

Liveable City Briefing: Envision Central Texas (ECT) - Part I - “Shape Our Future”

This is the first in a series on the issues in the upcoming Envision Central Texas “Shape Our Future” Community Vision Survey that is scheduled for September. While this newsletter is lengthy, it is organized to be easily accessible by topic. Liveable City believes this process could have a pivotal impact on our community’s future and we hope that you will share this newsletter with your family, friends, and neighbors. (need layout easy to read)

Part I -The ECT Overview

What is Envision Central Texas?

Who is Involved in ECT and How is it Funded? (could be on web page, not here)

What could be the Impact of a successful ECT process?

The ECT Process: Developing Future Growth Scenarios

The Four Land Use Scenarios

ECT Scenario Indicators

Transportation, Economy, and Social Equity Issue Papers

The September “Shape Our Future” Community Vision Survey

Will the ECT “Shape Our Future” Community Vision Survey Results be Implemented?

A Few Key Questions for the Upcoming ECT Community Debate

Liveable City’s Goal: Higher Participation in the “Shape Our Future” Community Vision Survey

Useful Links/ News Stories of Interest (links could be on web page, not here)

Important ECT Dates

Next in the Series - Envision Central Texas - Part II - Critical Issues

What is Envision Central Texas?

Envision Central Texas (ECT) is a five county regional visioning process created to build a consensus vision for future land use and transportation planning in our region. The project is designed to address the 1.25 million additional people that are projected to live in Central Texas during the next 20 to 40 years while hoping to preserve and enhance the region’s quality of life. Funded primarily by public entities, representatives from business, neighborhood, environmental and other stakeholder groups from Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson counties have been working for almost two years on the project.

A key part of the ECT process has been the development of four future growth scenarios. Developed with feedback from public workshops conducted last fall, the four scenarios project future land use and transportation growth patterns. Using analytical tools such as mapping, surveys, and data modeling, a broad range of indicators including transportation, jobs, social equity, land consumption, population density, reinvestment, environment, and housing have been examined. The scenario analysis enables Central Texas residents to consider the impacts and tradeoffs of various future development patterns.

This September, the people of Central Texas will have the opportunity to express their opinion on the growth scenarios in the “Shape Our Future” Community Vision survey. Since ECT is a visioning process and not a plan, the survey responses will not replace or compete with pre-existing master plans. However, after the survey is completed, the consultant will present a “consensus scenario” compiled from responses from which the ECT board or other organizations

may recommend implementation strategies. It will be up to the citizens and their elected officials over the next decade to determine how much of the vision becomes a reality.

What could a successful ECT process mean to our community?

This September's "Shape Our Future" community vision survey will be the first real opportunity for Central Texans to say what kind of future they want to live in. Never before have we examined growth in our region in such a comprehensive manner, with the analysis to understand the consequences and the tradeoffs of our decisions. It is an opportunity for tens of thousands of people to demand the quality of life and the future they want for themselves and their families. If successful, ECT will result in the first steps in creating a viable consensus vision for our region that will shape our future for decades to come.

The ECT Process: Developing Future Growth Scenarios (too much jargon in scenarios)

The principal tools developed during the ECT process are growth scenarios, which represent possible future regional growth patterns over the next 20-40 years. ECT consultants have developed four scenarios from responses to workshops held last fall that mapped participant's growth pattern preferences. The scenarios are designed to help analyze the impacts and tradeoffs of different land use and transportation patterns. Each of the four scenarios assumes that an additional 1.25 million people will live in Central Texas over the next 20 to 40 years. While that estimate is controversial, no projections show Central Texas declining or stabilizing in population in the coming decades. Liveable City believes there is value in comparing the scenarios regardless of divergent points of view regarding population growth.

The Four Land Use Scenarios (*click here for maps of each scenario*)(*do we need matrix*)

The following are short descriptions of the four growth scenarios developed from ECT documents. A more in-depth analysis of the scenarios will be covered in a later newsletter.

Scenario A – Informally referred to as the "current trends" scenario, this scenario projects the past ten year trends into their likely implications 20 to 40 years ahead. Central Texas continues to sprawl rapidly outward in all directions, consuming a large number of undeveloped acres. Housing choice is limited, and the transportation network continues to be automobile-oriented while adding a commuter rail line. News jobs in the region are concentrated in Travis County.

Scenario B – Informally referred to as the "roads corridor" scenario, this scenario consolidates growth within one mile of the IH-35 and SH-130 road corridors. More mixed-use development and reinvestment allows commuter rail and Bus Rapid Transit while conserving more undeveloped land and the sensitive aquifer zone than Scenario A.

Scenario C – Sometimes referred to as the "edge city" scenario, this pattern focuses growth in new and existing towns across the region. More mixed-use development and reinvestment than Scenario B allows commuter rail and Bus Rapid Transit with a streetcar system in Austin, which conserves more undeveloped land than Scenarios A and B and conserves the most aquifer zone of any Scenario. Employment distribution and diversity of housing are greater than A and B.

Scenario D –In this pattern, the highest degree of infill and reinvestment is concentrated in the existing Travis County urban core. It consumes the least amount of undeveloped land, with little aquifer zone affected. Scenario D offers the greatest housing and transportation options including commuter rail, Bus Rapid Transit and light rail.

ECT Scenario Indicators (need definition) (maybe glossary of terms)

ECT consultants have developed indicators to assist in analyzing the different growth scenarios. Along with specific issue analysis in the areas of transportation, the economy and social equity, indicators for land use, land consumption, mixed use and separate-use development, population density, reinvestment, environment, and housing diversity are being developed for each scenario. These indicators are important tools to understand the tradeoffs involved in future land use and transportation decisions with each scenario.

Transportation, Economy, and Social Equity Issue Papers

Other key elements of the ECT process are in-depth issue papers to support analysis of each future growth scenario. Each paper analyses the projected consequences of each scenario with indicators broken down by region, county, or area specific to the analysis such as vehicle miles traveled or job growth. The full reports will be posted at www.liveablecity.org/regionalvote as they become available.

Transportation - The ECT transportation analysis evaluates each scenario's transportation system for transit access, vehicle miles traveled, average trip time, vehicle miles under congestion, and a number of other measures. The transportation analysis is scheduled to be released on July 10th.

Economy- The ECT economic issue paper investigates the long-term outlook for the region by income growth, new job creation, capital investment, and diversification. Analysts expect fewer additional high tech jobs and a continued shift to more retail and services level jobs, especially in the medical services segment. This has far-reaching implications for the region's prosperity. *Click here to download the ECT PowerPoint: Central Texas Economic Outlook*

Social Equity - While the ECT is primarily a land use and transportation process, issues such as job/housing balance; degree of transit and expected job growth by industry can be used to understand the long-term implications of our current trends. ECT consultants are reviewing "best practices" from other regions and cities for policies that result in a fairer share of prosperity for all citizens. *Date?*

The September "Shape Our Future" Community Vision Survey

This September, during a three-week period, residents of Central Texas will have the opportunity to express their opinion on the four growth scenarios and to voice their hopes and concerns on the future. The survey will be available online as well as distributed in publications such as the Austin American Statesman and by community organizations across the region. Questions will include preferences on each scenario by issue such as transportation systems, housing options, land preservation and others. The questionnaire is being drafted during July and will be finalized by mid August. A fuller discussion of the September "Shape Our Future" Survey will be covered in a later newsletter. If you or your organization, church, or neighborhood group would like to distribute the survey to your members, please contact Liveable City at?

Will the ECT "Shape Our Future" Community Vision Survey results be implemented?

ECT is a visioning process, it is not a plan. After the survey is completed, the consultant will present the compiled responses to the ECT board as a "consensus scenario". Then, the ECT board or a follow-up organization may recommend a series of implementation strategies to carry

forward the "consensus scenario". ECT does not have any regional authority of its own. It will be up to the citizens and their elected officials over the next decade to determine how much of the vision becomes a reality. (what other communities have done, where has it worked)

A Few Key Questions for the Upcoming ECT Community Debate

Liveable City supports community dialog and believes that ECT is a valuable tool for fostering discussion about our future. These are just a few of the questions that should be raised when considering future scenarios on ECT's "Shape Our Future" Community Vision Survey.

- What are the consequences if Central Texas continues to sprawl at a rapid pace?
- Will we have more or less congestion if we build all the roads that are currently planned?
- What transit alternatives make the most sense for the long term in Central Texas?
- What are the implications of increased density on existing neighborhoods?
- How can we preserve the rural character and the unique local culture of our communities?
- How do land use and transportation decisions affect economic opportunity for all citizens?
- What trade-offs are we willing to make to have the community quality of life we desire?

Liveable City's Goal: Higher Participation in the "Shape Our Future" Community Vision Survey

Liveable City believes ECT is an important opportunity to engage the community in discussions about our future and give everyone a say in how our region grows. Liveable City is organizing a community outreach program to ensure larger public participation and a fuller community discussion. Liveable City is working with representatives of community organizations on downloadable web materials, leaflets, and tabling a wide variety of community functions. If you or your organization would like to be involved in this effort please contact Brian at 481-8400.

Want more information?

www.liveablecity.org/regionalvote - Liveable City

www.envisioncentraltexas.org - Envision Central Texas

www.envisionutah.org - Salt Lake City visioning process similar to ECT

www.frego.com - ECT consultant John Fregonese

Important ECT Dates

July 10 - Final land use and transportation scenarios presented to ECT board.

Last week of July 2003 - Elected official scenario briefings across region.

August 1, 2003 - Beginning of community briefing period.

September 15, 2003 - Shape Our Future Community Vision Survey begins.

First week of October 2003 - Shape Our Future Community Vision Survey ends.

January 2004 - Survey results "Community Consensus Scenario" presented to ECT board.

Next in the series - Envision Central Texas - Part II - Critical Issues

Have additional questions? Write us at????? (This could be a box)

The items under here are excess that could be on the web page instead of the newsletter, I don't feel strongly about them, I did leave them on the contents list, if you guys agree they could be removed from there too.

Who is involved in ECT and how is it funded?

ECT has a seventy-member board (click here for full list) made up of business, neighborhood, and environmental and other stakeholders from Travis, Hays, Bastrop, Caldwell and Williamson counties. Funding for the project, which has totaled more than \$1 million dollars has come from primarily public entities: City of Austin, Cap Metro, (get full list). While several Liveable City board members actively participate on the ECT board, Liveable City is a separate organization from ECT.

News Stories of Interest

Austin American Statesman 9/14/2002 - A million people are coming, where would you put them?

Austin Chronicle 10/26/01 - It's a vision thing

1. Austin has had plans before that were never implemented. What is different about ECT?

ECT is a first of its kind in that it is a five county regional effort. It is not a plan per se. Instead it provides a forum and set of analytical tools (such as maps, surveys, scenarios and data modeling.) ECT has the potential to drive a regional consensus about the community's hopes and concerns about the future.

2. What is the relationship of ECT to neighborhood plans and the City/County master plans?

ECT does not replace or compete with pre-existing master plans. It provides detailed input from across the community that will be helpful in updating and extending other master planning efforts.

Note to staff – we need to define answers to the following at some point:

*What is mixed use development and what are its pros and cons?
while minimizing gentrification?*

What is “mixed use development” on a broad scale and what are the pros and cons of it?
How can we prevent land fragmentation?

Does it matter that Central Texas does not have healthy jobs/housing balance?