

What is a Neighborhood Center?

Imagine Austin, the Comprehensive Plan for development of the City of Austin, was adopted June 15, 2012, a high level roadmap for directing growth in Austin in the next 30 years. It was developed with extensive public input and City Staff involvement. Implementation is guided by subsequent action of City Council and City departments, such as CodeNEXT updates to the land development code. By law, a comprehensive plan does not constitute or establish zoning regulations and districts.ⁱ However, the Austin City Charter requires that land use actions by Council, including rezoning, must comply with the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

Included in Imagine Austin is a growth concept map for where new development should be located (see [Growth Concept Map](#)) to encourage development of a compact and connected City. A table identifies these priority locations intended for the specific types of activity centers and transit corridors that connect them. (see [List of Centers](#))

The different types of activity centers guide decisions on land use, transportation, affordability, and other topics. The activity centers and transit corridors “allow people to reside, work, shop, access services, people watch, recreate, and hang out without traveling for distances. Within them, the design and scale of buildings and the design and availability of parks and gathering spaces will welcome people of all ages and abilities. They will be walkable, bikable and connected to one another, the rest of the city, and the region by roads, transit, bicycle routes and lanes, and trails.”ⁱⁱⁱ A graphical depiction in the plan shows conceptual profiles of the different types of centers. (see [Conceptual View](#))

Briefly, these are the activity centers and their characteristics:

	Regional Center	Town Center	Neighborhood Center
General Focus	Retail, cultural, recreational, entertainment destinations for Central Texas; large and small employers	Large and small employers, fewer than regional center; provide goods and services to the center and surrounding area	Smallest and least intense of the centers; businesses and services serve the center and surrounding neighborhoods
Commercial Aspects	Greatest intensity of people and jobs; tallest buildings in the region	Mixed use (residential and office) and office buildings	Locally focused – grocery, shops, doctors, hair salons, restaurants, ...
Housing	Low to high-rise apartments, mixed use buildings, rowhouses, townhouses; sometimes single family units	1 to 3-story houses, duplexes, townhouses, rowhouses; low to mid-rise apartments, mixed-use buildings	May be mixed-use at the core, surrounded by mix of housing
Size Factors	25,000 – 45,000 people; 5,000 – 25,000 jobs	10,000 – 30,000 people; 5,000 – 20,000 jobs	5,000 – 10,000 people; 2,500 – 7,000 jobs
Examples	Central (Downtown, UT, Capitol,...); the Domain	Mueller (expected to be 4.2M sq. ft. when built out)	Far West Blvd; Anderson Lane Station

Centers are generally located on one or more major transit stops, with greatest density around the transit stop. Activity corridors (like Burnet Road) may have similar uses at a center, but the development is spread in a more linear nature along the roadway.

Other building blocks in the framework for the future include these, each supported by a description and a map of key elements in the Imagine Austin plan:

- Environmental resources
- Bicycle and pedestrian networks
- Transit networks
- Roadway networks

As components of these building blocks move, the location and definition of the activity centers may also move. For more information see the online version of the Imagine Austin plan.

For downloads, see <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/imagine-austin-download-center>

For a viewable version online, see <https://www.austintexas.gov/department/our-plan-future>

ⁱ Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, page 97.

ⁱⁱ Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, page 104.