



**SMALL AREA PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION AND THE ZONING AND PLATTING COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATION 20170607-6A**

Date: June 7, 2017

Subject: Future Small Area Planning Efforts

Motioned By: David King

Seconded By: Stephen Oliver

Recommendation

The Small Area Planning Joint Committee recommends that the City expand the current efforts of the Mobility Bond areas beyond only right-of-way, to include Corridor Planning. It should take into consideration the tools of CodeNext and other current planning efforts, and begin to create a process for which our City's long-range planning can follow.

Description of Recommendation to Council

The City of Austin should reconsider its current small area planning efforts in light of the *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan* and the CodeNEXT process. Instead of solely focusing on neighborhood plans, the emphasis should be on creating small area plans for the comprehensive plan's Activity Centers and Activity Corridors. These planning efforts should be done in a coordinated manner with the planning and capital improvements associated with the mobility bonds.

Rationale:

Please see attached memo from the Chair of the Small Area Planning Joint Committee, James Shieh.

Vote

For: David King, Stephen Oliver, Jeffrey Thompson, James Shieh

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Jolene Kiobassa, Jim Duncan, Trinity White

Attest:



Mark Walters

Planning and Zoning Department Staff Liaison



SMALL AREA PLANNING JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE ZONING AND PLATTING COMMISSION– MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 7, 2017

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Small Area Planning Joint Committee

SUBJECT: Current and Future Small Area Planning Efforts – Status and Recommendations

The Small Area Planning Joint Committee, consisting of members of the Planning Commission and Zoning and Platting Commission, discussed the status of current and future small area planning in the City at our June meeting. We found that there is a disjoint between the projected efforts and what is very much needed. When asked about what was on the horizon, we heard that a neighborhood plan was next on the list. With the current efforts of CodeNEXT, the upcoming Transportation Plan release in 2018, the ongoing Mobility Bond work, and upcoming revisions to our neighborhood planning processes, we feel that that there are other important areas that need immediate attention.

Small area planning looks at criteria and principles for bettering and connecting our city through a different lens than our neighborhood planning process of the last 20 years. The premise of Compact and Connected and the benefits that it brings, as described in Imagine Austin, cannot be realized without looking at what connects and glues the City together. Imagine Austin states on Page 186:

“... [a] compact and connected city encapsulates household affordability, environmental protection, and complete communities, with easier, greener, healthier transportation options linking residents to jobs, arts and culture, parks, schools, health care, shopping, and other destinations.”

In the past, neighborhood planning often pushed its back against the major commercial streets where most main transit exists. We know now the great importance of these areas for the public’s health in bringing services, connections, housing diversity, and helping to complete the needs of a community.

Small area planning for Austin can look holistically at the transition from areas of transit and increased mobility, across areas of integrated “missing middle” residential / commercial, and into better protected, but more complete, single-family residential neighborhood cores. The kinds of transitions can vary to reflect the unique areas of the city, but the citywide need for better connected and improved neighborhoods is clearly evident. Completing the city fabric with an emphasis on implementing “complete communities” is desperately needed with each wave of city growth.

There appears to be a disconnection between our City's traditional planning process of neighborhoods and the greater vision of Imagine Austin with its Corridors and Centers. A focused and strategic citywide small area planning effort can begin to organize the city and connect the neighborhoods while preserving key qualities we love most about our existing neighborhoods. These efforts would specifically target the integration of improved connectivity, transit opportunities, appropriate lands uses, and building forms on and near Imagine Austin Corridors and Centers. Additionally, this would give the residential areas of our neighborhoods increased levels predictability and understanding from which to adapt their respective Neighborhood Plans. Resources for new and updated traditional Neighborhood Planning efforts should continue but within context of the immediate focus of looking more strategically across multiple neighborhood planning areas and tying the fabric of the city together.

The immediacy of this need comes from lessons we are learning from the current CodeNext process. The success of the Mobility Bond, which identifies critical corridors and calls for right-of-way improvements in some, and right-of-way planning in others, gives us an opportunity to plan through a prioritized list of corridors and centers which are to receive critical funding. The conversation about these areas in relation to the Bond has recently begun. Critical to these discussions is planning beyond the right-of-way and analyzing the adjacent land uses and forms and well as the transitions into the neighborhood. There are also cues we can take from other recent planning efforts, such as Capital Metro's Priority Planning Tools which analyzes areas around transit stops and routes to gauge the readiness of the area for land development. With funding already in place for part of the discussion, insight from CodeNext process and other studies, it would be prudent incorporate some key elements of Corridor Planning—doing so later would prove to be more costly and unnecessary frustrations at lost opportunities.

The Small Area Planning Joint Committee recommends that the City expand the current efforts of the Mobility Bond areas beyond only right-of-way, to include Corridor Planning. It should take into consideration of CodeNEXT's tools and other current planning efforts, and begin to create a process for our City's long-range planning to follow.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Shieh". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

James Shieh
Chair, Small Area Planning Joint Committee

CC: Members of Small Area Planning Joint Committee — Stephen Oliver, James Shieh, Jeffery Thompson, Trinity White, Jim Duncan, Jolene Kiolbassa, and David King