



NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN THE CITY OF AUSTIN

The City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning Program follows from decades of citizen initiatives to plan the City. These initiatives intended to establish planning policies [to](#) guide the form, location, and characteristics of development in order to preserve the quality of life and character of existing neighborhoods.

In 1979, the [Austin](#) City Council adopted a comprehensive plan, the Austin Tomorrow Plan, in which goals and objectives were based on public input. A policy objective in the [plan](#) states: "Develop and implement specific, detailed plans tailored to the needs of each neighborhood."

In 1995 and 1996, Austin's Citizens' Planning Committee issued reports recommending neighborhood planning to identify community needs and guide future development in specific areas of the city ("From Chaos to Common Ground," Citizens' Planning Committee Report, p. 12). In 1996, City Council created the Neighborhood Planning Program to achieve [these](#) goals.

THE OAK HILL COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA

On October 20, 2005, [City Council created the East and West Oak Hill neighborhood planning areas and started the planning process for both areas, jointly known as the Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Planning Area. \(Throughout this plan, "planning area" will refer to the combined neighborhood, and "East Oak Hill" and "West Oak Hill" will refer to the individual planning areas, respectively. "Oak Hill" will refer to the area more generally.\)](#)

The [planning area](#) is located in southwest Austin [and is bound](#) by MOPAC (Loop 1) on the east, Thomas Springs Road and Circle Drive on the west, Southwest Parkway and Travis Country neighborhood on the north, and Convict Hill, Davis Lane, and Granada Hills neighborhood on the south. The area covers approximately 11,000 acres, [making it](#) the largest planning area in the City.

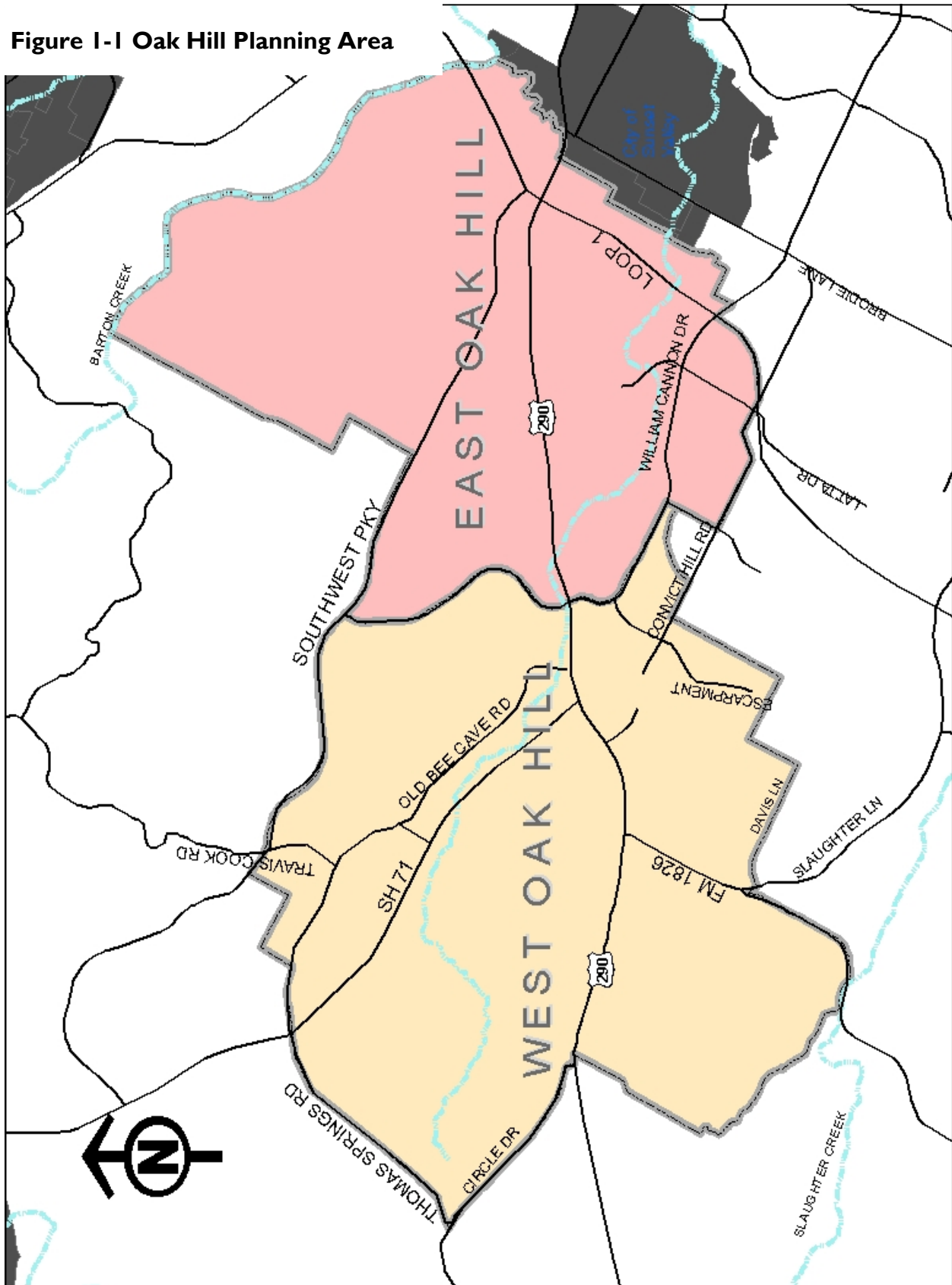
[Two major highways pass through Oak Hill:](#) U.S. Highway 290 bisects the planning area; State Highway 71 splits [northwest](#) from Highway 290 at the "Y," in West Oak Hill.

PLAN STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The major planning challenges and opportunities in this area were first identified in the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan (1979), and then analyzed further in the Oak Hill Area Study (1985). [Similar concerns run through this plan as well.](#) They include the need to balance development with the preservation of natural features (such [as](#) aquifers [and](#) greenbelts); the prevention of ero-



Figure I-1 Oak Hill Planning Area





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sion, flooding, [and](#) water pollution; and the need to protect the integrity and character of current residential neighborhoods while accommodating for future growth.

[Chapter 2 introduces the planning area, including its history, statistical profile, and environmental character.](#) The goals, objectives, and recommendations in this plan were developed through a public planning process that included meetings, workshops, and surveys. This process is described in Chapter 3: Planning Process. Stakeholders [invited to help develop](#) this plan include residents, property owners, community business owners, renters, and various organizations and institutions. Given [the nature of Oak Hill's environmental features, participants in the process put a great deal of effort into determining appropriate development in the Barton Springs Zone \(Chapter 4\).](#)

Chapter 5: Public Utilities and Development Patterns provides information on how the provision of public utilities can affect land use patterns. [Chapters 6 through 11 address one major planning topic each:](#) Chapter 6: Land Use and Development; Chapter 7: Transportation and Infrastructure; Chapter 8: Housing; Chapter 9: Neighborhood Design; Chapter 10: Parks, Trails, and Open Space; and Chapter 11: Community Life. The beginning of each of these chapters lists the goals, objectives, and recommendations for that topic.

LAND USE PLANNING PRINCIPLES

The City of Austin has 18 land use planning principles. Land use is a complex issue that is critical to the long-term prosperity of the people and neighborhoods in Austin. [Below](#) is the list of planning principles that guide neighborhoods in addressing future land use issues:

1. Ensure that the decision will not create an arbitrary development pattern,
2. Ensure an adequate and diverse supply of housing for all income levels,
3. Minimize negative effects between incompatible land uses,
4. Recognize suitable areas for public uses, such as hospitals and schools that will minimize the impacts to residential areas,
5. Discourage intense uses within or adjacent to residential areas,
6. Ensure neighborhood businesses are planned to minimize adverse effects to the neighborhood,
7. Minimize development in floodplains and environmentally sensitive areas,
8. Promote goals that provide additional environmental protection,
9. Consider regulations that address public safety as they pertain to future developments (e.g. overlay zones, pipeline ordinances that limit residential development),
10. Ensure adequate transition between adjacent land uses and development intensities,
11. Protect and promote historically and culturally significant areas,



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12. Recognize current City Council priorities,
13. Avoid creating undesirable precedents,
14. Promote expansion of the economic base and create job opportunities,
15. Ensure similar treatment of land use decisions on similar properties,
16. Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals,
17. Consider infrastructure when making land use decisions, and
18. Promote development that serves the needs of a diverse population.

OTHER PLANS AND CITY INITIATIVES

[This plan considered the planning principles](#), policies, and objectives in the following plans.

Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan (1979)

[City Council adopted the Austin Tomorrow Plan in 1979, and it remains](#) the comprehensive plan for the City of Austin. It includes chapters on urban design, economic development, environmental management, government and utility services, housing and neighborhoods, parks and recreation, and transportation. [It also ranked the suitability of different regions in and around Austin for growth and development on a scale of I to V. Areas ranked IV and V were considered the least suitable for development. Oak Hill was primarily classified as IV, balancing its substantial development constraints against existing transportation and utility investments.](#)

All neighborhood plans approved by City Council become amendments to the Austin Tomorrow Plan. The City Charter states in Article X: Planning, Sec. 5, that all elements of the Austin Tomorrow Plan, including neighborhood plans, shall be coordinated and internally consistent with the comprehensive plan.

The Oak Hill Area Study (1985)

The Oak Hill Area Study was conducted in 1985 by the Office of Land Development Services for the purpose of [creating a comprehensive zoning map](#) for recently annexed areas of the city. [The zoning map was designed to promote](#) good water quality, protect environmental resources, ensure land use compatibility, encourage efficient land uses, secure adequate public facilities, compare alternatives and [ensure that future decisions were part of a broader](#), comprehensive planning process.

The Austinplan (1989)

Created between 1985 and 1988, the Austinplan was an attempt to update the Austin Tomorrow Plan (1979). The purpose of the Austinplan was “to provide a sound, reasonable, and clear basis for making future City planning, programming, and budgeting decisions within the City’s jurisdiction” (Austinplan, Sector I I, pg.1). This plan was not approved.



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Envision Central Texas (2004)

“A Vision for Central Texas” is a guiding document that was created by the non-profit organization, Envision Central Texas (ECT). The organization is composed of concerned citizens representing the business community, environmental organizations, neighborhoods, and policy-makers who share the common goal of addressing growth with sound planning that has the interests of the region’s existing and future citizens in mind. (*A Vision for Central Texas, Envision Central Texas, May 2004, “Our Mission”*). The mission of ECT is to assist in the public development and implementation of a regional vision addressing the growth of Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties, with an emphasis on land use, transportation and the environment” (*A Vision for Central Texas, Envision Central Texas, May 2004, “Our Mission”*).

In general, the City uses this plan as a guiding document, recognizing the regional interconnectedness of the five counties when addressing regional growth.

Regional Water Quality Protection Plan for the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer and Its Contributing Zone (June 2005)

“Develop an implement-able Regional Water Quality Management Plan that preserves and protects resources and manages activities within the planning region so that existing and future land use, land management, and development activities maintain or enhance the existing water quality of the groundwater and surface water within both the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer and the contributing portion of the watersheds within the Planning Region, for the benefit of people and the environment”

[Stakeholder committee goal statement](#), *Regional Water Quality Protection Plan for the Barton Springs segment of the Edwards Aquifer and Its Contributing Zone*, pg. viii, June 2005.

The City of Austin, [as one of the sponsors of this plan, continues to evaluate](#) opportunities for protection of the Edwards Aquifer identified in the plan. More on this subject can be found in Chapter 4.



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