

Envision Central Texas

2009 Program of Work Accomplishments

A Summary of ECT Activities from January 1 – December 31, 2009



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.*

Executive Summary: **2009 was a year of exciting beginnings and a rewarding completion for Envision Central Texas!** ECT launched a major initiative about developing and coordinating critical regional infrastructure in a time of limited resources. This initiative kicked off with an address from a respected national speaker on infrastructure development. ECT also convened key infrastructure providers in various meetings to discuss their priorities and concerns related to regional coordination. This year's efforts laid the groundwork for two public forums on regional infrastructure development and coordination that will be held in 2010. For the first time, ECT played a key advocacy role in two critical regional legislative issues: enhanced county land use authority and local option transportation funding. Legislation to address these issues was not accomplished this year, but more progress was made than ever before. After nearly two years and a quarter million dollars, the *Central Texas Greenprint for Growth* was completed in November by ECT and its partners. The result is a powerful interactive mapping tool that the region can use to identify key areas for conservation as well as the best lands for development. To read more about these projects and other ways that ECT helped the region move toward the Vision in 2009, please review the following pages of highlights.

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. ECT began 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.

■ Phase I - Public Outreach.

ECT staff and volunteers have been conducting a series of conversations and presentations to various community and civic groups as well as commissioners courts and city councils around the region about the need for better coordination in planning, prioritizing and implementing infrastructure in a time of limited resources.



On **April 6**, Envision Central Texas convened a "Corporate Council" breakfast with key regional business leaders. Featured speaker for the event was the LCRA's General Manager **Tom Mason** who addressed some of the biggest challenges for the future in water and energy.



To bring a national perspective to the discussion, ECT engaged **Robert Puentes**, senior fellow of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., as the keynote speaker of the 2009 Community Stewardship Awards Luncheon on **May 8**. He discussed the challenges of creating infrastructure for a sustainable region in the future.



■ **Phase II—Central Texas Infrastructure Forums.**

ECT has begun actively planning for a series of Central Texas Infrastructure Forums involving 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 and green space.

On **December 2**, ECT convened a meeting of about a dozen leaders of the key regional infrastructure providers to begin a dialogue about infrastructure challenges and coordination. A number of ideas and issues were discussed that will inform the content of a public forum to be held in the first quarter of 2010.



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 included:



■ **Leader Updates.** ECT continues to meet with public and private-sector 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.** The Community Design Committee led by **Tom Yantis** and **John Rosato** convened a Regional Planner Roundtable Meeting on **November 20** to introduce the newly completed *Central Texas Greenprint for Growth* and to seek input relating to monitoring and measuring the results of the initiative. A follow up roundtable on the Greenprint use and results around the region will be held in spring 2010.

■ **Regional Organizations Collaboration.** Through meetings, joint projects and events, ECT continues to increase cooperation and collaboration among regional organizations and governments in order to maximize synergies as well as increase progress toward the Regional Vision. One such event was **“Shifting Gears,”** a luncheon held on **January 21st** in collaboration with BikeTexas and **Texas Senators Rodney Ellis** and **Jeff Wentworth**. The event featured innovative transportation leader **Enrique Peñalosa**, former mayor of Bogotá. Peñalosa described his accomplishments in transforming and revitalizing the city of Bogotá by implementing his vision of a city energized with alternative transit, public spaces, side walks, bike paths and pedestrian streets.



A second collaborative event titled **“Preparing for the Impacts of the New Census Changes on Community Planning”** was held **March 2** and was sponsored by Envision Central Texas, Capital Area Council of Governments, Community Action Network, National Association of Planning Councils and U.S. Census Bureau. The speakers included **Jim Walker**, chair, Envision Central Texas; **Susan Schechter**, chief of the American Community Survey Office, U.S. Census Bureau; **Karl Eschbach**, demographer for the State of Texas; **Sarah Eckhardt**, Travis County Commissioner; **Mark Salling**, director of the Northern Ohio Data & Information Service in The Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University and The Center for Community Solutions; and, **Ryan Robinson**, demographer for the City of Austin. The presentation and panel discussion examined the coming changes in the United States Census and American Community Survey; the broad impact of the changes; federal coordination; impact on local communities; and how local leaders can prepare for these changes.



■ **Regional Outreach.** ECT staff and volunteer leadership met throughout the year with individual leaders, small groups and large forums to present information about the ECT Vision and its principles and other topics including the CAMPO 2035 Plan and the “centers” concept, the various rail initiatives and the need for multi-modal transportation in the region and the region’s pressing need for additional county land use authority and additional sources of transportation funding. ECT also helped publicize public outreach by the various agencies on these issues. ECT also hosted booths at several festivals and fairs around the region to share information and promote the Greenprint and Vision.



■ **Fourth Annual ECT Community Stewardship Awards and Luncheon.**

On **May 8** at the Hyatt Regency Austin, ECT conducted 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. The Keynote Speaker was **Robert Puentes** of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. , who spoke about creating a sustainable region in the future. The Community Stewardship Awards winners for 2009 included: New development – **Capital MetroRail Red Line**, Austin to Leander; Redevelopment – **The Alley Flats Initiative**, Austin - Austin Community Design and Development Center, the Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation and the University of Texas Center for Sustainable Development; Pioneer – **Sustainable Food Center**, Austin; Public Planning and Policy – **City of Hutto**; and Raising Public Awareness – **Katherine Gregor**, *Austin Chronicle*. The W. Neal Kocurek Legacy Award was presented to **Pike Powers** of Fulbright & Jaworski LLP.



■ **Horizons Newsletter.** Continued to publish and distribute *ECT Horizons*, a quarterly e-newsletter about strategies for coping with the rapid growth in the region and the vision, programs and projects of ECT.



III. **Seeking Opportunities for Advocacy**

ECT will seek opportunities for advocacy in accordance to its adopted plan and Vision. Work to date includes:

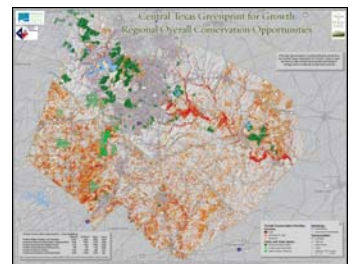
■ **Legislative Advocacy.** Our region needs both the tools and the resources to address future growth challenges and ensure our livability. The Texas Legislature plays a critical role in providing those tools and resources, and for the first time, ECT weighed in with position statements on issues being considered in this legislative session which will impact the region's ability to realize its Vision. ECT took positions in favor of enhanced county land use authority and local option transportation funding and provided testimony and counsel. The two working groups formed on these issues will continue to work on these issues between sessions.



On **September, 24 –26**, ECT was a partner in an important activity that will help coalition building in the state on key issues— the inaugural "Megaregions and MetroProsperity" conference in Houston. The event brought together leaders from across the Texas Triangle Megaregion, an area defined by the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio, to discuss infrastructure challenges, economic strategies and how our futures are intertwined. The Texas Triangle is one of the fastest growing of the nation's emerging megaregions, encompassing nearly 80 percent of Texas' population and an even larger share of its economy and population growth. Envision Central Texas was one of the event partners and presenters, sharing our lessons learned about regional visioning and implementation and discussing the possibility of coalitions within the state on legislative issues.



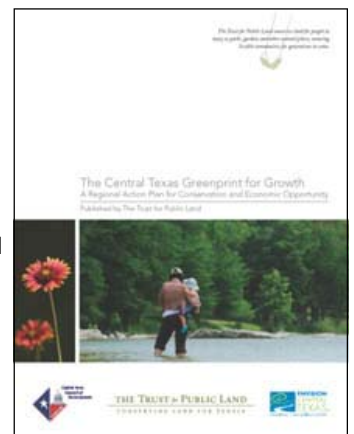
■ **2009 Legislative Update.** On **August 31**, ECT convened the *81st Texas Legislative Roundup*. More than 300 people from across the region attended and panel participants in the event included **Senator Glenn Hegar**, **Senator Kirk Watson**, **Senator Jeff Wentworth**, **Representative Valinda Bolton**, **Representative Eddie Rodriguez**, and **Representative Patrick Rose**. ECT Chairman **Jim Walker** served as moderator of the discussion, which explored outcomes from the last session and priorities going forward, especially related to transportation, land use and other infrastructure and coordination issues in the Central Texas.



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 have included:

■ **Quality Growth Toolbox.** ECT has continued to enhance and enlarge the online Quality Growth Toolbox, which is a collection of more than 100 resources, models, best practices and other tools designed to assist communities as they plan for growth. ECT is also on conveying the resources to local jurisdictions and community leaders. ECT has also begun discussion with other visioning organizations in the D/FW Metroplex and Houston about a combined effort to expand ECT's toolbox to be a repository for statewide best practices for quality growth.



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The Central Texas Greenprint for Growth (phase 2) took nearly two years and \$250,000 to accomplish. Funders included the Federal Highway Administration, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the Shield Ayres Foundation, Bastrop, Caldwell and Hays Counties, Barton Springs-Edwards Aquifer Conservation District and the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority. The Phase 1 Travis County Greenprint was funded by TPL, Travis County, University of Texas at Austin, and others.

- **ECT Website.** ECT has maintained and expanded its website which spotlights its work and offers resources and information to those interested in the challenges of growth and development in Central Texas. (www.envisioncentraltexas.org)



V. Measuring Progress Towards the Regional Vision

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

- **Updating Goals Toward Vision.** During 2009, **Richard Maier** of DR. Horton and **Gail Vittori** of the Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems, led the task force effort to select measurable indicators, benchmarks and goals to demonstrate progress toward the Vision. It was decided by the task force that it would be desirable to use indicators that were used in the initial visioning phase of ECT so that change over time can be tracked. Draft indicators for transportation, housing and economy have been selected and the status of sources will be confirmed before the next stage of the project. This initiative will continue in 2010.



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.

- **Community Design Committee:** Co-Chairs **Tom Yantis**, BWR Corp. and **John Rosato**, Southwest Strategies Group. The committee began work on two case studies of new developments in Central Texas. One is an urban transit oriented development (Crestview Station in Austin) and the other is a greenfield town center concept (Cedar Park Town Center). The two projects were selected because they were very different examples of designs that attempted to include some of the ECT Vision elements in their execution. The case studies will examine topics such as financing, regulations and design, and will also look at the barriers and challenges encountered, areas for improvement and lessons learned. It is hoped that this may be the start of a library of such studies.



- **Community Outreach Committee:** Co-Chairs: **Ann Stafford**, UT PAC and **Carole Belver**, Community Action, Inc. of Hays, Caldwell and Blanco Counties. This committee planned the successful 09 Community Stewardship Awards Luncheon and is beginning work on the 2010 event. The group also helped design and edit various communication pieces for ECT and several members participated in a communications workshop for ECT in the summer.



- **Natural Infrastructure Committee** Co-Chairs: **Valarie Bristol**, Travis Audubon and **Karen Ford**, Commissioner, Hays County. This group has been supporting the Greenprint initiative throughout the year including helping to identify and involve stakeholders in the process. The group has just embarked on a case study project similar to that of the Community Design Committee. They will research and complete two case studies of conservation projects—one primarily driven by the private sector (Dahlstrom Ranch in Hays County) and one primarily driven by the public sector (Onion Creek Trail in Travis County). The case studies will be shared online in the Quality Growth Toolbox and possibly at an event in 2010.

- **Transportation and Land Use Committee:** Co-Chairs: **Wade Cooper**, Managing Partner, Jackson Walker LLP and **Jeff Coffee**, City Manager, City of Elgin. This committee had semi-monthly meetings highlighting transportation and land use issues in the region. The group also helped plan and host the 81st Legislative Roundup in August and supported the local option transportation funding working group's efforts in the 81st legislature.

- **Regional Infrastructure Task Force:** Co-Chairs: **Jim Walker**, Director Sustainability, University of Texas at Austin and **Travis Froehlich**, Vice President, Strategic Planning, Seton Family of Hospitals. This group has helped to frame and plan the infrastructure initiative.

- **Benchmarks and Goals Task Force:** Co-Chairs: **Richard Maier**, Land Manager, DR Horton and **Gail Vittori**, Co-Director, The Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems. See item V.