

Planning Commission Workgroup response to CodeNext's Affordability prescription paper.

A. Density Bonus Program

1. The affordability prescription paper does a good job of explaining market affordable housing, and how it makes up the vast majority of our affordable housing stock. However it does not propose any prescriptions for monitoring or preserving affordable units that occur naturally in the market, outside of affordability programs.
 - i. Demolished housing units must be tracked in order to evaluate the success of affordability programs.
 - ii. Increased entitlements must be calibrated to ensure they do not incentivize the demolition of market affordable units.
 - iii. Our older stock of market affordable units must be preserved or replaced when facing demolition. It is important that these approaches include incentives to replace the units.

B. Diversity of Housing Choices

1. In instances where entitlement increases are applied in order to achieve greater affordability, some measure of affordability outcome must be clearly defined and required in the surrounding area.
2. There is support for incentivizing a mix of housing types, of especial interest are entitlements that would increase density without increasing the current FAR or impervious cover. We believe they would better fit the character of already developed areas, and would produce a smaller product, more likely to increase affordability.

C. Fair Housing

1. In light of the research results on Austin's economic segregation, and to ensure we are pursuing fair housing policies, the growth concept map must be evaluated to consider activity corridors and centers west of Mopac.
2. Different areas of town have different economic realities. An entitlement might promote affordability in one part of town while it might push out lower income residents in another. We believe the code should be sensitive to that reality in order to address economic segregation.

D. Density Limits

1. Several prescriptions have a basis on our current land development code. We believe strongly that there must be an evaluation of how the programs are moving the needle on affordability before we incorporate them in our new land development code: i.e. infill tools, fee in lieu, density bonus historic and homestead districts, live/work units and any other existing tools in the current LDC.

E. Compatibility and Transitions

1. Where do these transitions occur and how are they decided? It is important for the code to begin addressing these issues because this has historically been where planning and rezoning run into conflicts with the community at large.
2. How will the diversity of our neighborhoods be considered in the form based code?

F. Mobility & Affordability

1. There is much research showing that increases in transit options drive up property values and displace transit dependent residents. Choice riders, who own vehicles, replace them. The result is not only that those who need the service most lose access, but that ridership decrease. Can mobility be directly linked to affordability the way parking reductions are?

G. Parking & Affordability

1. Reducing parking requirements in targeted areas. What are 'compact' areas? We have neighborhoods and areas with parking reductions like the Urban Core and Mueller, have these worked to incentive alternative methods of transportation? Does this decrease the cost of housing in these areas?
2. Are there ways to diversify the types of parking that can be allowed, i.e. stack parking, pervious parking?

H. Development Review Process Tradeoffs

1. The site-plan requirement is discouraging missing middle developments. Its application and its processes must be evaluated in order to remove this barrier for smaller unit count projects, 2-5 units.
2. *my concern is that the site plan process looks at so many factors like storm water, traffic impact, etc. that I would hate to see these get ignored of larger unit projects, 5-25)*

I. Environmental Regulations Tradeoffs

1. Outlined in previous response paper

J. Affordability Impacts to Small Businesses and the Cultural Arts.

1. What impact has form based codes had on small commercial businesses in the core of other cities? If the use is not mandated and housing is more lucrative it may force small commercial out of our form based core.

K. Other Points

1. Planning efforts must prioritize areas where Austin is experiencing the most growth, and where we are likely to have the greatest impact. Currently the greatest growth and the greatest potential for creating complete connected communities lies in the development of Greenfield sites.
2. A prescription to bring housing to job centers and even job sites should be considered.
3. Although we understand that the affordability prescription paper intended to focus only on topics that fall squarely within the land development code, we believe it would be of great value to report on topics that are integral to the affordability conversation, even if, at least in part, they fall outside of the LDC re-write scope. I.e. Public private partnerships, the use of public lands, historic preservation districts, homestead preservation districts. As well as an outline on ways in which city government can support the land development code via next steps and assumptions that the code rewrite team may see as necessary for the future success of this rewrite.

