

24th Annual
ULI HINES 2026
Student Urban Design Competition



Briefing Materials
Austin, Texas
January 2026



Hines

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About the Sponsors

Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a nonprofit with a mission: *Shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide*. ULI's mission priorities are 1) Decarbonizing the real estate sector and accelerating progress to net zero; 2) Increasing housing attainability in communities around the world; and 3) Educating the next generation of diverse real estate leaders. [Learn more about ULI](#). Follow ULI on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

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The following [Associate Membership](#) discounts are available:

- Under 35 or Government, Nonprofit, and Academia 50 percent discount off the regular rate
- Students 75 percent discount off the regular rate

About the Competition

The ULI Hines Student Competition – Americas, now in its 24th year, is one of the core education initiatives of the Urban Land Institute. The competition offers eligible students the opportunity to form multidisciplinary teams and engage in a challenging exercise in responsible land use. It is part of ULI's ongoing effort to raise interest among young people in creating better communities, improving development patterns, and increasing awareness of the need for multidisciplinary solutions to development and design challenges.

The late Gerald D. Hines, founder and chairman of the Hines real estate company, was the 2002 recipient of the \$100,000 [ULI Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development](#). A firm believer in the power of people and fostering transformative values, Hines declined the prize money and endowed the competition with an additional \$3 million, ensuring its longevity and legacy for future generations of practitioners. "The purpose of the competition is to raise awareness, particularly among the next generation, of the important role that high-quality urban design plays in creating not just beautiful buildings, but living environments," Hines said.

The competition encourages cooperation and teamwork among future real estate developers and investors and the many allied professions, such as architecture, landscape architecture, planning, finance, historic preservation, law, and public policy, among others. Since the competition began in 2003, more than 12,260 students on over 2,452 teams have participated, including 96 teams (480 students) who made it to the finalist round. More than 1,000 real estate and design professionals have served as advisers to these teams.

Please refer to the competition website, uli.org/hines for more background and updates.

Notice to Competitors

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU COMMUNICATE REGARDING THE COMPETITION WITH HINES; THE CITY OF AUSTIN OR OTHER REGIONAL MUNICIPALITIES; TRAVIS, HAYS, OR WILLIAMSON COUNTY; THE STATE OF TEXAS; THE NONPROFIT AND PUBLIC AGENCIES INVOLVED; THE PROPERTY OWNERS OR EMPLOYEES OF THE PROPERTY OWNERS; CONSULTANTS WHO ARE WORKING OR WHO HAVE WORKED ON THE PROJECT; THE COMPETITION JURY; AREA RESIDENTS; OR OTHER ASSOCIATED ENTITIES UNLESS THEY ALREADY ARE AMONG YOUR PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS. DO NOT CALL ULI'S HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C., ULI AUSTIN, OR OTHER ULI DISTRICT COUNCILS UNLESS THOSE DISTRICT COUNCILS ALREADY HAVE OFFERED TO BE A RESOURCE TO YOUR TEAM. IF ULI LEARNS THAT YOU HAVE TRIED TO COMMUNICATE IN THE MANNER DESCRIBED HERE, ULI MAY DISCARD YOUR SUBMISSION AND THE JURY WILL NOT REVIEW IT.

Citing Sources

You are allowed to use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) if you properly cite your uses of it, including any prompts that you may use. When paraphrasing, quoting, or including any GenAI generated text or data, cite GenAI as a source using [citation style guidelines](#) (MLA, APA, Chicago). If you use GenAI tools to generate imagery, use citations in the same way that you would for a human designer or photographer, and include your prompt. Note that GenAI may produce data inaccuracies, misleading info, fabrications, or incorporate biases; respondents are expected to review AI-generated content and are responsible for the accuracy of content created and submitted.

In general, please ensure that if a juror wanted to learn more about your process, they would be able to track your sources and process easily through your citations. If you are unsure about how to cite something, include a note in your text that describes how you used a certain tool.



Figure 1: Image generated by Microsoft Copilot, November 12, 2025, from the prompt “Create an image of an artist designing landscape.”

See examples of [how to cite an AI-generated image](#) from Georgetown University. To cite AI-generated images in Chicago style, Georgetown recommends you include the figure number, the software that generated the image, the date of image generation, and the prompt used.

The Competition Host City: Austin, Texas

This year's competition is focused on a site in Austin, Texas. [Austin](#), situated on the banks of the Colorado River in Central Texas, is the state capital and a prominent cultural and economic center. Prior to its late 20th century [transformation](#), Austin was a recognized government and university town, with the State of Texas and [The University of Texas at Austin](#) (UT Austin) anchoring a modest economy oriented around public employment, higher education, and regional services, complemented by a cultural identity rooted in its music scene and creative community.

[Beginning in the 1980s](#) and accelerating through the 2000s, [Austin's Chamber of Commerce](#) leveraged its educated workforce, relatively low cost of living, and attractive quality of life in a marketing and public relations campaign to diversify its economic base. The [1980s](#) also saw the expansion of the manufacturing industry, with major companies such as IBM, Motorola, Dell, and 3M creating a presence in the city. In 1986, [SEMATECH](#)—a research and development consortium created through a partnership between semiconductor manufacturers and the U.S. government—was created in Austin to advance chip manufacturing. The Chambers' campaign and the consortium catalyzed the city's transformation into a hub for technology manufacturing, creative industries, and research, positioning Austin as one of the fastest growing metropolitan economies in the United States.

As of 2024, Austin has an estimated population of approximately [993,000 residents](#) according to the Census Bureau. The city has experienced sustained population growth in recent decades, driven largely by domestic migration and increased employment opportunities, although growth has slowed since 2020. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), Austin's demographic composition is around 48 percent non-Hispanic white, 32 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Asian, and 8 percent African American, reflecting a multi-ethnic urban profile. Austin's Black and Hispanic populations, however, have declined recently, reflecting a shifting demographic composition. Austin is the largest city in [Travis County](#), which contains roughly 1.36 million residents, and serves as the core of the [Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos metropolitan area](#), home to 2.5 million people.

The city's geography is defined by the [Colorado River](#), surrounding [lakes](#), and the [Balcones Escarpment](#), providing scenic and recreational open spaces. Austin covers approximately [326 square miles](#), combining dense urban neighborhoods, suburban areas, and extensive parkland, including [Zilker Park](#), [Barton Creek Greenbelt](#), and the [Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail](#). Land use is diverse, with residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational zones interspersed throughout the city.

In recent years, Austin has pursued strategic planning initiatives, with particular focus on addressing affordability and increasing density. [Planning efforts](#) have emphasized mixed-use development, equitable growth, and transit-oriented design. [Transportation and connectivity](#) remain central to these strategies, including expanded active transportation networks, and voter-approved [Project Connect](#) featuring light rail, bus rapid transit, and commuter-rail projects. In conjunction with the State [TxDOT I-35 Capital Express Central Project](#) to increase mobility and safety, [Our Future 35](#) Interstate 35 (I-35) "cap and stitch" proposals aim to reconnect neighborhoods divided by the highway. Affordability remains a major challenge for both long-term and new residents amid the city's continuing growth.

Overall, Austin is a dynamic city, combining population and economic expansion with strategic infrastructure investment, diverse neighborhoods, and a commitment to sustainability, [equity](#), and community engagement. Its unique geography, planning initiatives, and future-oriented policies position Austin as a prominent example of a city navigating rapid growth while balancing development, mobility, and quality of life.



Figure 2: Austin's Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake. Source: [Visit Austin](#)

History

Native American communities occupied Austin's geographic area for [thousands of years](#) prior to the arrival of European explorers in the 16th century. The Tonkawa, Comanche, and Lipan Apache people were the primary [original inhabitants](#) of Austin/Central Texas. Many Native Americans were [forcibly displaced](#) or died of European diseases. Some living relatives of those native to the area remain in Central Texas today; others may live on reservations in [Texas](#) or Oklahoma.

The [origins](#) of modern day Austin date to the early 19th century, when settlers established a small village called Waterloo along the Colorado River. Anglo settlements arose in 1821, led by Stephen F. Austin and his colony of settlers known as the [Old Three Hundred](#), and established cotton as the area's primary cash crop through slavery. After the Civil War during the Reconstruction period, many African Americans moved out of Travis County to find work elsewhere, but many remained as [sharecroppers and tenant farmers](#), which contributed to a cotton boom.

In 1839, the village was [renamed](#) Austin after [Stephen F. Austin](#), known as the "Father of Texas," and designated the capital of the Republic of Texas. Led by the [Adelsverein](#), an influx of German immigrants settled across South/Central Texas starting in the 1840s, which led Germans to become the [largest European ethnic group](#) throughout the 19th century. Starting in the [early 1900s](#), thousands of Latinos from Mexico immigrated to Austin, with a population boom after the 1910 Mexican Revolution. Despite facing years of discrimination, the Latino community has had a large impact on [Austin's rich culture](#).

For much of its early history, Austin's economy and identity were anchored by state government and the [University of Texas at Austin](#), which together shaped the city as a modest administrative and educational center. Cultural life during this period was defined by the university, local music traditions, and emerging creative communities, laying the groundwork for the city's later reputation as a cultural hub.

In 1928, [Austin's Master Plan](#) was adopted by City Council. Segregation zoning laws were declared illegal by the Supreme Court in 1917, but Austin used the 1928 plan as a [workaround](#) to segregate the city using East Avenue (now I-35). The plan created a district designed for African American Austinites on the East side of [East Avenue](#),

and forcibly displaced these residents from other parts of the city by restricting their access to public services, including schools, and withholding power and utilities from their west-side homes. The City services that were provided to East Austin residents were often delayed and below the quality of the same services offered to white West Austinites. Though nearly a century has passed, the 1928 plan, along with [aligned policies](#) including [redlining](#) and subsequent plans directing East Austin residential areas, have had a lasting effect, with these [demographic lines still present](#) today. Most white Austinites reside west of I-35, while most Black and Hispanic Austinites live east of the highway and are continuing to move farther east or out of the city entirely.

The latter half of the 20th century brought [significant economic and demographic change](#). Austin began to diversify beyond its government and education base, attracting technology firms, manufacturing companies, creative industries, and life sciences companies. [This growth](#) was enhanced by a highly educated workforce, relative affordability compared to other tech hubs, and the city's quirky atmosphere and live music scene (the home of [South by Southwest](#) and [Austin City Limits](#)), drawing both talent and investment. Rapid population growth during the 1980s and 1990s expanded development beyond downtown into East Austin and suburban corridors, reshaping land-use patterns and neighborhood composition. These changes set the stage for Austin's emergence as a nationally recognized center for innovation, entrepreneurship, and culture.

Austin builds upon the innovation growth in the 1990s, with a boom in modern-day jobs in tech industries making Austin one of the nation's [most technology-intensive metro economies](#). Since the [late 2010s](#), Austin's tech sector has grown significantly, with Apple, Google, Facebook, and Amazon moving to the area, sparking interest from mid-size tech companies, incubators, and start-ups. In addition, Austin has established itself as a contemporary [health care hub](#), with advanced patient care, specialists, and medical research. The city ranks as one of America's top cities in [bio and health funding](#). A leader in Austin's health care, [UT Austin's Dell Medical School](#) stands as part of the larger [UT Austin Medical Center](#) alongside a hospital and a planned cancer center.

In 2012, Austin City Council adopted the [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#) to guide the next 30 years of city development. Some plan components include increasing affordability and improving sustainability. The City looked to connect the neighborhoods and mitigate sprawl by writing a [new land development code](#) (LDC) that would revise development regulations and processes. In 2017, the city released the proposed new LDC CodeNEXT; this proposal was met with opposition from some segments of the community who petitioned to put the adoption of a new code to [a public vote](#). While the ballot initiative failed, the controversy resulted in Austin's City Council [sunsetting CodeNEXT](#) in 2018 and initiating a second attempt at comprehensive code revisions (known as the [Land Development Code Revision](#)) in 2019. While a court invalidated the comprehensive LDC revision process in spring 2020, the City has continued efforts to improve and modernize the code via individual [code amendments](#) and public hearings for changes such as [eliminating minimum parking requirements](#), allowing for [additional housing units](#) on lots zoned previously for single units, easing compatibility requirements to allow larger buildings near single-family houses, and allowing for more density in exchange for income-restricted housing.

The Competition Site

A private development company in Austin has identified a parcel in the Hancock Center north of Downtown Austin as a development opportunity: Parcel 954419, owned by Regency Centers (the Site).

The Site is located west of Interstate 35. East 41st Street is southwest of the Site. North of the Site are single-family homes along East 43rd Street. Both East 41st and East 43rd streets provide access to an I-35 frontage road. Red River Street runs north/south to the Site. Currently, the area is occupied by popular grocery store H-E-B that is used frequently by local neighborhoods and students attending UT Austin, which lies approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the Site. However, the Hancock Center is not in close walking distance to the UT Austin campus. Students and locals from surrounding neighborhoods use several bus stops in and around the Site.

Parcel data is available at the [Regrid parcel viewer](#). Image files of maps are found in the [Competition Site Maps folder](#).

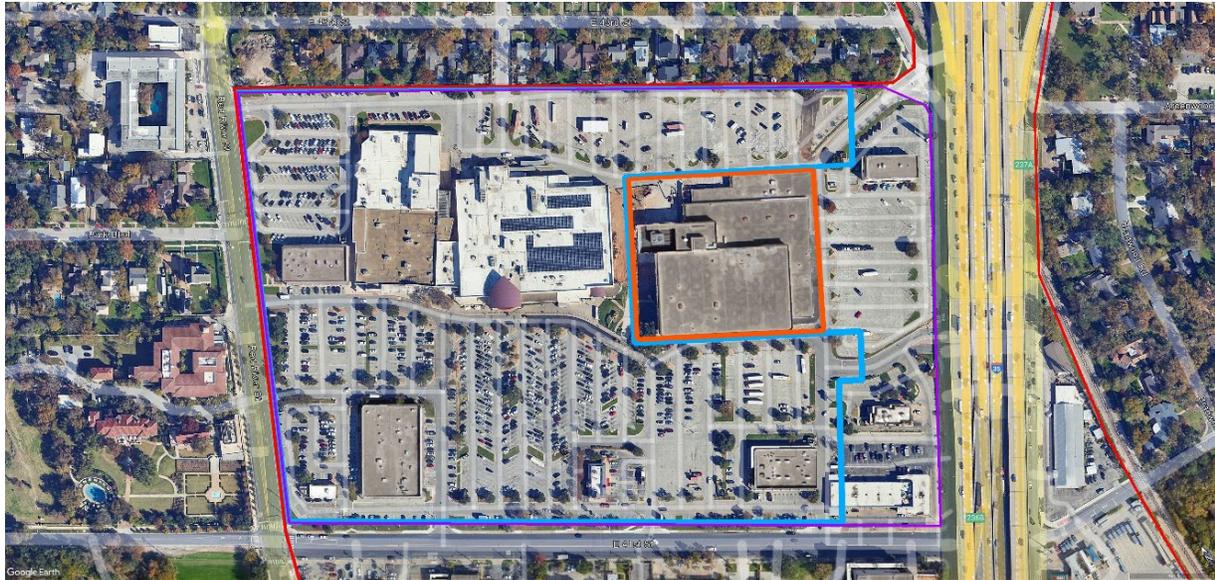


Figure 3: The Competition Site and Study Area. Color key: **blue boundary** = Site / **red boundary** = Study Area / **purple boundary** = previous property extension prior to right-of-way / **orange boundary** = building footprint not to develop.
Source: Google Earth

Competition Site History



Figure 4: A 1960s photo of the Capital Plaza located across I-35, a mile from the Hancock Center. Source: [UNT Libraries](#)



Figure 5: A 1970s photo of the last major expansion of I-35 on Airport Boulevard. Source: [TXDOT](#)

[Hancock Center](#), established in 1963, holds the distinction of being [Austin’s first modern shopping mall](#). The property was developed by Chicago-based [Homart Development Company](#)—a subsidiary of Sears, Roebuck & Co.—specializing in mall and retail development. The 34-acre site was constructed on what was once part of the [Austin Country Club](#), which was founded by Mayor Lewis Hancock in 1899. Hancock Center officially opened in February 1964, featuring anchor stores such as Sears and Dillard’s, along with a variety of other retailers and a 350-seat community center.

Over the decades, Hancock Center experienced several ownership changes and renovations to adapt to evolving retail trends and community needs. In 1996, Pacific Retail Trust acquired the property and initiated a significant redevelopment, including the construction of a new [H-E-B](#), a beloved Central Texas grocery chain, and the addition of open-air retail spaces. [Regency Centers](#) acquired the property in 1998 and further enhanced its retail offerings. The original Sears store [closed](#) in January 2019 after over 55 years of operation, following Sears’s bankruptcy filing. The Sears building has since been acquired by Central Health and is being [repurposed](#) to house administrative offices, a medical clinic, imaging services, and a pharmacy.

The Hancock Center’s H-E-B is still operational as a grocery store and is undergoing a [large-scale remodel](#). It is the main grocery store to those living in the surrounding area and UT Austin students, as well as many faculty and staff members. UT Austin was recently named an [H-E-B Delivery Hub](#). Across I-35 is another large grocer, [Fiesta Mart \(Store #25\)](#). The two grocery stores serve residents across a variety of different demographics and are both highly utilized. [Five food pantries](#) are located within five miles of the Site. Most patrons access Hancock Center by car, but access is also available via bicycle and CapMetro bus routes [10](#), [322](#), [345](#), and [492](#).

Today, Hancock Center stands as both a historical landmark in Austin’s retail evolution and a strategic site for future redevelopment. Its location along I-35 and access to multiple bus lines make it a prime candidate for a new mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The Site is envisioned as a potential stop in [Project Connect](#), Austin’s voter-approved transit expansion plan that includes light rail, commuter rail, and expanded bus service. Redevelopment of Hancock Center offers an opportunity to integrate residential, commercial, and community spaces, strengthen neighborhood connections, and support Austin’s goals for equitable, sustainable, and connected urban growth.

Reading Resources

The links below provide access to resources about Austin. Some of these resources will be available in the [Google Drive folder](#) entitled **2026 ULI Hines Student Resources**. You do not need to review every resource listed here in detail, and you should conduct additional research to learn about the region, city, and Site, and follow additional links provided in the brief.

Public Resources

- [City of Austin Development Services](#)
- [The City of Austin Official Website](#)
- [6 Developments We're Watching in 2025](#)
- [Austin Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Austin DSD Reports](#)
- [State of Downtown 2025](#)
- [Speak Up Austin](#)

ULI Reading



The following resources are available to students for the competition. Some resources are available only to [ULI members](#). You can find these resources in the [Google Drive](#).

- [Emerging Trends in Real Estate® United States and Canada 2026](#), [November 2025], PwC and Urban Land Institute.
- [ULI 2025 Terwilliger Center Home Attainability Index](#), [February 2025], Urban Land Institute.
- [The I-35 Corridor: Austin, Texas](#) [February 2020], Advisory Services panel report, Urban Land Institute.
- [10 Principles for Embedding Racial Equity in Real Estate Development](#) [2022], Urban Land Institute.
- [“Mall Redevelopment Can Achieve Sustainable, Equitable Diversity in American Suburbs,”](#) [May 2021], Urban Land Institute.
- [“From Ordinary to Extraordinary: Added Density and Mixed Use, Vancouver’s Mall Redevelopments Charge Ahead”](#), [September 2021], Urban Land Institute.
- [“Three U.S. ‘Highway Cap’ Projects Reckoning with Urban Inequity,”](#) [October 2020], Urban Land Institute.

ULI Technical Assistance Panels and Award Winners

Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs): [Downtown Austin Parking](#), March 2024; [Austin Historic-age Housing Preservation](#), July 2022; [ULI Austin Net Zero Imperative](#), May 2022; and [ULI Austin Adopt-A-Park Program](#), January 2023. These TAPs are available [here](#) and in the [Google Drive folder](#).

Award Winners: The following are developments relevant to this year's Site that have won the [ULI Americas Awards for Excellence](#):

- 2025, [Waterworks](#), Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- 2025, Finalist, [The Land Bridge and Prairie at Memorial Park](#), Houston, Texas, United States
- 2024, [Austin Housing Conservancy](#), Austin, Texas, United States
- 2023, [Water Street Tampa](#), Tampa, Florida, United States

The following are developments relevant to this year's Site that have won the [ULI Austin Impact Award](#):

- 2022, [Austin Community College Highland Phase II](#)
- 2022, [Waterloo Park](#)

Local and Regional Data

Austin boasts a wealth of local data from various sources, providing insights into demographics, economic trends, public health, and more. The [U.S. Census Bureau](#), including [Quick Facts](#), provides important demographic data, including population statistics, income levels, and housing information. In addition, the City of Austin provides access to city-specific reports and data sets through its [Open Data Portal](#), including crime statistics, permitting and building data, neighborhood and parks inventories, and departmental dashboards. The [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) provides context and background information about employment and the labor market. The [Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization \(CAMPO\)](#) offers valuable information on transit investments, traffic patterns, and long-range planning efforts in the Greater Austin area. CapMetro provides ridership data and other agency metrics, such as population and crash statistics, via their [Public Performance Dashboard](#).

Some key economic development agencies that provide data and resources for understanding Austin's economic landscape include [the City of Austin Economic Development department](#); [Opportunity Austin](#); and [Travis County Economic Development & Strategic Investments](#).

Information on Austin destinations is available from [Visit Austin](#), the city's convention and visitor's bureau. Explore parks, playgrounds, programs, and green spaces through [Austin Parks & Recreation](#). Austin offers a vibrant array of attractions, arts, and cultural institutions, including the [Texas State Capitol](#), [Blanton Museum of Art](#), [Paramount Theatre](#), [Moody Center](#), the [Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum](#), along with internationally recognized festivals such as [South by Southwest](#) and [Austin City Limits](#). [Q2 Stadium](#) is home to Major League Soccer's [Austin FC](#), while [Circuit of The Americas](#) hosts international motorsports and large-scale entertainment events including Formula 1, MotoGP, and more.

Development Context

Urban Planning

Austin's latest urban planning initiatives aim to enhance green infrastructure and expand and modernize transportation mobility, improving access from residential areas to jobs and services. The State's [I-35 Capital Express Central Project](#) is underway to improve mobility and connectivity across an eight-mile stretch of I-35 between [US 290](#) and State Highway 71 (SH 71)/Ben White Boulevard. The project includes widening and lowering the interstate beneath existing grade, as well as removing the elevated overpasses adjacent to the project site. The [Our Future 35](#) local initiative is aiming to reconnect neighborhoods across I-35 and create new public-realm opportunities (further details are in the following [Transportation section](#)). Other key projects include the voter-approved [Project Connect](#) package, which is reshaping regional transit, guiding station-area planning, and improving access to jobs and services. Austin's [Climate Equity Plan](#) aims to increase sustainability and resilience.

Austin's [land-acquisition and disposition efforts](#) make vacant or underused parcels available to developers, nonprofits, and community partners to construct affordable housing and preserve market-affordable units. The Austin City Council has directed staff to explore [formal land-banking options](#) and stronger support for community land trusts to preserve long-term affordability. Recent amendments to the Land Development Code through the [Home Options for Mobility and Equity](#) (HOME) Initiative expanded housing options on single-family lots and enable more middle housing types across the city. Review the [City of Austin Planning](#) page for planning reports, maps, and updates about ongoing projects that shape both citywide and neighborhood-level land-use decisions, including older neighborhood plans adopted by the City in 2004 and 2002 for the Hancock and Cherrywood neighborhoods, and a [large area of Central Austin](#). The City maintains [interactive mapping tools](#) that provide helpful data about property status and public projects.

The City of Austin has actively led redevelopment projects. These [precedents](#) offer useful comparisons for phasing, infrastructure needs, and amenity expectations. The City also leans on partnerships with organizations such as [Waterloo Greenway Conservancy](#), [Downtown Austin Alliance](#), [Red Line Parkway Initiative](#), and [community development intermediaries](#) to promote inclusive design, community engagement, and equitable outcomes.

The Red Line Parkway Initiative plans to create a [36-mile Red Line Parkway](#) that connects communities from Downtown Austin up to Leander, Texas, with linear park and public space. [The Hancock-Cherrywood Vision Initiative](#) proposes a long-term vision for the 60 acres of private land that contains the Red Line Parkway, I-35, and the Red Line railway between the Hancock Center and [Delwood Shopping Center](#). In November 2025, the Red Line Parkway Initiative was awarded \$2 million in [federal grant funding](#) to create the Community Vision & Implementation Strategy. The Red Line Parkway Initiative is also seeking public engagement and [fundraising](#) to help support parkway planning and activation. This strategy builds off CapMetro's 2023 [Red Line Trail Study](#) and includes plans to secure space for the parkway, develop a funding strategy, and identify stakeholder roles by summer 2028.

As an example of green infrastructure in Austin, two miles south of the Site in Downtown, the \$230 million Waterloo Greenway project is underway, reimagining a 1.5-mile stretch of Waller Creek into a connected chain of parks, trails, and public spaces via a public/private partnership. The public portion of the project is funded via a tax increment financing (TIF) model, managed by the [Waller Creek Local Government Corporation](#). The project emphasizes ecological restoration, flood mitigation, community gathering spaces, and linking downtown neighborhoods to Lady Bird Lake. [Phase 1—Waterloo Park](#) and Moody Amphitheater—opened in 2021 and [subsequent phases](#) will extend south toward the lake. The City of Austin, in partnership with the Waterloo Greenway Conservancy, continues to host community events and [stakeholder sessions](#) to shape the Greenway vision, emphasizing both ecological health and equitable public access.

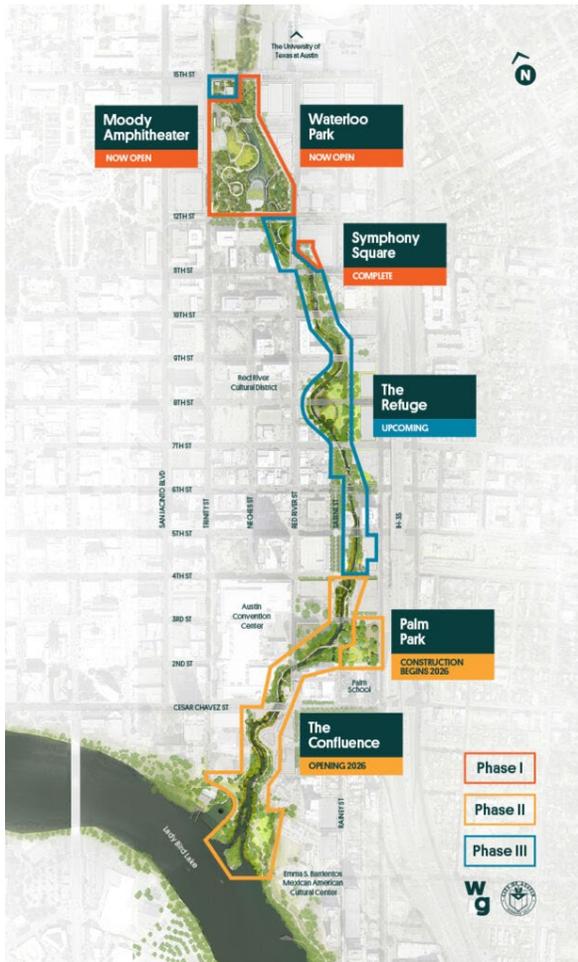


Figure 63: Waterloo Greenway phases. Source: [Waterloo Greenway](#)

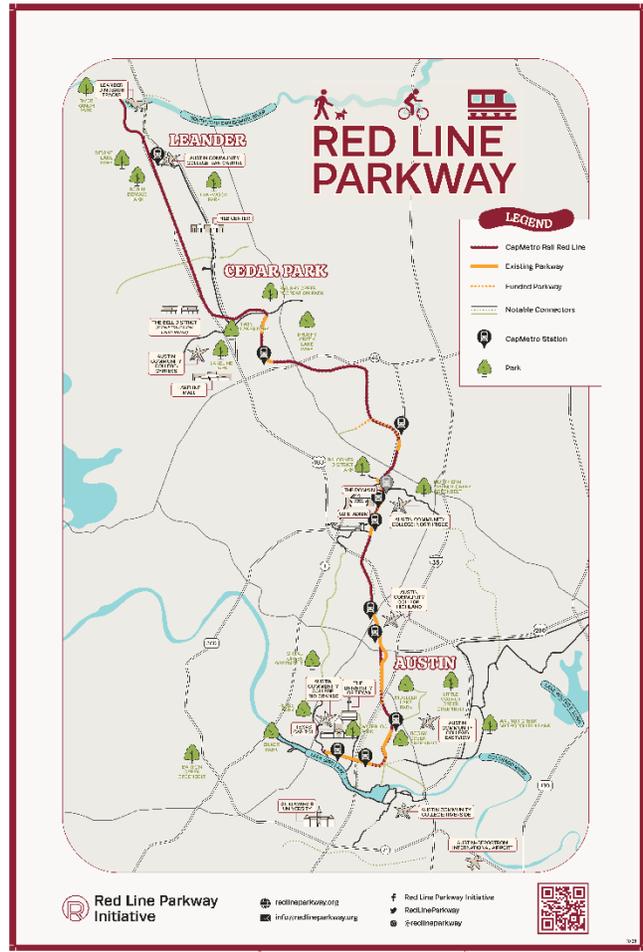


Figure 74: The Red Line Parkway. Source: [Red Line Parkway Initiative](#)

Historic Resources

Historic landmarks and districts throughout Austin highlight its [unique heritage](#). One of the city’s most notable landmarks is the [Texas State Capitol and Capitol Complex](#), a defining feature of Austin’s skyline and identity. The Capitol grounds and Congress Avenue—a National Register [historic district](#) terminating at the Capitol—reflect the city’s deep ties to Texas history and governance. [Capitol View Corridors](#) ensure that the Capitol is visible from vantage points around the city.

Nearby, [Sixth Street](#) is characterized by its 19th-century commercial architecture and iconic live music venues. Designated as a National Register historic district, the corridor has experienced waves of reinvention, [now serving as a hub for nightlife](#), restaurants, and cultural tourism, while maintaining its historic buildings. A portion of Sixth Street is currently planned for significant [redevelopment](#).

Beyond Downtown Austin, historic landmarks and districts are largely residential, with the exception of city parks. Several locally designated historic districts are clustered west of Downtown along West Sixth Street, which developed along a streetcar line. These areas generally developed in the late 19th and early 20th century and feature dense single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes, and garage apartments, as well as an [early homestead](#). South of Lady Bird Lake, a small one-block historic district is representative of the larger Travis Heights neighborhood around it. Two other residential historic districts, including the Hyde Park streetcar suburb, lie north of the UT campus.

East Austin holds two locally designated historic districts and a number of historic landmarks. Notable historic sites include but are not limited to [Huston-Tillotson University](#), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) that predates UT as the oldest institution of higher learning in Austin; the [French Legation](#), Austin's oldest building; [Rosewood Park](#), historically home to Emancipation celebrations on Juneteenth; three of the country's first public housing projects, initially segregated by race/ethnicity, [Rosewood Courts](#), [Chalmers Courts](#), and [Santa Rita Courts](#); the [Texas State Cemetery](#) and Oakwood Cemetery; and many iconic legacy businesses. The two historic districts were designated more recently than districts in West Austin and are one step toward remedying longstanding underrepresentation of Black and Hispanic communities in historic resources.

The city has close to [20 National Register historic districts](#), which are honorific and do not come with protection against demolition. Two mid-century districts are located near the Site: Wilshire Wood/Delwood 1 and the Delwood Duplexes.

A number of areas that help to “keep Austin weird” (and historic) are not formally designated. [South Congress](#), [North Loop](#), [Red River Cultural District](#), and [The Drag](#) (Guadalupe Street near the UT campus) are uniquely flavored commercial districts not designated as historic.

The City of Austin adopted the award-winning [Equity-Based Preservation Plan](#) in fall 2024. It is beginning to implement the plan's recommendations, which span a broad range: expanding what is considered significant, inviting more Austinites to participate in diverse preservation activities, and making local preservation programs and tools more equitable and effective.

More historical archives can be explored through the [Austin History Center](#) and the [Texas State Historical Association](#).

Housing and the Unhoused

The City of Austin offers resources in support of affordable and market rate housing development through [Austin Housing](#) and the [Austin Housing Finance Corporation](#) (and guided by the [Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint](#)). This department provides information and reports on housing policies, programs, and statistics related to housing supply and affordability, such as the [Affordable Housing Inventory](#) and the [Anti-Displacement Maps and Dashboard](#). [Austin Homeless Strategies and Operations](#) (HSO) offers data on homelessness in the county and services including prevention, shelter services, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, and a hotline for those experiencing homelessness. The [Housing Authority of the City of Austin](#) provides housing assistance applications, information on residency and fair housing rights, and family financial self-sufficiency programs to Austin residents.

[Austin ECHO](#) conducts research and advocacy related to housing issues such as racial inequities and leads a coalition responding to homelessness in the community. The [Austin Housing Analysis](#) offers interactive maps, charts, and public data collected in a study of Austin's housing from 1993 to 2021 as a collaboration between UT Austin and the City of Austin. The City of Austin provides the [Affordable Housing Online Search Tool](#) (AHOST) that allows residents to input household size and income to view relevant affordable rental properties. [Housing Works Austin](#) delivers research, advocacy, education, and recommendations on affordable housing policy. These resources will provide comprehensive data and insights into Austin's housed and unhoused populations.

[Opened in 2015](#), the [Community First! Village](#) is a master-planned neighborhood that houses more than 420 formerly homeless Austinites in permanent affordable housing in far Northeast Austin. Developed by the nonprofit [Mobile Loaves and Fishes](#), the village is set to expand to include housing for [1,500 more residents](#). The Village design encourages community building, with shared spaces such as common areas, community gardens, dining areas, and green space, and features a [CapMetro bus stop](#) providing connection to the greater Austin area. Community First! Village has been covered by [major news outlets](#) as an influential model for addressing chronic homelessness.

In 2017, Austin City Council adopted the [Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint](#), a 10-year plan aimed at leveraging resources and community partnerships to promote affordable housing throughout the city, with a goal of creating 60,000 affordable units. In 2019, the City of Austin launched the [Affordability Unlocked Development Bonus Program](#) that uses public funds and resources to offer development waivers and modifications in exchange for creating affordable units. Texas law prohibits inclusionary zoning; affordable units must be incentivized through other means. In 2023, Austin adopted [Home Options for Mobility and Equity](#) (HOME), which updates the City's Land Development Code to allow for more housing types and an increased housing supply in single-family zoned areas.

Transportation

Austin currently ranks as one of the most congested cities in the country ([INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard](#), [Consumer Affairs](#)). [Toll lanes](#) and the [Austin Strategic Mobility Plan](#) (ASMP) aim to decrease congestion and promote investment that would lead to other modes of transportation among Austin residents. [Project Connect](#) is a regional vision and action plan led by the [City of Austin](#), [Austin Transit Partnership](#), and [CapMetro](#) that aims to expand transit options in Austin, add a [new light rail system](#), and improve existing transit options. The [CAMPO 2050 Regional Transportation Plan](#) highlights many regionally significant improvements to the transportation system that the region looks to take on within the next 25 years.

[Austin Transportation and Public Works](#) (ATPW) and the [Texas Department of Transportation](#) (TxDOT) play a significant role in shaping Austin's long-term transportation planning and mobility infrastructure. TxDOT runs [MyMobility35](#), which is divided into regional projects with the [I-35 Capital Express Central](#) (colloquially CapEx) addressing improvement areas in [Central Austin](#). Construction is planned through 2033, after which there will be a [10-year moratorium](#) on I-35 construction. I-35 connects the heart of Austin with Mexico and Canada as a key interstate trade corridor. Relieving congestion along this important trade route through CapEx also provides an opportunity to design and construct enhancements such as cap decks to mitigate the historic division of East and West Austin. The local effort to reconnect East and West Austin through cap decks and design is detailed in the City's [Our Future 35](#), including Northern parts of Austin.

The City of Austin has approved construction funding for the foundations for caps and stitches in [certain locations](#), but funding for and timing of construction for possible cap or stitch decks have not been determined. As part of the project, East 41st Street, which bounds the Site on the south, will be connected to the street grid in the Wilshire Wood/Delwood 1 neighborhood east of the interstate. By December 2025, the City, following [public feedback](#) opportunities, will identify to TxDOT the preferred two northern stitches' extents and locations, which are adjacent to the project site. The City presented new options for the northern stitches on [November 22, 2025](#). In addition, ATPW has introduced the [Austin Core Transportation Plan](#) (ACT Plan), slated for Council adoption in 2026, which is the long-term vision for improving transportation and mobility options in and around Downtown Austin, in conjunction with the other mobility infrastructure improvements noted above.

Austin's [street network](#) interconnects with a variety of expressways and major roads that support both local and regional traffic. Key highways include [I-35](#) and Mopac Expressway (colloquially known as Loop 1 or Mopac). Mopac is the primary north-south alternative to I-35 and [Highway 183](#); provides access to the airport, offices, and shopping centers; and connects with critical east-west corridors [US 290](#) and [SH 71](#).

[CapMetro](#) is the primary provider of [public transportation services](#) in Austin and surrounding communities. CapMetro operates 71 routes including the high-frequency [rapid bus service](#) throughout Austin and the [CapMetro Express](#) commuter bus that connects Central Austin with outlying areas. The CapMetro [commuter rail service](#) includes the [Red Line](#), a 32-mile commuter rail route connecting Downtown Austin through North Austin up to Leander, Texas. [This map](#) shows the area serviced by Metro Rail. [CapMetro Access](#) provides shared-ride service for people with disabilities who cannot ride fixed-route bus and rail services. CapMetro also

provides a [shuttle service](#) around [UT Austin](#) and to [surrounding residential areas](#). Riding is free for students, faculty, and staff. Commuters can also form a [vanpool](#) group and carpool in a vehicle provided and subsidized by CapMetro.

CapMetro plans to update the current transit system to better meet community needs through [Strategic Plan 2030](#) and [Transit Plan 2035](#). As part of Project Connect, CapMetro proposed the addition of a rapid line along the Red River corridor to provide enhanced services in the corridor and a new station called the [North Burnet/Uptown station](#) that is beginning construction near the Domain and Uptown development. In addition, CapMetro is planning Red Line [railway improvements](#), such as double tracking and upgraded rail signal infrastructure near the Site, at the intersection of 45th Street and Airport Boulevard, as part of an elevated CapMetro Red Line crossing that will be constructed south of Airport Boulevard with pedestrian and bicycle access to improve connectivity.

Beyond this necessary work tied to the highway project, there are no immediate plans for other Red Line capital investments in the Study Area. CapMetro has identified that a potential Red Line station near the Hancock Center could be appropriate and beneficial in the future; however, this concept does not have any design definition, funding, or next steps identified at this time. Based on the current conditions, a new Red Line station is not anticipated within the Study Area's planning horizon (10-year period). Timelines are, however, subject to change and dependent on a number of factors including public/private/institutional partnerships, stakeholder interest and commitments, cost, funding, potential impacts of the project, and operating requirements.

For biking and walking infrastructure, Austin has implemented a [citywide network](#) of bike lanes, 50 miles of which are [protected](#), and the CapMetro [Bikeshare program](#), helping promote sustainable transportation in the city. The [Veloway at Circle C Ranch Metropolitan Park](#) is a 5k bicycle track that was developed in the 1990s as the first facility of its kind. It now draws travelers from across the region. The [Southern Walnut Creek Trail](#), and the [Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail and Boardwalk](#) around Lady Bird Lake are popular pathways for cyclists and pedestrians. Mountain bikers can enjoy the [South Austin Trail Network](#) (SATN) that joins greenbelts, parks, and neighborhoods in Southwest Austin.

[Red Line Parkway](#) envisions using a stitch at Hancock Center crossing as part of the Parkway's connectivity. The exact shape of the Northern stitches at 41st St crossing are yet to be determined by the city, with four options in consideration. Red Line Parkway is [advocating for Option B](#) to secure car-free crossing of I-35 to increase connectivity. The proposed [East Avenue trail](#) will create a path connecting the caps and stitches, referencing [East Avenue's](#) history of segregating East and West Austin, and reclaiming the name to promote connectivity. Many of these trails and paths will connect to destinations throughout the region, as depicted in [CAMPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Inventory](#).

Austin is also working to reduce traffic related injuries and fatalities by focusing on safe street design and public policy changes in [Vision Zero](#). Similar commitments to roadway safety have been made by regional and statewide agencies, such as [CAMPO's Regional Safety Action Plan](#) and [TxDOT's Road to Zero](#). [Safe Streets Austin](#) is a grassroots movement encompassing long-time organizations that advocate for safe streets and urban trails in Austin.

[Austin-Bergstrom International Airport](#) (AUS) is the city's primary airport, and one of the fastest-growing airports in the country, serving as a hub for both domestic and international flights. An [\\$865 million terminal expansion](#) at AUS is underway and slated to be complete by 2029. [Austin Executive Airport](#) is a smaller, general aviation airport primarily serving private planes and small aircraft. [Bus Route 20 and Route 483](#) connect the airport and Downtown, UT Austin, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Adjacent Neighborhoods/Places

[Austin's neighborhoods](#) are diverse, each contributing to the city's unique character. In central Austin are [Downtown](#), known for its skyline, business district, and live music scene, and [East Austin](#), historic and artistic, long recognized as a hub of cultural creativity and activism.

To the north are the Hancock and [Hyde Park](#) neighborhoods, known for rich heritage and identity. Hyde Park, Austin's first streetcar suburb, is known for its historic homes and walkable streets and has traditionally been home to many students and faculty from UT Austin, although home prices and rental costs have increased substantially for this area in recent decades, forcing students and lower-income residents to farther neighborhoods. Hancock is home to the Hancock Municipal Golf Course and the Hancock Center site. One mile north of the Site up I-35 is [Capital Plaza](#), a shopping center featuring dining, retail, convenience stores, and health care, legal, and business services.

Farther west of the Site sits [The Triangle](#), a 22-acre community featuring apartments, townhomes, lofts, schools, retail, restaurants, park space, and [Heart Hospital](#)—one of the nation's highest performing cardiovascular facilities. The neighborhood offers an urban feel and many rental units for a population of primarily [young professionals](#). West of the Triangle is [the Rosedale neighborhood](#), home to families, young professionals, and longtime residents. Rosedale's charming atmosphere incorporates housing stock from the 1930s and 1940s, new construction, a variety of businesses, Ramsey Park, tree-lined streets, and easy access to Heart Hospital and [Ascension Seton Medical Center Austin](#). Construction of a new [bikeway](#) linking North University, Heritage, and Rosedale kicked off in Spring 2025.

To the south of the Site sits North University and the UT Austin campus. North University (or North Campus) houses similar parts student condos and expensive homes, some with development dating back to the early 20th century. The neighborhood is very [walkable](#) and bike friendly, with proximity to UT Austin, Downtown Austin, bars, restaurants, and parks. UT Austin, located just south of the Hancock neighborhood, spans [431 acres](#), and supports 55,000 students. The campus features museums, libraries, classrooms, career centers, sports facilities, student organizations, and [18 percent of university student housing](#).

The [East Austin](#) neighborhoods share a geographic closeness that shapes their development and community dynamics. Shaped by segregation-era policies and the 1928 Master Plan, these neighborhoods became central to Austin's Black and Latino communities and played a pivotal role in Austin's [cultural and civil rights history](#). Today they struggle to balance a strong legacy of resilience with rapid redevelopment and rising housing costs. Coalitions such as the emerging [African American Cultural Heritage District](#) and groups such as [East Austin Conservancy](#) work to support cultural preservation, housing affordability, and community stability.

Due east of the Site across I-35, situated between Airport Boulevard and Wilshire Boulevard, is the [Wilshire Wood/Delwood 1](#) neighborhood. [In 2011](#), the neighborhood was added to the National Register of Historic Places as the Wilshire National Register Historic District. The district is comprised of two sections: Wilshire Wood and Wilshire Park, which feature post-war single-family homes alongside greenery.

To the southeast of the Site across I-35 is the quiet, [close-knit](#), residential [Cherrywood](#) neighborhood. Developed in Austin's post-war housing boom (1940s/1950s), the area features older single-family homes and National Register-listed historic duplexes alongside an elementary school. Cherrywood also boasts easy access to I-35, the Manor Road commercial corridor, UT Austin, and Downtown Austin. The Cherrywood Neighborhood Association recently worked with the Hancock Neighborhood Association and others to spearhead the [2025 AIA Design Assistance Team \(DAT\) Overview](#), spanning the Fiesta grocery site and the Hancock Center site. Please note that these plans have not been approved by TxDOT or the City of Austin, and they should not factor into your proposals per [The Competition Site and Study Area Challenge](#) section. See more information about that [public input process](#).

Further southeast below Cherrywood, just off I-35, sit [Blackland](#) and [Chestnut](#). Blackland is a [predominantly Black neighborhood](#) as a result of the racialized zoning practices of the 1928 Master Plan. While Black

Austinites were forced east of I-35, UT Austin also planned to [expand eastward](#) into Blackland, which threatened displacement of neighborhood residents and a decrease in affordable housing stock. Established in 1983, the [Blackland Community Development Corporation](#) advocates for stable affordable housing for area residents with initiatives such as the [Austin Art Village](#) affordable housing development. [Chestnut](#) has many new construction projects including bars, restaurants, and parks. With rapid change comes concerns about reduced affordable housing, which prompted the creation of the [Chestnut Neighborhood Revitalization Corporation](#), which provides affordable housing for area residents.

Down Airport Boulevard from the Site is [Mueller](#), a 700-acre mixed-use, mixed-income, master-planned development on the site of the former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport. Shaped by the [Mueller Neighborhood Coalition](#) in the 1990s (that included Cherrywood, Hancock, and others), the community is a pedestrian-friendly, diverse, sustainable community with a vibrant [neighborhood association](#) that includes some income-restricted housing units.

Near the Site, [Ridgetop Elementary](#) is one of 10 schools [slated to close](#) after a recent Austin Independent School District (AISD) decision responding to declining enrollment. [Maplewood Elementary](#), just across I-35 in Cherrywood, was removed from the list of closures but could be reconsidered for closure in the near future.

Despite challenges of affordability, displacement, and uneven investment, these neighborhoods' proximity to Downtown, UT Austin, and major corridors provides significant opportunity for growth. Efforts such as [Project Connect's](#) transit expansion and the [Our Future 35](#) initiative aim to reconnect central neighborhoods divided by infrastructure, while ongoing preservation and cultural initiatives reflect Austin's broader effort to balance modernization with equity and heritage.

Area Developments

Austin has numerous examples of mixed-use development; many of which are within a four-mile radius of the competition site. East of Hancock Center across I-35 sits [Mueller](#), a master-planned, mixed-income community developed in the [early 2000s](#), inspired by the 1984 [Citizens for Airport Relocation](#) (CARE) plan that called for high-density development. Mueller is commended for the redevelopment's innovation, bold vision, sustainability, and success in implementation and has won several national awards such as the [HUD Secretary's Opportunity and Empowerment Award in 2015](#). Formed in 2007 as part of the Mueller Airport Redevelopment, the [Mueller Foundation](#) provides the largest portfolio of shared-appreciation for-sale affordable homes in Austin, and has retained these homes through resales to successive affordable owners. The Mueller redevelopment agreement requires 25 percent affordable units within both for-sale and rental housing detailed in their [2024 impact report](#).

[The Grove](#), also a master-planned community, offers dining, shopping, office, and residential options. A great example of urban infill, the land was originally owned by TxDOT and featured primarily open space and sparse office buildings until [Milestone purchased the 75 acres in 2014](#) to begin construction of the new mixed-use district.

Another [lauded](#) nearby development is [Highland](#), a mixed-use neighborhood featuring apartments, shops, office buildings, and Austin Community College's [flagship campus](#). Formerly the site of the 1970s-era Highland Mall, this adaptive reuse redevelopment was formed from a [public/private partnership](#) between RedLeaf Properties and Austin Community College.

One of the first efforts to create transit-oriented development within Austin, the [Saltillo District](#) in East Austin includes apartments (15 percent of which are dedicated to residents with an average income of 50 percent of Austin's median family income), retail, office space, open space, and public art alongside the Plaza Saltillo CapMetro commuter rail station. Planning for the district started in 2003 between [CapMetro and ROMA Design Group](#) (now McCann Adams Studio) and has been grounded by a vision to increase transit ridership, increase connectivity, and provide both affordable and market-rate housing.

New development is also planned in [North Loop](#), with United Properties looking to establish a new mixed-use district off Ranch to Market Road 2222. Updates to the area’s zoning through [Density Bonus 90](#) allows for the development of thousands of new residences. In collaboration with the [North Loop Neighborhood Plan Contact Team](#), developers look to include a pedestrian crossing at 55th Street, a grocery store, townhomes, the Red Line Parkway, and public spaces.

The Competition Site and Study Area Challenge

The competition challenge reflects much of the actual conditions at the location; however, ULI has changed certain details in this brief for the purposes of the competition. The competition is an educational exercise; ULI does not anticipate that anyone will build what participating teams propose for the Site.

A private development company in Austin has identified a parcel in the Hancock Center north of Downtown Austin as a development opportunity: Parcel 954419, owned by Regency Centers (the Site).

The Site is located west of Interstate 35. East 41st Street is southwest of the Site. North of the Site are single-family homes along East 43rd Street. Both East 41st and East 43rd streets provide access to an I-35 frontage road. Red River Street runs north/south to the Site. Currently, the area is occupied by popular grocery store H-E-B that is used frequently by local neighborhoods and students attending UT Austin, which lies approximately 1.5 miles southwest of the Site. However, the Hancock Center is not in close walking distance to the UT Austin campus. Students and locals from surrounding neighborhoods use several bus stops both in and around the Site.

Parcel data is available at the [Regrid parcel viewer](#).

Your team has been selected by Regency Centers as the master developer for the Site. As master developer, you have entered into a Master Development Agreement with the landowner to provide a proposal to **transform the Site into a thriving, mixed-use, mixed-income development**. The proposal will **evaluate the benefits and financial possibilities of redeveloping the Site within a 10-year period**. The owner is seeking a **vision** for the area that will **increase connectivity and mobility around the Site**, address **housing affordability and inclusivity**, create a **positive economic impact**, include connection to surrounding neighborhoods, and increase the **sustainability and resilience** of the immediate area. As the master developer, you can propose to establish a public/private partnership and/or determine other mechanisms by which to redevelop the site.

Image files of maps are found in the [Competition Site Maps folder](#).



Figure 8: The Competition Site and Study Area. Color key: **blue boundary** = Site / **red boundary** = Study Area / **purple boundary** = previous property extension prior to right-of-way / **orange boundary** = building footprint not to develop. Source: Google Earth



Figure 9: Site facing north. Source: Google Earth



Figure 10: Site facing south. Source: Google Earth

Parcels of the Competition Site: Your proposal must address all parcels listed here (blue boundary).

Parcel ID	PROPERTY NAME	PRESENT USE	DEEDED ACREAGE
954419	Regency Centers, LP	Shopping center	29.2 acres

Optional: Study Area (red boundary): This competition does not ask you to develop anything beyond the Site and Study Area. Do not propose to acquire or redevelop parcels beyond the Site and Study Area. However, you have the **option** to propose **high-level, conceptual designs** for the next 20 years for parcels within the Study Area. Use the red outline in Figures 8–13 as your guide for the allowable Study Area. For any area beyond the Site that you propose designs, you must use the Study Area slides (see the Presentation Requirements section in this document). You do not need to include these conceptual designs in your pro forma; however, if you are proposing enhancements to the stitches, you should describe your funding model on your slides.



Aerial view of Study Area. Source: Google Earth

Figure 11:



Figure 12: Study Area facing north. Source: Google Earth



Figure 13: Study Area facing south. Source: Google Earth

Assumptions

Please observe the following guidelines as you prepare your proposal.

Site Assumptions

Existing buildings and tenants: within the Site, Regency Centers sold the former Sears building to Central Health, which is boxed in the orange boundary. With the sale, Central Health became an acting member of the ownership condo regime. The Central Health building cannot be redesigned and contains 238,000 SF of admin and clinical spaces. Participating teams should assume that the H-E-B will remain a permanent tenant and requires at least 160,000 SF of space (currently it is 129,000 SF and is adding 31,000 SF). However, teams may choose to alter/move the current H-E-B building location, footprint, and design. Other tenants on the Site are not required to remain.

Noise and loading: In your design schemes, consider that the retail and any related loading/unloading of goods and waste management is adjacent to residential homes and streets. For any proposed housing units, consider how the proximity to I-35 will contribute to vehicle-generated noise.

Entry points, rights-of-way, and circulation patterns: Teams may choose to close, or create new, public streets within your development blocks.

Parking: There is no parking minimum requirement for the Site, aside from the required accessible parking spots. However, it should be assumed that both H-E-B and Central Health will require parking for their visitors. Teams should plan to provide parking for these two buildings at a ratio of 1 space to 350 SF of building SF. Parking spaces can be provided at your team's discretion (i.e., surface-parked, underground, or in parking garages). In your pro forma, teams can assume that both H-E-B and Central Health will pay for their required spaces. The H-E-B building will be 160,000 SF and the Central Health building will be 238,000 SF.

Right-of-way (ROW) changes during the 10-year period: Figures 8–13 show how the changes to the ROW will impact the site over the 10-year period, with the purple line indicating the property boundary line prior to the ROW changes. The area of ROW between I-35 and the blue boundary should not be considered as part of the Site. Please carefully review the Transportation section of this brief. Union Pacific operates a commercial rail line beneath the I-35 overpass.

I-35 and stitches (conceptual designs only): Do not propose a “cap” or “lid” over I-35. Teams may account for the City's proposed “stitch” designs in your conceptual designs. The goal of the stitches is to culturally reconnect the historically divided East and West areas of Austin. Up to two-story high buildings may be available to be built on top of the stitches, depending on the stitch location and the structure beneath it. Teams should use their slides to describe how you would fund the stitch and any related buildings on the stitch

beyond the 10-year period (do not list the City of Austin as a funding partner for stitch improvements beyond the City's \$104M commitment for roadway elements on May 22, 2025). In addition, if you create any proposed plans for stitches, please do not reference the [2025 AIA Design Assistance Team \(DAT\) Overview](#), which includes assumptions like a cap that do not align with the current plans for the area.

Context Assumptions

For the competition, your team should consider the following guidance:

Start of development/predevelopment: (land acquisition, planning, entitlements, stakeholder engagement, etc.) can begin as early as **January 1, 2027**, for any component. The start year—the first year you may begin **construction** on any phase—is **2028**. **Close-out** for all phases must finish by the end of **2037**. You may address entitlement issues for components upfront or sequentially, adjacent to the construction period for each component. In real life, predevelopment can take three to four years or more, but it is possible to complete it in less time, depending on the size and scope of the project. You may propose shortened predevelopment periods for the components of your development for the purposes of this competition. As a reminder, please refer to the [TxDOT timeline](#) and scheduled completion dates (2033) noted in the [Transportation](#) section of this brief.

Complete neighborhoods: Proposals should give priority to mixed-use, mixed-income development and neighborhood vitality.

Market-feasible costs and pricing: Although the competition uses a fictional scenario, your team should aim to create a financially feasible plan for the Site. Teams should produce market-appropriate financials that you can justify in your pro forma (e.g., current sales price for land in the area, market rents for various uses, project costs, etc.). If your program requires a subsidy or grant, the subsidy amount should be realistic and from viable sources.

Inflation: You do not need to apply inflation as a factor and can use untrended data.

Planning and zoning code: You may use the current zoning requirements of the Site or propose changes to zoning. The jury will not be checking your proposal against the existing zoning ordinance; however, the existing zones outlined in the land use code can provide you with examples of compatible uses, design preferences, setbacks, parking, lighting, and other approaches that align with the City's urban design, planning, and land use goals.

- You can view the zoning maps and overlay districts using the City's [interactive online resources](#).
- The City of Austin provides the public with interactive GIS web applications for viewing the official zoning district maps, overlays, landmarks, and other planning-related information in Austin.
- More information on Austin's zoning and land use can be found on the [City of Austin Planning Commission](#) site, under [Zoning / Zoning Resources & Site Regulations](#).
- The [Municode Library](#) hosts the full [Code of Ordinances for the City of Austin](#), as well as the various Criteria Manuals (e.g., Environmental Criteria Manual, Drainage Criteria Manual), which describe the rules by which the code is applied.
- The [Travis County Development Planning](#) and [Travis County GeoHub](#) provide detailed reports for data and mapping within Travis County and outside the city border of Austin.
- Legacy documents from the Austin City Zoning and Planning Commission are available through the [Austin Public Library Digital Resource Subjects](#).

Redevelopment tools and incentive programs: The City of Austin, Travis County, and the State of Texas have many incentive programs available for redevelopment of sites. A few key programs that may be applicable to your project include the following:

- The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs has [Competitive \(9%\)](#) and [Non-Competitive \(4%\)](#) Housing Tax Credit programs.

- Austin has several [Opportunity Zones](#) that continue to attract investment. The State of Texas participates in the Federal [Opportunity Zone Tax Credit](#) program administered by the U.S. Department of Treasury.
- The City of Austin has a [tax abatement program](#) for rehabilitation of a property in a historic district.
- Austin also offers [tax increment financing](#) in established Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ). Austin property owners can submit a petition for TIRZ designation provided that they own at least [50 percent of the appraised property value](#) in the requested zone.
- The City of Austin provides development incentives through the [SMART Housing](#) program and [density bonuses](#). To participate in the SMART (Safe, Mixed-Income, Accessible, Reasonably-priced, Transit-oriented) Housing program, residential developments must have at least 10 percent reasonably priced units, meet [Austin Energy Green Building](#) (AEGB) standards, and meet other standards of being safe, accessible, and transit-oriented.
- Developers can receive [density bonuses](#) through the City of Austin that allow for building more units than allowed in the Site's base zoning provided that they set aside a portion of units from income-restricted affordable housing. Density bonuses include [Affordability Unlocked](#), [Vertical Mixed Use](#), [Overlays](#), [Equitable Transit Oriented Development \(ETOD\)](#), and [Density Bonus 90 \(DB90\)](#). Investments, developments, and infrastructure changes are informed by [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#).
- The state passed [SB 840](#), which allows residential development on commercially zoned land.
- The federal [New Markets Tax Credit \(NMTC\) Program](#) is available for individual and corporate investors who make equity investments in [Community Development Entities \(CDEs\)](#). The NMTC Program is an incentive for community development and economic growth.
- Companies can receive grants from the [Texas Enterprise Fund \(TEF\)](#) for companies that are considering a new project where a Texas site is competing with out-of-state sites.
- Travis County offers [Economic Development Incentive Agreements](#) through the [Economic and Strategic Planning Division](#). Travis County also runs the [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#) that helps fund housing, infrastructure, and social service projects for low- to moderate-income county residents.
- A number of nonprofits in the area support development projects. The [Travis County Development Corporation](#) acquires property from regional public/private entities for redevelopment as affordable housing. [Rally Austin](#) (formerly Austin Economic Development Corporation) is a nonprofit formed by the City of Austin that partners with public institutions and private real estate developers to undertake real estate development projects connected to the community.
- [Austin Development Services](#) provides information on building codes and creates [annual reports](#).
- The City of Austin's [Redevelopment Division](#) offers redevelopment and place-based initiatives to support investment in residential, commercial, and mixed-use committees and sites to add social and economic value to the city. [Public Improvement Districts \(PIDs\)](#) allow financing of public improvements and services that the City approves as providing special benefit to the designated area; [Development PIDs](#) are specifically designed to spur economic development in an area through financing the costs of infrastructure.
- [Downtown Austin Alliance](#) maps real estate development semi-annually, as seen in this [interactive map](#). The organization also compiles development stats, identifies trends, and produces an annual report on the [State of Downtown](#).

- The City of Austin Economic Development Department manages a [Place-Based Enhancement Program](#) that can provide tax reimbursement for eligible property and/or sales taxes of the project site.

Taxes: Texas does not have a state-wide [property tax](#); local governments set rates and collect property tax based on property values appraised by the [Travis Central Appraisal District](#), as well as zoning, land use, and new construction. [Texas law](#) requires that property values be equal and uniform when determining taxes. Local taxing units are required, under the [Truth-in-Taxation](#) concept of the Texas Constitution, to make taxpayers aware of tax rates and allow the opportunity to limit tax increases. In 2019, Texas lawmakers passed a bill that prohibits local tax units from raising property tax rates over [3.5 percent annually](#) without voter approval.

- **Real property tax.** You can find real property tax information for most of Austin on the Travis County Tax Office [webpage](#).
- **Austin’s commercial property tax rates** are determined by local taxing units, and factor in elements such as [appraised value, zoning and land use, and new construction](#).

Stormwater utility fee: The City of Austin’s [MS4 Stormwater Management Program](#) ensures compliance to state and federal regulations, and is implemented by [numerous departments](#), notably [Austin Water](#) and the Austin [Watershed Protection](#). Austin Water provides [water quality reports](#) and Austin Watershed Protection publishes [annual MS4 \[Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System\] reports](#) and offers a [Find My Drainage Charge tool](#) to calculate a fee summary for an address. The [Regional Stormwater Management Program](#) is an alternative method for developers to meet onsite detention requirements.

In effort to increase the use of reclaimed water in Austin and the surrounding areas, Austin Water launched the [GoPurple](#) program in 2024, which will install [Onsite Water Reuse Systems](#) (OWRS) and utilize the city’s [reclaimed water system](#) for nonpotable water purposes such as irrigation and toilet flushing. The Austin Energy [District Energy and Cooling System](#) (DEC) has been operating in Downtown, the Domain, ACC Highland, and Mueller since 2001, to use chilled water and a system of underground pipes to cool large buildings. [TxDOT](#) plans to create a [Drainage Tunnel and Pump Station](#) portion of I-35 between Airport Boulevard and Holly Street, to improve Austin’s stormwater treatment and [mitigate flooding risk](#) with lowered I-35 lanes.

Construction and infrastructure costs: You must include costs for infrastructure on private parcels in your financing proposal. In addition, you must include costs for public infrastructure in your financing proposal if you use that infrastructure to achieve a building premium. That means if you propose public infrastructure that clearly goes above and beyond what the municipality typically provides in the area, then you should include it in your budget and identify sources of funds to cover the cost of that infrastructure. If you propose infrastructure that is normal practice for the area, such as the paving of a public road, you do not need to include the cost of the infrastructure in your budget.

- An additional reference, [Construction Pricing Guide](#), is available in the [Google Drive folder](#). This guide includes data sets from a local firm that you may use or adjust at your discretion. The main goal of these data sets is to provide realistic numbers for your pro forma.

Detailed Assignment

As master developer, you must do the following:

1. Analyze regional forces—social, historical, demographic, political, and economic, among others—and the Competition Site in relation to its surroundings and **describe or visualize key aspects of your regional analysis**.
2. **Determine the type of redevelopment** the market would support and **describe or visualize key aspects of your market analysis**.

3. **Establish a strong vision for the future of the Site based on these analyses.** Communicate or visualize the decision-making process that led to your unique vision and informs the program and plans you will propose.
4. **Propose a market-feasible development program and financial pro forma** for the Competition Site. This program should identify all phasing within the 10-year period.
5. **Ascertain the development value of the total redeveloped Site** within the 10-year period. You are not required to use a specific development tool.
6. **Determine and state the subsidies and/or grants** (if any) that would make redevelopment feasible and the **sources** of those subsidies and/or grants.
7. **Establish and state a fair rate of return to the owner** that compensates for the value-added activity and/or establish and state the concessions you recommend.
8. **Propose and visualize a site plan** for the Competition Site. Be explicit about what the owner, Regency Centers, is getting out of the Plan.
9. **Describe or visualize key urban design elements, including specific connections or integrations** between your development components.
10. **Optional: Provide conceptual designs/plans for the future of the Study Area as outlined in Figures 8–13.** *The purpose of undertaking this optional exercise is to encourage thoughtfulness about how your Plan will enhance connections to surrounding areas in the future, giving a way to communicate these connections to the jury. Your focus should be on the connections, not coming up with new ideas for development surrounding the Site. These plans will be high level; therefore, descriptions and illustrations of these plans do not need to be as detailed as those for the Site. In your visuals, clearly delineate any conceptual plans from those that are part of the Site within the 10-year period.*
11. **Provide site-specific illustrations** of key development components you propose within the 10-year hold including planning context and analysis
12. **Offer minimum levels of affordable/workforce housing. In your proposal, a minimum of 20 percent of new residential product**, both for sale and rental, must be units affordable for low- to moderate-income households. Avoid concentrating these units in a single building, if possible.

Presentation Requirements

ULI developed the presentation requirements for the benefit of both competitors and the jury. These requirements ensure that the jury will have enough information to evaluate and compare proposals. Please follow the naming conventions in the submission form as you upload files.

****Please simplify and clarify your visuals in a way that the jury can digest the information quickly. Entries should aim to represent big ideas with graphics rather than with a lot of text. Make sure there is just enough text so that the jurors understand what they are seeing. Labeling is important. Please label significant buildings, streets, landmarks, charts, or graphs. You might also use text to provide succinct descriptions where needed.****

Required Submission Materials (1–5) See the [Submission Process](#) section.

1. **One pro forma in Excel** based on the ULI pro forma template. ULI has provided a pro forma template in the [Google Drive folder](#). In this template, worksheets link to one another, and the cells contain formulas to aid you in scoping the financial viability of each development component. You may modify the template and apply different assumptions (e.g., cap rate, rental rates, project costs by line item, etc.) as you deem necessary. You can add new building types. You do not need to add information about a product type if that type is not part of your development program.

2. **A set of 1 to 4 PDFs (11" × 17") of the Assumptions and Development Program summary tabs from the ULI pro forma template.** You can orient these in landscape or portrait format; the template is in landscape format. You should eliminate unnecessary tabs and use or add tabs only for the development components that are part of your design.

3. **One 11" × 17" PDF digital slide show in horizontal landscape format.** Digital slides may not be animated. Do not include video. Each team is limited to **25 slides** that must follow this outline and should have a **minimum of 20 slides**: The digital slide show must follow these rules and appear in the following order:
 - **(1 slide) Title slide. Include the proposal title and application code.** Do not include information that would identify any team member, school, or adviser. You may include an image or not.

 - **(1 slide) One narrative summary, no more than 750 words, which describes your design and development plan.** Use this summary to indicate what you are proposing to build (your development program) and to highlight *how* your proposal increases connectivity and mobility, addresses issues of equity and housing affordability, has a positive economic impact, and increases sustainability and resilience.

 - **(1 slide) One table ([see template](#)), which describes your financing plan.** Please follow the template (you may add columns for phases and alter colors and fonts).

 - **(4 slides) Analysis, vision, and decision-making process.** Address your parti and what makes your vision for the Site unique. Include concept diagrams that illuminate patterns and concepts for local and regional issues the team considers relevant. This section could include early sketches and bullet points. Please avoid narrative explanations over 50 words per slide.

 - **(6 slides) Plan, urban design, and development context.**
 - **Your whole Site Plan—without conceptual plans for outside the Site—should be on one slide.**
 - *If you provided optional, high-level, conceptual plans for outside the Site, you must include another slide that shows the Site Plan plus the conceptual plans.*
 - **The Site Plan elements might include:**
 - a. A legend or key and/or text and labels to orient the viewer
 - b. Blocks and streets, labeled with street names wherever possible
 - c. Land uses and building uses
 - For all uses, text and labels should clearly delineate between amounts included in the Site and amounts in conceptual plans outside the Site.
 - d. Landscape, open space, waterways and other natural systems
 - e. Circulation (pedestrian, vehicular, transit, bicycle, parking, etc.)
 - f. Location of transit lines and stops/terminals
 - g. Public and private infrastructure, including stormwater and landscape
 - h. Public realm enhancements
 - **Provide additional illustrations** that zoom in on the Site and illuminate the urban design elements. These illustrations might be plans, diagrams, elevations, sections, or three-dimensional views (perspective/axonometric). These illustrations might highlight the elements above as well as:
 - a. Private-sector development concepts
 - b. Connections to neighboring blocks
 - c. Environmental, sustainability, and resilience considerations
 - d. Image and character of the area

- e. Overall design characteristics and aesthetic values
 - f. Social and economic concerns
 - g. Community planning and infrastructure concepts
 - **(4 slides) Phasing.**
 - These slides should illustrate massing and scale for the public and private realms, including how they will be programmed and used.
 - For each phase, include text, labels, or graphs that indicate the total size of each use, the number of units (where relevant), and the percentage of each use as a portion of all uses for that phase.
 - Indicate how much affordable housing is complete in each phase. Include an indicator of affordability [such as area median income (AMI)], size, and number of units.
 - Include debt and equity by phase including loan-to-value (LTV) and loan-to-cost (LTC).
 - One of these slides should show the program when complete, at the end of the development period, with labels that indicate total size and number of units for each use. These slides should not include any elements outside the Site.
 - **(3 slides) 3–5 renderings or graphic vignettes of elements of your development.**
 - **Optional (5 slides) Other slides:** Use the remaining slides to communicate images and information to tell the story of your development.
4. Upload the same three renderings/graphic vignettes from your **Plan, urban design, and development context** slides as jpeg or png files (340 pixels × 340 pixels). ULI may use these on the ULI website or social media if your project is recognized by the jury. Please do not include team codes on these images.
 5. Upload the Site Plan from your slideshow as a jpeg or png file (340 pixels × 340 pixels).

Notes on Graphics

- Competitors have discretion to select which graphic techniques they use.
- Maps, plans, and illustrations may be at any scale.
 - Sections should include a graphic scale.
 - Maps and plans should include a graphic scale and an arrow indicating north.

Submission Process

Deadline

ULI must receive all digital submissions by 11:59 p.m. PST on Monday, January 19, 2026 (which is 2:59 a.m. EST on Tuesday, January 20, 2025). We suggest you review and understand the online form AND plan to complete it well ahead of this deadline. **ULI staff will not be available** to answer questions or assist you after 2:00 p.m. PST/5:00 p.m. EST on January 19.

Rules for Submission

- **You will submit only digital files**, as outlined below. Please do not mail anything to ULI.
- Submit all files via the 2026 ULI Hines Student Competition portal at uli.org/hines2026 using the form titled “Submission Materials.” This form will be accessible by January 7, 2026, two days after the competition commences.

- The person who submitted the team application should also be the one to log in, upload documents, and submit your team’s final proposal. If other team members need to upload documents, the person who submitted the application will need to log in and add team members using the Manage Collaborators function.
- **One corner of every document except the vignettes MUST display your team’s nine-digit code**, which takes the form “2026-#####.”
 - Your code was automatically generated when you registered to participate at the submission portal at uli.org/hines/2026. Whoever registered the team should log in to the portal, click on My Applications, and select Complete. Your code can be found code under “Application #.”
- **DO NOT include any marks**—other than your nine-digit code—**that identify your team or universities** on any of the sheets you submit, either in digital or in hard copy. There should be no mascots, no university buildings, and no references an alum would recognize, etc. **If you include identifying marks on any sheets, ULI will discard your submission and the jury will not review it.**
- ULI will not accept—and the jury will not review—any supplemental diagrams or information not specified in the [Presentation Requirements](#) section.

Notification of Receipt

You will receive an automatic email and system notification once you hit Submit, confirming that we have received your submission. About five days after the submission period ends, ULI will send a message to your team to let you know if your submission is complete and eligible for jury review.

Competition Resources

The following list includes all the items available for download from the [Google Drive folder](#) or elsewhere and serves as a checklist for you to ensure that you receive all the resources:

- The **challenge brief** (this document) is available as a PDF.
- The **pro forma template** is available as an Excel file.
- The [Question & Answer \(Q&A\) document](#) is available as a Google Doc. During the competition period, ULI will post responses to team inquiries on this document in the [Google Drive folder](#). **Please plan to check the Q&A document daily.**
- **Geographic information system (GIS) files** of the site and its surroundings are also provided in the GIS folder.
- **Photos and videos** of the site and context, including ground-level imagery and drone footage are available on ULI Award’s [Flickr](#) account.
- Various **reports** will be available in the Google Drive folder. You are not required to review these documents, and you should plan to do additional research to inform your proposal.

Downloading Competition Resources

- You may download competition resources for distribution only among your team members, faculty advisers, and professional advisers.
- You may share resources and collaborate across teams, but team members should not directly contribute content to another team’s proposal (so that ULI and the jury do not have to worry about someone asking for credit for part of another team’s proposal).
- You may use competition resources only for this competition. **You may not use, copy, or distribute these resources for any other purpose without written permission from ULI.**

Criteria for Judging

The jury will select **four finalist teams** that it deems to have best satisfied the goals and deliverables of the challenge and criteria described here. The jury, at its discretion, will award an unspecified number of **honorable mentions** for outstanding submissions in one or more of these criteria. Specifically, proposals should strive to meet the following criteria:

- **Integrate planning and design decisions with economic feasibility, including market-level returns on investment** for private investors and lenders. For instance,
 - Public investments in infrastructure and public facilities should have clear value for the owner.
 - The development proposal and planning and design concepts should support and reinforce both public planning goals and financial returns for the owners.
- **Demonstrate awareness of design issues** contributing to a development that supports the vision specified in this brief.
- **Demonstrate attention to factors affecting the risks and feasibility of the project**, including:
 - Development and construction costs;
 - Future expenses and revenues from operations and land sales; and
 - Effects of project phasing on risks and feasibility.
- **Demonstrate working together as a team.** A primary goal of this competition is to provide a means and demonstration of integrating real estate with allied disciplines. The jury will consider how successfully your team worked together, as evidenced by the consistency and coherence of your proposal. For example, the financial proposal should accurately reflect the designs and vice versa. You may have an excellent pro forma, but if your vision is weak and your site plan is confusing, your proposal will not advance to the finals. Likewise, you may have an excellent vision and stunning graphics, but if your pro forma is very weak with no obvious room for simple corrections and improvements, your proposal will not advance.

The jury may, if it wishes, use additional criteria in making its final decisions.

Jury Evaluation Process

ULI strives to conduct a thorough, fair, and rigorous jury evaluation process, yet teams need to consider the realistic constraints on and limitations of the jury. ULI receives many submissions (70–100 on average), and jurors have very limited time to review each one. Jurors will not have extensive time to delve into every detail of every proposal, nor will they have the capacity to provide lengthy, detailed feedback. Teams should make their presentations as clear and easy to understand as possible.

The jurors ULI selects are leaders in their fields and generously donate their time to the competition. Just as in the real world, in which developers and designers have a finite window to present their proposals, your team should strive to make a meaningful first impression by packaging your solution in a compelling and succinct fashion that invites additional analysis of the proposal. The following is a typical process; however, it might not be the exact process the 2026 jury uses.

- The jury meets several times in February to review all submissions and again in April for the final presentations.
- About one week before the jury meets in February, all jurors receive all digital files from each complete submission. ULI will indicate to all jurors which subset of submissions they should review before they reconvene as a full jury.
- During the February meetings, the jury has about 15 hours over three working days to review all the submissions, select the four finalists and any honorable mentions and consider whether and how each submission meets the criteria.

- All jurors cast votes for the four submissions they think should be finalists. The submissions with the most votes become the finalists.
- The jury discusses the feedback they want ULI staff to provide to each finalist team.
- The jury selects honorable mentions and discusses why they merit this honor.
- Only after selection of the finalists and honorable mentions does ULI staff reveal to the jury which school(s) submitted each proposal.

Tools (Not Required)

RSMMeans Data

Registered teams had the option to request this access for two team members from ULI by December 13. This is an online database tool that consists of relevant local construction cost information. If you have questions about using the software, please see the training videos offered on [the RSMMeans website](#).

Pro Forma Training and Q&A Sessions

ULI offers recorded trainings on how to use the pro forma template on the [About the 2026 Competition](#) page.

Questions

Please make sure you are monitoring your email during the competition period because we may send email updates, new resources, or corrections.

ULI will periodically post questions and answers to the [Q&A document](#) in the [Google Drive folder](#). ULI reserves the right to edit submitted questions before posting them. ULI also reserves the right to not answer every question it receives and to not post redundant questions or remarks it deems inappropriate or irrelevant. **Please plan to check this document daily as we do not have the staff resources to send out an email every time that we update the document.**

During the 15-day competition, teams may send questions in writing via email to hinescompetition@uli.org.

Once ULI announces the four finalist teams, it will share finalist stage guidance with those teams. You will have a chance to provide feedback on the competition in February after the general competition is complete and again in late spring after the finals have concluded. Thank you for joining us in this year's competition!

Best of luck,

ULI Hines Student Competition