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Dear Client:

How did Austin jump past all the other once-sleepy state university/state capital metros to earn the designation as the #1 US city for technology innovation startups? Think about it. What contributed to this economic sea change that no one -- absolutely no one -- predicted. Those of us who were around prior to the beginning of the evolution, and some who later became part of it, now marvel at what has happened. The answer to what contributed to the change is being carefully analyzed, funded and researched at a high level.

Austin experienced *one of the most exceptional economic transformations in the US urban landscape* – growing from an economy that revolved almost totally around state government and a state university town of 250,000 in 1970, to leading a technology-based region with a population of about two million today. So, the **Kauffman Foundation is funding a study on the development of Austin's high-technology entrepreneurial system.**

Why us? Why here? What set the Austin metro apart? The beginning of the tech surge in Austin in the 1980s has been well-chronicled, and the role of **business, civic and university collaboration** that moved Austin into the top ranks of high-tech cities has been highlighted.

Now, the Kauffman-funded study is focusing on the **evolution of the Austin technopolis from the 1980s, before the digital revolution and through several economic downturns**, to Austin's current ranking as an internationally-recognized center of creativity, innovation and tech growth.

Some questions it is trying to answer: **What institutions and policies have been important in the growth and sustainability of local, innovative startups? How did the 2000 Dot-Com bust change the Austin entrepreneurial scene? How has UT Austin contributed to the supply of startups in the city?**

Another important area of examination is **the role played by large corporations** in the birth and growth of Austin's entrepreneurial ecosystem. There are other questions as well, such as the **role of individuals who acted as influencers and the enduring institutions they built.**

The results of the 18-month project are due in Spring 2017. They'll be interesting.

Fitting right in with Austin's national innovation status, is a first-in-Texas concept that melds hotel-like operations with co-working spaces recently opened in a downtown Austin location. The national company, named Industrious, feels its model will revitalize the professional co-working experience. So how does it work?

It occupies 19,000 square feet of space on the **11th floor at 201 West Fifth Street, between Lavaca and Colorado, and incorporates as many as 83 private offices.** It brags about floor-to-ceiling glass offices with views of downtown and Lady Bird Lake, as well as a number of amenities, including common spaces for companies or individual entrepreneurs to share.

What is meant by “hotel-like?” A company executive told GlobeSt.com that it considers itself “**a hospitality company at heart.** Just like hotels create an experience for their guests each night through service and product offerings, we create an atmosphere that makes our members feel excited to come to work. **Our sophisticated music, high quality café offerings and friendly community manager are just a few of the many elements that shape the experience.**”

What else? Industrious Austin will offer a fitness room with showers, a new mother's room, **concierge service**, huddle rooms, 100/100 Mbps Internet, members-only events such as **lectures and Bloody Mary happy hours**, and **indoor parking** on a first-come, first-served basis. It even offers a monthly discounted rate with a **valet service.**

Okay, okay, what kind of deals do they cut for tenants (they call them members)? Access to the building is 24/7 and **leases are available in flexible month-to-month agreements** for companies seeking regional office spaces. **Renting a desk starts at \$500 per month, while private offices start at \$925 per month.**

So, what does the Austin concierge (uh, community manager) **Sarah Lawton Hawkins** have to say about the hotel/workspace model? “Industrious offers members an unparalleled energy, **combining high-level professionalism that's missing at the coffee shop and an attention to detail** that makes them proud to come to work every day,” she told GlobeSt.com.

Co-working spaces have recently gained a foothold in the Austin market.

Is this marriage of co-working spaces with the hotel approach a new way of working that will catch on in Austin? Check out what the company's CEO says.

The Industrious CEO and co-founder, **Jamie Hodari**, says “As more businesses look to grow their presence in Austin, the introduction of our hospitality-meets-co-working philosophy will revitalize the professional co-working experience. **We are excited to bring the Industrious model to the Austin business community, which is widely known for its entrepreneurial spirit and technology-focused startups.**” Community Manager Hawkins says “This location offers an elegant, boutique feel and I can't wait to welcome our new members.”

Is diminishing downtown Austin parking like the weather – everybody talks about it but no one does anything about it? Not necessarily, but you may have to wait until next year to see if current in-depth planning results in acceptable solutions.

Downtown parking is a problem that appears to be growing daily, as new offices fill with tenants and Austin's population increases at one of the fastest rates in the nation. Back in May, the **Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA) and its consultants, Nelson\Nygaard, kicked off a study, including more than 200 interviews with those affected.** Some of what they found:

Demand for parking continues to grow, **yet we are losing on-street and surface parking for other uses.** Lack of adequate/convenient parking is an ongoing challenge for many **downtown office employers, employees, businesses and leasing agents.**

More options are needed for downtown employees and visitors who cannot access or afford parking downtown. **Finding available parking is challenging for downtown visitors.** Many use on-street parking because they do not know how to access garage parking. The consultants also conducted an inventory of parking spaces in the study area (44,000).

Step back and read the previous two paragraphs again. **Is there anything in them you didn't already know? That's what we thought. You also didn't need a study to tell you that street parking in the downtown area has been drastically reduced.**

Drive downtown from the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge north to the state capitol (also check out the side streets). **Many automobile parking spaces have been eliminated, and in their place you can see outdoor dining tables and chairs, bicycle lanes/storage, widened sidewalks and bus lanes.** All this was done intentionally by the City of Austin to make downtown more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Not to disparage the work done by the study so far. After all, you need a baseline from which to start planning. But now they must come up with solutions. And, the **City of Austin has shown no inclination to change continuing down the "bike-ped friendly" path.**

It's a huge task. **Can more parking be created? If so, what type?** City-operated garages? How to handle future growth? **What about the cost to park –** for employees, for those who need to do business downtown? You get the picture.

The steering committee for this DAA group is quite diverse. For instance, city staffers, Capital Metro, downtown landlords, a market researcher, a planning commission rep, an architect/planner, a state official, et al. make up the group **providing project direction.** They are working toward a deadline of February 2017. Stay tuned.

You know those speed monitors that show how fast you're driving as you approach them. The City of Austin is adding six new units that will be moved around the city. C'mon, admit it. You let up on the accelerator when you see you're going faster than you thought. Well, that's the general idea – to get you to slow down.

These devices are called Dynamic Speed Display Devices (DSDD). Each device has an electronic radar that displays the speed of your vehicle as it approaches the device. The City says **“research has shown that DSDDs are effective in reducing vehicle speeds and achieving better compliance to posted speed limits when left in place for three to four weeks at a time.”**

That's the plan. **The units will be left in place for approximately four weeks at a time then placed in different locations** based on community input. These units are fully **solar-powered, require no underground cabling** and can be picked up and moved relatively easily.

Okay, what happens to all that speed data? It will be stored in real time on a web portal. **The city plans to use it to generate customized vehicle counts and speed reports for the precise locations.** So how will this data be used? The city says it is **“yet another tool in our toolbox for speed monitoring, mitigation and traffic calming.”**

Got that? Could the **city alter speed limits**, for example? Or **target enforcement of the speeding laws** at locations where there is consistent speeding on those roadways? By the way, the city says it welcomes suggestions from citizens where disregard of the speed limits can regularly be observed. One way to request specific placement of a DSDD unit is to simply pick up the phone and call 3-1-1.

Since **Dr. Louis Overholster** has been to more than his share of boring Austin dinner parties, he quietly asks his host in advance: “If you have someone who can't say anything nice about anyone, please sit them next to me!”

Sincerely,



Editor/Publisher