



Austin ISD Repurposing

Former Sims Elementary School

Engagement Summary | January 16, 2024

Austin ISD is committed to finding new uses for district sites that are underutilized to benefit staff, students and communities. Called “repurposing,” this process aims to make long-term investments in these sites that are responsive to affected communities’ needs while maintaining district ownership and control.

As Austin ISD continues to explore ways to use the former Sims Elementary School campus to strengthen its schools and communities, the district held a series of in-person community meetings and conducted a public survey, between October 17, 2023 and December 22, 2023.

The following report summarizes the feedback from the community engagement process. For additional information about the repurposing process for the former Sims Elementary School campus, please visit www.austinisd.org/repurposing.

Background Information

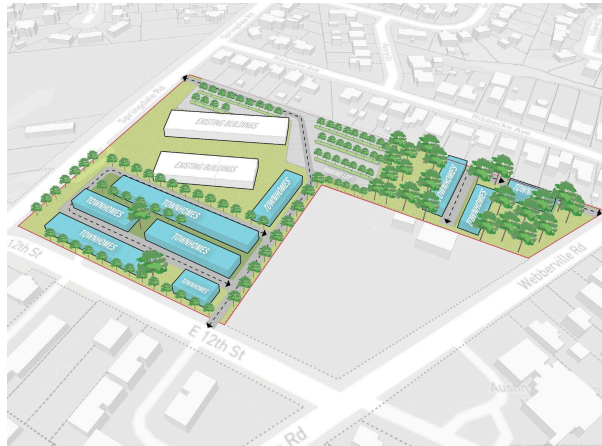
Austin ISD conducted a feasibility study to assess the current conditions of the Sims site, including the existing condition of building and development allowed under zoning and other regulations. Based on the analysis that determined what is legally allowed, physically possible, and market feasible, community members were presented with four scenarios to consider for the repurposing of Sims and asked to provide their feedback:

Scenario A



- Retain existing building
- (127) Parking stalls
- (47) Townhomes

Scenario B



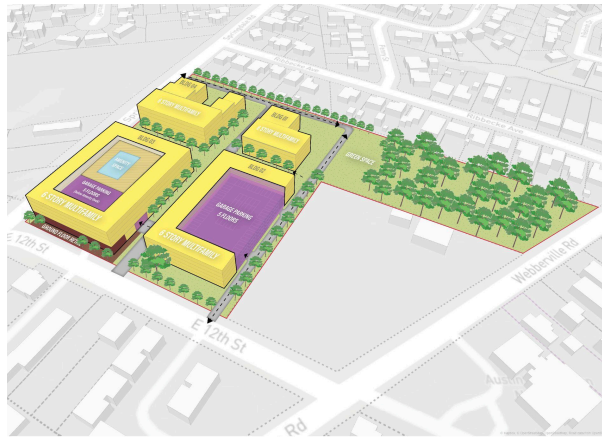
- Retain portion of existing building
- (127) Parking stalls
- (65) Townhomes

Scenario C



- Remove existing building
- (223) Apartments
- (300) Parking stalls
- (16) Townhomes

Scenario D



- Remove existing building
- (386) Apartments
- (557) Parking stalls
- (0) Townhomes

Community Visioning Session

Meeting Summary - May 23, 2023

Number of Attendees: 20

High-Level Feedback:

- Any housing needs to be family sized (3+ bedrooms)
- Need more community focused spaces in the neighborhood
- Concerns about the level of affordability that can be offered
- Concerns about density and lack of infrastructure in the area to support growth

Attendees were asked to express what they liked and what they disliked about each scenario. This is the feedback:

Scenario A

- Likes - preservation of the existing building; potential for affordable homeownership; amount of green space; community use
- Dislikes - utilization of the site; size of the townhomes (not family-sized)

Scenario B

- Likes - preservation of the existing building; potential for affordable homeownership; multi- use of the site;
- Dislikes - lack of community gathering space

Scenario C

- Likes - townhomes; amenity space
- Dislikes - lack of green space; concerns about parking and impact on traffic; lack of retail/commercial space

Scenario D

- Likes - green space along Webberville Road
- Dislikes - height and density; lack of community space; concerns about parking and impact on traffic

District Student Workshop

Meeting Summary - October 23, 2023

Number of Attendees: 41

High-Level Feedback:

- Desire for green space and public amenities
- Open to housing but want to see family sized homes
- Concerns about parking, density and impact on the neighborhood

Attendees were asked to express what they liked and what they disliked about each scenario. This is the feedback:

Scenario A

- Likes - preservation of the existing building; green space
- Dislikes - layout of the townhomes; concerns about parking

Scenario B

- Likes - preservation of the existing building; housing; green space
- Dislikes - lack of public amenities; size of townhomes

Scenario C

- Likes - amount of housing provided; utilization of the site
- Dislikes - lack of retail; density; lack of parking

Scenario D

- Likes - amount of parking; multi-purpose; green space
- Dislikes - density; compact; lack of public amenities

East MLK Combined Neighborhood Plan Contact Team

Meeting Summary - November 20, 2023

Number of Attendees: 15

High-Level Feedback:

- Support for using Sims as swing space for local district schools during 2022 Bond modernization projects
- Request to extend survey to end of December to allow more time for community input
- Concerns about development in the area and lack of supporting infrastructure

Questions / Comments:

- Can the survey be extended until mid-to-late December?
- “Love that we (Austin ISD) are using the Sims school as swing space as it is important for the surrounding developments seeing children at the site to understand that there are families in the neighborhood”
- Using Sims as swing space over the next few years allows Austin ISD the opportunity to see what is being built nearby to inform repurposing.
- Note the increase in renter-occupied units compared to ownership and that the infrastructure (i.e. utilities, transit, etc.) in the area is not being properly addressed. Rental [housing] is outpacing ownership due to the increased cost of living
- Former student of Ms. Sims and expressed preference to see Sims Elementary continue to be used for educational purposes even if it is no longer an elementary school.
- Could see a mix of rental and ownership on the Sims site and suggested a land trust style for the home ownership to protect long-term affordability.

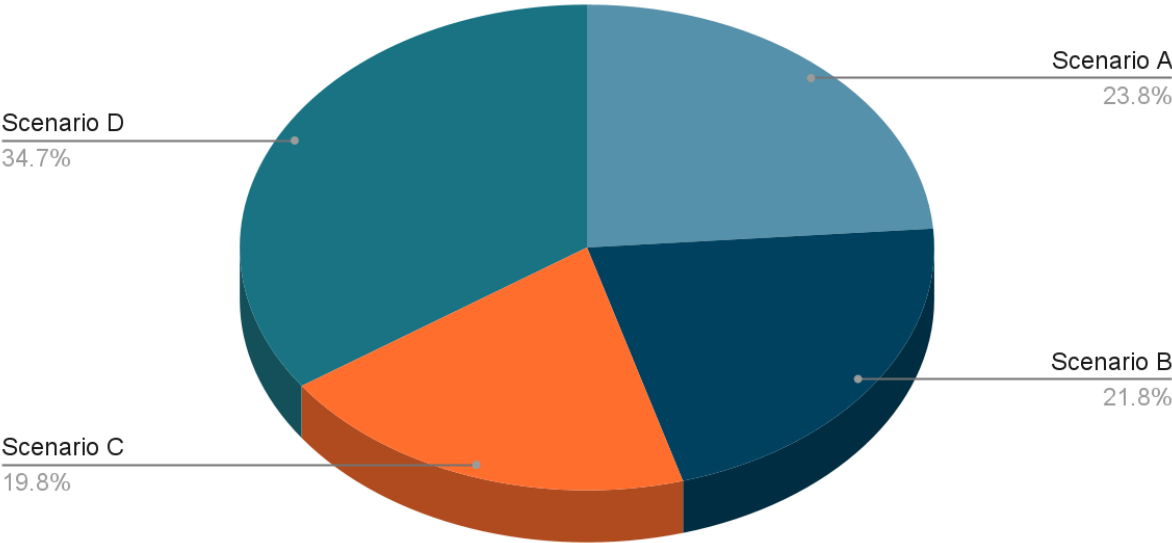
Public Survey Results

Number of Participants: 115

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| 95 Thoughts | 1,329 Ratings | 14 Ratings/Thought |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|

Overview

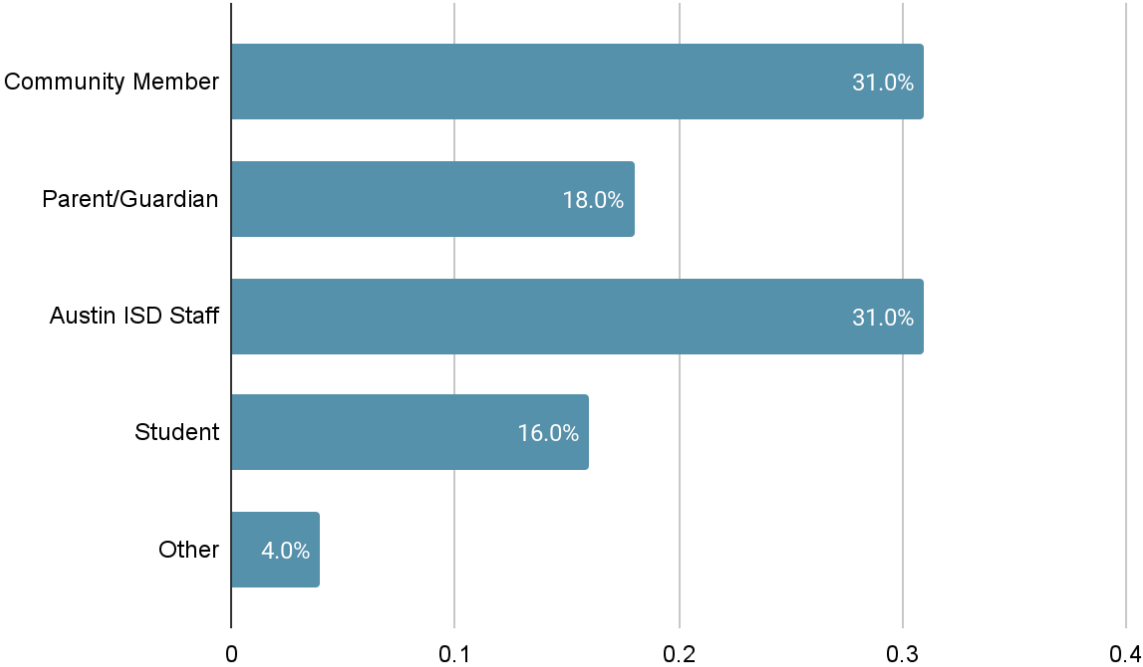
Which development scenario do you prefer?



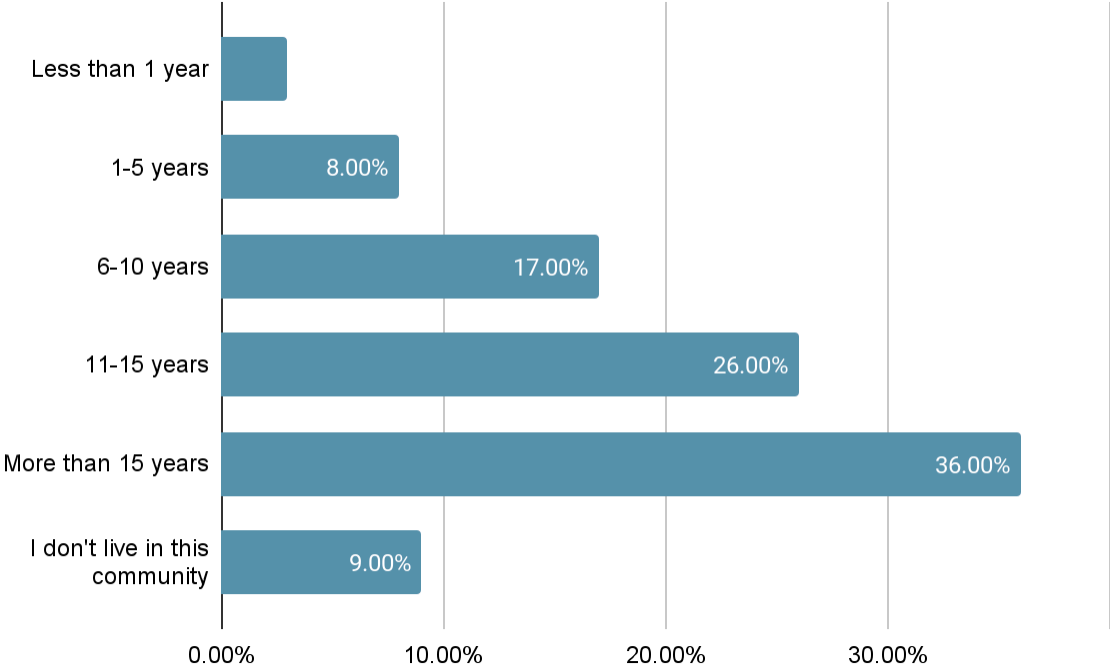
The responses to the question about preferred scenarios for the Sims campus were varied. Many emphasized the need for more affordable housing for Austin ISD teachers and staff. Some respondents preferred scenarios that included retail and arts spaces, while others expressed a desire for more green space. A few expressed concerns about gentrification and the impact of new development on the character of the neighborhood. It was also suggested that the district should consider preserving parts of the original building as a nod to Austin's history.

Participant Information

What is your connection to Austin ISD schools?



How long (in years) have you lived in the community?



Highest Rated Thoughts:

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | "We need more retail and arts spaces in the area." |
| 2 | "I prefer scenario B because it provides more affordable housing to the community. AISD teachers deserve to live in the communities they work in. My husband was born and raised in Austin and I am a teacher for AISD. The cost of living continues to rise and it's nearly impossible to afford living." |
| 3 | "More housing for staff. City rent prices are unaffordable for most district's employees." |
| 4 | "I have lived in and around the Sims area since 1984. It is a great community. The area could really use more affordable housing. I am part of the community and support affordable housing for my neighbors." |
| 5 | "Housing with an infrastructure of community spaces is important. Access to housing plus other services supports children and families thrive." |
| 6 | "I prefer scenario B, because I think townhomes provide more dignity for families in a rental than apartments do. Families have more space in townhomes and the school site can still be partially used for other purposes." |
| 7 | "Affordable housing has the opportunity to remove some financial stressors for teachers. It will help our staff, especially newer less established staff, be better able to focus their energy on providing great instruction." |
| 8 | "[Scenario] A: to utilize the least new resources and minimize the impact of traffic in the neighborhood. Most environmentally sound proposal." |
| 9 | "I prefer option B. It strikes me as a nice balance of old and new for the land. What's most important to me is that these townhomes are reserved for AISD teachers and staff." |
| 10 | "I like the idea of retail to bring more businesses and food (small local grocer or restaurants). It's important to have some food businesses in this area because there are none nearby for walkability. Provide affordable living for teachers and income for the district." |

Key Themes:

