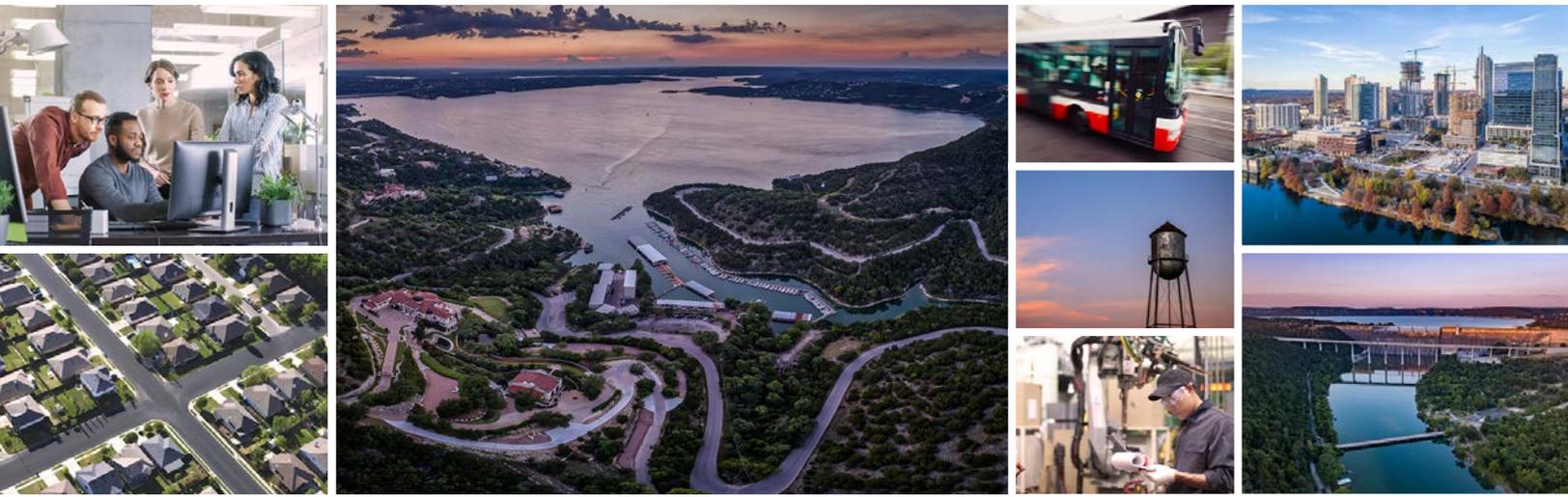


DECEMBER 2019



COMPREHENSIVE, COUNTYWIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

TRAVIS COUNTY, TX



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TIP Strategies would like to thank the more than 70 individuals and organizations that participated in this planning process. In addition, we'd like to thank the Travis County Commissioners and staff who were involved in this process.

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ABOUT THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

Travis County established its first office dedicated to economic development in 2016 in response to a growing need to manage the County’s varied economic development programming under one umbrella. The Office of Economic Development & Strategic Investments (EDSI) is housed within the Planning and Budget Office. EDSI manages the County’s investment portfolio, depository contract, real estate redevelopment and facilities planning, corporations, incentives, and other strategic initiatives. The office seeks to create conditions for economic growth to improve quality of life and affordability and address economic inequity through the use of funding mechanisms beyond ad valorem taxes.

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INTRODUCTION

The Austin metro area and Travis County are a magnet for both talent and companies. Renowned for its high quality of life and strong creative industries, the Austin area consistently lands on national “best of” lists.

Over the past 5 years, the population of the metro area has surpassed 2 million and the population in Travis County has reached 1.2 million (Figure 1). In Travis County, the population grew 12 percent between 2012 and 2017.

At the same time, the total number of jobs in Travis County grew 19 percent from 646,775 in 2012 to 770,658 in 2017 (Figure 2). This job growth was led by the professional services, hospitality, and construction sectors.

This economic boom has led to improvements in regional prosperity measures. The poverty rate in Travis County fell from more than 18 percent in 2012 to 12 percent in 2016. The median household income reached \$70,158 in 2016, which is more than 20 percent higher than the US. The unemployment rate has fallen below 3 percent.

However, not all residents or all parts of Travis County have shared in this prosperity. Structural and institutional barriers have contributed to significant disparities in prosperity measures across ethnic and racial lines (Figure 3, page 2). Blacks and Latinos in Travis County are more likely to be living in poverty, have lower median incomes, and are more likely to be unemployed. In addition, the number and percentage of individuals working full-time and earning wages below the federal poverty level has increased, and poverty in the County continues to be largely concentrated east of I-35 (Figure 4 & Figure 5, page 3).

Furthermore, the rapid growth of Travis County has put pressure on some the region’s sensitive environmental features. Travis County’s vulnerability to natural disasters has been tested in recent years. Flooding, drought, and wildfires have exposed some of the related risks and affected neighborhoods county-wide. The increasingly extreme fluctuations in weather and temperature continue to threaten the resiliency of businesses and residents across the County.

The influx of residents and businesses has also contributed to rising real estate prices, both residential and commercial, and traffic congestion poses challenges to mobility across the region. As a result, affordability and transportation have risen to the top of the list of regional challenges.

FIGURE 1. POPULATION, AUSTIN MSA*
2012–2017, IN MILLIONS

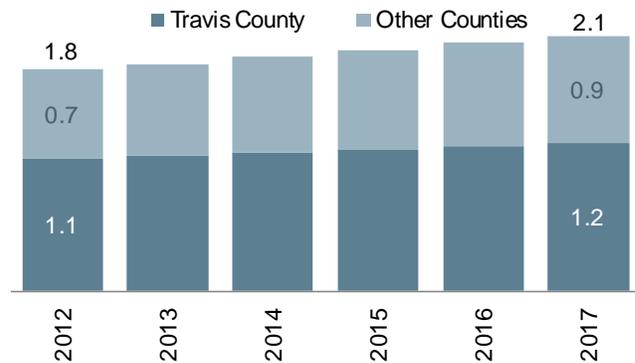
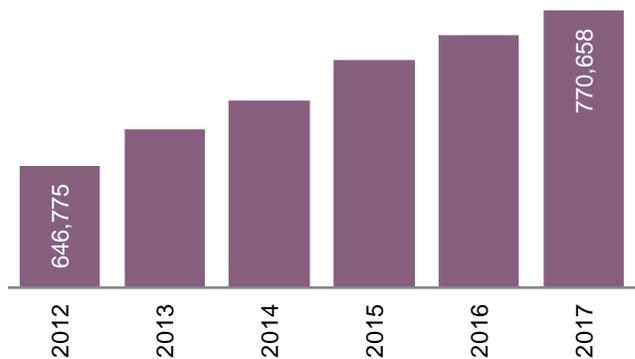


FIGURE 2. TOTAL JOBS, TRAVIS COUNTY
2012–2017



* A metropolitan statistical area is a core urban area and its adjacent communities that have a high degree of economic and social integration.
Sources: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program. Jobs EQ.

With this context in mind, Travis County began the process of developing a Countywide, comprehensive economic development strategy in late 2017. The purpose of this strategy is to provide recommendations for a holistic, community-driven approach to economic development that focuses on shared prosperity and sustainability.

The process for developing the strategy took place in two phases. The first phase, conducted by the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), was a background analysis, resource document overview, and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis. The second phase was the development of the strategic plan. For this phase, the County engaged TIP Strategies to lead the planning process. The TIP team included Janet Hammer of The Collaboratory and Tracye McDaniel of McDaniel Strategy Ecosystems.

Over the course of six months, the project team engaged more than 70 stakeholders and more than 1,000 residents in developing the County's first economic development strategic plan. The team also conducted an extensive review of background research and reports, performed an analysis of the economic development landscape in the County, and completed a review of best practices from around the country. The resulting plan focuses on core opportunity areas where the County has the greatest potential to influence positive economic development outcomes without duplicating efforts.

FIGURE 3. TRAVIS COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS



Source: American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

FIGURE 4. CONCENTRATED POVERTY
SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (2015)

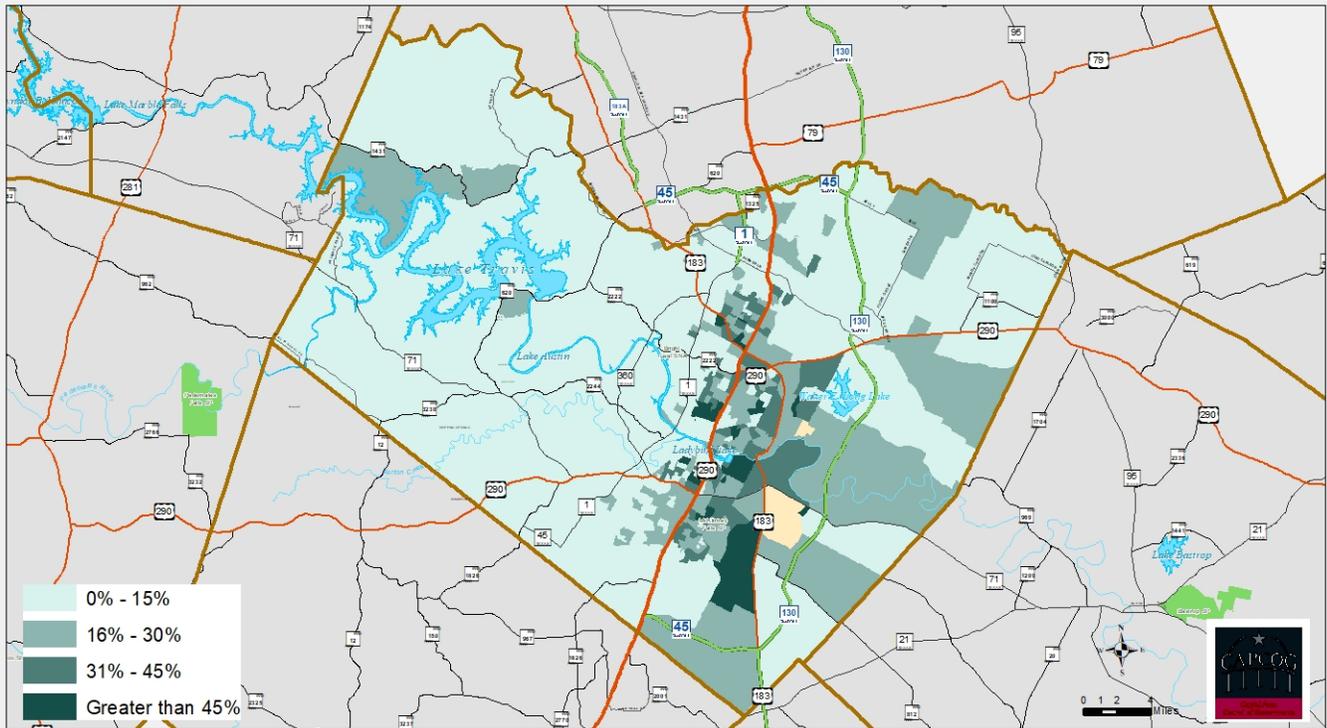
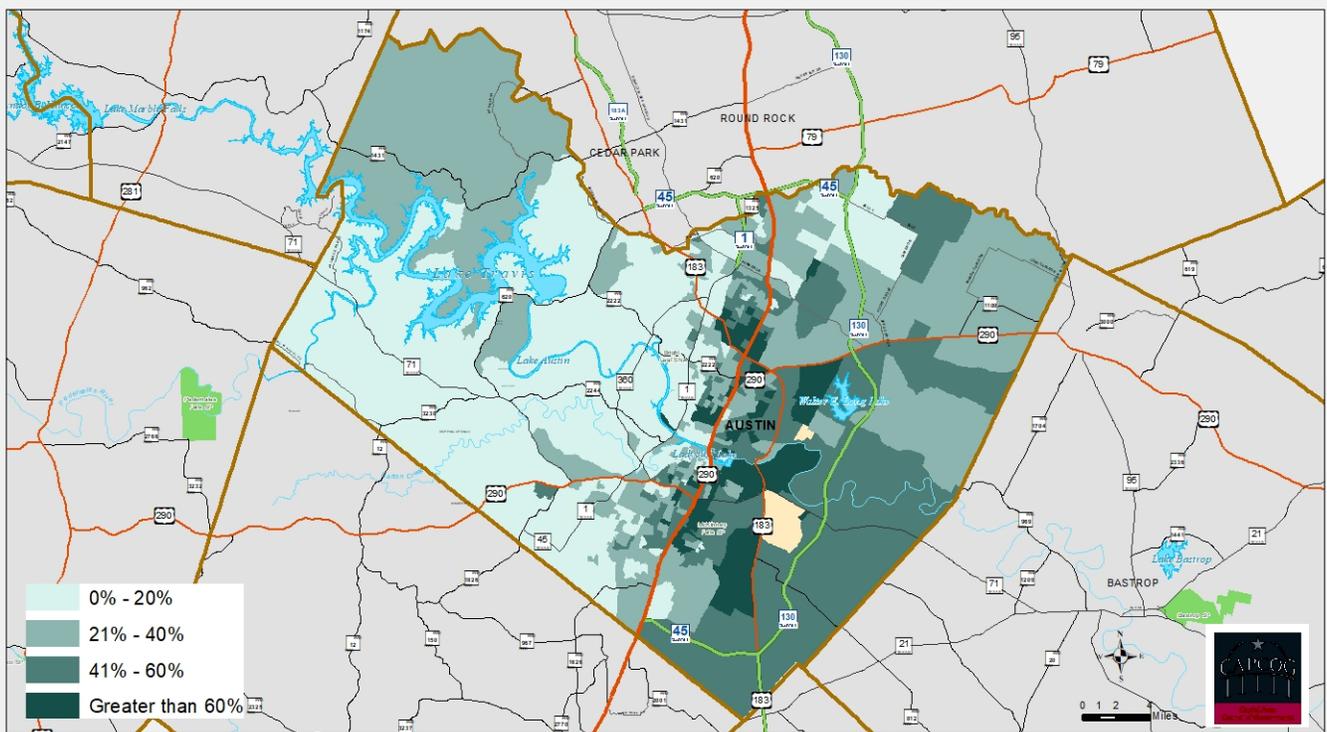


FIGURE 5. 200% OF POVERTY LEVEL
SHARE OF HOUSEHOLDS 200% BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL (2015)



Source: (Figure 4 & 5) US Census Bureau, American Community Survey via CAPCOG.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

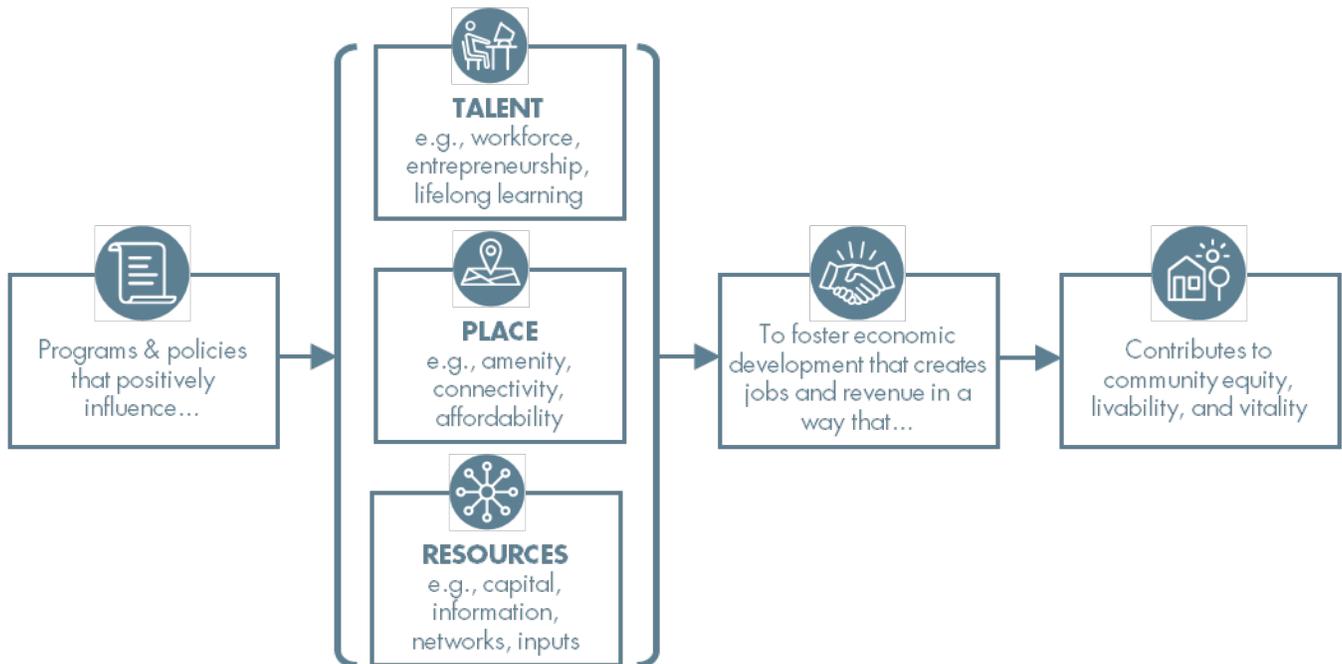


DEFINING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to the US Economic Development Administration, **economic development** creates the conditions for economic growth and improved quality of life by expanding the capacity of individuals, firms, and communities to maximize the use of their talents and skills to support innovation, lower transaction costs, and responsibly produce and trade valuable goods and services. Generally, factors that contribute to economic development can be classified into three primary categories: place, talent, and resources.

- **Place Factors** influence whether a community has accessible, affordable, and amenity-rich spaces where businesses and workers want to locate;
- **Talent Factors** influence whether a community is home to capable workers and entrepreneurs; and
- **Resource Factors** influence whether businesses have access to the capital, networks, and the full-range of inputs that they need.

Inclusive and sustainable economic development recognizes that place, talent, and resource factors are interconnected and aims to create jobs and revenue in ways that create opportunity, shared prosperity, resource stewardship, resilience, and quality of life.



Source: The Collaboratory.

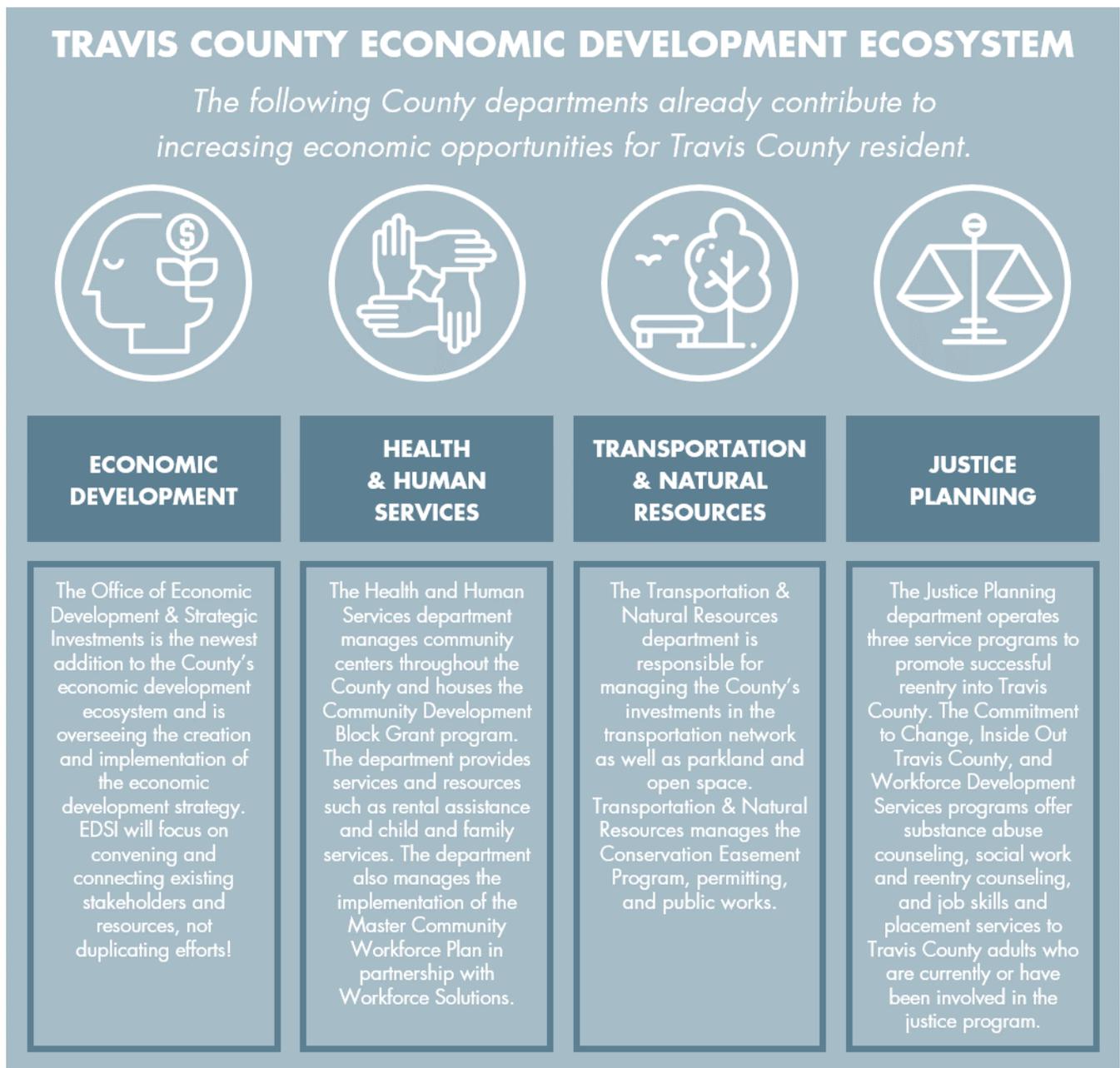
THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The County has a variety of levers it can use to influence economic development outcomes. These include investment, employment, procurement, incentives, education, and outreach. Although the Travis County Office of Economic Development & Strategic Investments (EDSI) is relatively new, Travis County has long played a significant role in economic development—through its transportation investments, land conservation efforts, park system, and investments in workforce development. The County, as a top 20 employer, generates a wide range of jobs and provides training to its employees. As a purchaser, it injects dollars into the regional economy through its contracts. It has also successfully incentivized large employers to locate in Travis County, often in partnership with the City of Austin and

State of Texas. These roles are the County’s primary levers by which it has and can shape economic development in Travis County.

The creation of EDSI brings new tools and resources that can amplify the County’s economic development impact by linking and leveraging the multitude of activities that contribute to economic development. By convening stakeholders, aligning resources, connecting related activities, and spanning gaps in services, both across and beyond the County’s departments, Travis County can strengthen its role in regional economic development and positively influence outcomes, even with its limited land use tools and statutory authority.

FIGURE 6. TRAVIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM



A key finding of the planning process is that Travis County is home to a rich array of organizations addressing various facets of economic development, yet the whole remains less than the sum of its parts. Thus, Travis County's specific roles in the larger regional economic development landscape emerged:

- Serve as a convener and connector to enhance coordination across jurisdictional boundaries and around common goals to ensure that inclusivity, sustainability, and resiliency are integrated into the regional economic development conversation. In addition to local government and quasi-governmental organizations such as cities, housing authorities, transit authorities, councils of government, innovation and other special districts, local government and economic development corporations, examples of partners include area educational institutions, health care providers, grassroots and nongovernmental organizations, foundations, chambers of commerce, and business organizations.
- Lead economic development practitioners by example and demonstrate innovative, progressive approaches to growth management and inclusive economic development.
- Leverage existing County tools to promote more equitable and sustainable economic development outcomes.
- Examine County practices to ensure consistent implementation of requirements in private and County projects.

In addition, while the topics of economic inclusion, sustainability, and resiliency are appearing in the regional economic development conversation, the County can and should undertake the four roles listed above to advance the conversation and ensure that progress is made. The County's involvement in health and human services, criminal justice, and natural resources management put it in a unique position to be a critical bridge between traditional economic development activities and those with an eye toward inclusion, sustainability, and resiliency. EDSI, in particular, can steer the conversations toward the areas of greatest need and make sure that economic development linkages are established, especially with those communities that are often disconnected from regional prosperity.

VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Travis County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a 5-year strategic plan that outlines a set of strategic initiatives to strengthen Travis County’s economic competitiveness, inclusion, and resilience. It also identifies approaches to promote investment in targeted areas and execute high-impact projects. The plan will guide the work of EDSI and influence the strategic direction of economic development across the County.

The plan identifies goals, strategies, and actions that will enable the County to positively influence its economic development future. To be effective, these goals, strategies, and actions must be driven by a unifying vision and guiding principles.

Travis County has an existing vision statement that guides the Commissioners’ Court as well as its government services and structure. It articulates the County’s priorities and is supported by a set of goals. The vision is one of innovation and vibrancy balanced with cultural and environmental preservation. The County’s goals prioritize resilience, well-being, safety, stewardship, mobility, and civic engagement.

The economic development strategic plan aligns with and supports the County’s overall vision and goals. In this context, the strategic plan lays out a set of guiding principles that create a foundation for the County’s economic development strategic framework and provide a reference point for the County’s economic development programs, policies, and investments. These guiding principles are listed in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Travis County’s economic development programs, policies, and investments...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance <i>opportunity and prosperity</i> for residents, particularly those who are disadvantaged; 2. Contribute to the region’s economic <i>strength, diversification, and resilience</i>; and 3. Foster <i>sustainability</i> in Travis County and the region.

From these guiding principles, a strategic framework was developed around four elements that reflect key points of leverage that the County can affect with the tools in its statutory authority. The four elements are business development, economic and financial opportunity, placemaking, and transportation and mobility. Together, these four areas will propel Travis County toward its vision of an innovative and vibrant community.

TRAVIS COUNTY VISION AND GOALS
<p>VISION</p> <p>Travis County is an innovative, vibrant community that preserves diverse cultural heritage and natural resources.</p>
<p>GOALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community resilience in daily living and in times of emergency • Promote the well-being of our residents through social, economic, and health and safety initiatives • Ensure the public safety and peaceful resolution of conflicts through the justice system and other public processes • Preserve and protect our environment and natural resources through responsible land stewardship • Empower the public through civic engagement and collaboration • Foster transportation mobility and accessibility <p>Source: Travis County.</p>

Cutting across each of the elements are the foundational practices of collaboration, inclusion, resilience, and sustainability. The foundational practices are meant to be consistent themes across the plan. In this vein, EDSI will work with the public, private, nonprofit, philanthropic, and academic sectors to enhance collaborative capacity to successfully address shared economic development goals. In addition, the County will advance community goals by applying a lens of inclusion, resilience, and sustainability across all economic development programs and policies.

FIGURE 8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



1. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Helping businesses to start, stay, and grow in Travis County

The heart of economic development is the community of businesses, business owners, and entrepreneurs who contribute to the economic viability and vitality of a region. The cultivation of healthy businesses—small, medium, and large—in a wide range of industries diversifies the economy and contributes to a strong, resilient tax base. Economic development efforts can help guide business investment into targeted areas, influence the types of jobs and industries that grow, support the scaling up of small and medium-sized businesses, strengthen the network of services that support businesses, and encourage inclusive business ownership.

In Travis County and the Austin metropolitan area, there are a number of active efforts to encourage business development. These include the following.

- **The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and its Opportunity Austin 4.0** strategic plan seeks to strengthen and diversify the greater Austin economy. The chamber promotes the region as a destination for business and supports employer expansion with the “Connect First” existing business outreach program. The chamber also provides a wide range of member services aimed at strengthening business.
- **City of Austin’s Economic Development Department** utilizes traditional and equity-based economic development approaches to encourage global business expansion and promote the development of small business, cultural arts, and music. The city has an extensive small business development program that provides technical assistance to small business owners across its extraterritorial jurisdiction. It also has a program called Souly Austin Business District Incubator that helps establish merchants’ associations in business districts across the city.
- **Pflugerville Community Development Corporation (CDC)** is a Texas 4B economic development corporation with a primary purpose of promoting economic development in the City of Pflugerville. PCDC actively markets the community, recruits new businesses, and assists existing businesses through their Business PFirst Program. Additionally, PCDC provides funding for incentives, infrastructure investments, projects to create primary jobs, and parks and recreation projects.

In addition, there are 12 other chambers of commerce that provide services for their members, including business classes and networking. These chambers are as follows.

- The Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- The Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce
- The Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce
- Austin Young Chamber
- Manor Chamber of Commerce
- Bee Cave Chamber of Commerce
- Lake Travis Chamber of Commerce
- Lago Vista and Jonestown Area Chamber of Commerce

RATIONALE
<i>Economic vitality is fostered through business ownership and success across the County’s diverse geographies and population.</i>
PRIORITY PROJECTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Economic development toolbox 2 Business resource hub 3 Industry cluster grants
OUTCOMES
Better distribution of employment centers across the County.
Increased business ownership and success among the County’s diverse populations.

- Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce
- Pflugerville Chamber of Commerce
- West Austin Chamber of Commerce

There are also many nonprofit organizations that provide small business support, especially targeted at minority and/or low-income small business owners. These organization include the following.

- BiGAUSTIN
- Business & Community Lenders of Texas
- Business Success Center
- Economic Growth Business Incubator
- LiftFund
- PeopleFund
- Service Corps of Retired Executives, SCORE
- Small Business Development Centers

Despite the presence of these many organizations, there remain gaps in the business development landscape in Travis County. These gaps include the following.

- **Community capacity.** Many of the smaller communities in Travis County and the unincorporated areas have little economic development capacity and are not visible in the competitive, regional, economic development landscape. This lack of capacity means low-income or distressed communities are likely to be disconnected from the region’s prosperity and have less influence over their economic development futures.
- **Business support networks.** Many businesses in unincorporated Travis County are not aware of or do not have access to the Austin region’s comprehensive business support network. Further, businesses from traditionally under-represented populations have not had sufficient access to resources, networks, and opportunity sectors.
- **Business scale-up.** Many programs exist to support business start-up. However, fewer programs and resources are specifically focused on helping businesses scale-up.
- **Employer relationships.** EDSI has not yet built strong relationships with key employers that it can leverage for both economic and community development.
- **Industry focus.** Many of the larger-scale economic development efforts are focused on technology-based sectors. There is a need to also support industry sectors located outside of the Austin city limits that might employ area residents and provide career opportunities that do not require a 4-year degree.

TARGET INDUSTRIES FOR TRAVIS COUNTY

Different entities target different industries for their business recruitment and industry cluster development efforts. Below is a list of target industries by organization.

	GREATER AUSTIN CHAMBER	PFLUGERVILLE CDC
Advanced Manufacturing	●	●
Clean Energy & Power Technology	●	●
Corporate HQs/Regional Offices	●	●
Creative & Digital Media	●	●
Data Management	●	●
Life Sciences	●	●
Professional Technology Services		●
Space Technology	●	
Supply Chain Management		●

Source: Greater Austin Chamber, Pflugerville CDC.

Eastern Travis County, including Pflugerville, could be an appealing location for the more production-oriented industries and supply chain management. Furthermore, these industries offer strong middle-skill and entry-level careers that could provide good economic opportunities for residents in eastern Travis County.

Western Travis County is, in many ways, already a destination for corporate and regional offices, which include many of the large technology employers.

- **Economic development toolkit.** Travis County’s economic development incentives, in the past, focused on Chapter 381 agreements with large businesses. There are a range of other tools that the County can use to direct investment into specific areas and to also support small- and medium-sized businesses.

With the strategies that follow, EDSI can ensure that more communities in Travis County have access to business development services and that bridges are established between regional economic development activities and targeted areas of the County.

1.1. Enhance economic development capacity in underserved or unserved areas of the County.

Many communities in Travis County do not have a local economic development organization representing them. In contrast, communities in Williamson County are represented by the Williamson County Economic Development Partnership and Hays and Caldwell counties are represented by the Greater San Marcos Partnership. These partnerships raise the visibility of the communities they represent and facilitate collaborative responses to realize shared economic development opportunities. In addition, many communities in Travis County are disconnected and often left out of broader community conversations about economic development priorities and projects. By convening the economic development stakeholders and a broader base of residents from Travis County communities, EDSI can identify unmet needs and help the communities coordinate responses to those that are highest priority.

- 1.1.1. Convene economic development stakeholders from Travis County communities outside Austin to discuss economic development challenges and opportunities. These stakeholders should include incorporated areas and established communities in unincorporated areas, such as Del Valle.
- 1.1.2. Based on the identified needs and opportunities, create a structure for ongoing collaboration and support.
- 1.1.3. Use the Travis County clerk’s database of Assumed Name Records to identify businesses in underserved areas, promote the business resources, classes, and services directly to business owners in high-need areas.

GO! AUSTIN/VAMOS! AUSTIN



Launched in 2012, Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin (GAVA) is a coalition of residents, community leaders, and nonprofits organizing to improve the health of communities in Dove Springs (78744) and 78745 by increasing access to and participation in physical activity and improved nutrition. The GAVA team helps residents organize sector-specific and geographic teams around five areas.

- School and out-of-school time
- Physical activity
- Early childhood
- Food
- Leadership development

GAVA works closely with these teams to empower them to transform the assets in their communities to improve health outcomes. A recent evaluation of GAVA found that this place-based intervention has had a significant positive effect on the community.

For more information, visit www.goaustinvamosaustin.org

1.1.4. Engage businesses identified in 1.1.3. to develop projects and programs that grow the capacity of these businesses to expand and become more resilient.

1.2. Improve the accessibility and reach of small and medium-sized business development services.

The Austin region has an established and comprehensive business support network. However, some areas of Travis County do not have good access to services, and many businesses across the region are not aware of available resources. In addition, there is a need for more services to support business scale-up rather than start-up. There is also a need for more coordination among the resources. By partnering with providers in the business support network, EDSI can help raise the visibility of the services and expand access, using the County’s own facilities and records.

1.2.1. Partner with small business resource providers to deliver projects and programs developed under 1.1.4. above and other small business classes and technical assistance at county-owned community centers and other community facilities.

1.2.2. Raise awareness of existing programs that support disaster preparedness and post-disaster recovery. Resources can be found at the City of Austin’s Small Business Program, Austin Chamber of Commerce, the US Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Assistance, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

1.2.3. In partnership with business resource providers, explore the feasibility of a virtual business hub, such as SourceLink for diverse business owners and entrepreneurs to access information about resources and opportunities.

1.2.4. Fund and manage a competitive investment program that provides support and potentially seed funding for small businesses (general funds or grant funds).

1.3. Assist businesses with retention, expansion, and transition.

Travis County’s existing businesses are its greatest economic development asset. Ensuring that these businesses can thrive and grow, even through transitions, greatly enhances the region’s economic resilience and sustainability. Furthermore, employers that anchor Travis County’s high-need communities provide jobs for area residents and also often provide community support. EDSI

SourceLink was originally developed by the Kauffman Foundation as a hub for businesses and entrepreneurs in Kansas City. It has since evolved into a platform for managing business and entrepreneurial ecosystems in communities. Through the platform, communities can identify resources and make them visible; connect business owners to resources and to each other; provide a forum for collaboration; and measure impact. The platform is used in many communities across the US from Denver to Baltimore. For more information, visit www.joinsourcelink.com

should forge relationships with these important anchors to connect them with resources, as needed, and to assist them in enhancing their communities.

- 1.3.1. Partner with the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Opportunity Austin, and the Pflugerville CDC to participate in the Connect First and Business PFirst programs for select Travis County employers. This will allow EDSI to be more responsive to employers’ needs and build productive relationships.
- 1.3.2. Revise the County’s incentive policy to effectively retrain small and local businesses, assist them in expanding and scaling up, and becoming more resilient when facing economic, demographic, and climate changes.
- 1.3.3. Work with economic development organizations, including the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and Pflugerville CDC, to connect companies expanding in Travis County with workforce training resources to facilitate local hiring and with business resources/networks to encourage local purchasing. This can amplify the local impact of the expansion.
- 1.3.4. Work with small business resources/networks to encourage local purchasing.
- 1.3.5. Use industry data and pro forma reviews to gain insight into the capital needs of diverse industries.
- 1.3.6. Collaborate with chambers of commerce and other resource providers to create a program that assists business owners nearing retirement age to prepare their businesses for a successful transition.

1.4. Diversify and strengthen the County’s primary economic drivers and industry clusters.

Industry clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, and associated institutions in a particular field that are present in a region. Clusters arise because they increase the productivity with which companies can compete. Strengthening diverse clusters of firms and the value chains that support them can help build resilient economies that can better weather economic shocks. While the large economic drivers are important sources of stability and growth, emerging industry clusters can be sources of innovation, growth, and wealth. EDSI can

FORT COLLINS INDUSTRY CLUSTER GRANTS

Fort Collins, Colorado, has worked to foster growth of key industry clusters for more than a decade. In 2013, the city redefined its role in industry cluster development. In its new role, the city supports the growth of sectors by facilitating access to the following.

- **Peer networks:** opportunities to interact with peers.
- **Suppliers and inputs:** better access to supplies or suppliers to reduce costs.
- **Talent:** increased access to qualified workers.
- **Markets:** increased visibility in market segments and improved market penetration.
- **Capital:** improved access to capital networks—local and beyond.
- **Industry intelligence:** access to data and market research to inform business planning and strategic decision-making.
- **Space to grow:** access to sites in Fort Collins to accommodate the growth of companies in the industry clusters.

To this end, Fort Collins awards innovative industry partnerships with funding to support specific initiatives to strengthen their industry cluster. Awards range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 and must be matched by the cluster. Through this initiative, a number of industries have emerged, including a food cluster, a music and video initiative, and a creative district. The initiative has also supported more established industry clusters, such as manufacturing and bioscience.

For more information, visit www.fcgov.com/business/industry-clusters

collaborate with regional organizations to ensure the health of Travis County's large industry clusters but should focus its own efforts on supporting the smaller clusters of firms that are poised to be engines of prosperity in the County's high-need areas.

- 1.4.1. Revise the County's incentive policy to effectively support small and medium-sized businesses, achieve local hiring, encourage middle wages or higher, and drive investment into high-need areas using tools beyond tax abatement and refund.
- 1.4.2. In partnership with the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and local economic development organizations, promote sites at the County's key employment centers as destinations for employers positioned to hire from the surrounding community.
- 1.4.3. Continue the development and implementation of the Travis County Food and Farming Initiative. Key initiatives include the RFP for Walnut Creek Farm and the RFP in partnership with the City of Austin for the Feasibility study of Healthy Food Retail Incentives.
- 1.4.4. Conduct study of regional emergent/disruptor industries and their supply chains to proactively target investments that support emergent industries. This study will also inform investments in workforce training.

2. ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY

Strengthening pathways to employment and financial empowerment

Labor availability is one of the top factors that drives company’s location decisions because finding and retaining good employees is one of the most critical challenges employers face. In a recent survey of hiring managers conducted by Manpower, 46 percent of employers in the US are reporting difficulty filling jobs.

Yet, thousands of residents are unemployed, underemployed, or not even engaged in the workforce. In Travis County, unemployment is higher and labor force participation is lower for those residents with a high school diploma or less, for African American residents, and for residents living in poverty. In addition, more than 15,000 residents work full-time and still live in poverty.

This disconnect can impede the health of businesses and communities. Economic development efforts can help build bridges between employers seeking talent and the residents who need jobs. They can do this by working in partnership with workforce intermediaries and educational institutions to ensure the regional talent pipeline is aligned with employer needs and that residents are aware of and have access to good career opportunities.

Travis County is directly involved in workforce development efforts that could be linked more closely with its economic development efforts to improve residents’ awareness of and access to high-demand careers. These include:

- **The Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan (MCWP)** is a workforce strategy developed at the request of Travis County Judge Sarah Eckhardt and Austin Mayor Steve Adler. The goal of the workforce plan is to move 10,000 disadvantaged residents into middle-skill careers by 2021. Workforce Solutions Capital Area is managing the implementation of the strategy, and Travis County is heavily involved through its role on the leadership council, which governs and monitors the implementation of the strategy.
- Travis County invests **\$2.4 million annually in workforce development** through contracts with programs that provide training, assistance, and adult education. These contracts are managed through the Health and Human Services (HHS) department. The goal of these investments is to help individuals gain the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain and retain employment, while helping meet employer demand for skilled workers. Through these investments, more than 4,000 individuals were provided with direct services in 2017. In addition, Travis County provides **direct services to ex-offenders**, helping them prepare for employment and to find jobs. This program is administered by Justice Planning and serves 100 to 150 individuals each year.
- **Travis County employs more than 5,000 individuals.** Through its own human resource policies and programs, Travis County provides a wide range of programs that contribute to workforce development and positions the County to “lead by example” regarding inclusive hiring and advancement. These include second-chance hiring, internships, the Learning Enrichment and

RATIONALE
<i>Business and community vitality is fostered when residents have pathways to employment and financial empowerment.</i>
PRIORITY PROJECTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Public sector employer collaborative 2 Revision of incentives toolbox to reward inclusive hiring and childcare benefits 3 Expansion of the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC) collaborative
OUTCOMES
<p>Reduced disparities in employment, wages, and wealth.</p> <p>Increased household incomes and ability to afford housing.</p>

Development (LEAD) program for upskilling and leadership development, tuition refund benefits, the Employee Assistance Program, and the CARE program.

Linking these existing workforce development efforts to economic development can help to maximize their impact, amplify their reach, and ensure employers have better access to talent and disadvantaged populations have better access to economic opportunities. It will also help address some of the key challenges that exist at the intersection of workforce and economic development. These challenges include the following.

- **Public sector coordination.** Austin’s public sector represents one of the largest employment sectors in the regional economy. However, these employers have not yet come together to examine shared workforce challenges and needs. The public sector employs a large number of skilled trades and information technology workers, which were identified as high-demand sectors in the MCWP and could serve as connection points between public sector employers and the MCWP.
- **Private sector leadership.** The disparities in unemployment and economic opportunity in Travis County necessitate a more coordinated response. While the MCWP focuses on reaching more disadvantaged residents, more leadership from employers is needed to ensure hiring practices are inclusive and that opportunities for career advancement exist.
- **Affordable childcare.** Access to high-quality, affordable childcare persists as a major barrier to employment for many Travis County residents, in particular those who are low income. Childcare, transportation, and housing are the three biggest barriers to employment. Although a number of programs exist to provide assistance to families in need of childcare, there are not enough childcare spots and not enough assistance to meet the need.
- **Financial literacy.** While a better job is helpful in propelling families toward economic self-sufficiency, a lack of financial literacy can counter the positive impact of more household earnings. Pairing workforce programs and financial literacy training can create a more holistic support structure that positions individuals for more success in the workplace and yields greater family stability by building savings and assets. This, in turn, creates more resilient households. Currently, the County’s workforce investments are somewhat disconnected from other programs that help strengthen financial skills and build wealth.

The strategies on the next pages provide a framework for EDSI, in partnership with HHS, to improve Travis County residents’ access to economic opportunities and strengthen family stability.

2.1. Improve pathways and access to career opportunities.

The Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan is a Travis County and Austin joint initiative to move 10,000 disadvantaged workers into middle-skill jobs by 2021. Travis County is heavily involved in the plan implementation by serving in a leadership capacity and through its workforce investments. The County continues to align its workforce development activities with the plan in the programs that it supports and the direct client services that it provides. EDSI, in partnership with HHS, can support the implementation of the MCWP by engaging additional employers in the work of the plan and helping raise awareness of the plan’s initiatives through EDSI’s outreach activities with employers, community groups, and residents.

- 2.1.1. Continue to actively support the implementation of the MCWP and align the County’s workforce investments with the MCWP.
- 2.1.2. Based on the findings of the regional emergent industry study identified in 1.4.4., develop a stackable skills ‘crosswalk’ that identifies cross-sector overlap with skills and maximizes workforce training investments by the county.
- 2.1.3. Collaborate with ISDs on outreach activities to leverage each other’s community engagement efforts and connect emergent industry sectors with CTE tracks offered in schools.

2.2. Strengthen inclusive hiring and advancement.

To address Travis County’s disparities in economic opportunity, a more coordinated, employer-led effort is needed. Travis County is already a leader in this area, in many ways, through its own human resource policies and practices. However, the County could take a more active leadership role in the employer community. EDSI, in partnership with Human Resources, can encourage more collaboration with the employer community and incentivize inclusive hiring and advancement through an expanded economic development toolbox.

- 2.2.1. Collaborate with public, private, and nonprofit organizations to offer low cost or free courses on inherent bias in hiring.
- 2.2.2. Restructure the County’s incentives policy to reward inclusive hiring practices. Consider a range of tools besides Chapter 381 agreements, such as grants for training and hiring career-ready social service clients.

**FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO
PEOPLE WORKS**

Through the People Works program, Franklin County facilitates connections between employers and the county’s social service recipients to help them find long-term, sustainable employment. The program does this through a two-pronged approach.

Workforce navigation. A workforce navigator at the county assists employers by connecting them to the network of county and nonprofit social service agencies to find qualified candidates and by helping employers access relevant local, state, and federal workforce programs and incentives.

People Works grants. The grant programs are designed to provide employers who hire social service clients with resources to train these individuals with hard skills.

For more information, visit development.franklincountyohio.gov/people-works

2.3. Facilitate reductions in childcare barriers to employment.

A lack of access to reliable, high-quality childcare can prevent families from securing and maintaining stable employment. Although childcare subsidies are available and initiatives, such as Head Start and the Success By 6 Center Project, are working to increase the number of high-quality childcare spots available, it is not enough. EDSI, in partnership with HHS and Human Resources, can facilitate greater access to childcare.

- 2.3.1. Restructure the County’s incentive policy to reward the provision of on-site childcare in areas of high need or the provision of other childcare benefits.
- 2.3.2. With HHS, convene employers who are located in areas with a childcare deficit to determine the feasibility of a jointly owned childcare facility that would support the needs of employees and other residents in the area.
- 2.3.3. With HHS, partner with a small business support program to help HHS clients and others who are interested in starting a childcare business, get training and support to help them set up an in-home childcare business or a worker-owned cooperative that would serve the childcare needs of their communities. Consider creating a revolving loan fund that would support these childcare businesses that are located in high-need areas.
- 2.3.4. With Human Resources, continue exploring opportunities in County-owned facilities to offer on-site childcare in partnership with an established childcare provider (e.g., Open Door Preschools, YMCA).

UNITED WAY ATX 2-GEN STRATEGIC PLAN



Over the course of 2018, UWATX convened nearly 200 community stakeholders to develop the Family Opportunity Roadmap: The Austin/Travis County 2-Gen Strategic Plan. The plan integrates an approach to social services that serves parents and children deliberately and simultaneously, leading to better outcomes for both generations.

This approach prioritizes educational, financial, health and social supports for parents and children, including advocating for the provision of reliable, high-quality childcare that increases the likelihood that parents will enter the workforce or pursue their own education.

For more information, visit <https://www.unitedwayaustin.org/our-work/2-gen-austin/>

2.4. Promote financial stability and wealth accumulation through financial literacy and asset building.

Strengthening family financial stability is vital to community resiliency. While connecting individuals to better economic opportunity is an important piece of this, financial literacy and asset building are also essential pieces of the puzzle. Fortunately, Travis County has significant assets that can assist in building financial literacy skills and wealth in the community. The first is the Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, which grew out of the Travis County Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service. The second is the Travis County Credit Union. Both of these assets can be important partners in promoting family financial stability among Travis County employers, social service clients, and residents. EDSI, in partnership with HHS and Human Resources, can help to integrate these pieces and partners into the County's existing workforce-related programs to create a more comprehensive support structure for workers.

WORKFORCE AND EDUCATION READINESS CONTINUUM (WERC)

Sponsored by Travis County, Austin, and Workforce Solutions Capital Area, WERC is a network of community partners that help prepare residents to enter or reenter the labor market. In all, the network of partners has 38 locations across the metro area.

Partners offer a range of services from job search support to skill assessment to childcare support. Partners in the network include these organizations:

- American YouthWorks
- Austin Area Urban League
- El Buen Samaritano
- Foundation Communities
- Goodwill Industries
- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
- Manos de Cristo
- Workforce Solutions Capital Area

For more information, visit www.wercaustin.com

- 2.4.1. Identify all Travis County financial stability and wealth creation programs. Establish an inter-departmental working group to promote a more comprehensive, coordinated model of financial stability and wealth creation in County programs. With Human Resources, strengthen and expand the partnership between Travis County Human Resources, Travis County Credit Union, and the Travis County Agrilife Extension's Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas to help County employees improve their own financial skills and build savings.
- 2.4.2. With HHS, work with the Workforce and Education Readiness Continuum (WERC) partners to expand the services offered to include more financial literacy offerings and asset building programs. Explore the opportunity to expand the partnership to include additional nonprofit organization and social service agencies.
- 2.4.3. With HHS, partner with the Financial Literacy Coalition of Central Texas or another nonprofit to offer financial literacy courses to clients in County-supported programs.

3. PLACEMAKING

Developing resilient, healthy communities of opportunity

Quality of place matters to economic development. Studies have shown that it plays a significant role in attracting young talent to a region and building healthier and happier communities.* As talent is a critical factor for employers, quality of place is important to the business community too. The accessibility of cultural, entertainment, and recreational amenities; the quality of the built environment; the character of the community; and the availability and condition of housing all contribute to a community’s quality of place.

Placemaking is the process of creating places where people want to live, work, shop, learn, and visit. By this definition, placemaking is an intentional process to improve a community’s quality of place. This process involves vision, planning, and implementation. Cities often influence placemaking through land use controls, such as zoning, district planning, and form-based code. Although the County does not have land use controls, it can influence placemaking in a variety of ways. These include establishing public improvement and special financing districts, using County-owned land as a catalyst for development, making targeted infrastructure investments, streamlining the permitting process, and collaborating with developers to create desirable and sustainable development projects.

Travis County is actively engaging in placemaking and contributing to the quality of place in the region through a number of existing efforts.

- In 2014, Travis County approved the **Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP)**, which was developed by the Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) department. The plan established a framework for protecting land and water resources, building a comprehensive transportation system, and efficiently delivering related services in unincorporated Travis County. The growth guidance concept put forth in the LWTP clearly designates activity centers and nodes, transportation corridors, and conversation corridors, which are used to guide the County’s investments and influence development conversations.
- The **Travis County Hazard Mitigation Plan** is a multijurisdictional plan that was updated in 2017. The plan assessed natural hazard risk and identifies activities to mitigate those risks. The purpose of the plan is to protect people and structures and to minimize the cost of disaster response and recovery. Overall, the plan is integral to improving the region’s resilience and building a more sustainable future.
- In 2016, the Travis County Commissioners adopted a new Parks Master Plan. Travis County parks currently consists of 9,666 acre system with 26 parks open to the public. The Parks Master Plan establishes capital improvement priorities for acquiring parkland and implementing major capital

RATIONALE
<i>Economic development is fostered when residents and businesses can access vibrant and affordable spaces.</i>
PRIORITY PROJECTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 County-owned land as catalyst (North Campus, Palm School, FM 969 – Justice Center, strategic land acquisition) 2 Continuous promotion of employment uses near residential development 3 Expansion of anti-displacement toolbox
OUTCOMES
<p>Affordability of housing and commercial space.</p> <p>More diverse mix of uses (housing, commercial, and industry) outside the Austin city limits.</p>

* Richard Florida and Andrew Small. “Why Quality of Place Matters,” CityLab. December 28, 2016.

improvements. In 2017, voters approved approximately \$75 million to implement the first phase of master planned land projects. The County will continue to detail the next phase of work in preparation of future bond elections.

- The County's **Public Improvement District (PID)** policy, which was approved in 2016, provides a mechanism for the County to participate and influence development projects within its boundaries. By creating a PID, the Travis County Development Authority can provide debt secured by the assessment of the land in the PID in exchange for community benefits. The County has approved PIDs for five different developments.
- The County's **real estate holdings** offer catalytic opportunities to spur or influence development in the areas that surround them. One significant project is already in the planning stages at the North Campus on Airport Boulevard. This 3-acre, mixed-use redevelopment project includes additional office space for the County, 146 units of mixed-income housing, and retail. In addition, the County is exploring redevelopment options for Palm School and innovative partnership models for a new civil courthouse. In the future, strategic land acquisitions can continue to provide these opportunities to influence development.

Yet, some challenges and gaps related to quality of place remain that could be addressed by EDSI. Relevant issues that could be influenced through the creation of stronger partnerships with economic development and community development stakeholders across the region include the following.

- **Affordability issues.** Affordability of both housing and commercial space has become a top issue within the Austin city limits. Although some parts of Travis County are currently affordable, relative to Austin, growth pressures and rising property values are spreading to other parts of the County, particularly in western Travis County. In the face of these rising property values and rents, long-time residents and businesses can be displaced. Addressing affordability issues and mitigating the negative effects of growth will require a concerted, sustained effort, and a great deal of funding, all of which necessitates building strong partnerships with the City of Austin and the nonprofit sector.
- **Balanced growth.** Residential growth dominates current development patterns in unincorporated Travis County, which can result in an unbalanced tax base and a mismatch between where people live and where they work. The creation of mixed-used activity nodes can ensure that employment centers are located more proximately to residential developments, making economic opportunities more accessible and resulting in more sustainable development patterns.
- **Environmental sustainability.** Travis County has an abundance of sensitive and unique environmental features that, at times, are threatened by the region's explosive growth. In addition, the County is exposed to natural hazards, such as floods, drought, and wildfires. The risks associated with these hazards can be exacerbated by development. Thus, accommodating development while preserving critical environmental features and mitigating risks associated with natural hazards is a delicate balancing act.
- **Social equity.** The growing imbalance between Austin's residents is a direct threat to the region's economic future. The County's current real estate holdings and its ability to expand those holdings to influence future development place it in a unique position to effect Austin's social equity challenges. Discussions about the reuse of the historic Palm School site illustrate the tension between leveraging a site's economic value while being mindful of its historic place in the community. Careful development of this property and other County-owned properties presents the opportunity to affect dramatic change in some of the area's highest-need neighborhoods.

3.1. Grow the pool of funds and the number of projects that foster vibrant, walkable, mixed-use communities to meet diverse needs for housing and commercial space.

Affordability is a challenge not only to residents but also to businesses. Parts of Travis County, outside the Austin city limits, naturally offer property that is less expensive. However, the market is currently driving primarily residential uses. EDSI can play a role in promoting placemaking, contributing to the stock of affordable housing and commercial space within the city limits, and encouraging the inclusion of employment uses in developments outside the city limits.

- 3.1.1. Continue to use County-owned land as economic development catalysts and look for opportunities to acquire strategic parcels to use as future catalysts.
- 3.1.2. Create a countywide asset map. Assets here include access to parks and open space, housing, healthy food, transportation, and healthcare. This asset map will serve as the base for more nuanced place-based mapping efforts.
- 3.1.3. Work with underserved communities to create a structure for prioritizing economic development projects and for moving these projects forward, beginning with a community-led asset mapping process that will add detail to the countywide maps.
- 3.1.4. Cultivate impact investment partnerships and tools that are available to support community development in Travis County.
- 3.1.5. Continue to expand the use of County-owned Corporations to directly increase the pool of funds available to support community and economic development.
- 3.1.6. Prioritize employment-generating uses near residential development projects in which the County participates to ensure new housing in proximate to an array of employment opportunities.
- 3.1.7. Train County staff to conduct extensive community engagement and convene an Engagement Advisory Group to develop and engagement strategy.

CITY OF EL PASO NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

PURPOSE
The Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) provides the opportunity for Recognized Neighborhood Associations and Civic Associations to request small-scale permanent physical improvement projects to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The intent is to facilitate an organized process for residents to have direct input on physical improvements in their neighborhood.

PROGRAM FUNDS
The 2012 Quality of Life Bond included \$10 million for physical improvement projects under the NIP.

- Funding cycles are open to all Representative Districts for each project round. Beginning in 2018, applications will be available every two years with a maximum of \$250,000 available per round in each District.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES
Please refer to the NIP Policies and NIP Guide for complete information.

- NIP Policies
- NIP Guide and Scorecard
- NIP Guide and Scorecard (Spanish)
- NIP Pre-Application (Word Doc) - DUE FEBRUARY 12, 2018
- NIP Final Application (Word Doc) - DUE APRIL 9, 2018
- NIP Design Lab Presentations - Overview of the NIP Round 4 application and review process. (Includes examples of common NIP project requests.)

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

- Community Leadership Library
- Neighborhood Associations
- Neighborhood Caddies
- Neighborhood Conservation Action Plan
- Neighborhood Improvement Program
- Neighborhood Leadership Academy
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Neighborhood Summit

The Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) was launched in 2007 with \$1.45 million. The program provides opportunities for neighborhood and civic associations to request small-scale, permanent, physical improvement projects to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The 2012 Quality of Life Bond program included an additional \$10 million for physical improvement projects under NIP. Every year, \$250,000 is allocated to each city council district. Neighborhood associations within each district apply for funding through a competitive process to finance projects. The program funds projects that are located on city-owned land or in the public right of way. NIP awards have ranged from \$5,000 for residential mile markers to \$100,000 for a park.

For more information, visit www.elpasotexas.gov/community-and-human-development/neighborhood-services/neighborhood-improvement-program

3.2. Encourage a balanced approach to development of land to preserve sensitive ecosystems and unique environmental features and mitigate environmental risks and hazards.

Land use in unincorporated Travis County is not directly regulated through zoning but is indirectly influenced by many different Travis County departments and plans. Transportation and Natural Resources, Emergency Services, Parks, and Health and Human Services all have plans that affect development in the County. However, formal linkages between these plans, with economic development and with each other, have not been established. EDSI, in partnership with these departments, can establish the linkages and help promote implementation to further advance the more balanced, inclusive, and sustainable development embraced in these plans.

- 3.2.1. Identify and encourage economic development linkages with projects and activities associated with the Land, Water, and Transportation Plan (LWTP), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) consolidated plan, hazard mitigation, wildfire protection, the parks master plan, and other relevant plans.
- 3.2.2. Promote the development of appropriate use of sensitive lands and open space, such as farming in flood-prone areas.
- 3.2.3. Influence development patterns to promote density along transit corridors, thereby reducing the amount of necessary car trips to reach major destinations within the County.

3.3. Expand the size and reach of sustainable recreation, food, and culture economies, particularly in unincorporated areas of the County.

The recreation, food, and culture economies draw people to areas across Travis County and can create vibrant pocket communities. In some of these pockets, the assets have formal connections, but in many, they are disconnected, and their potential is unrealized. EDSI, in partnership with Travis County Parks and Emergency Services, can help make connections between the assets, foster collaboration, and cultivate growth.

- 3.3.1. Connect to industry cluster development initiatives.
- 3.3.2. Promote beneficial uses of areas at risk of flooding or other such natural hazards, while expanding open space and recreational opportunities (*Hazard Mitigation Plan Objective 6.2*).
- 3.3.3. Refine the use of special financing districts as a tool to further enhance Travis County economic assets.
- 3.3.4. Adopt models for public/private partnerships to increase funding available to support parks and recreation improvement projects as well as other public improvements. (See [Austin Parks Foundation and City of Austin's Parks & Recreation partnership program](#) and [Neighborhood Partnering Program](#).)
- 3.3.5. Develop a database of information for use internally and by partners and local businesses to help make data-driven decisions and monitor performance of the department's programs.
- 3.3.6. Cultivate more revenue-generating partnerships to enhance the park amenities and recreational opportunities while also contributing to business development goals (e.g., food vendors, event organizers/promoters, campsite operators, marinas, boat rentals, etc.).

3.4. Promote affordability and preservation of community integrity in development projects owned, funded, supported, or approved by the County.

3.4.1. With the growth of Austin and Travis County, development pressures have led to escalating property values, which has displaced long-time residents and businesses out of these areas. Tools that can be used to mitigate displacement pressures range from inclusionary housing to first-source hiring to foreclosure assistance. While many of the commonly used tools are not under the statutory authority of the County, EDSI, in partnership with the City of Austin and HHS, can develop a more comprehensive toolbox and can encourage the preservation of affordable spaces and community integrity. Develop a program to preserve a portion of housing units and commercial space in development projects as “affordable” to mitigate current and future displacement pressures through strategic use of county development tools and incentives including PIDs, Chapter 381 policy, and potential new tools such as the purchase of foreclosed properties for affordable housing and opportunity zones.

3.4.2. Bundle services and strategies that support the preservation and enhancement of community integrity and target them to areas that are experiencing a rapid increase in investment (e.g., financial stability, business support, training and hiring affected residents, legal and foreclosure assistance).

3.4.3. Support the recommendations of the Travis County Affordable Housing Policy Committee.

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT TOOLBOX

Many of the typical tools available to avoid displacement can only be used by cities in Texas. However, there are a handful of tools and strategies that counties can use. These include:

- Foreclosure assistance
- Legal assistance to prevent evictions
- Fee waivers for affordable developments
- Accelerated application processing for affordable projects
- Other incentives to encourage set-aside of affordable space
- Development of affordable space

In addition, connecting residents with better economic opportunities and financial stability programs enhances their ability to deal with rising property values and development pressures. Travis County is committed to collaborating with organizations comprised of the people directly impacted by affordability pressures to ensure that they have a direct hand in selecting the tools that they identify as benefiting their community.

For more information, visit www.urbandisplacement.org and allincities.org/toolkit

4. TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Connecting people and places

Infrastructure investments enable and shape development, and infrastructure investments shape development patterns. Transportation is the primary infrastructure investment that the County makes and is, therefore, a primary lever by which the County can influence development. As such, transportation networks are a key component of economic development in Travis County.

With the growth of Austin, existing transportation networks have become stressed and traffic congestion has become an oft-cited challenge for the Austin metro area. A recent study by INRIX, a global data company, ranked Austin as number 14 in its list of US cities with the most traffic congestion.

Furthermore, the cost of transportation and lack of transit options serve as a barrier to employment and also limit access to healthcare and other community services.

Transportation planning in Travis County is influenced by myriad organizations and initiatives. The County’s efforts in this area are managed by the Transportation and Natural Resources (TNR) department. TNR’s responsibilities include the engineering, design, construction, and maintenance of County-owned roads and infrastructure, and also environmental oversight and permitting.

Major existing transportation planning efforts include the following.

- Regional transportation planning is carried out by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO). As the metropolitan planning organization for the Austin area, CAMPO is federally mandated to produce long-range transportation plans for the region (which covers Bastrop, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson Counties). The organization is currently engaged in planning activities related to **CAMPO 2045**.
- TNR is currently preparing a locally focused, multimodal **transportation plan** that will identify transportation needs, propose solutions, and define the County’s priorities through 2045. This work expands on the transportation element of the Land, Water, and Transportation Plan adopted in 2014 and represents the County’s first long-range, transportation plan. Unlike CAMPO’s planning efforts, which are largely focused on regional connectivity issues and major roadways, the County’s plan will emphasize the needs and priorities of residents in unincorporated areas of the County.
- The County is also working on a **transit plan**, the need for which was identified during the transportation plan’s public outreach phase. Austin’s explosive population growth has translated into an increase in the number of people living in unincorporated areas of the County. Many of these areas are too rural to be served by the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Capital Metro) and too urban to be served by the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS). It is expected that after the 2020 Census, all of Travis County will be too urban to be served by CARTS. A citizens’ advisory committee was appointed to oversee the planning process, which will seek input

RATIONALE
<i>Transportation is a vital link that provides connectivity between schools, employment, homes, recreation, and commerce.</i>
PRIORITY PROJECTS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit corridor planning Incentives for employer-led mobility solutions
OUTCOMES
<p>Better distribution of travel modes.</p> <p>Reduced travel times.</p>

from a range of partners, with Capital Metro and CARTS providing support for public outreach and data collection.

- In August 2018, Capital Metro authorized **a study of the Green Line**, a passenger rail project proposed as part of its Project Connect transit plan. The 28-mile route would use existing rail corridors to travel from downtown Austin to downtown Elgin, with service to Manor and other east Austin communities. The study will be managed by Travis County and is expected to determine the feasibility of the project, explore possible financing options, and consider potential impacts associated with the investment. Funding for the work will be provided through Capital Metro's Service Expansion Policy program, which makes Federal Transit Administration funds available to communities outside Capital Metro's service area, with the County providing a 20 percent match.
- The City of Austin is now developing a long-term transportation plan. Initiated in 2016, **the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan** (ASMP) is designed to connect prior planning efforts, including Imagine Austin, with current programs, plans, and policies. Increasing travel options, taking advantage of new technologies, and improving the efficiencies of the current transportation system are important objectives of the planning process. It will replace the Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan, which was adopted in 1995, when Austin's population was one-half of current levels.
- In addition, the City of Austin developed the **Smart Mobility Roadmap** in 2017 to plan for the advent of autonomous vehicles and ensure that this mobility option is equitable and affordable. The roadmap makes recommendations around five areas: shared-use mobility; electric vehicles and infrastructure; autonomous vehicles; data and technology; and land use and infrastructure. Preparing the region for autonomous vehicles will require collaboration across the many organizations involved in transportation across the Austin metro area.

Despite the many players in this space, there are still gaps in services that the County can address. The exact nature of these gaps and potential strategies will be more clearly defined once the transportation plan is finalized. However, the following are issues where the County could clearly play a role.

- **Public transit.** Population growth in and around Austin has resulted in gaps in the availability of public transit services in large parts of the region, including Travis County. The current service providers in this space, Capital Metro and CARTS, are unable to meet the rising demand. Capital Metro's recent changes to its bus network, rolled out in June 2018 under the title "Cap Remap," were aimed at increasing ridership and modernizing the regional transit system. Although the revamp made significant changes, including an increase in the number of high-frequency routes, it was focused on improving the existing service rather than addressing underserved areas. Working cooperatively with Capital Metro, CARTS provides transportation services across a much larger geographic area: nine counties covering 7,200 square miles and serving 169 communities. However, Travis County will likely no longer qualify for CARTS services after the 2020 Census, resulting in a further increase in residents without access to public transportation.
- **Cross-jurisdictional coordination.** The sheer number of organizations, projects, and planning initiatives creates challenges for addressing Austin's transportation problems. A carefully coordinated approach to current planning efforts is required to realize the full range of opportunities, implement proposed solutions, and ensure improvement projects are synchronized across jurisdictional boundaries.

residents, particularly in unincorporated areas. EDSI, in partnership with TNR, can strengthen and build partnerships with organizations to enhance the transportation program offerings available to Travis County residents.

- 4.2.1. Promote the use of existing demand management programs and employer-led mobility solutions through the County's incentives toolbox.
- 4.2.2. With TNR, collaborate with Capital Metro and CARTS to implement innovative mobility solutions across all parts of the County.
- 4.2.3. Partner with nonprofit organizations and other transportation partners to pilot new mobility solutions to meet the needs of disadvantaged residents in hard-to-reach areas of Travis County.

4.3. Continue to cultivate partnerships across the five-county metropolitan area to ensure coordination and continuity of transportation planning and investment.

Transportation networks cross jurisdictional boundaries. Thus, ensuring the transportation investments of one jurisdiction align with surrounding jurisdictions is of utmost importance. EDSI, in partnership with TNR, should continue to collaborate with its regional transportation partners and transportation departments in other jurisdictions.

- 4.3.1. Support and promote the implementation of the Travis County Transportation Plan, once it is complete.
- 4.3.2. Continue to forge strong relationships with transportation departments and planners of other jurisdictions to enhance cross-jurisdictional collaboration.