



# Colony Park

## Complete Community Report

An *IMAGINE AUSTIN* Study

City of Austin  
Planning and Development Review Department  
Comprehensive Planning Division  
November 2013

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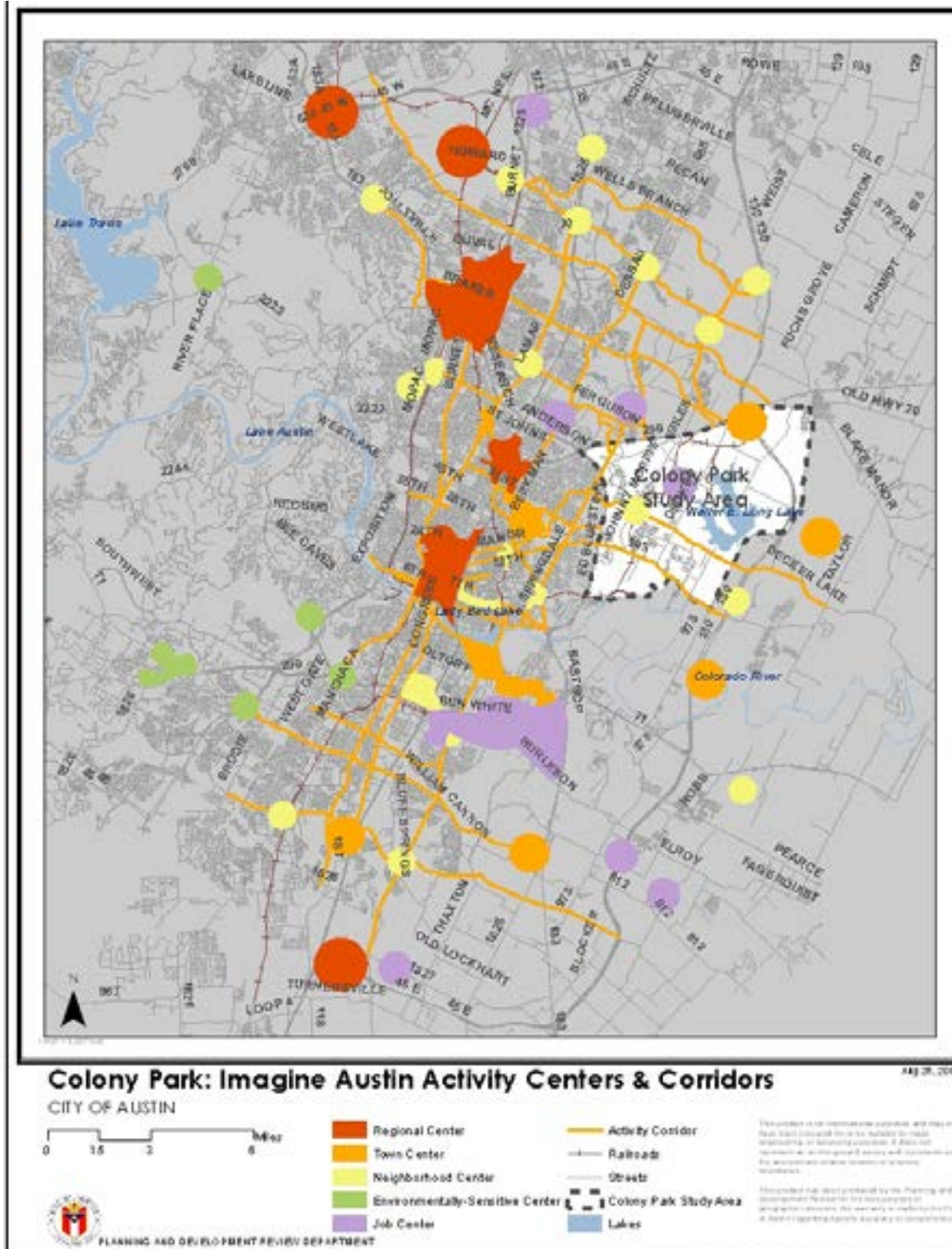
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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

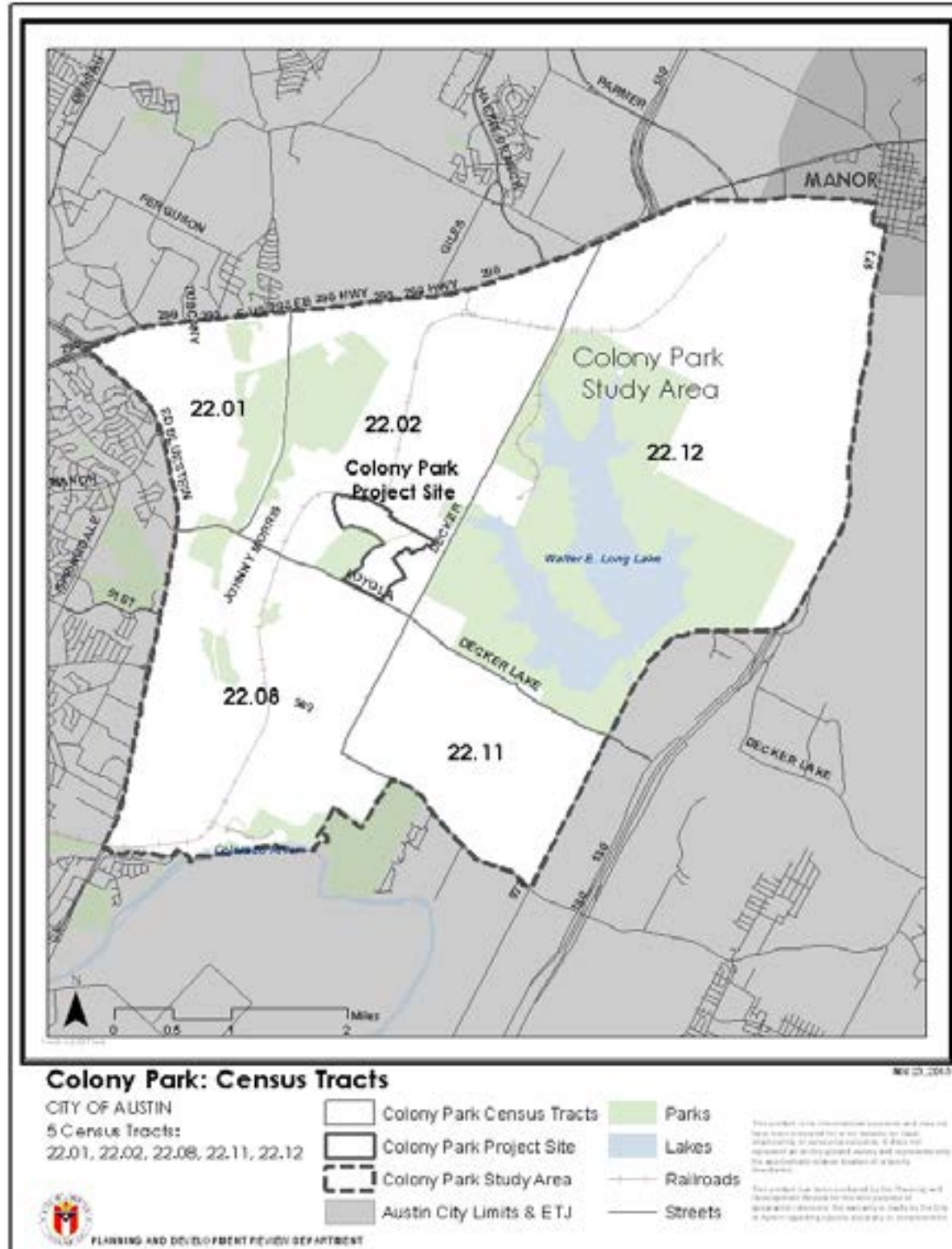
In November 2011 the City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD) was approved for a \$3 million Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant with a grant start date of February 15, 2012. The goal of the federal grant program is to reduce barriers to achieving affordable, economically vital, and sustainable communities. According to HUD's Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant website:

"Such efforts may include amending or replacing local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes, either on a jurisdiction-wide basis or in a specific neighborhood, district, corridor, or sector to promote mixed-use development, affordable housing, the reuse of older buildings and structures for new purposes, and similar activities with the goal of promoting sustainability at the local or neighborhood level."<sup>1</sup>

The grant was awarded to fund development of a master plan for a 208 acre property located in northeastern Austin and owned by Austin Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC). The master plan will integrate and reflect issues and concerns of the immediate community, while incorporating best practices in sustainable development.

<sup>1</sup> [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/sustainable\\_housing\\_communities/HUD-DOT\\_Community\\_Challenge\\_Grants](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/HUD-DOT_Community_Challenge_Grants) (Accessed 8/27/13)





The Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative (CPS-CI) was established to manage the grant and has three overarching outcomes:

1. Further land-use planning and development of 208 acres of publicly-owned land at Colony Park inspired by the HUD Livability Principles as an economic catalyst for the surrounding area;
2. Foster cross-department/agency coordination and create successful models of comprehensive systems change to support sustainable and equitable development;
3. Support capacity building and community transformation goals of Colony Park area residents and stakeholders.

Although the grant focuses on the 208-acre AFHC property (the project site), it is also important to understand the broader context in which the property is located. The grant application identifies a larger, five-census tract area (the project area) roughly bounded by US Highway 183 to the west, US Highway 290 to the North, SH 130 to the east and FM 969 to the south. The project area is comprised of census tracts 22.01, 22.02, 22.08, 22.11, and 22.12. Together, these tracts establish a project area of 16,757.9 acres or 26.2 sq. miles.

## FRAMEWORK

This report examines several of the project area's existing conditions and considered them through the lens of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. Adopted in June 2012, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan establishes the community's future vision as well as a broad policy framework for getting there, including:

1. Grow as a compact, connected city.
2. Integrate nature into the city.
3. Provide paths to prosperity for all.
4. Develop as an affordable and healthy community.
5. Sustainably manage water, energy and other environmental resources.
6. Think creatively and work together.

(Imagine Austin, Pg. 10-11)

One overarching theme of Imagine Austin is the desire to create a city of compact, connected (#1), and complete (#2-5) communities across Austin. Growing in a "compact and connected" manner means coordinating land use and transportation to increase access to destinations from residences by reducing distances, and improving connections (e.g., through a comprehensive and efficient transportation network). This idea is about creating a city of people-friendly places that is easy to get around, regardless of the mode of transportation one uses.

"Complete communities" are places where people can easily access everything they need to meet their basic daily needs (such as buy groceries, play, learn, go to the doctors, etc.). Complete communities ensure these compact, people-friendly places have a variety of goods and services that are easily accessible for people of all ages and abilities (for example within a

short walk, bike, transit ride or drive).

While all communities are more or less complete, this analysis identifies attributes that foster and hinder the "completeness" of the project area. Based on the analysis, X policy recommendations were developed that can help make the project area a more complete community.



## METHODOLOGY

To assess the project area's level of completeness, this report first analyzes the existing conditions of as well as planned improvements to the project area's natural, built, and regulatory environment by topic. Then, the Implications section identifies the attributes that foster as well as hinder the project area's completeness. The specific topics reviewed for this report are:

### Demographics

This section uses the complete community lens to examine and expand upon several of the findings in the demographics section of NHCD's Community Profile.

### Transportation Network

This section reviewed the 2025 Austin Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, Austin 2020 Bicycle Plan Update, Urban Trails Master Plan, Sidewalk Master Plan, pertinent City of Austin studies, and Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Capital Metro) bus routes.

### Parks & Open Space

This analysis identifies the parks and open spaces in the project area and reviews the Parks and Recreation Department's (PARC) Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs to identify gaps in park service areas and planned improvements.

### Neighborhood Services Analysis

Using the existing road network, this Geographic Information System (GIS) tool demonstrates accessibility to local-serving goods and services.

### Housing

This section of the analysis uses the complete community lens to summarize and expand upon some of the findings of the housing section of NHCD's Community Profile.

### Land Use & Zoning

This portion of the analysis reviews the existing land use patterns and zoning within the project area and assessed them against the complete community concept.

### Imagine Austin's Growth Concept Map

This section reviews the Imagine Austin's Growth Concept Map and its relationship to the project area to identify the presence and type of any activity centers and/or activity corridors.





## DEMOGRAPHICS

As part of the CPSCI, NHCD staff created a Community Profile<sup>2</sup> for the five-census tract project area. The NHCD report looked at several aspects of the project area: demographics, housing, employment, and community assets.

This report will not duplicate this earlier work; however, it will use the complete community lens to examine and expand upon several of the findings in the demographics section of the Community Profile. Following this analysis, implications for a complete community are discussed.

### **Population Density**

- The project area has a low population density. When controlling for dedicated open space/parkland, the gross density is 1.8 people/acre. As a reference, the city of Austin as a whole (controlling for parkland) has an estimated gross population density of 4.7 people/acre. The project area population density is less than half (38.3%) that of the city.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

- The population of the project area has a significantly different ethnic composition than the City of Austin and the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). It has a higher percentage of Hispanic--Latino and African-American than both the City and MSA and a lower percentage of Anglo, Asian and Other.

<sup>2</sup> NHCD's Community Profile is available online at: [http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Colony\\_Park/Community\\_Profile\\_Final.pdf](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Colony_Park/Community_Profile_Final.pdf)

Race/Ethnicity*	Anglo (non-Hispanic White)	Hispanic- Latino	African- American	Asian	Other
CPSCI Project area	9.0%	59.0%	31.0%	0.0%	1.0%
City of Austin	48.7%	35.1%	7.7%	6.3%	2.2%
Austin-Round Rock- San Marcos MSA	54.7%	31.4%	7.4%	4.8%	1.7%
<b>*2010 US Census.</b>					

### Age

- Although Austin is a young city, the project area is even younger. It has a median age of 29.4 years as compared to Austin's 31.0 years. In addition, 45.2% of the population of project area is 24 years old or younger as compared for 36.7% for the City of Austin.

### Median Family Income (MFI)

- The project area, as a whole, is much less affluent than Austin and the MSA. While the median family income in the project area is \$41,702, there is a significant disparity among the five census tracts.

The least affluent census tract (22.02) has a median family income (MFI) of \$33,069. This is less than half the project area's most affluent census tract's (22.12) MFI of \$69,375. In addition, the least affluent census tract is the most populous (8,714 people), while the most affluent census tract is the least populous (712 people).

Area	Median Family Income*
CPSCI Project area	\$41,702
City of Austin	\$63,672
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA	\$73,200
<b>*2010 US Census.</b>	

### Poverty Rate

- The low median family income in the project area is further underscored by a high poverty rate as compared to the city and the MSA. Over a third of residents in the project area live below the poverty line.

In addition, the project area has a high poverty rate for young people. 40.2% of people who are 24 years or younger live below the poverty line. Of this same group, 56% of those who had household incomes below the poverty level are Hispanic/Latino.

Area	Poverty Rate	
	Overall*	24 years or younger**
CPSCI Project area	33.4%	40.2%
City of Austin	18.5%	34.6%
Austin-Round Rock- San Marcos MSA	15.2%	31.7%
<b>*2011 ACS 5-year estimates. **2010 US Census.</b>		

### Educational Attainment

- The baccalaureate attainment for persons 25 years or older in the project area (6.0%) is significantly below that of Austin (43.9%) and the MSA (27.3%). Whereas the project area is less than 10%, the city of Austin is almost half the population. In fact, the city's rate is more than six times the project area's.

College Education	Rate of Bachelor Degree Attainment
CPSCI Project area*	6.0%
City of Austin*	43.9%
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA**	25.7%
<b>*2010 US Census. **2010 ACS 1-year estimates.</b>	



## Implications: Demographics

- **Lower population densities**  
Lower population densities may also impede a variety of retailers from locating businesses within the project area.
- **Lower household incomes**  
Lower household incomes may be an impediment for many retailers other than convenience retail to locating businesses within the project area.
- **Lower educational attainment**  
Low educational attainment may discourage employers to locate within the project area.





## TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

An essential aspect of compact, connected and complete communities is the ability to easily access one's daily needs regardless of age, ability or preferred transportation mode. A well-connected transportation network, with short links, minimal dead-ends (cul-de-sacs), and numerous intersections, provides direct routes to access destinations. These direct routes reduce travel distances to destinations, making walking, bicycling, taking transit more viable transportation options.

The transportation analysis examined several aspects of the project area's transportation network:

- Road network
- Transit network
- Sidewalk network
- Bicycle network
- Trail network

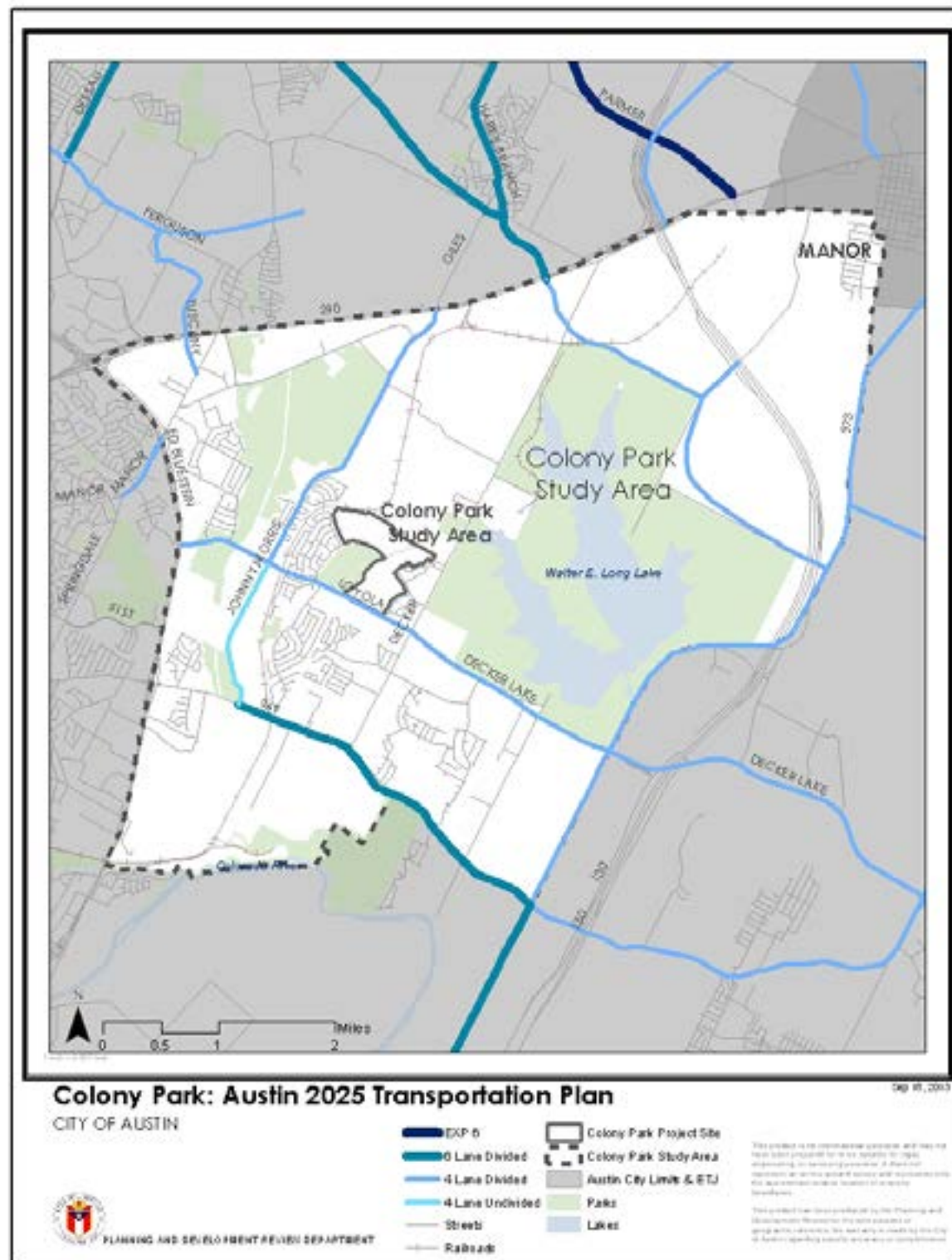
### ROAD NETWORK

#### **Highways and Freeways**

The project area's boundaries are primarily four large highways and freeways, including:

- US 290 (toll road) is the northern boundary
- US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard is the western boundary
- FM 973 and SH130 (toll road) form the eastern boundary
- MLK Boulevard/FM 969 is the approximate southern boundary





### Major Roadways

Within the project area, there are two major roadways that connect these bounding highways and freeways and two major roadways that connect the project area to the city. Johnny Morris Road and Decker Lane run north-south through the project area and connect US 290 to MLK Boulevard/FM 969. On the other hand, Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road and MLK Boulevard/FM 969 run east-west and connect the project area to Austin.

### Residential Streets

Within the project area's neighborhoods, there is a patchwork of residential streets. A handful of these local, residential streets connect to one another, such as Sendero Hills Parkway, Imperial Drive, the collection of linked north-south streets in The Woodlands and Thunderbird Village neighborhoods, as well as the linked east-west streets of Hogg Eye Rd. and Hidden W. Boulevard. However, the majority of streets do not. They connect only the residential streets within the neighborhood to the major roadway it branches off from.

The residential street pattern is very suburban in nature. Most have either a broken or extended grid pattern, as seen in the Colony Park and Meadows of Walnut Creek neighborhoods. Most have long block lengths with few intersections, as exemplified in Meadows at Trinity. A few neighborhoods, such as the Woodlands, Thunder Village, Imperial Valley, and Sendero Hills, have long winding roads that stop with stub streets or cul-du-sacs.



## TRANSIT NETWORK

### Existing Services

Within the project area there are five bus routes (6, 20, 37, 323, 990) with a total of 50 stops along 4.8 miles of roadway:

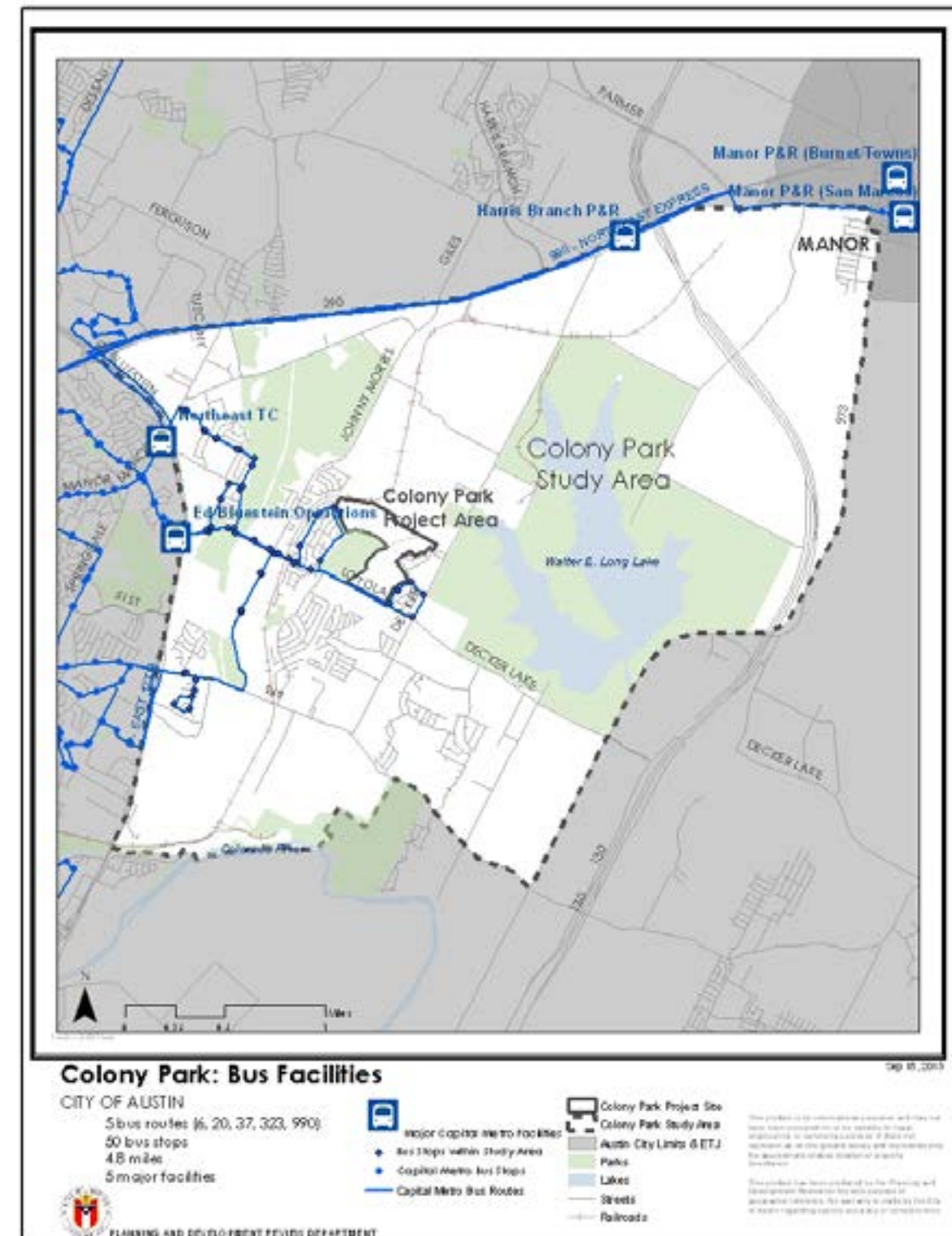
1. #323 Anderson/Johnny Morris—Runs along the western portion of the project area.
2. #37 Colony Park/Windsor Park—Runs past the project site on Loyola Lane.
3. #20 Manor Rd/LBJ High—Makes a small loop in the northwestern portion of the project area.
4. #990 Northeast Express—Runs along the northern border of the project area along US 290/Manor Expressway.
5. #6 East 12th—Makes a loop in the southwestern corner of the project area heading back to downtown along E. 12th St.

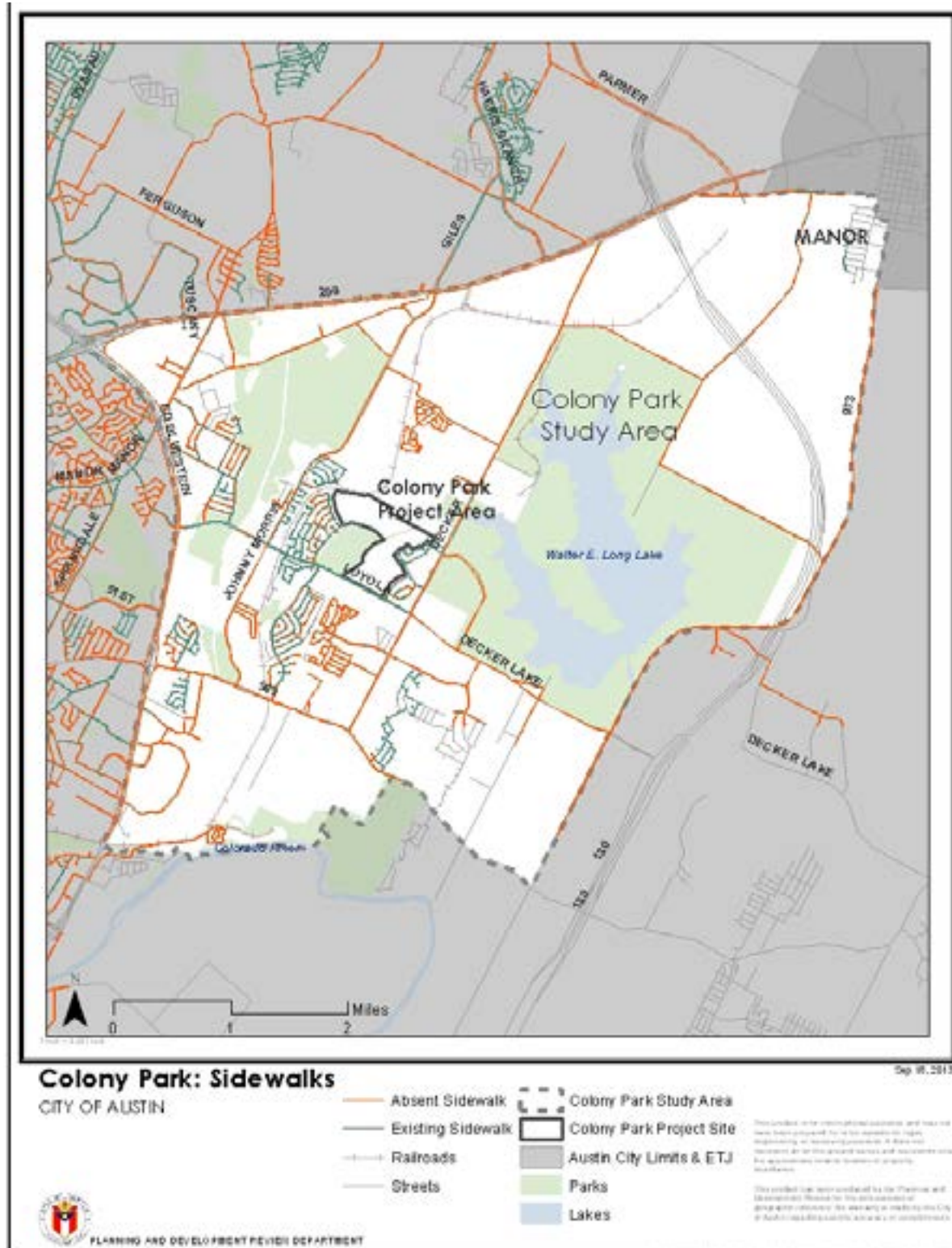
Most of the bus routes stay along the periphery of the study area – primarily along the north or western boundaries. However, two routes, the #37 and #323, enter the study area and approach the project site.

In addition, five major transit facilities, including three park-and-rides, are within, or just outside the project area. The park and ride facilities are located in the far northeast and western corners of the project area. The southern and eastern portions of the project area do not have transit service.

### Potential Services

Currently, the project area is not served by high-capacity transit. The closest existing MetroRail Red station is at the MLK, Jr. Station located about five miles west of the project site. Looking to the future, the CAMPO 2035 Regional Transportation Plan identifies a commuter line (as either a Metro Rapid bus service or the MetroRail Green line) running through the project area less





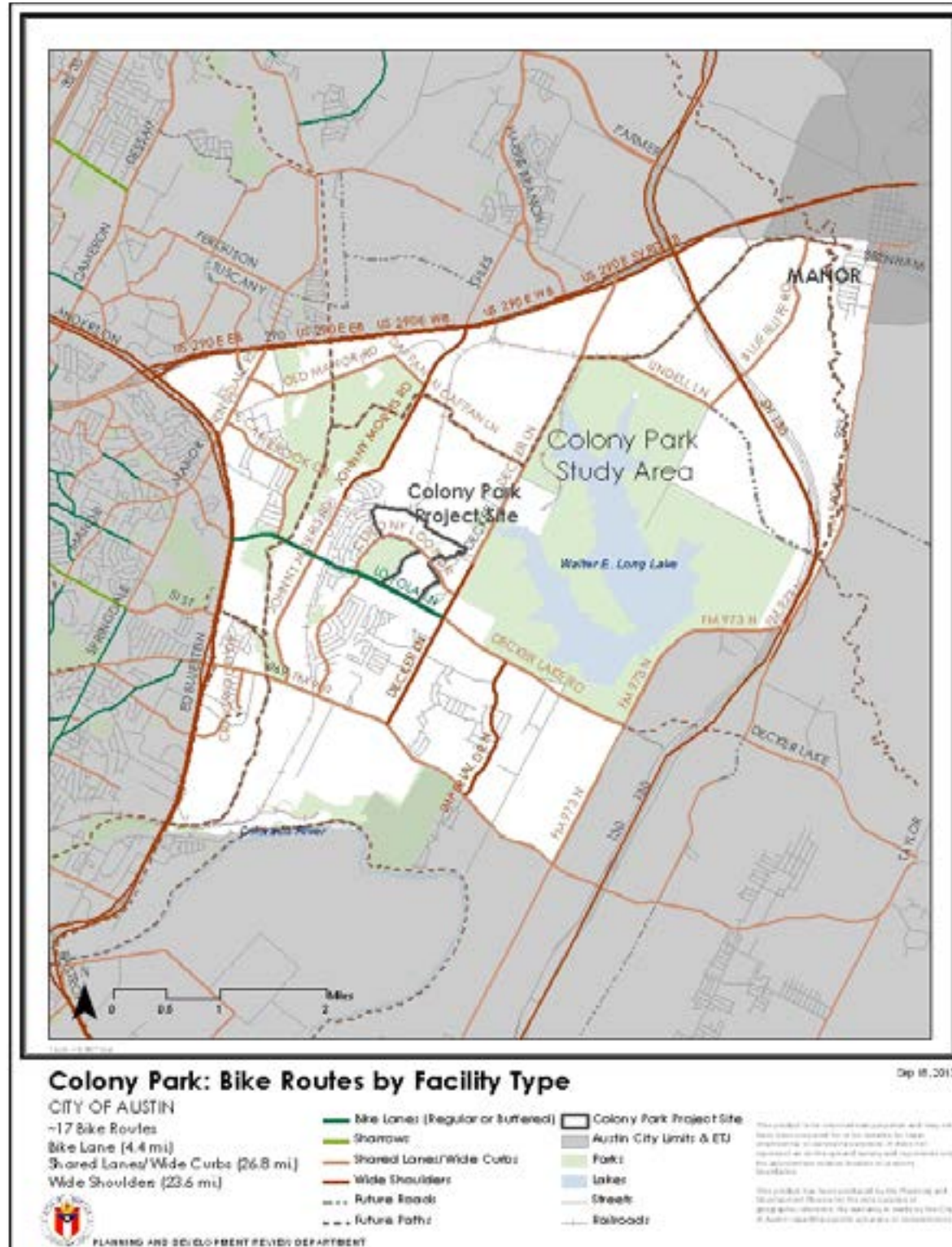
than a half mile from the project site. This commuter line would connect downtown Austin to Manor, Texas. Capital Metro currently owns 10 acres at that intersection. Imagine Austin's Growth Concept Map identifies the intersection of Loyola Lane and the Giddings to Llano railroad as a "proposed high-capacity transit stop" in conjunction with a future neighborhood center.

## SIDEWALK NETWORK

The existing sidewalk network exists mainly on neighborhood streets. While newer neighborhoods have more complete sidewalk networks, older ones tend to have sidewalk gaps or only have sidewalks on some streets and not others. In particular, the manufactured and mobile home communities in the project area do not have sidewalks within their communities, nor along the drives and roadways connecting them to major roadways, such as Loyola and Decker Lanes.

Major roadways in the project area are almost completely without sidewalks. Only Loyola Lane from US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard Bluestein to Decker Lane has sidewalks.





## BICYCLE NETWORK

### Existing Bicycle Routes

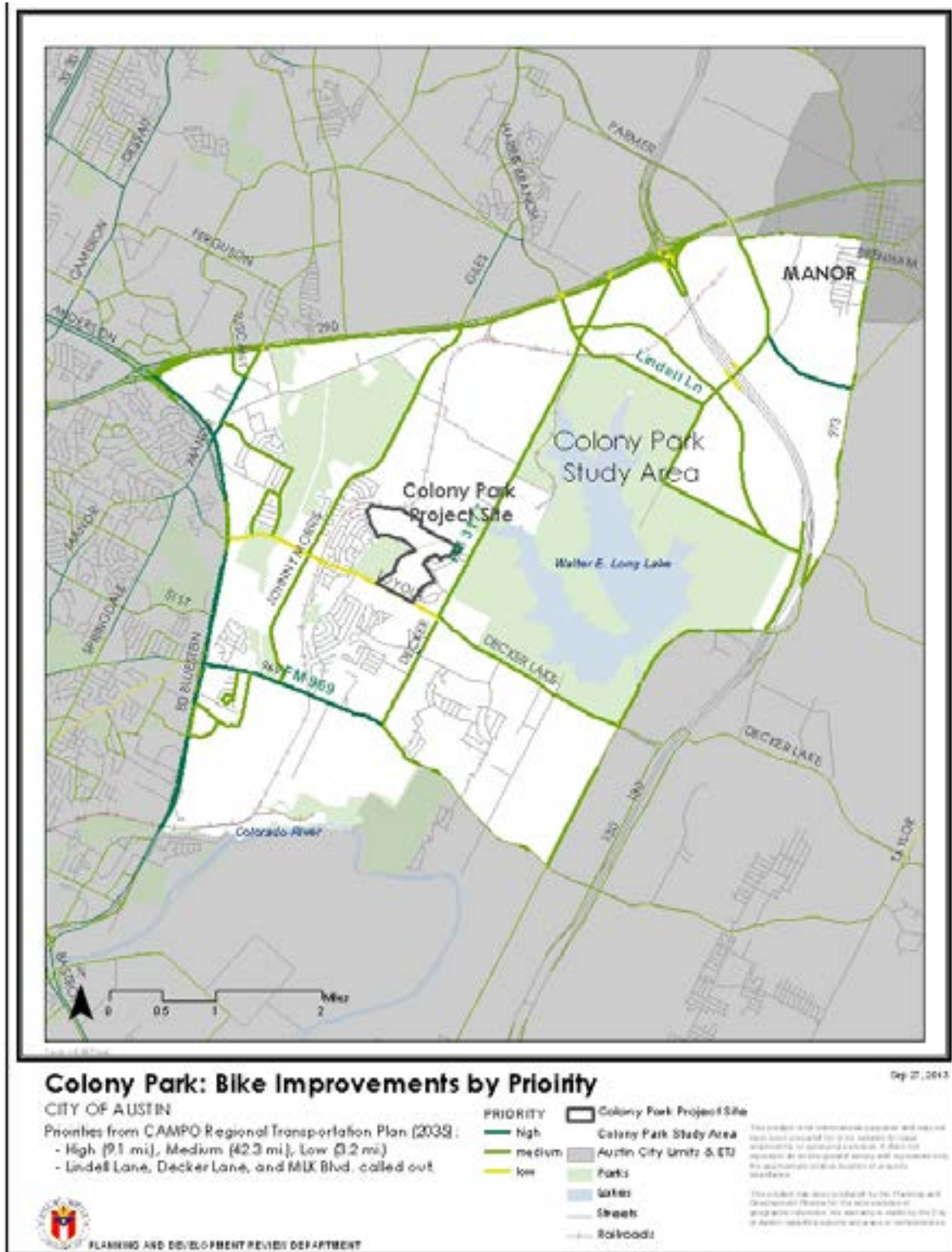
There are a number of bicycle routes in the project area; however their quality varies greatly from low-comfort routes with or along high traffic roads, to a separated bicycle lane, to higher comfort residential streets.

Similar to the transit service, there are a number of bicycle routes around the periphery of the project area. Examples include the service roads of US183, US290 and SH130 (Austin 2020 Bicycle Plan Update, 2009, p.49). These routes offer a low level of comfort for most cyclists as they require riding along the shoulder alongside high-speed traffic. These routes are primarily frequented by advanced cyclists who ride for long distance recreation and seek smooth flat surfaces.

Several other routes run through the project area and require cyclists to share lanes with traffic. These include routes along MLK Boulevard/FM 969, Decker Lane, and Johnny Morris Road and are designed for advanced, recreational cyclists or potential bicycle commuters. However, these routes also have a fairly low level of comfort.

Presently, there is one striped bicycle lane in the project area. The bike lane runs along Loyola Lane from just east of US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard to Decker Lane. This bicycle lane was identified by the Street Smarts Task Force (SSTF) as one of the 101 key barriers for Austin's 2020 Bicycle Plan (p.47). Although the lane ends near US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard, a shared travel lane provides connections into more established areas of Austin.





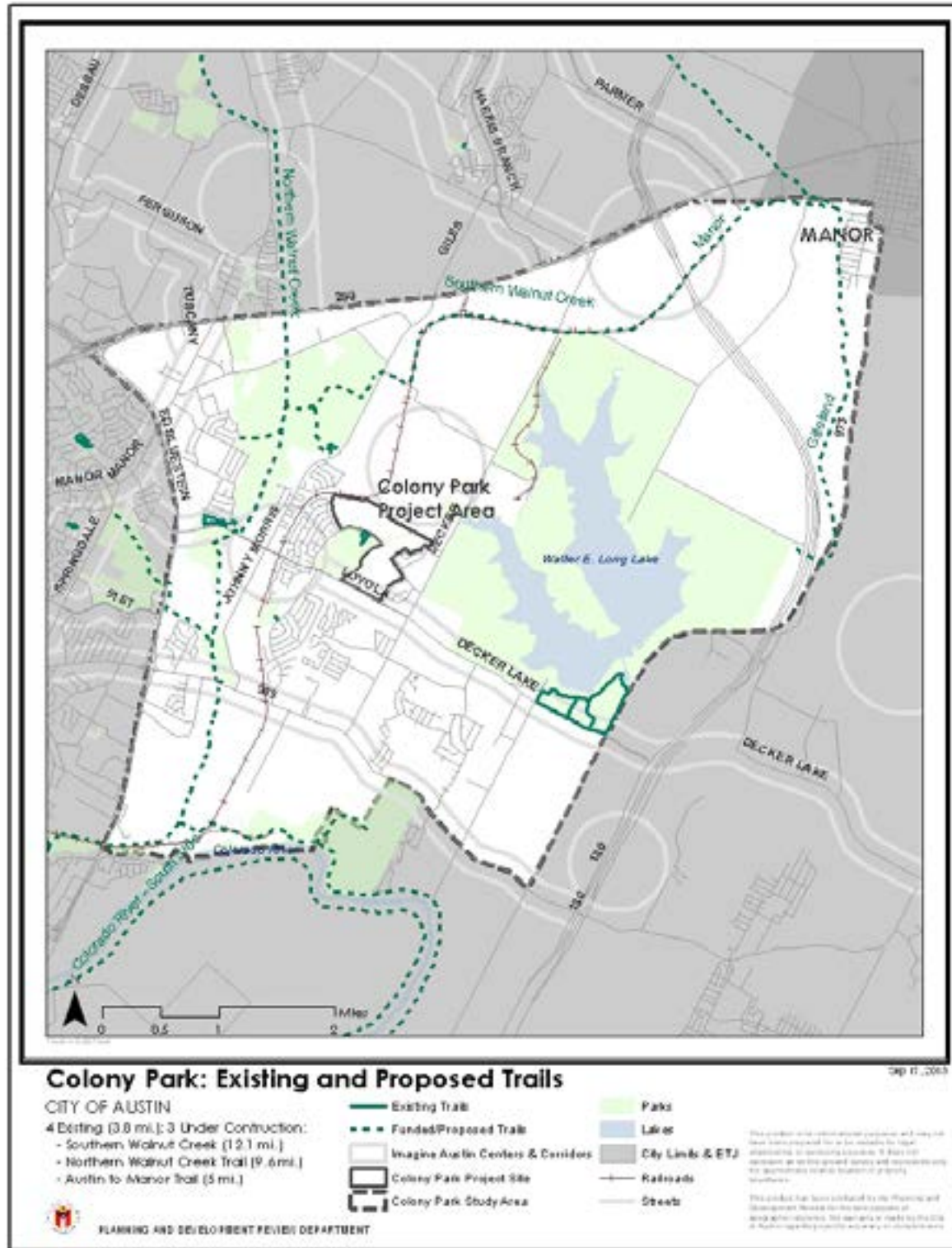
Lastly, there are routes in the project area that offer higher comfort levels. These include those that run through residential areas such as the Colony Loop Drive route. While this route does not provide a separated bicycle facility and requires bicyclists to share the lane with motorists, the travel speeds and traffic volumes are low. As a result, these routes are comfortable for less skilled cyclists. However, because of the lack of internal local street connections between neighborhoods in the project area, these routes have limited access to goods and services.

**Future Bicycle Routes**

A number of community entities are working together to improve bicycle mobility in Austin. CAMPO, which is responsible for regional transportation planning in Central Texas, helped identify high priority, future bicycle corridors in its 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. Three of its high priority bicycle corridors are located in the project area and align with the recommendations of the City of Austin's 2020 Bicycle Plan.

These include routes include:

- #14—Lindell Lane from Decker Lane to Blue Bluff Road
- #410—Decker Lane just south of Loyola Lane to MLK Boulevard/FM 969
- #44—MLK Boulevard/FM 969 from Decker Lane to US 183/Ed Bluestein



## TRAIL NETWORK

### Existing Trails

Currently, there are four trails covering 3.78 miles in the project area, including:

- Walter E. Long Metro Park Loop Trail (2.64 miles)
- Davis/White Northeast Neighborhood Park Trail (0.65 miles)
- Colony District Park Trail (0.26 miles)
- Walnut Creek Sports Park Pedestrian Walkway (0.23 miles).

Currently, there are four trails totaling 3.78 linear miles. The longest is 2.64 miles, with the other three each measuring less than a mile. While the trails are loops and therefore don't serve as a way to travel through the neighborhood, they do provide exercise opportunities.

### Future Trails

The City of Austin is constructing two trail projects in the area: the Southern Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail and the Austin to Manor Trail. Both are longer and more linear than the existing trails in the project area. The Southern Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail will be 7.3 miles and run between US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard and Johnny Morris Road from Old Manor Road to the Colorado River before it jogs west to Govalle Neighborhood Park. The trail is currently under-construction and scheduled to be completed in spring of 2014.

The Austin to Manor Trail will be a 5-mile trail that runs along Daffan Lane from Johnny Morris Road through Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park to Fischer Park in Manor. The trail will parallel the railroad and connect to the terminus of the Southern Walnut Creek Hike and Bike Trail at Johnny Morris Road. The first phase will connect Daffan Lane from Johnny Morris Road to Walter E. Long Metropolitan Park and then on to Lindell Road



and is under construction and scheduled for completion by spring/summer of 2014. The City is working to fund the second phase of the project. Eventually, the trail will connect to Govalle Neighborhood Park and then to the Lady Bird Lake Hike and Bike Trail.



## Implications: Transportation

The transportation networks have several complete community implications for the project area:

- **Limited connectivity to and thru the project area**  
Freeways and highways ring the project area, isolating it from the city. In addition, a lack of roadways reinforced this isolation to and thru the project area. Only Johnny Morris Road and Decker Lane run north-south through the project area. Similarly, only two roads, Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road and MLK Boulevard/FM 969, run east-west through the project area.

While not a road, the Colorado River creates a natural barrier. Running , just south of MLK Boulevard/FM 969, there are three bridges that cross the river. However, the closest is over three miles from the southwest boundary of the project area.

- **Limited street connectivity within the Project Area**  
The project area's neighborhoods are also internally disconnected from each other. Very few of the area's internal, local streets connect to one another or to more than one major roadways. In addition, the roads and winding and lack a strong grid preventing direct routes, increasing travel distances, and making walking, bicycling and taking transit less viable transportation options.

As a result, to travel between neighborhoods or to other destinations, requires travelling along one or more major roadways. Most of these roadways don't have pedestrian or bicycle facilities, making driving one of the only safe options, particularly for our most vulnerable populations, including children, older adults and



people with disabilities.

- **Limited transit service**

While there is service along the periphery of the project area, there is very limited bus services that penetrates the project area. Of the five bus routes in the study area, only two of enter the project area and come close to approaching the project site.

In addition, the three park and ride facilities are located in the northeast and western corners of the project area, miles from the project site, while, the southern and eastern portions of the project area don't have transit service. As a result, for much of the project area, the only viable transit option is the park and rides, which are at the interchanges of major highways and require a vehicle to access.

In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the transportation authority to only locate bus stops in area with sidewalks. As a result, the absence of a connected sidewalk network creates another barrier for better transit services in the project area.

The overall very low residential density makes it difficult for Capital Metro to provide bus transit services. For example, the FM 696 Corridor Development Program explains that the MLK Boulevard/FM 969 corridor east of US 183/Ed Bluestein would need to be addressed its "low population density, a high posted speed limit, a lack of sidewalks, and a lack of space to turn buses around" before Capital Metro would consider extending service (p.ES-3).

- **Limited sidewalk network**

The project area lacks a connected sidewalk network, particularly along major roadways.

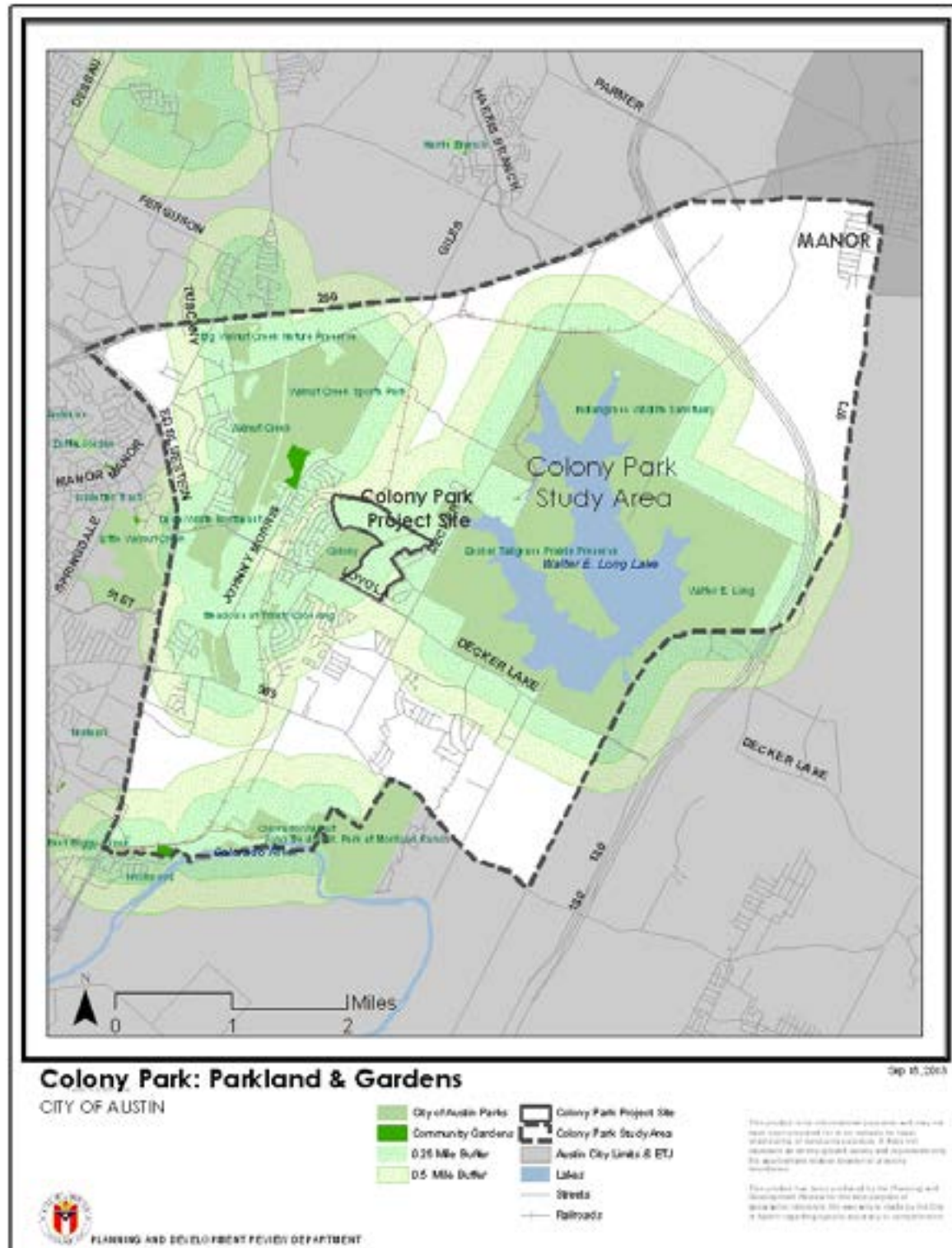
High speeds paired with a lack in facilities create a hostile environment for residents wishing to walk to destinations like the school, neighbor's houses or potential future local-serving goods and services.

- **Limited high-comfort bicycle routes**

While there are a number of bicycle routes in the project area, the routes do not create comfortable travel conditions for most cyclists. Considering the posted speed limits and traffic volumes along many of its roadways, these bicycle routes offers limited utility as a practical transportation option.

- **Limited trail facilities**

The project area has a number of trails, unfortunately, they are loops that are short in length. The trails serve a recreational purpose, but do not address the connectivity issues addressed above. In fact, community members who do not live or work immediately adjacent to the trails would need to drive to the trail heads in order to access them.



## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Compared to other parts of Austin, the project area has a notable amount of parkland and preserve lands/open space (5,898 acres or 9.23 square miles). However, it is important to note that the majority of the parks and open space in the project area is unimproved, including:

- 1,872.33 acres (2.92 square miles) surrounding and including Lake Walter E. Long
- 1,499.91 acres of set aside lands (preserves and greenbelts)
- 330.22 acres of unimproved parkland at John Trevino Jr Park at Morrison Ranch
- 212.40 acres at the Walnut Creek Sports Park

These high numbers do not reflect the amount of improved parkland readily accessible to the community. There are only two neighborhood parks with playgrounds that are in or adjacent to neighborhoods. They are Meadows at Trinity Crossing (16.36 acres) and Davis/White Northeast (29.12 acres). The remaining parkland is the currently undeveloped Colony District Park.

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department's (PARD) Long Range Plan (adopted 11/118/10) identified Parks Service Areas (Gap Analysis) Map (p. 173) and illustrated that the project areas has numerous parks. The plan also notes that due to its low population density, the project area does not currently meet PARD's requirements for a demographic need for more parks. However, if the project area begins to develop in a more compact and connected fashion, the need for more programmed parks throughout the project area will likely increase.

Unlike other parts of Austin, the two AISD elementary schools in the project area are not currently joint use AISD/City of Austin facilities. In other parts of the

city, neighbors can use school parks. However, in the project area residents can't, further reducing resident access to improved and programmed parkland. This is also the situation with the two Manor ISD elementary schools located in the project area. In addition, most of the improved and programmed parkland and recreation facilities in the area, such as the YMCA of Austin East Communities Branch, are only accessible by car for most area residents.

The unimproved Colony District Park (which includes the under-renovation Turner Roberts Recreation Center) could provide improved and programmed parkland for those current and future neighborhoods with access to Loyola Lane. In addition, the public process to plan the project site may identify additional types of parks and open space such as plazas, pocket parks, greens, or smaller, specialized park space on the site. This public planning process creates the possibility of generating more ideas for parks that could be implemented throughout the project area.

Park/Facility Type	Park	Acres
Metropolitan	Walter E. Long (includes the 1,269 Lake Walter E. Long serving as the cooling reservoir for the adjacent Decker Creek Power Station)	1,872.33
	John Trevino Jr Park at Morrison Ranch	330.22
	Walnut Creek Sports	212.40
Greenways / Nature Preserves	Walnut Creek	803.15
	Decker Prairie Preserve	339.22
	Indiangrass Wildlife Sanctuary	281.04
	Big Walnut Creek Nature Preserve	46.00
	Colorado/Walnut	30.50
District	Colony	95.23
Neighborhood Park	Davis-White Northeast	29.12
	Meadows at Trinity Crossing	16.36
Recreation Center	Turner-Roberts Recreation Center	N/A
	<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>5,898.52</b>

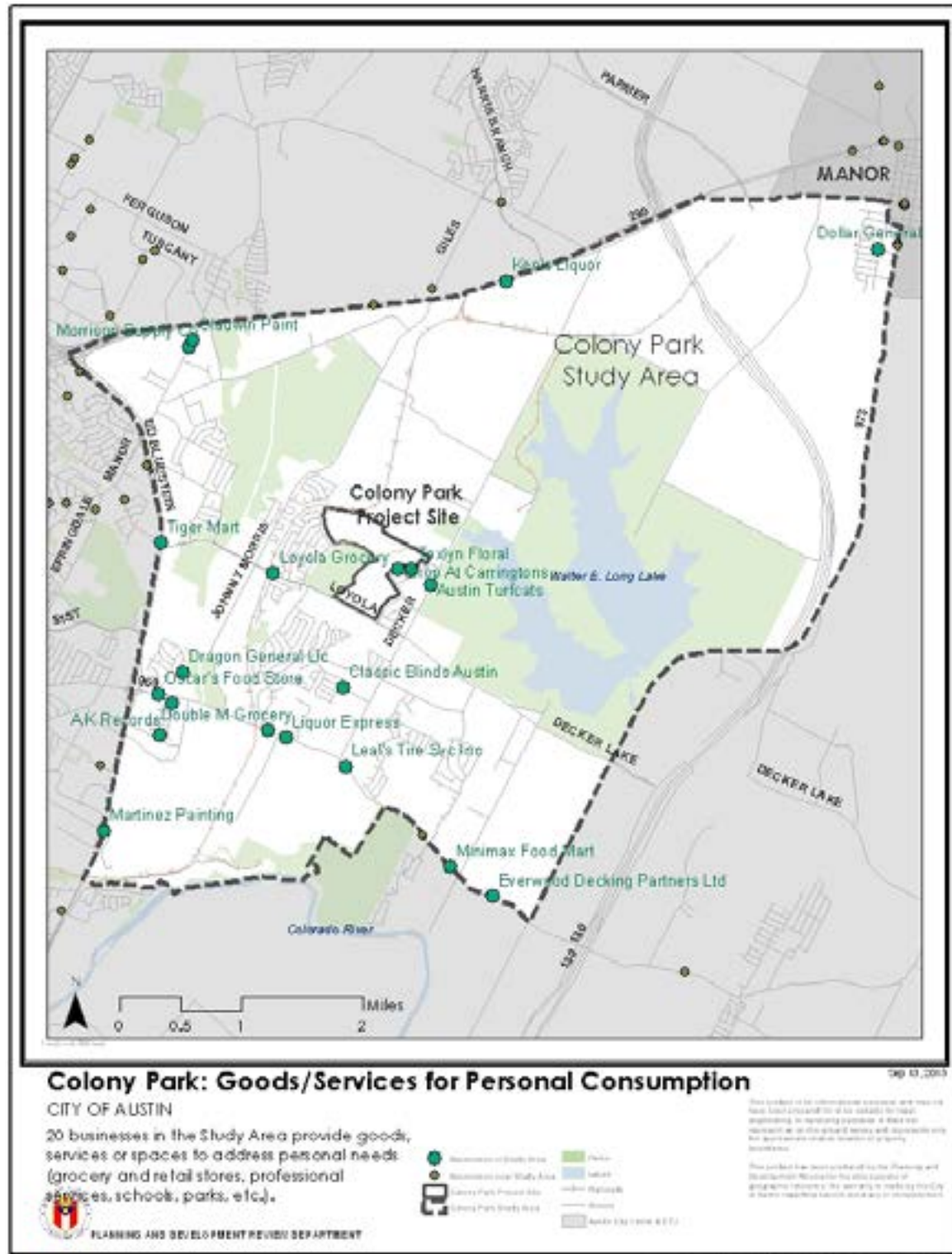
## Implications: Parks & Open Space

There are a number of complete community implications regarding parks and open in the project area.

- Limited access to programmed parks**  
 The project area has proportionately more open space than most other areas of Austin; however, there is poor access to much of it. Additional planning could identify ways to maximize access to these areas for both recreation and transportation.
- Low population density**  
 A gap-analysis conducted by PARD as part of their long-range planning demonstrated that there is presently no demographic need for additional parks in the project area. However, the neighborhoods surrounding the project site are presently underserved by programmed parkland which could be addressed through the planning process for the project site and adjacent Colony District Park.
- Some opportunities for additional park access**  
 As the parkland associated with the project site is developed and programed it could provide a "central park" for the neighborhoods along Loyola Lane. However, if the project area develops in a more compact and connect fashion, there could be a need of more, smaller parks.

Additional parks space could also be added if agreements could be reached between AISD and Manor ISD to expand the school playgrounds into joint-use facilities.





## NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICE ANALYSIS

The Neighborhood Service Analysis is a Geographic Information System (GIS) tool which demonstrates an area's accessibility to goods and services based on the distance from and number of the goods and services at a specific location. The Neighborhood Services Analysis uses the land use patterns, zoning, and transportation infrastructure to demonstrate the current accessibility to local-serving goods, services, public facilities, and schools.

Areas that are closer to a greater number of goods, services, public facilities, and schools are darker on the map. Those areas with fewer nearby goods and services are increasingly lighter. See appendix 2 for methodology.

The initial analysis was conducted for the 600+ square mile area of the city of Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). An analysis at this level can create inconsistencies when viewed on a more local level; however, it does provide a good overall indication of a community's completeness relative to access to goods and services. A more localized review of existing conditions can improve the accuracy of the analysis.

### Businesses & Access

There are approximately 20 neighborhood-servicing businesses in the project area. These businesses offer primarily convenience (such as gas stations), car and commercial/industrial (such as building and supply) services. These businesses are clustered to the southwest portion, particularly along MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and at the intersection of Decker and Loyola Lanes.

Based on the map, access to these businesses is low and centers on the intersection of Decker and Loyola Lane and along and US 183 and MLK Boulevard/FM 969



## Implications: Neighborhood Services

- Limited access to goods and services**  
 Within the project area there is extremely limited access to a meaningful number of goods and services. The majority of the project area has “almost no access” to goods and services, while areas near a school or convenience stores have only “very poor access”.

A more substantial range of goods and services is just outside the project area at the shopping center at Manor Road and US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard. However, due to their location just, residents would need to cross major highways to access them.

- Limited transportation network**  
 A limited internal transportation network and poor transit service in the project area limit pedestrian, bicyclists, and transit users’ access to goods and services.

In addition, highways, freeways and other physical barriers limit access outside the project area.





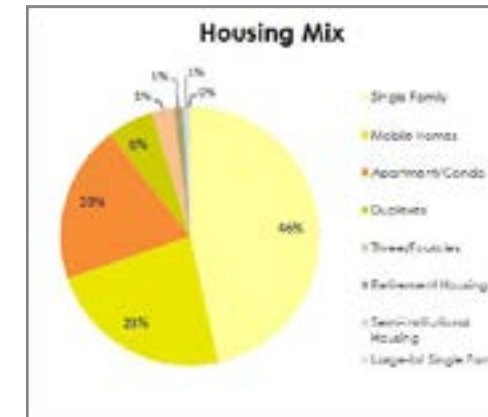


## HOUSING

As part of the CPSCI, NHCD staff created a Community Profile for the five-census tract project area, which looked at several aspects of the project area. This section of the Colony Park Complete Community Status Report will not duplicate their work; however, it will summarize and expand upon some of the findings of the housing section of the Community Profile.

### Housing Mix

The housing mix within the project area is weighted towards single-family and two-family housing types (72%) with multi-family mainly comprising the remaining housing stock (26%).



Housing Type	Parcels (Estimated)	Units (Estimated)	Percent of Total Units
Single Family	2865	2865	47%
Mobile Homes	310	1428	23%
Duplexes	178	357	6%
Large-lot Single Family	19	19	0%
Three/Fourplex	42	172	3%
Apartment/Condo	5	1215	20%
Retirement Housing	3	68	1%
Semi-institutional Housing	3	36	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3425</b>	<b>6160</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Homeownership**

The project area has a higher homeownership rate than the city, but a lower rate than the MSA. A strong majority of residents (57%) own their homes.

Occupancy	Own	Rent
CPSCI Project area	57.0%	43.0%
City of Austin	45.1%	54.9%
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA	62.6%	37.4%
* 2010 US Census.		

**Home Values**

NHCD's Community Profile found 85% of the houses in the project area were valued below \$150,000. In 2010, the average of the median home values for the project area was \$111,460. By comparison, the median home value for the City was \$214,500, almost double that of the project area. The home values in the project area are lower than the city as a whole, which translates to lower property taxes, particularly for people living in the county.

Median Home Values	2011*
CPSCI Project area	\$111,460**
<i>Census Tract 22.01</i>	\$106,500
<i>Census Tract 22.02</i>	\$104,500
<i>Census Tract 22.08</i>	\$60,600
<i>Census Tract 22.11</i>	\$109,300
<i>Census Tract 22.12</i>	\$128,600
City of Austin	\$209,900
Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos MSA	\$186,300
*2011 ACS 5-year estimates. **NOTE: Median Home Values in project area cluster strongly around average, except for Tract 22.08 and Tract 22.12.	

**Home Prices**

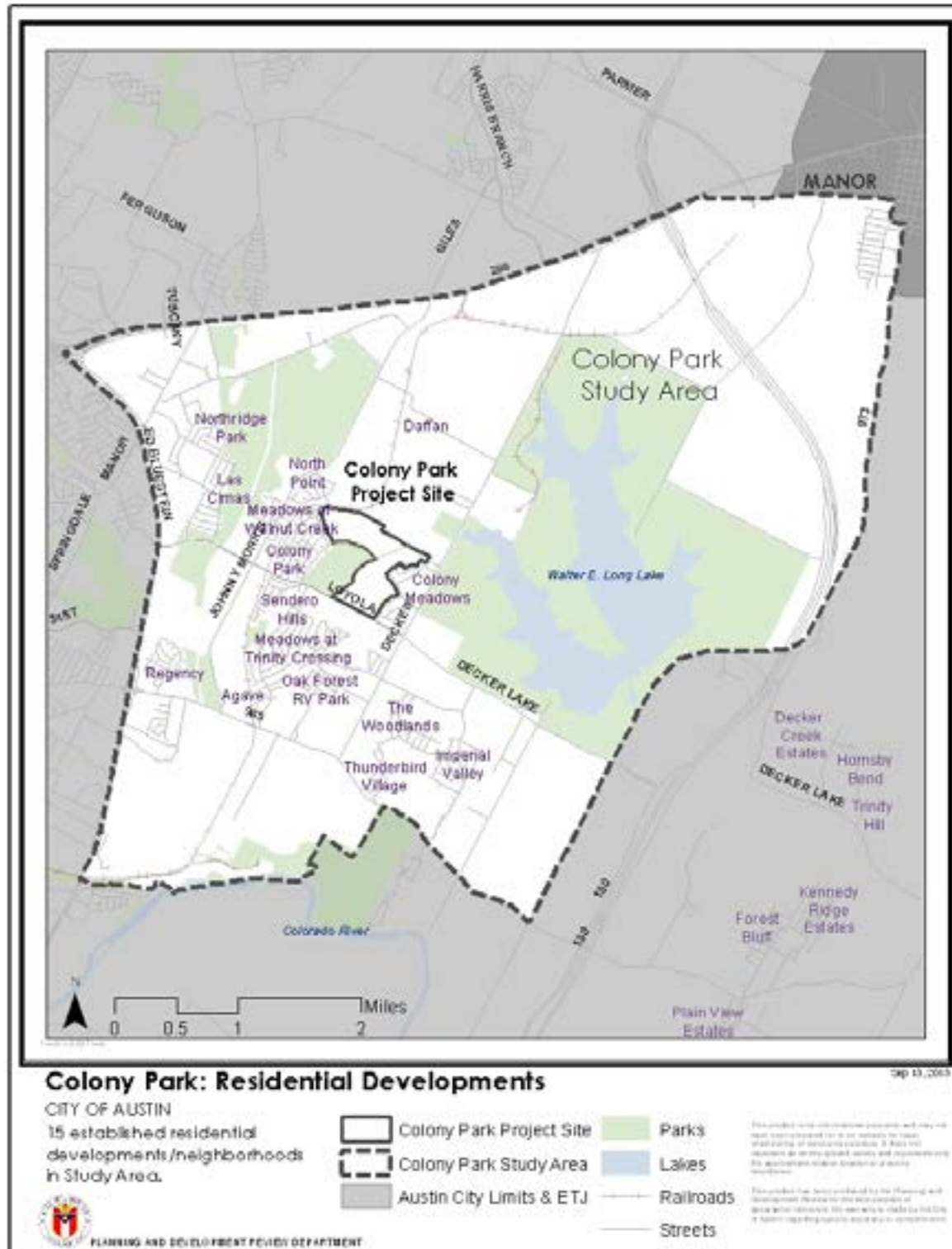
In addition, home prices are typically more affordable than the city. An August 7, 2013 review of the Trulia website real estate listings in the project area indicated a wide range of housing prices across different neighborhoods. According to Trulia, the median sales price for homes in the city of Austin between April 2013 and June 2013 was \$190,516.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, houses in newer developments had higher average listing prices. For instance, recently constructed, modernist-styled houses in the Agave neighborhood listed for between \$315,000 and \$338,000.

However, the majority of listing were more affordable. For instance, more traditional suburban-designed housing in the adjacent neighborhood, Meadows at Trinity Crossing, ranged from \$136,000 to \$174,000. Further east, near the intersection of Decker Lane and MLK Boulevard/FM 969, home prices in the recently-constructed Thunderbird Village and Woodlands neighborhoods ranged from \$138,000 to \$195,000.

In more established neighborhoods the house price listings were lower. In the Colony Meadows and Lakeside neighborhoods, small apartment complexes ranged from \$158,000 to \$218,000 and the only house listed at \$125,000. Houses in the Cavalier Park neighborhood, near MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and Ed Bluestein/US 183, ranged from \$110,000 to \$130,000. Listings in the Colony Park and Meadows of Walnut Creek neighborhoods ranged from \$67,000 to \$101,000.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.trulia.com/for\\_sale/Austin,TX/x\\_map/](http://www.trulia.com/for_sale/Austin,TX/x_map/), accessed 8-7-13



Neighborhood(s)	Housing Prices	
	Low	High
Agave	\$315,000	\$338,000
Thunderbird Village & Woodlands neighborhoods	\$138,000	\$195,000
Meadows at Trinity Crossing	\$136,000	\$174,000
Colony Meadows & Lakeside neighborhoods		
Multifamily listing	\$158,000	\$218,000
Single family listing	\$125,000	no listing
Cavalier Park	\$110,000	\$130,000
Colony Park & Meadows of Walnut Creek neighborhoods	\$67,000	\$101,000





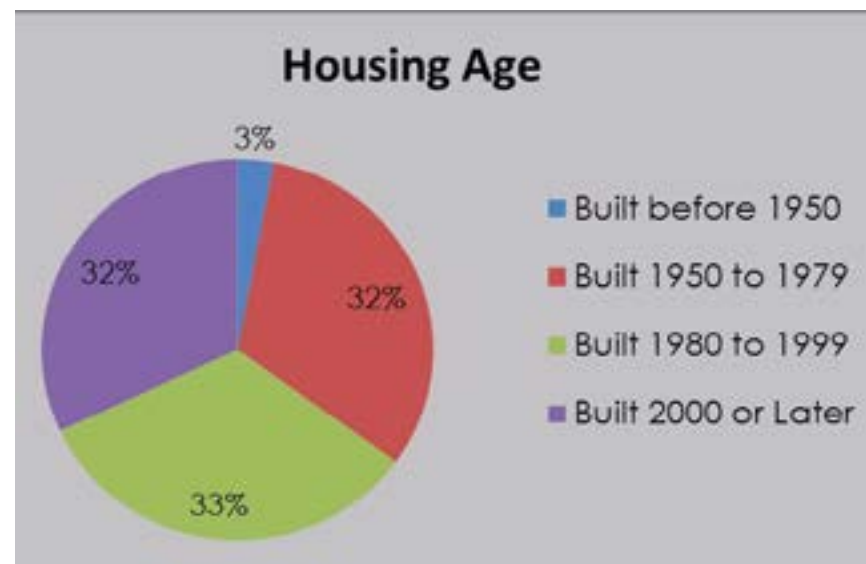
### Vehicle Miles Traveled

Due to the project area's relative remoteness to regional jobs and goods and services and limited transit service, sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure, area residents travel more annual vehicle miles (22,549) than Austinites as a whole (18,374) at a greater annual cost (\$4,159) than the rest of the city (\$3,389). People who live in the project area drive 20% more than Austinites, which translates to 20% higher commuting costs and spending more time in their cars.

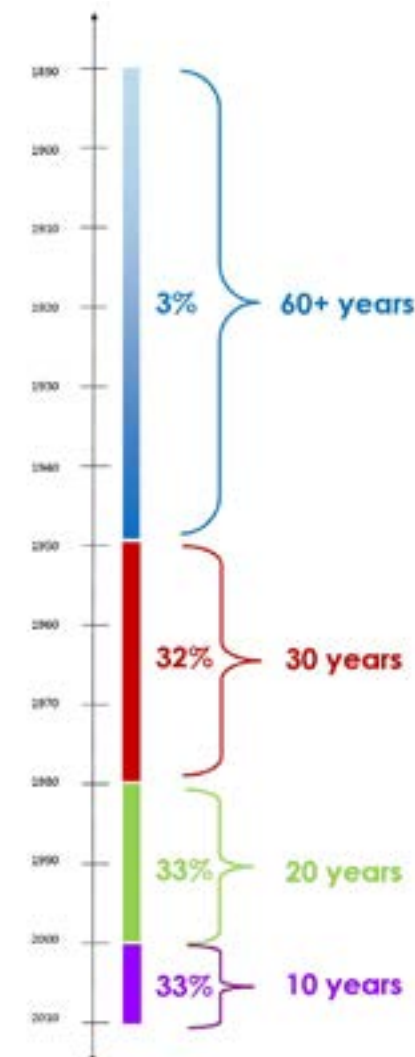
### Development History

The majority of the housing was built in three distinct time frames of increasingly shorter duration.

Of the existing housing stock within the project area, 3% was built before 1950 and the small percentage is reflective of the then very distant and rural nature of the area.



In the following three decades (1950-1979), about a third (32%) of the housing was constructed. The next two decades saw 33% of the housing constructed. The last third (32%) was built in the last decade (2000-2010). According to NHCD's *Community Profile*, this pattern is consistent with the city's overall development.



## Implications: Housing

The housing analysis points out several implications for complete communities.

- **Lower-intensity housing types**

The project area's predominant housing type is the free-standing single-family house. Single family homes tend to create development patterns that use large swaths of land and produce low population densities. In addition, they tend to separate residences from destinations and have disconnected road networks, which increase the distance to access goods and services and make modes other than driving very difficult.

The project area's predominant land use are low-density single family homes, which are further diluted by large amounts of undeveloped land. Given that "retail follows rooftops," this density pattern means the project area can only support a limited number of goods and services.

- **Lower housing costs**

With the exception of the Agave neighborhood, recently constructed single-family neighborhoods (Meadows at Trinity Crossing, Sendero Hill, the Woodlands, and Thunderbird Village) are largely priced as entry-level housing. Houses in older, more established neighborhoods in the project area offer multiple entry points to home ownership at lower costs.

- **Higher homeownership rates**

The project area has very high homeownership rates compared to the city. However, while homeownership can create stability, increases in home ownership have been linked to increases in unemployment as well as lower levels

of labor mobility, greater commuting types, and fewer businesses (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2013). Issues accessing jobs may be particularly impactful to the project area, which has lower educational levels, longer commutes and a location at the edge of a city that has high congestion.

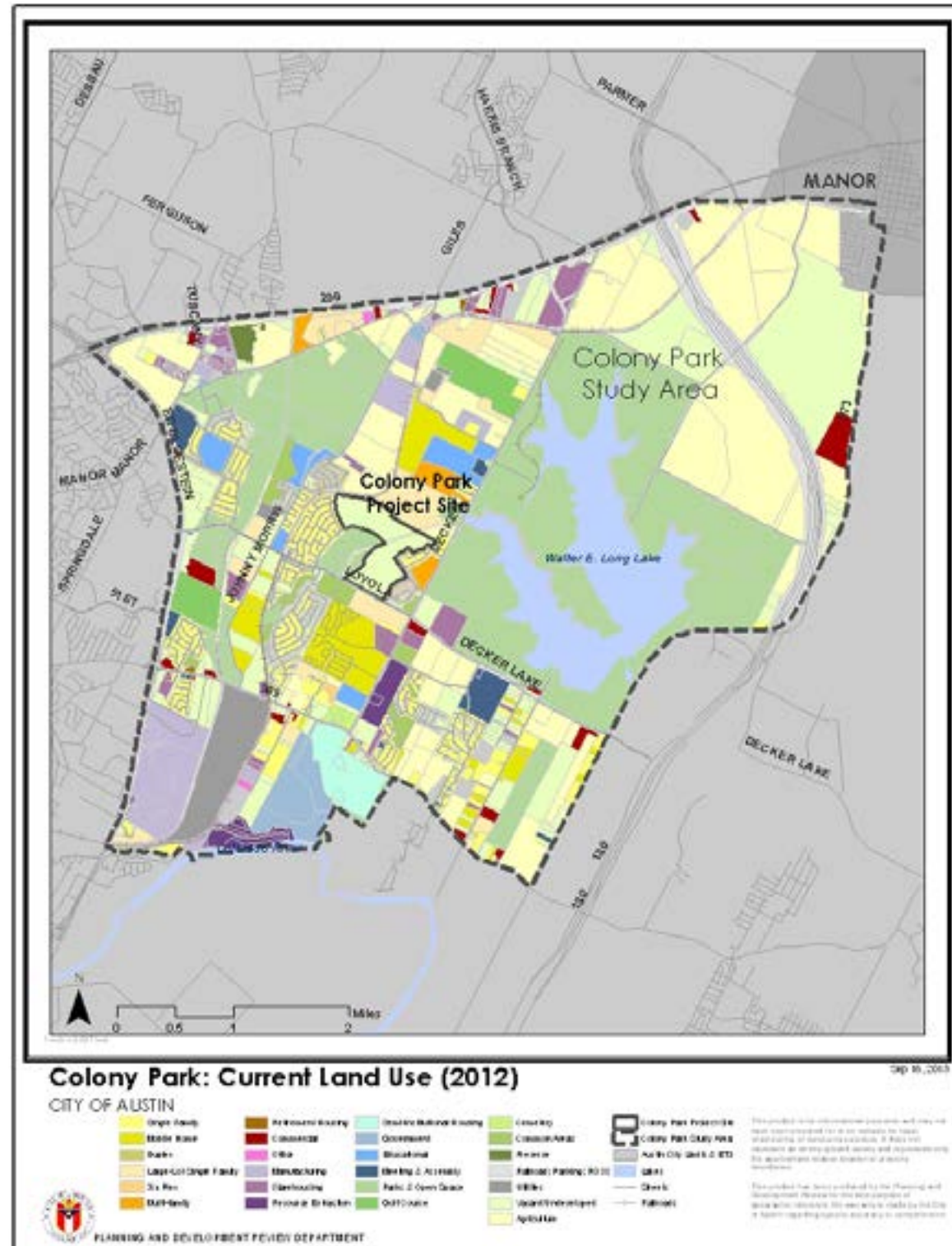
- **Higher commuting costs**

While residents may be able to purchase a home, the lack of significant employment opportunities and convenient access to goods and services in or near the project area, limited transit service, and volatile fuel prices could force residents, many with modest incomes, to spend an increasingly disproportionate amount of their income for commuting to work and attending to their daily needs.

- **Lower median family incomes**

Blanchflower and Oswald (2013) also note that increases in home ownership have also been linked to fewer businesses. If down payments, mortgages, and commuting costs tie up a high portion of households' income, they'll have less cashflow for paying other household expenses. This would be even greater for households with lower incomes. In addition, the funding, time, and energy one spends to maintaining the home may cut into the resources needed to starting one's own business or shopping at others. In addition, retailers may require households with higher levels disposable incomes or greater population density than currently afforded by the low-density, entry-level housing in the project area.





## LAND USE & ZONING

The land use and zoning analysis focused on the area's major arterial roadways: Decker Lane, MLK Boulevard/FM 969, and Loyola Lane. Although projects creating more complete communities could occur on sites without access or adjacency to one of these roadways, it is unlikely.

The large project area (26.2 sq. miles) contains a broad range of land uses and zoned and unzoned land. It contains a mix of suburban residential development, several mobile home parks, large-lot single-family homesteads, large tracts of vacant and agricultural lands, and numerous smaller-scaled warehouse and industrial uses. This hodgepodge of uses is very typical of the land use mix found at the transition from the more regulated land within the city to the less regulated land in the county.

When analyzing an area for its completeness, it is important to clarify that zoning regulations do not guarantee a particular type of development will occur. The regulations associated with a given zone only indicate that particular building orientations, setbacks, heights, and uses are allowed on a property. However, an analysis may demonstrate that the specific application a zoning districts to given locations or that the specific provisions of the regulations such as setbacks, height, allowed uses, etc. may hinder completeness. If this finding is made:

- Sites could be rezoned by either the owner or the City of Austin
- The regulations amended

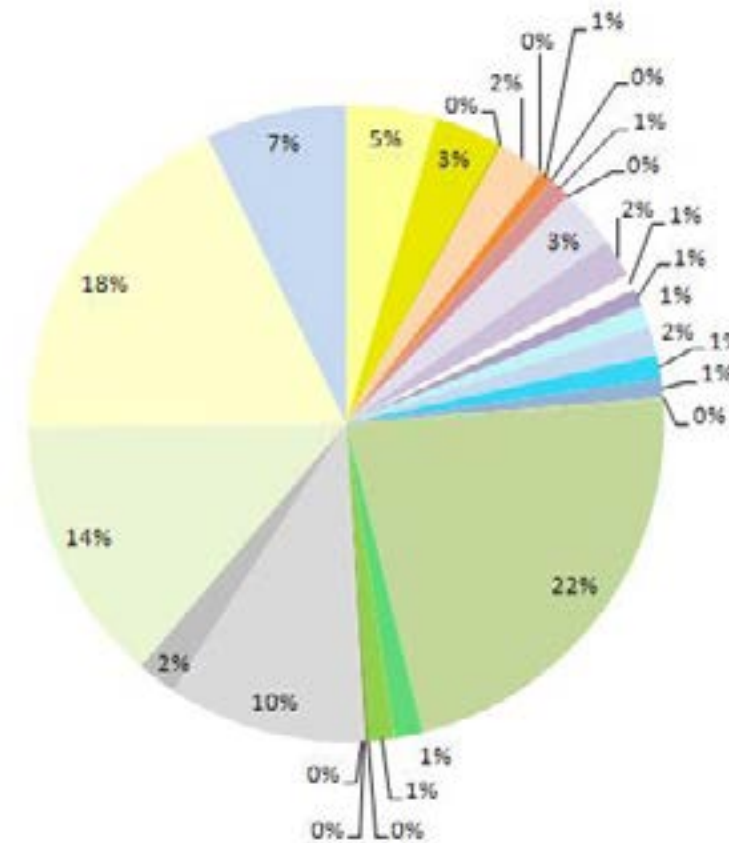
to allow for the possibility creating a more complete community. For the project area, both are presently options. In coordination with or as a part of the Colony Park Sustainable Community Initiative, a public involvement process could generate recommendations that

Code	Land Use Description	Total Acres	Percentage of Total Acres
100	Single Family	762	5%
113	Mobile Homes	548	3%
150	Duplexes	36	0%
160	Large-lot Single Family	383	2%
210	Three/Fourplex	11	0%
220	Apartment/Condo	114	1%
240	Retirement Housing	5	0%
300	Commercial	181	1%
400	Office	11	0%
510	Manufacturing	479	3%
520	Warehousing	331	2%
530	Misc. Industrial	128	1%
560	Resource Extraction	150	1%
610	Semi-Institutional Housing	184	1%
630	Government Services	249	2%
640	Educational	203	1%
650	Meeting and Assembly	150	1%
670	Cemetaries	26	0%
710	Parks/Greenbelts	3,693	22%
720	Golf Courses	235	1%
740	Common Areas	209	1%
750	Preserves	40	0%
810	Railroad Facilities	25	0%
850	Parking	0	0%
860	Streets and Roads	1,648	10%
870	Utilities	336	2%
900	Undeveloped	2,267	14%
910	Agricultural	2,972	18%
940	Water	1,193	7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>16,569</b>	<b>100%</b>

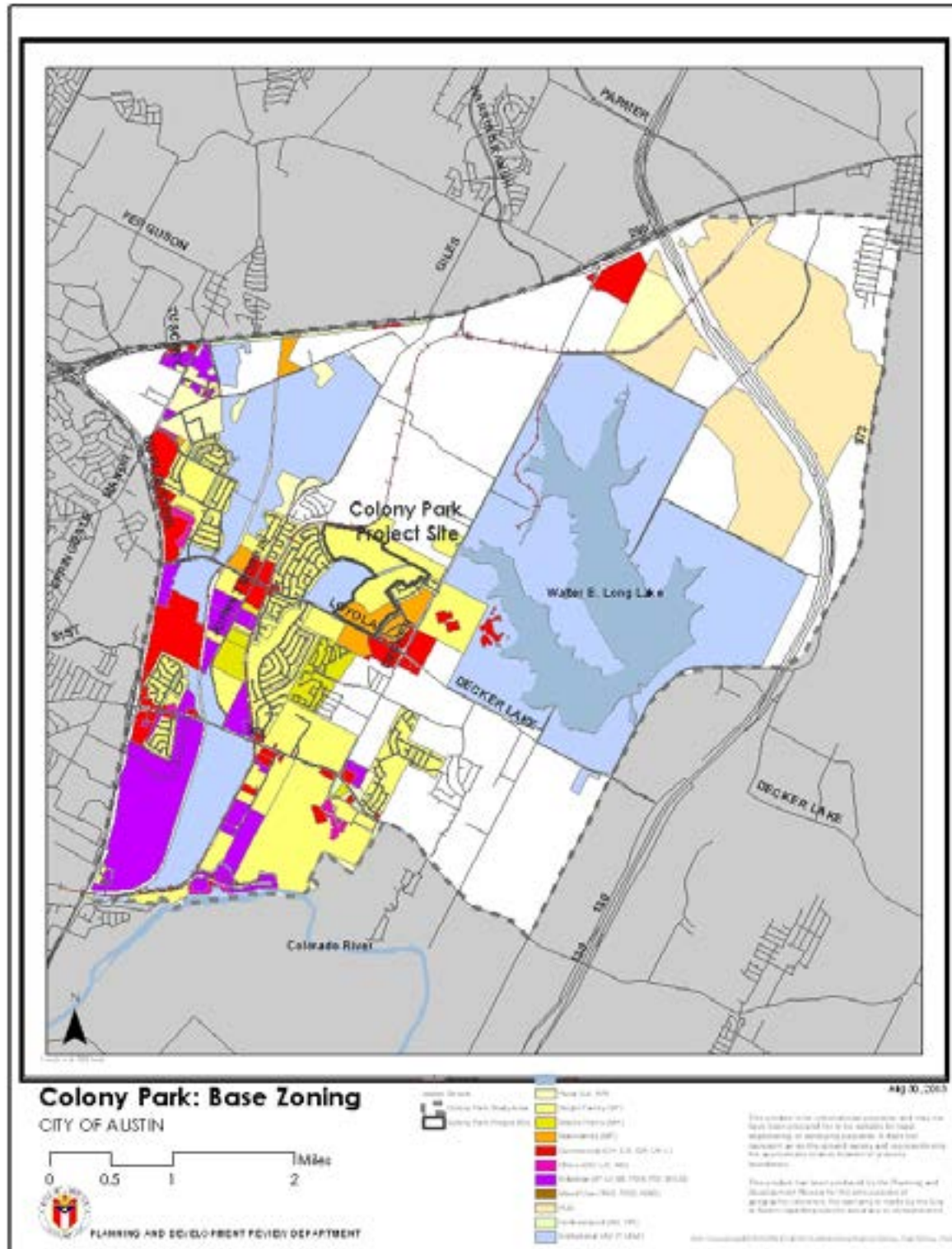
inform the ongoing Land Development Code (LDC) Revision process and/or recommend a series of rezonings in advance of a new code being adopted.

## LAND USE DISTRIBUTION

Unlike most areas of Austin, the project area has a significant amount of land used for low intensity purposes. Sixty-one percent of the land is either parkland (22%), in agricultural use (18%), undeveloped (14%), or water (7%). The next significant percentage of land is used for housing of all types (11%). Roads and streets account for a smaller percentage of the area (10%). All types of commercial and industrial-type uses account for even less of the area (8%).





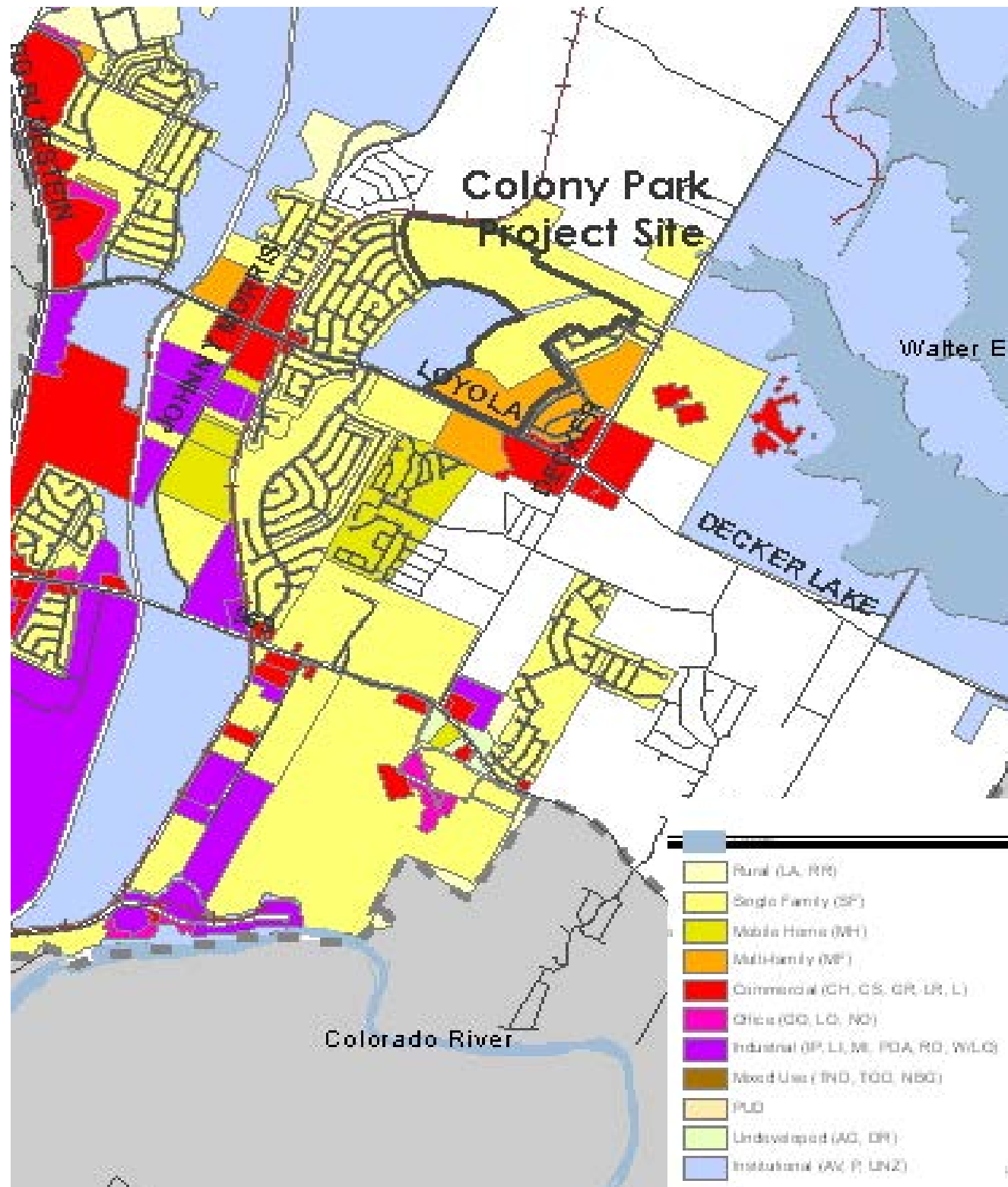


## DECKER LANE:

### US 290/Manor Expressway to Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road

The wide variety of uses along the western side of Decker Lane from US 290/Manor Expressway to Mayview Lane reflects the lack of land use planning and zoning typical of unincorporated areas. Along this segment of the roadway there are large tracts of undeveloped and agricultural lands, the +150-acre private Bluebonnet Golf Course, the Eagle's Landing Apartment community, a small neighborhood, and two Manor ISD schools (Decker Middle and Decker Elementary Schools). South of Mayview Drive to Loyola Lane is within Austin city limits. The zoning along this segment of the western side is a mix of MF-2 (Multi-Family Residence-Low Density) and SF-2 (Single Family Residence-Standard Lot) and SF-3 (Family Residence) and appears to be mostly built out to those standards. At the northwest corner of the intersection with Loyola Lane there is a sizable tract of GR (Community Commercial) which would allow a number of commercial uses that include all allowable automotive uses (washing, repair, sales, etc.).

Beginning at US 290/Manor Expressway, the eastern side of Decker Lane has a very rural character with large tracts of undeveloped land, some of which is in limited agricultural production. Near the intersection of US 290/Manor Expressway and Decker Lane, the land within the city limits is zoned with the intensive CH-CO (Commercial Highway with a Conditional Overlay limiting some aspects of the base zoning). This zoning extends to SH 130 and reflects the type of development often occurring at highway intersections. Near the intersection with Lindell Lane and the railroad tracks there are industrial uses which include an Austin Energy storage facility and Lester Field, a large landing strip for radio-controlled aircraft. Including and extending south of the Austin Energy facility are publically-owned



lands zoned P (Public) and includes the Decker Creek Power Station, and the park/preserve lands surrounding Lake Walter E. Long and the Travis County Exposition Center.

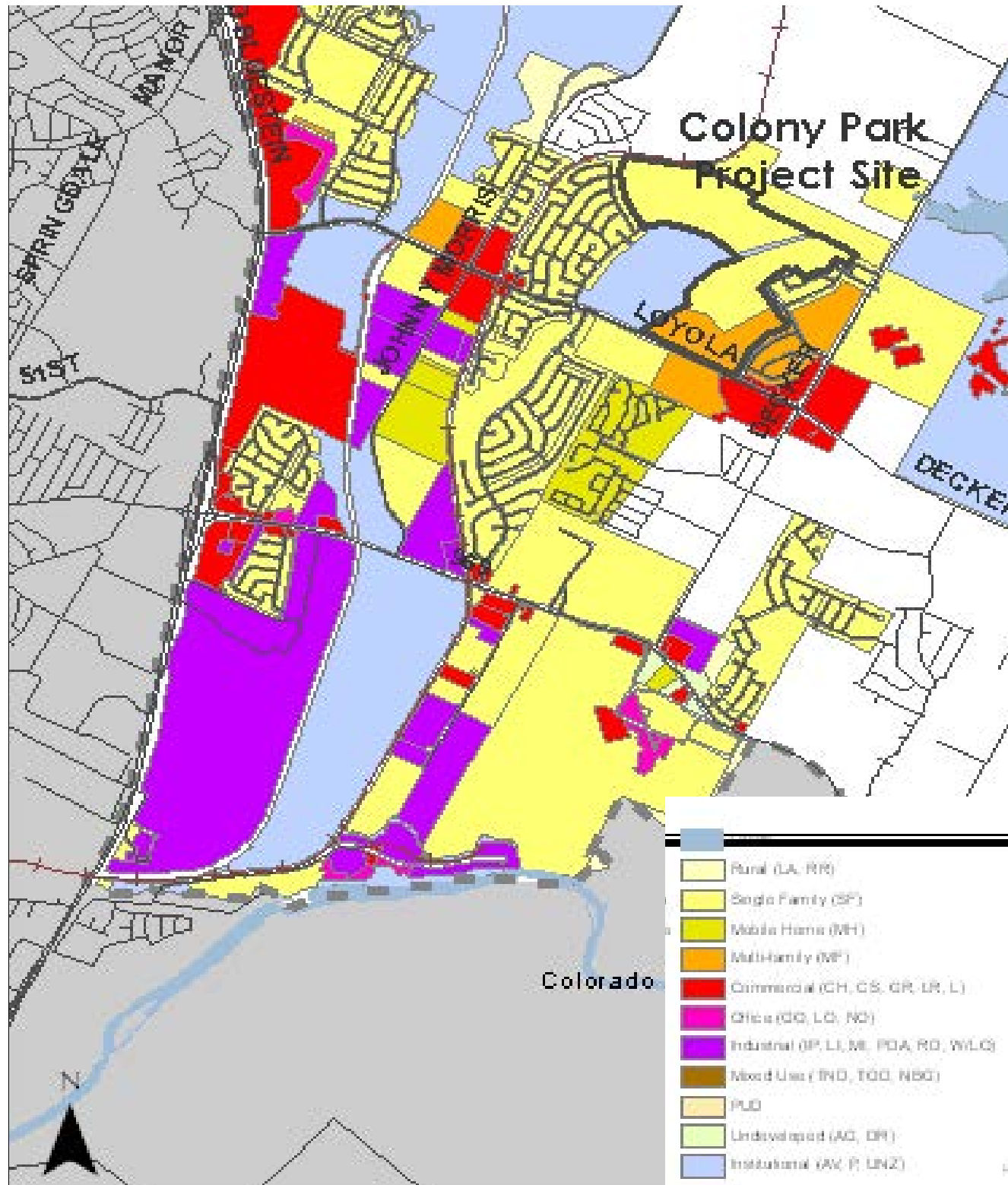
**DECKER LANE:**

**Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road to MLK Boulevard/FM 969**

At the southwest corner of the Loyola Lane and Decker Lane is a large, undeveloped tract zoned GR (Community Commercial) which, like on the opposite side of Loyola Lane, would allow a number of commercial uses that include all allowable automotive uses (washing, repair, sales, etc.). Continuing on the west side of the road for approximately a half mile the land is within the county and contains an emerging industrial district. South of the district the land is once again in the city and is mostly undeveloped except for the Manor ISD Oak Meadows Elementary School. The land along this segment is zoned SF-2 (Single Family Residence-Standard Lot).

On the eastern side of Decker Lane south of the intersection with Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road is one of the few commercial locations in the entire project area. There is a convenience retail center, car wash, and night club. The commercial center is zoned GR-CO (Community Commercial/ Conditional Overlay) and the night club is zoned CS1-CO (Commercial Services-Liquor Sales/Conditional Overlay). To the south of this site, the land is in the county and is largely undeveloped except for a trucking company adjacent to the commercial center. The land remains in the county until the intersection MLK Boulevard/FM 969. At the intersection there are several large undeveloped tracts zoned for a variety of uses: GR, GR-CO, and IP (Industrial Park/Conditional Overlay).



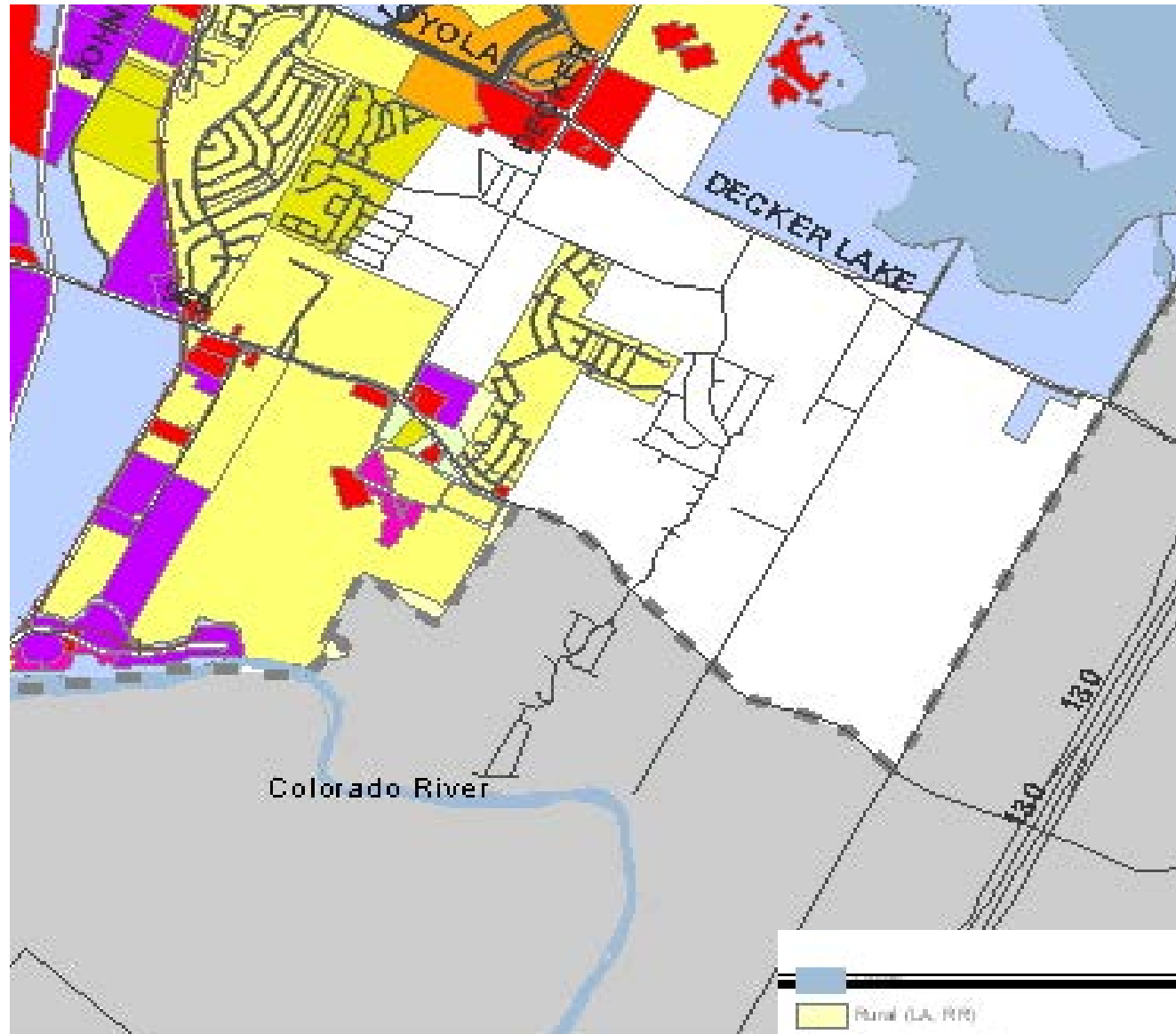


South of the T-intersection with MLK Boulevard/FM 969 is the 436-acre site of the former Travis State School which closed in 1999. The site is currently undergoing some redevelopment and repurposing and is the location of several charter schools and a coffee roasting plant. The zoning is a mix of SF-3, GO-CO, and GR-CO (General Office/Conditional Overlay).

### MLK BOULEVARD/FM 969: US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard to Decker Lane

The area along MLK Boulevard/FM 969 between US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard and project area's eastern boundary, FM 973, has a rural nature and, in areas not within Walnut Creek's flood plain, sparingly developed. The jumble of zoning along the roadway reflects its semi-rural nature and its function as a highway linking east and southeast Travis County, the Village of Webberville, and northern Bastrop County to Austin.

Between Ed Bluestein and the railroad tracks, there is a mix of vacant land (much of which is within the 100-year flood plain), entrances to two neighborhoods, several commercial uses, a church, and a recycling facility. In addition, at the intersection with Ed Bluestein there is a long-abandoned, partially constructed commercial site. The zoning along this segment of MLK Boulevard/FM 969 is an wide assortment of commercial and industrial zoning districts ranging from CS-1-MU-NP (Commercial Services-Liquor Sales/Mixed-Use Combining District/Conditional Overlay/Neighborhood Plan) to LR-MU to GO-NP (General Office/Neighborhood Plan) to W/LO-CO (Warehouse Limited Office/Conditional Overlay) to LI (Limited Industrial Services) to LI-PDA-NP (Limited Industrial Services/Planned Development Area Combining District/Neighborhood Plan). Considered together, this mix of zoning would allow for rather intensive commercial uses. This segment of MLK Boulevard/



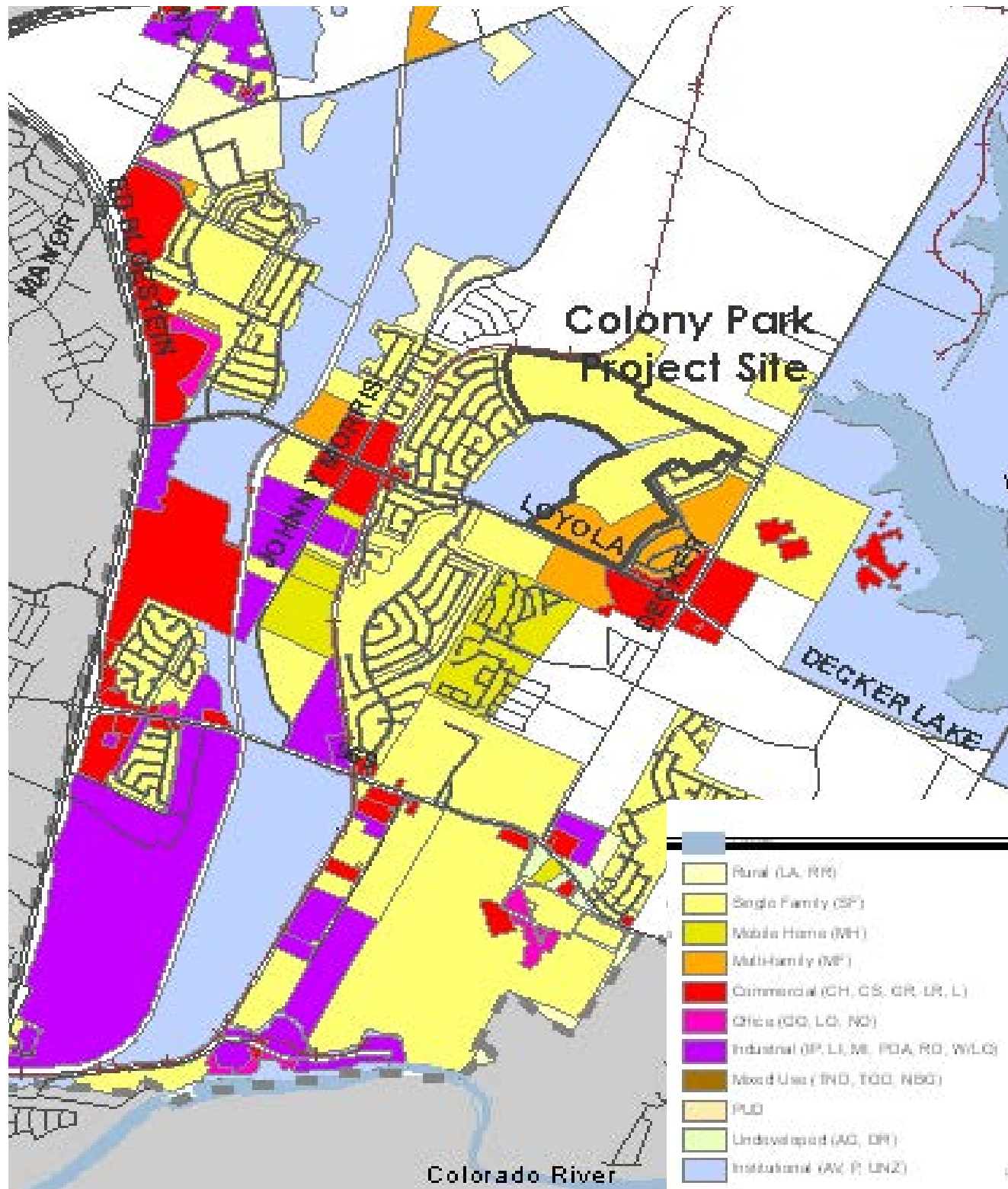
- Rural (LA, RM)
- Single Family (SF)
- Mobile Home (MH)
- Multi-Family (MF)
- Commercial (CH, CS, CR, LR, L)
- Office (OO, LO, NO)
- Industrial (IF, LI, MI, PDA, RD, WLC)
- Mixed Use (TND, TOD, NBO)
- PUD
- Undeveloped (AO, DR)
- Institutional (AX, P, UNZ)

FM 969 also crosses through the Walnut Creek's almost half mile wide flood plain. Between the rail line and Decker Lane there is a jumble of residential and commercial zoning and a number of intensive commercial and industrial uses. There are two notable exceptions to the area west of the rail tracks. The first is the P (Public) zoning at the site of the Walnut Creek Water Treatment Plant. The second is the residentially-zoned land which includes large amounts of undeveloped acreage zoned SF-2 and SF-3. The undeveloped land, the sparse and mixed development, posted speed limits, and wide travel lanes reinforce semi-rural-highway feel of the roadway which increases as the roadway extends to the east.

**MLK BOULEVARD/FM 969:**  
**Decker Lane to FM 973**

East of the intersection of Decker Lane, MLK Boulevard/FM 969 there is a cluster of residential uses and zoning districts. The zoning mix includes MH (Mobile Home), SF-3, and SF-4A-CO (Single-Family Residence—Small Lot). There are also several lots zoned DR (Development Reserve). DR zoning is a designation for a temporary use or a use that will not commit land to a particular use pattern or intensity. The DR zoned property was annexed into Austin in the mid-1970s (south side of the road) and the mid-1980 (north side). The continuance of DR zoning indicates that this area has seen very little development interest. East of the cluster of residential uses, on the south side of the road is the undeveloped City of Austin's John Trevino Jr. Park at Morrison Ranch. East of the park, the roadway enters the country and becomes increasingly more rural until it reaches the project area's boundary, FM 973. Located on or immediately off of MLK Boulevard/FM 969 there are several sizable auto salvage facilities as well as a mix of small businesses and residential areas.



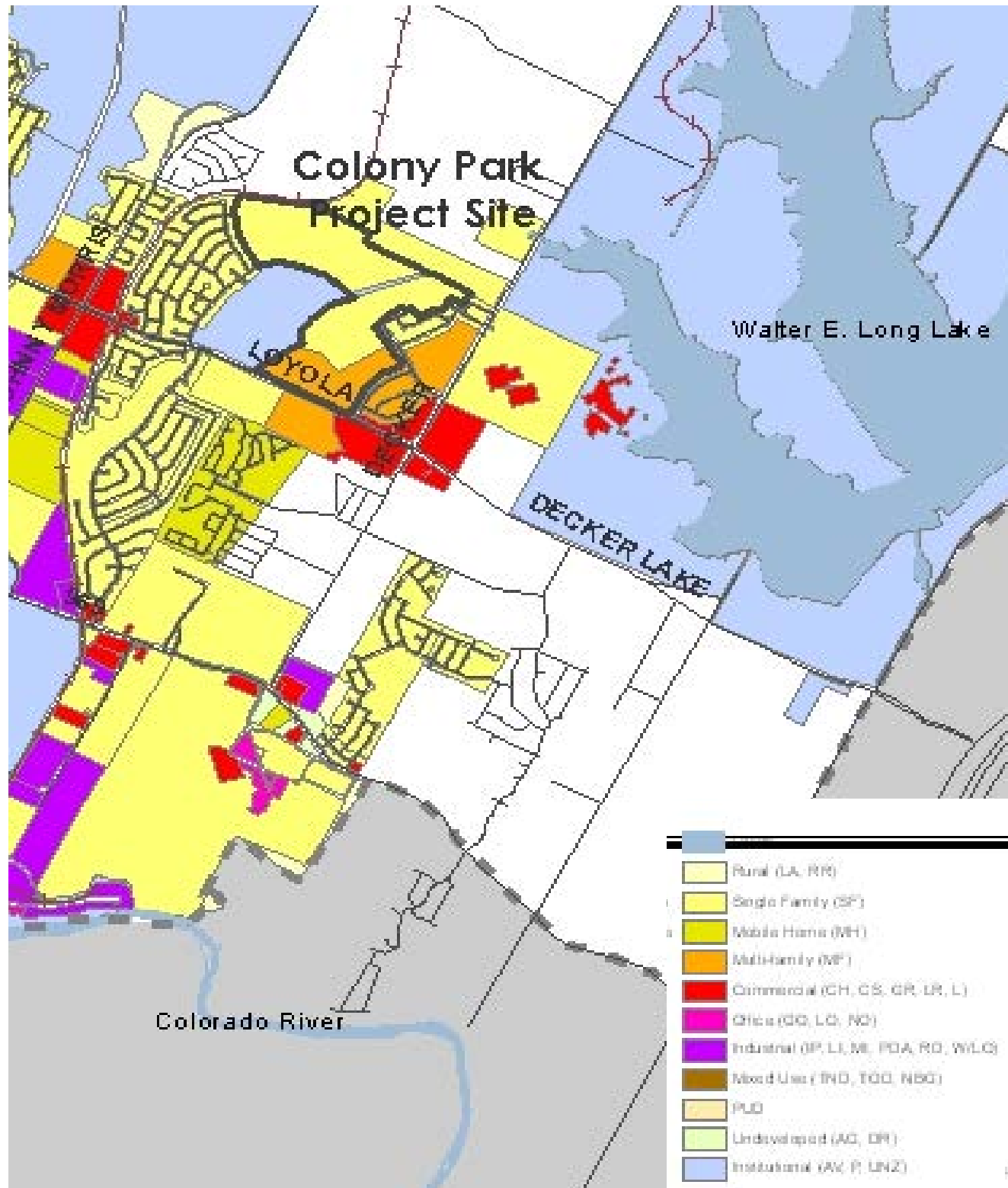


### LOYOLA LANE:

#### US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard to Johnny Morris Road

The three major thoroughfares discussed in this section are listed as arterial roadways in the Austin Metropolitan Transportation Plan. However, unlike MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and Decker Lane's semi-rural and rural character, Loyola Lane has the characteristics to become an urban roadway. It is curbed and guttered, has sidewalks on both sides of the road, striped bicycle lanes, a center median, and lower posted speed limits (particularly on its western half). These characteristics create a more local feel which is also exhibited in the less intensive zoning along Loyola Lane between Ed Bluestein Boulevard/US 183 and Decker Lane.

Between US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard and the Giddings to Llano rail line the majority of the land is undeveloped and much of that is within Walnut Creek's flood plain. There is the Walnut Creek Greenway, Davis/White Northeast Neighborhood Park, a large garden-style apartment complex, and Austin ISD's Barbara Jordan Early College Prep School Elementary School. At the intersection with US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard there is LI (Limited Industrial Services) zoning on the south side and GR on the north. Between these commercial sites and the unused rail road right-of-way the greenway and parkland is zoned P (Public). Between the right-of-way and the active rail tracks, the land is zoned SF-3 on the south side and MF-3-CO (Multi-Family Residence - Medium Density/Conditional Overlay) on the north. The Park Place on Loyola Apartments, a typical suburban-styled project, is on the multi-family zoned property. At the intersection of Loyola Lane and Johnny Morris Road three of corners are undeveloped and zoned LR. The northeast corner is zoned LR and contains the Barbara Jordan Early College Prep School Elementary School.



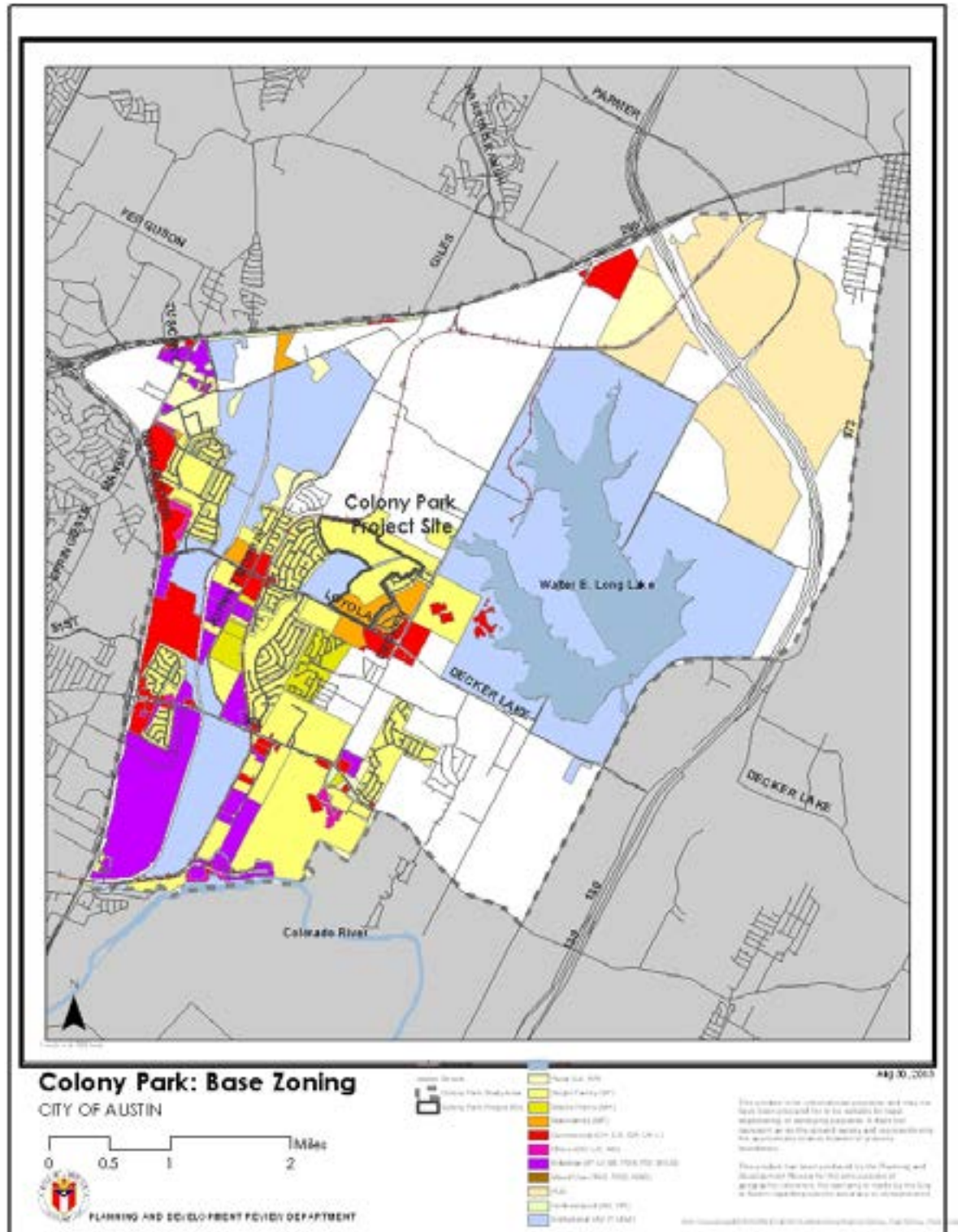
**LOYOLA LANE:**

***Giddings to Llano Railroad to Decker Lane***

Immediately east of the railroad tracks there is another cluster of LR zoning at three of the corners of the intersection of Loyola Lane and Sandshof Drive. The commercial zoning includes a service station/convenience store on the northwestern corner, four single family houses on the northeast corner and the French Hall Academy preschool on the southwest corner. To the east are the Colony Park neighborhood on the north side and the Park Place neighborhood on the south. Colony Park is zoned SF-2 and Park Place is zoned a mix of SF-2 and SF-3. Duplexes are allowed in SF-3, but not SF-2.

On the north side, east of the Colony Park neighborhood is the project site. The site is zoned P and is largely undeveloped except for the adjacent Volma Overton Elementary School and the Turner-Roberts Recreation Center. East of the project site there is a large track of undeveloped land zoned MF-2 (Multi-Family Residence - Low Density). Between this land and Decker Lane are the MF-2 and SF-3 zoned Colony Meadows and Lakeside neighborhoods. Between Wentworth Drive and Decker Lane the land is zoned Gr and GR-CO. On the south side of the Loyola Lane between Sendero Hills Parkway and Decker Lane the land is undeveloped and zoned a mix of SF-2, MF-2 and GR.





### US 290/MANOR EXPRESSWAY

Along the freeway and northern boundary of the project area there is mix of large tracts of undeveloped land, industrial uses, and a large garden-styled apartment complex. For those areas within Austin's city limits, the zoning is a mix of industrial and commercial. The notable exception is near the southwest corner of the intersection of SH 130 and US 290/Manor Expressway. There large tracts of CH-CO (Commercial Highway/Conditional Overlay), PUD (Planned Unit Development), and a large tract of recently annexed I-RR (Interim/Rural Residence District). This zoning was put in place in anticipation of the development anticipated with the completion of the SH-130 and US 290/Manor Expressway toll roads.

### ED BLUESTEIN BOULEVARD/US 183

The zoning along Ed Bluestein Boulevard/US 183 between the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Agency (Capital Metro) railroad and Marcel Gres Drive is LI-NP and includes the Freescale Semiconductor chip manufacturing and a business park. North of Marcel Gres Drive the zoning is a mix of CS-CO-NP, GR-CO-NP, and GR. Much of this land is part of Harvey Penick Golf Campus, the YMCA, and the Wilhelmina Delco Center.

## Implications: Land Use & Zoning

There are a number of complete community implications related to land use and zoning.

- **Loyola Lane**  
Unlike the other major arterial roadways in the project area, Loyola Lane could serve as a “neighborhood main street” and provide the basis for creating a complete community for present and future neighborhoods.
- **Rural Nature of the Project Area**  
The rural and semi-rural nature of much of project area and the low population density does not provide a very desirable location for most retail and commercial services providers. Without an increased customer base it is unlikely the area could support a significant or diverse amount of new retail or services.
- **Unplanned Distribution of Zoning**  
In parts of the project area where there is zoning, particularly along MLK Boulevard/FM 969, it is distributed in a scattershot fashion. Even in areas covered by a neighborhood plan, the application of zoning appears to recognize the zoning that existed prior to the plan or existing uses. The lack of a sustainable community vision and the application of land use regulations to encourage that vision are a major impediment to creating a regulatory framework for a more complete community.
- **Current Zoning Regulation & Subchapter E**  
Austin’s land development regulations, like those of most American Sunbelt cities, promote the development of an automobile-oriented built environment. For Austin, this is particularly true in areas located away from the central core, such as the project area.

However, within the central parts of Austin, there are tools that have been used to promote more compact and connected places such as the:

- University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO) promotes dense, urban development west of the University of Texas
- Vertical Mixed Use Combining District (VMU) promoting vertically integrated commercial and residential developments along major roadways
- Transit Oriented Development District (TOD) promotes the creation of transit-supportive and people-oriented places
- East Riverside Corridor District (ERC) promotes redevelopment along East Riverside Drive into an urban mixed-use neighborhood that is more pedestrian friendly and takes advantage of existing and future transit options.

Austin’s Land Development Code, in Subchapter E: Design Standards and Mixed Use, contains a hierarchy of roadway types which establishes building placement requirements and mandatory improvements to public rights-of-way as tools to foster a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The most widely applicable of these roadways designations are:

- Highways include all freeways, parkways, expressways, and frontage roads identified in the Austin Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan, except for Core Transit Corridors
- Core Transit Corridors and Future Core Transit Corridors are roadways that have or will have a sufficient population density, mix of uses, and transit facilities to encourage and support transit use
- Urban Roadways are roadways other than those designated as Core Transit Corridors and Highways located within the Urban Roadway Boundary most of central Austin)



- Suburban Roadways are roads outside the Urban Roadway Boundary that are not classified as other types of roadways.

The regulations for the Core and Future Core Transit Corridors and the Urban Roadways promote, to greater and lesser degrees, more urban and pedestrian-oriented buildings and streetscapes: greater proportions of buildings sited closer to the sidewalk, wider sidewalks, and street trees. This is not required along those roadways designated as Highways and Suburban Roadways. Within the project area most of the roadways are designated as Suburban Roadways (the two exceptions are US 290/Memor Expressway and Ed Bluestein Boulevard/US 183.) Under the Suburban Roadway provisions, new commercial development must provide, at a minimum, a 7' wide planting zone adjacent to the roadway which may, or may not be paved and a 5' wide sidewalk behind the planting zone. Street trees are suggested along Suburban Roadways, but not required. Furthermore, the Subchapter E sidewalk requirements do not apply to multi-family zoning, unless the project is being developed under GR-MU or more intensive commercial-mixed use zoning. In addition, there are no minimum building setback requirements from the roadway.

While the Subchapter E provisions for Suburban Roadways may create a better looking suburban-styled development, they do very little to cultivate a pedestrian-friendly built environment—other than create a 7' buffer between the sidewalk and the roadway. However, designating a roadway, such as Loyola Lane, as a Core Transit Corridor can create a local regulatory framework conducive to creating a more pedestrian-friendly built environment as it relates to commercial and mixed use develop-

ment. This designation could serve as a temporary measure while the code revision project is underway. In addition, adding the Vertical Mixed Use Combining District (V) to commercially zoned property could allow, but not require, more pedestrian-oriented development if a mixed use project is constructed.

Under the current zoning code, regulatory changes can be made to promote pedestrian-friendly commercial development; however, no mechanism presently exists to address apartment projects built under multi-family zoning. Other than the exception mentioned above, the regulations governing multi-family do not mandate development that creates a pedestrian-friendly built environment. Consequently, if the large tracks of vacant multi-family zoned property in the project area were developed under the current multi-family regulations, the results would most likely be the typical suburban-styled garden apartments. While perfectly adequate to house people, they do very little to foster a healthy, vibrant pedestrian environment. Due to limited transit service, resident living in these future complexes would also be largely dependent on their cars for most daily trips.

- **The Project Site**

The project could serve as a catalyst for change along Loyola Lane; however, there are a number of factors that could impede that transformation. These include:

- Very low population density
- Existing zoning of parcels along Loyola Lane

The City of Austin's land development regulations. A disconnected land use pattern and transportation network in the neighborhoods adjacent to Loyola Lane.

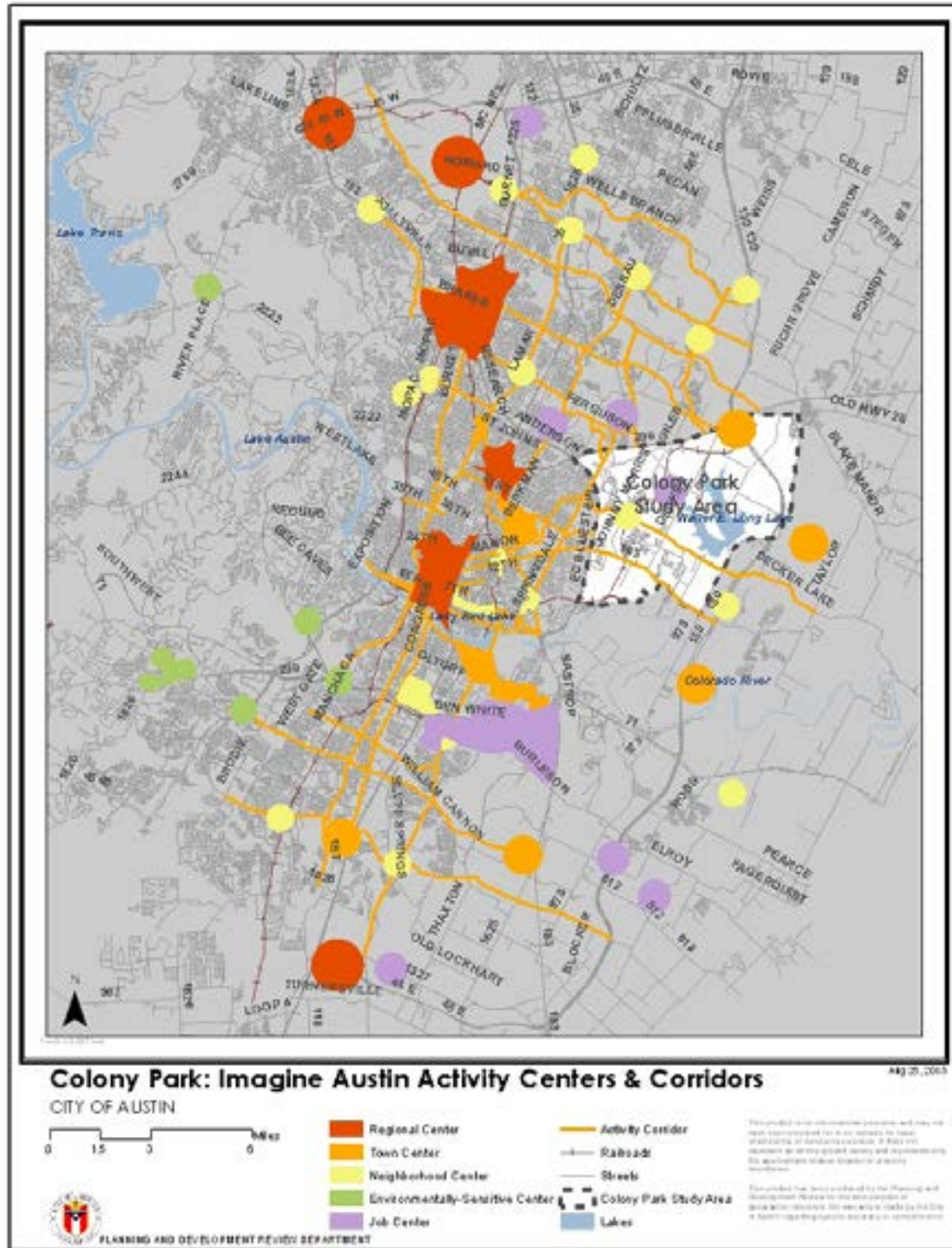
Before any short or medium-term regulatory changes are made, a visioning process is needed for Loyola Lane. The results of this process would subsequently inform additional reconditions.

- **Development Trends**

If recent development trends are indicative what may occur in the near future, the area may soon be poised for rapid development. If this trend does continue, it remains to be seen what the target market segment and the housing mix will be. However, if developed under the current land development regulations (subdivision, zoning, criteria manuals, etc.) and absent a coherent community vision, there is a very strong likelihood that the resulting development will perpetuate a pedestrian-unfriendly land use pattern and an equally unfriendly, corresponding transportation network.







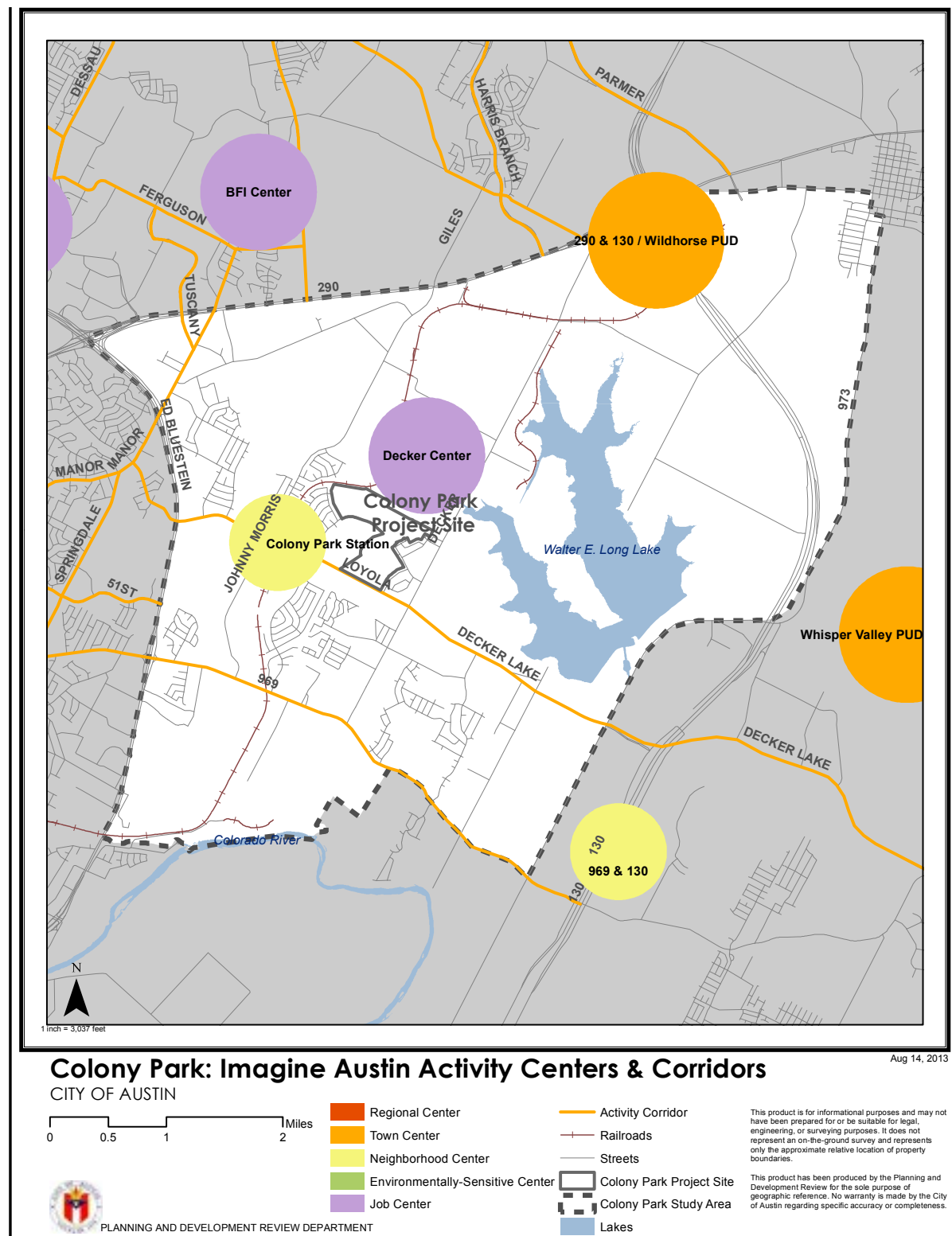




## IMAGINE AUSTIN'S GROWTH CONCEPT MAP

Imagine Austin's Growth Concept Map on page XX illustrates a future development pattern of what compact, connected and complete communities across Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) might look like. It creates centers of activity (called activity centers, activity corridors, or job centers) and links them together through future transportation improvements. These activity centers and corridors allow people to live, work, learn, play, shop, access services, people watch, recreate, and hang out without travelling long distances or enduring a lengthy commute.

Activity Center/Corridor Type	Description
 Neighborhood Center	Smallest and most locally-focused center. Businesses and services generally serve the center and surrounding neighborhoods.
 Town Center	Middle-sized center. These have a variety of housing types. A range of employers with regional customer and employee bases. They also provide goods and services for the center, the region, and the surrounding neighborhoods.
 Job Center	These centers accommodate businesses not well-suited for residential or environmentally sensitive areas. They take advantage of access to transportation infrastructure.
 Activity Corridor	These are characterized by the activities and buildings located along them— shopping, restaurants and cafés, parks, schools, single-family houses, apartments, public buildings, houses of worship, mixed-use buildings, and offices with transportation infrastructure linking them to other corridors, activity centers, and adjacent neighborhoods.



## ACTIVITY CENTERS IN THE PROJECT AREA

Imagine Austin's activity centers are generally focused around one or more major transit hubs. These hubs are where the greatest density of people and activity will be located. Centers will feature a mix of retail, offices, open space and parks; public uses and services such as libraries and government offices; and a variety of housing choices.

The activity centers in or near the project area, like most of the centers identified on the Growth Concept Map, are depicted by large circles indicating approximate scale and location. There are a number of activity centers on the map with more definite boundaries that were established through adopted small area plans. These include centers include those for East Riverside Drive or Highland Mall, and reflect boundaries in through those plans.

There are three types of activity centers (neighborhood, town, and job) located within the project area. The first is a town center located at the intersection of SH 130 and US 290/Manor Expressway. The second is a neighborhood center located at the intersection of Loyola Lane and the railroad tracks. This center includes 10-acres of Capital Metro-owned land and is located to take advantage of a potential transit stop should the proposed Green Line go into operation. The third is a job center located north of the project site off at the intersection of Daffan Lane and Johnny Morris Road.



## ACTIVITY CORRIDORS IN PROJECT AREA

Activity corridors feature the same variety of uses as centers; however, their linear nature spreads uses along roadways. Activity corridors are primarily located along arterial roadways and serve as linkages between most activity centers. The two activity corridors in the project area are along MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road.

### **MLK Boulevard/FM 969**

The activity corridor designation for MLK Boulevard/FM 969 begins in central Austin at North Lamar Boulevard and extends over 9 miles east to SH 130. Almost half of the activity corridor (4 miles) lies within the project area from US 183/Ed Bluestein and FM 973.

### **Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road**

The activity corridor designation along Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road begins at Manor Road and extends over 8 miles east where it ends at Taylor Lane just east of SH 130. Again, about half of the activity corridor lies within the project area - extending for about 4 miles between Ed Bluestein/US 183 and FM 973.

However, while most new development will occur in centers and along corridors, some infill development will occur in locations outside the centers and corridors:

“Infill development can occur as redevelopment of obsolete office, retail, or residential sites or as new development on vacant land within largely developed areas. New commercial, office, larger apartments, and institutional uses such as schools and churches, may also be located in areas outside of centers and corridors. The design of new development should be sensitive to and complement its context.”  
(Imagine Austin, Pg. 107)

## Implications: Growth Concept Map

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Growth Concept Map has several complete community implications for the project area:

- **Expanded retail and Service Options**

The development of the activity centers and activity corridors in and near the project area could increase the availability of goods and services in an area of Austin and Travis County with very little current access to daily necessities. Zoning and other regulatory changes could establish entitlements along the corridor to encourage more local-serving goods and services and promote a more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment.

- **Shortened Household Trips**

As the activity centers and corridors develop provide more goods and services in and near the project area, residents may be able to make shorter trips to meet many of their daily needs. Shorter trips can reduce household transportation expenditures and reduce the need to always use the car for errands.

- **Shortened Commuting Trips**

The development of the activity center, the activity corridor along Loyola Lane, and the other centers in and near the project area could also provide additional employment opportunities. The job center located to the north of the project site could provide much needed job opportunities. Local employment opportunities may mean shorter commute distances and times to work, which could reduce transportation expenditures.

## FINDINGS

The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan uses the idea of compact, connected and complete communities as a way for Austin to develop into a more economically, socially and environmentally sustainable community. Using complete communities as a lens, this report analyzed the completeness of the Colony Park project area and identified a number of significant obstacles to it becoming a more complete community.

- **The Colony Park project area is isolated from the rest of Austin.**

The project area is surrounded by large physical barriers, including three freeways to the west, east and north, and the Colorado River to the south. Although the freeways provide access to Austin and the region, their current (US 209 and SH 130) and future (US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard) statuses as toll roads could be significant deterrents to their use, especially by lower income motorists who live in the project area.

Only two roadways (MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and Loyola Lane) connect the project area to central and northeast Austin. At the same time, two other two major roadways (Johnny Morris Road and Decker Lane) bisect the project area and serve as connections between US 290/Manor Expressway and MLK Boulevard/FM 969.

The area is also isolated by limited transit service as a result of the area's very low population density and lack of significant employment centers. In addition, the limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure provide only partial linkages outside of the project area.

- **The Colony Park project area is internally unconnected.**

As much as the project area is disconnected from the rest of Austin, the neighborhoods are equally unconnected from one another. Many of these neighborhoods only connect to one of the project area's arterial roadways (Loyola Lane, Decker Lane, and MLK Boulevard/FM 969) and few connect to other developments. In addition, a lack of a grid street network increases distances between destinations. As a consequence, pedestrian and bicycle travel is not direct or convenient.

- **The Colony Park project area has a lower population density and median family income, and fewer local-serving goods and services.**

The project area has a quasi-suburban, quasi-rural development pattern, that is dominated by single family housing types. As a result, the project area has a very low population and housing density.

Currently, available goods and services are limited to convenience retail. However, these areas are difficult to accessible without a car and are not well-served by transit. In addition, high homeownership rates, paired with lower incomes and educational attainment, may make attracting additional businesses a challenge due to households with less disposable income.

- **There are few programmed, neighborhood parks in the Colony Park project area.**

The Austin Parks and Recreation Long Range Plan (adopted 11/118/10) contains Parks Service Areas (Gap Analysis) Map (p. 173) illustrating that there are numerous parks in the project area, but that the demographic need is not



currently present. If the project area develops in a more compact and connect fashion, there could be a need for more, smaller parks.

- **The land use regulations currently applied to most of the project area do not support the development of a walkable and bikable built environment.**

Aside from notable exceptions previously listed in this report, Austin's land development regulations do not actively promote the types of compact and connected places envisioned in Imagine Austin. The zoning most frequently applied to areas at the urban margins, like the project area, too often results in a built environment hostile to pedestrians and bicyclists and practically compels automobile usage. Current zoning and subdivision regulations won't support a greater variety of housing types, higher density development patterns, or building or infrastructure design that supports walking, bicycling, taking or transit. In fact, the zoning along the area's arterial roadways, along with the Subchapter E design standards, will result in sprawling development that requires driving for most trips.

While the zoning development standards (set-backs, building heights, etc.) are not, for the most part, conducive to creating walkable, urban places, they are not the sole regulatory impediment. With only very minimum standards for access and connectivity, current subdivision regulations do not promote the creation of connected places and neighborhoods. For example, although sidewalks are required at the subdivision stage of the development process, the lack of a sidewalk network and connectivity effectively nullifies their transportation utility.

- **The Colony Park project area currently has few significant employment opportunities.**

The employment opportunities in the project area are largely located along or off of US 290/Manor Expressway, MLK Boulevard/FM 969, and US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard and are mostly smaller-scale industrial or warehouse uses. The exception to the is the high-tech cluster located off of US 183/Ed Bluestein Boulevard, south of MLK Boulevard/FM 969. However, without exception, these areas are not accessible without a car and are not well-served by transit. Like retail, employers follow rooftops, which means more people will likely need to move into the project area before many more businesses move in.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

All communities are complete to greater and lesser degrees and have elements that fulfill people's daily needs. While the project area's currently level of completeness is low, this report identified a number of recommendations to address these obstacles and become a more complete community.

### **Focus on Loyola Lane.**

As the central spine in the project area, the strategic importance of Loyola Lane for the long-term success of the project site and adjacent neighborhoods cannot be understated. For MLK Boulevard/FM 969 and Decker Lane sprawling, low-density commercial development will not have the same negative effect on establishing compact and connected built environment as it would were it to occur along Loyola Lane. Sprawling development along Loyola Lane could negate for the adjacent neighborhoods any of the advantages created by a sustainable and walkable community on the project site.

### **Create a vision for Loyola Lane.**

The efforts for Loyola Lane should include a community planning process to establish a vision for Loyola Lane that addresses the corridor's future character. The visioning results could affect the land development regulations along Loyola Lane in two ways. First, it could provide zoning change recommendations that could serve as interim regulations prior to the adoption and application of a new zoning ordinance for the City of Austin. Second, the visioning could create a future character map that could guide the application of a new zoning code to the Loyola Lane and other parts of the project area.

### **Connect the project area to the city**

Connecting Loyola Lane/Decker Lake Road to SH 130

could improve access to the neighborhood, as well as provide more direct access to SH 130. This connection and improved regional access could help encourage additional residents to move into the area and the development of the activity centers and activity corridors in and near the project area.

### **Connect the community, particularly for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users**

Increasing connectivity within the project area will help residents of all ages and abilities access goods and services. Completing key connections (including from residences to attractors such as concentrations of goods and services and recreational opportunities) will reduce travel distances, allowing people greater choice as to how to travel (drive, walk, bicycle, and transit). Infrastructure investments (such as installing sidewalks, street trees, benches, bike lanes, and covered transit stops) and street designs that accommodate all users, regardless of age or ability, will increase the safety and comfort of these transportation options. Bicycle infrastructure improvements and sidewalks will also support transit improvements.

A significant obstacle to Colony Park becoming a more complete community is the lack of street connectivity between established neighborhoods. Identify opportunities to link existing residential areas to one another by improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. This may require retrofitting existing transportation facilities (such as cul-du-sacs) to improve walking and bicycling connectivity between the presently disconnected residential neighborhoods.

### **Create greater connectivity through greenways.**

Another opportunity is to leverage the investment's the city is making in the trail network within the Project area. These trails will offer greater opportunities for outdoor recreation and for community members to experience nature. Due their linear design, these trail projects will create additional transportation choices in



the project area. This is particularly important given the lack of connectivity within the Project area and constrained current transportation budgets. For an, park trails offer high comfort routes away from roads and an opportunity to access local destinations such as the YMCA as well as other attractors such as Lake Bird trail, particularly in area that has limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities. However, while trail investments may improve mobility in the project area, they are less likely to support transit due trails being located along less developed areas such greenways and creeks.

***Increase housing options in the project area, especially near Loyola Lane.***

Increasing housing options beyond the manufactured and mobile homes, single-family, and garden-styled apartments currently available in the project can expand the commercial markets and also provide housing for a wider range of household incomes.

Currently, the lack of goods and services within the project and along Loyola Lane is largely due to a residential density too low to create a viable customer base. A broader spectrum of lower-scale, but denser housing types could increase the population in a way that compliments the scale of the current residential areas as well as create a customer base to support the goods and services contributing to a complete community.

An expanded palette of housing choices could include single-family houses, as well as bungalow courts/cottage courts, townhouses, row houses, mansion apartment houses (single structures with multiple units designed to look like large houses), secondary apartments/garage apartments, tri- and four-plexes, courtyard apartments, and even modestly-scaled mixed use buildings. Although these building types are denser than the predominant housing type, most of these are smaller-scaled housing types that wouldn't fundamentally alter the community's character. In addition, these

building types contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly built environment, especially compared to the large-scaled blocks of multi-family construction that are typical of developing areas on the urban edge.

A wider range of housing types could provide ownership and rental opportunities for a larger mix of households. Residents with a wider range of incomes can help create a more mixed-income community and a broader customer base to support community amenities and a greater variety of good and services.

***Increase the amount, variety, and accessibility of parkland.***

As the project area becomes more developed there will be an increased need for a greater amount and variety of parkland. Now is the time to plan and set aside land for the future. It will only become more difficult to fund and realize once development pressures increase. For example, as the parkland associated with the project site is developed and programmed it could provide much needed park space and become a "central park" for the neighborhoods along Loyola Lane. However, if the disconnected transportation network is continued throughout the project area, parkland will continue to be largely inaccessible.

***Develop the Imagine Austin job center north of the project site.***

The lack of nearby employment is and will continue to be a burden for many households in the project area. The job center can provide employment opportunities for area residents and significantly reduce commutes. In addition, the job center is situated to take advantage of existing transportation infrastructure in accordance with Imagine Austin policies.

## APPENDIX

The Neighborhood Services Analysis shows areas where walking might be encouraged due to proximity to businesses and services. Areas with “great access” are in close proximity, when travelling along the street network, to a variety of businesses and services.

People living in these well-serviced areas might rely less (or not at all) on their car to obtain products and services. Those living in areas with limited access are likely to be more dependent on their car. We measure proximity along the street network, as opposed to Walkscore.com, which measures proximity “as the crow flies,” regardless of the street network design.

Staff created this analysis using ArcGIS Network Analysis software. The initial analysis was conducted for the 600+ square mile area of the city of Austin and its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). We began by creating approximately 15,000 points along the street network that represent business and service locations. We also added point locations for bus stops and schools. We used the points to create “branches” along the street network that reflect the routes a person could travel if they were walking away from the points and along the street network. The branches equaled distances of 1/4, 1/2, and 1 mile for each point. Major highways, railroads, and steep slopes were used as barriers that a person would have to walk around. The outer reaches of the branches were converted into about 45,000 polygons that represent the outer boundaries of each branch. These “branch” areas can be thought of as service areas. We then assigned scores to each service area polygons. Service areas of 1/4 mile received a 3, 1/2 mile areas a 2, and 1 mile service areas a 1. Areas with 3 have the highest score since they are in closer proximity with each location.

We also created layers representing the density of sidewalks, and the variety of businesses. Areas with a high density of sidewalks received an additional 3 points. Each of the businesses and services were classified into 17 categories. If a location had all 17 categories, it received an additional 5 points. Areas with only a few types of categories received 1 point.

We combined the polygons from all the layers using the ArcGIS Spatial Analyst Weighted Sum tool. The result is a “grid” map, with each grid cell containing the sum of all of the various scores.





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