



## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Small Area Planning Joint Committee  
**FROM:** Mark Walters, Principal Planner, Planning and Zoning Department  
**DATE:** May 11, 2018  
**RE:** North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Plan

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At the April 24 meeting of the Austin Planning Commission, there was public input and discussion of the North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Plan. Staff has prepared this memo in order to answer questions and clarify issues brought up at that meeting.

### Outreach and Participation

*Planning Commissioners and speakers asked questions about how much outreach was done for the plan, especially to groups other than homeowners.*

Staff went to significant efforts to engage the community:

- Mailed postcards and public hearing notice to all residents, businesses, and property owners
- Posted fliers in multi-family developments and gathering spaces such as the North Village Branch Library and local cafes
- Emailed initial survey to all utility customers within the area
- Sent home English and Spanish fliers to all Pillow Elementary students
- Posted signs on major access points to planning area
- Directed outreach to community groups including NSCNA, Shoal Creek Conservancy, North Village Branch Library story time events, and Pillow PTA
- Posted summaries and materials for all meetings online
- Maintained and updated stakeholder email list.

All notices/signs/fliers included contact information in Spanish. All events had press releases and were picked up by Austin Chronicle. KUT released a story early in the process. As a supplement to staff efforts, the North Shoal Creek Neighborhood Association did extensive outreach, including hand-delivered newsletters, yard signs, and online forums.

Participant addresses were collected at workshops and ownership status was collected with initial survey. 80% of workshop participants and 72% of survey respondents own their residence. Through a tax record search, staff determined that roughly 39% of the dwelling units in the planning area are owner-occupied.

## Connectivity

*Planning Commissioners commented that the lack of connectivity from the core of the residential area to the Activity Corridors was unfortunate and asked what solutions were brought up during the planning process.*

During the public hearing, some speakers and Commissioners commented about improving connectivity and increasing housing density near transit. **Figure 10 of the NSCNP** (p. 64 of the plan and p. 6 of this memo) shows the areas that are within ¼ mile radius of the MetroRapid stops. The ¼ mile measure is a commonly used catchment area for high-capacity bus transit stations. Under the proposed FLUM, nearly all of the land along this walk-shed would allow mixed-use multi-family or live-work units (Mixed-use Activity Corridor, Neighborhood Transition, or Buell Avenue Special District).

It was suggested during the planning process and public hearing that additional connections (beyond the two identified in the plan connecting the residential core and Steck Avenue to Anderson Lane) be made between the interior of the planning area and the activity corridors; however, when looked at more closely, these connections proved to be problematic. One recommendation suggested demolition a house on Thrushwood or Primrose Lanes to create a connection to the Crossroads shopping Center. This would require a willing seller and upwards of half a million dollars to reduce a half-mile walk or bike ride to a little over 200'. This dollar amount does not include perpetual maintenance of the proposed connection. Another recommendation suggested that a connection be made at the stub of Stillwood Lane to connect to the Northwood Shopping Center on Anderson Lane. This would require gaining easements and/or access agreements from the Village Christian Apartments and the shopping center. If this connection were to be made cyclists and pedestrian would be then be deposited at the service area on the backside of the shopping center. Although staff considered these options, they were ultimately rejected. Should properties along the activity corridors redevelop, all reasonable efforts to improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity should be made.

## Evolution of Place Visions and FLUM

*Based on discussions at the meeting, staff would like to clarify the difference between the Neighborhood Place Visions/Policies and the FLUM Character Districts, especially in regards to the Residential Interior and Residential Core. Additionally, Commissioners asked what compromises and considerations were made in creating the FLUM.*

The draft FLUM is the culmination of a lengthy, iterative, and participatory process and involved a dialogue between professional staff and the community. This conversation included educating stakeholders about land use, housing, *Imagine Austin*, and the other issues associated with Austin's rapid growth. At the first public meeting participants were asked to identify parts of the planning area where they rationally expected the character to dramatically change, experience modest change, and where the character would remain largely as is. Building on this, staff asked participants to define different character areas of the planning area and to draw the borders around each of these places. Each of these places also has a vision statement intended to guide future land use decisions. Stakeholders identified "Residential Interior" as the area of the neighborhood which contains all of the houses, duplexes, and apartment or condo complexes. (See **Neighborhood Places Map** on p. 16 of the

plan and p. 7 of this memo). The Residential Interior includes both Residential Core and Neighborhood Transition FLUM districts.

The FLUM evolved out of the discussions of the different places in the planning area. Stakeholders indicated what they thought were appropriate character districts for different parts of the planning area. Staff assembled and synthesized community input, filtered it through *Imagine Austin* and other adopted City policies, and considered the interests of low or non-participating stakeholders such as business owners, investment property owners, and renters. Once synthesized the input was presented to the participants. Despite earlier hesitations, stakeholders ultimately accepted maintaining the integrity of the Activity Corridors at an appropriate scale to support high-capacity transit and expand housing choices in this portion of North-Central Austin.

### **Housing impact of proposed FLUM**

*Planning Commissioners asked what additional capacity for additional housing units exists presently and under the proposed FLUM.*

There are 2,155 existing residential units in the planning area. Because of the number of different zones that could be applied to a given FLUM character district, it is difficult to estimate what could realistically be built under the proposed FLUM without developing a range through a lot-by-lot analysis that considers parcel size, parking requirements, allowable floor-to-area requirements (FAR), impervious cover, unit mix and units per acre, compatibility requirements, and required storm water and water quality facilities. However, for the purposes of comparison it is possible to create a very theoretical maximum of allowable units based on the development standards and land area of each zoning district. This is calculated by multiplying the maximum dwelling unit density per acre by the amount of land area for the most and least permissive districts. Actual unit numbers will be markedly lower than these theoretical limits based on development requirements listed above and the specific zone applied to a given parcel. This exercise does not consider market factors which are beyond the scope of a staff analysis. The ultimate unit yield estimates will be much further reduced due to the fact that the planning area is built out and that the majority of buildings have considerable economic and useful life left in them. The net result is relatively few redevelopment options. **Table 1** on p. 4 of this memo shows the results of this theoretical analysis.

When CodeNEXT is adopted, two units would be allowed in every Residential Core lot. Duplexes would be limited to properties zoned R2-C and on corner lots in the R2-A zone; however, **ADUs would be allowed on every single-family lot in the Residential Core**. The plan does not designate what residential zones should be applied in a given area of the Residential Core. The plan does not define where R2-A and R2-C should be allowed. If the existing character district table were to be translated into the latest CodeNEXT districts, R2-C could be allowed everywhere within the Residential Core.

**Table 1. Theoretical Maximum Total Housing Units In the North Shoal Creek Planning Area – Based on aggregated areas without consideration of lot sizes, parking, setbacks/compatibility, or any other development regulations or market conditions.**

	Single-Family & Duplex Zones	Multi-family Zones	Other Zones	Total
Existing Units	894	1261	0	2155
Theoretical Maximum Under Current Zoning	1147	1149	0*	2596
Theoretical Maximum Under Proposed FLUM (CodeNEXT)	1698	1324	3802*	6824

**Methods and Assumptions:** This table shows existing units, potential units under current zoning, and potential units under the FLUM/CodeNEXT. The latter two values are based on total redevelopment of all the land zoned under each category. Note that land zoned multifamily or non-residential under the existing LDC does not correspond exactly to the same categories under CodeNEXT. Lot counts and land areas were then multiplied by density limits, where available in the current code or CodeNEXT. Development regulations such as parking, required yards, residential compatibility, impervious area, maximum height, etc., were not considered.

*\*Land currently zoned for Vertical Mixed Use or proposed to be zoned as Main Street districts was excluded from this analysis, as there is no density limit specified in the respective codes. These areas account for 37 acres (VMU) and 118 acres (Main Street districts), all of which could be developed with medium to high density mixed-use.*

It should be restated that this housing capacity is theoretical, and that there are several factors that would reduce the amount of units that could actually be built. This exercise was provided to demonstrate that under the proposed FLUM and CodeNEXT, theoretical housing capacity could increase by multiples over what is allowed under the current code.

## Extending Neighborhood Transition

*Planning Commissioners asked if the possibility of extending the Neighborhood Transition FLUM district along Steck Avenue or Rockwood Lane.*

Lot sizes along Steck Avenue vary from 6,877 to 10,755 square feet. As shown on the **Steck Avenue Lot Areas Map** on p. 8 of this memo, 16 lots have side-yard frontages on Steck Avenue and would not be ideal candidates for denser development. It should also be noted that the lots on the western segment of Steck Avenue are affected by the 100-year floodplain. Under the CodeNEXT Draft #3, depending on the applicable zone, multifamily developments would be allowed on lots 5,000 square feet or those 8,000 square feet or greater. Lot sizes and configurations along Steck suggest that it would be difficult to develop existing individual lots into multifamily units due to impervious cover limitations, and access and parking requirements. Independent of the building typology, a potential downside of more intensive redevelopment would be a proliferation of driveways and added turning motions on an already-busy roadway.

As a case study, staff looked at the southern block face of Steck Avenue between Stillwood Lane and Parkdale Drive. This 600 foot long block face currently contains 9 single family homes. Under CodeNEXT, these lots could add an accessory dwelling unit, bringing the total number of units to 18. If all 9 lots were to be combined and replatted under the proposed CodeNEXT R2A district, the block face could be redeveloped with up to 24 single-family attached lots. In contrast, if this block was designated Neighborhood Transition in the FLUM and rezoned to R4A or RM2, this could theoretically result in 30 townhouse units along the entire block. If the desired outcome of this is to create more affordable housing options in the planning area it is highly doubtful that the new development would be affordable to Austinites making 80% of the median household income.

Considering the condition and value of these homes, individual lots on this block are unlikely to redevelop, and it is even less likely that multiple lots will be combined and redeveloped. This situation has borne out in other neighborhood planning areas, where lots designated as high-density single-family on the FLUM during the planning process (an analogous district to the Neighborhood Transition) have failed to develop as such. A more likely scenario for adding housing to North Shoal Creek is to develop mixed-use and denser multi-family buildings along the corridors and allow accessory dwelling units and duplexes throughout the Residential Core.

Similar to Steck Avenue, similar constraints apply to lots along Rockwood Lane, which is narrower and has lower traffic volumes than Steck. Also, the Austin Transportation Department is working to install additional traffic calming on the Rockwood Lane north of Steck Avenue. Consequently, staff does not recommend extending the Neighborhood Transition district along Rockwood Lane.

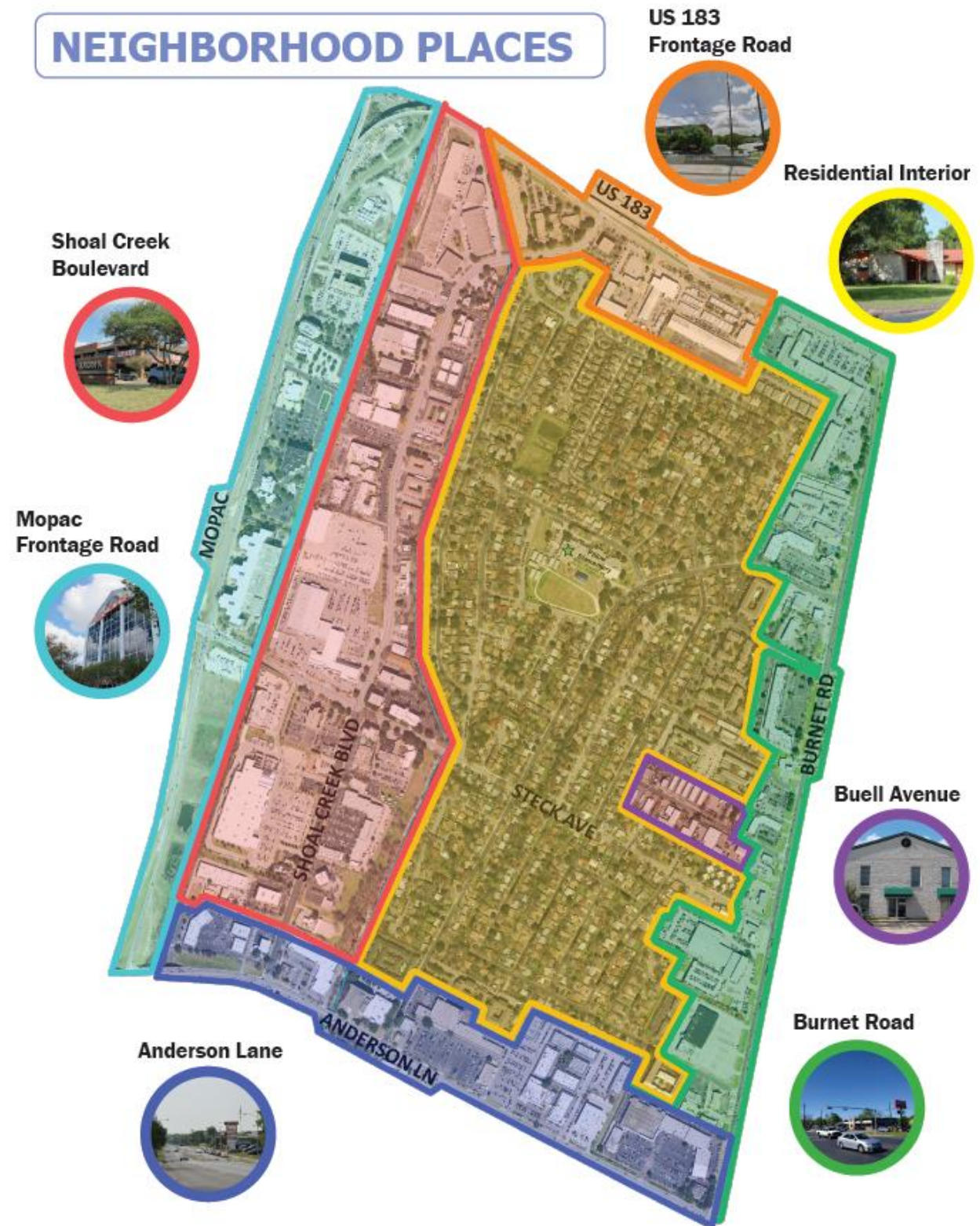
If the Planning Commission recommends extending Neighborhood Transition district to areas that have been shown as Residential Core throughout the process, staff will reach out to those residents, property owners and their neighbors so that they might weigh in before City Council takes final action.

**Figure 10: ¼ Mile Metro Rapid Stop Pedestrian Shed**





## Neighborhood Places Map



Steck Avenue Lot Sizes Map

