



CITY OF AUSTIN STRATEGIC HOUSING BLUEPRINT

In 2017, Austin City Council adopted a *Strategic Housing Blueprint* to address ongoing issues of affordable housing. As one of the country's fastest-growing cities, Austin has expanded to nearly a million residents in just the last few years. Some predict the region's population could reach nearly 4 million people by 2050.

Many have voiced that without effective strategic planning, Austinites who embody the city's character and who provide critical services in the community will continue to be priced out of the city. Subsidies alone cannot close the growing affordable housing gaps, which continue to increase. While Austin's affordability issues are complex, implementing the *Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint* can help the community address these issues in a more cost effective and intentional manner. By utilizing a multifaceted set of coordinated strategies, the City of Austin can work with partners to more effectively address these challenges and reach our community's affordability goals.

Developing a Blueprint

The Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) was tasked with developing an integrated, multi-faceted approach to addressing affordable housing. From the start, it was an inclusive process, with extensive community outreach for resident

input. NHCD hosted more than 30 public meetings over 18 months at senior centers, faith-based communities, and schools, as well as conducting a statistically valid, bi-lingual survey.



Residents used the forums to stress the importance of affordable housing across Austin and to ensure balanced livability for all income levels. Residents also urged the City to build affordable housing in close proximity to transportation choices, particularly for the elderly and residents with disabilities.

Setting Goals for Success

In addition to community input, NHCD staff conducted a detailed analysis of national planning models, tracked long-term building trends, and examined a range of potential local economic scenarios for the next decade. The intent was to be as diligent as possible when setting future housing goals and ensuring that households within each income category across the city could continue to find affordable housing and avoid the risk of displacement.

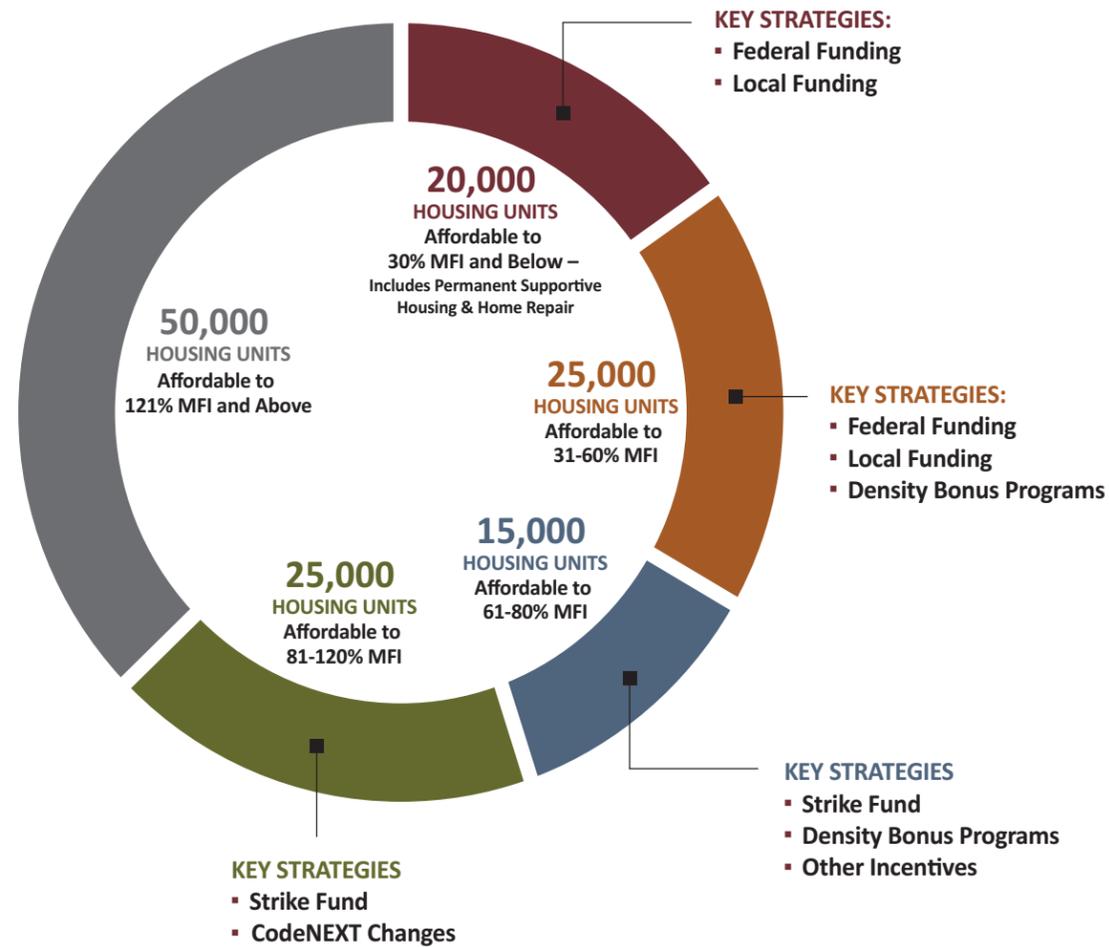
Ultimately, the *Blueprint* evolved into a holistic plan to preserve affordable homes in established communities and to increase the supply of housing to help mitigate the competition for housing that is affordable to lower-in-



come households. Above all, the *Blueprint* recognizes that any approach to expanding availability of affordable housing must also maintain the livability standards and benefits for people who perform all types of jobs and whose contributions are essential to making Austin a vibrant, culturally diverse, and livable city.

AUSTIN COMMUNITY 10-YEAR AFFORDABLE HOUSING GOALS

135,000 HOUSING UNITS IN 10 YEARS



- At least 75% of new housing units should be within 1/2 mile of Imagine Austin Centers and Corridors.
- Preserve 10,000 affordable housing units over 10 years.
- Produce 100 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units each year, with half of those units (50) being Housing First. Learn more at: www.austintexas.gov/department/permanent-supportive-housing-initiative.
- At least 25% of new income-restricted affordable housing should be in high opportunity areas.
- At least 30% of new housing should be a range of housing types from small-lot single-family to eight-plexes to help address Austin's need for multi-generational housing.

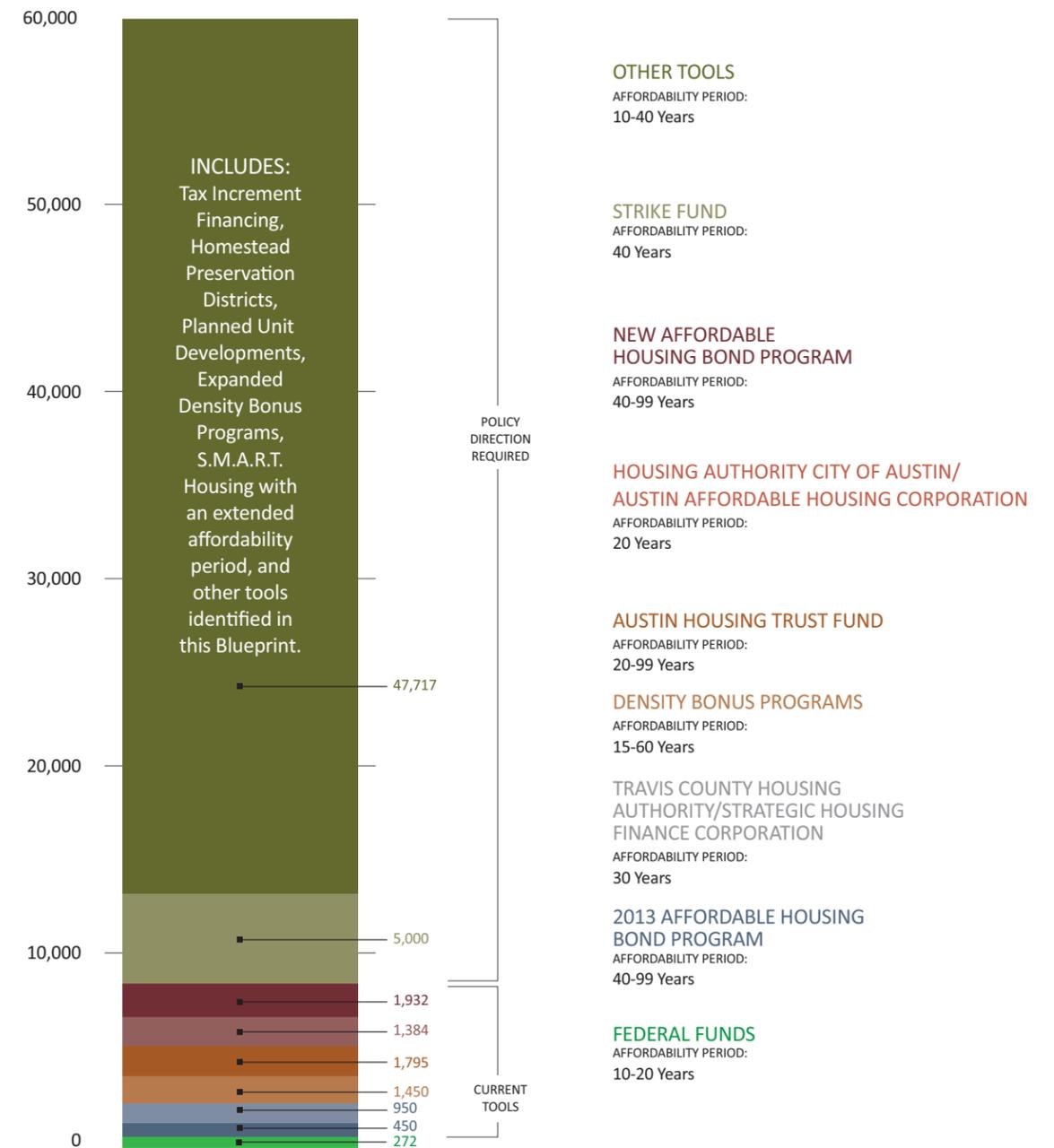
WITHIN EACH CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT:

- At least 10% of rental housing units that are affordable to households earning at or below 30% Median Family Income (MFI) (which is \$24,300 or less for a 4-person household in 2016); and
- At least 25% of ownership housing units that are affordable to households earning at or below 120% MFI (\$93,360 or less for a 4-person household in 2016).

How will the Blueprint Help Achieve Affordable Housing?

Austin's *Strategic Housing Blueprint* is a multi-faceted, integrated approach to creating and preserving additional affordable housing. First, the *Blueprint* implementation plan will seek to foster strategic investment collaborations with private investors and community partners to promote and finance a range of new affordable housing construction. Second, the implementation plan seeks to streamline the City's construction permit process and assist in reforms to the land development code to facilitate new construction. Most importantly—the *Blueprint* sets a goal for 60,000 units to be affordable to households at 80 percent of median family income (MFI) and below. Potential funding and tools for those units is delineated in the chart below.

FUNDING MECHANISMS AND TOOLS FOR 60,000 AFFORDABLE UNITS (UP TO 80% MFI) IN 10 YEARS



*Estimate methodology is featured in Appendix A.
NOTE: These strategies and activities are in addition to the existing efforts already underway amongst the City and its partners.

Key Actions to Meet Housing Needs and Support Community Values

Equally important to the future of affordable housing is our commitment to preserving the diversity and values of our communities across the city. Throughout public engagement, NHCD heard from residents and community leaders who clearly voiced the desire to prevent families from being priced out of the Austin market, to invest in housing for those of greatest need, and to help residents reduce transportation costs and household expenses whenever possible. These recommendations ended up being organized into five categories, each focused on achieving the best outcomes, including:

- **Prevent households from being priced out of Austin.** Support legislation to allow flat dollar-amount Homestead Exemptions, create a preservation property tax exemption for properties to minimize displacement of low-income renters, expand the use of shared-equity ownership and mechanisms to preserve and create ownership options for households at 80-120% MFI, and invest in preservation strategies to combat gentrification.
- **Foster equitable, integrated, and diverse communities.** Promote strategic investments and create protections for low-income renters by developing a strike fund to preserve multi-family buildings to retain affordable housing units, implement Austin's Fair Housing Action Plan, bolster enforcement of Fair Housing requirements, and undertake strategic land banking for affordable housing.
- **Invest in housing for those most in need.** Every effort should be made to protect our most vulnerable populations. The City should pursue General Obligation Bonds and General Fund appropriations for affordable housing, leverage low-income housing tax credits, incentivize the private sector to fund affordable workforce housing, maximize the use public properties for public housing, and expand housing for citizens with disabilities.
- **Create new and affordable housing choices for all Austinites in all parts of town.** We can facilitate the streamlining of City codes and permit processes, revise the S.M.A.R.T. Housing Program, relax regulations on affordable housing products (including cooperatives and Accessory Dwelling Units), and create a Multifamily Property Tax Exemption Program.
- **Help Austinites reduce their household costs.** More can be done to help Austinites through projects that connect housing with transportation choices, educate and increase efforts to help households to reduce utility costs through weatherization of current residences, and ensure that future housing developments are in proximity to healthy grocery stores, health care services, and social support agencies.

As Austin continues to tackle the benefits and challenges of a growing population, an evolving economy, and residential affordability, the *Strategic Housing Blueprint* will be a useful guide to ensuring a thriving and equitable city. Through multiple initiatives, including effective engagement with the housing market, ensuring affordable housing units, and fostering equitable communities, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development will continue to work for the City of Austin and its remarkable citizenry.

Next Steps: Implementation and Ongoing Engagement

Now that the *Blueprint* has been finalized, the work toward implementation begins. The Austin City Council has directed the City Manager to create an Interdepartmental Action Team comprised of the Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development, Department of Transportation, Planning and Zoning, Economic Development, Financial Services, and Law Department to coordinate implementation steps for each of the Key Actions, and to document progress and obtain ongoing public feedback.



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www.austintexas.gov/housingblueprint

City of Austin

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