

## **Title: Investigation of Austin, MN – A Prediction for Austin, MN and Its Future**

**Overview:** Throughout their human geography course, students will engage in studying geography from the local level, in addition to our global study of geography. As fundamental geography skills are introduced in Chapter 1, students will start the investigation process into how this applies to their hometown of Austin, MN. As we continue our study of geography, students will engage in a lesson in which they will analyze population distribution maps of Austin, MN which will provide background information necessary for completion of their final project of the year, the Field Analysis Project of Austin, MN. Throughout the semester, students will refer back to the maps of Austin, MN they have investigated and will utilize them to discuss other geographical data such as level of economic development, agricultural land use and finally, urban development of Austin, MN. In their final project, students will be presented the option of five questions to investigate on Austin, MN. In groups, the students will need to conduct field and academic research as well as refer back to the maps of Austin, MN, Mower County and the State of Minnesota to develop their conclusions regarding one of these five questions.

### **Minnesota Social Studies Standards:**

#### V. Geography

B. Essential Skills – 1. The student will use maps, globes, geographic information systems, and other databases to answer geographic questions at a variety of scales from local to global.

#1 Students will demonstrate the ability to obtain geographic information from a variety of print and electronic sources.

#2 Students will make inferences and draw conclusions about the character of places based on a comparison of maps, aerial photos, and other images.

#3 Students will demonstrate the ability to use geographic information from a variety of sources to determine feasible locations for economic activities and examine voting behavior.

#### V. Geography

C. Spatial Organization – 3. The student will analyze the patterns of location, functions, structure, and characteristics of local to global settlement patterns and the processes that affect the location of cities.

#2 Students will describe the processes that have produced this pattern of cities

#### V. Geography

D. Interconnections – 1. The student will describe how humans influence the environment and in turn are influenced by it.

#1 Students will provide a range of examples illustrating how types of government systems and technology impact the ability to change the environment or adapt to it

#### IV. Historical Skills

A. Historical Inquiry – 1. The student will apply research skills through an in-depth investigation of a historical topic.

#1 Students will define a research topic that can be studied using a variety of historical sources with an emphasis on the use of primary sources.

#2 Students will identify and use repositories of research materials including libraries, the Internet, historical societies, historic sites, and archives, as appropriate for their project.

**Objectives:** Based on information presented during this course, students will be able to analyze their hometown of Austin, MN through the utilization of a field research investigation trip and academic research. Students will investigate one of five specific questions regarding Austin, MN and its future. Students will need to synthesize analyze and evaluate their research in order to develop their predictions for Austin, MN and its future. The students' predictions will be shared with their classmates and will provide them with information to share with the city council, mayor and/or coordinator of the Austin Main Street Project.

**Grade Level:** 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Grades

**Time:** Information will be presented to them throughout the semester but the final product will probably involve 2-3 days of field research as well as 2-3 days of research analysis and reflection, most of which will be done outside of class.

**Subject(s)/Topic(s):** Field Analysis of Austin, MN

**Required Materials:** (GET MAPS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION)

1. U.S. Census Bureau – maps of the population distribution of Austin, MN, Mower Country and the State of Minnesota and article “Population Change and Distribution” at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-2.pdf>
2. Rubenstein, James. *The Cultural Landscape: An Introduction to Human Geography*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.
3. Maps of Austin, MN from Fact Finder showing a variety of demographic information such as population density, housing distribution, commercial building distribution, etc. at: [http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?\\_lang=en](http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en)
4. Demographic statistics on Austin, MN from the U.S. Census Bureau
5. Historical photographs of the development of Austin, MN as a city
6. Historical development of Austin, MN PowerPoint and class discussion with maps, pictures and other visuals gathered from city hall, county committees, historical society, planning commission.
7. Historical Tour of Austin, MN designed by instructor based on research gathered regarding the historical development of Austin, MN
8. Handouts including: Five Questions on Austin, Minnesota's Future; Things to Observe during the Field Study/Trip about Austin, MN; Questions to Consider During Your Analysis

**Suggested Procedure:**

**Lesson 1:** Population Map Analysis for Austin, MN with Reading from U.S. Census Bureau, “Population Change and Distribution: 1990 – 2000.” (1 – 2 periods of 50 minutes)

Overview: Students will analyze population distribution maps of Austin, MN and compare these maps to maps of Mower County and the State of Minnesota. This lesson will also include a discussion of a reading from the *U.S. Census Bureau* on “Population Change and Distribution” as well as reading selections from the textbook.

1. Begin class with a discussion of their article from the *U.S. Census Bureau* “Population Change and Distribution.” While students read the article for homework, they were to utilize the HUG reading strategy.

- a. H – Students are to highlight the main ideas of the reading (mainly identifying key concepts).
  - b. U – Students were to underline important details such as key words, steps in a process, definitions and names/dates that were important in understanding population change and distribution.
  - c. G – Students were to summarize in their own words what they read. This could be done by listing important points, creating a cause-effect chart and/or stating important dates.
2. As a class, based on the information gathered in the reading of the article, students are to web-map the important information from the article regarding population change and distribution. Listed below are some topics they should include in their web map, but students may identify more details than this.
  - a. Largest increase in population in American History from 1990 to 2000
  - b. Western states are growing fastest in the 1990s than in the past
  - c. The South states reached 100 million in population
  - d. Nevada is growing at the fastest rate of all states
  - e. Identify the top ten most populous states
  - f. Identify those counties that are losing population
  - g. Large metropolitan areas had the strongest growth in the 1990s
3. Students will discuss this web-map in terms of what it says for the United States and its growing population. Are there some concerns regarding our fast growing population? How did this article and its information compare to that information presented in Chapter 2 of our textbook regarding population growth and data we collected from our previous study of population maps of the United States? We're now going to move to the local scale and study Austin, MN in terms of its population distribution and patterns to see how they compare with those changes mentioned in the article and our analysis of other population maps (world, United States).
4. Prior to analyzing population distribution maps of Austin, MN, students will make predictions regarding the patterns they would expect to see on these maps in terms of the distribution of ethnic groups, residential dwellings and commercial establishments.
5. Students will share their predictions by writing them on large pieces of paper (1 per group) and discussing their predictions with the class.
6. As students share their predictions, each group will circle those predictions that are common among various groups regarding Austin, MN.
7. PowerPoint, created by the instructor that incorporates Population Maps for Austin, MN from the U.S. Census Bureau: Fact Finder.
8. Using their map analysis questions, students will discuss the population distributions they see on the maps of Austin, MN and the patterns they see.
9. While discussing the patterns students see, the class will also develop explanations for these patterns based on what they know about Austin, MN.
10. What distribution patterns, based on the 2000 Census data maps shown in class, can they identify in terms of people per square mile in the following categories: (The instructor will also have to remind students that when the data says white alone, it means that people check only white on the census, they did not combine it with another selection.)
  - a. Total people

- b. White alone
  - c. Black or African-Americans alone
  - d. American Indian and Alaska Native alone
  - e. Asian alone
  - f. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone
  - g. Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
  - h. Some Other Race Alone
11. What distribution patterns, based on the 2000 Census data maps, can they identify in terms of residential land use in the following categories:
    - a. Total housing units
    - b. Owner-occupied housing units
    - c. Renter-occupied housing units
    - d. Median value of specified owner-occupied housing units
    - e. Median selected monthly owner costs of specified owner-occupied housing units with a mortgage
  12. What distribution patterns, based on the 2000 Census data maps, can they identify regarding education in terms of:
    - a. the percentage of people 25 years and over with a high school diploma or more education
    - b. the percentage of people 25 years and over with a bachelor's degree or higher
  13. What distributions patterns, based on the 2000 Census data maps, can they identify in terms of the following:
    - a. Percentage of people who are foreign born
    - b. Percentage of people 5 years and over who speak a language other than English at home
  14. What distribution patterns, based on the 2000 Census data maps, can you identify based on the following income statistics:
    - a. Median household income in 1999
    - b. Percentage of families below the poverty level in 1999
    - c. Percentage of persons below the poverty level in 1999
  15. Students will then look at the 2000 Census population density maps for Mower County and the State of Minnesota. What similarities and/or differences do they see between the maps of Austin versus the maps of Mower County and the State of Minnesota? Which maps give them a more accurate view of the population of Austin, MN? Which would you use if you were making decisions regarding the future development of Austin, MN?
  16. What changes do we see in terms of population density and distribution in Austin, MN from 1990 to 2000? Students will compare the population density and distribution maps of Austin, MN for 1990 and 2000 to see whether the patterns have remained the same or changed. They will look at a variety of the distribution maps listed above in numbers 10 – 14 and compare them using the 1990 and 2000 data available at the U.S. Census Bureau Fact Finder.

**Lesson 2:** Urban Geography Field Trip/Study of Austin, MN. (1 – 2 periods of 50 minutes for the field trip– unless you can convince the students to come in on a Saturday morning to do the field trip. Students will need to complete their field sketch map and field journal as homework.)  
 – This will be done after the students have completed their unit on Urban Geography.

Overview: Urban Geography Field Trip of Austin, MN developed by the instructor to provide students with the opportunity to begin their analysis of the urban development of Austin, MN. This field study/trip will provide students with historical background information and data on the development of the city of Austin, MN and provide students with the base necessary to begin the development of their predictions. Students will also begin to analyze and synthesize their field research and data collected during their field trip in order to develop their predictions of one of five questions, which form the core of their final assignment.

1. Prior to their field study/trip, the students will take a quiz on the history of Austin, MN. This data will be used as a base to identify what students know or do not know about Austin or what missing information you have regarding their town. This data will be used by the instructor to design their field study/trip of Austin.
2. Students will then have the opportunity to read an article written by the City of Austin on the History of Austin. After reading the article, students will discuss the results of their quiz in comparison to the article. Do they know a lot about their town? If so, how did they acquire this knowledge? If not, why do they not know more about their hometown? Should they know more about the history of Austin? Students will need to explain their answers. Following this discussion, introduce the field study and analysis project based on the premise that students need to know more about the city they live in and the events taking place in the town, as these events do impact their lives.
3. Listed below are the questions students, in groups, will have the opportunity to answer with field and academic research. The research conducted by the students is necessary to creating predictions for the future of Austin, MN. The questions/scenarios they will select from are: (please note that there will be one group per question)
  - a. Why did the city of Austin, MN and local businesses want to revitalize the downtown/main street area? What impacted their decisions to revitalize this area? What impact has this process and project already had on Austin, MN? What impact will this process and project have on Austin in the future?
  - b. What decisions were involved in the approval of the development of a Wal-Mart store in the northwestern part of Austin, MN? What impacted the city councils' decision to allow Wal-Mart to develop in Austin, MN? What impact will this have on the revitalization of downtown? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in the near future? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in 10 years?
  - c. Analyze the current housing patterns in Austin, MN. Was there a need for the new housing development by the Nature Center? What type of housing is being developed in this area? Was there a need for this type of housing? What impact will this have on the city?
  - d. Analyze the current housing development in the Southwest part of Austin. Compare this to the residential housing demographics for Austin, MN. Why is Austin expanding its housing to this part of town? What are the demographics of this residential area compared to the Northwest, Southeast and Northeast parts of town? What impact will the developed residential areas in the southwest part of Austin have on its future development as a city?

- e. What impact will the expansion of the Hormel Institute have on Austin as a whole (economically, socially, culturally, financially, and globally)? You might find it useful to analysis current demographic statistics in the areas of housing, education, commercial needs, etc.
4. In order to answer these questions, students will need to conduct field research in Austin, MN. The students will start their research with a class field study/trip led by their instructor which will provide the students with historical information regarding the development of Austin as a city. Areas to be included in the field study/trip are as follows but are not limited to: (\*)
  - a. Main Street which will include the Historic Hormel House and Historic Paramount Theatre.
  - b. Hormel, QPP, the Spam Museum and the Mill Pond region
  - c. Northeast part of town – residential neighborhoods, business district near the railroad tracks (former railroad station), industrial center, Todd Park, the J.C. Nature Center, the new housing development west of the Nature Center and the airport.
  - d. Southeast part of town – residential neighborhoods, flood plain, businesses, parks, etc.
  - e. Southwest part of town – flood plain, Marcusen Park, the Band Shell, cemetery, old and new residential neighborhoods, commercial businesses, etc.
  - f. Northwest part of town – commercial buildings, residential neighborhoods, cemetery, schools, hospital, etc.
5. While participating in the field study/trip, students should start identifying the patterns they see in terms of housing, commercial centers, road construction, etc. Each student will need to maintain the following while on the field study/trip:
  - a. Sketch map – of areas you investigated showing points of interest, distribution of residential dwelling, distribution of commercial dwellings, etc. You might also want to include a diagram of the urban land model you see your city utilizing.
  - b. Field Journal of your observations – What patterns are you seeing? What urban land model do you see being used in the development of your city? Has the model changed over time?
6. The following are some questions or patterns students may need to investigate, if they pertain to your scenario, while on the field study/trip. These are the types of items students should include in their sketch map and field journal, particularly those that pertain to your scenario. Remember that each member of the five groups is to keep a field journal of their observations and thoughts about the neighborhoods and regions of Austin they are analyzing.
  - a. Describe the streets in consideration of the number of buildings involved, the ratio of parking space to shopping space and the overall size and design of the buildings.
  - b. What is the physical condition of the street? Are the buildings well maintained, are sidewalks in good repair, etc.? See if there are any variations in physical conditions.
  - c. The arrangement of space within the buildings
  - d. The patterns and number of shops, stores and/or houses along the street – building modifications

- e. Types of homes (single family, duplex, apartment buildings, assisted living and health care facilities for the elderly – various types)
  - f. Aesthetics of homes (yard, driveways – used or unused, driveways – maintained and/or materials used, types and location of cars, garage, garbage, gardens, grass, trees, decorations)
  - g. Neighborhood demographics (toys in yards, children playing, availability of parks, use of parks, sporting equipment, activities people are engaged in, types of cars in the driveways, etc.)
  - h. The kind of functions that are the primary anchors for the city center (main street or downtown area) and town
  - i. Location and use of transportation services, healthcare facilities
  - j. The kinds of people using the stores and service establishments and their activities
  - k. Types of restaurants – foods they sell
  - l. Types of churches and use of their facilities
  - m. The use of color in the buildings and displays in stores (signage)
  - n. The nature of the signage
  - o. Do you hear or see languages other than English being used in Austin?
  - p. The arrangement of space around the center especially along the river, creek, mill pond and lake.
  - q. The nature of window displays
  - r. Activities in the “public space” – is public space valued? Is it used or empty? Who uses it and for what types of activities?
  - s. Public facilities
  - t. Recreational and sporting facilities
  - u. Educational facilities – types, activities provided – playgrounds, sporting venues, etc.
  - v. Places to sit in public
  - w. Any and all other points you find interesting (street signs, benches, waste baskets, streetlight poles, walking/bicycling path, etc.)
7. Upon completion of this field study/trip, your group may decide to conduct further field and academic research in order to make your prediction regarding one of the scenarios for Austin’s future. Your group will need to analyze the population data for Austin, MN found on the U.S. Census Bureau’s website as well as data discovered in your own field investigation of Austin, MN. You will need to start analyzing the patterns you are seeing in terms of housing, commercial centers, road construction, etc. Listed below are examples of some questions you might need to answer:
- a. Does Austin have an ethnic population that is significantly larger than the county average? If so, what visible landscape clues reinforce this social geography? You may want to consider the following questions. How are the houses painted? What religious symbolism is apparent? Are these some characteristic land uses, such as gardens, plazas, or noticeable recreational sites? What vegetation do people plant and grow?
  - b. Does Austin have a large population of children? If so, what can be observed about the uses of social space? Where do children play or hang out? What kinds of activities do they engage in?

- c. Does Austin contain high-income residents? What can you observe about vehicles parked in driveways, on the street, and in front of houses? Do many people ride the bus rather than drive?
- d. How do your observations of housing compare to the statistical data from the census? What is the relationship between housing data and the physical condition and maintenance of houses or apartments? What types of housing prevail (i.e., apartments, row homes, duplexes, or single-family, detached houses)? Do people have large yards, or common-use areas? Do people use backyards or front yards for socializing?
- e. What other information did you gather about your area that you could not get from census data alone? Do you believe that field observation can help you to better understand the cultural environment?

(\*) Note that when you set up your field study/trip, you will need to identify the various regions of your city to study as well as important places to observe. When I was determining what to include in my field study/trip, I used the four regions that our town is divided into based on the location of two major roads: main street and Oakland avenue. These two streets divided Austin, MN into four very distinct regions, which the students are able to recognize because they are used locally when identifying the relative location of houses or businesses in our town. The four regions our town is divided into are the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and Northwest. When it came to identifying the important historical places and current places to visit and discuss, I based my decisions on the historical background of my town. You will need to investigate the history of your town so that you can identify the original location of the city and its major features as well as the new features that were added to the city as it developed. If your city was developed along a waterway or railroad, you will need to discuss the importance of that feature in the development of your city. Regarding current housing developments and commercial developments, you may find it helpful to contact your city development and planning commission, as well as your historical society to gain historical knowledge of the development of your city. It would be wise to practice your field study/trip prior to taking your students on their field study/trip of your town. This will provide you with the opportunity to determine the best route for your tour and give you an idea on the time frame needed to complete the trip.

**Lesson 3:** Predictions for the future of Austin, MN based on field and academic research analysis conducted by the students in groups. (2 periods of 50 minutes; Students may need to meet outside of class to complete this as homework.)

Overview: In groups, students will take their individual field and research analysis of Austin, MN and as a group, they are to synthesize, analysis and evaluate their data regarding Austin, MN. Each group will develop their predictions regarding the future of Austin, MN in reference to the question they selected to answer.

1. Students will answer the following questions/scenarios in groups and make their predictions on these current issues regarding Austin, MN. There will be one group per question. The questions they have the opportunity to select from are:
  - a. Why did the city of Austin, MN and local businesses want to revitalize the downtown/main street area? What impacted their decisions to revitalize this area? What

- impact has this process and project already had on Austin, MN? What impact will this process and project have on Austin in the future?
- b. What decisions were involved in the approval of the development of a Wal-Mart store in the northwestern part of Austin, MN? What impacted the city councils' decision to allow Wal-Mart to develop in Austin, MN? What impact will this have on the revitalization of downtown? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in the near future? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in 10 years?
  - c. Analyze the current housing patterns in Austin, MN. Was there a need for the new housing development by the Nature Center? What type of housing is being developed in this area? Was there a need for this type of housing? What impact will this have on the city?
  - d. Analyze the current housing development in the Southwest part of Austin. Compare this to the residential housing demographics for Austin, MN. Why is Austin expanding its housing to this part of town? What are the demographics of this residential area compared to the Northwest, Southeast and Northeast parts of town? What impact will this developed of residential areas in the southwest part of Austin have on its future development as a city?
  - e. What impact will the expansion of the Hormel Institute have on Austin as a whole (economically, socially, culturally, financially, and globally)? Be sure to analysis current demographic statistics in the areas of housing, education, commercial needs, etc.
2. Following their field trip/study with their instructor, students will individually complete their sketch maps and field journals. Remember to discuss the type of urban land use model currently being utilized in their city and the model used in the past, if it has changed at all.
  3. Each student will also write their own reflection/prediction/analysis paper on Austin. Students will use data collected in their field investigation, in class discussions and own research to answer the question or scenario their group was given. Students will also make their predictions for what Austin will look like in 15 years? Students will also make predictions for what Austin will look like in 25 years? Students may refer to past data to help support the trends they see emerging in our town, including the urban land use model currently being used and those, if it has changed, that was used in the past. Students may also be able to support their data through their own experiences. Students may choose to discuss how Austin has changed in their lifetime or how it has changed while they lived in Austin.
  4. In class, students will then gather in their five groups to discuss their individual findings on the field trip/study by sharing their sketch maps, field journals and reflection/prediction/analysis paper with other members of their group. Students will use this time to share their observations regarding the patterns they observed that related to their question. The students will then start to analyze these patterns and compare them to the population distribution maps and statistics previously discussed for Austin, MN. Students will use this data and any other academic research they have conducted to generate together their prediction for Austin, MN and its future in respect to their scenario.
  5. These discussions will set the stage for a round table discussion to take place in class. During these five round table discussions (one per question/scenario), each group will have the opportunity to present their findings and conclusions on their scenario. These discussions will be limited to 5 minutes. Their fellow classmates will listen to their

discussion and have the opportunity to ask questions or propose ideas to the group for 5 minutes.

6. Based upon their round table discussion, each group will need to analyze all the individual results to develop a collective prediction for their scenario. Each group will put their collective prediction in writing, which will then be shared with the mayor, city council, and/or coordinator of the main street project

### **Products to be collected:**

1. Individual sketch map – of areas students investigated showing points of interest (that should support items discussed in their individual reflection paper) – one per group member.
2. Individual field journal of student’s observations – one per group member.
3. Reflection/Prediction/Analysis Paper (Each person in the group needs to write their own paper.)
  - a. Using data collected in during the student’s field investigation, in class discussions and through own research, answer the question or scenario their group was given.
  - b. Also, make predictions for what Austin will look like in 15 years? In 25 year? (Students may rely on past data to help support the trends they see emerging in our town. Students will also need to identify the urban land use model currently being utilized by the city and the model used in the past, if it has changed.)
  - c. Students may also be able to support their data through their own experiences – How has Austin changed during their lifetime? Or while they have lived in Austin?
4. Round table discussions – discuss your group’s scenario or question as a group in class. During this discussion, each group member is to present their individual findings and the group is to analyze them to develop their group prediction based on the data collected.
5. As a group, write a collective recommendation on your predictions or scenarios to the mayor, city council or coordinator of the Austin Main Street Project.

### **Resources:**

1. Mower County Historical Society. 700 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 437 – 6082. <http://www2.smig.net/mchistory>
2. Austin Main Street Project. Housing and Redevelopment Authority. 308 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433 – 1866. <http://www.austinmainstreetproject.com>
3. Austin Daily Herald. 301 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433-8851. <http://www.austindailyherald.com>
4. Austin Post Bulletin. 201 Main Street S. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 434 – 7340. <http://www.postbulletin.com>
5. Austin Chamber of Commerce. 329 North Main Street. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 437 – 4561. [www.austincoc.com](http://www.austincoc.com)
6. Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau. 104 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW, Suite D. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 437 – 4563. <http://www.austincevb.com>
7. Austin Public Library. 323 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433 – 2391. <http://www.austinpubliclibrary.org>
8. Hormel Institute. 801 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433 – 8804. <http://www.hi.umn.edu>
9. SPAM Museum. 1937 SPAM Boulevard. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 437 – 5100. <http://www.spam.com>

10. Mower County. 201 1<sup>st</sup> Street NE. Austin, MN 55912 [http:// www.co.mower.mn.us](http://www.co.mower.mn.us)
11. Mower Country Historical Society. *“Images of America: Mower County, Minnesota.”* Chicago, Illinois: Arcadia Publishing, 2002.
12. Austin Daily Herald. *“A Pictorial History of Austin, Minnesota Volume I.”* Portland, Oregon: The Pediment Group, Inc., 1997.
13. Austin Daily Herald. *“A Pictorial History of Austin, Minnesota Volume II.”* Portland, Oregon: The Pediment Group, Inc., 1998.
14. Austin Daily Herald. *“A Pictorial History of Austin, Minnesota Volume III.”* Portland, Oregon: The Pediment Group, Inc., 2002.
15. Mower County Historical Society. *“City of Austin: 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Pictorial.”* Paducah, Kentucky: Turner Publishing Company, 2005.
16. Stivers, Richard, et. *“Mill on the Willow: A History of Mower County, Minnesota.”* Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, 1984.
17. Douty, Sarah. Coordinator for Austin Main Street Project. Housing and Redevelopment Authority. 308 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 433 – 1866.  
[sarah.douty@austinmainstreetproject.com](mailto:sarah.douty@austinmainstreetproject.com)
18. Hoiium, Craig. Austin Community Development Director. City of Austin. 500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, MN 55912. (507) 437 – 9950. [Choium@austin-mn.com](mailto:Choium@austin-mn.com)
19. City of Austin. *Comprehensive Plan: City of Austin, Minnesota – August 2000.* Austin Municipal Building, 500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, Minnesota 55912.
20. City of Austin. *1988 Comprehensive Plan: City of Austin, Minnesota.* Austin Municipal Building, 500 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Austin, Minnesota 55912.
21. Austin Main Street Project. *Austin Main Street Project Design Manual for Building Owner.* Downtown Guidelines. HGA Architecture, Engineering and Planning, 2005.(?)
22. Austin Main Street Project. *Downtown Austin Master Plan.* HGA Architecture, Engineering and Planning, 2004.

**Assessment:**

1. Population Map Analysis of Austin, MN with comparison to population maps of Mower County and the State of Minnesota.
2. Field Analysis – sketch map, field journal
3. Reflective/Prediction/Analysis Paper
4. Round table discussion as a group to peers with opportunities for peers to ask questions
5. Letter to Mayor, city council member(s) and/or coordinator of Austin Main Street project, regarding your predictions for Austin’s future and/or your predictions regarding the impact current decisions will have on Austin’s future (e.g. Main Street Project, development of Wal-Mart, housing developments near the Hormel Nature Center, expansion of the Hormel Institute, and/or expansion of housing developments to the southwest part of Austin)

**Credits:** Lisa Sanders - RCC/AP Human Geography, World History Instructor at Austin High School in Austin, MN. [lsanders@austin.k12.mn.us](mailto:lsanders@austin.k12.mn.us)

# Five Questions on Austin, Minnesota's Future

1. Why did the city of Austin, MN and local businesses want to revitalize the downtown/main street area? What impacted their decisions to revitalize this area? What impact has this process and project already had on Austin, MN? What impact will this process and project have on Austin in the future?
2. What decisions were involved in the approval of the development of a Wal-Mart store in the northwestern part of Austin, MN? What impacted the city councils' decision to allow Wal-Mart to develop in Austin, MN? What impact will this have on the revitalization of downtown? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in the near future? What impact do you predict it will have on the economy of the city in 10 years?
3. Analyze the current housing patterns in Austin, MN. Was there a need for the new housing development by the Nature Center? What type of housing is being developed in this area? Was there a need for this type of housing? What impact will this have on the city?
4. Analyze the current housing development in the Southwest part of Austin. Compare this to the residential housing demographics for Austin, MN. Why is Austin expanding its housing to this part of town? What are the demographics of this residential area compared to the Northwest, Southeast and Northeast parts of town? What impact will this developed of residential areas in the southwest part of Austin have on its future development as a city?
5. What impact will the expansion of the Hormel Institute have on Austin as a whole (economically, socially, culturally, financially, and globally)? You might find it useful to analysis current demographic statistics in the areas of housing, education, commercial needs, etc.

## **Things to Observe during the Field Study/Trip about Austin, MN**

1. Describe the streets in consideration of the number of buildings involved, the ratio of parking space to shopping space and the overall size and design of the buildings.
2. What is the physical condition of the street? Are the buildings well maintained, are sidewalks in good repair, etc.? See if there are any variations in physical conditions.
3. The arrangement of space within the buildings
4. The patterns and number of shops, stores and/or houses along the street – building modifications
5. Types of homes (single family, duplex, apartment buildings, assisted living and health care facilities for the elderly – various types)
6. Aesthetics of homes (yard, driveways – used or unused, driveways – maintained and/or materials used, types and location of cars, garage, garbage, gardens, grass, trees, decorations)
7. Neighborhood demographics (toys in yards, children playing, availability of parks, use of parks, sporting equipment, activities people are engaged in, types of cars in the driveways, etc.)
8. The kind of functions that are the primary anchors for the city center (main street or downtown area) and town
9. Location and use of transportation services, healthcare facilities
10. The kinds of people using the stores and service establishments and their activities
11. Types of restaurants – foods they sell
12. Types of churches and use of their facilities
13. The use of color in the buildings and displays in stores (signage)
14. The nature of the signage
15. Do you hear or see languages other than English being used in Austin?
16. The arrangement of space around the center especially along the river, creek, mill pond and lake.
17. The nature of window displays

18. Activities in the “public space” – is public space valued? Is it used or empty? Who uses it and for what types of activities?
19. Public facilities
20. Recreational and sporting facilities
21. Educational facilities – types, activities provided – playgrounds, sporting venues, etc.
22. Places to sit in public
23. Any and all other points you find interesting (street signs, benches, waste baskets, streetlight poles, walking/bicycling path, etc.)

## Questions to Consider During Your Analysis

1. Does Austin have an ethnic population that is significantly larger than the county average? If so, what visible landscape clues reinforce this social geography? You may want to consider the following questions. How are the houses painted? What religious symbolism is apparent? Are there some characteristic land uses, such as gardens, plazas, or noticeable recreational sites? What vegetation do people plant and grow?
2. Does Austin have a large population of children? If so, what can be observed about the uses of social space? Where do children play or hang out? What kinds of activities do they engage in?
3. Does Austin contain high-income residents? What can you observe about vehicles parked in driveways, on the street, and in front of houses? Do many people ride the bus rather than drive?
4. How do your observations of housing compare to the statistical data from the census? What is the relationship between housing data and the physical condition and maintenance of houses or apartments? What types of housing prevail (i.e., apartments, row homes, duplexes, or single-family, detached houses)? Do people have large yards, or common-use areas? Do people use backyards or front yards for socializing?
5. What other information did you gather about your area that you could not get from census data alone? Do you believe that field observation can help you to better understand the cultural environment?