Item 6d

Green Infrastructure Working Group: **Summary of stakeholder input**

September 2, 2015

Rainwater harvesting at Twin Oaks Library

CodeNEXT Process: Implementing Imagine Austin

- Workforce & Education
- Household Affordability
- Sustainable Water
- Green Infrastructure
- Compact & Connected
- Healthy Austin
- Creative Economy

Green Infrastructure Working Group

CodeNEXT Citizen Advisory Group

Opticos Design

CODE NEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE

Flood Mitigation Task Force

Integrated Water Resource Planning

City of Austin Staff

Green Infrastructure Working Group

Council Direction (November 20, 2014)

- Asked that the CodeNEXT focus include green infrastructure & sustainable water management

Purpose of Green Infrastructure Working Group

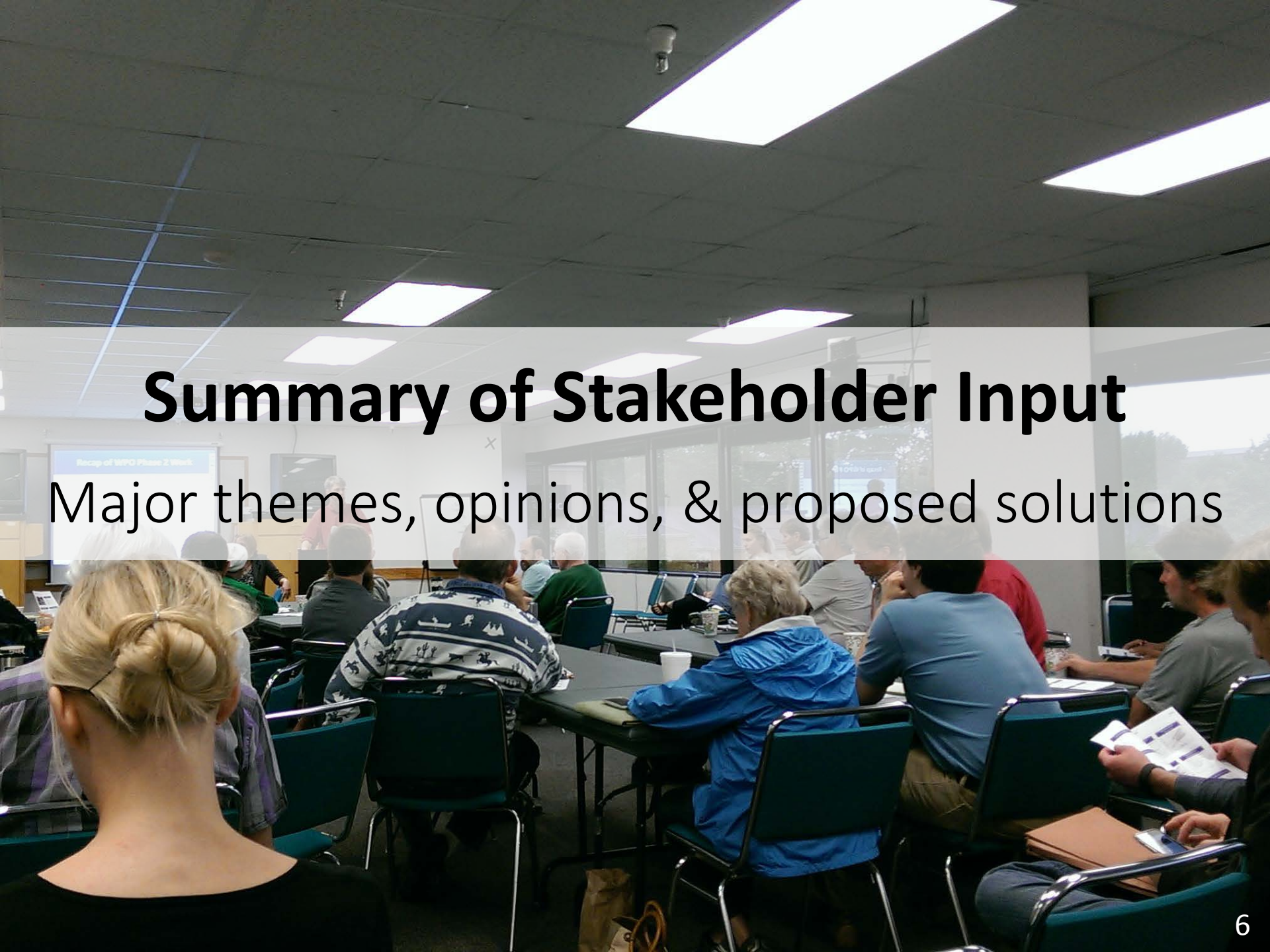
- How we can achieve the Imagine Austin goals of integrating nature into the city, sustainably managing our water resources, and creating complete communities through revisions to the Land Development Code?

Green Infrastructure Working Group

- Over 300 stakeholders on distribution list
- Six meetings between January & July 2015
- Engineers, landscape architects, developers, neighborhoods, environmental groups, and staff from multiple departments

Four Green Infrastructure Themes

1. Land Cover and Natural Function
   - How to achieve functional, purposeful, connected open space?
2. Integrate Nature into the City
   - How to ensure adequate, multifunctional landscaping in every context (e.g., urban vs. suburban)?
3. Beneficial Use of Stormwater
   - How to optimize on-site use of stormwater runoff?
4. Stormwater Options for Redevelopment/Infill
   - How to address longstanding flooding problems resulting from development without sufficient controls or conveyance?



Summary of Stakeholder Input

Major themes, opinions, & proposed solutions

Land Cover & Natural Function

Functional pervious areas

- Preserve/protect open space, key natural assets
- Protect/restore trees, soil, vegetation, natural function
- Prefer flexible & incentive-based systems
- Use metrics to ensure function of pervious areas
- Protect or restore all pervious areas during construction
- Allow for flexible site designs to enable preservation of larger areas of contiguous pervious cover

Land Cover & Natural Function

Publicly-accessible open space

- Open space and green connections are vital
- Need for parkland within walking distance to mitigate for higher density in development centers & corridors
- Provide parkland onsite wherever possible;
  use payment-in-lieu offsite as a last resort
- Big percent of required open space should be pervious
- Use open space as buffer between differing land uses
- Maintain or increase 5% private open space requirement

Integrate Nature into the City

Integrate landscaping into all contexts

- All sites should have some form or percent of green area
- Incentivize larger offsite areas & smaller, onsite green elements
- Use flexible, menu-based approach (per Green Area Ratio and Green Factor*), especially in denser areas
- Design for multi-purpose landscapes that serve hydrologic, wildlife, and human purposes
- Use landscaped green transitions between different land use intensities to address compatibility concerns

* Washington, D.C. & Seattle systems used to require and quantify green elements for new development

Integrate Nature into the City

Integrate landscaping into all contexts (continued)

- Require landscaping in some form for commercial remodels
- Add more green space to subdivision requirements
- Allow for flexible site designs to preserve existing natural areas
- Include landscape architect/designers early in process
- Integrate green stormwater controls in landscapes/open spaces
- Allow/encourage urban agriculture in front and back yards

Integrate Nature into the City

Landscaping in right-of-way & site setbacks

- Strong support for Green Street designs, elements
- Provide more trees for walkable, shaded corridors
  - But cannot rely on the ROW for all green elements
- Ensure building setbacks sufficient to provide green elements on both sides of sidewalk (10 - 15 feet)
- Use technologies like porous pavement, structural soil, continuous planting beds to accommodate street trees

Integrate Nature into the City

Provisions for shade trees

- Trees and shade are critical to mitigate urban heat island and promote walkability
- Retain existing tree protections (e.g., Heritage Tree)
- Preserve & protect mature, healthy trees as well as smaller caliper trees (e.g., mature understory)
- Institute soil volume requirements and other design criteria to protect tree functions
- Plant more trees in surface parking lots

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Onsite infiltration/retention

- Maintain/restore predevelopment hydrology
- Require onsite infiltration/retention per other U.S. models
- Use decentralized green options like rain gardens, porous pavement, and rainwater harvesting
- Provide a menu of alternatives to reach requirements if cannot infiltrate due to site constraints
- Reduce barriers to speed approval of innovative controls & rainwater capture systems
- Work to address maintenance questions

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Re-use/conservation

- Water conservation essential, must incorporate into designs
- Work towards goal of no potable water for irrigation
  - Others: Still need a potable irrigation system as backup
- Require potable water budget; use non-potable to exceed
- Incentivize efficient irrigation through technology
- Use regionally-appropriate plant list; Limit turf grass
- Increase soil health and depth

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Special considerations for redevelopment

- Reduce retention requirements to encourage other redevelopment benefits (e.g., transit-oriented)
  - Others: do not support special considerations for redevelopment—should be held to same standard
- Consider additional offsite mitigation options such as the provision of open space and tree plantings
- Any offsite mitigation should occur within same watershed

Stormwater Options for Redevelopment & Infill

- Redevelopment should help mitigate flooding
- Reverse degraded hydrology in incremental fashion
- Manage smaller storms onsite (e.g., 2 and 10 year); pay-in-lieu for City to mitigate larger storms offsite
- Offer density bonuses to incentivize onsite detention where none existed previously

Big Picture Comments

- Re-establish intent language in new code
- Write the code to enable site-specific differences: honor different contexts (urban vs. suburban)
- Use watershed/existing infrastructure data to help inform land use planning decisions— “Watershed Growth Plan”
- Account for Austin’s unique climate & geography as we consider solutions from other jurisdictions
- Want performance-based, not prescriptive, requirements

Big Picture Comments

(continued)

- Consider affordability impacts of new requirements
- Don’t want to (too easily) allow variances
- Make innovation and desired outcomes the easy path —not the prohibitive, alternative path
- Consider extending these policies to single-family subdivisions and individual building permits

Going Forward

CodeNEXT Process

- Fall 2015: Draft Code Testing
- Summer 2016: Public Review Draft Anticipated
- Fall 2016: Public Review Process

Future GIWG Meetings

- What is being proposed in the draft code?
- Topic-specific meetings as key issues arise

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Green Infrastructure Working Group:

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