

# Envision Central Texas 2009 Program of Work



**Our Mission:** *Envision Central Texas (ECT) serves as a catalyst for regional cooperation and planning in order to realize a common Vision for Central Texas which preserves and enhances our natural resources, economic vitality, social equity and overall quality of living.*

**Our Goal:** *We must improve how we grow in order to sustain our region's quality of life and competitiveness. The focus of ECT is on what, where and when we build, and how that impacts natural resources and mobility.*

**Our Work:** *To help achieve this goal, the ECT Program of Work for 2009 is divided into six elements: a major initiative focusing on creating critical infrastructure in a time of limited resources; public education, engagement and outreach; seeking opportunities for advocacy; creating tools and resources to accomplish the regional vision; measuring progress toward the regional vision; and, Implementation Committees and Task Forces.*

## I. Major Initiative for 2009:

**Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources.** *Central Texas has critical infrastructure needs and severely limited resources. Envision Central Texas will lead a regional dialogue to help inform the hard choices that must be made by regional leaders about infrastructure in order to maintain the quality of life and competitiveness of Central Texas and better educate the public about these tradeoffs.*

In 2008, ECT conducted a Vision Progress Assessment to analyze the extent to which the region was moving toward the Vision and to learn what issues are most pressing today. One finding was that there is a need for greater awareness about our regional growth challenges, how issues are interconnected, and the tradeoffs inherent in various approaches to growth. The results of rising fuel and energy prices, fiscal deficits for funding new infrastructure and ongoing maintenance, and ever growing demands on limited natural resources will require growth patterns that maximize efficiency and produce multiple benefits rather than isolated advantages or detrimental unintended consequences. The purpose of the initiative is to better inform citizens about the trade-offs inherent in developing infrastructure in a time of limited resources and to catalyze the collaboration necessary within the region to ensure efficient new and existing infrastructure.

- **Phase I - Public Outreach.** Building on the extensive public outreach that was conducted in 2008 through the Vision Progress Assessment, ECT has identified a need for a regional dialogue about the tradeoffs inherent in different development styles and how to prioritize critical infrastructure in a time of limited resources.
- **Phase II—Central Texas Infrastructure Forums.** ECT will convene a series of three Central Texas Infrastructure Forums of the region's key leaders, infrastructure providers, subject matter experts and the public to examine existing challenges relating to interconnected infrastructure issues including, but not limited to transportation, water quality and quantity, waste water, electric and gas utilities. ECT will also develop a process through which citizens can examine the issues and priorities and explore the consequences of various actions. Two polls will measure opinion changes. ECT will form a task force to plan and execute details of the initiative. Forums might include:
  - **Forum One: Lay of the Land**
    - Existing infrastructure framework, plans and challenges
    - Future infrastructure needs of the region
  - **Forum Two: Strategies for Financing**
    - Additional forces that may impact us in the future
    - Fiscal impacts of different styles of development
    - Best practices from around the country
  - **Forum Three: Reaching Consensus on Priorities**
    - Ways to prioritize projects
    - Strategies for Central Texas funding
    - Action Steps
- **Phase III—Advocacy.** Based on the outcomes of the forums and the public outreach process, ECT will develop advocacy positions that will help put the mechanisms in place to impact the current systems and influence decision makers in order to achieve the desired results.



## Ongoing Initiatives for 2009:

### II. Public Education, Engagement and Outreach

***ECT will continue to fulfill its critical role of educating and engaging the citizens and governmental leaders of Central Texas in an ongoing dialogue about the challenges of rapid growth, the benefits of regional cooperation and the opportunities to shape our region's future. ECT will also seek opportunities to advocate for positive steps toward the vision. Activities in this area will include:***

- **Leader Updates.** Continue to meet with city and county leaders throughout Central Texas to update them about the work of ECT, discuss what ECT can do to better support their needs and determine their views regarding the integration of the ECT vision into their planning processes.
- **Regional Planner Roundtables.** Convene two meetings of the region's planners to discuss Central Texas growth issues and infrastructure challenges.
- **Regional Organizations Collaboration.** Through meetings and joint projects and events, increase cooperation and collaboration among regional organizations and governments in order to maximize synergies as well as increase progress toward the Regional Vision.
- **Fourth Annual ECT Community Stewardship Awards and Luncheon.** On May 8, ECT will conduct the fourth annual luncheon to spotlight and honor the innovative people, projects and processes that are addressing the growth challenges facing our region in ways that will move us closer to a future that preserves and enhances our natural resources, economic vitality, social equity and overall quality of living.
- **Regional Activity Centers.** Help educate stakeholders about the tradeoffs of different development styles including the benefits of compact, walkable activity centers and assist the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization in its efforts to add land use as an additional component of its 2035 Plan. Seek opportunities for advocacy.
- **Rail Initiatives.** Help educate the public about the emerging rail initiatives of Capital Metro and the Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Rail District and examine opportunities for advocacy.
- **County Land Use Authority.** Research use of Texas county land use authority as well as ideas from other states. Educate various stakeholders on and explore opportunities for advocacy for expanding county land use authority.
- **Horizons Newsletter.** Continue to publish and distribute *ECT Horizons*, a quarterly e-newsletter about strategies for coping with the rapid growth in the region and the work of Envision Central Texas.

### III. Seeking Opportunities for Advocacy

***ECT will seek opportunities for advocacy in accordance to its adopted plan and Vision. The issues to be examined this year for possible advocacy positions will include, but not be limited to, the three listed below, and will follow one of three advocacy tracts, depending on the immediacy of the issue.***

- **Regional Activity Centers.** See bullet in [Education, Engagement and Outreach](#).
- **Rail Initiatives.** See bullet in [Education, Engagement and Outreach](#).
- **County Land Use Authority.** See bullet in [Education, Engagement and Outreach](#).

### IV. Creating Tools and Resources to Accomplish the Regional Vision

***ECT will be a resource to the region on best practices, tools and strategies that support quality growth and move us closer to the Regional Vision. Activities and resources will include:***

- **Quality Growth Toolbox.** The toolbox is a collection of resources, models, best practices and other tools designed to assist communities as they plan for growth. The focus in 2009 will be on conveying the resources to local jurisdictions and community leaders through workshops or demonstrations. New tools, such as the "Mixed Use Matters" paper which addresses creating walkable/bikeable communities, will be featured during this process. ECT will also continue to expand the tools and resources and seek partners to expand the toolbox usage.
- **Central Texas Greenprint for Growth.** ECT, in partnership with the Trust for Public Land and the Capital Area Council of Governments, will continue its *Central Texas Greenprint for Growth* initiative. This initiative offers both a tool and a process for helping communities identify opportunities to preserve and enhance their "green infrastructure" by identifying land conservation priorities. In 2009, ECT will use the Greenprint in bringing together the array of agencies and jurisdictions with planning responsibilities to examine how the Greenprint can also serve as a "blueprint" and help inform larger infrastructure and planning projects, including roads, rail and utilities.

- **ECT Website.** Maintain and enhance a website ([www.envisioncentraltexas.org](http://www.envisioncentraltexas.org)) that spotlights the work of Envision Central Texas and offers resources and information to those addressing the challenges of growth and development in Central Texas.

## V. Measuring Progress Towards the Regional Vision

**ECT will advocate for goals related to the attainment of the Region Vision.**

- **Update Goals Toward Vision.** ECT will select measureable indicators, benchmarks and goals which will demonstrate progress toward the realization of the Vision and produce a report at the end of the year to show changes.

## VI. Implementation Committees and Task Forces

ECT will leverage the talents, knowledge and energy of the region's citizens to accomplish the Program of Work through engagement in Envision Central Texas' Implementation Committees and Task Forces. In 2009, the committees and major projects include:

- **Community Design Committee**
  - *Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources*
  - Quality Growth Toolbox
- **Community Outreach Committee**
  - *Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources*
  - Fourth Annual Community Stewardship Awards Luncheon
  - Planner Roundtables
- **Open Space Committee**
  - *Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources*
  - Greenprint for Growth
- **Transportation and Land Use Committee**
  - *Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources*
  - Rail Initiatives
  - Regional Activity Centers
  - County Land Use Authority
- **Regional Infrastructure Task Force**
  - Lead the major initiative, *Ensuring Efficient New and Existing Infrastructure in a Time of Limited Resources*

**Note:** Co-chairs and members of the former Social Equity Committee will be invited to join one or more of the above committees or task forces to infuse the ideas of social equity into the various new committees and task force. The former Social Equity Committee members will meet at least once during the year to discuss how their issues are being addressed in their new committees' work, and make a report of their conclusions to the Executive Committee.