



CodeNEXT released a Code Prescription on the Natural and Built Environment on March 7th, 2016, at a Code Advisory Group Meeting. This purpose of this document is to begin a community-wide discussion around issues in the categories of Water and Watersheds, Landscape and Trees, Compatibility and Transitions, Design for Mobility, Redevelopment, Greenfield Development, and Parks and Open Space regarding what the new Land Development Code can do to impact these issues. In order to reach a variety of people, the CodeNEXT team has participated in a variety of events to solicit public feedback. Staff are very interested in learning what people think about the Prescription recommendations, where Austinites feel that recommendations go too far (or not far enough), and what they feel is missing. This information is being shared with Code writers so that as the new Land Development Code is written it can be appropriately calibrated to Austin. Since March 7th, public comment events have included:

- Code Advisory Group (CAG) Public Comment Meeting April 4th (p. 1-29)
 - At this meeting, participants had the opportunity to participate in small group discussions on Water and Watersheds; Landscape and Trees; Redevelopment, Compatibility, and Mobility; Parks and Open Space; and Greenfield Development.
 - Code Advisory Group members served as conversation facilitators and scribes at each station while City staff were on hand to serve as subject-matter resources.
 - Outcomes of this meeting include flip chart notes summarizing small group conversations as well as hand written comment cards.
 - Approximately 65 people participated.
- SpeakUpAustin (p. 30-56)
 - SpeakUpAustin is an online forum where anyone can leave comments and ask questions. Participants can also respond to one another and vote for responses.
 - CodeNEXT asked for all individuals wanting to offer feedback on the Prescription to post it on SpeakUpAustin.
 - There were approximately 20 participants.
- Reddit Ask Me Anything Session March 29th (p. 57-98)
 - A subset of CodeNEXT staff were available for two hours to answer questions from the public. There are approximately 180 comments, and the forum remains open for public comment.
- April 9th Community walk around S. 1st and Oltorf (p. 99)
 - Approximately 30 people participated in the walk to learn more about how the Land Development Code impacts what people see and experience on the ground in Austin.
 - Outcomes of this event include a summary of comments and photographs of the walk.
- Emails providing feedback from various community organizations (p. 100-141)
 - To date, CodeNEXT has received direct email comments from eight community groups regarding the Natural and Built Environment Prescription.

The attached pages are an unfiltered look at public comment. Planning and Zoning staff are currently working to categorize all of the comments. In addition, a few designated members of the Code Advisory Group are currently preparing a document that summarizes the responses of the CAG to the Code Prescription. This document will be brought before the CAG for consideration and possible adoption in the coming weeks.



WATER

- We need a study of infrastructure, specifically Waller Creek from Dean Keeton to 45th.
- Mistake to pin all flooding on density - period where climate is causing more extreme weather events.
- general agreement that more severe weather events should be considered
- impervious cover is wrong measure, need more performance-based code, reward pervious cover as the thing you like instead.
- should make sure we incentivize the development we are trying to encourage, especially during the transition period where we may be afraid of what we don't know.
- should think about sharing uses, + thus criteria, regionally, like parking, e.g. for churches that don't need sea of parking all the time.
 - and for example, discouraging renovation by site requirements, when there could be a regional ~~region~~ solution that helps incentivize redevelopment and even just small retrofits. Result is inability to work with existing buildings.
- re regionalizing green infrastructure - rather than encourage it on small scale on every site, we should be encouraging a community / district-wide solution - more neighborly, probably more effective, less staff time, easier oversight
- more support for regionalization, also w/ ^{storm} water retention + quality - for shared facilities, and multi-governmental entities
- the Prescription Paper didn't feel aspirational - doesn't paint picture of the Ashin we envision - more of the same

WATER + WATERSHED

- Will still be fee-in-lieu? **YES**, for beneficial reuse
- FI-L for onsite capture?
- Will green roofs count? *this one of strongest parts of this prescription, should extend to parking*
- re double credit, is it possible to include park acreage? **YES**
- other ^{various} materials that will allow credit?
- What about paver stones in parking? *water quality but not impervious credit.*
- Imagine Austin says prioritize infill/redevelopment + affordability, but No 2 (redevelopment strds) flies in face of that.
- Climate change - long droughts / flooding - what's number for how long to hold water / drawdown? *Still in the works.* What does 95% do to this?
- allowing for flexibility in bldg type (#11, pg 17) has potential to create loophole.
- trails / connectivity in creeks - not just transport, but also recreation - not just connectivity, but opportunity as rec amenity.
- when development has no greenspace, it increases travel across street to nearby parks + open spaces, and causes impacts on surrounding community, not to mention the existence of a large parking garages. Should consider pedestrian needs, for example, as we build housing like this. (Burnet Marketplace) another eg.
- define "calibrated for context"
- would like a priority list of tools in this prescription paper (eg. connected trails or pocket parks?)
- urban watersheds are already overbuilt + causing flooding, those standards aren't good enough + now we are talking increased density in residential areas. *Walter Creek before*

themselves already flooding

LANDSCAPE + TREES

← glossary for
prescription
papers

- What's definition of "mid-low density"?
- It's difficult / I feel nervous w/o specifics.
- bullet points on display board do not coordinate w/
Code Prescription Paper
- Is functional green based on ecological values? **YES.**
- "maximum" impervious limit must be clearly defined if goal
is to protect trees
- Are green infrastructure categories separate from open space? **YES.**
- Does this trump Heritage Tree Ordinance? **No. + HTD won't change**
- Will health of tree canopy be part of criteria?
- Re: tree cover. Eastside is blackland prairie.
- A site by site approach should look at health, diversity of existing trees
+ landscape arch should decide what is prudent/responsible
- ↑ in response ↑ but w/o certainty, who will be making decisions? **Site analysis
by landscape arch.**
- Cost? site-by-site solution is going to increase time/cost/city's resources,
although there is a benefit, it contradicts affordability - but if it's clearer
from beginning, the expectation is there.
- We aren't saving trees that are unhealthy already
- minimum landscaping requirement? Or intentional overlap? **working for overlap**

LANDSCAPE + TREES

Does multifunctionality of landscape including open space + parks:
that is covered by open space criteria

When determining whether a landscape tool also gets credit for another
functionality, how does that decision get made? Multiple overlap seems
like it could get very complicated

B.S.

*HOW WE INTEGRATE HISTORIC PRES
INTO CODENEXT?

Template

- Most Design Standards Form Based
- National vs Local Historic Districts
- Too many layers/overlays
- Historic Preservation through overlays
- Time and \$ to get a local historic district
 - What are other cities doing?
- Does overuse of historic districts ~~de~~ Affordability?
- Continuity of Neighborhoods - Tools?
- Transition areas / zoning & compatibility
- Sprawl (Greenfield) vs. Density City

IMMO CODE REVIEW

*FROM ME INTERVIEW HISTORIC DISTRICT

How might we ^{make} Compatibility more predictable?

- 11 -
 - Use trigger, blunt instrument
 - Dependant on use & zoning
 - Doesn't take into account topography

How might we ^{↑ Density / Growth} Utilize Form Based Codes throughout the city

- 11 -
 - Increase Density in centers/corridors not SF neighborhoods
 - Be judicious about entitlements on land
 - Add housing choices; community value with entitlement
 - Regulations increase costs for others
 - Demolition b/c ^{highest} new development is all that can clear regulatory hurdles
 - ^{Most} Economic & Racially segregated city
 - New Missing middle housing types will be around for generations
 - Devastating identity as a city

How might we.

- Preserve East Austin w/ a Historic District?
- Reasonably codify drainage standards w/o being cost prohibitive
- Don't want to be punitive/incentivize
- Drainage: regional solutions may be more effective & cost effective than handling on lot-by-lot basis. (esp. for redevelopment of exstg lots).
- Zero lot line development
- How might we preserve local businesses?
 - Encourage development types that make it affordable for them

How
might
we

Right size parking?

- Transportation choices to get to daily needs (ie. grocery stores)
- Tradeoffs: parking is inhibiting space/
limiting development
- Reasonable amount of on/off street parking.
- Shared Parking Agreements (more efficient by time)
- Reasonable Parking for hours (like theaters/cultural)
 - Distance - door to door
 - Legal Agreement
 - Could make easier through Code NEXT
- ~~Ex~~ Realize offsite Parking Rules
- Potentially Dangerous for Pedestrians
- Sidewalks - fee in lieu vs. putting in reg.
 - Neighborhood Plan Sidewalk Mark $\frac{\$7.50}{\text{RSK}}$ $\frac{\$24.50}{\text{RSK}}$
 - Sidewalk Master Plan weighting
Centers & Corridors in IA

- No code enforcement on sidewalks
- Code Enforcement on sidewalks potential revenue source for the city
- City could be subsidizing sustainable transportation
- Completely abolish parking requirements Citywide
- Explore parking reductions in the context of existing sidewalk network
- Proximity & Accessibility (transit, biker sidewalks)
- Sidewalks are underfunded - have to be cognizant of all in community
- Location is important when businesses are further in the neighborhood it causes conflicts
- Residential Parking during limited hrs. for safety

- Relationship between CodeNEXT & Transit

- TOD zoned areas

- Greenfield Development - Subdivision Design

→ Building from scratch, want to avoid challenges we face in other developed parts of the city

→ More Diverse housing types

- Ridership ↓ on Burnet Rd. yet more development
how can we ensure dev. isn't over burdensome

- FBC: Activity Centers/Corridors; subdivision
code link to FBC standards - sustainable trajectory

- Hoping for public benefit in exchange for reduced parking - pass on cost savings (conditions)

- Concern about Prescription Paper not being changed
Appendix w/ Comments - include criticisms in new draft

- Define terms utilized in document
- Executive Summary?
- Comments from this event will be provided to the CAG

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

NO LOSS OF BIO-DIVERSITY

SOUTH AUSTIN PARK MAINTENANCE → FUNDS & MAINTENANCE

- WANT SPACE NEXT TO THEM TO HAVE A PARK
- OUT OF SCALE
- MAINTENANCE VS. PROGRAMMING NEEDS

VARIETY OF PARKS & OPEN SPACES

OVERLAY TO PROTECT CULTURAL OPEN SPACES

PARKS AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN

VARY USES OF PUBLIC SPACES FOR MORE THAN ONE USE

EVERY PARK SHOULD HAVE A SOCCER & SOFTBALL FIELD

EXPAND RECLAM. H₂O

INCLUDE ORIENTATION ELEMENTS TO ENCOURAGE PARK USE DURING SUMMER

INCREASE PPPs AROUND THE CITY TO INCREASE FUNDING ABILITIES

INTERFACE OF BUILT & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- NEED TO ADDRESS HUMAN PROTECTIONS

RELATIONSHIP BT LONG RANGE PLANS & CEE

- OPEN SPACE THAT MAKES SENSE FOR A DISTRICT, RATHER THAN JUST THE PROJECT

MAINTAIN PRIVATE OPEN SPACE REQUIREMENTS

- WALK TO PARK - how many people can walk to a park

NEIGH. CONNECTIVITY, STREET QUIETS, REG. CONNECTIVITY

LOOK @ MORE CREATIVE CONNECTIVITY OPTIONS - RAIL ROW

- MORE IMP. PPL CAN WALK TO PARKS THAN LONG PARK ACROSS
 - ↳ MAKE MORE USABLE, WALKABLE & CLOSER TO NEIGHBORHOODS

LOOK @ DISTRICT-WIDE PARKLAND OF. FOR CENTERS AND CORRIDORS

- COULD THERE BE A REQUIREMENT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT SPECIFIC TO PROJECT AND/OR CONTEXT?
 - ↳ ADJACENT, 1/2 MILE RADIUS, 1 MI RADIUS

LOOK @ UTILIZING SED/FILL PONDS AS USABLE OPEN SPACE

- GREEN ROOF INCENTIVES NOT PUBLIC ALLOWED TO ACCESS (PRIVATE DEVELOP)

~~THE~~ 1!
HOW ARE THE GOALS IMPLEMENTED IN
SUBDIVISION &/OR IN THE ETJ?

➤ ETJ later/incl. COUNTIES NETWORKING?
PLANNING?

START WITH WHERE WE HAVE CONTROL
GREENFIELD DEV. W/ CORPORATE LTS.

GREEN OR INNOVATIVE BUILDING
MATERIALS (-hasn't heard discussed -)

RE. EXTERIOR: RECYCLED - LONG LASTING

"CLADDING" MATERIALS for example masonry, natural materials.

CRITICAL ISSUE BEFORE DEV.

WHERE DEVELOPMENT HAPPEN

= PARKLAND, GREENWAYS, URBAN FARMS
RE. STORMWATER MGMT/FLOOD CONDITIONS

➤ ENTIRE FLOODPLAIN PERMANENTLY
DEDICATED FOR GREENSPACE/OPEN

NOT ADDRESSED IN PRESCRIPTION PAPER
LANGUAGE: REQUIREMENT/CODE

- CREATIVE POPULATION - Affordability:
CODE: FOR LIVING/WORKING IN ONE STRUCTURE
 (DISTRICTS? PARTICULAR MU FOCUS?)
 * Could contribute to less environmental disruption as well -

* current & possibly continuing trends = Families w/ children will be in greenfield (assumed more affordable than central city neighborhoods) residential development =
CAPTURE THE GREENSPACES = CONSISTENT, EQUITABLE
 (RE. PARD IMPLEMENTATION PLAN; collaboratively engage CoA, schools, nonprofits, hospitals, etc. to coordinate/
 partner = ^{TO} ACCOMPLISH! BUILD IN THE BASICS OF MASS
 TRANSIT - TRANSPORTATION FEATURES (DESIGN & DEDICATE

("CONNECTIVITY") MORE THAN CARS AS A
 PRIORITY: CONNECTIONS w/ AREAS FOR PEDS,
 BIKES = OTHER NON AUTO TRAVEL MODES; TRAILS,
 ROUTES THAT ALSO CONNECT. CODE MUST REFLECT EFFECTIVE
 SHORT TERM & LONG TERM CONNECTIVITY.

* CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS include -
 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE - INNOVATING DESIGN

& USING GREENSPACE FOR MORE THAN ONE
 FUNCTION OR ROLE

CodeNEXT = taking away yards which IS GREENSPACE.

Greenfield

Page 3

ACKNOWLEDGE =

DIFFERENCES IN EAST VS. WEST DEV.

TOPOGRAPHY, HYDROGEOLOGY, SOILS = DEVELOPER COSTS
APPROPRIATE REGS.

DIFFERENCES IN REQUIREMENTS = TAILOR,
REQUIRE MORE CAREFULLY - Such as requiring
bike lanes on 620, etc. DISTANCE - LIKELIHOOD OF (at least
immediate) HIGH USER NUMBERS OF BICYCLISTS

SIDEWALKS, etc. (ACCOMMODATED SHEET FLOW ENHANCEMENT FOR
RAIN EVENTS) • DIFF. IN ENV. SENSITIVE AREAS -
TRAILS & SIDEWALKS • IMPERVIOUS COVER WHERE IC IS MORE RESTRICTIVE

FOR THE FUTURE, COULD DESIGN - DEVELOP OR RESERVE TRANSPORTATION
"BLOCKS" NEEDED ONE DAY = ELEMENTS IN PLACE @ SUBD.

CONNECTIVITY
- SAND CARS
- TRANSIT STOPS
etc.

== PLAN FOR GREEN SPACE, OPEN SPACE, RE. FARMERS'
MARKETS, RECREATIONAL PLAY = <FOOD DESERTS>
<OBESITY>

== VILLAGE DESIGN - TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN,
AS PROPOSED BY ELEMENTS RECLAIMING M-U, WALKABILITY, etc. -
(90's - Duany, et al) ; Shared workspace = WORK SPACE "CAFE"
+ comp.

* GROCERY STORE SITES DESIGNATED? OR ID'd

⊗ smaller sites, smaller stores = "Mom & Pop" w/incentives

Greenfield

Page 4

* Do no harm:

↪ Here's where you plan, design for & implement DENSITY. This is where you make none of the mistakes of the past.

= Reach out to Google or ... ?

Re. GIS & modeling = technology available to layer = pull up = virtually "build out" the City - w/ existing zoning - watersheds, - NP's or other small plans - etc.

Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

City needs to take into account costs associated with regulation - sections in the draft that discuss "encouragement" seem to really say "require" and all costs need to be considered.

We discuss affordability a lot - we need to see how the desire to "stop" or "regulate" growth has been used to make this city only more unaffordable.

The requirement for "public" access to private property is specifically troubling. How will this be interpreted or enforced?

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: District 1 Benson Place Trinity

Comment(s): Connectivity (Design for Mobility)

We would like to ensure that in addition to utilizing greenways to build new transportation systems that we're using those systems to encourage interaction & connection with nature. Make use of natural diversity to make transportation systems more inviting.

These transportation systems should also include "active transportation" as a way of bringing people out into nature. A connection to the natural world is key to healthy and happy society & we want to ensure that the code takes into account the goal of bringing people outdoors.

Please see the attached edits to the Connectivity Code Section in BLUE

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Landscape + Trees

Comment(s): _____

~~can~~ prescription 1: define native vegetation & enviro. health
#2: in order to do this CAs need to be
involved earlier in the development
process.

#4: Will streetyard still apply in suburban
zones? It's inefficient & limiting
It should be done away with. Love
that new code will integrate +
look at site wholistically. Love
functional green approach.

#5: define "significant trees". Love the
idea of site specific approach.

#7: code needs to eliminate subjectivity
and "interpretation"

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.

#8: This needs more clarification. Health safety + welfare of users (generally use impervious surfaces) need to trump trees!

#9: Digital! Thank god! Pre-submissions are a great idea.

#10: This is great. Tree health needs to be taken into account as well as site diversity and enviro. benefits of trees.

#13: This needs that all trees 19" + smaller are protected, that can't be the case. This needs to be eval. on a site by site basis.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Watershed: Trees

Comment(s): Evolution of compatibility standards
and other parameters
should

free up space on site plans
and thus allowing for better
tree protection.

Density can yield status
quo tree protection.

Density ≠ fewer trees

Optional

Name: _____



Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: "SHARE" - WATER WATERSHEDS, etc.

Comment(s):

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE INTERVENTIONS ON PARCELS SHOULD COUNT
CO-EFFICIENT VALUES (i.e. GREEN ROOF, PERVIOUS PAVES ETC) TO
COUNT TOWARDS MEETING PRE-DEVELOPMENT PERFORMANCE —
PERFORMANCE MATTERS MORE THAN PHYSICAL FORM (i.e. IMPERVIOUS
COVER) BUT ALSO IMPERVIOUS COVER IS NEGATIVE. LET'S TALK
ABOUT PERVIOUS SURFACE INSTEAD.

ALSO, WE NEED TO LOOK AT CODE AT A COMMUNITY (DISTRICT)
LEVEL, NOT PARCEL-BY-PARCEL. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IS A SYSTEM.
PARKING IS A SYSTEM. IT'S A MORE NEIGHBORLY CONVERSATION
(AND EASIER FOR STAFF) TO ~~HAVE~~ THINK BIGGER THAN PARCELS.

~~WE HAVE A CHALLENGE TO OUR CURRENT ZONING~~
~~CODE THAT DOESN'T ALLOW FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE~~
~~TO BE A PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS~~
~~AND WE NEED TO RECONSIDER OUR ZONING CODE~~

OPPORTUNITY FOR SYSTEMS TO BE A DISTRICT
OVERLAY IN WHICH ZONING WORKS

Please use reverse side for additional comments.

INCENTIVIZE GREEN
BUILDING, REMOVE
WATERSHEDS BEING "EXTRA"
CODE TO DEAL WITH —
MAKE UNIVERSAL AND
... ..

Good evening. My name is Kristine Street and I am a resident of Austin. I hold a Master of Landscape Architecture and I am also a licensed architect in Utah.

I would like to recommend that the code advisory group continue to work with the City of Austin to emphasize green infrastructure in the proposed land development code. In particular, I would like to advocate for stormwater detention in the proposed document that requires sites in existing urban areas to use sustainable strategies so that stormwater from rainfall events up to the 95th percentile are not shed downstream through gray infrastructure.

I also believe that we should look to other cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul that found developers ~~stormed~~ ^{stored} stormwater underground onsite in an effort to comply with detention requirements. While this could be a good approach, a better solution in some cases might be one that uses public portions of ~~a~~ an urban corridor to commonly store stormwater; this water could be used for irrigation of native plants and as a streetscape amenity. I believe this condition would be particularly useful along transportation corridors in the Compact and Connected community envisioned by ImagineAustin. So, I would like the city and the land development code to be structured in a way to allow for multiple solutions-- that do not default to the storage of water underground or at the rear of projects.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Water & Watersheds

Comment(s): This is a frustrating exercise — hard to hear; hard to speak (the acoustics of this building don't work well!)

It would be more fruitful for me (and others) to have a visual picture of current zoning entitlements (w/ GIS modeling or/and Fregonese's Envision Tomorrow's modeling). If we could understand what density we have or could have w/ the zoning from the NTs in the urban core, it might aide all of us w/ a baseline of where we are and could be for the future. "A picture (a vision/visual modeling) tells a thousand words" — and it can help reach people who are inexperienced w/ zoning & of this codeNEXT process. This modeling (picture) would be a baseline of what we have now (what hasn't yet been built) — one could visualize better w/ a picture of the code on the urban core.

Optional

Name: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Water & Wastewater

Comment(s): _____

1) Just how many people can Austin
accommodate w/ our current water supply?
(LCRA Contracts & Right of the River?)

2) How does the increasing cost of living impact
resource consumption

3) Will we get maps of the urban watersheds
w.r.t. the impact of adding density to those
water sheds?

4) Is there any cost data for the various
mitigation needed by increasing density.

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Water/watersheds - Landscape/Trees

Comment(s): _____

- Encourage diversity of the landscape, depending on natives or adapted
- Review of Biophilic cities template to include the long view of our future
- Consider permaculture systems as a resource/energy saving landscape.

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name:

Watershed & Landscape

Comment(s):

Use this opportunity to encourage & give credit for the development of amenities/support of natural areas that can be used as access to nature and outdoor experiences by children, families and individuals of all ages and abilities. We are a city noted for its wonderful outdoor green spaces, so the code should reflect this value held dear by many long time and newly arriving residents.

Optional

Name:

Email:

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Condor & Jiles station waterbeds

Comment(s): _____

- Bullet pts. on posters not clearly aligned
w/ N2BE paper

•

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.



Comment Card: Code Advisory Group Public Comment Meeting

April 4, 2016

Station Name: Water & Watersheds

Comment(s):

In the footnotes of the draft
there is a reference to the
"Austin Water Resource Planning Task Force
Recommendations, Revised Report"
By Greg Maggros, Director, Austin Water
To: Mayor & Council
Date: July 10, 2014

In this report, in the Executive Summary,
immediate action is recommended "to mitigate
the impact of the immediate drought and
to catalyze... in a water-efficient economy."
Where are we with this plan re

Optional

Name: _____

Email: _____

Please use reverse side for additional comments.

✓

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

21

PARTICIPANTS

4

TOPICS

40

ANSWERS

22

REPLIES

12

VOTES

SUMMARY OF TOPICS

CODE PRESCRIPTION #4: FISCAL HEALTH  0 Answers · 0 Replies

Coming September, 2016

CODE PRESCRIPTION #3: MOBILITY  0 Answers · 0 Replies

Coming July, 2016


CODE PRESCRIPTION #1: MANAGING GROWTH AND MAINTAINING CHARACTER  40 Answers · 22 Replies

Here's Code Prescription #1. How might the new land development code manage our growth while keeping Austin's character?

What should the City allow, encourage or prohibit? What trade-offs are acceptable or unacceptable?

What are some additional recommendations, not included in this Code Prescription, that would help preserve, protect and enhance the City's natural and built environment?

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 11:06 am

 4 Votes

Do we want to maintain character? Most of the times I hear that I think of people trying to make it harder for my neighborhood to have a walkable grocery store or new housing. The kind of character I want to maintain are places like the yellow ball house in Travis Heights. I want to preserve my unique neighbors, and add new ones. I'd like to see us INCREASE Austin's unique flavor and replicate it throughout town.

To that end:

The city should encourage changing neighborhoods to be walkable, transit friendly, and easy to add multifamily housing to combat income inequality. To do that we need to stop zoning large single-family neighborhoods. Point blank. If a big project in Austin or the ETJ doesn't have space for walkable grocery stores, for connected grid streets, for multifamily, and for office buildings it shouldn't be approved. We don't need any more

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

sprawl. We need more Austin.

We need to make it easy to change residential to commercial, so for instance we can put a Hyde Park Theater or a Nau's Enfield Drug, into every neighborhood in Austin. We need to replicate Hyde Park and Bouldin Everywhere. Allow small apartment complexes, office buildings, and other interesting amenities in every neighborhood in Austin. Making every neighborhood a self-contained part of the city will ensure no part of the city becomes exclusively the "bar district", the "apartment district", or the "office district".

Maintaining the status quo will lead to more sprawl, more traffic, and less interest as people can't experiment on unique Austin businesses because it costs too much.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 2:10 pm

Tim, thanks for your comments! Could you say more about the yellow ball house and what makes it significant to you from a character perspective? Can you also say more about what it means to "make it easy to change residential to commercial?" Thanks again! -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 11:57 am

👍 1 Votes

I agree with Tim. I would hope that Austin would encourage neighborhoods which nurture city neighborhood life. Encourage walkable areas - making use of side walks and marked crosswalks. There should be no food deserts for our families. We talk of trees and green spaces - are any of the towers downtown including greenery, something to remind people we live on a planet that includes plant life? If we are going to ask developers to follow city rules, why can't we have them actually include truly affordable housing. Making a place that is livable should be paramount. Austin can be a spectacular leader in creating a livable city. Neighborhoods which include what is needed to live a life with job, shopping, schools and scaled to be used should be our goal.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 2:28 pm

Thanks for your comments, Annette! How do you define "truly affordable housing?" We also often hear suggestions about sidewalk additions and improvements, and funding is often an issue there. To what extent do you think additional funding (tax increases, cuts to other services) should be appropriated for sidewalk improvements? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 1:19 pm

👍 5 Votes

How about establishing a more human-scale building setback from the street and requiring trees and/or other flora in the right-of-way? Austin says it wants to encourage more walking and biking, but most of the new skyscrapers going in downtown are built like this is midtown Manhattan--with wind tunnels between inhuman edifices that reflect all the heat in summer. People want to walk where there's shade and plantlife (at least trees they can walk UNDER), and they don't feel like they're 2 feet from being mowed-down by speeding vehicles.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 2:39 pm

Thank you for your comment, Heather! I understand your desire for more shade and plant life downtown. Would this be something you would like to see the City change, or is this more of an issue that the community partners or individual citizens need to address? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 6:26 pm

👍 1 Votes

The most essential thing to consider with code development is to respect the existing character of a neighborhood - Travis Heights as mentioned above - used to be a fairly mixed income area and now it's likely 98 - 99% affluent just because of its proximity to downtown.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 09, 2016 7:05 am

Thanks for your comments, J! To clarify--are you hoping that CodeNEXT prevents the kind of trend you're identifying in Travis Heights? If so, how would you suggest that be achieved? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 08, 2016 8:57 pm

👍 3 Votes

I think we need to breakdown our understanding of "maintain Austin character." I don't want to maintain Austinites' diehard attachment to their private automotive transportation (or Uber/Lyft, as a non-alternative). This city isn't Manhattan, but it demands a transit system, which includes walking and biking, that anticipates its future growth. I acknowledge, as does the Prescription, that we're not going to eliminate cars any time soon and that those with mobility restrictions and certain occupations require that form of transportation as technology currently stands. However, I'd like to see CodeNext be more activist about non-auto transportation and not capitulate to the existing car culture in Austin/Texas.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 09, 2016 7:04 am

Thanks for your comments! In what ways might CodeNEXT be "more activist about non-auto transportation?" -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 09, 2016 1:33 am

👍 0 Votes

I think this discussion needs to be narrowed. The "prescription paper" is 45 pages long and I doubt many commenters here will have read it all.

Would the moderator consider re-positioning this discussion to something more manageable?

Response:

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 09, 2016 7:04 am

Hi, Tim--appreciate the question. You're welcome to focus on the questions listed at the top of this forum. I will ask your question to the CodeNEXT team. -Moderator

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 29, 2016 2:38 pm

Hi Tim, thank you for your question. We're working on a more specific list of tradeoffs and/or questions. Once that's together, we will post here.

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 09, 2016 7:56 pm

 0 Votes

I saw two things in the prescription paper to comment on. Both are what I perceive as conflicting goals.

One is the need to preserve our green space vs connectivity. Addressing erosion concerns, saving trees, etc, is all good, but the conflict is with the desire for connectivity. Trails and pathways that are for biking and walking options. I see the city being overly protective of green spaces sometimes to the exclusion of human use. Like the Slaughter Creek m.u. Trail. There is no connectivity from Circle C park. The desire to "protect the water quality" cuts off all access to that trail by hikers and bikers. They are forced to GET IN A CAR to drive to the trail. This makes no sense. The impact of hikers and bikers, entering from Circle C park, to the environment, would be lots less than the impact of those cars' carbon emissions to the air, and the oil and gas run off to our water system from the dripping on the roadway. So I implore all regulations to look at the big picture, coming down on the side of human powered transportation, whenever there is a question as to the higher priority.

The second thing I saw was a mention about "too many gas stations." The prescription sounded like it wanted to make it harder to get a gas station open in the name of having a greener and more attractive development. I like having gas stations, and other services, and retail options. I do not want the "where we want to be" to be too costly to small businesses getting open. We humans need services. Affordable services. Every time a regulation is enacted by the city, in the end it costs us, the citizen. The mentality of "let business pay for it" has to change. I believe that we can create this Codenext vision in possibly a more gentle manner that allows new business to form in such a way as to allow those businesses to make a profit and remain in business.

Mayor Adler was elected on the promise of making the code more simple for business. Hopefully these initiative will follow that thinking.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 22, 2016 2:25 pm

Thanks for your comments, Carl! Are you saying that you'd prefer there to be a bit less emphasis on trails and pathways and a bit more on road-based connectivity?

-Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 11, 2016 3:12 pm

 0 Votes

comment...make bigger closets ,put them in the parks too!! (with rainbows),so all the new californians can go back „to a place that feels like home,, where they belong,,

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 22, 2016 2:34 pm

Hi, Max--could you clarify your comments in relation to CodeNEXT? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 11, 2016 7:25 pm

 1 Votes

The character of Austin that makes it unique and most desirable to me IS the greenery. The most surprising fact of the Prescription 1 publication is the fact that the trees in Austin remove air pollution, avoid run off, and sequester carbon to the tune of 16 billion dollars in irreplaceable compensatory value. Secondly, the most emphatic change of questionable consequence will be limited parking requirements in future development. It seems some of us would be willing to sacrifice the quality of life of others for expansion which is why our good City government is burdened with the civic requirement to plan ahead a beneficial quality of life for generations to come and first - do no harm. It is interesting to me that the land development code was already revised to widen the area next to the creeks that were to be protected more stringently while reducing the overall distance of impervious cover (elimination of the transition zone) to allow for more development. In retrospect, the revised FEMA maps would have widened the creek danger zone anyway but has no benefit where homes are already built. Now, in less than a year we are closing in on the creek banks in consideration of "urban trails" ie 12 ft wide cement trails with additional clearance zones in the name of connectivity. It seems we have not adequately considered the impact on flooding, stream erosion and neighborhood quality of life. To add insult to injury ...connecting the dots... creek banks are quickly becoming the most significant undeveloped land in neighborhoods outside of the Flood Zone and might be considered for parkland purchasing. Of course, the primary function of parkland is to serve the adjacent community in congregation and may not even be subject to the same impervious cover restrictions. At a creek bank removing trees undeniably adds to erosion and is not the same as planting a tree where there was none (or for that matter providing a fee in lieu). In the codenext I would most like to see an elimination of the "fee in lieu" or instead require action on a site that directly benefits water quality and restoration of lost environment in the affected community. And please keep the existing green banks adjacent to the erosion hazard zone free of increased impervious cover in spite of the fact that the goal of connectivity is a good one. I hope that I am not alone in thinking that Park land should not be allowed to depart from impervious cover restrictions in the Code Next.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 13, 2016 2:31 pm

Thanks for your comments, Leigh. -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 18, 2016 10:26 am

 0 Votes

Are there any plans to create green alleys in the downtown/congress ave area? This would provide additional areas for pedestrians and safety for cyclists. Also, restaurants and cafes would be able to provide outdoor dining/seating areas without dealing with the noise and smell of auto traffic. Is this something the city would consider implementing?

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 29, 2016 2:40 pm

Hi Christal, thank you for your comment! We are looking at ways to green and activate alleys as opportunities allow. As you mentioned, these can be great spaces for pedestrian and bike connections, and a space for people to relax.

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 21, 2016 1:09 pm

👍 0 Votes

Currently, the impervious cover limit is 45% for many areas. Change that to 40%, or even 35%, for buildings (excluding greenhouses) and driveways/parking lots. That would allow 5-10% for the landscape. As it is now, the landscape is typically left with tiny fractions, such as .05%, for the landscape. Yet the City says it wants us to increase useable outdoor spaces. Well...HOW when the builder/architects gobble up most of the impervious percentage and leave the landscape with giblets?

Another thing: stop calling it "impervious cover." Just call it hardscape. Using the phrase impervious cover is confusing since it has nothing to do with water quality. The word impervious is all about water quality, except in Austin.

Also, the City needs to crack down on the growing number of deceitful developers/builders. For instance, I have a client that has hardscape around their pool. But, it doesn't show up on the site survey. Apparently, the builder covered the hardscape with sod and passed inspection. Another builder covered up concrete pads left over from old sheds with mulch so he could pass inspection. But a next door resident caught him. Another builder built a deck attached to the side yard fence. Inspectors said they couldn't do that, so they took it down and replaced it with some dinky thing. After it passed inspection, they took down the deck and rebuilt the original one (I the photos as proof). I reported this to the city. I am SICK of sneaky builders.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 23, 2016 9:58 pm

Impervious cover restrictions promote urban sprawl. Have to think about that as well.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 29, 2016 2:43 pm

Hi Elizabeth, thank you for your comment! To address your question, we're looking at a variety of strategies including (but not limited to) increased watershed protection requirements, incentivizing functional green infrastructure (it could double as active recreation space, for example), and recalibrating our park and open space types to provide for more options.

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 22, 2016 7:55 am

👍 1 Votes

This draft, at least nominally, addresses issues related to both the built and natural landscapes. I understand the focus on the built environment and the need for regulatory prescriptions as well as proscriptions. However, what I find inexplicable is the almost complete absence of attention paid to conservation, restoration, and preservation,

This draft, unfortunately, is a flawed document. Deeply, deeply flawed. Here is an

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

example. Biodiversity has been conflated into trees. In fact, the word biodiversity is mentioned only once, and then only in a quote from the original vision (Imagine Austin). Virtually all of the "conservation" efforts outlined in the plan have to do with trees and tree preservation.

Surely there has been enough expertise on the task force to be able to value Austin's landscape beyond urban trees. There are inferences, usually incorporated into buzzwords, about "green" development and the desire to integrate nature into the urban environment. But, there is nothing in the prescriptions specifically mentioning the conservation of the remaining biodiversity in the city, especially along the stream corridors and within the watersheds. I see no mention at all about the restoration of what has already been lost through mindless and insensitive development (start by reading Paul Hawken if you need help).

It is hard to imagine a 21st Century city being oblivious to the need to conserve all aspects of its natural patrimony. Unfortunately, this myopia extends to the built environment. Preservation is mentioned only in the context of, you guessed it, trees.

I know that Preservation Austin has submitted extensive recommendations, but I see no mention of them in this document. Yes, we have a separate commission that addresses historic properties. But, the protection of a city's patrimony, its heritage, must be integrated into its building codes as well. This document completely ignores this issue.

Austin has a chance to be one of the great 21st Century cities, but this type of myopic, buzzword planning will not get us there.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 13, 2016 2:32 pm

Thanks for your comments, Ted--sounds like you're suggesting a much broader approach to the topics you mentioned. Is there a link to Preservation Austin's recommendations that we can post so others can view it here? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 22, 2016 1:51 pm

 2 Votes

I do not understand why staff has undertaken this "Prescription" exercise so late in the game. This should have been done 2 or 3 years ago after an analysis, reorganization and cleanup of the current Euclidean Code. Then staff could have used the "Prescriptions" to identify additions to the Euclidean code and to guide the addition of Form Based Code into the Land Development Code. The Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription draft document is just more "envisioning"; we need details. Staff needs to stop "envisioning" and just write the code. The public needs to review a draft of the code long before the "release" of the "whole package" in January 2017.

These are some of the comments and questions I have on the Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription draft document:

1. We need a definition or a clarification (some numbers please) for each of the following terms: "compact and connected", "city core", "affordability", on page 16 item 4.a. "lots of space" and "contextually appropriate public-private interface" and on page 26 item 1 "robust transit" (define "robust").

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

2. Page 16 item 4. a. refers to “the mid-to low-density suburban context.” Are these the Transect Zones T3 (SF-1, SF-2 and SF-3)? Transect Zones T4 and T3 are mentioned on page 30 Item 1.b. regarding reduced parking standards.

Also “Compact development diminishes or altogether eliminates the streetyard, bringing buildings closer to the street.” If buildings are brought closer to the street what is the impact on the side and rear yard setbacks? What kind of landscape will a built environment on a small lot have? With 75% impervious cover I would say very little. Cultivating a mature full canopied native tree would not be an option and yet they are the most valuable to the ecosystem.

3. Page 16 item 6.a. “Bring forward improvements to the Landscape code that account for the advances in urban environmental science, especially in soil science and hydrogeology, as well as technological improvements in water-reuse, and understanding of the urban heat-island effects.” This, plus information on infrastructure (including roads) and climate change should inform the built environment. More density = fewer trees + greater heat-island effect + more runoff and flooding. We need to work with our environment, not against it.

4. Since the document has a section on Compatibility and there are references to neighborhood “context” and “character” then why not include, in the Footnotes and Sources section at the end of the document, links to:

Adopted neighborhood plans

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/adopted-neighborhood-planning-areas-0>

Future neighborhoods plans

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/future-neighborhood-plans>

Community Character in a Box materials (the “DNA” of our neighborhoods)?

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/119725136@N06/sets>

5. Each “leaf” in the “branch” diagram on the CodeNEXT home page has the name of a different live link (e.g. Neighborhood Plans), however all are linked to the Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription draft document. Why not have each “leaf” link to the document it is labeled as? That would be user friendly.

6. Page 11 Item 6. b. “On high impervious sites (more typical in the urban core), infiltration-based approaches may not be economically feasible because they can potentially occupy a significant percentage of the site area.”

Footnote 6: “Modeling in Envision Tomorrow indicated that more passive stormwater technologies (both beneficial use and flood mitigation) can be accommodated on sites with at least 25 percent pervious area. This estimate assumes poor-draining soils and does not factor in additional requirements for landscaping, open space, and tree protection.”

Is this where the 75% impervious cover for SF-3 lots, shown at a previous CAG meeting, came from? Who made the 25% pervious area estimate and how did they do it? (What is the methodology?). Where can we get information on the Envision Tomorrow tool? Does the city currently have a fee-in-lieu program for flood/stormwater mitigation? If so, where is it in the current code?

7. You really need an economist on CodeNEXT who can give all the “envisioning” that’s been going on for the last 3 years a reality check. We really need to know how much “where we would like to be” will cost us. The density planners and the investment community would like would overwhelm much of the City’s infrastructure. Development

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

needs to pay for itself.

comment...

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 31, 2016 5:54 pm

Hi Joyce, thank you for your comments and questions! We are working with staff to address your questions and will post a response soon.

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Mar 22, 2016 9:10 pm

👍 1 Votes

If you plan to add more parks to the city, I would suggest and ask that you include vegetable gardens/fruit trees in the landscaping. Urbanites would hugely benefit from greater connection to a source of food. Even with the emphasis on eating local, most buyers never visit the farm that grows their produce, which means there's a communication gap between manufacturer and consumer. As cities continue import almost all of their raw materials, city dwellers become ever more woefully ignorant about how those materials originate. We in cities miss out on a key element of life.

You're going to landscape the parks anyway. You might as well plant vegetables. Then when you ask an urban child where carrots come from, he won't point to the HEB-- he'll point to the earth. And he'll grow up wanting to take care of the earth that feeds him.

Response:

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 13, 2016 2:33 pm

Thanks for your comments, Grace. Any thoughts on how the City could help achieve the goals you suggest? -Moderator

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 21, 2016 4:59 pm

👍 1 Votes

***MEMORANDUM FOR THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE ADVISORY GROUP
AND CODENEXT TEAM***

FROM: Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA)

SUBJECT: Response to Natural and Built Environment Prescription—The Next Austin:
Manage our growth, keep our character

OVERVIEW

The Real Estate Council of Austin first wants to thank you for your time and effort over these many months. We know this process is challenging, and as always we hope to be a continued resource for you as the process continues.

Concerning this prescription paper, we appreciate the intent behind it, but believe your time, and that of stakeholders invested in this process would best be served using the guidance already established within the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

In reviewing with our members we conclude this paper and future papers, if modeled similarly, are redundant and unnecessary. In fact, there is a real danger these prescriptions may lead to confusion where they deviate from the recommendations in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. It should also be a consideration that the latter was developed through a very robust citizen engagement process.

Nonetheless, respectful of your efforts, our general response and feedback is as follows:

WATER AND WATERSHEDS

1. While a significant amendment to the City's Watershed Ordinance has taken place in the recent past, we do not think it should be off the table for reconsideration, especially in looking at the City contextually.
2. The City currently evaluates infrastructure capacity, so this comment needs further clarity as to its intention. Regional approaches to Stormwater Management should be pursued in earnest. Site-by-site solutions can only do so much.
3. The requirement to detain redeveloped sites to pre-developed conditions does nothing to incentivize redevelopment and in many cases, is extremely challenging or impossible, due to the lack of stormwater infrastructure downstream. This requirement does not incentivize redevelopment in the central City, but rather encourages sprawl and expands our unaffordability problem. The City needs to take some responsibility for aging public infrastructure. Waiting for developers and redevelopment to upgrade aging central City infrastructure is irresponsible.
4. We support additional options to mitigate run-off and flooding. Regional and site-specific solutions should be considered. The Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) should also incorporate the two-year storm event as well as the proposed 95th percentile storm event that is recommended in the prescription paper. Further, if there is an existing flooding issue (due to conveyance or lack of infrastructure or aged infrastructure), then RSMP should not be denied if the redevelopment and infill has not increased the issue.
5. The requirement to use water as a resource will require a modification to the 48-hour and 72-hour draw down times. The Technical Criteria Manuals need to be consulted and addressed in conjunction with the Code re-write.
6. The requirement to re-use on-site storm water as a resource (on-site irrigation) will create a burden on many developments, specifically urban development properties and sites with poor soils. This requirement would require a modification to the 48-hour and 72-hour draw down times. We support incentives for developers to utilize innovative water quality measures and/or grey-water re-use, however we disagree this is a one size fits all approach. The Technical Criteria Manuals should also be consulted and addressed in conjunction with the Code re-write.
7. The recommendation to utilize excess Right-of-Way (ROW) for green infrastructure is positive in theory but typically the excess ROW is allocated for future mobility improvements, expansions, etc. and based on the future Austin Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan. Coordination with the Transportation Department will be necessary to vet the viability.

LANDSCAPE AND TREES

1. Cost impacts to expanded landscape requirements should be considered, in

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

conjunction with all the other recommendations.

2. We are generally in support of tree preservation based on site context.

3. What is the intended definition of “Significant” trees? The Code currently defines Protected and Heritage trees.

4. Protected and Heritage tree species should be re-analyzed.

COMPATABILITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITIONS

1. A complete re-analysis of our existing compatibility standards should be prioritized. While some of the elements are effective, the appropriate transitions between single-family and commercial development, are not one-size-fits-all. Designated growth centers and corridors should be looked at differently than a site interior to an established neighborhood.

2. Site characteristics, such as topography, should be considered when applying compatibility standards.

3. A review of the capability standards applicability should be analyzed. For example, civic uses such as schools, day cares and churches should not warrant the same protections as an established single-family residence. Further, a residential structure being utilized for commercial purposes should not trigger compatibility standards.

DESIGN FOR MOBILITY

1. We are supportive of allowing for parking reductions and shared parking opportunities.

2. In general, we support the Complete Streets Policy and are eager to review a draft of the City’s new Austin Thoroughfare Plan; our concern is tied to the costs to implement the plans.

3. We are supportive of connectivity, but need look at sites and their potential connections realistically. Connection hubs should be reasonable and not required as a one-size-fits-all.

REDEVELOPMENT

1. See above concerns as it relates to impervious cover, water quality and detention.

2. Subchapter E contemplates redevelopment, partial redevelopment, and rehabilitation. The definition and associated regulations for redevelopment should be consistent across Code chapters.

3. We recommend re-evaluating incentives that can be put in place to encourage redevelopment.

GREENFIELD

1. The proposed subdivision ordinance will be especially important as it relates to suburban development. We are eager to review and provide comment once more information is available.

2. Infrastructure improvements are generally the burden of the developer, while the maintenance of them over time is the responsibility of the tax-payers and rate-payers.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

3. Generally speaking, suburban, greenfield developments are required to meet open space and parkland requirements on-site, thereby providing a more cohesive development. On-site water quality and detention is also typically required.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

1. Any modifications should consider the recently revised Parkland Dedication ordinance, and should be analyzed in conjunction with the current required Open Space requirements (found in Subchapter E). Context should be considered as urban infill projects vary significantly from greenfield development.

2. Additional options should be considered for a development to meet parkland requirements, including a variety of open space options that would qualify, i.e. plazas, pocket parks, playgrounds, trails, etc.

In addition to the specific prescription paper comments outlined above, we also feel there were many items not considered. They are as follows:

1. Executive Summary (should be included in all prescription papers)

2. Process (should be included in all prescription papers)

a. How were these prescriptions were chosen?

3. Historic preservation

a. How do we select and protect historical landmarks and to what detriment/benefit does this allow in the Code?

4. Gray infrastructure (i.e., the wastewater and storm system)

a. How does the Code and regional planning change available infrastructure and costs (to both developer and City)?

5. Private open space

a. How are they determined and how are they regulated?

6. Wilderness areas

a. Do we have, or should we have, wilderness areas that are not maintained?

7. Transit plazas

a. How are the transit plazas (rail/bus/pedestrian) defined, decided and maintained?

8. Biodiversity

a. How do we enforce or restrict diversity of the flora in the natural and built environment? What are the positives and negatives of each approach?

9. Remodels

a. How would remodels be impacted?

10. Subchapter E

a. How will the Natural and Built Environment paper currently, and with future changes, compare to Subchapter E? Specifically, to the following sections:

i. 2.1.4. - Ensure that trees, sidewalks, and buildings - three of the major elements that make up a streetscape - are arranged in a manner that supports the creation of a safe, human-scaled, and well-defined roadway environment; and

ii. 2.1.10 - Ensure that large sites are developed in a manner that supports and

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

encourages connectivity and creates a cohesive visual identity and attractive street scene.

Furthermore, we strongly encourage that each of the recommended prescriptions be analyzed from a cost impact stand-point. Any one of the recommendations could add significant project costs, but considered cumulatively, they will undoubtedly have a significant cost impact to projects and thereby negative impacts on affordability. Prior to releasing the draft Code, we believe you need to consider the cost burden and the trade-offs necessary to achieve a more affordable Austin while growing in a smart, compact and connected manner.

A.J. Bingham, Director of Government Affairs

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 22, 2016 10:09 pm

 0 Votes

April 18, 2016

FROM: HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF GREATER AUSTIN

SUBJECT: Formal response to Natural and Built Environment Prescription—The Next Austin: Manage our growth, keep our character

OVERVIEW

Established in 1953, the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin is comprised of over 700 member companies and their over 100,000 employees. Our mission is to protect every family's right to home ownership and to promote and represent our industry to the 6 counties and over 30 municipalities that we cover.

As one of the main groups that will be affected by the new Land Development Code (LDC), we feel that one singular item that should be at the forefront of the proposed changes is the lack of homes that are affordable. The new LDC has the potential to either address and fix this issue, or add to it and make it worse. Below you will find our responses to the first prescription released by the CodeNext team. We look forward to working with you throughout this process.

RESPONSE

Water and Watersheds

1. Maintain Austin's historic watershed regulations and recent Watershed Protection Ordinance improvements.

Response: The HBAGA believes that the current watershed protection ordinance and recent improvements are sufficient. We would however encourage the City to examine any future updates or changes as to the impact those changes would have as a whole on the development process and the additional costs that they could have, thus impacting affordability.

2. Incremental redevelopment should occur in-step with an evaluation of infrastructure,

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

including drainage capacity.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that infrastructure should be built to support the capacity that it will require. However, we would strongly urge against the use of developers and the code as the sole means for the city updating older infrastructure.

3. Redevelopment – like new development -- will be required to mitigate for the site's share of existing downstream flooding. This means reducing post-development peak rates of discharge to match peak rates of discharge for undeveloped conditions, instead of existing pre-development conditions. Undeveloped conditions are assumed to be grassland unless otherwise demonstrated by the applicant.

Response: By requiring that the post-development peak rates of discharge to match the peak rates of discharge for undeveloped conditions the city could potentially restrict infill redevelopment in certain areas. It could also lead to certain instances where the solution, doesn't actually address the issue of high rates of discharge, and instead could potentially allow for situations where if the undeveloped site flooded prior to redevelopment there would not be a clear route to address the issue. The city should allow for flexibility within each site and tackle downstream flooding issues in a more comprehensive approach. Once again we would also urge the city to not use development or redevelopment as the sole means to address existing issues with out-of-date infrastructure.

4. Tools for mitigating flood impacts could include on-site detention, off-site detention, off-site conveyance improvements, or participation in the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP). Determining the appropriate flood mitigation tool will depend on the location in the watershed (e.g., headwaters) as well as the available downstream capacity. Generally, on-site detention is appropriate in the upper portions of a watershed, whereas lower portions of a watershed are more suitable for conveyance upgrades or participation in RSMP.

Response: The HBAGA concurs with this prescription. Due to the uniqueness of every site, there should be a comprehensive approach and a variety of tools allowed. By allowing for a variety of options, the city would maximize the improvements made to the infrastructure and limit the potential affect that costs could have on affordability.

-On-site detention is one of the more expensive ways to address the issue of discharge. While it should be allowed as an option, it should not necessarily be required on all sites.

-The HBAGA believes that the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) should also incorporate the 2-yr storm event as well as the 95th percentile event (described in prescription #6). We would also suggest that if there is an existing flooding problem (either due to conveyance or lacking infrastructure), then the RSMP should not have the ability to deny the redevelopment or infill if it will not increase the problem.

5. New and redevelopment sites will be required to retain and beneficially use stormwater onsite – a practice already implemented by numerous states and major cities around the country.

Response: There are many potential impacts that requiring onsite stormwater detention/containment could have. The city should also clarify as to what amount would be required on the site, and for what duration? Items like containment tanks or ponds can be cost prohibitive and have an impact on affordability. In addition, certain neighborhood architectural restrictions limit the placement of some of these items on the site. The city should encourage and incentivize these kind of items, but not require

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

them on all sites.

6. Require sites and subdivisions to prevent off-site discharge from all rainfall events less than or equal to the 95th percentile event through practices that infiltrate, evapotranspire, and/or harvest and use rainwater. This can be accomplished through the use of green stormwater infrastructure – both passive technologies, such as rain gardens and porous pavement, as well as more active technologies like rainwater harvesting systems and green roofs.

a. Reference national models for beneficial reuse requirements that have alternative standards for redevelopment, pollution hotspots, karst, areas with a shallow water table, and other unique site conditions.

b. On high impervious sites (more typical in the urban core), infiltration-based approaches may not be economically feasible because they can potentially occupy a significant percentage of the site area. Given these constraints, projects located within urban core watersheds will be allowed to request approval to reduce the requirement for onsite beneficial use of stormwater and instead provide payment-in-lieu based on a checklist of applicable site conditions (e.g., high existing impervious cover, poor draining soils, etc.). As with water quality payment-in-lieu, the funds collected would be used to build water quality controls and green stormwater infrastructure in the Urban Watersheds. Even in highly impervious sites, however, opportunities often exist to re-use the water both indoors and outdoors for advanced conservation, environmental, and place-making benefit. Examples include recessed parking islands and disconnected downspouts.

c. The recommendations for beneficial use of stormwater, as well as the city's current requirements for water quality, apply to smaller storms (e.g., less than 3 inches of rain). Flooding issues associated with larger storms are addressed through requirements and strategies for flood mitigation, as described in the section above. Although green stormwater infrastructure tools such as rain gardens improve water quality and help integrate nature into the city, they do not significantly address the flooding associated with large storms. To effectively address both flooding and water quality concerns, sites will need a combination of different tools.

Response: The 95th percentile event is less than the current 2 yr storm event that must be detained onsite. This requirement would not allow for any water to be discharged from this event and would discourage certain types of redevelopment and infill on older lots that could pose a greater challenge. The HBAGA is also concerned that this could potentially limit discharge needed downstream which rely on that discharge from frequent storms as a source of water. If the city does wish for containment with no discharge then there needs to be a combination of solutions that addresses the uniqueness for each site.

-Excess right of way usually serves as a buffer or for a future purpose (such as transportation-bike or road lanes). CodeNext should consult with the transportation department and transportation stakeholders regarding this issue.

-The HBAGA agrees that when green streets are encouraged, they should be in context with the area in which they are located. However, cost to achieve the city's desired effect should be taken into consideration as well.

Landscape and Trees

1. Maintain our current code's strong emphases on preservation of existing topography, native vegetation, and environmental health

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

Response: The HBAGA agrees that where feasible, development should always be encouraged to maintain existing topography, native vegetation and the environment.

2. Require a comprehensive approach to landscape treatment throughout the site, creating opportunity to integrate environmental, aesthetic, and site-use functionality.

Response: In many cases, large-scale master-planned communities are already doing these items. Since the adoption of the HBAGA's Sensible Landscaping Guidelines, there are several large communities incorporating many of the suggestions outlined in that document. However, the city should allow for flexibility and options when it comes to redevelopment/infill sites.

3. Encourage the incorporation of low-impact development in coordination with landscaping standards

Response: The HBAGA agrees that this should be encouraged, but would caution against working towards creating landscaping standards that would require a large number of code/technical revisions and add to the workload of the Development Services Department (DSD).

4. Adopt the context-based approach that is the cornerstone of the new LDC:

a. For the mid- to low-density suburban context, the new code will bring adjustments to address the move toward compact, pedestrian-centered development. Current landscape requirements rely heavily on the size of the "streetyard," the area between right-of-way and building façade. This assumes a suburban, automobile-oriented style of development, with lots of space between street and building. Compact development diminishes or altogether eliminates the streetyard, bringing buildings closer to the street. The new code will utilize an approach based on integrating landscape elements throughout the site, while providing a visually unified and contextually appropriate public- private interface.

b. For the higher-density Centers and Corridors called for by Imagine Austin, which may offer fewer opportunities for vegetated landscape, the new code likely will offer an options-based palette of urban-green options aimed at providing high functioning landscape in small spaces. This could operate similar to "Functional Green," a point-based system that allows choices among elements such as green roofs, green walls, stormwater collection and re-use, pervious pavement, rain gardens, etc. to meet landscape requirements.

Response: Depending how these items are adopted/implemented they could have a negative or positive affect on affordability.

5. Recognize that compact development can pressure existing vegetation, particularly trees; provide the tools to implement a site-specific approach to preservation that prioritizes protection of "significant" trees.

Response: CodeNext should define what "significant" would mean. By defining it properly, the city would allow for greater certainty for developers/builders which assists in providing some relief to the affordability issue naturally in this process. Furthermore, the code should define how preserving trees interacts with other portions of the code. For example:

-The Visitability Ordinance states that: "A visitable entrance must have at least one visitable route with a cross slope of no greater than two percent that originates from a

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

garage, driveway, public street, or public sidewalk."

-It was later clarified that if a switchback was to be required to comply, the builder/developer could apply for a variance.

-The question that the HBAGA would like to pose is: How would the preservation of "significant" trees be handled if the switchback was necessary to go around the tree? Which ordinance would prevail?

6. Promote land cover that performs multiple ecosystem functions, requires fewer resources, and provides better planting environments for a more sustainable urban landscape.

a. Bring forward improvements to the Landscape code that account for advances in urban environmental science, especially in soil science and hydrogeology, as well as technological improvements in water-reuse, and understanding of urban heat-island effects.

b. Set minimum soil quality and quantity standards.

c. Allow double-counting of Landscape and Watershed Protection requirements, thereby encouraging development to incorporate green infrastructure and sustainable water management best practices into landscape areas.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription and would suggest examining our Sensible Landscaping Guidelines. In addition, we feel that offering up incentives to encourage this type of landscaping could be far more beneficial to the city than mandating. For example, the City of Austin could issue certain density bonuses in exchange for drought tolerant landscapes and green infrastructure that addresses existing discharge issues with the site.

7. Clarify existing code provisions regarding applicability, definitions, survey requirements, review requirements, and other code sections.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

8. Set impervious cover limits as a maximum, not a guarantee of buildable land. It is possible that an impervious cover limit will not be reached due to unique site characteristics, such as regulated trees. Tree regulations, therefore, will apply regardless of a site's allowable impervious cover limit and may impact the final allowable impervious cover.

Response: Imagine Austin calls for a "compact and connected" city, and in order to provide that it is imperative that developers/builders should be able to accurately predict what the potential for developing a particular lot is. By not providing an accurate understanding of what would be allowed, this could potentially discourage development and limit what redevelopment/infill could happen. The HBAGA believes that tree preservation should not have an effect on a site's allowable impervious cover limit.

9. Improve administrative procedures to ensure clear, consistent, and timely reviews and inspections.

a. Integrate tree permits into the Plan Review process to avoid duplicative reviews

b. Offer online applications and payment

c. Offer a pre-submission consultation for applicants

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription. Any opportunity for a more efficient and predictable process is welcomed. We are also happy to assist in providing additional

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

feedback and testing as these new systems and processes are developed.

10. Use a site-by-site approach to tree preservation. Avoid the use of a purely quantitative, one-size-fits-all, approach to tree preservation (e.g. 80% of site trees must be preserved), in recognition of the non-uniform distribution of trees, the varying biological and structural health of trees, and differing land development types.

a. Look at reasonable use of and reasonable access to the property. To administer these criteria effectively, the City Arborist will utilize a process that assesses specific site characteristics and identifies the health of the regulated trees to ensure protection of the healthy trees onsite.

b. Adopt policies to define more effectively the varying contexts (e.g. urban, suburban, commercial, residential, etc.) and how best trees can be preserved in these varied contexts.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with taking a site-by-site approach to tree preservation but would coughing against creating an entirely new system and set of policies that would add additional costs to development. We would also encourage the city to look at easing the process for alternative forms of compliance such as adding new trees of the same caliper or relocating the trees.

11. Allow for more flexibility in accounting for various building types, internal circulation, utility assignments, parking requirements, and so forth, allowing more creative site layouts to preserve trees.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription. However, the greatest difficulty that this prescription will have is the inclusion of the various departments that will be affected. We would encourage the creation of additional memorandums of understanding (similar to those developed recently by Mr. Zucker) to assist in achieving clarification and efficiency in this process.

12. Integrate public tree standards in City Code Title 6 with the Land Development Code for consistent code application.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

13. Explore opportunities to improve tree preservation for “missing middle” developments. For example, protecting trees smaller than 19” might be an opportunity to bridge the gap between the current commercial site plan recognition of trees (8” inch and greater diameter trees) and single-family home development (19” and greater diameter trees).

Response: Most tree preservation has an effect on the affordability of a particular site/development. This is due to the fact that costs associated with preserving certain trees during the initial development of the site are passed onto the builder who purchases the lot from the developer. In turn, the builder will by default pass on that cost to the homebuyer by taking into account how much they (the builder) paid for that lot in setting the overall price for that home. To achieve both affordability and “missing middle” developments, the code must interact in a way that encourages the preservation of these trees, without adding significant costs overall.

Compatibility and Transitions

1. Form-Based Standards: These standards, which will regulate factors like building

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

placement, height, and mass, parking placement, four-sided design, and so forth, will allow compatibility to be built right into the base zoning districts. The new standards will also employ landscape as a means of promoting compatibility

Response: The HBAGA agrees (in principle) that zoning should be the determining factor and not use. We urge caution however on any design restrictions/standards that are created. In some cases, certain restrictions could have the unintended consequence of affecting the affordability of the site.

2. Building Types: Each Transect District will authorize certain specific Building Types, each of which must adhere to certain design and dimensional standards. This will allow the application of Transect Zones to compel compatibility. Unlike the current Compatibility Standards, which are tied to use (residential zoning or residential use), the use of Building Types acknowledges that form – rather than use – is typically what drives compatibility.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

3. Housing Types: A greater array of housing types, including Missing Middle Housing, which allows the code to regulate more effectively for compatibility.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that one of the most essential parts towards fixing affordability is providing a variety of housing options to meet the needs of our constantly growing market. The code should encourage additional types of homes to meet this needs including (but not limited to): triplexes, fourplexes, etc.

4. Compatibility Standards: It is likely that the new code will retain something akin to the current Compatibility Standards in the portions of Austin that remained zoned with “use-based” (as opposed to form-based) zoning districts.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

Design for Mobility

1. Parking: Reduced parking minimums in areas of the city targeted for compact development, especially when those areas have robust transit and other mobility options. This will be a continuation of the approach taken in the recent code amendments regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), where parking requirements were reduced in settings close to Imagine Austin Corridors.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that that the city should reduce parking minimums in certain areas that have transit and other mobility options.

2. Form-Based Standards: Form-based zoning districts that provide functionality but also minimize the negative impacts of on-site parking such as sidewalks interrupted by wide and frequent driveways, surface parking lots separating the sidewalk from the building, and parking lots without trees.

Response: The HBAGA would like to note that reducing driveway cuts will force more shared parking agreements and shared access agreements.

3. Signs: Sign rules that are not solely oriented around visibility from automobiles.

Response: No response.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

4. Roadway Design: Courtesy of the Austin Thoroughfare Plan (being developed as part of CodeNEXT), roadway designs based not only the function of a roadway, but also on the contexts through which it passes.

Response: The code should examine the potential impact that significant changes to roadway design standards could have. Not only could they impact the affordability, but could have adverse effects on the character of a neighborhood.

5. Location Efficiency: Form-based coding that will enable compact redevelopment to be constructed in transit-rich environments (e.g., rail, rapid bus, and frequent service bus lines). By doing so, the new code will promote land uses and development patterns that support mobility choice, reduce congestion, and reduce the negative environmental consequences of prolific automobile usage.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

6. Connectivity:

a. Subdivision and Site Plan standards that promote connectivity by: ensuring that development sites include roadway connections, and where that is not possible, through pedestrian and bicycle connections; and through block sizes and patterns that promote walking, biking, and efficient automobile circulation.

b. Using greenways to build new transportation systems; for example, by utilizing a certain number of feet from a floodplain to provide trails, bank stabilization, and to keep natural flooding areas free from development.

Response: In some cases connections are often built with potential future growth in mind. As a result, there are many instances where existing “connections” are in fact roads to “nowhere”. Connecting many of these areas will be a significant undertaking and at a significant cost.

Redevelopment

1. Reduce Parking Standards

a. Required parking minimums will be reduced from current levels to improve stormwater and water quality benefits; reduce development costs; promote walking, bicycling, and transit; provide opportunities for building expansion and development in retrofitted parking lots; and provide opportunities for open space and landscaping.

b. These reductions in parking standards will likely be focused in walkable urban areas, Transect Zones T4 and higher, and areas near high capacity transit. Drivable suburban areas and Transect Zones T3 and lower may see less of a reduction. In other words, the parking standards will be calibrated to context.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

2. Compatibility and Transitions: See the Compatibility and Transitions section of this paper.

Response: See previous sections.

3. Connectivity: In order to reap the full benefit of redevelopment in Centers and Corridors, those redeveloped areas will need to be well connected to nearby neighborhoods so that those neighborhoods can take advantage of the increased access to services and amenities that redevelopment will provide.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

- a. Require the extension of roads, alleys, trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, or green connectors as opportunities allow.
- b. Walkability will be promoted on large parcels through requirements for walkable block sizes, the number of required parking spots and their placement, and building coverage and placement standards.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription in principle, but would again urge that the costs could be significant in some instances to achieve some of these items.

4. Housing and Building Diversity:

- a. Providing a diverse array of housing and building types leverages redevelopment in at least two ways:
 - i. It affords access to the array of amenities and services available in Corridors and Centers to diverse households and businesses.
 - ii. It ensures that redevelopment occurs in the compact manner for which Imagine Austin calls.
- b. The new Land Development Code will promote this diversity through: reduced parking requirements, diverse and compact lot sizes, adaptable buildings that readily accommodate shifting markets and uses, and carrying forward the recently adopted Accessory Dwelling Unit code elements.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

5. Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation: See Water and Watersheds, above

Response: See previous responses.

6. Subchapter E:

- a. Subchapter E of the Land Development Code, also known as “Commercial Design Standards,” includes site development standards (e.g., building placement, parking placement, exterior lighting, and open space), building design standards, and rules regarding mixed-use projects.
- b. In the new code, most of the site development and building design standards will be integrated directly into the base zoning district (rather than being “stand-alone” as they are today). In addition to providing greater ease of use and administration, this will ensure that site and building design standards can be applied specific to context, rather than in the current one-size-fits-all approach.
- c. Subchapter E also contains standards for Vertical Mixed Use Buildings, including a density bonus program that incentivizes the creation of affordable housing units in return for increased density. The density bonus program of Subchapter E (and other density bonus programs) will be addressed in the upcoming Household Affordability Code Prescription, to be released later in 2016.

Response: No response.

7. Form-Based Standards: The new Land Development Code will integrate into the base zoning district standards that will help integrate redevelopment with its surroundings and adjacent neighborhoods. These standards will include: interconnected streets; walkable block sizes; lower parking ratios and appropriate design and location of parking; requirements compelling meaningful and functional landscape and open space; and requirements for flood mitigation and water quality. And the zoning districts will allow a wide array of uses, thereby allowing the creation of more complete communities.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

Greenfield Development

1. The new subdivision code will be simplified to contain only the process for creating a legally platted lot; specific standards such as those for design and connectivity will still apply, but will be in other sections of the code. For areas within Austin's full-purpose jurisdiction, for example, specific criteria such as minimum lot sizes and setbacks will be located in the zoning ordinance and watershed regulations. The subdivision code will rely on a parcel's base zone for the applicable design criteria; this will help prevent conflicts with other sections of the LDC. For areas in the extraterritorial jurisdiction where the City lacks zoning authority, this type of information will be included in the subdivision section.

Response: The HBAGA would encourage the city to have an open and transparent process with stakeholder involvement to develop the new subdivision code. In addition, the city should also consider lowering the minimum lot size standard.

2. Promote connectivity: As the city grows, it is increasingly important to create a built form that promotes walking and other mobility options, and that can be connected with other parts of the city, both existing and future. Our current greenfield development does not usually meet this standard, leading to isolated developments that generate car traffic and are often unsafe for other modes of transportation, such as walking and biking.

a. The Code prescription for new development will include increased connectivity through shorter block lengths, such as 400-500 feet, and by re-examining our minimum lot size to allow for a variety of building types on varying lot sizes.

b. New tools to encourage creative design that respects the natural environment, such as conservation subdivisions.

Response: It is important to note that while connectivity is more desirable, any significant increase to the overall price of the lot (due to infrastructure costs) will ultimately be paid for by the consumer. The HBAGA does agree with "a" and "b".

3. Protect the natural environment as growth occurs: Natural features such as rivers, creeks, trees, and open space are critical to creating a people-friendly Austin. One concern with greenfield development is that trees and open space may be lost, resulting in fragmented areas of private green space that are not accessible to everyone, and poor water quality when runoff from the new development reaches existing creeks and rivers. Therefore, the Code prescription entails:

a. Retain many of our current environmental protections, such as stream setbacks, tree preservation requirements, sensitive feature protection, and impervious cover limits.

b. Promote green spaces that are connected, desirable, and multi-functional. Examples of this could include preserving land for a network of greenways and urban trails which could be used for recreation and commuting by bicycle or foot, giving people an alternative to roadway connections.

c. Require stormwater to be filtered, retained, or otherwise reused onsite to support vegetation, supply baseflow to local springs and waterways, and reduce potable water consumption. For more information, please reference the previous sections on Water and Watersheds, and Landscape and Trees.

Response: The HBAGA disagrees with the concept that trees and open space are lost due to greenfield development. The city recently undertook an extensive update to the Parkland Dedication Ordinance that addresses this issue directly, and encourages

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

developers/builders to provide better parks, amenities, and open space. We also disagree with the concept that poor water quality and runoff are caused by new development. Existing city code requires water quality and detention to be implemented as part of the process. There are many factors in considering what causes issues with runoff and poor water quality, and much of it has to do with outdated city infrastructure.

Parks and Open Space: Build Great Public Spaces

1. Increase park and open space types; calibrate them to complement particular contexts; and incentivize the creation of great, active public spaces.
2. Increase access to recreation, as recommended in Imagine Austin, by expanding the number of parks and outdoor play spaces available to residents.
3. Develop standards for public spaces that are well-designed and tree-covered, and incentivize such spaces in new and redevelopment projects.
4. Infuse recommended code changes from the Parkland Dedication Ordinance: Parkland Dedication requires developers of dwelling units to provide land for parks or pay a fee in-lieu of land in proportion to the impact their development has on the park system.
 - a. Expand the amount of parkland options by setting fees to current land and construction costs and increase the amount of land required to meet the City's current level of service for neighborhood parks (9.4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents).
 - b. Increase credits for developments that agree to provide outdoor spaces that, while not dedicated parkland, are designed and designated for active use by the public. These private park spaces are maintained by the development and can provide unique play areas throughout the city.
 - c. Develop standards for public spaces to be used in giving parkland dedication credits. Practices for making earlier decisions about whether land will be given or fees paid on a residential development also give the development community increased assurances about incorporating public space and parkland into their project.
 - d. Retain the City's Park level-of-service as codified in the new parkland dedication ordinance. Intense competition for space on parcels in the City's core usually makes parkland an afterthought. Items labeled Open Space are routinely stormwater detention and drainage areas, protected tree stands, a swimming pool area for residents, or transitional elements between building types where no recreation items are allowed under current Compatibility Standards. The Code must include:
 - i. Metrics or design standards that retain percentages or pervious areas while incentivizing options for active recreation in urban and dense areas, as there is intense competition for space in the city's core.
 - ii. Improve the definition of Open Space to counteract current ambiguity in code.
 - iii. Open space in a project may be designated as a transitional element between building types where no recreation items are allowed under current Compatibility Standards.
 - iv. Open space may also be identified in the stormwater detention or drainage area.
5. Incorporate a metric for green infrastructure, for public space, and other items to obtain higher quality Open space.
6. Incentivize designing green infrastructure with dual active recreation options to meet dual purposes in the code.
7. Require connections between new and infill projects to adjacent or nearby parkland. In 2014, the City Council adopted the Urban Trails Master Plan to guide the creation of an

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

urban trail system. Many connections are needed through private property. Current code has an option for non-residential projects to make connections from their front entrances to adjacent parkland, but it is not mandatory. Requirements for connections to urban trails and nearby parkland will be included in the code.

8. Create a common language and incentivize the use of varied park and open space typologies as identified below

a. Parks:

- i. Metropolitan Parks
- ii. District Parks
- iii. Neighborhood and School Parks
- iv. Neighborhood and Urban Pocket Parks
- v. Special Parks

b. Sub-category of Parks: The code will address additional sub-categories of parks not included in the PARD Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs.

These sub-categories would help refine the palette of parks. This list generally adds additional parks that are not intended for structured sports activities, such as baseball, football or soccer. The palette of sub-categories will include standards including placement and location based on context. Sub-categories could include:

- i. Greenway
- ii. Green
- iii. Square
- iv. Plaza
- v. Pocket Plaza
- vi. Pocket Park
- vii. Nature Preserve

Response: The HBA of Greater Austin agrees with these prescriptions in their entirety.

Geoffrey Tahuahua, VP of Public Policy
Home Builders Association of Greater Austin

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 24, 2016 3:13 pm

 0 Votes

I'm concerned about the assumption that allowing a diversity of lot sizes and building types will increase the opportunity for affordability in residential and commercial development (#5 on page 5). Where is the evidence to support this assumption? Further, encouraging redevelopment and infill is also assumed to be beneficial (#6 on page 5). The prescription paper should address what will be done to discourage demolitions, loss of affordable housing, and gentrification of neighborhoods? In general, the prescription papers should specify how specific goals and ideals will be applied in areas of the city that are already build out vs. undeveloped lands. In particular, the prescription paper should address how the new Land Development Code will be integrated with the existing neighborhood plans (as required by page 207 of Imagine Austin).

Overall, the prescription paper is just a sell job without the needed details. For example, on compatibility there are comments that the existing standards have (page 19) are sometimes too restrictive and other times fail to provide true compatibility. The prescription implies that using form based standards; building and housing types, we'll get compatibility that is just right. That sounds nice, but why should we believe that the

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

new code will accomplish this? Please stop selling CodeNext and start to provide the actual code details.

· Citizen · (Postal Code: unknown) · Apr 29, 2016 9:14 am

 0 Votes

This format for response does not seem to allow graphics or formatting. This is my response without graphics or formatting. To see graphics go to <http://lostcreekcivicorganization.ning.com/blog/natural-and-built-environment-code-prescription>

Introduction

After a comprehensive review of the Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription, I will restrict my comments to those things I think are missed, or not treated thoroughly enough.

What's Missing from This Prescription?

Safe and livable transition from single family homes to park land

There is much in this prescription about the use of transects and compatibility in the built environment. The concepts of transects comes from its use in biology and ecology. Line transects are used when one wishes to illustrate a particular gradient or linear pattern along which communities of plants and, or animals change. They provide a good way of being able to clearly visualize the changes taking place along the line. In an ecological sense, a zone of the transect line shows how different living species can coexist with the zones on either side of it.

Transects are used in the new urbanism and in CodeNEXT as shown below: from natural zone to urban core zone.

This prescription mentions only compatibility in the built environment;

In my neighborhood of Lost Creek, and in many other neighborhoods in the city, the suburban zone is adjacent the natural zone. Using the ecological metaphor, the two zones are incompatible, and in the natural world, could not be sustained.

There are two elements of this incompatibility that are not addressed in this prescription – fire danger and animal interaction including humans who live in the suburban zone and visit the natural zone.

Fire Danger

Firewise also has a zoned approach between the natural and suburban zones. It is shown

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

below:

0 30 100 200 feet

According to Firewise1, “Zone 1 encircles the structure and all its attachments (wooden decks, fences, and boardwalks) for at least 30 feet on all sides. Note: the 30-foot number comes from the very minimum distance, on flat ground, that a wood wall can be separated from the radiant heat of large flames without igniting. In this area:

Plants should be carefully spaced, low-growing and free of resins, oils and waxes that burn easily.
Mow the lawn regularly. Prune trees up six to ten feet from the ground.
Space conifer trees 30 feet between crowns. Trim back trees that overhang the house.
Create a ‘fire-free’ area within five feet of the home, using non-flammable landscaping materials and/or high-moisture-content annuals and perennials.
Remove dead vegetation from under deck and within 10 feet of house.
Consider fire-resistant material for patio furniture, swing sets, etc.
Remove firewood stacks and propane tanks; they should not be located in this zone.
Water plants, trees and mulch regularly.
Consider xeriscaping if you are affected by water-use restrictions.

Zone 2 is 30 to 100 feet from the home, and plants in this zone should be low-growing, well irrigated and less flammable. In this area:

Leave 30 feet between clusters of two to three trees, or 20 feet between individual trees.
Encourage a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees.
Create ‘fuel breaks’, like driveways, gravel walkways and lawns.
Prune trees up six to ten feet from the ground.

Zone 3 is 100 to 200 feet from the home and this area should be thinned, although less space is required than in Zone 2. NOTE: Because of other factors such as topography, the recommended distances to mitigate for radiant heat exposure actually extend between 100 to 200 feet from the home – on a site-specific basis. In this area:

Remove smaller conifers that are growing between taller trees. Remove heavy accumulation of woody debris.
Reduce the density of tall trees so canopies are not touching.”

This implies that some compromise must be reached with natural areas that are part of a wildlife refuge, like the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve.

Parenthetically, these Firewise principles may have some implication for higher density residences.

Animal – Human & Human – Human Interaction

Until recent times, deer were a constant nuisance in Lost Creek. But, even in the worst of times, deer harmed plants, not people or pets2. Coyotes and foxes are deadly to pets, and they roam freely through the neighborhood. Even big cat's tracks have been seen on the golf course. Most of the time, these events are treated by the neighborhood with benign neglect. You learn quickly, no pets out at night and no small children alone.

CodeNEXT: What's the next Austin?

Closed Jul 31, 2016 · Discussion · 21 Participants · 4 Topics · 40 Answers · 22 Replies · 12 Votes

The people to people interaction between visitors and residents are more troubling. Many visitors to the Barton Creek Wilderness Area are not considerate of nature or the residents. As one resident wrote, "Besides the fire risk, we've had to tolerate nudity, drug use, under-age drinking, late-night parties, off-leash dogs relieving themselves on our lawns without regard of their owners, trash, and daily blocking of the fire hydrant, strangers on our street at all hours, etc etc etc. The day I sat at my desk and watched a woman drop her shorts and relieve herself on the street was my last straw."

These issues should be incorporated into the new zoning, and through increased funding to improve maintenance and policing.

No mobility provided

I understand the impetus to remove cars from the roads. However, the green belt has no real parking made available, and as a result cars park along roadsides and in neighborhoods. If the city is not going to provide parking then it must provide mobility without impacting neighborhoods, streets and highways. Like other elements of the city, the code should be written to require the city to provide mobility to their parks and wilderness areas.

Lack of emphasis on civic space

Civic spaces are an extension of the community. When they work well, they serve as a stage for our public lives. If they function in their true civic role, they can be the settings where celebrations are held, where social and economic exchanges take place, where friends run into each other, and where cultures mix. Austin needs more civic space - indoor and outdoor.

Over use for commercial purposes

The parks are being overused for commercial purposes. So much so, that the events coupled with the preparation and repair of the parks, reduce public access to the space. All the politicians and the news media talk about is how much economic impact an event has. Stop measuring things only by monetary measures, especially the parks and public spaces. The code should be written for a park that limits the amount of commercial time the park is used for. If you want a commercial space, create a fair grounds that specializes in just commercial events.

No mention of Dark Skies

No dedication for office development even if zoning changed from residential
Development of all types should require the dedication of public space.

CODE PRESCRIPTION #2: AFFORDABILITY 0 Answers · 0 Replies

Affordability affects everyone directly or indirectly, including seniors, those on a fixed income or in the low and middle income brackets, musicians and artists, service workers, and families with children. Read more in the attached prescription paper and let us know your thoughts about the proposed revisions to the City's Land Development Code.
Speak up, Austin!



reddit AUSTIN

COMMENTS

WANT TO JOIN? [AUSTIN FAQ](#) P IN SECONDS. ENGLISH

----- > Click here to check out [R/AUSTIN'S FAQ](#)

↑
17
↓



Hey Austinites! Team CodeNEXT is in the house ready to take your questions, so AMA! (self.Austin)

submitted 1 month ago * by [austintexasgov](#)



Team CodeNEXT has just released the first code prescription on the Natural and Built Environment. Austin deserves better development patterns! We're here till 1 to talk about all things CodeNEXT, so bring it!

[CodeNEXT homepage](#)

Proof

With us today is:

Jim

Matt

Jorge

Erin

Edit: [We're loving this! Keep em coming!](#)

Edit: Hey guys, that's it for the day! We really enjoyed this discussion, let's do it again sometime! April 4th code advisory group will be hosting a public meeting group focused on the code description.

180 comments share

all 180 comments

sorted by:
best ▾

↑ [-] [sb8636](#) 22 points 1 month ago

↓ 1. Why should there be parking minimums anywhere?



search



Before you post - please search and read the FAQ.

this post was submitted on 29 Mar 2016

17 points (68% upvoted)

shortlink: <https://redd.it/4cg2dp>

username

password



remember me

[reset password](#)

login

SUBMIT A NEW LINK

SUBMIT A NEW TEXT POST

Austin

[Subscribe](#)

52,571 readers (381 here now)

[CLICK HERE TO MESSAGE THE MODS](#)

• [r/Austin Rules and Moderating Info](#)

IMPORTANT THREADS

- [Moving to Austin](#)
- [What to do in Austin](#)
- [Where to eat in Austin](#)
- [Lost and Found Pets](#)
- [Classifieds Austin](#)
- [Job Listings](#)
- [Funemployed Calendar](#)

2. Why does compatibility matter? Specifically, many of the great cities in Asia have 2 story buildings next to 10 story buildings, allowing for increased housing, retail, commercial capacity without any evident increase in crime. For a city with huge demand for housing and Grade A office space right now, why is building/structure compatibility more important than adding supply?
3. Will CodeNEXT end McMansion? If the answer is not yes, why/how is McMansion defensible?
4. Why are huge yards something that should be mandated anywhere?

permalink

[-] [pgoetz](#) 4 points 1 month ago

↕ The best list of questions in this discussion!

permalink parent

[-] [Fitzgerald2016](#) 3 points 1 month ago

↕ These questions are fantastic!

permalink parent

[-] [Tstowell](#) 2 points 1 month ago

↕ This is a great set of questions. I'm hoping for a substantial response from the AMA team.

permalink parent

[-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 4 points 1 month ago*

Great questions!

1. Parking is a reality and a choice - vehicles are still part of our city and we must accommodate for parking. The benefit is that we do not have to prioritize parking as a way to guide our development standards but rather, offer mobility choices. So yes, we do have to have a way to address parking minimums so as to continue to have a choice.
2. Compatibility matters as a concept. True compatibility allows for the transition at appropriate scales and intensities. In Austin, we've taken a one-size-fits-all approach to compatibility without really addressing the issue: how to properly calibrate scale and proportions. When adding building options, we will look at how we can calibrate compatibility through building form to increase housing choices and thus, have an impact on supply.

- [Meetup Group](#)
- [ALL Austin Subreddits](#)
- [Other Austin FAQs](#)

Popular Austin	Subreddits
Austin Food	Ask Austin
Austin Classifieds	Austin Jobs
BikingATX	ATX Pics
UT Austin	Lost/Found Pets
All Austin Subreddits	

MEETING AUSTINITES

Wanna meet some Austinites and make some friends? Check out: or [/r/atx4atx](#).

CHAT

Chat live with other Austin Redditors on IRC:
Join [#austinreddit](#) on [irc.freenode.net](#).



a community for 8 years



[discuss this ad on reddit](#)

MODERATORS

[MESSAGE THE MODERATORS](#)

[darrendloux](#)
[AutoModerator](#)
[leAustinMod](#)
[ClutchDude](#) 
[doggod](#)
[defroach84](#) 


[about moderation team »](#)

3. Not necessarily. CodeNEXT will infuse form standards that seek to maintain residential character and while the McMansion standards were well intended, they are still applied as a one-size-fits-all approach and does little to consider context. There are beneficial uses of the McMansion regulations that seek to preserve character. While you may not see a direct application of the McMansion standards, you will see those addressed in the various zoning districts we create via CodeNEXT.
4. Huge yards can be appropriate in certain contexts but not everywhere. The example you cite is responsive of the standards we have today that offer little in terms of flexible site development standards and are strict in the application of setbacks. Via CodeNEXT, we will seek to offer varied site development standards that are responsive to context.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [\[-\]](#) [sb8636](#) 6 points 1 month ago

 Thank you for the response. I have some specific pushback - e.g. #2, why does compatibility matter as a concept? People are going to be blinded by the ugliness of retail next to residential, or a 10-story building next to 2-story? - but this may not be the correct forum.

My overall pushback centers on the distinction between "can be appropriate" (huge yards) or "a choice" (on-site parking) and **mandating** large yards/setbacks or mandating on-site parking. If we need to mandate something, it's not really a choice or an option anymore, it's mandatory...and mandatory land use for big yards/parking times hundreds of thousands of lots equals a lot of underutilized space, no?

A few followups:

1. Does the heritage tree/protected tree restrictions conflict with goals for CodeNEXT such as affordability, appropriate infill, densification? If so, how will CodeNEXT suggest the city balance conflicting priorities?
2. Same question as #1 except for historical

zoning laws instead of tree laws.

Does CodeNEXT have a position on appropriate use for historical zoning, appropriate guidelines for historical zoning, and appropriate restrictions on historical properties? How should historical zoning - both the properties currently designated historic and potential future historic properties - be weighed against goals like infill and missing middle?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Great points!

1. This is a great issue we are still working on. The intent is to protect trees that contribute to our urban forest and provide green elements for developments. It will have an impact on providing choices as we will need to have a method to offer alternatives when site development standards create conflicts. We will continue to work on this issue and hope to provide answers as we draft code standards.
2. Another great point! Historic zoning needs to be improved as a process but there is little to change in terms of the preservation approach. The new standards do not seek to conflict with historic priorities and those will need to be vetted on a case by case basis.
3. The intent of our code regulations should not be at the expense of our historic resources and treasures. That is part of our heritage and identity. We seek to continue this discussion throughout this process so as to address the need to preserve our historic structures.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [sb8636](#) 6 points 1 month ago

Thank you. Glad you guys were able to do the session today. I have a very demanding job and family life and it

allowed me to ask questions; while I do vote I don't have time to go to the myriad workshops, public forums, etc.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) **Tstowell** 9 points 1 month ago

1. Parking is only a reality because it's mandated by our LDC. If parking minimums were abolished citywide, however, developers would still build parking to meet the perceived demand. Why is this not a viable approach? Why does the city need to tell the developers how much parking they need?
2. Compatibility to protect character is not a tradeoff I am willing to accept. Our first, second, and third priorities should be adding significant housing supply, even in the face of compatibility. Again, I value affordable places for Austinites to live over an abstract notion of compatibility (which is correlated with "character"?).

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) **austintexasgov**



[\[S\]](#) 4 points 1 month ago

Thanks!

1. I agree it can be an approach but we need to have standards when parking will be considered. We will discuss parking minimums in the upcoming Mobility Prescription and would love to get your feedback.
2. I was addressing the concept of compatibility - not Article 10 (Compatibility). The intent of the code's compatibility standards were to protect scale and proportions into neighborhoods. We can achieve that by carefully evaluating character and offering housing building types as a way to transition. For example, you can have higher densities along a major Imagine Austin neighborhood while creating standards for transition areas. This addresses the compatibility issue through building forms rather than an arbitrary 540' linear approach to uses

and zoning.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **Tstowell** 7 points 1 month ago

Thanks again for the responses, Jorge. If this is about soliciting feedback from the community regarding tradeoffs we're willing to make, then my comments would be: I'll trade "standards when parking will be considered" for a market-based system where developers can decide for themselves. I'll also trade the entire concept of compatibility for across-the-board upzoning that allows massive increases in housing supply.

I think there's more of an appetite in the community for progressive urban solutions that the CodeNEXT team might anticipate, and the more diverse engagement opportunities are offered (online, etc.) the more often you will hear them. Just trying to move the needle. :-)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **tthomas48**  14 points 1 month ago

I feel like the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) process tends to make "future" maps that look exactly like the past. How will Code NEXT work to subvert the past to ensure we get what we need rather than simply codifying what we currently have?

[permalink](#)

 [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 4 points 1 month ago

We are implementing the goal of Imagine Austin to create complete communities. This is about having access to our daily needs in short access to where we live and play. The mapping process, at the conclusion of CodeNEXT, will address the integration of FLUMS and will map our city in a way that implements Imagine Austin. We will need the community's participation and input to successfully map our city.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **tthomas48**  6 points 1 month ago

Right, I guess I'm asking what is the mechanism that forces change? It sounds like your'e saying that more than likely this process will end up looking exactly like the current FLUMS (since the same sort of people will show up) and nothing will change. The current FLUMs, btw, are basically suburban sprawl and should be tossed. The idea of "integrating" them shows this process to be a waste of time for most people.

How will you engage people like me in this process who expect that they'll be shouted at by the same disruptive neighborhood activists who ruin all meetings and at the end of the day nothing will change?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **superprofundo** 3 points 1 month ago

↓ This answer would also apply to [my question asked above](#) and I'd be happy to take the answer here.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **rcauvin** 2 points 1 month ago

↓ To some extent it's up to us - who arguably compose the majority of neighborhood voices - to express ourselves and reclaim the word "neighborhood" to include more than just those voices who tend to have a more protectionist mindset.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **tthomas48**  7 points 1 month ago

↓ "Showing up" is mainly available to the wealthy and/or retired, and so any process that doesn't have a means of discounting those voices is not going to be representative of what the city as a whole wants or needs.

At some point we need our city council members to represent their constituent's needs and not simply the desires of those who show up.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

"Discounting" certain voices is a bit troubling for me, but I hear you. I've

been there - day job, kids, etc. Events like this Reddit are one means we are using to hear from "you" in a less traditional forum. We also have hosted "Coffee with CodeNEXT," "SpeakUp Austin," and our "Road Show" to meet people "where they are." It's my sense that Council Members really do want to hear from all their constituents, so I encourage you to stay involved.

Thanks.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 1 point 1 month ago

There is no mechanism to "force" change but rather, the intent is to offer choices - something we don't have today. While the process will consider the FLUMS it seeks to offer options that are true to the vision of Imagine Austin, which neighborhood plans are a part of.

Your input will prove most valuable as we try to strike a balance of ideas as part of the public process. The more we are inclusive, the better Austin we can build. That's why we are having events like this, having community walks, SpeakupAustin, and meeting with stakeholder groups to capture wide community feedback.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 8 points 1 month ago

This will be my final question. Thank you for bearing with me:

In light of the Mayor Adler's recent comments on CodeNEXT, how can any code prescription be successful without zoning allowing for densification of central core neighborhoods?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

The Prescription is a prompt for discussion on trade-offs and not meant to be a vehicle to implement zoning. However, the new code will allow for

zoning. However, the new code will allow for a greater variety of housing types to accommodate more people throughout the city. This will support our community's goals to increase mass transit options and future growth.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **chris78701** 8 points 1 month ago

Question via #atxurbanists on Facebook: With Austin's ranking as the highest rated U.S. city with economic segregation, will CodeNEXT offer Austin a "zoning toolbox" to help promote better adherence to the Fair Housing Act which takes "significant actions to overcome historic patterns of segregation, achieve truly balanced & integrated living patterns, promote fair housing choice, & foster inclusive communities"?

[permalink](#)

[-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 5 points 1 month ago

First off, stay tuned for the upcoming second Code Prescription on Household Affordability, where we'll be getting deeper into this issue. CodeNEXT will offer for adoption a "toolkit" that will enable housing to be provided in "high opportunity" areas of the city. Whether the city chooses to use those tools to achieve its Fair Housing goals will depend in large part on how the "mapping" of the code unfolds. It's the mapping that applies the code to the ground.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **rcauvin** 5 points 1 month ago

Please, in assessing the affects of conditional density programs (a.k.a. "density bonuses"), keep in mind Stringham and Powell's paper: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9GHftj8OAbmNFQ2RUE5azJfTTQ/view?usp=sharing>

It argues that inclusionary zoning worsens overall affordability, and that "density bonus" programs worsen affordability relative to unconditional upzoning.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **chris78701** 8 points 1 month ago

Population growth is unhindered and yet new building permits are consistently being restricted for various reasons (

<https://austinonyourfeet.wordpress.com/2016/03/25/nin>

<https://austintexas.gov/recordcenter/2019/09/29/m/e-barriers-to-building-housing-in-austins-central-city/>).
<http://imgur.com/C92tkr7> <http://imgur.com/O2sXnJG>

How can CodeNEXT streamline the building process to open up the supply in order to meet the overwhelming demand for housing?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 1 point 1 month ago

[I answered the process question here](#)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [sully231](#) 7 points 1 month ago

We do not need to destroy existing single family areas to create more housing. If we allow more ADUs, duplexes to 4-plexes on corner lots, smaller lots sizes, groups homes like co-ops, etc., only a small fraction of property owners will use these increased entitlements in any year. Evidence comes from the relatively small number of ADUs built to date despite some neighborhood plans having allowed them for more than 10 years. So by allowing some of these changes, we may gradually increase density in neighborhoods, but it won't happen overnight.

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [natruius](#) 7 points 1 month ago

Very true. In fact, the more broadly we remove barriers to cheaper housing, the less intensely any individual neighborhood will change.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month ago

Great point! Thanks for the input!

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [pgoetz](#) 2 points 1 month ago

You are correct, but the preservation activists always raise the spectre of entire neighborhoods being razed overnight if you allow the construction, of, say, by right dog houses. For example, the discussion on my neighborhood list serve regarding small lot amnesty revolved around potential flooding issues when hundreds of houses were demolished overnight to make way for smaller lot houses.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [blueeyes_austin](#) 1 point 1 month ago

↓ Ahem.

YOU state this is EXACTLY what will happen if, say, parking minimums are removed in Hyde Park.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [rcauvin](#) 6 points 1 month ago*

↓ I was on the Citizens Advisory Task Force that oversaw the creation of the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan. The plan (specifically priority program #8) spawned the CodeNEXT effort.

The plan lays out a set of metrics (called "Complete Communities Indicators") to measure progress in achieving plan goals. Yet in this prescription paper I see no mention of the indicators and how the "prescriptions" might affect them.

Do you plan to include that information in the final draft?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

While we're not using indicators in the Prescription, we will, however, be incorporating the indicators as part of the implementation of CodeNEXT.

--Jorge [Edit: added name]

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [rcauvin](#) 4 points 1 month ago

↓ Thanks. Is there a reason the prescriptions wouldn't mention the quantifiable goals they are designed to impact?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

The goals of Imagine Austin were the foundation to frame the Prescription. We are using modeling techniques via Envision Tomorrow and GIS to assess how the new Code standards implement the Complete Community indicators of Imagine Austin.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [rcauvin](#) 5 points 1 month ago

↓ Thanks, Jorge. It's good to hear that

you'll be doing the modeling. I would

suggest that at a minimum, the

suggest that, at a minimum, the prescriptions list the main indicators they would affect. The listed indicators (and perhaps some rudimentary projections) could be based on staff's planning expertise if it's too time intensive to use the Envision Tomorrow tool before the prescriptions.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month

ago

Excellent point! We will consider this for upcoming Prescriptions.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [horcruxatx](#) 4 points 1 month ago

The Mayor recently said the following, "We need to recognize that in a city that has 2 million people in the metropolitan area today, 3 million people predicted by 2030, 4 million people within 10 years of that, we're going to have to be building more densely than we're building now. *But we can't do that density in the middle of neighborhoods because that too is disruptive and will [make us] lose part of our spirit and our soul.*"

Have you had discussions with Council on what "density" in the neighborhoods would actually look like? And do public comments like this affect what recommendations you're willing to make?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [rcauvin](#) 11 points 1 month ago

We can embrace an abundance and diversity of people, and the housing needed to accommodate them, in our neighborhoods. If we attempt to "protect" our neighborhoods, we run the risk of engaging in protectionism, turning our neighborhoods into exclusive "clubs" of incumbents who got there first.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

First off, let me give you a heads up: we'll be going to City Council in the next couple weeks to present and discuss with them this first Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment. Stay tuned. This will give us the opportunity to talk with them about this

issue. Council recently took some action on this issue, with its decisions about Accessory Dwelling Units. Our impression is that there are lots of opportunities for accommodating growth in the central portion of the city without doing so in the heart of neighborhoods. This includes not only the

"Centers" and "Corridors" identified in Imagine Austin, but also a number of other smaller nodes and roadways. For example, I think of places like North Loop or 42nd and Duval, neither of which are Imagine Austin Corridors but which are wonderful assets to their surrounding neighborhoods.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **superprofundo** 7 points 1 month ago

↓ I would love to hear not only where, but what specifically the solutions are to accommodating growth in areas near the core of the city.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[-] **austintexasgov**



[S] 2 points 1 month ago

Imagine Austin is pretty clear about prioritizing growth in areas near the core of the city, especially in Centers and along Corridors. These areas offer the opportunity to accommodate new growth through the redevelopment of previously low-density, auto-oriented sites. If done well, this type of redevelopment can accommodate significant new density without significantly impacting adjacent neighborhoods. Missing Middle Housing (the range of housing types between detached, single-family and large multi-family projects) sometimes can be constructed within or adjacent to neighborhoods, bringing new housing to a neighborhood without dramatically changing the character of the neighborhood.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **atxurbanist** 2 points 1 month ago

↓ How about families who would prefer to live in neighborhoods (not off of busy corridors or in centers) but cannot afford single-family homes in these neighborhoods? Can we allow, say

neighborhood-scale fourplexes for them, or is missing-middle housing a sham?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month ago

Great point. Many of our great neighborhoods have become out of reach for families without lots of money who didn't happen to buy in the neighborhood years ago. This is where Missing Middle Housing (duplexes, four-plexes, eight-plexes, etc.) can play a positive role -providing housing options in wonderful neighborhoods without having to spring for a single-family house. But we'll have to be careful in how we deploy this tool, making sure that we ensure that these housing types fit within the form and character of the neighborhoods where they are built. We are optimistic this can be done. Some of Austin's most desirable neighborhoods (e.g., Old West Austin/Clarksville) are loaded with Missing Middle Housing.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [rcauvin](#) 4 points 1 month ago



I urge you to think a little outside the box here and consider how housing types can enhance - not just fit - the existing form and character. The best neighborhood character embraces "neighborhood characters" - the full diversity of people who might want to live there, and it requires building all kinds of housing.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [natrius](#) 3 points 1 month ago



Our impression is that there are lots of opportunities for accommodating growth in the central portion of the city without doing so in the heart of neighborhoods.

This city's efforts to avoid making the hearts of our neighborhoods more accessible to the middle class are unjust. Our laws set minimum land purchase requirements that push the middle class out of our neighborhoods. These laws are segregation laws. We must not preserve them.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **chris78701** 6 points 1 month ago

↕ 2nd question via #atxurbanists on Facebook: "Will you confirm that "missing middle" housing types will be used as a zoning option to help address some of these code prescriptions? If so, which ones?"

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 5 points 1 month ago

↕ Confirmed. We believe, and our testing so far has seemed to confirm, that Missing Middle Housing types (the range of housing between detached single-family and large multi-family) can provide the opportunity for greater housing choice and perhaps even somewhat enhanced density in certain areas without significantly changing the fundamental character of an area. We discussed Missing Middle a bit in the "Natural and Built Environment" code prescription, and expect more in the upcoming "Household Affordability" paper.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **ClutchDude**  5 points 1 month ago

↕ Is this new code going to ensure land is used to support and ensure mass transit options for higher density developments?

I know TxDOT and other entities have a lot of say in these mixed land usages re: transportation/streets - what are you doing to get ahead and work with them vs. work AROUND them?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] **rcauvin** 7 points 1 month ago*

↕ There is a bit of a chicken and egg issue here. Capital Metro's service guidelines list residential and employment density as the #1 criterion for determining the level of service to an area. If you want better transit service, you'll generally need to embrace the compact development that makes it viable.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **ClutchDude**  4 points 1 month ago

↕ Agreed but somebody has to commit first and I wouldn't count on Cap Metro to be the leader here.

Areas with higher job/housing density = 71 percent

Areas with higher job/housing density are almost immediately starved out of transit options and there seems to be a lack of connecting point A to point B -The vast majority of workers who need mass transit options will not be able to afford to live close to work anytime soon.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] [rcauvin](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Here are Capital Metro's latest service guidelines:
https://www.capmetro.org/uploadedFiles/Capmetroorg/About_Us/Service_Changes/capital-metro_service-guidelines-and-standards.pdf

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] [mdahmus](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Except, you know, when they completely ignore those guidelines and cut service anyways:
<http://m1ek.dahmus.org/?p=1049>

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 3 points 1 month ago

In the right areas, yes. There is a context to the community that requires appropriate tools for each pattern of development. CodeNEXT will be a hybrid code. A portion of the code is Form-based Code (FBC) and a portion will be euclidian. We will be recommending the FBC in the Imagine Austin centers and corridors which will support walking and transit.

TXDot has adopted context sensitive design standards and this is a supportive approach to what we are recommending. We are also coordinating with CapMetro and will support their Connections 2025 plan.

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] [ClutchDude](#)  3 points 1 month ago

A portion of the code is Form-based Code (FBC) and a portion will be euclidian.

Pretend I know nothing about code - ELI 18 what that means.

CapMetro and will support their Connections 2025 plan.

I'm not too impressed with their work on Connections 2025 - their public outreach seems

insulated and unwelcoming- they'd rather have fare enforcement on metrorail platforms than PR folks trying to do outreach.

What outreach do you plan to do? Obviously [/r/austin](#) is great first step, but what about beyond this?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Good Point: FBC: Focus on form, design and placement over the function in the building. Euclidian: Focuses on function rather than form. It can deliver better results that what we are getting now. We just need to require higher standards. Austin deserves it!

Real definitions below.

FBC- "A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law."

Euclidean zoning is characterized by the segregation of land uses into specified geographic districts and dimensional standards stipulating limitations on development activity within each type of district. It's what typical zoning type in the U.S.

The new code will will be laid out and more user-friendly. It will also require better development patterns.

--Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [blueeyes_austin](#) -4 points 1 month ago

It can deliver better results that what we are getting now.

That is entirely a matter of opinion. Many of us LIKE Euclidian because we WANT to prohibit function.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [ClutchDude](#)



5 points 1 month ago

Slightly off topic - how many on the team have read the Zucker report - www.austintexas.gov/zuckerfinalreport - and what lessons are they applying as they see future compliance enforcement and permitting within the framework of CodeNext?

permalink



[-] [austintexasgov](#)



[S] 6 points 1 month ago

I have read the entire report. During CodeNEXT we will be writing a new code, creating a new process and training on the code, building staff into the process. This is the critical way to ensure the staff and the process match the desired outcomes from the comprehensive plan and the code. We take ownership of the Zucker report and know we can do better. Austin deserves better.

-Matt

permalink parent



[-] [ClutchDude](#)



4 points 1 month ago

Thank you - The comp. planning department seemed to be a relative bright spot in the entire report -

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=231297>

How many of those recommendations would you say y'all have been able to implement/make redundant?

permalink parent



[-] [blueeyes_austin](#) -4 points 1 month ago

Problem: you're replacing the existing code with a form based approach that gives the existing individuals enforcing Austin land use ordinances even more power than they already have--and gives them a far freer hand to act capriciously

and arbitrarily. Code NEXT is exactly the wrong approach to improving the disaster that is Austin permitting.

permalink parent



[-] [\[deleted\]](#) 5 points 1 month ago

I don't understand - wasn't one of the primary reasons for revising the LDC to simplify and streamline the development process? And yet I can find no reference to this as a goal/priority/agenda item. Are we going to end up with something even more tortuous?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] [blueeyes_austin](#) -2 points 1 month ago

↓ Laugh. That's never what it has been about.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [Cooper_MHA](#) 4 points 1 month ago

↓ In your opinion, are our residential building code building restrictions the reason why we see the same type of condo/apartment buildings dominating all new development, or is it as simple as they outbid for the land?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

Our quick reaction is that it's probably more the market than the building code. There is such a high demand for convenient, central city living, that the development community is quick to snatch up parcels and build the products you're seeing. There are building code factors at work, though, probably the most powerful of which are fire codes. For example, the fire code allows constructing maximum five stories of wood frame construction on top of a concrete "podium," thus producing the so-called "Texas Doughnut" apartment complex you frequently see.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [atxurbanist](#) 3 points 1 month ago

↓ But the fact that you can only do multifamily on large parcels along busy corridors certainly contributes to this, no? And parking minimums... if you have to do structured parking, you generally need a large parcel. Also, do you think site plan requirements for small-scale residential can tip the balance in favor of large multifamily buildings, since the cost of a site-plan can be amortized over the cost of 100+ units instead of 4 units?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 7 points 1 month ago

Absolutely. Structured (and even surface) parking has such strict dimensional requirements, that certain parcels don't have the size or configuration to support any


significant development. We, as a city, could free up the development potential of lots of smaller parcels if we could get more clever about meeting the mobility needs of those parcels. I'm hopeful that better transit service, better parking policies, and even

"mobility as a service" innovations will help us make small-scale development more feasible and attractive.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [\[-\] atxurbanist](#) 4 points 1 month ago

 How about eliminating site-plan requirements for developments under X number of units? Site-plans kill small-scale multifamily by making it economically infeasible, since they tend to be too expensive and time-consuming for small-scale developers to want to bother with.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)


 [\[-\] austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Great point. One thing we're working on creating is a "lite" version of the site plan process for small-scale projects such as Missing Middle Housing. This process will hopefully be simpler and faster than the existing process, largely administrative in nature.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [\[-\] atxurbanist](#) 1 point 1 month ago

 I think the point about site plans is very important, because it makes missing-middle housing economically not feasible even where permitted by code. Can CodeNEXT address this?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [\[-\] austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month ago

I think the point about site plans is

very important, because it makes missing-middle housing economically not feasible even where permitted by code. Can CodeNEXT address this?

Yep -Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month

ago

See above. I think that addresses your point.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 1 point 1 month ago

Thank you. I appreciate the response

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 9 points 1 month ago

Why does 90% of the code prescription talk about drainage/stormwater/green streets/ green infrastructure? Last time I checked, Austin is in a housing crisis, not a "green infrastructure" and "impervious cover" crisis. Could all of these new requirements for developers to provide "green infrastructure" make housing more expensive to build, and thus more expensive to buy/rent?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

We will be looking at this issue as part of the Household Affordability Prescription coming in May.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 2 points 1 month ago

Thank you.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [insulation_crawford](#) -1 points 1 month ago

Welcome to the new Austin!

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 10 points 1 month ago

Wait we are getting mountains??? YES!!

-Matt

Track

permalink parent



[-] **tthomas48**  2 points 1 month ago

I actually lived in new Soviet apartment block housing and while it started out looking like that it's now these really nice neighborhood of

apartments each with a dedicated park in the middle. It has ended up really nice:

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Ainabulak-3,+Almaty,+Kazakhstan/@43.3227842,76.9107896,406m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m2!3m1!1s0x38836b5df9cb39bd:0xac30cd8c3fa77869>

New development never looks as nice as it will with a couple decades of trees and plant growth.

permalink parent



[-] **insulation_crawford** 4 points 1 month ago

I actually lived in new Soviet apartment block housing

I knew there'd be someone...

:)

permalink parent



[-] **atxurbanist** 2 points 1 month ago

Please. If we double our density, we aren't even as dense as MINNEAPOLIS

https://www.google.com/search?q=sham&biw=1440&bih=828&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjNgquSrubLAhVjnoMKHQf6ANsQ_AUIBigB#tbm=isch&q=minneapolis&imgsrc=R77sV-Vy1C2btM%3A

permalink parent



[-] **insulation_crawford** 5 points 1 month ago

Sorry, it was a cheap shot. I saw that photo on the front page this morning, and I couldn't resist.

permalink parent



[-] **InvasiveVines** 2 points 1 month ago

I see miles and miles of cheap Artist/Musician housing...and black lung.

permalink parent



[-] **schoolp** 3 points 1 month ago

What can CodeNEXT do to improve our quality of life and reduce our cost of living?

permalink



[\[-\] austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

The Land Development Code impacts every physical aspect of development. It can provide for better choices for where we live, and our ability to get to our desired destinations like a cafe, grocery store, school, and parks by any means of getting around. By having more housing choices and ways to get around, we can create more opportunities to impact the cost of living.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[\[+\]](#) [atx_hater](#) *comment score below threshold (0 children)*



[\[-\] austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

[/u/utspg1980](#) Asked this in the announcement

"I'm gonna ask questions now, maybe they'll see it and answer...

Location Efficiency: Form-based coding that will enable compact redevelopment to be constructed in transit-rich environments (e.g., rail, rapid bus, and frequent service bus lines). By doing so, the new code will promote land uses and development patterns that support mobility choice, reduce congestion, and reduce the negative environmental consequences of prolific automobile usage. Do you think it has to be a top down approach, or bottom up? In other words: build the high density housing, and then good public transport will follow; or build high density housing where there is already developed public transport.

Do you have any cities that you are modeling your goals after? Are there any American cities that are dense (minimal urban sprawl), have good public transport (that a significant portion of the population uses), that aren't forced into that situation by geography. Most dense, public transport heavy cities were forced into it, like NY (islands), San Francisco (peninsula, i.e. surrounded by water on 3 sides), Seattle (ocean on one side, mountains on the other), etc.

A 1 or 2 story single family home is always going to be the cheapest to build, as long as you have an abundance of land available. What realistic goals can the city hope to accomplish, when it will always be easiest/cheapest for developers to just move further out, buy up some farm land in Buda, etc, and build a bunch of cheap new houses."



[\[-\] austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 6 points 1 month ago

The folks who provide transit (in our case - Cap Metro) generally want to put their money in locations where there is (is is the likelihood) of reasonably dense development. So for example, Cap Metro invested about \$50-60 million in the MetroRapid bus lines (801 and 803) along some key corridors that

have reasonably dense development and more on the way -- North and South Lamar, Burnet Road, South Congress. In other cases, however, our community has invested in transit (e.g., MetroRail) along existing rail lines and built stations in areas that were not previously very dense. So in those cases, the city has come in and adopted Transit-Oriented Development plans and regulations to accommodate new development.

In response to your question about peer cities, Portland come to mind. In the mid-1980s, Portland was well on its way to becoming a sprawling, automobile-oriented city. The city (using laws created by the State), put in place urban growth boundaries that created "artificial" (non-geography) limits on outward growth. That, combined, with a number of other strategies, allowed/forced the city to grow in a more compact manner.

Your last one ("cheapest to build") is a tough one. Land is almost always going to be cheaper further out (location, location, location!), but there are certain things we can do to make urban development more affordable: spreading fixed costs (e.g., land) across more units; a more efficient approval process; an approval process that involves more predictability and less uncertainty.

-Jim

permalink parent



[\[-\] rcavuin](#) 5 points 1 month ago

Jim is right here about Capital Metro's service guidelines calling for putting transit service where there are large concentrations of residents and jobs. (See https://www.capmetro.org/uploadedFiles/Capmetroorg/About_Us/Service_Changes/capital-metro_service-guidelines-and-standards.pdf)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **mdahmus** 0 points 1 month ago

↓ I find it interesting that you thought it wise to point to the 801 and 803 as an actual additive investment to those corridors when it was **precisely the opposite.**

<http://m1ek.dahmus.org/?p=994>

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **rcauvin** 4 points 1 month ago

↓ Planning professionals with the city (as well as private citizens) can apply their expertise to estimating the impacts of the development code on the metrics that matter - the Complete Communities Indicators listed in Imagine Austin. They can also use a tool called Envision Tomorrow to model land development scenarios and project their impact on the indicators.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **rcauvin** 2 points 1 month ago*

↓ I should add that the Complete Communities Indicators reflect and quantify the goals in the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan for our city. The plan, the goals, and the indicators were a result of intense engagement with the public, and the CodeNEXT effort must, by law, support them.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **Tstowell** 3 points 1 month ago

↓ CodeNEXT is an essential part of implementing Imagine Austin and the priority programs it contains. I'm wondering, are the eight priority programs given an actual ranking - like does program #1 (compact and connected) take priority over program #2? I'm asking this because even with this first prescription paper we're seeing the implementation of priority programs at odds with each other, and I'm curious if the staff has guidance on what to do in these situations.

In other words, if all of the priority programs are the most important, how does the CodeNEXT team decide what to do when compact/connected is directly at odds with integrating nature into the city?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] **rcauvin** 3 points 1 month ago

↓ Priority program #8 gave birth to the CodeNEXT effort, and it explicitly defines the goal of land

development code revisions as "promoting a compact and connected city". In this sense, priority program #1 (growing as a compact and connected city) is the top priority for CodeNEXT.

However, the Imagine Austin plan explains that growing as a compact and connected city supports the fulfillment of many of the plan's goals. Via the Complete Communities Indicators, we can project and measure the extent to which our land development code revisions impact the goals.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month ago

The priority programs were ranked based on the way the community voted during the public phase of Imagine Austin (IA). In the implementation of IA, priority depends on context and the tools available.

"Compact and connected" do not have to be at odds with integrating nature in the city and often work in together. For example, in an urban context like Downtown, we are striving to implement green elements to increase green roofs, rain gardens, street trees, creek corridors, and great public places. However, in times of conflict, priority depends on context and the needs of an area. For example, increasing park and open space choices in park deficient areas.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [codenextquestions](#) 3 points 1 month ago



What is the schedule for the release of the draft code?

Thanks!

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 7 points 1 month ago

The draft code will be out January 2017. This is a celebratory event for Austin. We want to have a Happy New Year party and roll out the new draft code. [We want Redditors at the party! Log out and join?](#)

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [rowdy_fowler](#) 3 points 1 month ago



Imagine Austin states that neighborhood plans must be

"respected". Does Opticos interpret this as 1.) CodeNEXT must incorporate existing neighborhood plans into the new code verbatim, 2.) CodeNEXT should consider the values articulated in existing neighborhood plans, or 3.) Something else?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Respected means we will carefully work to implement the vision of said neighborhood plans. These will be the guiding documents we use to craft code standards that preserve neighborhood character and protect the sense of place of a neighborhood. We have examined the goals of neighborhood plans as well as ordinances as a way to inform context-sensitive solutions. Other things we will consider are environmental issues, access to mobility choices, and affordability.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [Tstowell](#) 5 points 1 month ago

Jorge - what does the CodeNEXT team do when the vision of a neighborhood plan is at odds with Imagine Austin? This will undoubtedly come up frequently during the mapping process, and it ties in to my question earlier. There has to be a clear priority, so that the team implementing code knows what to do with conflicting interests.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 1 point 1 month ago

Great point. We will look to Imagine Austin as our guiding document for the vision of our city. However, we are carefully analyzing vision statements of neighborhood plans to reconcile conflicting vision statements. It will take a collaborative approach on trade-offs to truly get to the conflict issues. For example, if we truly want to have an impact on affordability, we need to increase choices and availability - this means considering increasing densities on certain contexts such as corridors and centers. The priorities will need to be based on how they were outlined in Imagine Austin.

-Jorge

permalink parent

[+] **blueeyes_austin** *comment score below threshold*
(0 children)

[-] **atxurbanist** 3 points 1 month ago

Why should neighborhood plans which were written years ago with extremely low participation (especially by renters) have any bearing on CodeNEXT?

permalink parent

[-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 2 points 1 month ago*

The City Charter says the land development code must implement the comprehensive plan. In order to ensure we do this, we will be considering a variety of plans and information including Imagine Austin, neighborhood plans, corridor plans, zoning, environmental conditions, transportation, etc... This is also why we are going out to Austinites to find out what they want for their community.

Edit: added name

-Jorge

permalink parent

[-] **atxurbanist** 1 point 1 month ago

Just a warning, the neighborhood planning process certainly wasn't inclusive of the desires of most Austinites. It was hijacked by a vocal minority of NIMBYs. 99% of Austinites don't even know what a neighborhood plan is.

permalink parent

[-] **rcauvin** 0 points 1 month ago

Let's hope that "protection" doesn't turn into "protectionism"!

permalink parent

[-] **atxurbanist** 11 points 1 month ago

What is "neighborhood character" and why should the majority of Austinites who have been priced out of the Central Austin neighborhoods fighting the hardest to protect "neighborhood character" care? My feeling is that "neighborhood character" is a code word for "keeping our neighborhoods exclusive, expensive, and free of missing-middle housing" but I could be wrong? How does the CodeNEXT team interpret "neighborhood character?"

permalink

[-] **rcauvin** 2 points 1 month ago

We have a great opportunity to create and enhance neighborhood character. Some of our highest-demand neighborhoods are the most segregated. If we meet the demand (by supplying an abundance and diversity of housing) of people of all socioeconomic backgrounds to live in our central neighborhoods, we can greatly enhance the character of these neighborhoods.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 1 point 1 month ago

Great question. It's the buildings, public spaces, the streets, the businesses, but most importantly it's about the people that live in the community. As Austin grows and changes many businesses and residences are experiencing major financial decisions. We hope that this code will help provide a variety of choices to our community, from how they live and move around our city to where they work and recreate.

Missing middle housing exist in some of our neighborhoods and provides a housing choice some prefer. We want to extract the DNA of those places and code it back into our neighborhoods where appropriate.

--Matt Edit Added name

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **superprofundo** 8 points 1 month ago*

How do you intend to allow more voices and opinions on what defines the *future* of that character? Austin is already one of the most economically segregated cities in america, so if you're only relying on voices currently living in those segregated areas, it stands to reason that you're leaving out the voices of people who would love to be included and contribute in forming a character important to them.

EDIT: The other opportunity to answer this [is in a comment below](#).

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 5 points 1 month ago

We are on Reddit, we are going for walks, we are doing coffee and CodeNEXT and we are

are doing coffee and CODENEXT and we are using Speakup Austin to gather input. We will also go speak to groups. If you want us at your event let us know. Speakup link:

<http://speakupaustin.org>

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **atxurbanist** 3 points 1 month ago

↓ I would love for you guys to try to engage the academic community at UT (urban planning/architecture, economics and finance) as well as the architecture, development and design communities here in Austin

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 3 points 1 month ago

We are working with the Tactical Urbanism UT class to pilot some of ideas. Several members on our Code Advisory Group (CAG) are from the development community and the academic community. Feel free to contact us and lets make a plan on how to best engage you all. Thanks

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **atxurbanist** 7 points 1 month ago

↓ Isn't the point of missing-middle housing is that it is appropriate in a single-family context? In cities like Minneapolis, missing-middle housing fits seamlessly into *all* single-family neighborhoods without disrupting the neighborhood-scale feel of the neighborhoods, while providing housing options for families who can't afford single-family homes. Shouldn't we be allowing missing-middle housing everywhere in the urban core to provide for more affordable housing options on expensive dirt?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **atxurbanist** 5 points 1 month ago

↓ Also, couldn't missing-middle housing actually improve neighborhood character by allowing for more socio-economic diversity and architectural diversity?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 5 points 1 month ago

Missing middle housing serves as great transitions from higher density housing to lower density housing. The urban core needs a variety of housing types to meet the needs of various community members. One thing we are looking at is how we can get these housing types to be fiscally viable in todays market.

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 2 points 1 month ago

On Opticos's website, it says missing middle housing works everywhere and can be mixed in with single-family housing. Does the CodeNEXT team disagree?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1

month ago

We don't. See Old West Austin/Clarksville. Judges Hill has a verity of missing middle housing.

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [atxurbanist](#) 2 points 1 month ago

Great, so we can expect more neighborhoods with missing-middle housing options? I love the fourplexes in Old Enfield, but I wish there was something like that in East Austin where I live (since I certainly cannot afford a single-family home over there and don't particularly enjoy living in a large complex with amenities I don't need)

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3

points 1 month ago

points 1 month ago

Yes! Great point. We aim to offer additional choices for neighborhoods while striving to maintain neighborhood character. We think we can calibrate additional housing types that will increase housing availability in neighborhoods.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **Tstowell** 5 points 1 month ago

↓ One of the code prescriptions reads: Reduced parking minimums in areas of the city targeted for compact development, especially when those areas have robust transit and other mobility options.

Our *entire* urban core needs to be targeted for compact development. This is the central pillar of Imagine Austin (compact and connected). Will the CodeNEXT team consider across-the-board parking minimum reductions, to give the whole city an opportunity to develop in the patterns we desire? Will the team consider parking *maximums* in the CBD?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 3 points 1 month ago

We are modeling a variety of parking standards. We think this is one of the biggest items to changing the built environment.

Parking maximums are being examined but we want to be mindful of how we approach this. Our code is plagued with arbitrary regulations. We want this code to be written around real world needs. Parking in our current built environment is necessary but we can't over park our city. Whether we have maximums or not, we know the city needs minimal parking rather than parking minimums.

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **Tstowell** 4 points 1 month ago

↓ I appreciate the response, Matt. I don't want this CodeNEXT team, or the resulting draft code, to be naive about real world needs. I also don't want the recommendations to seem anachronistic

want the recommendations to seem apologetic about policies that would have a huge positive effect, but may be perceived "politically risky".

Here's a real-world need anyway, as it relates to parking maximums downtown: the emerging Austin vernacular of building high rises that are literally half parking. Examples: 5th and Colorado, Colorado Tower, Seaholm High Rise... etc. This is *unacceptable* in our CBD!

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [pgoetz](#) 7 points 1 month ago*

↓ My big concern is that entrenched neighborhood preservationists are going to derail CodeNext (actually, I voiced this concern to staff years ago when CodeNext was first announced). I'm sure this is their goal, and many people have said as much already.

The main thing I would like to see is the *possibility* for intelligent land use, which doesn't exist today. Right now, if I have some innovative building plan which doesn't meet the current Euclidean prescripts, I have to apply for a *hardship variance* no matter how popular my idea is. Many times there is no hardship, this is just the best way to do it. Way back in 2002 I got my neighbors to vote to allow me to build a small-scale multi-family development on SF-3 zoned neighborhood interior lots -- the neighbors *approved* of my missing middle housing plan. Unfortunately city code would not allow it be built, and I certainly would not have been able to demonstrate any kind of hardship.

My question is **is anyone thinking along these lines?** I.e. making nearly anything possible, but possibly requiring neighborhood support to proceed?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] [rcauvin](#) 3 points 1 month ago

↓ It's disenfranchising to refer to everyone in a neighborhood as "the neighborhood" and characterize their support or opposition to something

monolithically. There are diversity of views. We should not lump them all together.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [pgoetz](#) 2 points 1 month ago

↓ Good point -- I edited my comment for clarity.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [austintexasgov](#)  [S] 2 points 1 month ago*

One of Team CodeNEXT's goals is to collect feedback from a large diversity of people in order to hear a variety of viewpoints. This is why we are having many different outreach efforts including this Reddit AMA, SpeakupAustin, community walks, the team going out to meet with groups, CodeNEXT Advisory Group meetings.

The revised code will seek to create flexible and predictable standards that allows development that fits within the context of a community. It will also seek to provide more diversity in uses such as allowing for more missing middle housing that fits the context of the neighborhood.

Edit: Added name

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [blueeyes_austin](#) -1 points 1 month ago

↓ This is what YOU really want to do:

"People are just waiting for the parking minimums to go away. If and when this happens there will be a multi-family construction frenzy in HP similar to what's occurred in West Campus (if not to that scale)."

Turn Hyde Park into West Campus.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [pgoetz](#) 2 points 1 month ago

↓ Not sure if this comment should be dignified with a response, but to be clear, under current land use rules most of Hyde Park is zoned single family and you currently cannot build multi-family on SF zoned properties. Hyde Park also has a historical overlay which further complicates matters, not to mention compatibility and setback requirements. In short, removing the minimum parking requirements will do nothing whatsoever to Hyde Park.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [blueeyes_austin](#) 0 points 1 month ago

↓ You are such a fucking liar:

https://www.reddit.com/r/Austin/comments/3uscbe/austin_urbanists_embrace_yimby_label_as_part_of/cxi26vp?context=3

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [pgoetz](#) 1 point 1 month ago

↓ More like I'm so senile. I honestly do not

remember making that comment. Taken in context, I was referring to the redevelopment of existing MF property in Hyde Park, which you will agree is fairly limited. I was responding to someone saying that no new apartments would ever be built in Hyde Park again. In retrospect, the comment you're quoting is fairly misleading. West Campus got a blanket rezoning, which is what has allowed all the high density construction that's been going on there for the last 5-10 years.

Even if minimum parking requirements are removed it turns out there are other rules which limit reconstruction potential (minimum land per unit requirements that I didn't know about at the time) not to mention compatibility requirements which will be a deal killer for most MF properties, since they're adjacent to SF-3. But anyway, thanks for alerting me to my previous unfortunate lapse in judgement; I've edited that comment accordingly to avoid future confusion.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [blueeyes_austin](#) 1 point 1 month ago

↓ Future confusion? Give me a break. You slipped and told the truth. Just like you refuse to tell the truth about the real goal, which is upzone everything.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] [pgoetz](#) 2 points 1 month ago

↓ Whose real goal? My real goal? CodeNext's real goal? AURA's real

goal? Speaking only for myself; I'm more than happy to state that I'm a strong proponent of conditionally upzoning everything. Of course the devil is in the details, and the details are complicated.

The somewhat interesting question is why you NPEs

(neighborhood preservation extremists) are so wrapped up in preventing any land use in the urban core from ever changing. It's OK to change the name of Lee Elementary, but diabolically evil to build a duplex or triplex in Hyde Park? Why?

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **Tstowell** 5 points 1 month ago

↓ I worry about the first prescription paper being overly focused on preserving trees and obsessing over impervious cover limits in the urban core. In many ways, preservation efforts within the city's core leads to unchecked sprawl development patterns in virgin hill country, which has a much more devastating affect on the region's natural resources. Are these kinds of tradeoffs being considered by the CodeNEXT team? Will there be mitigation options for urban development and missing middle housing that conforms to our vision of compact and connected?

[permalink](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 5 points 1 month ago

We totally understand the point you're making, and we are being careful to consider the trade-offs between environmental protections and accommodating new development. We've tested our recommendations to see what impact they have on redevelopment, and so far it appears that we can achieve fairly high levels of environmental protection while keeping redevelopment feasible. In the most compact, urban settings, we are trying to create a toolkit that allows projects to utilize environmental protection strategies that don't take lots of space but still provide substantial protection and function.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **InvasiveVines** 2 points 1 month ago

↓ My limited understanding of city coding as it relates to development is a list of things that can and cannot be done with a parcel of land. (true/false?)

If this is true (or close to true), what does COA hope to improve upon this process with CodeNext, and why are these improvements beneficial to the average citizens?

Essentially, someone (contractor) who has a right to

Essentially, compare/contrast what we have right now and what CodeNext promises to be.

Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions on Reddit.

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

Partially correct. Today's code only addresses things you cannot do but little to nothing of what you can do. With CodeNEXT, we are striving to provide clear and predictable standards that make it easy to understand and therefore, successfully provide guidance on what can be built. The improvements of clear and predictable regulations will allow the average citizen to understand the regulations. It will also make it easy to administer and foster consistent interpretations of the regulations.

-Jorge

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [Fitzgerald2016](#) 2 points 1 month ago

Which divisions will implement CodeNEXT? Seems like no division is willing to take responsibility for implementation.

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

CodeNEXT is currently being led by folks in the Planning and Zoning Department, but ultimately "implementation" will involve a number of departments, including: Planning and Zoning; Development Services; Watershed Protection; Neighborhood Housing; etc. It's truly going to be a city-wide effort, and for that reason we've got multiple folks working with us.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [Fitzgerald2016](#) 1 point 1 month ago

Thanks Jim. It seems like there has been a lot of talk about ImagineAustin, but little actual action.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [horcruxatx](#) 2 points 1 month ago

I see national news stories making an explicit connection between land use and economic opportunity increasing in frequency. Even the White House has joined the chorus:

<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2015/11/20/why-white-house-economists-worry-about-land-use-regulations/>

It just so happens that Austin is one of the most segregated communities in the country. Is this a frame that you find resonates with the nominally liberal neighborhood preservationists and their allies on Council?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)



[\[S\]](#) 4 points 1 month ago

Hard to argue that land patterns don't have an impact on economic opportunity. One of the best pieces I've seen on that is Paul Krugman's piece from a couple years ago, "Did Sprawl Kill Horatio Alger?" If you live in far South Austin because that's where you can afford housing, and a great job opportunity pops up in far Northwest Austin, how likely is it you can take advantage of that opportunity? CodeNEXT offers the opportunity to locate housing proximate to economic opportunity. Time will tell whether we as a city seize that opportunity.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [blueeyes_austin](#) 1 point 1 month ago



That makes absolutely no sense. There is already affordable housing in far NW Austin.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [rcauvin](#) 2 points 1 month ago

The irony is that these nominal "liberals" are taking a conservative stance in the sense they are opposing change in their neighborhoods. (Resistance to

change is one of the definitions of conservative political ideology.)

The rhetoric of some of these voices tends to reflect Donald Trump's nativist rhetoric in the presidential campaign. I don't think they see it this way, but they effectively are advocating for building walls (and sometimes, literally, gates) around their neighborhoods, to protect the "natives" from "outsiders".

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [heyzeus212](#) 1 point 1 month ago




Without going into my particular line of work, I've learned the following inviolable truth - the

one concept that unites liberals and conservatives is that whatever needs to be built (more housing, a wider road, a powerplant, a power line), the only appropriate location is Somewhere Else, aka Not In My Back Yard.


[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[-]  **atxurbanist** 3 points 1 month ago

 Sorry, one final question. How do you plan to include a diverse set of voices in the CodeNEXT process? Austin is 56% renters, over 50% non-white, and has one of the youngest voting-age populations in the nation. However, at public input meetings, the majority of participants are retired (65+) white homeowners. How do you make sure the input on which you are acting is not biased towards a demographic which might not represent the interests of our diverse electorate? How do you make sure you take into account the young people and FUTURE homeowners who will be more impacted by changes to the code than retired people who already own homes?


[permalink](#)

 [-] **Tstowell** 4 points 1 month ago

 This is a great question, and one I've been interested in too. I think events like Reddit AMA's are a good start, and other online participation tools like SpeakUp Austin. My concern is how city staff weights input received in person, versus online like this. I could understand weighing someone's comment more heavily if they're saying it right to your face (sometimes yelling), versus reading comments online, but this should not be the case!

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **sully231** 4 points 1 month ago

 Some of us on the CodeNEXT Advisory Group will be watching out for the interests of underrepresented folks. We recognize that our own group is older, not as ethnically diverse as Austin, and nearly all home-owners, yet several of us are actively promoting cheaper rentals, trying to slow gentrification, and decrease economic segregation.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

 [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

This is a good point. We are being mindful of all the input we receive from the verity forums we are hosting. We will convey the voices from this

input into our final recommendations. The ultimate decision will happen at the final City Council hearing. This is required by state law. We do encourage people to show up at the formal hearings as they are critical to the process.

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 1 point 1 month ago

[I answered this here](#) What are y'all's thoughts?

-Matt

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[\[+\]](#) [blueeyes_austin](#) *comment score below threshold (10 children)*



[\[-\]](#) [insulation_crawford](#) 1 point 1 month ago

Do all the new VMUs need to be so damn boring?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 2 points 1 month ago

This relates to an earlier question about the role of the market versus the role of building codes. These are big projects that typically use structured parking, and that type of parking has very rigid dimensional requirements governed by the turning and parking dimensions for cars. So that leads to some uniformity. Then you throw in the high cost of land, and the developer oftentimes wants to maximize the number of units in order to defray those costs across lots of units. For better or worse, the "Texas Doughnut" multi-family product is a tried and tested product that the market delivers with relative ease.

-Jim

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) [green-atx](#) 1 point 1 month ago

How can the new LDC provide for tree protection and retention of storm water on-site especially in missing middle housing districts?

[permalink](#)



[\[-\]](#) [austintexasgov](#)  [\[S\]](#) 3 points 1 month ago

We are looking to keep smaller rains on-site to soak into the ground and water the landscape. This improves water quality, enhances base flow in our creeks, and promotes water conservation by off-

creeks, and promotes water conservation by on setting potable water use. In addition, we are exploring options to improve tree preservation for missing middle developments.

- Erin

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **Tstowell** 3 points 1 month ago

↓ In an effort to express the tradeoffs we're willing to make (public community), I would like to say I'm *not* okay with trading off Missing Middle housing for tree preservation, full stop. I do not value trees over affordable place for Austinites to live.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **pgoetz** 5 points 1 month ago

↓ My question is why is storm water retention (as opposed to proper drainage to appropriate locations) a worthy goal? Here is why not

- Existing stormwater retention systems are an eyesore
- They take up valuable space on high dollar land
- They provide habitat for mosquito larvae
- The retained stormwater is useless for anything other than breeding mosquitoes and increasing humidity
- 98% of the time they're not used for anything and just take up space

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **austintexasgov**  [S] 2 points 1 month ago

Keeping stormwater on-site to soak into the ground and water landscapes can help restore base flow to our urban creeks and offset the need for potable water. The water can even be used indoors to flush toilets, etc. Rather than treating stormwater and sending it downstream, let's put it to beneficial use on-site. New green stormwater infrastructure tools such as rain gardens can be more successfully integrated with landscape as well as parks and open space, creating beautiful,

multi-functional spaces.

-Erin

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

↑ [-] **pgoetz** 4 points 1 month ago

↓ Oh, I agree that stormwater should be

retained and re-used; just not on site, per development, which is how it's done now. It seems very unlikely that each (actually, any) developer will set up the infrastructure for stormwater re-use.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) **ClutchDude** 

3 points 1 month ago

Exactly - purple pipe is not going to happen(save for a few hippies) unless the city code makes it easy to do so/incentivize during new build out. Also, if water reuse happened at a decent scale, I look forward to hearing how Austin Water is going bankrupt due to lack of use.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)



[\[-\]](#) **rcauvin** 1 point 1 month ago

Great points. We need to frame this issue with metrics (perhaps with added Complete Communities Indicators) that measure what we desire to achieve, not just reflect potentially outmoded policies.

[permalink](#) [parent](#)

[+] **atx_hater** *comment score below threshold (1 child)*

[+] **blueeyes_austin** *comment score below threshold (2 children)*

[+] **blueeyes_austin** *comment score below threshold (3 children)*

about

[blog](#)
[about](#)
[values](#)
[source code](#)
[advertise](#)
[jobs](#)

help

[site rules](#)
[FAQ](#)
[wiki](#)
[reddiquette](#)
[transparency](#)
[contact us](#)

apps & tools

[Reddit for iPhone](#)
[Reddit for Android](#)
[mobile website](#)
[buttons](#)

<3

reddit gold
[redditgifts](#)

Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [User Agreement](#) and [Privacy Policy \(updated\)](#). © 2016 reddit inc. All rights reserved.
REDDIT and the ALIEN Logo are registered trademarks of reddit inc.

[Advertise - local](#)

CodeWALK
S. 1st and Oltorf
April 16, 2016

- Topics: residential/commercial transitions, differing scales of residential and commercial, mixing uses, sidewalks and connectivity, redevelopment, green infrastructure
- Flood mitigation opportunities, especially around Bouldin creek
 - Erosion issues, density and impervious cover
 - Treat water with green infrastructure before it reaches the creek
- Rainwater collection and management at Twin Oaks library- how can this be replicated elsewhere?
- Various code compliance issues (tall fences, grass)
- If we scale mixed use appropriately, can be good for S. 1st and Oltorf. Land uses change over time
- Need shade on sidewalks, but not all sidewalks are appropriate for all users (ex: child can use neighborhood sidewalks but not walk unaccompanied on Oltorf)
 - Could we copy Atlanta's program for tree canopy?
- Redevelopment allows for updated standards
 - Remodels should allow greening of site without site plan

Comments on CodeNEXT Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription (NBECP)
Allandale Neighborhood Association CodeNEXT Committee
April 18, 2016

We would like to thank the CodeNEXT team for making public its draft of the Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription. Having something on paper to debate is extremely important and our comments are listed below by page number in the Prescription. Where possible we refer back to Imagine Austin (henceforth IA) or other documents as noted.

In our reading of Imagine Austin, we see a slightly different arrangements of objectives which we see as important. Under the first vision statement in Imagine Austin, the first descriptive sentence is the following:

Imagining Austin: Our Vision of a Complete Community

“Ours will be one of a “complete communities” that is natural and sustainable, prosperous, livable, mobile and interconnected, educated, creative, and which values and respects all Austinites.”

Austinites were first and foremost concerned about the natural environment. We recognize that singular element. Other elements listed are also important, and we will reflect back on that in time. But our comments will recognize the prime consideration of Imagine Austin, the environment.

The opening sentences on the Prescription Introduction actually places the environment last behind two issues that were not even raised in Imagine Austin’s vision statement. We find it curious that a vision statement so carefully put together and articulated would be truncated and transposed. It clearly shows a different direction for CodeNEXT than that laid out by IA in the Preamble. We see the same inversion later in the comments on the Land Development Code discussing a “grand balancing of our public values”(p5) where the environment comes in third out of 5.

We do appreciate that the Prescription List puts an environmental issue at the top, though it is only about water. Further, we appreciate that the unusual theory of diversity of lots sizes within plats already filed with Travis County (a jurisdiction outside the scope of City Government) and redevelopment and infill are put towards the low priority section. We are also quite interested in this theory of greenfield development (p5), so much so that we’d like to address it.

If you look at Austin’s land area, you will notice the following in IA (p 32):

Between 2000 and 2010, Austin’s land area grew by more than 19 percent.

CHANGE IN LAND AREA, 1950 – 2011

Year	Land area (in sq miles)	percent change
1950	37.5	--
1960	55.1	45
1970	80.1	45
1980	123.9	55
1990	225.6	82

2000	257.9	14
2010	307.8	19

source: City of Austin

- During the past decade there has been a modest trend of infill development and redevelopment in established areas of Austin; however, the pace of urban core development lags far behind new development in suburban areas and beyond.

Water and Watersheds (p7)

Are you suggesting that Austin retract its ETJ and stop development in greenfield? Is CodeNEXT prepared to introduce land reform to eliminate greenfield construction. If we are going to open up 40% or more of Austin neighborhoods to infill and redevelopment (ATX Housing April 2016), shouldn't CodeNEXT be limiting greenfield construction by the same percentage? Many of Austin's neighborhood subdivisions have deed restrictions limiting how the land is used. If greenfield construction is not going to be stopped by CodeNEXT then infill should not be created by it. The same principles of taking would seem to apply here. If a person is free to sell their land for development in the ETJ or far reaches of Austin's City limits so Austin doesn't "Take" their rights, then allowing infill in lots next to single family homes is a "Take" as well since land values and resale opportunities fall next to or near duplexes and four-plexes. There is no "taking" from the seller if the seller has agreed to deed restrictions limited the aforementioned deed restrictions.

Stormwater and Flooding (p8) addresses the issue of flooding, but we see no real suggestions. The sections covers two rules, a "current rules" which evidently speaks to some category and "water quality rules" which speak to redevelopment of land over 8,000 sq ft. It is unclear where these two rules intersect. It is undefined how a lot that has 100% impervious cover could create more run off. But it is quite clear how infill in residential areas where impervious coverage average is only 25% could, with infill up to the 45% maximum or higher, add significant water runoff. Both Onion Creek flooding and the addition of some 200 homes to FEMA flood plains in Brentwood, among other neighborhoods, demonstrate the effect of infill.

When land goes into a flood plain, the owner, if they increase the size of the existing residence must: 1) fill out a 17 page Federal Elevation Certificate document , 2) have the document filled out and signed by a licensed surveyor, engineer, or architect on Section D, 3) have it signed by the local authority who oversees the flood plain management ordinance as required.

Typical FEMA floodplain requirements along with FAQs on a local floodplain:

<http://charmeck.org/stormwater/DrainageandFlooding/pages/floodplainconstructionfaqs.aspx>

- Building pad must be 1' above the 100 year flood plain
- Physical survey must show the location and elevation of the 100 yr FP
- You can build an addition on the existing footprint that is below the flood plain IF
 - The local rules allow it

- You are not adding “substantial improvements” defined as repairs, reconstruction, or improvement of more than 50% of the current value of the house
- If your house floods with “substantial damage,” you can rebuild up to a dollar amount of 50% of the value of the house prior to the flood
- You cannot repair any wall, ceiling, floor or structural part of the house if repairs exceed this amount
- This rule is met if during any 10 year period your repair the structure at an expense of more than 25% of the pre-flood value per event with a cumulative total over 10 years higher than 50\$
- Keep in mind this is the value of the house, not the house and lot
- Finally, if your house is substantially damaged (over 50% of the pre-flood value) you must bring the entire structure up to the code, i.e. 1 foot above the flood plain

This is very onerous. As discussed earlier, allowing infill can easily allow another “Taking” of somebody’s property. CodeNEXT cannot be cavalier about this issue. The value of people’s homes is at stake, and often one’s home is over 50% of the value of assets they can retire on. And of course, if a house is placed on a flood plain due to changes caused by infill, their ability to do a reverse mortgage is severely limited. CodeNEXT has a moral obligation here that is highly significant and should not be ignored or glossed over.

Tools for mitigating flood impacts (p10) is another of the “in lieu of” provisions that even City Staff admitted they did not like during the inaugural meeting of the Burnet Road Corridor Study held in 2015 at Northcross Mall. We hate to state the obvious, but Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) has not stopped the flooding in Brentwood, and it will not stop other point specific flooding. This merely allows somebody to increase runoff in one part of Austin by sending money to another part. Again, this is a serious failing in the NBCEP. Infill has to mitigate runoff in situ or in an immediate area before the water hits a low spot on the way to the creek. In Austin, we’ve seen low spots defined as a wall, the side of a house, or a fence/bridge clogged with debris.

6.b.

We again see the “in lieu of” payment system. This does not mitigate local flooding. Austin has long used this system to eliminate its obligation to provide resources for citizens. It is a constant torn in the side of any logical argument regarding Austin’s commitment to its citizens and the environment.

The Memorial Day Flood of 1981 created a serious reassessment of flood control measures, bridge height, channel slope and design, and bridge design on Shoal Creek as three people died along the creek within the confines of Allandale. Allandale Neighborhood Association provided the assistance of 3 professional engineers to discuss mitigating solutions. They worked with the then City Engineer to propose holding ponds, the first of its kind in Austin. These holding ponds were placed north of US 183

and within the confines of Northwest Park and the Pony League field within Allandale. The neighborhood gave up those facilities in times of flood to help citizens downstream. However, the addition of another holding pond within Allandale where Far West and MoPAC intersect was still not enough to stop the flooding found at 9th and North Lamar in 2015, both upstream and downstream. These are low points in a general down-sloping topography. The RSMP was completely ineffective to solve this problem. And it will remain so. Impervious cover increases need to be solved at a local level, not on a tributary drainage level. The rain fall occurred south of the holding ponds at Northwest Park (it never really filled) but north of the low areas around 9th and North Lamar. CodeNEXT (NBCEP) has completely ignored this problem. Actually, NBCEP has accepted payment to ignore it by validating “in lieu of” payments.

7. and 8.

This section has some potential benefits but the issue is not simple. Burnet Road south of Koenig has limited street width, only 60' in some sections, whereas the right of way north of Koenig is 120'. The addition of pleasing adornments can be beneficial but CodeNEXT should be aware that some business entities use ROW harmlessly as additional parking in a few peak hours. It is possible some accommodation might be considered. However, the ROW is land belonging to all citizens of Austin.

Generally, we believe that artistic interpretations along major roads have value. But these changes need to meet safety criteria of vehicles pulling in and out of driveways on major arterials. Hopefully, bright minds can come up with solutions. Allandale tried “islands” to slow traffic on Shoal Creek Blvd that cost the City of Austin \$650,000 to put in and half that to take them out when citizens objected strenuously.

Landscape and Trees (p13)

We endorse the continued efforts to increase the urban forest and protect heritage trees. The heat island effect can be mitigated with such forests, and the pollution that is a serious problem for them needs to be addressed. (p13)

Infill is again a serious threat to trees. Infill disturbs and damages root systems, prevents water entering along the drip lines, and reduces the amount of ground available for this ecosystem. As the climate continues to warm, it is important to provide water and nutrients for the natural environment, not pave it over. The topography of Central Texas and Austin does not lend itself well to building as to slope and soils. As a matter of fact, 66.96% of Austin's soil by area is determined to be “very limited” to building dwellings. (A-52-53IA) This is an indication of suitability, but within the soils is also data regarding the ability of soils to absorb water and transport water, something beyond our expertise but something that the City and BNECP needs to consider in more detail.

4.A. (p16)

This section is totally incongruous to anything discussed regarding flooding and water purity. Eliminating open space merely adds to run off. Further, this violates the main initial concept of IA, that the natural environment is the main objective. This isn't even remotely "visually unified or contextually appropriate." This is a sheet of roofs and sidewalks read to starve trees and vegetation and bring Phoenix to Austin. The idea this promotes a natural environment is wildly misplaced and casts a question mark on the objective of retaining a natural environment and mitigating run-off. IA talks about designing the physical environment to affect public health (IA p68). I don't think IA imagined we'd make public health worse. We should not forget that Austin went so far afield in providing building area and neglecting our streams that EPA successfully sued Austin in the early 2000s over the terrible condition of our streams. We forget how many \$100 millions it took to solve that. Are we going back to that place?

4.B (p16)

A "high functioning landscape in small places" sounds like a mental health problem rather than a solution. How does this fit with IA (p10) statement of "increased need for parks and open space", or "gardens ... wildlife habitat." We don't see a fit here at all. This is "in lieu of" without much lipstick. This is not a plan, it is a forfeiture of what IA proscribed.

5. (p16)

Apparently, the only trees to be saved are "significant." That word has no meaning within the context of this paper or the glossary found in IA. Are we to assume that the evidence of significant is self-evident? That word has no legally enforceable value.

8.A (p17)

This section more clearly buttresses the requirements of IA.

10.A (p17)

This sections turns around and prepares to weaken environmental controls again. Section B. implies that there are areas of the City that do not deserve protection. We find that concerning. It goes back to the concept of shared commitment to our natural environment.

11 (p18)

The question here is what is flexible accounting. We do not know what that word means. We don't see it in the IA glossary, either.

Compatibility and Transitions

1-6 (p20)

This is an informative discussion of issues. Let's look at a few of them. 4 makes the argument that maybe other types of property use need protection besides SF and that height is ameliorated by topography, landscape, and building design. It's pretty hard to design a 50' building that isn't 50'. And landscaping can change over time. Landscaping dies but buildings live a long, long time. The discussion does not bother us as much as the solutions.

Where Do we Want to Be? (p21)

1. (p21)

We like the wording in found in IA (p207)

"Any suggested rewrite of the City Code, while striving to achieve the broad goals of the comprehensive plan, must recognize, respect, and reflect these carefully crafted compromises, balances, and the assumptions upon which the existing neighborhood and area plans were based and depend."

"Continued protection and preservation of existing neighborhoods and the natural environment must be considered top priorities of comprehensive revisions to the City Code. The consequences and impact of additional density and infill in existing neighborhoods must be carefully identified and analyzed to avoid endangering the existing character of neighborhoods and exacerbating community health and safety issues, such as flooding."

2. This address form based zoning.

3. Are landscaped transitions the only recommendation of the Green Infrastructure Working Group? The photo at the bottom of the page is essentially greenfield construction on former federally regulated airport land, not infill or transitional zones. It is an inaccurate depiction of what a transition zone as proposed would look like.

Prescription

1. Form base Standards (p22)

- The illustrations on pretty much say it all. The transitions occur "into" the neighborhood, not within the development area. So the latest arrival on the scene of an established neighborhood, most likely an investor, gets to prescribe what happens to the neighborhood, in some case up to ¼ miles in as envisioned by CodeNEXT ATX Housing
- The form based standards are pretty much unenforceable by adjoining homeowners and will be determined in the confines of the offices of City Staff
 - "Our progressive spirit, environmental ideals, and innovative character distinguish us from other metropolitan areas in Texas. **Many of the City's past policy choices show an**

early understanding of growth and economic issues that many Texas cities only recently have begun to address. This contrast has enhanced Austin's community identity, creating a strong sense of our uniqueness in relation to the rest of the state and the nation" IA P 19

- This raises significant questions about State Law, specifically the right to petition a zoning change as it relates to form based zoning
 - Will it still exist?
 - Or will it be swept under by the vote on the entire plan?
- The adjoining houses have little or no chance of being owner occupied, so any opposition is unlikely to occur.
 - The very threat of this approach could send people running from neighborhoods across Austin
 - This makes Austin even less family friendly than it is
- There is no differentiation between current SF1, SF2, or SF3 as affected by this Prescription.
- As discussed above, there is no concern for the existing neighborhoods or the environmental impacts
 - (Austin is a city of diverse neighborhoods that contribute to our community's character and our residents' quality of life. (IA P135)
- There is no discussion of restrictive covenants that border Burnet Road on the west from 45th Street to US 183 and on the east from Houston to Ohlen Road. Almost without exception they are single family residential use only.
 - Is the City prepared to start protracted legal battles along major arterials?
 - Is CodeNEXT tone deaf to the uniqueness that is Austin (IA p135)
- This shows no concern for the capacities of streets, waste water, water, run-off, electricity, etc (IA HN P12 p138)
- Calculations along Burnet Road indicate that the ATX Housing initiative will change the zoning on roughly 40% of the neighborhoods, in some case running as high as 90%
- The missing middle will be the "missing" current owners in these neighborhoods
- If density creates affordability, how come New York City has the highest rental rates in the country?

2. Building types

- By dictating a form based standards, you have no zoning, only standard types, if that?
 - Does this mean the right of valid petition under Texas Statute no longer exists?
 - Does this mean then that the City of Austin would have final say on anything that goes into neighborhoods in Austin or just if they are within ¼ miles of a bus line or corridor?
 - And one could ask the same about the right of valid petition for a flag lot
- The Eucldean zoning process whereby you specify each use within a classification is good for everybody except those who want a free range approach to planning.
 - Not only are you disenfranchising a lot of homeowners, you are eliminating their rights
 - Families constitute 52% of Austin households whereas 67% the residents of the US cities' are families
 - Are we contemplating building an entire city for the young and single?

3. Missing Middle (p23)

- You failed to define this term, but then so did Imagine Austin
- Let's give it a shot:
- The missing middle will be investor owned rental units starting with

- TYPE DISTANCE FROM CORRIDOR. etc
- Livework, 250' to 350'
- Multiplex, 350' to 480'
- Townhouse, 480' to 610'
- Bungalow Court 610' to 790'
- Courtyard apartments 790' to 970'
- Triplex and fourplex 970' to 1200'
- Duplex 1200' to 1330'
- In the illustration on p23 you show a WorkLive building, that given the housing is on 50' lots, would be 75' wide, and apartment building that would be 50' wide, a townhouse that would be 50' wide, a bungalow court that would be 75' wide, a court yard that would be 75' wide, a triplex/four-plex that would be 80' wide, a duplex that would be 50' wide, and three houses at 50' each.
 - Since the ATX Housing would allow for duplexes out to 1320' from the corridor, we can assume that each measurement would be 2.2 times larger allowing for a 250' mid-rise building lot on the commercial street.
 - Also, it should be noted that these units stretch backwards across the width of a city block. Of course not all blocks come in perpendicular.
 - Would the city terminate streets and reengineer them so all intersect perpendicularly?
 - With reduced parking requirements, what kind of gauntlet would the SF families expect to run going up and down neighborhood streets
 - Traffic on these neighborhood streets will be intense and well beyond the design capacity.
 - There is no middle alley to transfer traffic to as
 - Any alley would bifurcate the commercial area
 - Any alley would take up space valuable to investors and still have to empty out onto either street
 - I guess, assuming 8 vtd per unit and the design on p23 and do not include traffic for livework or the mid-rise, you'd be looking at 1000 to 2000vtd at a minimum and it could be more.

Analysis. This is a bad deal for Austin and for anybody living in a neighborhood close to a major corridor or neighborhood center or major center. And the only way this type of development become affordable is for the entire area to become crime ridden and delapidated. The illustration about density in New York City is as valid as it gets. If density worked, rents there would not be the highest in the US.

Imagine Austin did not envision this. It does not list "Missing Middle" as a word , or "Bungalow Court," or "Worklive" (IA A-16)

Imagine Austin had protections as listed in above pages for the environment, neighborhoods, and individuals.

Design for Mobility

1. Reduced Parking

- Look at IA's analysis of use by mode of transportation (p22)

Type	Use to get to work	% of Median Income
------	--------------------	--------------------

- | | | |
|-----------|------|------|
| ○ Bicycle | 1.0% | 60% |
| ○ Walk | 2.3% | 60% |
| ○ Bus | 5.0% | 60% |
| ○ Car | 90%+ | 110% |
- As a businessman, do you want bicycle stands, benches, bus stops, or parking in front of or behind your retail establishment or restaurant?
 - As a landlord of apartments, how many bike racks versus parking spots do you want?
 - Parking isn't necessarily beautiful, but the car is the conduit for our entire economy
 - Motorization rate is the number of passengers cars per 1000 inhabitants
 - The United States is at 808 (<http://www.oica.net/category/vehicles-in-use/>)
 - This is the highest in the world
 - Africa is the lowest
 - There is a strong correlation between motorization and economic viability
 - The idea we should take cars out of the economic mix when bus occupancy on Burnet Road has fallen for two years in a row (Cap Metro Burnet Road Corridor meeting 2015) is not wise
 - We have to be grown up when we look at economic statistics
 - We can't arbitrarily give away road capacity or parking requirements. Of course those who live close to neighborhoods but not in them are fine with patrons parking in the street.
 - Then we come up with special permit parking so homeowners can't have parties at their house.
 - This is a nightmare we can see coming and elimination parking requirements could quickly become an infrastructure nightmare that cannot be fixed.
2. Form based standards have been discussed in detail
- You still have to look to modal uses to determine requirements for bike racks and pedestrian walkways
 - Beyond that, you have to look at the costs to operate say a grocery store in downtown versus one in a high rise on Burnet versus one with adequate, visible parking.
 - As a small grocery, you die in competition with a large store if you don't have parking
 - This is an immutable fact
 - We build parking lots to attract people for convenience not because anybody likes them
 - There is a reason Euclidean zoning exists and form based zoning is being imposed
4. Mobility choice
- The biggest mistake in the corridor idea is the linearity
 - There is a reason that bus traffic is low on Burnet
 - It takes forever to get around. It isn't unusual to find that it takes two hours to get from one place to another on the bus
 - Anybody with a background in transportation will admit that the nodal system works for transit, not a long line of residential and business structures.
 - IA chart notes that 2.3% of people use the bus to get to work and their median income is 60% of the median income
 - We need buses to help people who are starting out, have disadvantages, lack financial asset
 - We cannot depend on buses to move people to work (IA P22)

Redevelopment

- Reduce parking
 - Bad idea, see above
 - Let people make their own choices. If parking prices are too high, then they'll adapt
- Housing and Building Diversity
 - There is nothing in this section that illustrates that redevelopment will be close to an array of amenities
 - Where are they now? They are in the Euclidean environment of SF, MF, GR, C
 - Form based won't make much difference to that, until everybody leaves Austin's neighborhoods
 - Lot sizes have to get through the above mentioned environment problems of runoff as well as the requirement of CodeNEXT to be faithful to existing neighborhoods
- Same problems with filling commercial interests with pockets of money
 - Vertical Mixed use with few, small, or short term commitment to affordable housing
 - Form based problems haven't changed since the last page

Greenfield Development

1. No comments at this time.

Parks

We need more close in

We need to end in lieu of payments and fund park space like it was done decades ago. The developer provides where he builds.

Response to City of Austin Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

4/14/2016

ASLA-CTX believes that the *Imagine Austin* goals of Compact and Connected and Integrate Nature and City are strongly connected to the creation of places that are vibrant, healthy, and meaningful. *Imagine Austin* established key Priority Programs to **Sustainably Manage Water Resources** and to implement **Green Infrastructure**. We believe the *Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription* should emphasize these priorities. In some cases, synergies can be provided by green infrastructure across multiple categories of the natural and built environment.

In response to the City of Austin (COA) Code Prescription Paper, *The Next Austin: Manage our growth, keep our character: Natural and Built Environment*, we would like to offer the following comments focused on the topics of Land Cover and Natural Function, Integrate Nature into City, Beneficial Use of Stormwater, and Stormwater Options for Redevelopment.

ASLA-CTX supports these proposals in the Prescription:

- **Redevelopment sites will mitigate their share of downstream flooding (Water and Watersheds #3).** ASLA-CTX recommends that the language of the code emphasize the decentralized micro-scale nature of Low Impact Development techniques and a context-sensitive approach. A density bonus could be offered as incentive to perform better than the Land Development Code (LDC) standard.
- **New and redevelopment sites will be required to retain and beneficially use stormwater onsite (Water and Watersheds #5).** ASLA-CTX recommends a reduction in the use of potable water of 50% by implementing water conservation practices and stormwater capture and reuse by means of overland flow to vegetation, rain gardens, or rainwater harvesting.
- **The Heritage Tree Ordinance and Tree Preservation/Mitigation Rules will be maintained in the LDC (Landscape and Trees #1 and Greenfield Development #3a), and tree preservation measures will be extended into the new 'Transition Zones' with missing middle housing (Landscape and Trees #13).** Discussions need to be held to balance increasing density and preserving tree canopy.
- **Allow double-counting of Landscape and Watershed Protection requirements to encourage green infrastructure and sustainable water management (Landscape and Trees #6c).**
- **Landscape will be employed as a means of promoting compatibility (Compatibility and Transitions #1).** ASLA-CTX has issued a Green Compatibility proposal that graphically illustrates how an ecologically functional landscape can mitigate impacts in a compatibility setback.
- **Connections will be required between new and redevelopment sites to adjacent or nearby parkland and urban trails (Parks and Open Space #7, Mobility #6, and Greenfield Development #3b).** These links create an open space system that provides connectivity for pedestrians and wildlife. Multi-use paths through greenways and the on-street network support the 2014 Urban Trails Master Plan.
- **Current environmental protections will be retained such as stream setbacks and sensitive feature protection in new development (Greenfield Development #3a).**
- **Protect the natural environment as growth occurs (Greenfield Development #3).** Unique water and land features define Austin's character and need to be preserved.

ASLA-CTX believes these proposals in the Prescription can be strengthened:

- **To improve the Watershed Protection Ordinance noted in Water and Watersheds #1,** the “draw-down” time for detention ponds should be increased to help minimize stream erosion.
- **Water and Watersheds #2 implies a watershed capacity analysis,** and ASLA-CTX recommends that this analysis inform the LDC re-write and form-based code (FBC) mapping. Any proposed increase in land use density should be tied to the adequacy of the watershed’s infrastructure capacity. If a watershed has been determined to be at capacity by the Watershed Protection Department, then the LDC should require that any new development in that watershed detain all stormwater. Do not allow payment in lieu, waivers, or variances. An incentive and assistance program should be established to help property owners improve upon existing infrastructure.
- **For Water and Watersheds #4, the last sentence of the main paragraph should be revised to read:** “Generally, near the headwaters, detention can be at grade or underground on- or off-site. Toward the middle of the watershed off-site conveyance improvements such as upgrading storm drains and culverts are appropriate. In the lower reaches, payment into the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) is appropriate.”
- **For Water and Watersheds #6,** ASLA-CTX concurs with the intent to prevent off-site discharge from average rainfall events since it improves stormwater quality, reduces subsidence, refills aquifers, and diverts trash from waterways. Under Landscape and Trees, the Functional Green system offers retention options for high impervious sites in the urban core. Any payment in lieu needs to be carefully calibrated to ensure an equitable offset.
- **Parks and Open Space #4d.i states that design standards will establish the percentage of pervious areas in dedicated parkland.** ASLA-CTX recommends 30% minimum pervious area in all required open space.
- **The prescription language for Landscape and Trees #8 notes that unique site characteristics may impact the final allowable impervious cover based on the priority given to tree regulations.** In the same way, site specific environmental considerations-- like karst, sinkholes, and bluffs-- may impact the final allowable impervious cover relating to watersheds. Ensure that these considerations are included in determining impervious cover limits.
- **Green Streets are to be incorporated throughout Austin that suit their context (Water and Watershed #8 and Mobility #4).** In addition, excess right-of-way can be reclaimed for green infrastructure (Water and Watersheds #7) beyond the right-of-way needed for the bicycle network of the 2014 Austin Bicycle Plan. Green Streets enhance pedestrian and bike-friendly connectivity in addition to improving water quality and reducing peak stormwater flows. Standards and specifications shall be defined for all right-of-way construction and in the various transect zones. Clarification is needed from CodeNEXT for which public or private entities will build Green Street features and how they will be implemented in incremental development. Infill development should be required to connect Green Streets whenever possible and restrict the use of controlled access gates.
- **Parks and Open Space #4 updates the LDC with the recent changes to the Parkland Dedication Ordinance.** ASLA-CTX recommends that parkland required of subdivision and site plan applicants be provided on-site, especially in areas of the city that are identified in the Parks Master Plan as deficient in open space and parks. The City of Austin also should acquire private land to convert to public open space within a ¼-mile radius of proposed higher density districts and corridors.
- **Parks and Open Space #3 calls for standards to be developed for public spaces that are well-designed and tree-covered.** Public parks and open space should achieve the goal of 40% canopy citywide, promote tree health, and provide clear open space for solar access and views at appropriate intervals.
- **Prescriptions like Water and Watersheds #4 as well as Landscape and Trees #5 are intended to reduce the damage of flood events and the loss of urban tree canopy.** Incentives should be provided to sites that restore floodplains, waterways, and urban forests.
- **The protection of significant trees is stated as a goal in the prescription (Landscape and Trees #5 and #10).** Options to promote transplanting of trees to nearby dedicated open spaces with attendant automatic irrigation should be incentivized before payment in lieu is permitted. CodeNEXT should integrate the GIS data for *2015 Tree Planting Prioritization* issued by the City Arborist and the findings from *Austin’s Urban Forest 2014* issued by the USDA. For

example, if development occurs in an area that is deficient in Cedar Elm and other valued native species, there could be incentives to harmonize the tree composition of that area.

- **The Functional Green system will be developed for landscaping requirements in the Centers and Corridors where higher density may require multi-functional landscapes (Landscape and Trees #4b).** The prescription calls for a “point-based system that allows choices among elements such as green roofs, green walls, stormwater collection and re-use...” or ‘Functional Green.’ ASLA-CTX recommends that new and infill development in all land use zones have a significant percentage of on-site green elements—and particularly in the new ‘Transition Zones’ with missing middle housing. Establishing performance benchmarks of ecological function will help to steer this prescription’s development. A Functional Green approach incentivizes such items as protection of existing trees, increased soil depth, green walls, green roofs, and permeable pavements. It could also help to make documented on-site life cycle implementation and maintenance plans more commonplace.
- **Mobility #1 and Redevelopment #1 propose to reduce parking minimums in areas of the city targeted for compact development, especially when those areas have robust transit.** Where parking requirements are reduced in these cases, vegetated pervious space should be increased. Parking maximums, shared parking, and leased parking separate from unit rentals should be tied to increased green space.

ASLA-CTX recommends the following be added to the Prescription:

Intent Language of the LDC

- ASLA-CTX recommends that Dr. Frances Kuo’s research on the health benefits of green elements be written into the intent language of the LDC. Include descriptions of how tree canopy mitigates the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect and how plantings absorb and clean stormwater.

Water Conservation

- **Under Landscape and Trees**, add conservation of water resources by: 1) initiating potable water budgets that are supported by the use of rainwater harvesting, HVAC condensate, and graywater; and 2) incentivizing efficient irrigation. ASLA-CTX makes these recommendations to adopt the ‘conservation mindset’ that CodeNEXT mentions in the Prescription introduction.

Open Space

- **Under Parks and Open Space, add Private Open Space.** The existing 5% Private Open Space ordinance for Commercial and Multifamily uses should be maintained or increased. This requirement should also be extended into new ‘Transition Zones’ that are planned for redevelopment or up-zoning. On-site private open space is critical to preserving pervious cover, existing tree canopy, and on-site infiltration of stormwater.
- **Add Private Open Space Typologies** under Private Common Open Space such as accessible green roofs, playgrounds, educational areas, swimming pools, water quality green space as an amenity, sport courts, and multi-use trails. Include standards for minimum percentage of pervious area.
- **Add Urban Agriculture.** Add private and public open space provisions and standards for urban farms, community gardens, and front and backyard vegetable gardens.

Urban Heat Island Mitigation

- **Under Landscape and Trees**, to mitigate the Urban Heat Island in parking lots, new trees should be planted at a maximum of 30’ on-center in parking lot medians.

Water Quality and Creek Restoration

- Water quality controls should be required for all development in which the total disturbed area exceeds 5,000 square feet rather than the current requirement of 8,000 square feet of impervious cover.
- Water quality controls (i.e., green stormwater quality infrastructure) that are better at removing nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) should be required or incentivized in comparison to conventional stormwater controls, such as sand filters.
- A Homeowners Association (HOA) should be created for all new developments that include micro-scale residential water quality controls (e.g., rain gardens); the HOA shall assume responsibility for the maintenance of such controls.
- Commercial developments that impact creeks should provide a visual impact watershed creek survey that documents existing conditions including erosion, trash, etc. In addition, they should propose on-site or off-site mitigation commensurate with development impact.

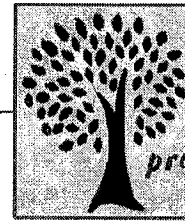
Site Plan Process

- **Landscape and Trees #9c suggests a pre-submission consultation to ensure consistent reviews.** ASLA-CTX recommends that a required Conceptual Site Plan submittal should be instituted prior to the Completeness Check that shows a stormwater/green infrastructure and preservation of natural assets approach to site layout. Include the participation of Landscape Architects in the submittal requirement.
- **Modify the Site Plan Exemption** to allow commercial remodel projects to reduce impervious cover by installing green infrastructure without triggering a site plan requirement.
- **For Redevelopment #6a**, also modify Subchapter E at Core Transit Corridors by setting the building façade back from the clear zone of sidewalks or the property line, thereby allowing for green landscape on both sides of a sidewalk to mitigate the UHI effect and increase pedestrian comfort.
- **For Landscape and Trees #8**, create an administrative process to evaluate hardship cases relating to conflicts between impervious cover limits and regulated trees.

CodeNEXT should address the following in the next step of the LDC rewrite:

- **Parks and Open Space #5 states that a metric for green infrastructure in public space will be established to achieve higher quality.** Performance benchmarks of ecological function should also be established in the water and landscape categories as well as others for evaluating projects seeking green infrastructure incentives. CodeNEXT should publish preliminary benchmarks to facilitate discussion of the array of green infrastructure measures.
- **Landscape and Trees #6 notes the desire to update the Landscape code to include “advances in urban environmental science, especially in soil science and hydrogeology....”** ASLA-CTX recommends that CodeNEXT provide a nuanced code that recognizes the shallower soils in Western Travis County and the deeper soils in Eastern Travis County. A minimum soil depth (using existing or existing plus imported soil) should be required in pervious areas to retain on-site stormwater. In addition, tree soil volume requirements should be established for all new trees to promote healthy growing conditions.
- **Under Landscape and Trees**, ASLA-CTX recommends that a new protected ‘understory’ tree having a caliper size of 4” or more be created for trees such as the Texas Mountain Laurel and Texas Redbud that contribute significantly to the Central Texas landscape character.

ASLA-CTX would like to offer input regarding Functional Green and the results of the Watershed Protection Department’s watershed modeling to CodeNEXT as the process of the LDC rewrite continues.



To: CodeNext Citizens Advisory Group

April 25, 2016

Re: AHTF's Comments to RX-1

We are a non-profit that has been actively and effectively preserving heritage trees since 2009. We have 500 members. We have reviewed the Natural and Built Environment Code RX in detail. These are our comments:

What is missing:

- The desire for density (subdividing into smaller lots), connectivity and affordability needs to be balanced with preservation of the environment, including trees, and especially preservation of protected and heritage trees.
 - ⇒ Imagine Austin and the community strongly support tree preservation, especially that of protected and heritage trees. Austinites want for tree preservation to be one of the top 3 priorities of the City.
 - ⇒ Item 5 in page 5 of the Introduction, *"allowing for a diversity of lot sized and building types, increasing the opportunity for affordability in residential and commercial development"* needs to be tempered and balanced with tree preservation. Many trees of all sizes, including protected and heritage trees, will be removed if CodeNext only, or mainly, focuses on allowing subdivision of lots into smaller lots and building types that don't conform with the existing neighborhood character.
 - ⇒ In fact, we see this as the major challenge to the Heritage and Protected Trees Ordinances, that they will be weakened or overridden by density that doesn't take into consideration that quality of life includes a sustainable balance of affordability as well as environmental protection.
- **Make clear in the text of the RX that the Heritage and the Protected Trees Ordinances will not be weakened or changed in any manner.** If there will be changes, make it clear that the City will conduct extensive inclusive public input. Tree preservation is important to the entire community, developers and environmental advocates alike.
- Clarify that item #11 page 17, *"allow more flexibility in accounting for various building types"* means to change the building design to preserve trees, not the other way around to remove trees to have a specific predetermined building design that doesn't get modified to preserve the tree. Tree preservation should be the driver. This item shouldn't become a loop hole to facilitate tree removal.
- A letter or report from a licensed Landscape Architect (LA) should be required to be submitted prior to submitting site plans to facilitate an early-stage discussion/consultation. This is similar to submitting an Environmental Impact Analysis. The LA letter should include tree health and condition as identified by a Certified Arborist, for heritage, protected and smaller trees.
- Tree preservation should be made based on data and goals for a healthy urban forest.
 - ⇒ For instance, 10% of the trees in a healthy forest should be heritage trees.
 - ⇒ More protected trees need to be preserved because it will take these trees at least another 50 years to become heritage trees. Currently, about 50% or more protected trees are removed in large subdivisions.
 - ⇒ More trees in the 15-18.5 inches bracket need to be preserved as well because this is the bracket where most are removed.

- ⇒ The largest percentage of existing trees is in the 2-10 inches bracket because those are the newly planted trees. This doesn't mean to plant fewer young trees, but to preserve more of the larger healthy trees.

What we don't like:

- Delete the word "significant" trees (item #5 pg. 17). All heritage and protected trees are significant.
- The goal of bringing buildings closer to the street should be overridden to protect healthy heritage and protected trees, or even smaller healthy trees, in that setback.
- Be clear that the green palette will give proportional value to elements such as green roofs and walls, but not at the expense of removing trees. Trees provide much higher health and ecosystem benefits than green walls or roofs.
- Separate landscape sections from tree section because reading becomes confusing. At minimum, specify in each item in pages 13-17 whether it applies to landscape or trees.
- Include community feedback that supports density at the expense of removing healthy protected and heritage trees, because our data shows that the entire community strongly supports tree preservation.
- Staff from both the landscape and the heritage tree groups have stated that staff outside their groups edited their comments. Consequently, the draft document is vague and confusing, and is prone to be interpreted differently than what the staff that wrote the original version intended.
- There should be a balanced fiscally responsible approach to provide connectivity, alternative transportation and recreation that minimizes the use of urban trails. Bike lanes can provide the desired connectivity and alternative transportation network. Sidewalks help much more significantly to get people connected. Urban trails are used mostly for recreation but they don't provide the benefits that parks, ball fields and pools provide to children and adults.
- Urban trails are 8-12 ft. wide concrete trails that are very expensive (at least \$3 Million per mile) and impact the environment and wildlife, even with the creek protection regulations from the Watershed Ordinance. Only a few should be built, not one in every creek. The Austin Creek Plan is not a City plan and it didn't have public input.

What we like:

- The City's processes for tree preservation should be based on a site by site basis. This is the current flexible approach that has proven to be highly successful. Predictability is obtained by staff and developers discussing heritage tree preservation at an early stage with a voluntary consultation. It is impossible for code to include every situation, and it would not be appropriate to simplify code to have a one size fits all for tree preservation. The goal is to save the best healthy trees and that can only be achieved if City staff and developers discuss this at an early stage on a case by case basis.
- A similar approach should be offered voluntarily or required for Protected and smaller trees in the Environmental Reviewer group when site plans are reviewed.
- A low impact development approach should be used, such as the SITES initiative.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Fossum
Executive Director
Austin Heritage Tree Foundation
www.austinheritagetreefoundation.com
512-739-5472



25 April 2016

Esteemed CodeNEXT Advisory Group Members, City Staff, Mayor and Council Members,

Over the course of nearly a year of attending various CodeNEXT discussion events, members of the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood and Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association officers have noted some concerns or questions about the code re-write process, what staff has said about its analysis and its progress in the re-write, and the complete lack of any actual documents that residents can see or comment on. What appears to be staff's idea about what constitutes "public input" is an additional concern that we won't attempt to address in this document. For now, we'd like to bring your attention to just a few key questions, concerns, and requests for clarification and action listed below.

Thank you for your attention, and for your dedication to this monumental task.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cory Walton", is written over the word "Sincerely,".

Cory Walton, President,
Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association

1. The Imagine Austin comprehensive plan (Item HN P14 Page 138) calls on strengthening planning by recognizing the need to respect, inform, and draw from neighborhood plans— Yet CodeNext staff leader Jim Robertson has said in the council-mandated Neighborhood Plan Contact Team meetings, and in the CodeNEXT Sound check, that some aspects of some neighborhood plans will be in conflict with the CodeNEXT re-write. This would imply that the CodeNext team has already made some predeterminations on the code that will override or eliminate elements of neighborhood plans. Which initiatives or zoning in which neighborhood plans? We request specifically that staff provide NOW all known examples of conflict or override to which Mr. Robertson is referring.

2. In the November 2015 CodeNEXT sound check workshop sessions, there was much discussion of adopting form-based code. Opticos is the consultant group that will lead recommendations on implementing form-based zoning in CodeNext. How does form-based relate to or reconcile existing City of Austin land development code's compatibility standards? The existing compatibility standards are key to co-existence and logical transition between different building sizes and uses (i.e. commercial and single-family residential). We imperatively request that compatibility standards be maintained.

cont'd.

Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association, P. O. Box 3683, Austin, Texas 78764

3. The adopted Imagine Austin comprehensive plan makes repeated mention of preserving and enhancing our natural areas, open green spaces, and pedestrian walkways. The Lady Bird Lake Waterfront Overlay best exemplifies and, to date, protects these qualities. Will the Waterfront Overlay be adopted into CodeNEXT? If not, what protections and oversight will our waterfront and the areas surrounding the hike and bike trails have? We request that the Waterfront Overlay's setbacks and their respective building height and density limitations, FAR, and design standards be maintained.

4. Accommodating future growth is a key consideration both in the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan and in the CodeNEXT rewrite. Going into the Imagine Austin fact gathering and community input and analysis exercises, City Council repeatedly requested, and finally received from the City demographer a capacity analysis—i.e. statistical data on how many present and future Austin residents the city could absorb with maximum allowable property development under land development code as it exists today without adding any more density or infill entitlements. We request that the CAG publish that capacity analysis data as part of any findings or recommendations, and that it be submitted for study by staff, and by Opticos and other third parties that might be more interested in the results of that study than our City planning and development staff, which has pointedly ignored it.

5. For decades, City of Austin Watershed Protection staff have told our neighborhood that each additional square foot of impervious cover in our neighborhood increases runoff, flooding, and erosion, sedimentation and degradation of our urban watersheds. Flooding events have dramatically increased in recent years, along with the area of their impacts. We're now told that Watershed Protection's analyses and recommendations will not be completed 'til several months from now. Yet planning department is moving ahead with its vision of a new land development code which must of necessity include infill and impervious cover limits. How and when will the two departments reconcile the inevitable impacts of the increasing incidence of properties being built out to maximum allowable impervious cover limit under the present code—not to mention from any increased infill and impervious cover recommendations from the new CodeNEXT land development code?

6. On a recent (April 9, 2016) CodeNEXT community walk, CodeNEXT staff spoke of proposals to further reduce parking requirements for commercial properties adjacent to single family residential neighborhoods in order to enhance the pedestrian, bicycle and other non-auto transit experience. This is a repeated theme that has already manifested in current codes and ordinances (urban core and transit corridor reductions). The impacts on residents of spillover traffic and on-street parking by employees and customers of businesses on commercial corridors have been well documented for years. City traffic department and planing staff seems to subscribe to the belief that as

parking becomes less available (i.e. not required to be provided by businesses), fewer and fewer business employees and customers will use their cars and increasingly rely on public and other alternate transit to get to these businesses.

The problems with this philosophy include: 1). Our public transit system, to be diplomatic, is inadequate to serve the community's needs. 2). These commercial sites are old and small, and were built to serve mainly local customers—not city-wide tourist and entertainment markets, so many properties already possess grandfathered parking reductions or no parking provision at all. Any expansion by these business can only be accomplished by further reducing the little parking they presently provide. 3). The social engineering experiment of converting Austinites via codes and ordinances to a non-car-centric culture is being conducted to the economic advantage of commercial interests, while exacting a punishing cost on adjacent residents, while the experiment is still many many years away from yielding any of the desired results.

When a resident neighborhood association officer pointed out these punishing costs to staff. Their only reply was a vague allusion to future improvements to alternative options—and citing one or two city employees who live in the neighborhood and have the good fortune to be able to walk to their city jobs.

We recommend that CodeNEXT be written to require documented study results showing at least one full year's sustained reduction in car traffic counts on commercial corridors and adjacent residential streets be provided for analysis and verification BEFORE allowing any new parking reductions to any commercial business, and that those reductions be granted only in proportion to the reductions produced in the immediate area of the applicant property. In this way, both city transportation department and businesses are incentivised to participate in the social engineering they espouse, and to ensure their success—without subjecting the innocent bystanders—i.e. adjacent residential property owners—to the punishing fallout city planners and businesses have created and visited on them heretofore.



April 18, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR CODE ADVISORY GROUP AND CODENEXT TEAM

FROM: HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF GREATER AUSTIN (HBAGA)

SUBJECT: Formal response to Natural and Built Environment Prescription—The Next Austin: Manage our growth, keep our character

OVERVIEW

Established in 1953, the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin is comprised of over 700 member companies and their over 100,000 employees. Our mission is to protect every family's right to home ownership and to promote and represent our industry to the 6 counties and over 30 municipalities that we cover.

As one of the main groups that will be affected by the new Land Development Code (LDC), we feel that one singular item that should be at the forefront of the proposed changes is the lack of homes that are affordable. The new LDC has the potential to either address and fix this issue, or add to it and make it worse. Below you will find our responses to the first prescription released by the CodeNext team. We look forward to working with you throughout this process.

RESPONSE

WATER AND WATERSHEDS

1. Maintain Austin's historic watershed regulations and recent Watershed Protection Ordinance improvements.

Response: The HBAGA believes that the current watershed protection ordinance and recent improvements are sufficient. We would however encourage the City to examine any future updates or changes as to the impact those changes would have as a whole on the development process and the additional costs that they could have, thus impacting affordability.

2. Incremental redevelopment should occur in-step with an evaluation of infrastructure,

including drainage capacity.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that infrastructure should be built to support the capacity that it will require. However, we would strongly urge against the use of developers and the code as the sole means for the city updating older infrastructure.

3. Redevelopment – like new development -- will be required to mitigate for the site's share of existing downstream flooding. This means reducing post-development peak rates of discharge to match peak rates of discharge for undeveloped conditions, instead of existing pre-development conditions. Undeveloped conditions are assumed to be grassland unless otherwise demonstrated by the applicant.

Response: By requiring that the post-development peak rates of discharge to match the peak rates of discharge for undeveloped conditions the city could potentially restrict infill redevelopment in certain areas. It could also lead to certain instances where the solution, doesn't actually address the issue of high rates of discharge, and instead could potentially allow for situations where if the undeveloped site flooded prior to redevelopment there would not be a clear route to address the issue. The city should allow for flexibility within each site and tackle downstream flooding issues in a more comprehensive approach. Once again we would also urge the city to not use development or redevelopment as the sole means to address existing issues with out-of-date infrastructure.

4. Tools for mitigating flood impacts could include on-site detention, off-site detention, off-site conveyance improvements, or participation in the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP). Determining the appropriate flood mitigation tool will depend on the location in the watershed (e.g., headwaters) as well as the available downstream capacity. Generally, on-site detention is appropriate in the upper portions of a watershed, whereas lower portions of a watershed are more suitable for conveyance upgrades or participation in RSMP.

Response: The HBAGA concurs with this prescription. Due to the uniqueness of every site, there should be a comprehensive approach and a variety of tools allowed. By allowing for a variety of options, the city would maximize the improvements made to the infrastructure and limit the potential affect that costs could have on affordability.

- *On-site detention is one of the more expensive ways to address the issue of discharge. While it should be allowed as an option, it should not necessarily be required on all sites.*
- *The HBAGA believes that the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP) should also incorporate the 2-yr storm event as well as the 95th percentile event (described in prescription #6). We would also suggest that if there is an existing flooding problem (either due to conveyance or lacking infrastructure), then the RSMP should not*

have the ability to deny the redevelopment or infill if it will not increase the problem.

5. New and redevelopment sites will be required to retain and beneficially use stormwater onsite – a practice already implemented by numerous states and major cities around the country.

Response: There are many potential impacts that requiring onsite stormwater detention/containment could have. The city should also clarify as to what amount would be required on the site, and for what duration? Items like containment tanks or ponds can be cost prohibitive and have an impact on affordability. In addition, certain neighborhood architectural restrictions limit the placement of some of these items on the site. The city should encourage and incentivize these kind of items, but not require them on all sites.

6. Require sites and subdivisions to prevent off-site discharge from all rainfall events less than or equal to the 95th percentile event through practices that infiltrate, evapotranspire, and/or harvest and use rainwater. This can be accomplished through the use of green stormwater infrastructure – both passive technologies, such as rain gardens and porous pavement, as well as more active technologies like rainwater harvesting systems and green roofs.
 - a. Reference national models for beneficial reuse requirements that have alternative standards for redevelopment, pollution hotspots, karst, areas with a shallow water table, and other unique site conditions.
 - b. On high impervious sites (more typical in the urban core), infiltration-based approaches may not be economically feasible because they can potentially occupy a significant percentage of the site area. Given these constraints, projects located within urban core watersheds will be allowed to request approval to reduce the requirement for onsite beneficial use of stormwater and instead provide payment-in-lieu based on a checklist of applicable site conditions (e.g., high existing impervious cover, poor draining soils, etc.). As with water quality payment-in-lieu, the funds collected would be used to build water quality controls and green stormwater infrastructure in the Urban Watersheds. Even in highly impervious sites, however, opportunities often exist to re-use the water both indoors and outdoors for advanced conservation, environmental, and place-making benefit. Examples include recessed parking islands and disconnected downspouts.
 - c. The recommendations for beneficial use of stormwater, as well as the city's current requirements for water quality, apply to smaller storms (e.g., less than 3 inches of rain). Flooding issues associated with larger storms are addressed through requirements and strategies for flood mitigation, as described in the section above. Although green stormwater infrastructure tools such as rain

gardens improve water quality and help integrate nature into the city, they do not significantly address the flooding associated with large storms. To effectively address both flooding and water quality concerns, sites will need a combination of different tools.

Response: The 95th percentile event is less than the current 2 yr storm event that must be detained onsite. This requirement would not allow for any water to be discharged from this event and would discourage certain types of redevelopment and infill on older lots that could pose a greater challenge. The HBAGA is also concerned that this could potentially limit discharge needed downstream which rely on that discharge from frequent storms as a source of water. If the city does wish for containment with no discharge then there needs to be a combination of solutions that addresses the uniqueness for each site.

- *Excess right of way usually serves as a buffer or for a future purpose (such as transportation-bike or road lanes). CodeNext should consult with the transportation department and transportation stakeholders regarding this issue.*
- *The HBAGA agrees that when green streets are encouraged, they should be in context with the area in which they are located. However, cost to achieve the city's desired effect should be taken into consideration as well.*

LANDSCAPE AND TREES

1. Maintain our current code's strong emphases on preservation of existing topography, native vegetation, and environmental health

Response: The HBAGA agrees that where feasible, development should always be encouraged to maintain existing topography, native vegetation and the environment.

2. Require a comprehensive approach to landscape treatment throughout the site, creating opportunity to integrate environmental, aesthetic, and site-use functionality.

Response: In many cases, large-scale master-planned communities are already doing these items. Since the adoption of the HBAGA's Sensible Landscaping Guidelines, there are several large communities incorporating many of the suggestions outlined in that document. However, the city should allow for flexibility and options when it comes to redevelopment/infill sites.

3. Encourage the incorporation of low-impact development in coordination with landscaping standards

Response: The HBAGA agrees that this should be encouraged, but would caution against working towards creating landscaping standards that would require a large number of code/technical revisions and add to the workload of the Development Services Department

(DSD).

4. Adopt the context-based approach that is the cornerstone of the new LDC:
 - a. For the mid- to low-density suburban context, the new code will bring adjustments to address the move toward compact, pedestrian-centered development. Current landscape requirements rely heavily on the size of the “streetyard,” the area between right-of-way and building façade. This assumes a suburban, automobile-oriented style of development, with lots of space between street and building. Compact development diminishes or altogether eliminates the streetyard, bringing buildings closer to the street. The new code will utilize an approach based on integrating landscape elements throughout the site, while providing a visually unified and contextually appropriate public-private interface.
 - b. For the higher-density Centers and Corridors called for by Imagine Austin, which may offer fewer opportunities for vegetated landscape, the new code likely will offer an options-based palette of urban-green options aimed at providing high functioning landscape in small spaces. This could operate similar to “Functional Green,” a point-based system that allows choices among elements such as green roofs, green walls, stormwater collection and re-use, pervious pavement, rain gardens, etc. to meet landscape requirements.

Response: Depending how these items are adopted/implemented they could have a negative or positive affect on affordability.

5. Recognize that compact development can pressure existing vegetation, particularly trees; provide the tools to implement a site-specific approach to preservation that prioritizes protection of “significant” trees

Response: CodeNext should define what “significant” would mean. By defining it properly, the city would allow for greater certainty for developers/builders which assists in providing some relief to the affordability issue naturally in this process. Furthermore, the code should define how preserving trees interacts with other portions of the code. For example:

- *The Visitability Ordinance states that: “A visitable entrance must have at least one visitable route with a cross slope of no greater than two percent that originates from a garage, driveway, public street, or public sidewalk.”*
- *It was later clarified that if a switchback was to be required to comply, the builder/developer could apply for a variance.*
- *The question that the HBAGA would like to pose is: How would the preservation of “significant” trees be handled if the switchback was necessary to go around the tree? Which ordinance would prevail?*

6. Promote land cover that performs multiple ecosystem functions, requires fewer resources, and provides better planting environments for a more sustainable urban landscape.

- a. Bring forward improvements to the Landscape code that account for advances in urban environmental science, especially in soil science and hydrogeology, as well as technological improvements in water-reuse, and understanding of urban heat-island effects.
- b. Set minimum soil quality and quantity standards.
- c. Allow double-counting of Landscape and Watershed Protection requirements, thereby encouraging development to incorporate green infrastructure and sustainable water management best practices into landscape areas.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription and would suggest examining our Sensible Landscaping Guidelines. In addition, we feel that offering up incentives to encourage this type of landscaping could be far more beneficial to the city than mandating. For example, the City of Austin could issue certain density bonuses in exchange for drought tolerant landscapes and green infrastructure that addresses existing discharge issues with the site.

7. Clarify existing code provisions regarding applicability, definitions, survey requirements, review requirements, and other code sections.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

8. Set impervious cover limits as a maximum, not a guarantee of buildable land. It is possible that an impervious cover limit will not be reached due to unique site characteristics, such as regulated trees. Tree regulations, therefore, will apply regardless of a site's allowable impervious cover limit and may impact the final allowable impervious cover.

Response: Imagine Austin calls for a "compact and connected" city, and in order to provide that it is imperative that developers/builders should be able to accurately predict what the potential for developing a particular lot is. By not providing an accurate understanding of what would be allowed, this could potentially discourage development and limit what redevelopment/infill could happen. The HBAGA believes that tree preservation should not have an effect on a site's allowable impervious cover limit.

9. Improve administrative procedures to ensure clear, consistent, and timely reviews and inspections.
 - a. Integrate tree permits into the Plan Review process to avoid duplicative reviews
 - b. Offer online applications and payment
 - c. Offer a pre-submission consultation for applicants

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription. Any opportunity for a more efficient and predictable process is welcomed. We are also happy to assist in providing additional feedback

and testing as these new systems and processes are developed.

10. Use a site-by-site approach to tree preservation. Avoid the use of a purely quantitative, one-size-fits-all, approach to tree preservation (e.g. 80% of site trees must be preserved), in recognition of the non-uniform distribution of trees, the varying biological and structural health of trees, and differing land development types.
 - a. Look at reasonable use of and reasonable access to the property. To administer these criteria effectively, the City Arborist will utilize a process that assesses specific site characteristics and identifies the health of the regulated trees to ensure protection of the healthy trees onsite.
 - b. Adopt policies to define more effectively the varying contexts (e.g. urban, suburban, commercial, residential, etc.) and how best trees can be preserved in these varied contexts.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with taking a site-by-site approach to tree preservation but would coughing against creating an entirely new system and set of policies that would add additional costs to development. We would also encourage the city to look at easing the process for alternative forms of compliance such as adding new trees of the same caliper or relocating the trees.

11. Allow for more flexibility in accounting for various building types, internal circulation, utility assignments, parking requirements, and so forth, allowing more creative site layouts to preserve trees.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription. However, the greatest difficulty that this prescription will have is the inclusion of the various departments that will be affected. We would encourage the creation of additional memorandums of understanding (similar to those developed recently by Mr. Zucker) to assist in achieving clarification and efficiency in this process.

12. Integrate public tree standards in City Code Title 6 with the Land Development Code for consistent code application.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

13. Explore opportunities to improve tree preservation for “missing middle” developments. For example, protecting trees smaller than 19” might be an opportunity to bridge the gap between the current commercial site plan recognition of trees (8” inch and greater diameter trees) and single-family home development (19” and greater diameter trees).

Response: Most tree preservation has an effect on the affordability of a particular site/development. This is due to the fact that costs associated with preserving certain trees during the initial development of the site are passed onto the builder who purchases the lot from the developer. In turn, the builder will by default pass on that cost to the homebuyer by taking into account how much they (the builder) paid for that lot in setting the overall price for that home. To achieve both affordability and “missing middle” developments, the code must interact in a way that encourages the preservation of these trees, without adding significant costs overall.

COMPATABILITY AND TRANSITIONS

1. Form-Based Standards: These standards, which will regulate factors like building placement, height, and mass, parking placement, four-sided design, and so forth, will allow compatibility to be built right into the base zoning districts. The new standards will also employ landscape as a means of promoting compatibility

Response: The HBAGA agrees (in principle) that zoning should be the determining factor and not use. We urge caution however on any design restrictions/standards that are created. In some cases, certain restrictions could have the unintended consequence of affecting the affordability of the site.

2. Building Types: Each Transect District will authorize certain specific Building Types, each of which must adhere to certain design and dimensional standards. This will allow the application of Transect Zones to compel compatibility. Unlike the current Compatibility Standards, which are tied to use (residential zoning or residential use), the use of Building Types acknowledges that form – rather than use – is typically what drives compatibility.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

3. Housing Types: A greater array of housing types, including Missing Middle Housing, which allows the code to regulate more effectively for compatibility.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that one of the most essential parts towards fixing affordability is providing a variety of housing options to meet the needs of our constantly growing market. The code should encourage additional types of homes to meet this needs including (but not limited to): triplexes, fourplexes, etc.

4. Compatibility Standards: It is likely that the new code will retain something akin to the current Compatibility Standards in the portions of Austin that remained zoned with “use-based” (as opposed to form-based) zoning districts.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

DESIGN FOR MOBILITY

1. **Parking:** Reduced parking minimums in areas of the city targeted for compact development, especially when those areas have robust transit and other mobility options. This will be a continuation of the approach taken in the recent code amendments regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), where parking requirements were reduced in settings close to Imagine Austin Corridors.

Response: The HBAGA agrees that the city should reduce parking minimums in certain areas that have transit and other mobility options.

2. **Form-Based Standards:** Form-based zoning districts that provide functionality but also minimize the negative impacts of on-site parking such as sidewalks interrupted by wide and frequent driveways, surface parking lots separating the sidewalk from the building, and parking lots without trees.

Response: The HBAGA would like to note that reducing driveway cuts will force more shared parking agreements and shared access agreements.

3. **Signs:** Sign rules that are not solely oriented around visibility from automobiles.

Response: No comment.

4. **Roadway Design:** Courtesy of the Austin Thoroughfare Plan (being developed as part of CodeNEXT), roadway designs based not only the function of a roadway, but also on the contexts through which it passes.

Response: The code should examine the potential impact that significant changes to roadway design standards could have. Not only could they impact the affordability, but could have adverse effects on the character of a neighborhood.

5. **Location Efficiency:** Form-based coding that will enable compact redevelopment to be constructed in transit-rich environments (e.g., rail, rapid bus, and frequent service bus lines). By doing so, the new code will promote land uses and development patterns that support mobility choice, reduce congestion, and reduce the negative environmental consequences of prolific automobile usage.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

6. **Connectivity:**
 - a. Subdivision and Site Plan standards that promote connectivity by: ensuring that

development sites include roadway connections, and where that is not possible, through pedestrian and bicycle connections; and through block sizes and patterns that promote walking, biking, and efficient automobile circulation.

- b. Using greenways to build new transportation systems; for example, by utilizing a certain number of feet from a floodplain to provide trails, bank stabilization, and to keep natural flooding areas free from development.

Response: In some cases connections are often built with potential future growth in mind. As a result, there are many instances where existing "connections" are in fact roads to "nowhere". Connecting many of these areas will be a significant undertaking and at a significant cost.

REDEVELOPMENT

1. Reduce Parking Standards

- a. Required parking minimums will be reduced from current levels to improve stormwater and water quality benefits; reduce development costs; promote walking, bicycling, and transit; provide opportunities for building expansion and development in retrofitted parking lots; and provide opportunities for open space and landscaping.
- b. These reductions in parking standards will likely be focused in walkable urban areas, Transect Zones T4 and higher, and areas near high capacity transit. Drivable suburban areas and Transect Zones T3 and lower may see less of a reduction. In other words, the parking standards will be calibrated to context.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

2. Compatibility and Transitions: See the Compatibility and Transitions section of this paper.

Response: See previous sections.

3. Connectivity: In order to reap the full benefit of redevelopment in Centers and Corridors, those redeveloped areas will need to be well connected to nearby neighborhoods so that those neighborhoods can take advantage of the increased access to services and amenities that redevelopment will provide.
 - a. Require the extension of roads, alleys, trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, or green connectors as opportunities allow.
 - b. Walkability will be promoted on large parcels through requirements for walkable block sizes, the number of required parking spots and their placement, and building coverage and placement standards.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription in principle, but would again urge that the

costs could be significant in some instances to achieve some of these items.

4. Housing and Building Diversity:

- a. Providing a diverse array of housing and building types leverages redevelopment in at least two ways:
 - i. It affords access to the array of amenities and services available in Corridors and Centers to diverse households and businesses.
 - ii. It ensures that redevelopment occurs in the compact manner for which Imagine Austin calls.
- b. The new Land Development Code will promote this diversity through: reduced parking requirements, diverse and compact lot sizes, adaptable buildings that readily accommodate shifting markets and uses, and carrying forward the recently adopted Accessory Dwelling Unit code elements.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

5. Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation: See Water and Watersheds, above

Response: See previous responses.

6. Subchapter E:

- a. Subchapter E of the Land Development Code, also known as “Commercial Design Standards,” includes site development standards (e.g., building placement, parking placement, exterior lighting, and open space), building design standards, and rules regarding mixed-use projects.
- b. In the new code, most of the site development and building design standards will be integrated directly into the base zoning district (rather than being “stand-alone” as they are today). In addition to providing greater ease of use and administration, this will ensure that site and building design standards can be applied specific to context, rather than in the current one-size-fits-all approach.
- c. Subchapter E also contains standards for Vertical Mixed Use Buildings, including a density bonus program that incentivizes the creation of affordable housing units in return for increased density. The density bonus program of Subchapter E (and other density bonus programs) will be addressed in the upcoming Household Affordability Code Prescription, to be released later in 2016.

Response: No response.

7. Form-Based Standards: The new Land Development Code will integrate into the base zoning district standards that will help integrate redevelopment with its surroundings and adjacent neighborhoods. These standards will include: interconnected streets; walkable block sizes; lower parking ratios and appropriate design and location of parking; requirements compelling meaningful and functional landscape and open space; and requirements for flood mitigation and water quality. And the zoning districts will

allow a wide array of uses, thereby allowing the creation of more complete communities.

Response: The HBAGA agrees with this prescription.

GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT

1. The new subdivision code will be simplified to contain only the process for creating a legally platted lot; specific standards such as those for design and connectivity will still apply, but will be in other sections of the code. For areas within Austin's full-purpose jurisdiction, for example, specific criteria such as minimum lot sizes and setbacks will be located in the zoning ordinance and watershed regulations. The subdivision code will rely on a parcel's base zone for the applicable design criteria; this will help prevent conflicts with other sections of the LDC. For areas in the extraterritorial jurisdiction where the City lacks zoning authority, this type of information will be included in the subdivision section.

Response: The HBAGA would encourage the city to have an open and transparent process with stakeholder involvement to develop the new subdivision code. In addition, the city should also consider lowering the minimum lot size standard.

2. Promote connectivity: As the city grows, it is increasingly important to create a built form that promotes walking and other mobility options, and that can be connected with other parts of the city, both existing and future. Our current greenfield development does not usually meet this standard, leading to isolated developments that generate car traffic and are often unsafe for other modes of transportation, such as walking and biking.
 - a. The Code prescription for new development will include increased connectivity through shorter block lengths, such as 400-500 feet, and by re-examining our minimum lot size to allow for a variety of building types on varying lot sizes.
 - b. New tools to encourage creative design that respects the natural environment, such as conservation subdivisions.

Response: It is important to note that while connectivity is more desirable, any significant increase to the overall price of the lot (due to infrastructure costs) will ultimately be paid for by the consumer. The HBAGA does agree with "a" and "b".

3. Protect the natural environment as growth occurs: Natural features such as rivers, creeks, trees, and open space are critical to creating a people-friendly Austin. One concern with greenfield development is that trees and open space may be lost, resulting in fragmented areas of private green space that are not accessible to everyone, and

poor water quality when runoff from the new development reaches existing creeks and rivers. Therefore, the Code prescription entails:

- a. Retain many of our current environmental protections, such as stream setbacks, tree preservation requirements, sensitive feature protection, and impervious cover limits.
- b. Promote green spaces that are connected, desirable, and multi-functional. Examples of this could include preserving land for a network of greenways and urban trails which could be used for recreation and commuting by bicycle or foot, giving people an alternative to roadway connections.
- c. Require stormwater to be filtered, retained, or otherwise reused onsite to support vegetation, supply baseflow to local springs and waterways, and reduce potable water consumption. For more information, please reference the previous sections on Water and Watersheds, and Landscape and Trees.

Response: The HBAGA disagrees with the concept that trees and open space are lost due to greenfield development. The city recently undertook an extensive update to the Parkland Dedication Ordinance that addresses this issue directly, and encourages developers/builders to provide better parks, amenities, and open space. We also disagree with the concept that poor water quality and runoff are caused by new development. Existing city code requires water quality and detention to be implemented as part of the process. There are many factors in considering what causes issues with runoff and poor water quality, and much of it has to do with outdated city infrastructure.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE: BUILD GREAT PUBLIC SPACES

1. Increase park and open space types; calibrate them to complement particular contexts; and incentivize the creation of great, active public spaces.
2. Increase access to recreation, as recommended in Imagine Austin, by expanding the number of parks and outdoor play spaces available to residents.
3. Develop standards for public spaces that are well-designed and tree-covered, and incentivize such spaces in new and redevelopment projects.
4. Infuse recommended code changes from the Parkland Dedication Ordinance: Parkland Dedication requires developers of dwelling units to provide land for parks or pay a fee in-lieu of land in proportion to the impact their development has on the park system.
 - a. Expand the amount of parkland options by setting fees to current land and construction costs and increase the amount of land required to meet the City's current level of service for neighborhood parks (9.4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents).
 - b. Increase credits for developments that agree to provide outdoor spaces that, while not dedicated parkland, are designed and designated for active use by the

- public. These private park spaces are maintained by the development and can provide unique play areas throughout the city.
- c. Develop standards for public spaces to be used in giving parkland dedication credits. Practices for making earlier decisions about whether land will be given or fees paid on a residential development also give the development community increased assurances about incorporating public space and parkland into their project.
 - d. Retain the City's Park level-of-service as codified in the new parkland dedication ordinance. Intense competition for space on parcels in the City's core usually makes parkland an afterthought. Items labeled Open Space are routinely stormwater detention and drainage areas, protected tree stands, a swimming pool area for residents, or transitional elements between building types where no recreation items are allowed under current Compatibility Standards. The Code must include:
 - i. Metrics or design standards that retain percentages or pervious areas while incentivizing options for active recreation in urban and dense areas, as there is intense competition for space in the city's core.
 - ii. Improve the definition of Open Space to counteract current ambiguity in code.
 - iii. Open space in a project may be designated as a transitional element between building types where no recreation items are allowed under current Compatibility Standards.
 - iv. Open space may also be identified in the stormwater detention or drainage area.
- 5. Incorporate a metric for green infrastructure, for public space, and other items to obtain higher quality Open space.
 - 6. Incentivize designing green infrastructure with dual active recreation options to meet dual purposes in the code.
 - 7. Require connections between new and infill projects to adjacent or nearby parkland. In 2014, the City Council adopted the Urban Trails Master Plan to guide the creation of an urban trail system. Many connections are needed through private property. Current code has an option for non-residential projects to make connections from their front entrances to adjacent parkland, but it is not mandatory. Requirements for connections to urban trails and nearby parkland will be included in the code.
 - 8. Create a common language and incentivize the use of varied park and open space typologies as identified below
 - a. Parks:
 - i. Metropolitan Parks
 - ii. District Parks
 - iii. Neighborhood and School Parks
 - iv. Neighborhood and Urban Pocket Parks
 - v. Special Parks
 - b. Sub-category of Parks: The code will address additional sub-categories of parks not included in the PARD Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs.

These sub-categories would help refine the palette of parks. This list generally adds additional parks that are not intended for structured sports activities, such as baseball, football or soccer. The palette of sub-categories will include standards including placement and location based on context. Sub-categories could include:

- i. Greenway
- ii. Green
- iii. Square
- iv. Plaza
- v. Pocket Plaza
- vi. Pocket Park
- vii. Nature Preserve

Response: The HBA of Greater Austin agrees with these prescriptions in their entirety.

HBA OF GREATER AUSTIN CONTACT INFORMATION

Geoffrey Tahuahua—VP of Public Policy
(512) 982-9175
geoffrey@hbaaustin.com

Emily Lubbers—CEO
(512) 982-9184
emily@hbaaustin.com



TO: CodeNEXT Advisory Group

FROM: North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association Development Committee

DATE: April 18, 2016

RE: Comments on Prescription 1: The Next Austin: Manage Our Growth, Keep Our Character

The North Shoal Creek Development Committee sees parts of this prescription as likely to make the patient, in this case North Shoal Creek, worse rather than better. Also, like other CodeNext documents, it fails to address an important question: will CodeNext's implementation of *Imagine Austin* include or exclude the section that addresses neighborhood and area plans? Thirdly, it presents implementing changes that are needed to current City policy and code as advantages inherent in CodeNext's form based approach. In reality, the changes need not wait for CodeNext's implementation but could be put into effect by code amendments sooner and at less cost than via a complete code rewrite.

Prescriptions normally say not only what drug to take but also how much and when. Metrics, however, are missing from this prescription. As a result, North Shoal Creek can tell only that more density is prescribed but not how much more, when and where. We are a medium to moderate density neighborhood and want to remain so, but recently had high density (107 persons per acre) introduced via a zoning change. What level of density is prescribed for North Shoal Creek in the Next Austin -- medium or high? (FYI: in the 2010 Census our neighborhood ranked 57th of 102 Austin neighborhoods, basically middle tier).

Most of North Shoal Creek was developed in the 60s and 70s, so most of its infrastructure is nearly 50 years old. It's situated near the headwaters of Shoal Creek, so parts lie in Shoal Creek's floodplain and have flooded in the past. Residents fear that, as density increases, aging and undersized drainage infrastructure combined with heavier downpours caused by climate change will increase the risk of flooding. Brentwood's recent experience with areas flooding for the first time is an experience we want to avoid. Yet, the prescription's redevelopment section doesn't address what we see as essential: assessing existing infrastructure and paying for upgrades. And, as described above, changes to current redevelopment and flood detention policies are presented as an advantage of CodeNext rather than as an issue that can (and should) stand on its own rather than be folded into CodeNext's implementation.

Regarding payment in lieu: while fine in theory, it is cold comfort to an individual whose home has flooded. Similarly, density bonuses that benefit one neighborhood at a cost to quality of life in another are not a plus.

Finally, we expect reducing parking requirements while increasing density to increase traffic and traffic-associated safety issues in our neighborhood. We live with the effects of Burnet Road and Highway 183 traffic daily. Many homes have one-car garages or garages converted to living space, so street parking by residents is common. Much of our neighborhood lacks sidewalks. Neighborhood streets tend to be narrow. There's little buffer between commercial and residential. Multiple streets suffer from frequently speeding cut-through traffic, but funding is so scarce that the neighborhood association is investigating help with traffic calming from the City's Neighborhood Partnership Program. In short, existing traffic and traffic-associated safety problems on neighborhood streets lead North Shoal Creek residents to view reducing parking requirements as exacerbating our neighborhood's greatest problem, not helping solve it.

We thank you for accepting additional comments on this first prescription paper, and we look forward to reading the revised document.

Sincerely,

Sharon Justice, Board Member and Development Committee Member,
North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association

April 18, 2016

Jim Duncan, Chair
Land Development Code Advisory Group
City of Austin
Austin, Texas

RE: Comments on “DRAFT Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription”

Dear Chairman Duncan:

I was unable to attend this evening’s meeting of the group. Please consider the following comments on the draft “code prescription” document. I looked on the website on how to submit written comments, but came up empty. The webpage for the Group requests that correspondence with the Group be directed to Paul DiGiuseppe, but I was unable to find an email address or other contact information for Mr. DiGiuseppe. Please share these comments with him and with the rest of the Group members and appropriate staff.

Please accept these comments from me as Executive Director of Save Our Springs Alliance. However, please know that our Board of Directors has not taken action on this matter and that some of my comments go beyond established SOS Alliance policies.

At the outset, please note my objection to the process of publishing the “prescription” documents but withholding draft code language until the end. The code should be released in chapters or subparts, with a clear overall outline of what is to come and the overall structure of the proposed new code.

The code prescription documents are no substitute for an open, participatory process that would allow the CodeNext Advisory Group, stakeholders, and the community to provide input along the way. Under the current process, there is no way of telling if the process is veering off course and, if so, to provide necessary early, mid-, and late-course corrections. This is unacceptable. We strongly encourage both the advisory group and the city council to step in and direct staff and the consultants to immediately release for review and comment all portions of the code where draft language exists together with a comprehensive, draft table of contents.

The current choice of staff and the consultant team for what is, in effect, an all-or-nothing approach suggests a high level of disrespect to council, the community experts and volunteers on the Advisory Group, and all interested parties. It seems clear that, under the current process, were it to continue, that once the full new code is dumped on the community, there will be a push to adopt it without adequate time for understanding, discussing, and considering

amendments and alternatives. The “sunk costs” incurred between now and then would favor adopting an undesirable code rather than one that would require significant rewrites.

The current process should be ended immediately in favor of a process that includes rather than excludes the community.

Two other general comments: it is essential that the staff and consultants provide disposition tables that lay out where current code sections were moved to in the code and spelling out how they were changed (or not) in the process. Absent such a document—which is standard practice in all legislative drafting—the process will become the equivalent of a “where’s Waldo?” game of code review. Unintended and undesirable results will ensue.

Finally, key terms (aka “jargon”) should be clearly defined and terms that are misleading should be avoided. For example, “complete streets” should be spelled out, in a glossary or otherwise; “missing middle” is another example.

In the section on “Water and Watersheds”

I recommend an explicit recognition of the most difficult challenges to implementing any of the major changes, including, for example, state law on grandfathering and the need to reduce impervious cover and mitigate the effects of impervious cover from existing development in order to help offset the adverse effects of new development.

We appreciate the recognition that the existing Water Protection Ordinances shall be “maintained” and “improved” in their ability to protect watersheds and water quality. It should be made explicit that this includes the Save Our Springs ordinance and urban watershed protection standards.

The “Issues” subsection should include a number “4” titled either “Pollution and Extinction” or “Water Quality and Biodiversity.” It is essential to highlight water quality—and deteriorating water quality in our watersheds—at a time when both contact and noncontact water recreation and protection of aquatic endangered species. Preserving exceptional, clear clean waters and aquatic ecosystems are established community priorities. Both face immediate and growing challenges that must be addressed in the Land Development Code. Actions are needed in addition to limiting impervious cover.

The “Impervious Cover” section should include a statement that impervious cover leads to downstream erosion that destroys aquatic habitats, streamside trails and parks, and private property. As written, the effect of impervious cover on erosion is largely ignored.

New developments above a relatively low threshold should be required to submit “water impact reports” that spell out the effects of the proposed development on our water resources. “Water neutral” development should be required, wherever feasible, with the burden on the developer to

show that “water neutral” is not reasonably achievable. “Water neutrality” standards should include capture, use, and reuse standards and guidelines.

(These comments also apply to some extent in the “Landscape and Trees” section.)

In the “Compatibility and Transitions” section:

At the bottom of p. 20 it is asserted that current compatibility standards “could” have a significant detrimental effect. There should be specific examples to determine if this is a real problem or not.

On page 22 is asserted that “form—rather than use” is what typically drives compatibility. This is likely not true or only true in some circumstances. Zoning law has long recognized that many uses are not compatible for being close or next door neighbors.

The assertion on page 23 that the new approach to compatibility requires “sound mapping decisions,” yet our understanding is that the mapping “decisions” are being decoupled from the process of considering the new code standards. This makes little sense, and will result in two rounds of battles. It should also be made explicit what exactly these “mapping decisions” are, who will make them, and how and when.

In the section “Landscape and Trees” it is stated at the beginning that the new code will “recognize” the importance of landscape and trees. However, we need trees and greenspaces protected, not merely their value “recognized.” In the urban core, as density is increased and automobile habitat reduced, trees and greenspaces should be expanded (not sacrificed). This is essential to reduce the urban heat island effect, mitigate climate change, achieve water catchment and conservation goals, and prevent downstream flooding and erosion.

Tree health is difficult to assess, and far too often trees are marked “unhealthy” or “overmature” as a way to get rid of them. Mature trees especially need to be saved, not labelled as defective.

In the “Design for Mobility” section:

The “prescription” for “connectivity in new subdivisions emphasizes the need for connectivity within new subdivisions but largely ignores the need for connectivity between subdivisions. This is repeated in the “greenfields” section.

In the Redevelopment section:

It is strongly suggested in the text here and elsewhere that higher density nodes and corridors must sacrifice or possibly discard green spaces. This idea should be scrapped. Higher density projects should retain significant green spaces, both within redeveloped, high-density areas and nearby. As denser projects go “up” and car habitat is reduced, green spaces should be included and expanded. In many older developments there is excessive and unneeded pavement, providing opportunities to reduce impervious cover during the redevelopment process.

In the “Greenfield Development”

The #1 under Prescription, page 34, is not clear on how the processes and code structures are intended to be rearranged. The #2 “connectivity” paragraph seems to ignore connectivity between developments.

The #3, in stating that “many of our current environmental protections” will be retained, suggests that others will NOT be retained. These should be clearly spelled out and, more likely than not, should also be retained rather than discarded.

In the “Parks and Open Space” section:

Please add text suggesting that commercial development, not just residential development, should provide parks and outdoor recreation opportunities. Residents spend large amounts of time at work: they/we need access to healthy, beautiful outdoor recreation areas at our places of work, not just within residential areas.

It should also be noted that, given the shortage of nearby state and/or federal parks and recreation areas, it is necessary for Austin residents and businesses to expand and connect our local parks to offset this shortfall.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Bunch

Save Our Springs Alliance



April 26, 2016

RE: CodeNEXT, Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

Dear CodeNEXT Team:

On behalf of Shoal Creek Conservancy, I am writing to share our recommendations for improving the “Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription” draft document developed as part of the CodeNEXT process. We appreciate the opportunity to share our comments and thank you for your work on the Land Development Code rewrite. We commend the City for undertaking this important process.

Water and Watersheds: We strongly support the eight prescriptions included in the Water and Watersheds section of the document and the incorporation of the full Green Infrastructure Working Groups (GIWG) recommendations into the Code rewrite. We would like to underscore the vital importance of the recommended requirements for redevelopment projects, particularly in Shoal Creek and Austin’s other highly urbanized watersheds. Five Imagine Austin Centers are located within the watershed. The Far West and Anderson Lane Station neighborhood centers could each bring up to 10,000 new residents and 7,000 new jobs. The Downtown and North Burnet/Gateway Station are regional centers expected to accommodate up to 45,000 new residents and 25,000 new jobs. Redevelopment, and new development, in these centers must incorporate the GIWG recommendations to ensure stormwater is adequately mitigated and does not contribute to creek flooding and degraded water quality in Shoal Creek, Lady Bird Lake, and the Colorado River.

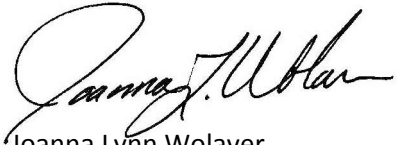
Parks & Open Space: The Conservancy also strongly supports the recommendations in the Parks & Open Space section of the draft as critical steps towards creating world-class recreational spaces in our growing city. We also commend the inclusion of recommendations to promote green infrastructure within these spaces. However, a critical element is missing in this section – protection and restoration of biodiversity within these spaces. Imagine Austin underscores that “Our open spaces and preserves shape city planning, reduce infrastructure costs, provide us with recreation, clean air and water, local food, cooler temperatures, and biodiversity.” However, little is mentioned about biodiversity in this draft document. Recommendations should be added that seek to both conserve the remaining biodiversity in these areas and to restore diverse native habitats, particularly in the riparian areas along our stream corridors. These areas not only provide critical habitat for native species, but also play a key role in improving water quality and slowing the flow of stormwater.

Landscape and Trees: The Conservancy also recommends the incorporate of biodiversity protection and restoration into the Landscape and Trees section of this document. This section is heavily focused on the preservation of trees. Trees, while critically important, are only one element of a functioning ecosystem. A healthy urban forest ecosystem is much more than trees and consists of a large number of plant species at multiple layers. These grasses, shrubs and other plants enable different types of native animals to live in a small area. We strongly recommend a broader view of urban forests, trees and landscaping in this section and the incorporation of biodiversity enhancement recommendations.

Through CodeNEXT, we have the opportunity to create healthy ecosystems, as well as protect trees and develop beautiful landscapes.

Shoal Creek Conservancy is nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the Shoal Creek watershed and associated greenway. The vision of the Conservancy is for Shoal Creek to be a vibrant corridor that integrates the flow of water and people, engages the community, and inspires the public. We will continue working with the City and community to develop strategies that support this vision and the Imagine Austin goals. Thank you for the opportunity to make recommendations regarding the CodeNEXT process. Please feel free to contact me at 512-474-2412 or joanna@shoalcreekconservancy.org with any questions.

Sincerely,



Joanna Lynn Wolaver
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Ted Siff, President
Albert Stowell, Treasurer
Paul Isham, Secretary
Jo-Dee Benson
Ted Eubanks
Perry Lorenz
Susan Rieff
Amy Wannamaker

www.shoalcreekconservancy.org

701 West 7th Street Austin, Texas 78701

Phone: 512-474-2412 Fax: 512-474-2417 E-Mail: info@shoalcreekconservancy.org