

Commission Recommendation  
Economic Prosperity Commission  
Recommendation Number: 20170419-002b  
Recommendation Regarding CodeNEXT

The Economic Prosperity Commission has been tasked by the City Council to promote economic growth and job creation in the City. While it has been well documented that access to affordable housing, quality schools and transportation have a profound effect on intergenerational mobility and prosperity of residents, Austin has made unfortunate headlines as a highly segregated city with unequal outcomes. CodeNEXT provides the city an opportunity to provide greater affordable and market rate housing options in areas of high opportunity - defined by access to good schools, walkability and transportation options to good jobs.

CodeNEXT has been a multi-year effort costing millions of dollars, which itself came from the Imagine Austin comprehensive plan, a multi-year effort involving thousands of citizens and civic organizations laying out the goals we hope our city will achieve. Given the years of effort, the role of land use in building widely prosperous communities, and the goals laid out in Imagine Austin, *we are deeply concerned that the draft code and map do not go far enough to implement the community's stated goals and needs, as stated in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.*

Specifically, the following characteristics leave the Commission with the deepest concerns:

- The draft code is still complex, dividing the city between over 100 euclidean categories and over 21 transects when including commercial services.
- And while more housing types, particularly more affordable “missing middle” are allowed by-right in transects 4 (T4) and higher, we are concerned that the draft map does not utilize this tool sufficiently and instead perpetuates unsustainably low-density zoning across the vast majority of the City. *This does not sufficiently address the lack of affordable and market rate housing in areas of high opportunity, perpetuating segregation and unequal outcomes.*

We are hopeful that revisions to the new draft code will reduce its complexity and encourage the greatest number of practicable housing types in areas of high opportunity, such as:

- Form-based rules that allow for a mixture of housing and commercial services by-right throughout the entire city, as opposed to their continued separation;
- Removal of deep setback transects in T4 and above that codify expensive and unsustainable housing forms within Central Austin;
- Further narrowing the number of euclidean and transect land use categories;
- Expand the inclusion of “missing middle” housing types through T3 and T4 categories, including row-homes within neighborhoods and not exclusively along major corridors.

These recommendations stem from our observation that complexity is not only a problem for developers, but for city staff who are unable to provide consistent and timely reviews.

Austin is a dynamic community, whose character is defined by the diversity and creativity of the people who live here, and not the preservation of any one housing form. To the maximum extent possible, we urge the CAG and City Staff to consider further reducing the complexity of the draft code and to allow the greatest number of practicable housing types across the entire city so that every Austin resident has access to an affordable home, good schools and job opportunities connected by transit options.

RECOMMENDATION APPROVED:

FOR: 9

AGAINST: 0

ABSTAINED: 0

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Mosier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

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Roberto C. Rondero de Mosier  
Chair