

Analyzing Revitalization and Issues in Downtown, Austin, Texas

Ratul Debnath
Master of Science in Geographic Information Systems
Department of Environmental and Geosciences
Sam Houston State University

Instructor: Dr. Mark Leipnik
Course: Selected Problems in Geography (GEOG 5075)
Semester: Fall 2023

CONTENTS

Purpose of the study

Study Area

Background

Austin Demographics Overview

Downtown Austin Plan, 2011

Active Project Cases

Waterloo Greenway Project

Sixth Street Entertainment District

Historic Preservation

Transportation System

Site Plan Project cases

Homeless Encampment Assistance Link (HEAL)

Violent Crimes

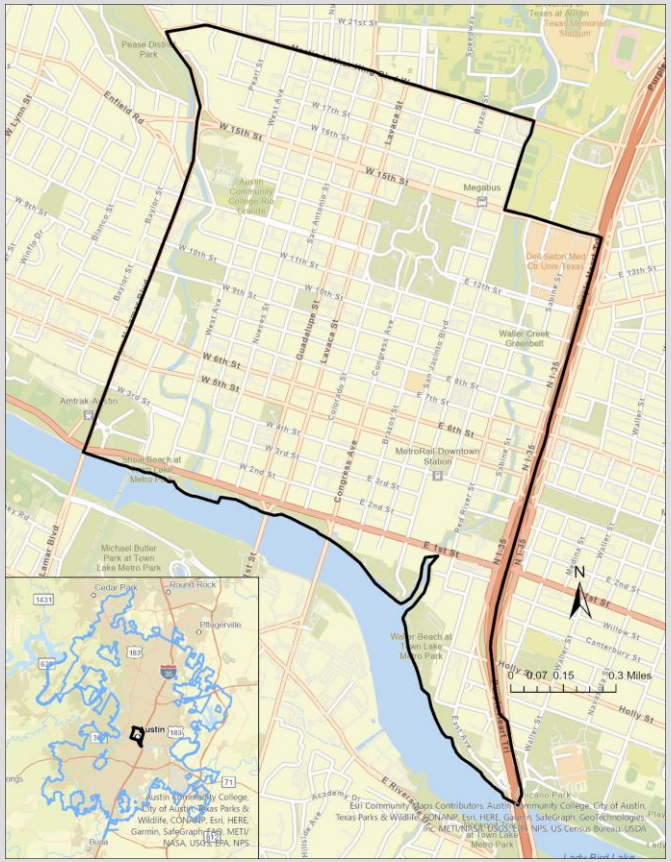
Takeaway

PURPOSE OF STUDY

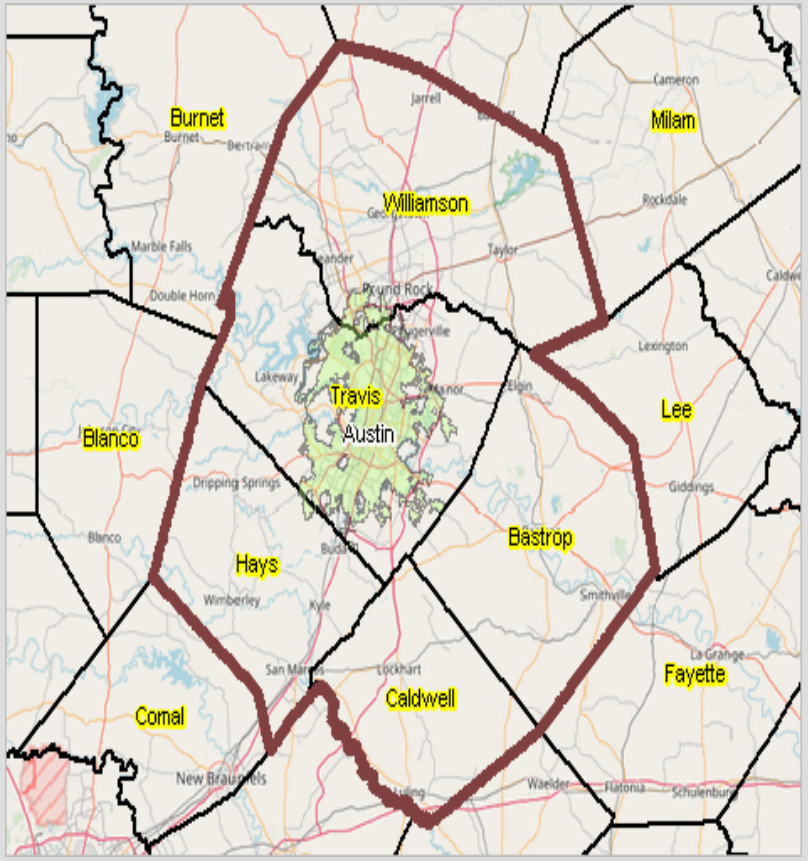
Purpose

- To analyze the issues influencing the development in the Downtown, Austin City
- To evaluate the revitalization ongoing and future projects

Study Area



Downtown, Austin city



Austin-Round Rock metropolitan statistical area (MSA)



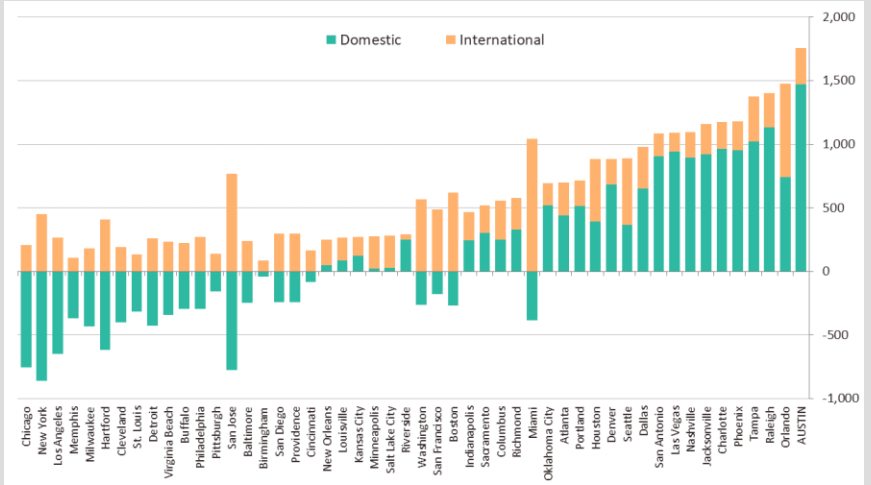
Austin city Location

Background

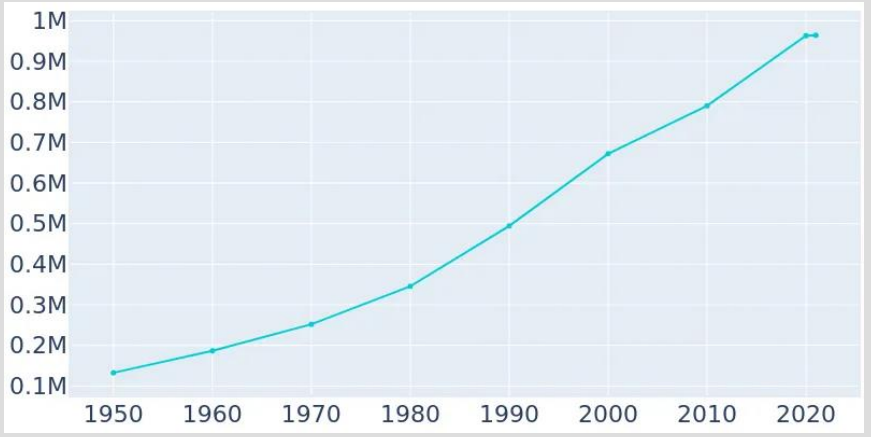
- Austin, the capital of Texas, was founded in 1839.
- Despite economic difficulties, the city gradually grew in the late 19th century
- The University of Texas at Austin, established in 1883, played a significant role in the city's development
- 1980s and 1990s, Austin experienced a tech boom, earning the nickname "Silicon Hills"
- Live Music Capital of the World
- Challenges: traffic congestion, housing affordability, Homelessness, and Public Safety
- Major Efforts: Downtown Austin Plan, 2011 and Project Connect

Austin Demographics Overview

- The population of Austin city in 2020 increased by 19% from 2010
- Austin downtown population in 2020 was 13,648; Jumped 79% from 2010
- Austin is 2nd fastest-growing city in America after San Francisco Bay area



Net migration per 10,000 population, 2010-2020, Austin Metro area



Austin Population Growth History

Downtown Austin Plan, 2011

Downtown Austin Plan, phase one was adopted by the Austin City Council on December 8, 2011

The plan focus on improving

- downtown signature parks
- Rail transportation system
- East Sixth Street
- Historic Preservation
- permanent supportive housing
- Utility service

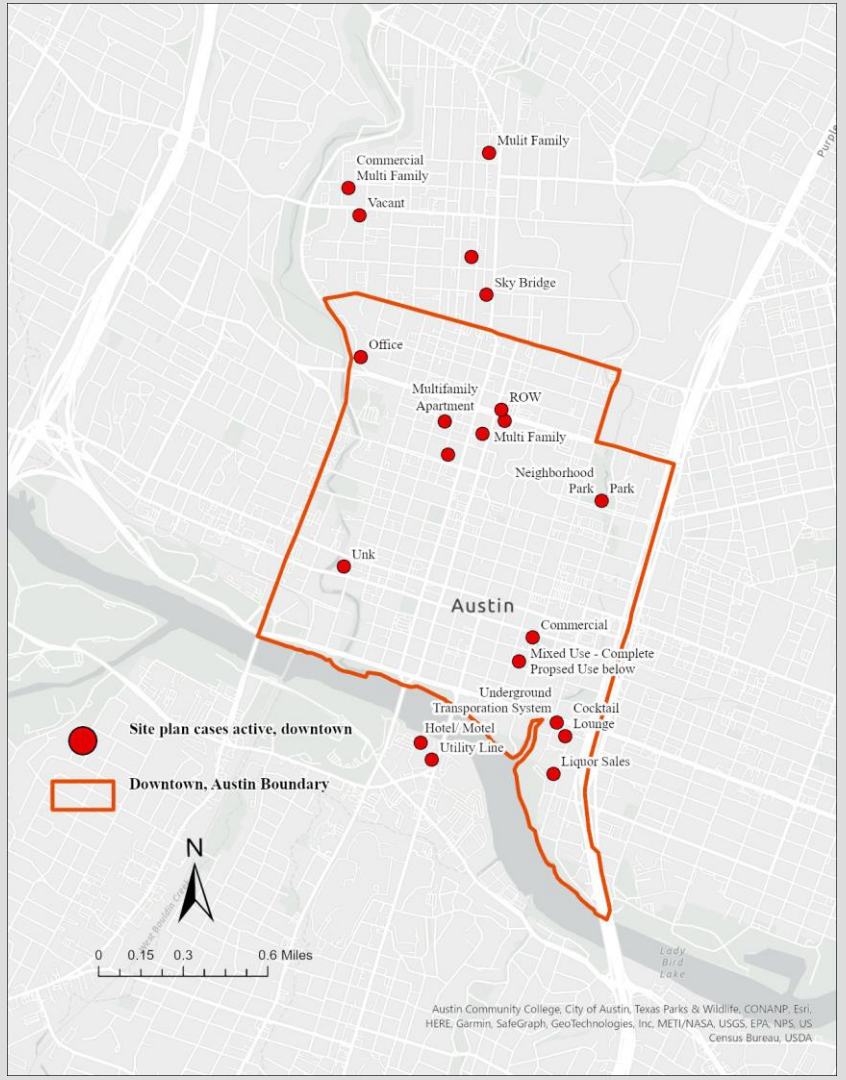


Active Project Cases, Downtown Austin

Summary of active project cases

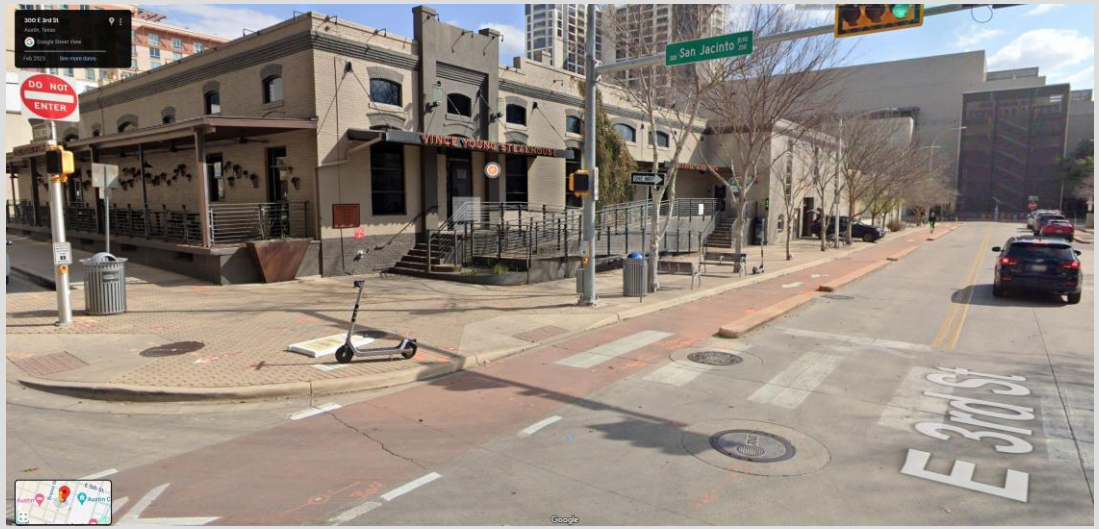
Total 24 ongoing project cases in Downtown, Austin

mixed use	4
parking	2
residential	4
State Bar of Texas - Historical Building	1
Demolition and commercial improvement	2
Commercial (hotel, motel, bar, office)	4
Utility service	4
Sky Bridge	1
Right of Way (ROW)(Capitol Complex)	1
Underground Transportation System	1



Active Project cases, Downtown Austin

proposing high rise multifamily commercial buildings



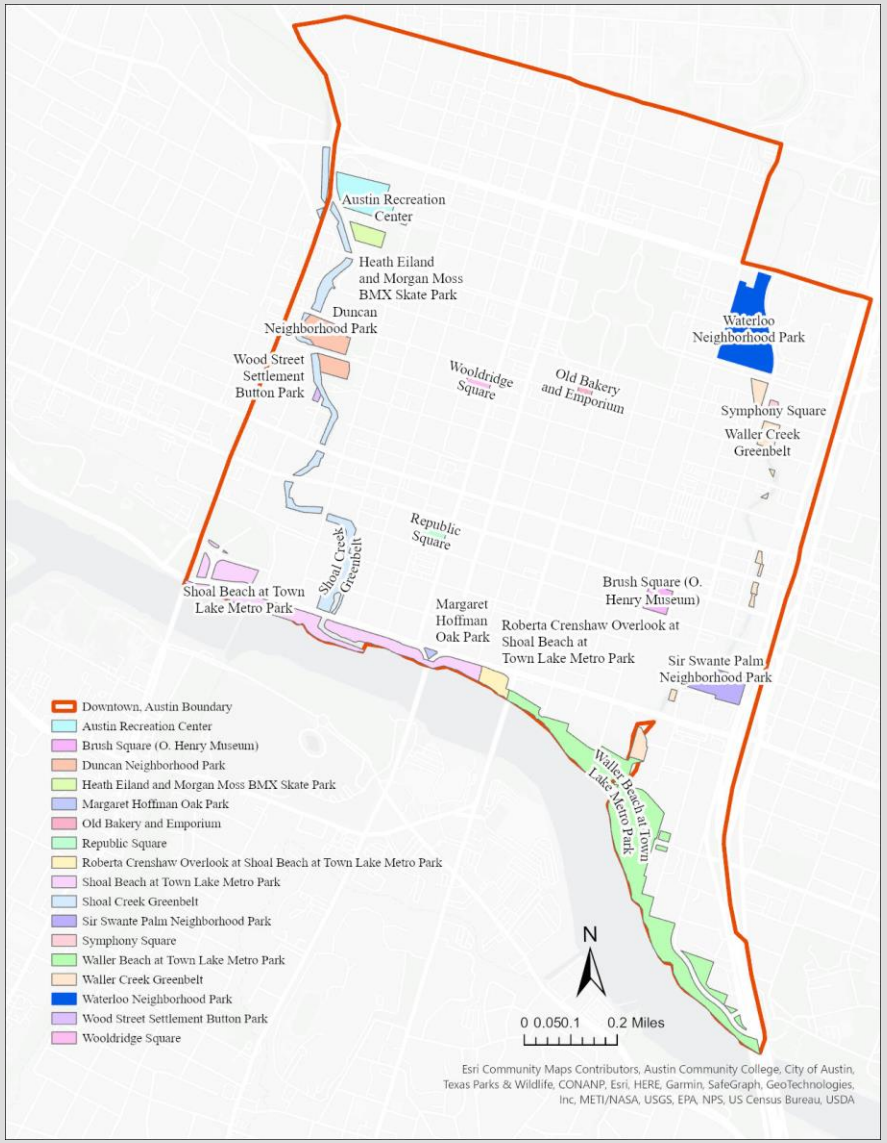
Vince Young Steakhouse



DKG International Educators Foundation

Downtown Signature Park

One of the most signature park in downtown, Austin is Waterloo Neighborhood Park



Waterloo Greenway project

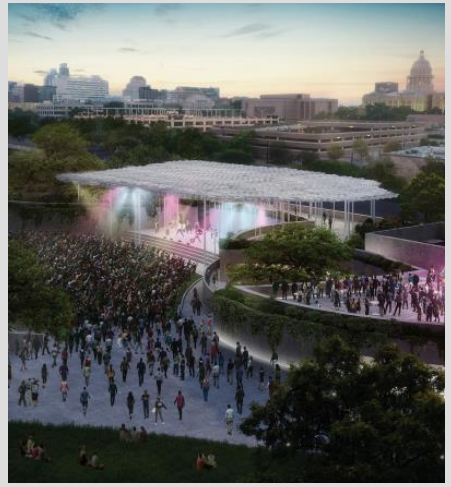
Waterloo Park will feature 11 acres primed for concerts, performing arts shows, food trucks, field trips, and other events. 5,000-seat amphitheater for outdoor concerts, sustainable rain gardens, and plenty of play space for kids

Four site plan projects have been approved to redesign this signature park

- Waterloo Neighborhood Park and Caffe
- sidewalk and utility
- Street realignment and drainage improvements
- Conditional Use Permit for onsite consumption of alcoholic beverages



Reimagined **Waterloo Park**



Moody Amphitheater



Family Pavilion seating area



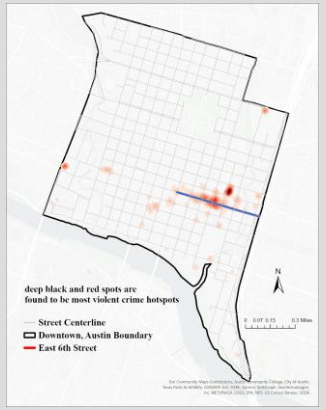
Kitty King Powell Lawn

Sixth Street entertainment district

plans for reinventing ‘dirty Sixth’

- Increasing safety and getting illegal guns off the street
- Improve the pedestrian environment,
- diversify activities,
- protect the unique historic character and
- provide for coordinated management





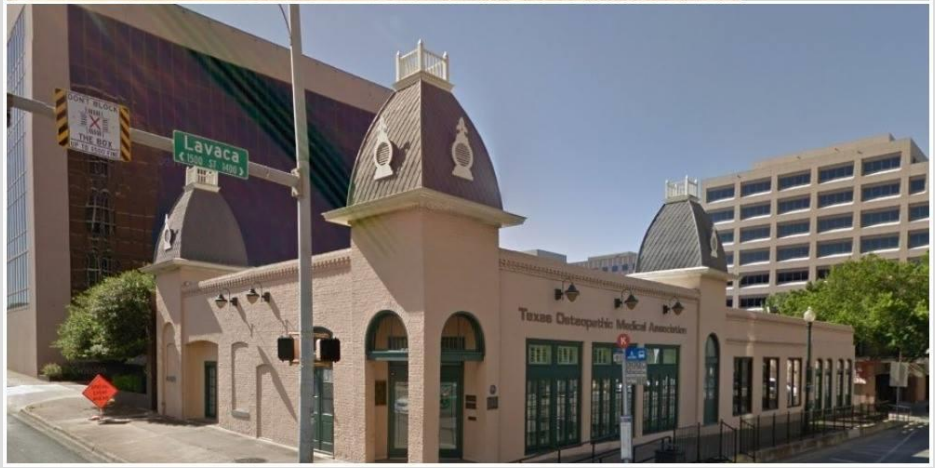


Historic Preservation

State Bar of Texas – Historical Building

- The State Bar of Texas is expanding its headquarters with the $3.25 million purchase of a 4,100-square-foot historic building “Bartholomew-Robinson Building” in downtown Austin.
- The bar’s plans include preserving and restoring the historic structure and constructing a new, three-story building on the same property





Rail transportation system

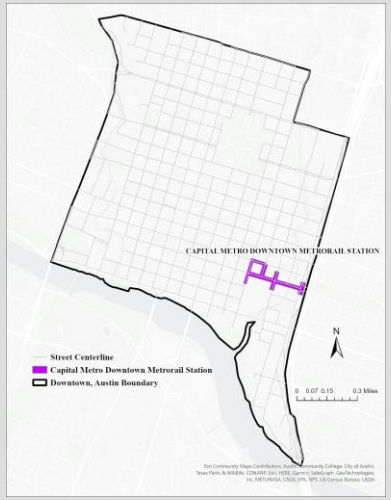
Project Connect

- new light rail lines,
- four new MetroRapid lines, and
- more services across the city



Capital metro downtown railway station

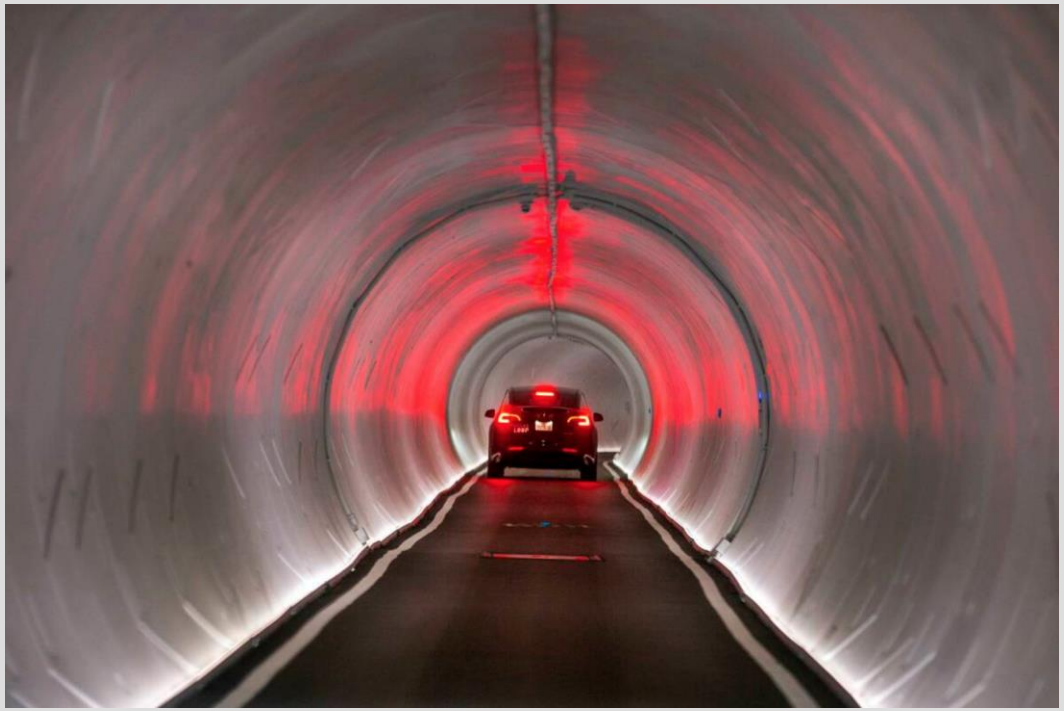
- Located at 4th & Neches
- four platforms
- Supports multi-modal transportation

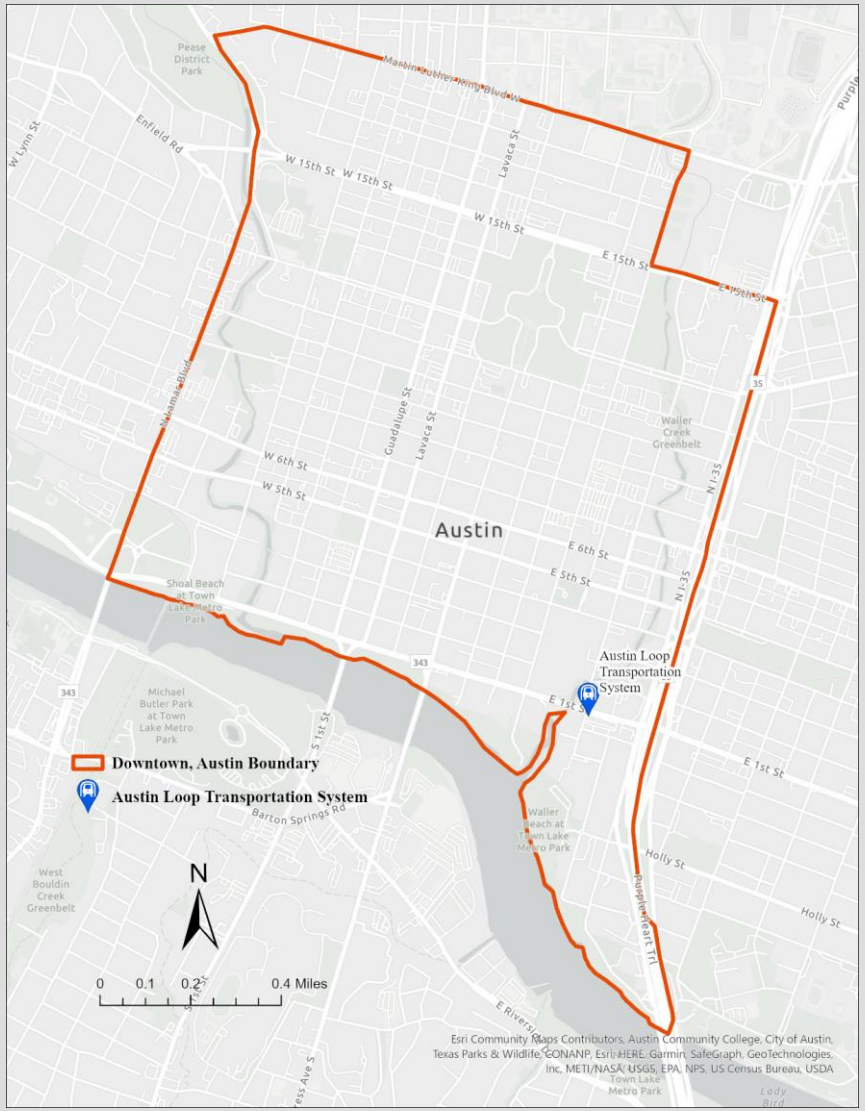




Underground Transportation System

- proposing underground transportation system for the use of transporting public passengers in electric vehicles with associated improvements
- Similar to operational underground transportation loop in Las Vegas





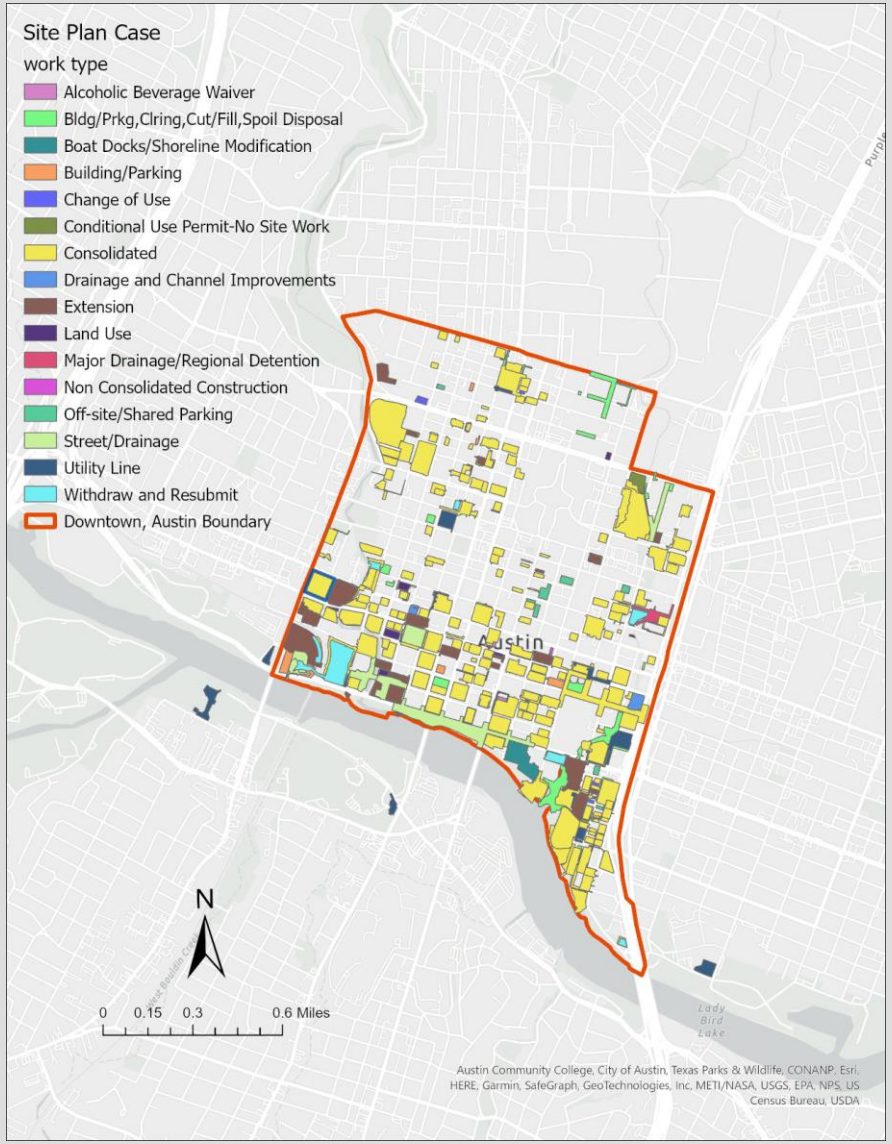
Site Plan Project cases

299 site plan projects approved and completed in last decade

Maximum of the projects are for high rise mix use development

some of the projects are for

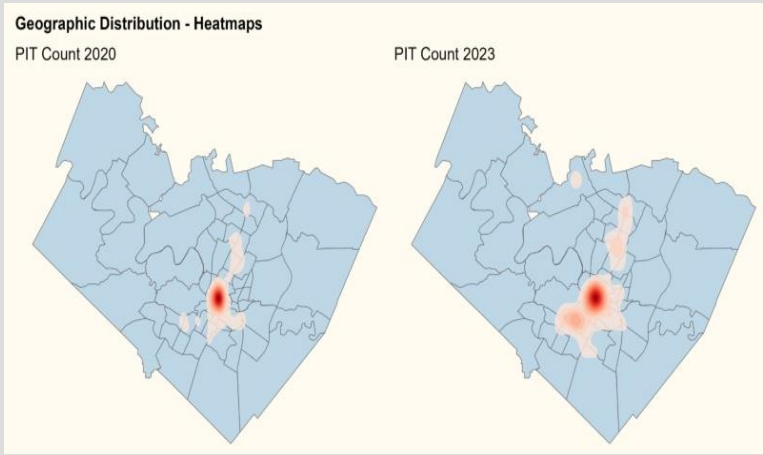
- commercial
- Utility work
- Park for entertainment
- Parking improvement



Homeless Encampment Assistance Link (HEAL)

- Banned homeless people from camping
- Police clearing the camps
- unsheltered homelessness decreased by 55% (Oct 2021)
  - 813 people (May) to 365 people (Oct) in Downtown
- Relocate to four unsheltered camping sites in Austin which is very controversial process
- Only 60 people move from an encampment at Pack Saddle Pass and U.S. Hwy. 71(Feb 2023)





Austin's homeless population remains concentrated around downtown but is spreading out



Public Improvement District



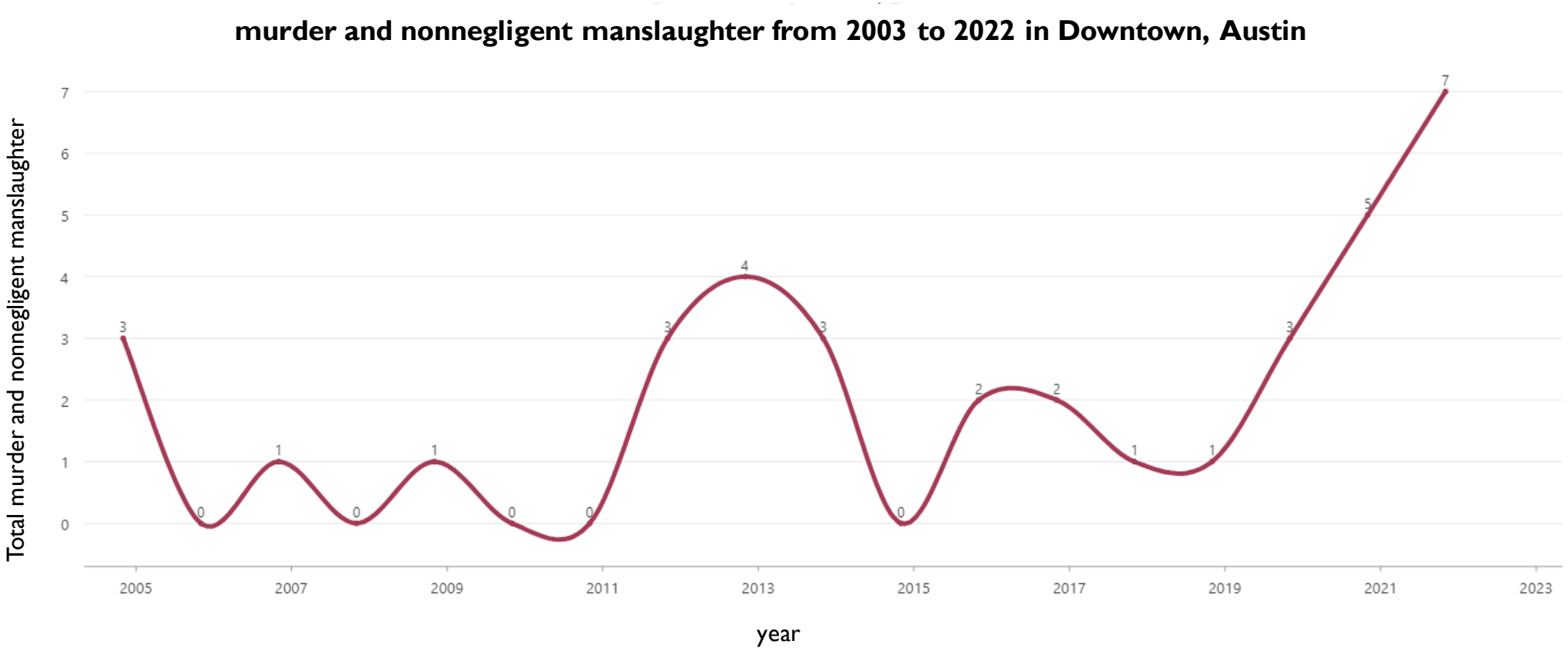
Violent Crime

Violent Crime

- murder and nonnegligent manslaughter
- forcible rape
- robbery
- aggravated assault
- property crimes(burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft)

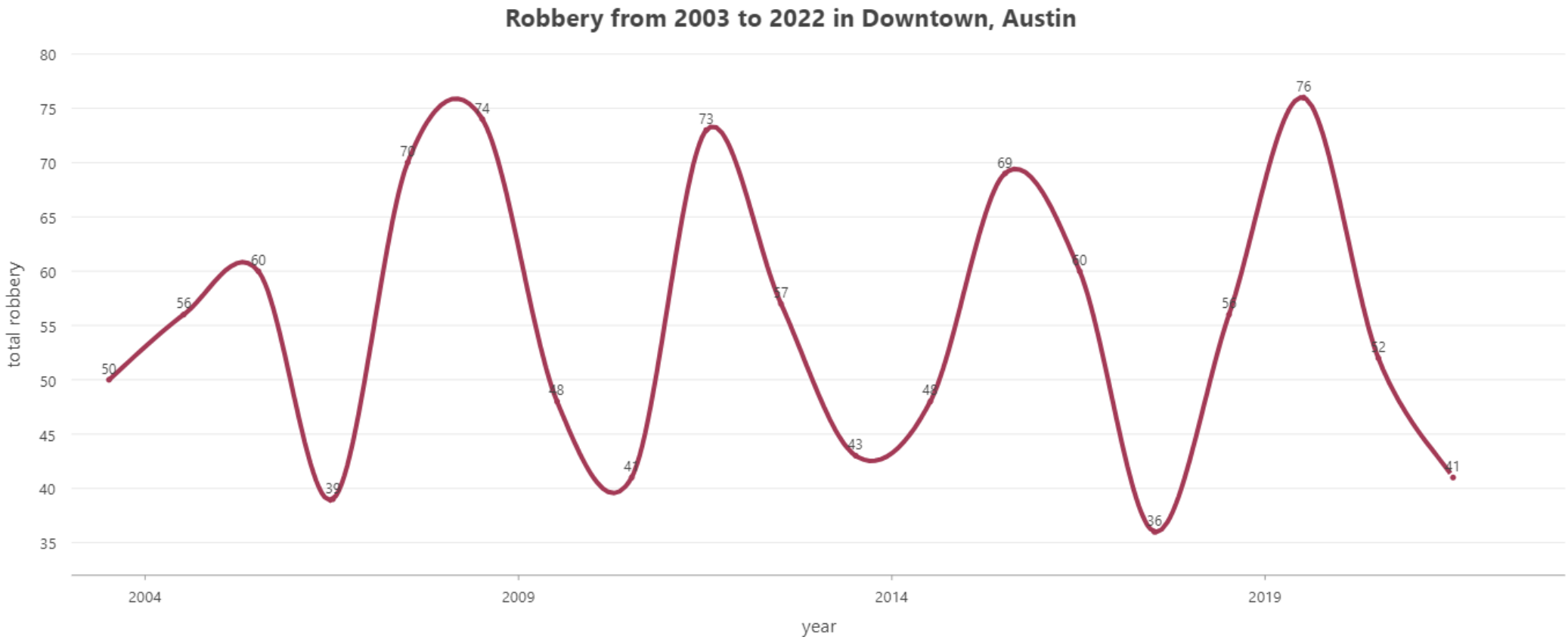
Violent Crime– Downtown, Austin City

murder and nonnegligent manslaughter



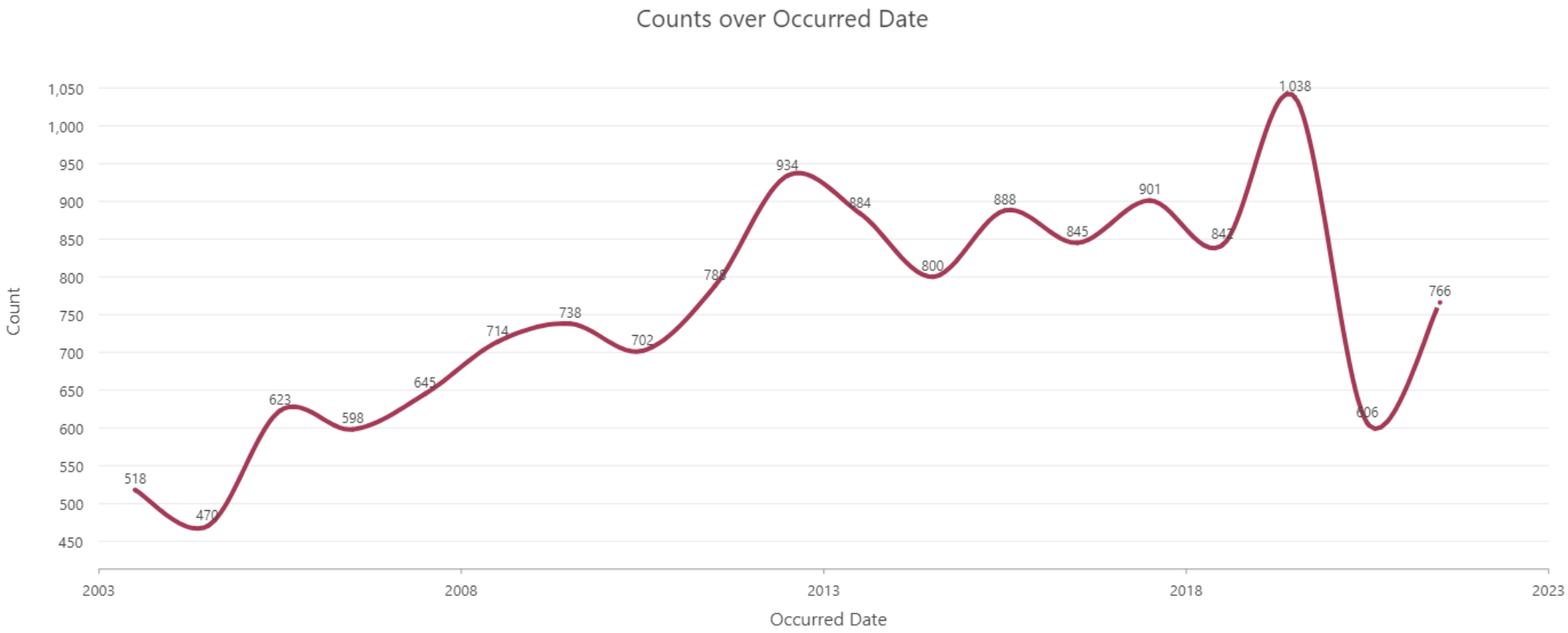
Violent Crime– Downtown, Austin City

robbery



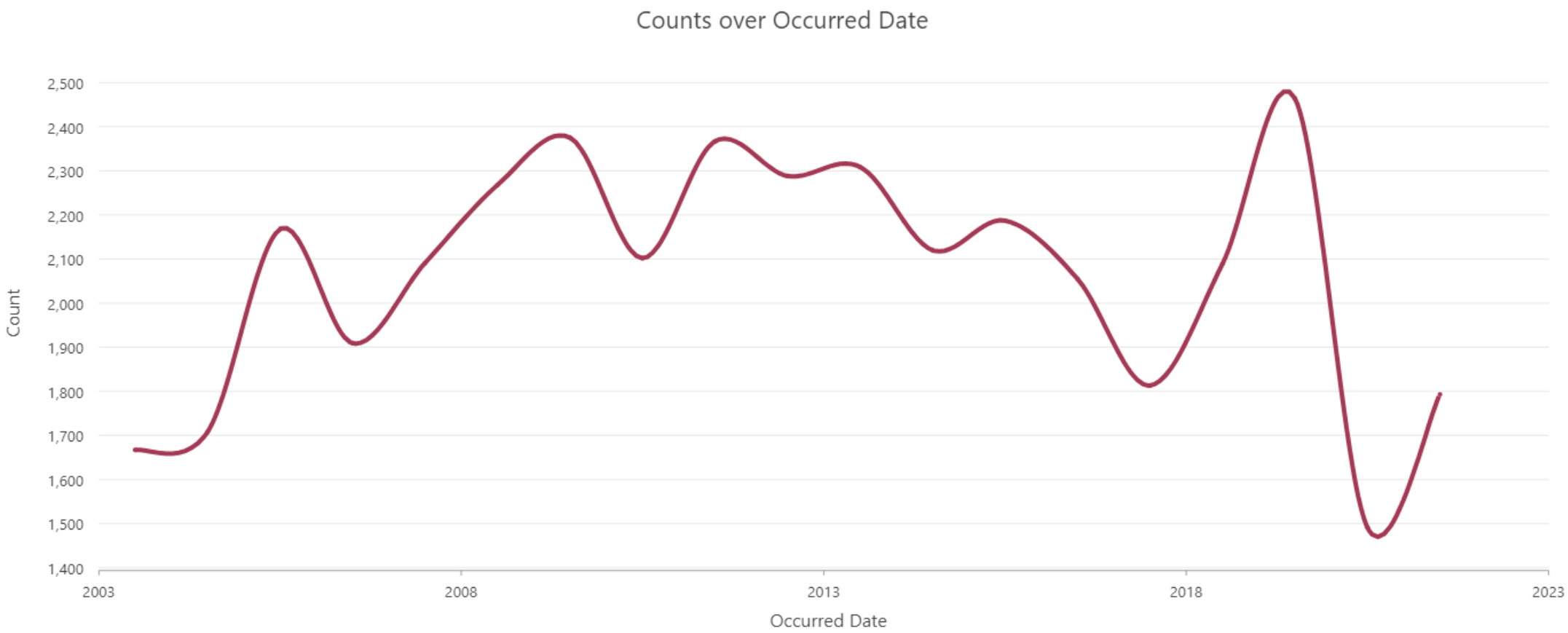
Violent Crime– Downtown, Austin City

Assault



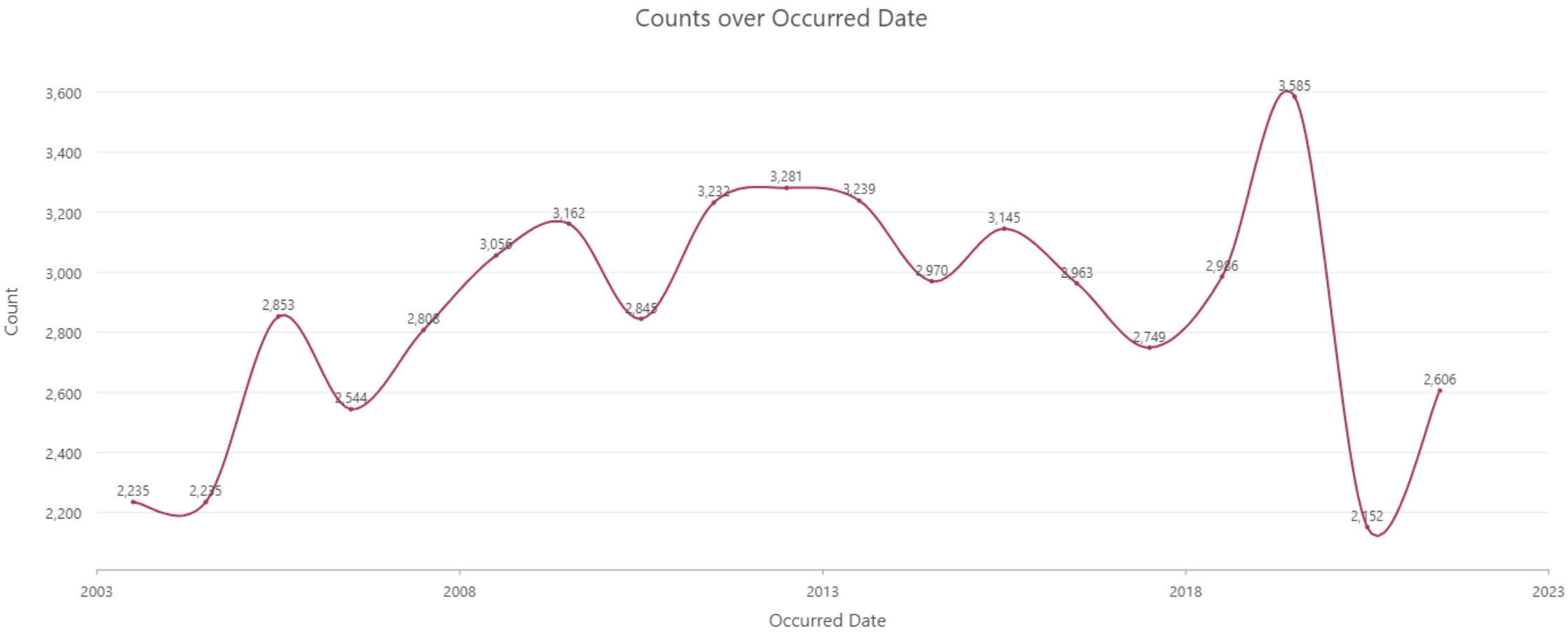
Violent Crime- Downtown, Austin City

property crimes



Violent Crime- Downtown, Austin City

violent crimes



Violent Crime- Downtown, Austin City

violent crimes



The deep black and red spots are found to be most violent crime hotspots analyzing the data from 2003 to 2022.

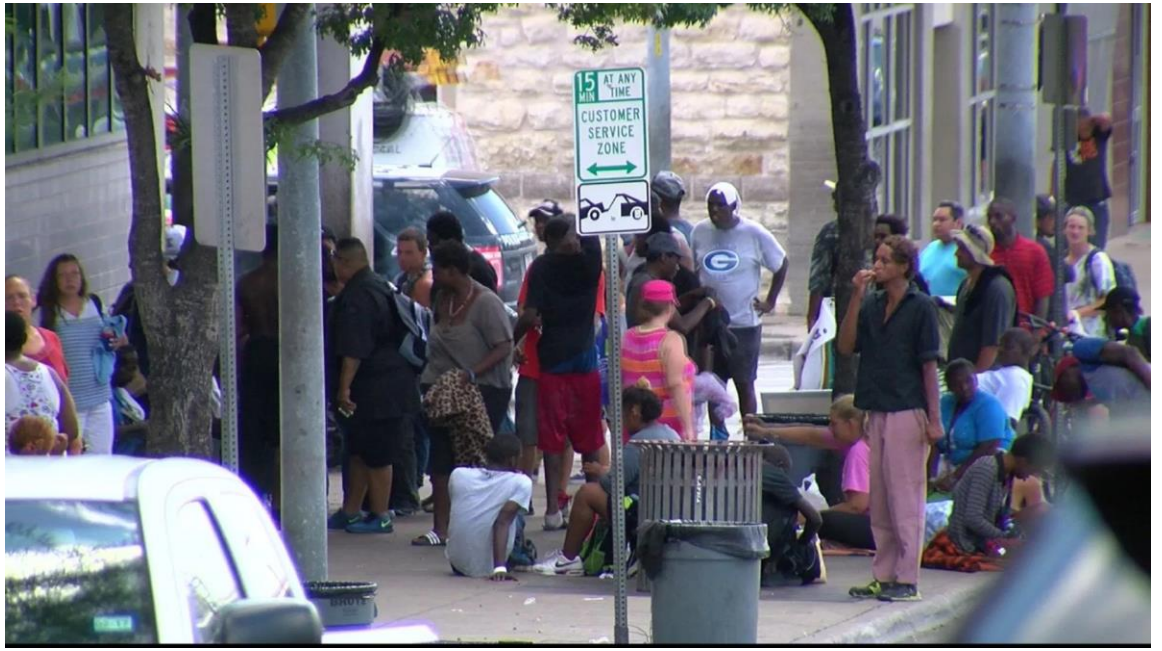
- The most risky place spotted near Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH) and Austin Health Department
- E 6th Street seems like a dangerous crime hotspot
- Other than that, next most violent crimes occurred near the Whole Foods Market grocery shop, on N Lamar Blvd

Violent Crime- Downtown, Austin City

Most violent crimes hotspot

Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH)





Takeaway

- Homelessness is one of the major reasons of violent crimes.
- For homeless people, city is taking some major steps, but these are controversial and very slow process
- The city is not taking any significant step for the housing crisis and affordability.
- Rail Transportation would be a great major development to reduce the ongoing traffic problems

Ratul Debnath

rxd075@shsu.edu

Master of Science in Geographic Information Systems
Department of Environmental and Geosciences
Sam Houston State University

