

NOTE: THIS IS A DRAFT OF THE NORTH SHOAL CREEK PLAN QUALITY OF LIFE ELEMENT. THIS DRAFT CONTAINS ONLY TEXT. GRAPHICS, MAPS, AND PHOTOS TO BE INSERTED LATER ARE REFERENCED IN THE TEXT. TEXT MAY BE EDITED FOR CONSISTENCY OF STYLE IN FINAL DOCUMENT.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of Life encompasses many topics, including housing choice, public facilities and services, a thriving economy with quality jobs, shops and services, healthy living, a safe and attractive neighborhood, and a general sense of community. Many of these are not directly related to land use, mobility, or environment, but are still important to area stakeholders. The North Shoal Creek neighborhood plan aims to improve quality of life for a multitude of stakeholders identified in the planning process, such as residents, property owners, businesses, workers, students, and visitors to the area.

North Shoal Creek is a desirable neighborhood with a strong sense of community and a variety of amenities. Maintaining and improving upon that quality of life will depend on the continued actions of residents, property owners, businesses, City departments, and others. North Shoal Creek faces some major challenges common to Austin as a whole, such as traffic congestion and housing affordability. Some of the neighborhood's challenges are unique, such as a deficiency of parks and natural spaces, and an aging population with fewer families with school-age children. With relatively low levels of crime and code violations, some challenges are minor compared to other areas in the city. Nonetheless, these issues should be monitored to ensure they do not grow.

The items listed in this section were identified as priorities through the neighborhood planning process. Many of these topics align with goals and policies in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive plan. Imagine Austin identifies many city-wide policies and programs to address quality of life issues which will have a positive impact on North Shoal Creek. Where applicable, those policies are cross-referenced. The chart below shows Imagine Austin's Complete Community aspects that are addressed in this section of the North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Plan.

Photos from NSC area –people of all ages, green spaces, bustling coffee shop, community garden construction

Map – Key Goods & Services within 1 mile

Walk Score map

Housing Opportunity

North Shoal Creek hosts a mix of housing types, but like most other Austin neighborhoods, lacks affordable home ownership opportunities. The majority of housing units within the planning area are apartments (57%), but most of the land devoted to housing is used for single family homes. Most of the single family homes were built in the 1960s, and the housing stock is in good condition. The missing middle is somewhat present in North Shoal Creek, with 5.7% of housing units consisting of duplexes, three-plexes or four-plexes. As of the 2010 Census, 44.1% of the dwelling units were owner-occupied. Some of the apartments have been converted into condominiums, representing the most affordable ownership opportunities.

Zillow chart

The Austin metropolitan area continues to grow at a high rate, driving up the cost of housing. As shown on the chart above, home sales prices have steadily risen over the past six years in Austin, with an even higher rate of increase in North Shoal Creek. The City of Austin added 17,738 residents from July 2015 through June 2016, a 1.9% increase. Almost 49 people move into the city each day. Many people move to new housing at the edge of the city or suburbs, where housing costs are lower, but transportation costs are higher.

Median home values –heat map, NSC compared to nearby neighborhoods

Housing affordability is relative to income. In general, housing is considered affordable if monthly housing costs (rent, mortgage, property taxes, and utilities) are equal to or less than 30% of household income. North Shoal Creek is home to two subsidized housing developments. One development has 14 units required to be leased to families earning 30% or less of Austin's Median Family Income (MFI) until the year 2109. In 2017, the HUD MFI for the Austin-Round Rock area was set at \$81,400. There is also a retirement community within the neighborhood that receives HUD funding, which has 105 units. This retirement community is a Section 202 project-based rental assistance property for residents 62 years old and above. These two subsidized developments account for 5.5% of the neighborhood's housing units.

A more comprehensive look at affordability includes both housing and transportation costs. Housing experts recommend spending less than 45% of gross income on housing and transportation combined. Transportation costs include things like car payments, gasoline, insurance, and public transit costs. As shown on the adjacent map, housing and transportation costs combined can average from ___ to ___ within North Shoal Creek.

Housing + Transportation map

Map out housing types – sf/dup/3-4-plex/multi-fam

Call-out box: Strategic Housing Blueprint

Increasing housing supply is an important component to improving housing opportunities. The North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Plan aims to allow for increases in housing supply within Activity Corridors, and especially near high-capacity transit, while maintaining the overall character of the residential core. This is reflected in the Character Districts shown on the Future Land Use Map, and will be implemented through the adoption of changes to the Land Development Code. Accessory dwellings should continue to be allowed within areas currently zoned SF-3.

Goal: Maintain a balance of housing types for a variety household sizes and incomes.

Priorities:

Encourage and support a range of affordable housing in appropriate locations.

Meet the housing needs of people of different ages, abilities, and other protected classes with a variety of housing options.

Promote new dwellings along Imagine Austin Activity Corridors served by transit and near goods and services.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

- QL-1 Coordinate with NHCD to implement the Strategic Housing Blueprint. (PAZ, NHCD)
- QL-2 Engage neighborhood association through speakers or events focusing on the importance of economic, racial, and ethnic diversity as a core value. (NHCD, NSCNA)
- QL-3 Allow for residential dwellings in more commercial areas throughout the planning area through adoption of the FLUM and changes to Land Development Code. (PAZ)
- QL-4 Promote more affordable units in mixed-use and multi-family residential zoning districts through affordable housing bonus provisions in the Land Development Code. (PAZ)
- QL-5 Allow for accessory dwelling units in low-medium density residential districts to help homeowners reduce burden of mortgage payments and property taxes. (PAZ)
- QL-6 Educate residents about home repair and down payment assistance programs currently available to low to moderate-income households through neighborhood association newsletter or web site. (NSCNA, NHCD)
- QL-7 Encourage location of residential units near transit to improve overall housing + transportation affordability. (ATD)
- QL-8 Explore partnerships with employees for workforce housing.

Public services/facilities

North Shoal Creek contains some quality public institutions, such as Pillow Elementary and the North Village Branch Library. While many neighborhoods have an elementary or middle school, few have a library branch. There are no houses of worship within the neighborhood (although one congregation often meets at the elementary school). North Shoal Creek only has one public park, at Pillow Elementary School, which is not accessible during school hours. However, there are regional parks and recreation centers not too far from the neighborhood, such as Sheffield Northwest District Park or the Northwest Recreation Center. Providing safe access to these regional amenities should be a priority.

North Shoal Creek is not home to any police or fire stations, but there is a fire station just outside the planning area. This nearby station allows for low response times, with 87.5% of calls responded to in less than 8 minutes in 2016. The City's target for service is to respond to 90% of calls within 8 minutes or less. Other city services, such as waste recovery, electricity or water utilities were not brought up by participants during the planning process.

Photo of school, [Link to school web page](#)

Photo of library/events, [Link to library web page](#)

Map of public facilities in extended region (school, park, library, fire station)

Photos of Fire, utilities

Goal: Maintain quality public facilities and services.

Priorities:

Promote resources such as the North Village Branch Library and Pillow Elementary.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

- QL-9 Promote North Village Branch Library events and resources through flyers, online presence, and traditional media for large events. (APL)
- QL-10 Complete needed maintenance of Pillow Elementary School, including replacement of roof. (AISD)
- QL-11 Resurface and improve Pillow Elementary School track. (AISD)
- QL-12 Promote use of Pillow School facilities such as cafeteria, new library and remodeled gym. (NSCNA, PTA)

Thriving economy/services

North Shoal Creek is bordered by two highways and two major roadways. All of these host businesses that serve the larger region, along with smaller retail, service and industrial concerns. There are many uniquely Austin businesses, as well as a few national chains. There are financial services, health services, and lots of offices. During the planning process, stakeholders voiced support for local and small businesses. They also expressed concerns about being able to access those businesses, wanting better pedestrian connections and adequate parking for those arriving by car.

[Photos of local businesses](#)

[Map of jobs near the area](#)

[Link to EDD programs web page](#)

Goal: Provide a diverse range of shops and services for neighborhood residents and other Austinites.

Priorities:

Ensure businesses have adequate access for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Support and encourage more local businesses.

Provide new and renovated spaces for businesses of all sizes.

Goal: Provide quality jobs.

Priorities:

Retain the strong base of office and low-intensity industrial uses.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

- QL-13 Promote Locally Austin program among local businesses in the planning area.
- QL-14 Promote small business programs through online outreach.
- QL-15 Allow for live-work development in appropriate areas. (PAZ)
- QL-16 Allow for shared/district parking and/or reduce parking requirement for outdoor spaces. (PAZ)

Health and Food Access

Being active, eating right, and preventative care are all aspects of being healthy. Residents, students at Pillow Elementary School, workers, shoppers and other visitors to the area should have opportunities to improve their health. Health could be measured by physical fitness, maintaining mental acuity, access to nutritional foods, and access to care. In order to support health outcomes, the City and partners provide a variety of facilities, programs, and services.

[Map of nearby parks, PARD facilities, gyms](#)

Access to healthcare facilities and healthy foods were a concern for stakeholders. There are some specialty physicians and dentists within the neighborhood, but no urgent care centers. There is only one pharmacy, on the southern border of the neighborhood. There are convenience stores, but no full-service grocery stores within the planning area (there are two just south of Anderson Lane and several supermarkets are within two miles of the neighborhood).

[Healthy foods access map](#)

One possible solution to overcome the lack of primary care, pharmacies, and grocery stores within the neighborhood is the new paradigm of virtual doctor visits and home delivery of grocery and pharmacy goods. Another solution to providing healthy foods is to grow your own. The new community garden on the Pillow School grounds aims to allow residents to do just that.

[Call-out box: community garden. Site design, photos of other CGs](#)

Goal: Promote health throughout the neighborhood.

Priorities:

Make it more pleasant to walk to nearby commercial and recreational spaces.

Provide more healthy food options within the neighborhood.

Promote active lifestyles and provide recreational spaces and opportunities.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

QL-17 Complete construction of the community garden at Pillow Elementary School. (NSCNA, NPP)

- QL-18 Coordinate workshops on organic gardening at the new community garden. (NSCNA, SFC, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service)
- QL-19 Encourage composting through education and a compost cooperative/exchange. (NSCNA, ARR)
- QL-20 Coordinate Community Garden with Pillow School for food production and education (NSCNA, AISD)
- QL-21 Encourage parent or faculty participation in the Austin Area School Garden Collaborative (greeningyourschoolyard.com). (AISD, Pillow PTA, OoS)
- QL-22 Promote programs to provide healthy food to seniors. (APH)
- QL-23 Explore options to provide healthy foods and produce within the neighborhood, such as a farmer's market, through the Fresh For Less programs. (APH, OoS, NSCNA)
- QL-24 Explore ways to educate families about healthy cooking through outreach and student curricula (SFC Happy Kitchen, AISD CATCH, Common Threads?)
- QL-25 Explore potential community events related to promotion of health, such as bike rides, tai-chi, etc. (NSCNA, local fitness groups)
- QL-26 Coordinate with PARD to promote programs and activities for healthier youth, adults and seniors. (NSCNA, PARD)
- QL-27 Promote and expand access to fitness and recreational facilities in the areas surrounding North Shoal Creek. (PARD)
- QL-28 Promote awareness of online options to mitigate lack of health care facilities and pharmacies within the planning area. (APH?)

Community

There are many opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to interact with each other in North Shoal Creek. The North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association (NSCNA) is an active group that holds social events and organizes projects to improve the neighborhood, such as the new community garden.

[Link to NSCNA web site, nextdoor.com page](#)

[Photos from NSCNA meeting or newsletter screencap](#)

[Profile NSCNA? Started in ____, meets x times a year, etc.](#)

Goal: Encourage a sense of community.

Priorities:

Encourage interaction and collaboration among community stakeholders.

Expand opportunities for interaction among the community.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

- QL-29 Promote participation in NSCNA meetings and events through increased outreach. (NSCNA)
- QL-30 Organize community-wide celebrations and events to encourage neighbors to meet each other. (NSCNA)
- QL-31 Keep residents informed of City projects and zoning/FLUM amendment requests (NPCT, NSCNA).
- QL-32 Support informal community-building interactions such as block parties through neighborhood association and online platforms. (NSCNA)
- QL-33 Promote social support programs and life-long learning opportunities to residents through neighborhood association and online platforms. (NSCNA)
- QL-34 Create a sense of place/identity around the neighborhood through unique public art on the Steck bridge over Shoal Creek. (NSCNA, NPP)

Safety & Maintenance

North Shoal Creek is a safe and well-maintained neighborhood. The planning area's crime rate is fairly low compared to the rest of the city. For example, in 2012 there were 29 burglaries in the neighborhood out of 7,237 city-wide (see map). Violent crimes rates have been very low. The city's struggle with homelessness affects North Shoal Creek, especially along Anderson Lane and Burnet Road.

Crime map (of thefts, assaults)

<http://www.austintexas.gov/GIS/crimeviewer/CrimeReportSearch.html>

Photos of police and/or NNO

In terms of property maintenance, the Austin Code Department has received less complaints from North Shoal Creek than many other neighborhoods. The most cited issues are common to the city as a whole, such as accumulation of excess trash or failure to abate weeds. The only issue of note in commercial areas is the tendency for illegal signs to crop up along arterial and frontage roads.

Map of code complaints from 311.

Photos of typical code violations.

Goal: Promote safety and maintenance

Priorities:

Increase awareness of safety and maintenance issues and prevention.

Actions (with Potential Partners):

- QL-35 Invite speakers from APD, Code, or other departments to address the neighborhood association about programs and reporting issues. (NSCNA, APD, Code)
- QL-36 Alert neighborhood association and/or Nextdoor web site when a pattern of crime or vandalism is detected in the area. (APD, Code)
- QL-37 Promote reporting of code violations via 311 to ensure minor issues don't become major problems. (NSCNA, 311)
- QL-38 Explore re-activation of Neighborhood Watch program, reaching out to residents of apartment and condominium properties. (NSCNA, APD).
- QL-39 Explore partnership opportunities for Adopt-a-street program? (Keep Austin Beautiful)
- QL-40 Participate in public safety events such as National Night Out. (NSCNA, APD)