection to economic vitality. “Good sign of a growing healthy city.”

They were then asked to record what came to mind when they thought about the quality of life in the Austin area (Appendix B). Most thought it was good. A few said it was getting worse, using terms like “declining,” “diminishing,” and “deteriorating.” Several mentioned the high cost of living, a topic that came up frequently in the group discussions mostly relating to lack of affordable housing and gentrification in some areas of the city. “I can’t even afford a tract house in this town.”

They also were asked to record what messages they had for local and regional government officials about population growth in the Austin area (Appendix C). Their responses and the discussion that followed highlighted several themes – lack of planning for population growth, the impact of growth on natural areas, and the threat to Austin’s unique features. Regarding planning, many felt that the area was always “playing catch-up” with highways and roads and infrastructure, with several mentioning that the new airport already is too small. Some talked about inadequate schools and services for youth.

Regarding natural areas, several described housing developers as “mowing” or “chopping” down trees. Others talked about losing open land and development in environmentally sensitive areas. Those concerned about losing Austin’s special qualities mentioned loss of local entertainment venues, specific businesses, and gentrification in central areas. Several mentioned the loft developments downtown – some liking them and others concerned they were changing the character of Austin.

Affordable housing also was an important issue for many participants. When asked about affordable housing for low income people, there were a handful of negative reactions (“run down” “squalor for too much money”), but most felt there was not enough in the Austin area and it was needed (Appendix B). “Necessary to provide this assistance because the housing market is so inflated.”

When asked to record what they thought was the most important environmental issue in the Austin Area (Appendix B), nearly half of the participants made some mention of water-related issues focusing on water supply or water quality. The next most-mentioned issue was air quality, especially related to traffic. “Ozone days...this is tied to us not doing more with traffic and growth.” A few mentioned concern about environmentally sensitive areas.

## **IV. LAND USE PLANNING**

“Less concrete, more parks, less building.”

“Set aside more land that will not be developed; do not pave over as much open or natural land.”

“If you mow trees down – must replant.”

“Planning is being done, but is it being implemented and at what price?”

Participants were asked to record their associations with needed land use planning in the area of the region where they lived (Appendix B). Many mentioned more and better parks and recreation areas. Others made generally critical comments about the lack of planning in the area. Some were less enthusiastic about land use planning, but thought it probably was necessary. “Don’t really need (or want) it but keeps neighborhoods alive.”

During the discussions, several participants talked about better restrictions on and requirements of developers. Ideas included requiring replacing trees that were removed, setting aside land for parks, and consideration of traffic and school capacities. As mentioned earlier, most thought the region had done a poor job of staying ahead of infrastructure demands for roads, housing, schools, and the like.

Participants were asked where they thought future housing should and should not go in the Austin area. Suggestions included looking to the east rather than west side of Austin, developing on barren land, expanding where infrastructure exists, and focusing back on the central, core areas of Austin.

While discussing residential growth, some participants brought up concerns about the rate of growth in communities (e.g. Round Rock) and specific developments (e.g. Steiner Ranch). “Round Rock is growing so fast, they build new schools and then immediately build a new subdivision behind them, making them overcrowded again.”

## **V. LAND USE PREFERENCES**

### **A. Growth in Developed or Undeveloped Areas**

“Want growth in undeveloped areas where you can correct the mistakes you made in developed areas...Austin is known for not being able to correct mistakes.”

“There are so many areas in the city that could be rehabilitated [to] hold people in the area. It would eliminate the need for a lot of travel. Getting cars off the street is a major deal here.”

“This is a huge state with lots of land. No reason why we shouldn’t expand outward into the undeveloped areas.”

Participants were asked to indicate which came closest to how they felt about growth primarily in developed areas (rating of 1) versus growth in undeveloped areas (rating of 7). Two-thirds of all participants favored growth in undeveloped areas, some strongly. The combined average rating was 5.0 (Appendix D). None of the participants was neutral (rating of 4) on this question.

Those favoring growth in undeveloped areas commented on people being “crammed together.” Several added caveats like “stay out of the nature areas” and “only if you leave some trees...and make more parks” or expressed some ambivalence about their rating. A few comments, especially in the second group, indicated some confusion about the rating.

Some felt growth in developed areas, and especially in Austin, had the potential to “change what Austin is all about.” Some feared forcing people out of their neighborhoods, and building apartments where older housing now exists.

Those favoring growth in developed areas felt there were many existing areas within Austin that “should be rehabilitated or redeveloped before moving further from the city core.” They associated growth in undeveloped areas with loss of open space. Some also associated it with sprawl.

## **B. Mixed Use Centers/Residential-Shopping Separation**

“Our use of cars for everyday trips or for groceries is a relatively new phenomenon. Mixed use is [the] primary development around the world.”

“We need to keep residential and shopping areas separate to reduce noise and other problems.”

“There should be some separation but not necessarily a big separation! It’s good to allow the residential feeling with the neighborhoods.”

Participants were asked to indicate whether more areas should be planned so that residential and small scale commercial areas are mixed together (rating of 1) or should there be a separation between residential and shopping areas (rating of 7). Nearly two-thirds (n=11) of all participants favored mixed used, with two neutral and five favoring residential-shopping separation. The average combined rating was 3.3 (Appendix E).

Several of those favoring mixed use mentioned that this is the way people used to live. Some liked the idea, but only if there were adequate safeguards. “With stiff restrictions mixed centers can be appealing, safe and useful for all, making less traffic.” One person commented that people should be able to choose which way they want to live.

Some of those favoring a separation between residential and shopping seemed to indicate that it did not need to be a major separation. They liked the convenience of shopping near by but they also wanted to be sure there was still a residential feeling. A few supported a very distinct separation, concerned about losing the “peacefulness and relaxing feeling” of a neighborhood.

## V. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

“We do need better public transit and some of the roads should be better planned.”

“We need to improve the quality and *safety* of our roads. I don’t care what public transit modes are provided; the majority of people are going to drive their cars.”

“If you build more express highways you can expand development further out but allow access to downtown areas quickly.”

Participants were asked how they felt about investment in roads for cars (rating of 1) and investment in public transit and alternative modes (rating of 7). A majority of all participants (n=10) favored investment in roads for cars, three were neutral, and five favored public transit and alternative modes. The average combined rating was 3.2 (Appendix F).

Neutral participants said that both needed to be addressed. Many who favored roads for cars felt mass transit would not work well for many people, citing the necessity of a car to be able to meet work and other demands. Others felt uncertain about public transit, with several commenting they felt it was unsafe.

Support for public transit was soft with only a few exceptions. Generally, support for buses seemed stronger than for light rail. When asked about the recent vote on light rail, some said “scare tactics” were used in the campaign. Most did not have a good explanation for the close vote.

Several doubted being able to ever get people out of their cars. “This is Texas!” One commented that Austin really wasn’t designed for mass transit. Most participants could not see public transit working in the Austin area.

## VI. FINAL MESSAGE

“Stop and think. But not too long because while you are thinking the town is growing bigger.”

“Let the neighborhoods and communities and people have more say in what goes on.”

“The key word is BALANCE! I’m mixed on most issues and see pros and cons to both.”

At the end of the discussion, participants were asked to write a message for their local and regional government officials about land use planning and options in the Austin area, based on what they had read and discussed during the focus groups (Appendix G). They often mentioned:

- Better overall planning
- Letting the community have more say
- Balanced development

The strongest overall message was participants’ desire to have decision makers look to the future and make sure they consulted the people before making their decisions. “When you plan it you have to think about everybody in the neighborhood.”

Opinions were divided on whether Austin could work with the rest of the region in addressing their concerns. Several participants, especially in the first group, did not have much faith that there was the right leadership to address their concerns. Some felt money had too big an influence in the community. Others, though, felt hopeful. “If there’s any city that can cooperate, this is the one.”

At the end of the discussion, participants were asked what stood out from their two hour discussion. Many of them liked hearing different perspectives. Some liked learning that they weren’t the only ones with certain opinions.

## VII. OBSERVATIONS

**Values and Related Imagery.** Participants expressed some clear values, mostly about the natural beauty of the area. They expressed a strong emotional connection to forested areas, water, open space, and hill vistas. They valued parks, trees, quiet, and safety in residential areas., along with their cars and convenience to shopping and other amenities. Many also wanted to preserve the “character” of Austin. There was virtually no mention of preserving ranch or farm land.

Participants used some strong verbs – *mowing* and *chopping down* trees – when describing what was happening as a result of residential development. Another image that seemed to resonate with many participants was worry that Austin was becoming “more like Houston.”

These values and imagery provide a good basis for future communication with the public and, as mentioned below, for exploring trade-offs in future research.

**Growth and Planning.** Nearly all participants seemed to see growth as being inevitable. Some welcomed it because of the importance of growing the local economy. Only one participant advocated stopping growth, and some participants wanted to slow its pace. Many expressed some ambivalence about the consequences of growth. “I love population growth, new businesses, but it scares me how fast new houses are thrown up, need more affordable housing other than apartments.”

Nearly all were highly critical of the failure of the area to be “ahead of the curve” in planning for roads, highways, infrastructure, and affordable housing. “I don’t think that anybody figured on the growth.” Interestingly, although participants talked about planning, they did not seem to be very future oriented unless prompted.

Overall, participants generally did not connect different land use planning concepts with their values, although they appreciated that some areas made more sense to expand into than others. For example, there was no expressed awareness of the concept of transit-oriented development and how light rail could help save open space. Only one participant talked about the connection between redevelopment and mixed use. “If you redevelop, you have to have mixed use and get the car out of the equation.”

However, when presented with the land use and transportation scenarios, many participants found the idea of balance appealing. The concept of balanced development also emerged at the end of the discussions. “Connecting the dots” between land use concepts and participant values offers some good opportunities for exploring trade-offs in the survey research.

**Transportation.** Investing in public transportation in the area was a difficult concept for many participants. They had a hard time envisioning how public transit could possibly work in the Austin area, mostly because of their belief in the strong attachment people have to their cars. “We Texans are an independent bunch; we don’t want someone taking away our freedom to have our cars.”

One participant who supported investment in public transit said, “I honestly think people will fight against balance [in transportation investment]...we stand a better chance of getting roads than public transportation.”

***Other Influences.*** Participant views may have been influenced to some extent by the choices they had made about where to live, although the numbers were too small to draw solid conclusions. That said, city residents seemed more likely to care about retaining the character of the city and were more open to investment in public transportation. Residents living further out seemed more concerned about adequate highways.

Regardless of their choice, participants recognized that different people liked different ways of living. “People who live in the city do it for a reason. People who live in suburbia live there for a greater degree of privacy. I say let people who choose one way have that way and stop trying to mix them up.” While many wanted the option of moving into the country, there was some ambivalence because new development in turn would affect what they valued about the country.

Participants also seemed influenced by other places they had lived. Those who had come from cities that had more extensive sprawl than Austin (e.g. Phoenix) or areas where there was denser development (e.g. New York City) seemed more knowledgeable about and receptive to mixed use and redevelopment.

These influences could be further explored in the survey research, especially through demographic breakdowns on various views. The results could affect how communications are shaped for different populations in the region.

**APPENDIX A  
Demographic Information**

<b>Occupation</b>	
<b>GROUP 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Student	Accountant
Director of Sales	Nanny
Nanny	Prop Master
Owner	Homemaker/Former Teacher
Homemaker	Paralegal
Commercial Paint Foreman	Retail Produce Manager
Owner	Customer Care Manager
Bartender	
Salesman	
Lead Technician	
Engineer	

<b>EDUCATION</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
High School or Less	3	3	-
Some College	7	4	3
College Degree +	8	4	4

<b>AGE RANGE</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
18 – 34	7	3	4
35 – 54	8	5	3
55 - 64	3	3	-

<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOME</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Under \$40,000	4	2	2
\$40,000 - \$75,000	9	6	3
\$75,000 - \$100,000	2	1	1
Over \$100,000	2	1	1
Refused	1	1	-

<b>ETHNICITY</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Caucasian	11	7	4
Hispanic	5	2	3
African American	1	1	-
Asian	1	1	-

<b>LENGTH OF RESIDENCY</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Average	13.9 years	16.6 years	9.6 years
Range	1 year – 40 years	2 years – 40 years	1 year – 29 years

<b>GENDER</b>			
	<b>Combined</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Male	10	6	4
Female	8	5	3

**APPENDIX B**

**What comes to mind when you think about the following:**

- Population growth in the Austin area
- The “quality of life” in the Austin area
- Needed “land use planning” in the area of the region where you live
- The most important environmental issue in the Austin area
- Affordable housing for low income people

<b>Population Growth in the Austin Area</b>	
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Two million.	Too much.
Good sign of a growing healthy city.	A lot.
Large volume, uncontrolled.	More traffic with a lot of exhaust fumes.
Poor freeway system.	Was rapid. Slowed with recession. Additional luxuries come with bigger population, but it's a hard trade off for crowding.
Two million.	Traffic congestion.
Blacks.	Internet site, traffic congestion.
Getting too big!	Less trees and countryside; traffic; overcrowded roads, restaurants.
Too much.	
Fast, good.	
Seems like it keeps growing.	
Too much traffic, sitting in hot car in rush hour.	

<b>The “Quality of Life” in the Austin Area</b>	
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Expensive.	Declining.
Not much to do here, quality is good.	Deteriorating.
Has declined in the last three years.	To be able to earn what you need for your existence.
Outstanding communities, high property tax.	Quality of life is good. A laid back easy to live in city. But expenses keep young adults living near poverty.
Relaxed and fun.	Cost of living.
Good for a family.	Good - hope it stays that way.
Diminishing.	Concerned about having a car accident; excellent activeness, outdoor opportunities; fun, energy, beautiful.
Great.	
Good – lots of trees, good health care.	
Very nice, comfortable, easy with strangers even.	
Good, live music, variety.	

<b>Needed Land Use Planning in the Area of the Region Where You Live</b>	
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Lake areas – farmland.	Corruption, economic segregation.
If it benefits society, then okay.	Set aside more land that will not be developed; do not pave over as much open or natural land.
More zoned areas for commerce and residential.	Affordable homes; parks.
Improved roads and highways!	I live near U.T. (North). Parking is bad sometimes. During the day most parking is reserved.
Parks and family recreation areas.	Overdeveloping.
More areas for kids to play (sports).	More large companies located out there.
Lack of planning.	More and more condominiums.
Planning is being done, but is it being implemented and at what price?	
More roads, faster access to things.	
Don't really need (or want) it but keeps neighborhoods alive.	
Less concrete, more parks, less building.	

<b>The Most Important Environmental Issue in the Austin Area</b>	
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Smog – Barton Springs.	Re-gentrification.
Keep the rivers clean, no dumping from plants.	Driving water conservation.
Air quality.	Keep clean air; recycle.
Water pollution and purity.	Preserving the aquifer and greenbelt.
Water purity.	Air pollution.
Pets.	Air quality - Ozone days - need to be addressed - this is tied to us not doing more with traffic and growth.
Water quality.	Lake Travis and Town Lake; water?
Degradation of environmentally sensitive areas.	
I don't know. Way to get cars off road, mass transit.	
Keeping children, people aware of problems now, so future will be better, easier.	
Water – overuse and pollution.	

<b>Affordable Housing for Low Income People</b>	
<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Section 8 and welfare.	A lie! Squalor for too much money.
Good idea, everyone needs a roof over his/her head.	It is clustered in certain areas.
Very little availability.	Should be good, safe, affordable housing for low-income people.
Poor areas, difficult to find.	There's been lots of gentrification in the last 10 years. Lower income families have been pushed out of land they've had for a long time. They need a new place.
Sparse and cold dwellings.	Low income people will have to wait a long time; not enough affordable housing.
Education.	Necessary to provide this assistance because housing market is so inflated.
Not available – losing good workforce.	None! Southeast Austin.
There is a lack of it.	
Need more.	
Needs to be more “affordable” housing, apartments – our income is still too low.	
Small, run down, not kept up places on the east side of I-35.	

## APPENDIX C

### What messages do you have for local and regional government officials about population growth in the Austin area?

#### Group 1

- I feel great about it because it improves rental property. “Rents and values.”
- Good sign, healthy growth to create a more dynamic city. Definitely don’t want a dying city where people are migrating out of the city.
- The planning for increased population must be addressed in the areas of water use, traffic patterns, high-density areas, market and service providers.
- In order to maintain the wonderful living environment Austin currently has we must allow for population growth. Improved roads, housing and infrastructure are imperative. Large companies will leave and/or stop coming if we don’t improve these items.
- Please make the highway systems and educational systems more “user friendly” to the population, especially regarding future growth. For example, the new airport is already too small.
- You need more programs like Big Brother, Big Sister to work with kids, learn to speak their language, be down to earth, not just tell what to do, show them how to do it.
- Population growth needs more planning structure requiring more stiff permits that must require putting back something you take out. If you mow trees down – must replant. Give thought to traffic in regard to population growth.
- Although the actual migration of people cannot be controlled, there should be better planning and especially implementation of policies to allow good flow of traffic and affordable housing for people.
- The fast growth is nice but we need to be planning ahead not playing catch up. Roads need to be built faster with lights that are reasonable. Housing does not need to be thrown up, but planned and for different incomes.
- I would say if there’s anything that needs improvement or change it would be housing, apartments. They need to be more affordable. The way wages are right now it’s almost impossible to make it in the everyday normal life and things would be easier.
- I feel that the rate of population growth is out of control. If we allow it then all the unique aspects of the Austin area are slowly going to be diluted and eventually driven away. Most of the large growth areas remind me of Houston/Dallas and we don’t want that.

#### Group 2

- Make it stop! Stop Dell from lying about work to bring in the techs and then lobbying for more blue work visas in state congress so that he creates an unstable talent pool throughout our communities and pays foreign workers \$7.00 an hour to do what he's firing people from. Make growth stop!!!!
- Fund Planned Parenthood. Teach real sex ed starting in 6th grade. Policy focus should be on preventing teen pregnancies. Channel kids, girls into education and careers. Set a minimum age for childbirth of 25.
- Along with population growth comes responsibility on the part of government to steer it in the right direction. Certain issues must be addressed before they become problems - need affordable housing, clean streets and air, jobs for those who need them and a voice for the people.

## **Group 2 (continued)**

- I'm glad that population growth has slowed some, though I'm sorry that it had to be because of recession. This is a bad place for a programmer to move. The city isn't designed well to allow for expansion. The buildings go right up to the road on I-35, Guadalupe, and Congress. We have little room to expand. Bike routes and better public transportation would help.
- Population growth is here and will always be here in this area. Development must go hand in hand with this therefore there should be better planning of schools, roads and shopping centers. The roads for traffic should be developed to handle the traffic before hand not after.
- As a community, I recognize the importance of growth for our economy, I ask that you please be "responsible" in the decisions that are made. Remember to consider the "quality of life" factors. Things like trees, parks, solitude. All of these are a part of a community. It's important for the good of community.
- I am concerned that we are destroying all the things that make Austin so incredible. Austin is quickly becoming overcrowded, therefore we are losing the beauty and peacefulness of nature. Also, the traffic makes getting on the road and experiencing the area frustrating. I love Austin and I'm proud that everyone else sees how amazing it is, but somehow we need to preserve what is so special about it.

**APPENDIX D**

Some people believe that to provide public services and transit efficiently and cost effectively, maintain environmental quality, and protect open space, new growth and development (including in-fill and redevelopment) should occur within existing neighborhoods and business districts even if it means more people living closer together. Others believe that focusing growth in existing areas will be expensive, even disruptive, and that new growth should occur on vacant land, moving out from the fringes of the existing developed area onto open space. Using a 7-point scale, where 1 is growth primarily in developed areas and 7 is growth in undeveloped areas, which number comes closest to the way you personally feel? You can choose any number from 1 to 7.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
GROWTH PRIMARILY IN DEVELOPED AREAS		BOTH EQUAL				GROWTH IN UNDEVELOPED AREAS

Average Rating		
Combined (n=18)	Group 1 (n=11)	Group 2 (n=7)
5.0	5.1	4.9

RATINGS DISTRIBUTION			
	Combined	Group 1	Group 2
GROWTH PRIMARILY IN DEVELOPED AREAS	-	-	-
1			
2	1	-	1
3	5	4	1
4	-	-	-
5	3	1	2
6	5	3	2
GROWTH IN UNDEVELOPED AREAS	4	3	1
7			

<b>Group 1</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
7	No comment.
7	This is a huge state with lots of land, no reason why we shouldn't expand outward into the undeveloped areas.
7	We are a society of peoples crammed together, many who are lacking in social skills, which makes life on an everyday basis difficult.
6	Can control growth and correct mistakes made in already developed areas.
6	Only if you leave (some) trees, don't take them all, and make more parks.
6	People do not need to be stuffed so close together. I believe the lack of space causes great agitation in people.
5	I think the "poor" undeveloped areas should be considered and really looked upon (seriously) to renovate or make comfortable or homey.
3	I think poor neighborhoods downtown could be developed into apartment complexes and lofts to help downtown commuters.
3	There are many existing areas within Austin that should be "rehabilitated" or redeveloped before moving further from the city core.
3	Prefer a denser urban area with open space at fringes.
3	If you spread out you lose convenience. I would hate to look at strip malls and housing all the way from Austin to San Marcos.

<b>Group 2</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
7	Make beautiful the ugly soon to be desert areas that are currently underdeveloped and stop trying to crowd people together or destroy sensitive nature spots.
6	Only if there are developed areas that need rejuvenation.
6	I think we should use the underdeveloped areas as a means of helping the community. While it may be more expensive, in the long run it will provide a bigger benefit. Both community and people need to be considered.
5	Neighborhoods near town should be improved, but not overdeveloped; no high rise apartments among the old homes. Barren land should be improved and lots of housing should go there. Stay out of the "nature" areas.
5	I have mixed emotions here. On one hand I feel new development in a developed area keeps it thriving and appealing. I've seen downtown area make a complete turn around when new condos are built. Out of time!
3	We need to use developed areas instead of having them be eyesores, bring the new development, save the beauty that has not developed.
2	Lessen dependence on transportation, cuts down on sprawl and addresses issues of blighted areas. Must provide a mix of affordable housing in core.

**APPENDIX E**

Some people feel that in the future, more areas should be planned so that residential and small scale commercial areas are mixed together and designed so that it is easy to walk or bicycle to shopping for everyday needs like groceries and the cleaners. Others feel that there should be a separation between residential and shopping areas to avoid any negative impacts on housing like noise and traffic and that people will always use their cars for shopping trips. Again, using a 7 point scale, where 1 is mixed use centers and 7 is residential-shopping separation, which number comes closest to the way you personally feel about how areas should be planned in the future. You can choose any number from 1 to 7.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
MIXED USE CENTERS ONLY		BOTH EQUAL			RESIDENTIAL SHOPPING SEPARATION	

Average Rating		
Combined (n=18)	Group 1 (n=11)	Group 2 (n=7)
3.3	3.5	3.0

RATINGS DISTRIBUTION			
	Combined	Group 1	Group 2
MIXED USE CENTERS ONLY	4	3	1
1			
2	6	3	3
3	1	1	-
4	2	-	2
5	-	-	-
6	3	2	1
RESIDENTIAL SHOPPING SEPARATION	2	2	-
7			

<b>Group 1</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
7	We need to keep residential and shopping areas separate to reduce noise and other problems.
7	Coming from the deep South, this has been a negative issue for my family – we want a neighborhood that is strictly for residing, not shopping.
6	No comment.
6	They should be close together but not “arm’s length close.” At least room for a front and back yard and less noise. Or a little further from the main roads.
3	With shopping areas being closer to people’s homes you are giving people the opportunity to walk or bike. Also those that do drive will not have to drive as far, being better for the environment.
2	Our use of cars for everyday trips or for groceries is a relatively new phenomenon. Mixed use is primary development around the world.
2	As long as the noise is under control and the commercial areas are safe.
2	Works great for us currently in our area.
1	Mixed use centers were the common systems used during the first half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
1	With stiff restrictions mixed centers can be appealing, safe and useful for all, making less traffic. A better environment for all!
1	I loved being able to walk everywhere. I had independence without a car. I think it would reduce the amount of auto congestion if people could walk or ride a bike to these places.

<b>Group 2</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
6	You're going to lose the peacefulness and relaxing feeling a neighborhood should have if you are surrounded by shopping centers, offices, etc. When you're home it should be like a vacation!
4	There should be some separation but not necessarily a big separation! It's good to allow the residential feeling with the neighborhoods.
4	I feel that for certain people like the elderly there should be mixed use centers to make it more convenient and easier for them.
2	The areas should be used and made to co-exist with the existing neighborhood. Restrictions should be in force to make it easy for both to co-exist.
2	I like the way Hyde Park is set up, with few businesses in among the houses, but clusters of businesses conveniently near. Big businesses <u>should stay out</u> of the neighborhoods.
2	People who live in the city do it for a reason. People who live in suburbia live there for a greater degree of privacy. I say let people who chose one way have that way and stop trying to mix them up.
1	Managed mixed use creates a much stronger sense of community and brings people together.

**APPENDIX F**

Traffic congestion has increased as the Austin area has grown. Some people believe that public funds should be used to widen existing roads and build new ones to preserve the convenience and freedom of driving a car. Others believe future transportation problems are best resolved by greater investment in public transit and other modes of transportation. Again, using the same 7 point scale where 1 is investment in roads for cars and 7 is investment in public transit and alternative modes, which number comes closest to the way you personally feel? Again, you can choose any number from 1 to 7.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ROADS FOR CARS		BOTH EQUAL				PUBLIC TRANSIT AND ALTERNATIVE MODES

Average Rating		
Combined (n=18)	Group 1 (n=11)	Group 2 (n=7)
3.2	3.1	3.4

RATINGS DISTRIBUTION			
	Combined	Group 1	Group 2
ROADS FOR CARS	5	3	2
1			
2	2	2	-
3	3	1	2
4	3	2	1
5	2	2	-
6	3	1	2
PUBLIC TRANSIT AND ALTERNATIVE MODES	-	-	-
7			

<b>Group 1</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
6	The Capitol Metro self-perpetuating dynasty must be ended before citizens will acknowledge and use public transit.
5	I believe there's already enough cars out there but we need better organization on environmental issues from all cars. (Electric cars.)
5	Other means of transportation.
4	I think that both are going to need to be addressed. We do need better public transit and some of the roads should be better planned.
4	We need to provide both.
3	Mass transit would work for some, but for others, because of where they need to go, it would be difficult.
2	We are a very mobile society – cars are here so try again to direct traffic flow and traffic lights during heavy times.
2	Both need to be done but cars will continue to be used, it needs to be addressed first.
1	We would have more money for roads, but we use it for things like new office furniture every year at State Capitol.
1	I do not feel safe on public transit.
1	If you build more express highways you can expand development further out but allow access to downtown areas quickly.

<b>Group 2</b>	
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Comments</b>
6	Shift of resources to public transit must be gradual and take into consideration current dependence on the car.
6	Roads should be repaired (mostly for bikes) but not widened. There's really nowhere for them to go. Buses should run later. Divert traffic around.
4	I think we need to do both. Both are necessary to accommodate the growth. We need work in both areas.
3	A city of this size needs more than two north/south routes, but it should be developed with alternative modes in the equation.
3	Although public transportation is important and necessary - sometimes driving a car is not just for freedom or convenience, it's also a necessity.
1	We need to improve the quality and <u>safety</u> of our roads. I don't care what public transit modes are provided, the majority of people are going to drive their cars.
1	Public transit leads to inconvenience in everyday minute by minute life and leads to an environment that encourages crime.

## APPENDIX G

### Considering what you have read and what we have discussed, what message do you now have for local and regional government officials about land use planning and land use options in the Austin area?

#### **Group 1**

- Go to undeveloped areas of Austin and leave the trees. No overbuilding.
- Land use planning – we need to plan and learn from our past mistakes and continuously improve on our plans. Land use option – Texas is a huge state and we should expand! Expand! Expand!
- Considering various factors, it should be evident that Austin needs infill and neighborhood revitalization. Public transportation that actually serves a large number of people.
- They need to incent builders to redevelop downtown, build more freeways, and require building in outlying areas to meet better environmental issues (i.e. parks, trees, access to roads and water).
- Learn from past mistakes and be open to a myriad of concepts even if (at first) they sound unconventional.
- Use some land not at all! Be careful, think about our future, not your pocket. And kids are the future.
- Talk to people – get more input much like this focus group. Listen to what people are saying – do not let money be the driving force.
- Continue land use planning, provide for better transportation infrastructure including public transportation. Avoid ugly sprawl.
- Stop and think. But not too long because while you are thinking the town is growing bigger. Look first at places that have been developed and improve them if you can. Look to outside undeveloped land for room. Watch out for the environment.
- I would say you need to sit down and actually “listen” to what the people want. And not just listen but really consider their feelings and emotions on these issues and take them seriously and really put effort and heart into it.

#### **Group 2**

- Be sensible and don't assume you know what's best for us. Let the neighborhoods and communities and people have more say in what goes on. Through public hearings and focus groups like this one, let us decide.
- Focus on development of the core city. That development must be balanced and provide safe, mixed use options for people of various income levels. Sprawl should be heavily taxed to be discouraged. You, as local authorities, must be efficient with our tax dollars.
- The use of land for developing business, housing and transportation must be balanced and reasonable. Also the needs of ALL the surrounding community should be included in all discussions and planning - you must include them.
- Central areas need to be improved with development - not just developed. New housing should spread onto vacant land which can be improved, staying away from the greenbelt. Big businesses should stay on the major roads, with small businesses clustered near the neighborhoods.
- Take into account the growth that will continue to be there. Make decisions based on the future, learn from the past, be open-minded and listen to the people that "live" in the area.

Group 2 (continued)

- There are a lot of variables that need to be considered when making these decisions. Try to vary the approaches, depending on the situation. Some of the things you should consider: people; how it will affect the community; will it change or enhance; what is the "best" option, not necessarily the least expensive. Consider balance between nature, community and people.
- The key word is a BALANCE! I'm mixed on most issues and see pros and cons to both. The people are the most important factor and by creating a balance, you give them the freedom to choose what's best for them. Preserve what is appealing about Austin! Think about what is best and safe for the community.