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Dear Client:

With new and diverse developments – some controversial — springing up around Austin like bluebonnets, one urban planner says “Austin should stop acting like a cheap date and ask its suitors to dress properly and take her out to a great restaurant. Austin accepts too many things that others would not.”

The planner uttering those words was **Andres Duany**, recognized internationally for decades as one of the top urban planners. He was in Austin recently to share his thoughts on how cities should be developed. Speaking to *The Austin Chronicle*, while looking at the downtown area where a mammoth Marriott Hotel is planned, replacing some local establishments on Congress Avenue like Las Manitas café, he had these observations:

“I’m disappointed in what I see here. **This city is acting like a beggar, with a beggar mentality.** It’s acting like it needs the Marriott. There may have been a time when you needed the Marriott, but you don’t now. **Austin is hot! You don’t have to go out on every date.** There’s something left over here about an inferiority complex. You should see how New York acts, how L.A. acts – you should see how Paris acts.

“**Austin accepts too many things that others would not.** Austin should have high self-esteem as a city, but from what I’m seeing, it hasn’t yet become ingrained. It’s like ‘We’re country folk, really; we don’t trust that we’ve arrived.’ You need to say instead ‘**We’re a very desirable city. We no longer will put up with B-grade service from developers. We demand and deserve A-service. Superb service!**’”

Duany had a suggestion on how to prevent future neighborhood vs. developer battles: “The citizens need design services. **You need an ongoing town architect position** that inexpensively provides urban design services to the citizens and the neighborhoods.”

How would this work? “Citizens petition to qualify for the services of the town architect. **The town architect works with them to create counter projects – counters to the developers’ proposals – so the citizens can do something other than say ‘no.’** The counter project they create must be the same program, with the same entitlements. Then you give the counter proposal, as an alternative, to the City Council and let them be the final judge.”

What about inner-city circulator rail in Austin? “Don’t build it yet” is the advice of one of the nation’s leading urban planners.

Even though he has strong feelings about how Austin should go about its urban planning (see the previous story), **Andres Duany** does not think a downtown rail project is viable for Austin at this time. “**You don’t have the fabric yet for it to be successful,**” he told *The Austin Chronicle* on a recent trip to Austin.

What does he mean by ‘fabric?’ “**Austin doesn’t have enough walkable stuff,**” Duany observed. “Look at the history of what’s happened in lots of other cities. **Miami is a good example,** a famous example, look at what happened when they built the Metrorail in ’78. Only now is the urban pattern coming in to support it. **Nobody used it; everyone made fun of it.**”

‘Building transit first gives transit a bad name,’ he continued. “**You have to build the urban pattern first, achieve the density.** Then do your transit next.”

Duany thinks mobility problems should reach a serious stage before rail will work. “The good thing about a bus,” he says, “is you can remove it if it gets embarrassing. You need to make a rail reservation in the city infrastructure now, but **don’t build it yet.** You’ll know when you need it; it will be so evident. **There has to be a pain factor.**”

What does he think about green building, about more environmentally conscious projects in the Austin area? “I think it’s too early for real sacrifice,” he said. The people that are really going to walk, not drive, are still under 20 years old. **They’re the first generation that’s been brainwashed on the environment since kindergarten.** So start planning for them.”

But, he said, “we’re not quite there yet. **The real environmentalists will be buying real estate in about another five years.** They’re the ones who will do with less for the sake of doing the right thing.”

In the meantime, this will continue to be a hot topic in Austin. In fact, a year from now (April 3-6, 2008) **Austin will be in the national spotlight even more** when the New Urbanism 16th Annual Congress convenes here – bringing to town 2,000 participants, including a passel of environmentalists and all manner of private-and-public-sector planners, architects, real estate pros, etc. Plan ahead. This could trigger more projects, more rules and regs.

It’s no accident we have brought you a number of reports over the last few months about this “clean tech” wave washing over Austin. **It’s not just the environmentalists who are involved. We’ll continue to see more involvement of the business community.** Remember, as we told you 3/9/07, Austin Mayor **Will Wynn** says that “environmental health and economic strength aren’t competing forces but, rather, are complementary and interdependent.”

While the Texas Legislature is hemming-and-hawing over whether to move the state's primary election to February to become a "player" in the selection of the next president, those who-would-be-president are bagging big bucks from Texas kingmakers.

During elections featuring Bush-The-Father and Bush-The-Son, and during times when a Texan was on the ticket as a VP nominee (such as Sen **Lloyd Bentsen**) Texas was a source of big stacks of campaign cash for the "favorite son" nominees. But, now it is wide open. So which *current* candidate, Democrat or Republican, has raised the most money in Texas?

If you said the New Yorker with the Bronx accent has talked the most money out of Texas so far, you would be right. Republican **Rudy Giuliani**, during the first quarter of this year, reported raising \$2,175,500 from Texans. Democrat **John Edwards** is in 2nd place, reporting receipt of \$1,495,075 Texas dollars.

Also in the Texas million-dollar fund-raising club are: Democrat **Hillary Rodham Clinton** (\$1,230,956) and Republican **Mitt Romney** (\$1,056,550). Close behind is Republican **John McCain** (\$968,900) followed by Democrat **Barack Obama** (\$695,306) and Democrat **Bill Richardson** (\$396,947). No other candidate raised more than \$100,000 in Texas during the first quarter 2007 reporting period.

Who are the Texans who have ponied up the big dollars this far in advance? *The Wall Street Journal* reported some of the names this week. And, by and large, they are the usual suspects – **those who have a history of giving early-and-often to various national candidates.** But it is interesting to see the candidate choices being made by the Texans.

The Journal reports **T. Boone Pickens Jr.** has given and raised more than \$500,000 for Giuliani. Other well-heeled big-givers betting on Giuliani: **Tom Hicks, Sid Bass, Richard Kinder, Tilman Fertitta, James H. Lee, Patrick Oxford** and **Roy Bailey**. It helps that Giuliani joined the Houston-based law firm of Bracewell & Patterson and the firm name was changed to Bracewell & Giuliani.

McCain got money from **Robert Mosbacher** and **Tom Loeffler**. Romney's list of Texas givers includes **Bob Perry** and **L. E. Simmons**. On the Democratic side of the giving ledger, **Fred Baron** is out front for Edwards while **Arthur Schechter** and **Garry Mauro** are raising money for Clinton.

While not mentioned in *The Journal* report, Austinites **Ben Barnes, Tom Meredith** and **Roy Spence** have been active on the fund-raising scene for Democrats, and Waco's **Bernard Rapoport** is known to have spread his contributions around to many Democratic hopefuls. If the Legislature fails to move the Texas primary election date to early February 2008, the presidential nominees will probably be set by the time Texans vote. As a result, very little presidential campaigning (and spending) will occur in Texas. **Texas voters, for all practical purposes, could be disenfranchised – except for those who gave money to the winners.**

“Some say Austin marches to the beat of a different drummer. We’re convinced the city broke off long ago to start its own band” – *Southern Living* magazine, April 2007.

To continue the metaphor, the drumbeat of stories about Austin grows ever louder, with most of them singing the praises of the area. The *Southern Living* article went on to say **“Austin’s greatest appeal lies in its ability to balance its trendy scene with an inclusive attitude.** The cowboy, the politician, the punk rocker, and the soccer mom all groove at the same music clubs and palm tortillas at the same Tex-Mex joints. No matter who you are, you’ll fit in. Snugly.”

Speaking of Tex-Mex food, the March/April 2007 edition of *Cooking with Paula Deen* declares: “Once known primarily for barbecue and Tex-Mex, **Austin sizzles as a culinary hot spot. Innovative young chefs receive acclaim among the country’s best** as they combine the flavors of regional influences.”

Where to Retire, in its March/April 2007 issue, said “If you are looking for a **cosmopolitan Southwestern city with soul and style**, look no further than the capital city in the heart of Texas. Live music makes for a vibrant nightlife, and the college town combines quirkiness, braininess and rugged individuality.”

Another publication, *Men’s Journal*, in its April 2007 listing of “50 Best Places to Live: Best Downtowns,” reported “It can’t be denied that **what was once a business district that rolled up the sidewalks at six is now a lively streetscape seven nights a week.**”

Austin has a problem many cities would love to have: how to *deal* with good publicity, rather than how to *generate* it.

Austin has long had a reputation as a city people do not want to leave. In fact, the ole joke is there are more bartenders with a PhD in Austin than anywhere else. **Dr. Louis Overholster** saw an update of that old story when he spotted the sign at El Arroyo bar and restaurant on West Fifth that read: “Graduates. Beat the Rush. Apply now!”

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