

Envision Central Texas

2008 Vision Progress Assessment



Painting by Mary Doerr

A Vision for Our Future

Central Texas is recognized as one of the most desirable places to live in the United States. Preserving our cherished quality of life in the face of rapid growth however, is a tremendous challenge. The five-county Central Texas Region will add another million people over the next 20 to 40 years. The demands that accompany this growth will require us to address such issues as how and where land is developed for housing and jobs, the types of homes we live in, how we travel around the region and how we preserve and protect our environment.

Envision Central Texas (ECT), a five-county non-profit organization, serves as a catalyst for change in our region's growth management strategies so that we can advance Central Texas' Vision for the future. In 2001, Envision Central Texas was created to assist in the public development of a vision to address growth issues in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis and Williamson Counties. This was the first time in the history of this region that individuals representing businesses, civic organizations, developers, local governments, environmental organizations, transportation organizations and neighborhoods came together to help spearhead the development of a regional vision.

From 2002-2004, Envision Central Texas engaged citizens in one of the largest conversations ever to occur in Texas about how to shape future growth. Thousands of residents participated in focus groups, workshops, surveys and educational forums. Their

input and ideas formed the basis of the Vision for Central Texas which includes multiple choices of transportation and housing, compact walkable communities in key nodes, abundant open spaces and recreation opportunities and a strong emphasis on social equity and preservation of our region's unique character and history.

Vision Progress Assessment

It has now been about five years since the visioning process and Envision Central Texas' leadership believes that this is an ideal time to assess the progress that the region has made toward the concepts described in the Vision and identify the key priorities for moving forward.

This initiative will enable us to engage public agencies, jurisdictions, the business and development community and the public in a dialogue about what has actually occurred and where future planning efforts are heading. This initiative will also lay the foundation for the scenario modeling work we anticipate conducting at the ten-year mark. Through a series of interviews, focus groups, workshops and questionnaires this spring, feedback on growth-related issues is being compiled and will form the basis of the *Vision Progress Assessment* report to be completed by May of 2008.

Read on to learn more about the region's Vision. We also invite you to visit our web site at www.envision-centraltexas.org or to contact our offices at (512) 916-6037.



A Vision for Central Texas



1. Protection of our environment and natural resources so we will have the open space, parks and trails that people cherish, preserve our ecologically sensitive land and ensure sustainable clean water and air for future generations.

- Lots of open green space, parks and trails, designed for people, in the populated areas
- The most ecologically sensitive land protected in perpetuity
- Clean air, even as the population grows
- Clean water in our lakes, creeks and aquifers
- Sustainable water supplies, both surface and groundwater, for our region



2. An effective transportation system that improves mobility throughout the region, increases transportation choices, including roads, rail, trails and bikeways, and is coordinated with land use planning.

- Consistently good highways and roadways that are adequately-sized and well-maintained
- Built-in 'intermodal' alternatives to cars: rapid transit, bicycle lanes, trails, sidewalks and pedestrian features, buses and shuttles
- HOV/HOT lanes that reward car-pooling and transit, and streamline car travel
- A regional highway system with tollways and freeways that are intermodally linked, with built-in

alternatives to cars (e.g., embedded bike lanes, sidewalks), and denser areas and smaller cities' hubs on route

- Transit that works and is coordinated with the locations of major employers, denser areas of housing, industry clusters, and other modes of transportation
- A transit system that could include rapid transit, rail (commuter, light, and other), and rapid buses
- Transit hubs that attract locally scaled business activity and investment as an attractive market alternative to current fragmented development patterns



3. A diverse and thriving economy with a robust base of businesses and quality job opportunities for citizens.

- Consistently good highways and roadways that are adequately-sized and well-maintained
- A strong base of local businesses, large, medium and small
- An emphasis on affordability and favorable cost of living is a key economic driver
- A globally connected region, with job opportunities throughout the region, especially for the existing workforce.
- Robust smaller towns and communities across the region that are not overwhelmed by growth, and retain their identity and sense of community
- Entrepreneurs as a continual source of vitality, jobs, and economic growth
- Full participation in the economic opportunities (jobs, advancement, business ownership, and property ownership) by all socio-economic groups
- Resources of state government and university systems harnessed to strengthen our region's economy

A Vision for Central Texas

- Smaller-scale, vibrant town centers and neighborhoods in surrounding communities
- A viable and vibrant downtown Austin, with thousands of residents, a unique history and artistic character, great streets full of life and activity night and day
- Easy connections to the world by Internet, air travel, and telecommunications



4. A variety of housing choices, affordable for everyone in the region and offering a mix of styles, such as neighborhoods with pedestrian-friendly streets or housing that is within walking distance to transit and stores.

- New development patterns which generate more choices, especially more affordable choices
- More traditional-styled neighborhoods with narrower, more pedestrian-friendly streets that help build a sense of community
- Areas with owner-occupied housing – townhomes, lofts, condominiums within walking distance of transit and parks, with storefront businesses
- More efficient use of land and infrastructure to enhance affordable housing choices



5. Preservation of our region's unique character by protecting and enhancing our neighborhoods, towns, rural areas, historic sites and special sense of place.

- Thinking and acting like a region, understanding that our futures are linked
- Striving to understand, appreciate, protect, and maintain the unique features, neighborhoods, historic structures, and cultural characteristics of our cities and communities, and the choices and options they offer
- Encouraging a sense of personal and community responsibility that is intolerant to crime



6. An understanding that social equity and racial harmony are core values that strengthen us and actions that foster respect, civility, and opportunities for all.

- A new focus on community and neighborhood planning to close the gaps for traditionally underserved populations – with emphasis on gaps in health, education, housing, jobs, and transportation
- Making all our children a priority from the earliest age, so they are nurtured and have opportunities for success
- Appreciation of cultural differences that begins at an early age, goes beyond tolerance to active



A Vision for Central Texas



7. A region-wide understanding that our fortunes are tied together requiring planning, participation and collaboration by stakeholders throughout our region to ensure a successful and livable future for Central Texas.

- Support for local planning processes, both existing and future, with high citizen participation as a balanced means of realizing both local and regional goals and visions
- Highly collaborative public/private sector dialogue, with market forces being a critical determinant in identifying and choosing courses of action
- Respect for private property rights, laws, and the importance of balance in planning decisions that affect landowners
- The harnessing of market forces by giving consumers new choices and rewarding those who make the choices available
- Vigorous private sector support and involvement in economic, civic, and regional issues
- The State of Texas, colleges and universities as partners in Central Texas's future
- Collaborative co-existence and problem solving among cities and towns throughout our region
- A new era of public engagement in matters that will shape our future
- Unified buy-in of multi-jurisdictional efforts recognizing that every governmental authority is an equal partner in the process

Current ECT Initiatives

Envision Central Texas is working to advance the region's Vision for the future and preserve and enhance our natural resources, economic vitality, social equity and overall quality of living. To help achieve this goal, ECT promotes and communicates the elements of the Vision, convenes regional dialogues to address growth challenges, creates tools to assist cities and counties in creating livable, sustainable communities and measures progress toward the Vision. In addition to its 67-member Board of Directors and 17-member Executive Committee, ECT has six Implementation Committees which work on a range of issue areas. They include:

- Community Design Committee
- Community Outreach Committee
- Open Space Committee
- Economic Vitality Committee
- Social Equity Committee
- Transportation and Land Use Committee

We thank you for becoming involved in planning for the future of the Central Texas and hope you will work with us to help realize the region's Vision. For more information, contact Executive Director Sally Campbell at scampbell@envisioncentraltexas.org or call 512.916.6176.



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