

Housing and Planning Committee (HPC) meeting Transcript – 3/26/2024

Title: ATXN-1 (24hr)

Channel: 1 - ATXN-1

Recorded On: 3/26/2024 6:00:00 AM

Original Air Date: 3/26/2024

Transcript Generated by SnapStream

=====

Please note that the following transcript is for reference purposes and does not constitute the official record of actions taken during the meeting. For the official record of actions of the meeting, please refer to the Approved Minutes.

[2:05:14 PM]

good afternoon, everybody. I am Austin city council member Natasha harper-madison. I'm the chair of the housing and planning committee. We are sitting in city hall council chambers in Austin, Texas, and it is not February 20th, on March 26th, 2024. It is now 205. And I'd like to call the meeting to order. I believe we have three speakers. Thank you. >> First, speaker Gus Pena. No. Okay. Jen weaver and then Adam Greenfield. >> All right, good afternoon. Honorable chair. Harper-madison. Vice chair. Alter council member. Ellis, and distinguished members of our housing and planning committee. I'm Jen weaver, a real estate developer and citizen of Austin, district nine. Last year, I worked with

[2:06:16 PM]

nine. Last year, I worked with council member harper-madison to initiate an urban land institute technical assistance panel to increase no and low parking adoption. We started discussion in January, quickly found collaborators held interviews in September, and presented initial findings in October. The strategies were widely welcomed as we a city work to reduce parking ratios for better parking, for better ratings for federal financing on project connect, planning commission made a recommendation in December. Based on the first draft of the Eula tap council initiated staff work in January and this year we are now in a better position to move forward on project connect. Thank you for hearing this need and moving quickly. However, we have a slight problem. Banking culture which looks at the past while policy builds forward, leaving the development community to bridge the gap. We have many years before project connect is usable. Developers will continue to build what they can get

[2:07:17 PM]

to build what they can get approved within their companies and what financing institutions will approve. If there is no investment. Committees do not care that policy in Austin has changed. If there is no benefit to the financiers for building less parking, we can expect to see no change in parking ratios delivered. It has been possible to deliver no parking projects in downtown since 2013, and I was the first developer to deliver a no parking apartment in 2022. Trust me when I say we cannot rely on the capitalist model alone to shift parking culture if we want to stimulate a change, we need to consider economic incentives. High parking ratios hurt. Voter approved project connects annual competitive financing in perpetuity. The public absolutely benefits from offering economic incentives for no and low parking adoption. During this cultural shift, the modal shift has been stated in various strategic plans from the city, including a snipes goal of 50 over 50 single occupancy vehicle use. But we have not partnered with the builders of

[2:08:18 PM]

partnered with the builders of our city in any of these plans. We need to build forward together. I'm asking that the economic incentives for no and low parking ratios be added as an agenda item at the next housing and planning committee meeting. I'm happy to cooperate in bringing more developers to testify, and I already have commitments from three, connect with rekha and Dia for advocacy and work with economic development office on processes and language to move this item forward. Thank you. >> Thank you. I appreciate your contribution. Just a second, anybody have a question? I do have a quick question. So in addition to getting that item on the agenda, if you had to say, say the top three things that have provided that have proved themselves to be barriers, what would you say that is? I think I heard you say that the like smp and other plans aren't collaborating with the development community. What would be the other two things, I would say from a developer perspective, it's that moment when a developer is getting

[2:09:18 PM]

when a developer is getting financing from a bank or investors or even internally in their company, and, and they're proposing a lower parking ratio than a company or bank or investor will approve. Then it goes right back to being the parking ratio that the financing institution wants, because that's the only way the project can move forward. >> Sorry to interrupt. So are you essentially saying that it's more difficult to finance a project with less parking and you're saying that's because the financial institution has not caught up with the concept of no parking being a part of the consideration for financing a project? >> Yes, ma'am. Okay, and so I think the ongoing liability is a high interest rate, higher interest rate. If the project can be approved, so the only, only the only ongoing liability that could offset that is property tax, and so I'm not saying that it should be a full property tax offset, but a potential calculation Ann to

[2:10:19 PM]

potential calculation Ann to carry the developer and investment first holder of the project through the first ten year cycle, I think would be immensely helpful tool to bring to an investment committee things like that. And we should do stakeholder input. That's that's a bigger conversation. That's the potential offset there. >> Thank you. I really appreciate your testimony. >> Thank you. >> Adam Greenfield. >> Good afternoon. Council members Adam Greenfield here with safe streets Austin just to back up Jen and follow her with, this push for, further parking reform downtown, as you know, in , in 2023, Austin led the way, led the nation, in fact, in removing parking mandates citywide in in Austin. And it is now time again, I think, to return to parking reform and specifically downtown if we want project connect, to work, if we want walking and biking to be

[2:11:21 PM]

want walking and biking to be serious, forms of transportation downtown, we really need to address parking. And as you can see, what's going up right now all over town, this is somewhat of an urgent situation, and it'll be fantastic if this committee can can really lead the way on, on on this next, slate of reforms. So thank you very much for your time. Thank you for your testimony. >> Did we have. Oh, Mr. Pena was a and he's not here, I'll tell you a funny story while I toggle between things. I was watching this anime show with my 15 year old the other day, and, one of the characters was getting her license, and somebody said, why would you want your license? Do you know how expensive it is to park in Tokyo? >> And I just laughed thinking about real world influences on anime. >> Okay, so I digress. Our first item is the approval of the

[2:12:22 PM]

item is the approval of the minutes of the housing and planning committee meeting from February 28th and, yes, from February 28th. And is there a motion to pass the minutes? Motion by vice chair alter seconded by council member Ellis and I'm going to throw my hat in the ring, too. And it looks like it's unanimous. Okay it's item one passed unanimously. I think we get to move straight to item number four. Urban rail alignments. I'm now going to recommend that we take up item four, which is a briefing on the proposed urban rail alignments. Next, so that we can allow our invited guests from the Austin transit. Nope. Okay scratch that, as staff approaches, I'd like to provide some context for the committee. John's running. Hold up .

[2:13:45 PM]

. You guys, if you'll excuse me, we're going to take a brief pause. I'm looking at agenda meeting minutes and notes from 2023. I apologize .

[2:15:00 PM]

. If we can move on to item two, I'm going to get my technical situation together. Thank you for your patience. >> Chair, we have another member that joined us who may want to. I'll motion to reconsider the minutes. >> I think we're going to motion to reconsider the minutes, because what I just read into the record, we were approving minutes from February 28th. Okay. And I think we're a little bit off. So I think we're going to have to reconsider that. Anyway. I'm having some tech trouble. In fact, if, colleagues, if you wouldn't mind, we're going to call up item number two while I get this fixed. Thank you. >> Sounds great. >> Good afternoon, chair, and members of the housing and planning committee. I'm Steve Greathouse, and I'm a division manager in the city of Austin planning department. I am here today to provide you with a brief update on the status and timeline of amendments to the land development code. Whoops. Okay, since last we briefed this

[2:16:05 PM]

Okay, since last we briefed this body, council has initiated and adopted the density bonus zoning district called db 90 has initiated creation of an equitable, transit oriented development overlay along the phase one light rail and priority extensions. Has initiated an amendment to downtown parking, and has initiated an amendment to the east Riverside corridor plan. In addition, planning commission initiated an amendment to the university neighborhood overlay at a meeting in January, and in addition to the items shown on the slide on March 22nd, council also initiated amendments to the Lamar boulevard Justin lane transit oriented district, also known as the crestview area. In addition to adopting the db 90 density bonus density bonus zoning district. Since last we briefed this body, council has adopted land development code amendments related to minimum bicycle parking, smart housing, on site water reuse, the butler trail, as well as an amendment to the north burnet gateway regulating plan and as staff presented to the committee in

[2:17:06 PM]

presented to the committee in January, the bulk of staff work on code amendments this spring will be focused on advancing a package of key transit supportive code amendments, which I will dive into briefly on the next several slides. In addition to the transit supportive package, other key code amendments will be coming to council over the next several months, including an amendment to create and regulate electric vehicle charging, use an amendment to create an incentive in the code for live music and creative space, an amendment related to Colorado river protections and amendments that

you will hear about later on today's agenda. From development services department staff related to site plan, light and the infill lot process as was presented in January, staff will be focused on bringing a number of key transit supportive land development code amendments to council this spring, including creation and application of the equitable TOD overlay, changes to citywide compatibility standards, amendments related to

[2:18:06 PM]

standards, amendments related to phase two of the home initiative related to small lot size for one unit, and regulations that apply to flag lots, downtown parking requirements, and amendments to create and apply a density bonus program with regulations for the south central waterfront district council and planning commission will host a joint public hearing that will begin at 9 A.M. On April the 11th that will focus on changes to citywide compatibility requirements. Amendments related to phase two of the home initiative, as well as electric vehicle charging use and the equitable transit oriented development overlay. After the joint meeting on April 11th, staff will host two informational open houses planning commission will hold hearings on April 23rd and April 30th to consider portions of the joint meeting package of amendments, and city council will hold a hearing and possibly consider adoption of the joint

[2:19:07 PM]

consider adoption of the joint meeting package of amendments on May 16th. This slide provides additional information about the planned informational open houses. The first open house will be an in-person event on April 17th at from 6 to 8 P.M. At the central library, and the second informational open house will be a virtual event in zoom the morning of Saturday, April 20th, from 10 to 12 A.M. To 12 noon. This slide provides a timeline of all major spring code amendment milestones, including both the joint amendment package as well as the other amendments that I've referenced in this presentation. And their major milestones related particularly to their council hearing dates, notifications will go out and web material for all of the items covered by the joint meeting will post this Friday, March 29th. A purple postcard will be mailed out citywide related to home phase two changes to citywide

[2:20:08 PM]

changes to citywide compatibility and the electric vehicle charging use changes. In addition, a longer, more detailed notification will be mailed to individual property owners in the vicinity of the equitable TOD overlay that provides more information on that proposal. Updated timelines for all code amendments in progress will continue to be included in the Gantt chart that is available for review at the speak up Austin website, which I will post here in a second, that provides sort of a visual of everything that I've discussed in this presentation, there are numerous amendments that have been

initiated that will be working over the next several months to schedule and identify timelines and the pathway forward for when they will be brought back to city council over the next year or so. For more information, or to provide feedback, folks can could visit the speak up Austin website, which is speak up Austin org forward slash ldc updates or can provide an email to ldc updates at Austin, Texas gov or leave a

[2:21:09 PM]

at Austin, Texas gov or leave a voicemail at the phone number listed on the screen and staff will respond to questions that we receive through any of these information channels as well. But that's where folks will go to provide comments on any and all of the amendments that are moving forward in the spring, and we look forward to engaging with the public over the months. Busy, busy months, busy, busy months. >> Thank you for your presentation. I appreciate it. It looks like vice chair alter has a question. >> I was just curious what the Colorado river protections amendment is. >> It's a watershed protection related amendment that is a portion of a larger body of work that was initiated by council, I believe, in 2019. Ann, that will be moving forward with watershed protection staff leading it, who I don't think they're in the room today, or I'd bring them up to provide more information than that about that amendment. But we can follow up. >> Council member qadri. >> Great. Thanks. Sure. Thanks for the presentation. I just want to clarify the live music and creative space, bonus code amendment. Will that be coming back in may, the current plan with the economic development

[2:22:10 PM]

with the economic development department, I think, is looking at some scheduling options that may end up, pushing that to the July date, but I don't know that they've landed on the final date yet. That is moving forward to planning commission consideration in the fairly near firm. >> Great. >> Yeah, yeah, we'd prefer to be delayed a bit just to get further stakeholder engagement on all this. Yeah. >> And I know that's been a, currently under discussion with economic development department, and they have not sent out the notice for that project yet. So. Okay. >> Great. Thank you. >> Thank you. I appreciate it, I actually have a question. So the , the speak up Boston website, are we tracking those analytics? Because maybe not everybody that visits the website is going to complete the form. Are we tracking how many people are looking at it. >> Yeah, we absolutely can and will continue to do that. >> In addition to similar to how we tracked in the fall, we will be tracking the individual questions and voicemails that we receive and providing the numbers on how many we've received and how many have been

[2:23:10 PM]

received and how many have been responded to, as we move through the spring package. >> Thank you. Relatively, would you say that it's been interacted with robustly or I think a fall was any indication? >> It was definitely interacted with robustly over the fall. And I expect once the purple postcard notifications land in mailboxes, that folks will continue to robustly interact with it over the next couple of months. Awesome. >> Thank you. No further questions. Thank you for your presentation, so we are going to entertain a motion by council member Ellis to go back to approving the meeting minutes from, oh, well, you know what? No, no, no. Yeah. To go back to approve them. Oh, but now vice chair alter's not here. So we'll go back to that when we have a full dias again. And what we can do is so today we had five things in front of us. We were going to approve the minutes, a presentation from the planning department, a presentation from, development services department, a presentation from the Austin infill coalition. And then we were going to finish with item number five, which is discussion

[2:24:11 PM]

number five, which is discussion of future committee items. And I'd really like for us to have a full dias to retake that vote, in which case can we move to item number three, the presentation from the department of development services. Good afternoon. >> Afternoon, chair. Committee members, Keith Myers, assistant director of the development services department, happy to present to you on, several code amendments that were initiated by council. And many of these have to do with the development process. Many of these have to do with how we're going to look inward as we develop within the city, as opposed to more Greenfield development. These items are the infill planning process, which is an act of subdividing land site plan light part two, which is really targeting housing and missing middle housing. Then we're going to round it out with an update from the home ordinance on

[2:25:13 PM]

from the home ordinance on additional direction on tree preservation and tree planting. So starting off with infill plat process, part of it is first to describe like how how did we get here and what are the mechanics of subdividing land. So the order of operations with typical say typical but Greenfield development, which is a lot of what our land development code subdivision is, is geared towards. And that's where you have undeveloped raw piece of property. And then you go in and title the piece of property. And then we have the build out of infrastructure. Right? We have roads, we have we have drainage facilities, we have water quality facilities. Then we have home construction. The challenge with that is, well, how do we subdivide land? How do we create an orderly, both process and fulfilling policy outcomes when most of our future today is more looking inwards of how do you remedy these issues and create a predictable, transparent, easy to follow process when the lots

[2:26:13 PM]

to follow process when the lots have already been subdivided? When land use regulations are generally agnostic towards is this Greenfield or is this infill and then space and capacity for our utilities? In 2023, council provided direction to the city manager and then through city manager to staff. Of these four things create an efficient process process for infill lots within residential subdivisions. And what I mean by that, get very specific with that. That is the development process. How does one go from submitting an application to getting approval in this case, for your your platting of property? And then how do we rightsize regulations for infill? Lots, for all the reasons I just mentioned, how do we explore making waivers and variances more administrative? How do we put those tools in the toolbox of professional staff to make those decisions? And then finally, how do how do we make other changes to the subdivision elements of the land development code that will result in more

[2:27:14 PM]

code that will result in more infill lots? I'm happy to say that many, many items of this direction have already been achieved and council actually acted on this this past December. In terms of process, we have made dramatic changes to the subdivision process of which infill plats will benefit from that. That rising tide lifts all boats approach. One is that we have dramatically streamlined the application submittal requirements. We have moved more in a position of where subdividing land is really about the mechanics of subdividing land and less about the predictions of what may or may not happen on that piece of property. We've extended application deadlines previously. I think we're 90 days, and now they're at 180 days to allow time in the process to remedy these issues, rather than someone getting through the process expiring and then having to come back through and start at square one, three

[2:28:14 PM]

and start at square one, three and in part three and five are some of the most meaningful changes in terms of a an orderly process. And a in a efficient process for infill platting is that we have expanded administrative variances that also resulted in administrative variances for flag lot regulations. And then finally, one of the major changes that this that the council acted on this past December is administrative approval for preliminary plans and plats, of which infill plat would be considered a plat. Why? That's important is previously, if you're in the city, you went to land use commission to have a have the political body approve the subdivision. If you're in the county you went to the commissioners court. Now those plans are approved are able to be approved administratively, dramatically increasing the time from application to permit. So that really leaves us and comes back to the residual issue of how do we right size and calibrate land development code

[2:29:16 PM]

calibrate land development code regulations that apply to the act of subdivision. And the reason why, in part, why we're doing this is to provide a menu of options of as opposed to a condo regime that is still a possibility. But the purpose of this process, in part, is to help facilitate just fee simple ownership of a final or of a of a piece of property. The steps that we are undertaking right now are really looking at calibrating those key regulatory requirements that apply in these small scale. The re subdividing of land when you already have an existing plat, when you have existing infrastructure, one of the key elements that we have not landed on a on a number to recommend, but on a process to recommend is that there are no changes in the impervious cover. As I mentioned, this is really about process and tailoring regulations that are not zoning regulations, but this will change what the assumptions are for how we calibrate drainage

[2:30:17 PM]

for how we calibrate drainage water quality requirements, development services and watershed protection are in dialog daily on this issue. There is more to come on that. But why this is key is this gets back to the point of with the act of subdivision, you, unless you're doing a construction plan or you're actually at final permitting and you're building a new home, everything else is based on assumptions. We are assuming a certain amount of impervious cover, and that's where we have the ability to kind of dial this in to better reflect urban infill development, not Greenfield development. I'll come back to you with kind of the proposed timelines, because site plan lite part two and urban and infill plat really come together around a lot of the key issues. They're both trying to solve housing, and they're both trying to solve urban infill. Conundrums that we face both from a policy perspective and from administrative process perspective. So the city of Austin site plan in in general,

[2:31:18 PM]

Austin site plan in in general, this is a very general statement, but illustrates a point that a development project that comes into the city that proposes more than four residential units is considered a site plan. That means five units. That means 500 units, that means a boat dock. That means infrastructure projects that the, the, the, the, the spectrum of development plans that fall under site plan are expansive. It also means that the full element of the land development code in supporting criteria manuals apply. There's also many departments involved in the process. So the problem we're trying to solve with the direction from council is how do we tailor the site plan process towards this missing middle housing site plan light part one and two addressed three of the four units that's on the books. That is in operation. Now. The

[2:32:19 PM]

That is in operation. Now. The next part is, well, how do we tailor a site plan process to this missing middle? When the site plan regulations are really agnostic? Again, if you're doing five units, 15 or 500, generally speaking, the same land development code, both the regulations and the process apply. So this is part two of the base resolution from 2022. This was about creating site plan lite part one and then site plan lite part two part one. As I mentioned, accomplished this for triplex and fourplex. How do we create an efficient process and how do we treat three and four unit as we would 1 or 2 unit? How do we how do we treat those by process and by regulations as residential development? That was completed and executed and projects are in review now that are utilizing that process. The next step was how do we create site plan lite part two for residential projects that are 5 to 16 units. Council also asked us to how do

[2:33:21 PM]

Council also asked us to how do we tailor non zoning requirements to kind of a key point there. These are about the land use regulations not the zoning regulations. And then also how do we streamline review process? A general theme with this is there's going to be policy dials and there's going to be administrative process dials. A lot of the code land development code also speaks to process, but there's also a fair amount of deference to the administrative staff, to rightsize process, to the policy . So I really want to highlight some of the process improvements , because ultimately, if we're focused on an outcome, how do we create a process for missing middle housing that is more predictable, repeatable, effective, efficient, you know, plain language? How do we get people through the system and ultimately compliant? There's a lot of opportunities on the administrative side to do this and things that we have done or are in the process to start doing and doing imminently is simplify and consolidate

[2:34:21 PM]

simplify and consolidate applications similar. As I mentioned, the site plan covers everything from five units to 500 units. Our applications kind of run the gamut to there's tremendous opportunities in our applications. There's the how does one even submit their their development plan to speak in plain language? To be clear, to focus on the end user of these applications, avoid acronyms at the population that we serve don't understand how do we and ultimately how do we do these things in order to facilitate more timely compliance? And I would argue, even better compliance if we can say what we mean and mean what we say and do it succinctly and in plain language, that is a major thing that we're working on now. In the same spirit, streamlining the site plan, completeness, check process. Currently there's 13 or 15 page document that one has to navigate just to even get in for the site plan process. Currently it's written without

[2:35:22 PM]

Currently it's written without one city voice. It's multiple departments that participated to come up with a completeness check process. Development services and partner departments have really taken the challenge of speaking as one city voice. The current draft of this, which will launch, I believe, in May, is now down to five pages. It speaks as if there's one author and not 13 departments writing their own separate content. It is supposed to be that the comment or that the requirements are clear and that they're executed well. The other one that we are doing on process imminently is dedicated case management to housing site plans. And this will I'm very bullish on this. In terms of that 5 to 16 unit. We can make a big difference here. The way I would describe this is there is an opportunity for the case manager to be an advocate for the process. And what I mean by that is I mentioned there is multiple departments that are involved, but we need a that that one key person or key process that helps assimilate

[2:36:25 PM]

process that helps assimilate all of those comments, that connects the dots with those that we're serving, that are going through the process. Again. Is there an acronym you don't understand? Is there a process you don't understand? Are there foreseeable issues that can be seen ahead of time and remedied ahead of time, those type of issues so that things do not get stuck and don't get stuck in the process or get stuck with this, this where everyone owns it and no one owns it. So the case manager, I think will play a critical role in kind of serving that, what we're calling kind of the enterprise, the one city approach of that is the individual that will navigate and shepherd that site plan through the process. This individual will also help with improving that last mile work of getting from all comments approved to getting site plan and permit in hand. There can be delays, there can be a process still involved in that. Our opportunity is to take that in-house and be more of an active participant in getting those signatures, getting everything finalized so that we

[2:37:26 PM]

everything finalized so that we close that gap between all comments being approved and that site plan in hand, a lot of financing, a lot of on the development side, a lot of things are contingent on getting that permit in hand and there's opportunities for us to really make a difference with that. With missing middle housing and housing at large site plans at large. So site plan lite, part two, this is similar to the infill plat amendment in that this is how do we right size regulations to 5 to 16 units. As I mentioned, we've really making positive changes on the process side. This is now an opportunity to tailor the underlying land development regulations. Similarly, that that the limits on impervious cover and site area remain. However the opportunity is to calibrate some requirements in the water quality requirements to facilitate missing middle is where we are now very, very

[2:38:27 PM]

where we are now very, very similar type of considerations of where we are with the infill plat process. Another change that we're proposing in or with this is classifying these projects as called small projects. There's existing land development code language that that allows for projects to be considered small projects. It's a more tailored process. It's it streamlines some of the regulatory requirements. Again, it allows us to differentiate between a 12 unit infill project and a 300 unit project, both with process and the applicable regulations. Part of this is it's important to note that that there are no proposed changes to zoning regulations. Council was specific of a look at process. Look at non zoning regulations and that's what we're coming back with. The properties that may be able to use this will be those that are already zoned multifamily or those that are using a density bonus program. For going back to final plat and

[2:39:30 PM]

For going back to final plat and site plan lite part two, this is our proposed next steps. There's a codes and ordinances joint committee on April 1st and followed by environmental commission planning commission in mid-may. And then bringing this back as a full body of work to city council on may 30th. Rounding out my presentation, this is the update to home, the home initiative on additional direction in the ordinance to city manager to explore how do we better protect trees and how do we get more trees planted and kind of the common theme for the day is how do we do this inward? How do we do this within the city limits? How do we do this within developed areas are just that. The fundamental understanding of the city is we. The city has had tree preservation regulations since 1983. We're one of the first cities in the country that

[2:40:31 PM]

cities in the country that really have a true tree, what we call a tree preservation ordinance. But it's really geared towards our largest and oldest trees in the city. Why this is important. It is the majority of trees in this city are smaller than protected size. I say protected, meaning a capital P protected 19 inch and greater trees. If you can just put your arms around the tree that's going to be a quote unquote protected tree. Everything to think to your right as the graph gets smaller, everything to your right represents the number of trees that in this city that ever represent that size. So less than 5% of the trees in this city, rare ever reach or reach protected size on the side of the coin of that is everything less than 19in in diameter is not regulated on residential property. One can protect them. One can remove them. The city has no no role and no, no bearing on that, on that outcome

[2:41:33 PM]

bearing on that, on that outcome . Part of what we're proposing is to help incentivize the preservation of those smaller trees. So council gave us further direction with the with the home ordinance as a further direction on this matter. There were five items. One is look and see if there's better opportunities for administrative flexibility to preserve trees. Are there gaps in our tree planting requirements which I'll touch on in a minute because it's an important part of our land development code, really focused on Greenfield development. Third is how do we promote slash, incentivize additional tree planting, and then how do we incentivize protection of some of these smaller trees and not regulated trees? The trees that are in in setback. So part of kind of going through these a little bit one by one part of the challenge with our city's tree planting regulations is that they are not located in the land development

[2:42:37 PM]

located in the land development code with all with the other tree protection requirements. They are buried in another section of code. >> What that has resulted in is confusion and at best and unclear of when they apply the way that the city has applied this over time is that tree planting requirements have really only been applied for Greenfield subdivision. >> So historically, what that means is there's real gaps in in as we develop inward within the city of the equitable distribution of trees really doesn't happen. And there's market reasons and many market reasons why trees are planted. But there's no policy objective to do that for infill projects. So our solution to this is to clarify and reorganize the land development code so that tree planting requirements are clear. It will be in the same content, in the same section as with the tree planting or I'm sorry, with the tree preservation regulations, which our community

[2:43:37 PM]

regulations, which our community is very familiar with. This will result in a more equitable and consistent tree planting requirements for residential development across the city. Another part of this resolution was to how do we incentivize the preservation of nonregulated trees? Going back to that slide of the majority of trees in the city never reach 19in greater, 95% of them never reach that size. But they they provide tremendous value to our community. So are there ways for us to incentivize that? And this could be if the tree is in a setback, if it's in the front yard, if it's in an unbuildable area, there's really no there's no language that speaks to okay, well, how do how do we recognize the value of that. So one of our proposals is to actually increase tree mitigation credit for preservation of nonregulated trees. Let me take a second to explain what mitigation means. So when someone removes leaves a protected tree, oftentimes and

[2:44:37 PM]

protected tree, oftentimes and many times your one is required to mitigate for that loss and the way code prescribes, that is when you remove trees, you plant back trees. And logically that makes sense, right. And a lot of times that is that is a great outcome. But the missing, the missing middle of this, the missing part of this. Well what about trees that are there. What about if you remove a tree that you can just put your arms around. But then in the front yard there's a tree that you just can barely put your arms or not around that is just slightly smaller, but not regulated. How do we recognize those trees? And our proposal is to increase the mitigation credits for preserving those smaller trees. So rather than planting back ten small trees again, they have value. If you're removing a 20 inch live oak, by way of example, that you can just barely put your arms around, but there is an 18 inch live oak, that is non-regulated, we ought

[2:45:37 PM]

that is non-regulated, we ought to be able to recognize the value of that tree and protect that tree. And both the development does not have to plant new trees or as many new trees. And there's a tree in place that doesn't have to be watered, doesn't have to be established, provides shade immediately part of the community, part of the fabric of that street. So really being able to change that dial on increasing mitigation credit gets us there. Similar theme to how do we incentivize planting different trees in our city right now? The code and the criteria man was are really kind of indifferent towards this. And kind of what you would expect. We tend to get whatever is available and then whatever's cheapest in the market to plant and for multiple policy reasons, there's tremendous value in the city incentivizing the planting back, both preserving and planting back a diversity of

[2:46:38 PM]

planting back a diversity of species similar like our proposal is to, is to move the dial on providing higher mitigation credit when you plant or when one plants less, common but less desirable. I'm sorry, more desirable, but uncommon trees. And hopefully this can do a couple of things. One, it will actually reduce cost for any project of planting less trees, but more desirable trees. It's also hopeful to signal the marketplace of providing that regulatory framework of in the city of Austin. We really want growers to be able to provide additional trees, a variety of trees, any and all tree. At this point, the challenges that our city is facing of the more trees and the different trees, the better. And then how do we create that, how do we create that certainty in the market on the tree growing side to incentivize that? Proposed steps for this work are slightly different. Again, out of

[2:47:39 PM]

different. Again, out of different circumstances. But the proposed timeline is soliciting community and stakeholder feedback next month and then going through the process of codes and ordinances, planning commission and council, and ultimately bringing this back to council in July of this year. And with that, that ends the presentation and happy to answer any questions. >> Thank you very much for the presentation, colleagues. Council member Ellis, I will go ahead and kick us off. >> Thank you for the presentation. Ann. I have just a couple of questions. Do you know how many applications have come in for the three and four unit residential review since we changed that ordinance? >> I do not, but I know that we have. I have talked with particular builders that are coming with this project, but I will get you a number on that. >> Yeah, we can follow up offline. No problem. I'm just curious. I know as we roll these programs out, we love to see are people aware of them? You know, are they popular? How how is it

[2:48:40 PM]

are they popular? How how is it functioning in real time? >> Likewise. Yes, absolutely. >> I appreciate that. And then my second question is going to be regarding the simplification process for some of the site plan light, there were a couple of bullet points. Let me let me pull up the slide. Got to go back. There were a number of good issues in here, on slide 15 of 27. And it was specifically about process improvements, are these also going to be applied to the folks that are larger than 17 units as well? Is that happening concurrently or is that going to be another step that you look at? >> It will happen concurrently? >> Oh, okay. We didn't even have to bring a resolution to tell you. I'm sure everyone appreciates that, let's see. Okay. I think that's all I have for now. Let me let me look through this again and I'll pass the ball to someone else. Thank you. >> Thank you, vice chair. After >> Thank you very much. And thank you all for humoring me,

[2:49:40 PM]

thank you all for humoring me, for having my vice chair here in my in my lap, I wanted to ask you, as it relates to the tree, that that third element of the direction there, the promoting additional tree planting. Did you all look at any considerations around those lots that, that maybe don't have tree canopy saying that, you know, we want a minimum three trees or four trees on a lot, well, first off, do we have the authority to do that? And secondly, was that a consideration you all made? >> It is. And those are the type of numbers that we plan on coming, bringing back to the full council of calibrating is that based on lot square footage? Is that based on there's different criteria of how to look at that. But we know that the status quo of, of really being tethered to something else in the land development code is not achieving those outcomes. So we intend to bring back that level

[2:50:41 PM]

intend to bring back that level of specificity. >> Okay, and then on the infill plat presentation on slide ten, and forgive me if you covered this, but you said no changes in impervious cover, but changes to assumptions to calibrate drainage and water quality can you elaborate on that? >> Yes. >> So the active subdivision is, is a bit of a challenge for us because it intends to forecast what is going to be the subsequent land development and that may or may not happen. >> Many of our assumptions in the land development code is really geared towards Greenfield development, not existing platted property, with within within the city. So being able to calibrate those assumptions may sound more of what infill development is like, as opposed to new Greenfield is like, that's how we're not touching the, the say the zoning requirement for impervious cover. But the actual assumptions that are made ahead

[2:51:41 PM]

assumptions that are made ahead of time during the act of subdividing is where we have an opportunity to be more right sized towards infill development, not Greenfield development. Okay. >> Thank you very much, chair. >> Thank you for your presentation. I have a few more questions, but I'll I'll go last. Did you have more questions, councilmember Ellis? >> I came up with one more, are all the departments that have previously been involved going to continue to stay involved? I know there's been some conversation around, how the departments talk to each other or trying to elevate some folks so that maybe there's some days of the week where they're in the same room and can iron out issues in real time. So as are all departments still involved, or is there any changes to that strategy? >> Absolutely. And I would say more, more than ever, we recognize that the serve our community and serve it effectively, that we need to speak with one city voice when someone asks for our services, they see the city of Austin and so being able to provide consistent, reliable, timely service. At the end of the day,

[2:52:43 PM]

service. At the end of the day, we need everyone involved in this process at the feedback from our community, overwhelmingly is that they had they understand the process, they understand the requirements . Staff were timely, staff met with them, and it really shouldn't matter which department you're in. And we're making some significant progress on that. >> Thank you. >> She stole my question, but I do have a statement. I cannot tell you how many asterisks and exclamation marks I put around dedicated case management. I think it's there's no silver bullet, but I think having that as a part of the process. And to council member Ellis's point, really streamlining the process, I'm really excited to see where we go from here. Thank you for your presentation. Thank you chair. And with that, so, vice chair alter, while you were away, council member qadri came in and we'd like to reconsider the vote on, on the minutes. And so, council member Ellis made the motion. >> I moved to reconsider and council member qadri seconded

[2:53:45 PM]

council member qadri seconded that. >> So with that, we're going to reconvene for, the first item, which is the approval of our minutes of the housing and planning committee, this is from the meeting on February 20th, 2024. Is there a motion to pass? Motion by council member qadri and seconded by council member Ellis. All in favor? Item number one passes unanimously. And so, as I stated before, we only have five things today. And the fifth thing is discussion of future items. So we have two more presentations. Oh. I'm sorry, that is not true. We have one more presentation from our Austin Enfield coalition and preservation Austin regarding a preservation bonus to be included in the home initiative phase two. I assume, and folks are going to make their way down. Please introduce yourself when you get to the podium. >> Sure.

[2:54:48 PM]

>> Sure. >> Okay. Hi, everyone. I want to thank chair harper-madison and the committee for giving preservation Austin, the Austin infill coalition, and I Austin, the chance to present on the preservation bonus today, this is a really important issue for us and for the city, we believe. And we'll talk a little bit about the policy's background, about strengths that we feel, about its best strengths, as adopted by council last fall and then some recommendations that we feel are very urgent for council to act on in order to make this policy and this tool as strong as it can be, let me, oops, apologize. Okay. I'm Lindsay Darrington, I'm executive director of preservation Austin. We're the citywide nonprofit dedicated to historic places. We exist to empower austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. We feel that historic buildings are worth saving because they're inherently valuable. They hold a lot of cultural and architectural worth for our city, but we also feel that they present solutions to really pressing issues that we're facing as a city, like affordability, equity and

[2:55:50 PM]

affordability, equity and sustainability. And we'll talk about all of those in a few minutes, also core to our work is the belief that preservation and growth are both required for our city to become world class, and that these things don't need to be in conflict, that the preservation bonus really embodies. What can happen when we set out both preservation and increasing housing production as mutual goals. A little bit of background on why preservation Austin engaged in this issue, there are very limited tools that we have as a community to preserve historic places. It's really historic zoning, both of individual landmarks and for districts, Austin passed its preservation ordinance in 1975, but unlike most cities across the country, they only allowed for individual landmarks at the time. And we did not enable, city council to establish historic districts until 2004. So we ended up with a list of city landmarks. That's over 600 buildings long and only eight local historic districts, which means that as a community, we've tried

to preserve buildings kind of one by one. And that's pretty inefficient, less than 1% of the entire city is zoned historic, right now, and fundamentally,

[2:56:50 PM]

right now, and fundamentally, our land development code and city processes make it easier, easier to demolish than to preserve. Which, of course, we as a preservation nonprofit would like to shift that dynamic, including that the city sees an average of 600 residential demolitions per year. And these are largely smaller, older and more affordable homes. The preservation bonus was first floated as an idea during codenext in 2019, the idea for a bonus or a preservation incentive included a requirement that someone would have to preserve 50% of a building. So we advocated as an organization a lot around that, because which 50% of the building you're preserving is important within preservation, we partnered with the Austin infill coalition in 2021 after codenext ultimately didn't move forward to come up with a better incentive. So approach this with the idea. Like if we if we were to build an incentive that achieves both of these goals, density and affordability and preservation, what would that look like if we were to start from scratch, that bonus evolved, and a lot of what

[2:57:52 PM]

bonus evolved, and a lot of what we had presented to the some council offices and city staff at the time now no longer applies. We talked about waiving parking requirements. Of course, now we don't have parking requirements in Austin, but we've continued to work on this and really saw the passage of the home ordinance as an opportunity to two fold in preservation, you know, there was real concern that enabling three units per lot might increase demolitions, but we're hopeful that with the preservation bonus in place and with the changes, we'll recommend today that we can not only turn more demolitions or kind of stem the tide of demolitions from increasing density, but turn more demolitions into preservation and into preservation projects. Essentially the preservation bonus applies to pre 1960 housing. So these are just a few images. All of these are in district nine because that is where I live. But these houses exist all over the city, especially central city, these are not homes that will ever be zoned as individual landmarks. They're likely not going to be zoned as part of local historic

[2:58:53 PM]

zoned as part of local historic districts, because that is very hard to do. And our legislature at the state level has made that even harder. But these buildings are really valuable, both for the qualities and materials that they embody, for the fact that they are more affordable than a new home built in their place. And this is the kind of housing that we're talking about with the preservation bonus, I'm going to turn things over to Megan king from our staff. >> Hi, I'm Megan king, I'm the policy and outreach

planner for preservation Austin, so I'll go ahead and explain a little bit about the preservation bonus, so it's pretty simply structured for a bonus. For properties with an existing home built before 1960 or earlier, the area of the existing building can be excluded from the far maximum. A 1,550% of the existing dwelling unit and 100% of the street facing facade are preserved, so this gives the owner or developer an additional developable, developable far to add new dwelling units, which would as Lindsay mentioned,

[2:59:55 PM]

would as Lindsay mentioned, contribute to our sustainability and affordability goals, the preservation components of the preservation bonus as adopted by council in December are quite strong, and we're really proud of them. Especially the fact that most of the requirements that are listed here, it's kind of spelled out in more detail, are informed by the city's citywide historic design standards. So we're really proud of the fact that these, that the that the bonus includes those, so you can kind of see some examples here from the citywide design standards of how to create compatible and incompatible additions, so as I said, the these are some examples, we're here today, I guess, to talk a bit more about the development incentives, as a part of the preservation bonus, which we feel need a little bit more work, so as we can see here is an example of, some infill development that actually

[3:00:55 PM]

development that actually currently exists in Hyde park. And so we include this image to show that this kind of infill development and housing is possible. And with greater development incentives as a part of the preservation preservation bonus. And by strengthening them, we can have, even more of this kind of development. So I will now pass it on to Kai gray of Austin infill coalition to describe that. >> Hi. Thanks for having us here today. My name is Kai and I'm the president of the Austin infill coalition. And we do a lot of this in our own private practice where we keep the existing house and then we build in the back. And so a lot of people ask us why. Because without a preservation bonus, it really doesn't make any sense. So people are always like, why the hell do you do this? It's really complicated. It seems messy. You should just tear down and build. And so I'd like to talk a little bit about why we do this. I do I obviously believe in density and urbanism, and I have been for a long time. But one of the benefits of the

[3:01:57 PM]

But one of the benefits of the preservation bonus is when you look at a house, the price is a combination of two factors. It's the land and it's the house. Right. So you combine those two and that's what you're going to sell it for. So what the preservation bonus what it does is you get a smaller lot

because you're sharing a lot. And you have usually a smaller house that's also older. So those tend to be the most affordable houses in the neighborhood. So when we've looked at neighborhoods, these kind of projects are usually the existing houses or maybe where, you know, someone's built in the back end kind of kept the house, they're usually 5% of the sales. But when you look at the most affordable houses, it's usually 85% of those. And so I have a lot of friends who build \$3 million houses, and they're amazing. I love to go look at them. They're awesome. But the thing that I really enjoy in my work is that when I can sell to someone who's like, I never thought I could live in this neighborhood, but because of this kind of project, I can that makes a meaningful difference in those people's lives. You know, I'm always really proud that, you know, I was the last person to be able to sell to, like, a schoolteacher or a mail carrier.

[3:02:57 PM]

schoolteacher or a mail carrier. And that means that they can live closer to work. And that means they can spend more time with their kids because they're not just commuting, they're not commuting as much. So it really I think there's a lot of analysis. What what gets lost? Is it, in my mind, being able to keep these houses, they're going to be the most affordable market rate housing on the market, and so that's that's why I do it, you know, not it's certainly not easy. And it doesn't really make sense without the preservation bonus. I've been told that like a hundred times now, from my friends. And they're right. It doesn't, so I'm going let me see. So I'm going to go through the history of the preservation bonus. It's been about three years, so it's been a while. And this started during codenext. So during codenext and everybody was really angry. So I'd spend a lot of time out there talking to people who agreed with me that thought it was good, and some people who thought it was horrible. And so when they thought it was horrible, I was like, well, what do you think about the preservation bonus? And they're like, well, I hate everything, but that's kind of a good idea. And I was like, yeah, this is one thing that most

[3:03:58 PM]

this is one thing that most people you talk to kind of realize is a good idea. If I talk to people in the community, they're like, yeah, this, this makes sense. You know, people who aren't involved in land use, I like to call it the puppy ordinance because there's some people that that hate puppies, but most people like puppies, right? So if you go up to someone and you're like, here's this picture of a puppy, most people are like, that's cool, I like puppies. A few people are like, I hate puppies, but they're weird, right? So we find those people. There's a few people that hate the preservation bonus, but it's fairly rare. Most normal people realize it's the benefit of preservation, and it's the benefit of more units that are more affordable. So I guess the opposite of the preservation bonus would be maybe some people want us to raze the entire city and only have one house per ten acres, and only a hundred people could live here, and they'd all be gazillionaires or something. I don't know, so anyway, after codenext, we reached out and started talking to preservation Austin and this shows how naive I am, I. So we spent a

long time kind of because we're very different organizations. We most people don't think aic and preservation Austin are going to work together on something, so we spent a lot of time trying to

[3:04:59 PM]

we spent a lot of time trying to come together on a framework that we could agree with. And to be honest, once we did, I thought we were done. I was like, we've agreed who could be against this? We're this is going to get passed right again, very naive. Three years ago, I should word this carefully. So that didn't happen when we took it. That's all I'm going to say, and so then it kind of wasn't there for a while. And then during home phase one, it came back. And what it was is there was some council offices that were saying when, it was actually really helpful because when they were talking their constituents, they were upset and they were like, hey, the preservation bonus, they always saw it as a positive to explain to people home phase one. And so a lot of people saw it as a benefit. Some council offices and obviously a lot of the community to some people again, are upset. But as you saw during phase one, there were people were upset about a lot of things. When most people talked about the preservation bonus, it was positive. People weren't holding up signs saying, I hate the preservation bonus. Again, I'm sure there's a few people like that, but not most. So

[3:06:00 PM]

like that, but not most. So during phase one, we got in a far bump and there was a fourth unit. Those were both part of home phase one. That was the peak of the preservation bonus. That was the if you were interested in the stuff that was like the halcyon days. It was very exciting. We were all very happy, and that was kind of the peak. And then after that, right before home passed, we were told that the bonus unit wasn't in the notice, so it was removed. But our understanding was it would be part of phase two, but at least we had the far bump, that essentially for the lot that would work for the preservation bonus doesn't exist. So if you have an 8000 square foot lot and you have an 800 square foot house, the amount you can build with the preservation bonus or without the preservation bonus is exactly the same. I can go into the details of that. It's a lot of math, but essentially for most of those lots, it's just you can do the exact same with the preservation bonus without. And that's because of some wording that was in the final ordinance that we were not expecting. So again, now essentially there's not a fourth unit. And, and basically there's

[3:07:00 PM]

unit. And, and basically there's not a far bump either, so we are here asking to have those restored. We are not looking for a delay. It's been three years. You know, we really want this to be in phase one. So if you support urbanism and you support preservation, I ask you to vote for this to be part of phase one. If

you don't support it, I'd ask you just to vote no. You know, delays isn't going to help. This has been a long journey for all of us, and again, I know impervious is very, very difficult. I hear that, but just talking about the fourth unit and far, just kind of restoring those to where they were during phase one, also, this would be a long time process, but we'd ask if we could have a simplified subdivision process. Right now, the subdivision process takes around 360 days, even with the amended plat, which is what's been talked about is not going through that process. The process is still 360 days. >> In fact, I have a printout for you all here. Here is the average. Process still takes about a year.

[3:08:09 PM]

about a year. >> I understand that's what's being proposed for home, but we would like for preservation for there to be a simplified subdivision process that would take around 30 days. >> I'm sorry, did you say 30 days, a subdivision process? >> Yes. >> Okay. Thank you. >> All right. Thank you guys for having us here, my name is Chris Gannon. I'm with aia, I'm the co-chair of the housing advocacy group, and I'm happy to be up here with these guys, presenting the preservation bonus. And, we have two lists here for you guys. One is the policy actions that we need, to make the preservation bonus work as it is right now, and the first, like, what Kyle was saying is, is what we're calling the fa fix. The fa fix, that's the reverse. The interpretation that the fa caps for individual units within a multi-unit development, which

[3:09:10 PM]

multi-unit development, which were intended to prevent stealth McMansions applied to preservation projects, exactly as Kai was saying, on the average lot that we'd find houses that would be applicable to be preserved, those are there's essentially no bonus. And I've got I'm going to get into the math here in a second, we've got some modeling that just kind of shows how the fa, caps work against the preservation bonus. And in truth, turn it into a demolition incentive, so the fa fixes one fourth unit. That would go a long ways and would tie in nicely with our, new site plan process that goes up to four units. And then what we're calling site coverage, this is sort of a combination of both impervious and building, coverage and just like we're waving the fa of the existing structure, we're, we're we're asking that the site coverage of the existing structure also be

[3:10:12 PM]

the existing structure also be waived, in our modeling, it looks like if it's if it's only waived up to 10% of the site area for either, impervious or, building coverage, that would do the trick. So we're saying the smaller the lesser of the entire structure, or 10, these are the additional benefits that we'd like to see added in, to bolster this bonus, like I was saying, subdivisions, so allowing for easier front and back subdivisions, quicker subdivisions and including provisions that would allow for flag lots with a minimum

pole. We spoke to a few people, and, and I don't know what that minimum pole is. The pole on a flag lot is used to get utilities to the site. So there's, some requirements there, reduced setbacks is kind of an easy one. If we can, minimize even further the setbacks, build on a lot that has an existing

[3:11:13 PM]

on a lot that has an existing structure that we're preserving means that we have less room to move around, we're less nimble. And then relocations. So allowing relocations of a qualifying structure, to benefit from the preservation bonus as well. Okay. So I'm going to jump into, some of the modeling here, as you do that, I just wanted to clarify for you, if you see us looking down, it's because our tech people did this fancy thing where we can see your presentation right here in front of us. >> So if we're looking down, we're looking no problem. Yeah. >> If you see me looking over your head, it's because it's the same thing, so these models and these are just illustrative models, these are, diagrammatic, and this is, this is looking at an average size Austin lot. So that's 8000ft S with the average size home that is being preserved. So that floats around 11,000 or, sorry, 1100 square feet, so we just kind of threw that together and said, well,

[3:12:14 PM]

that together and said, well, what is this spatially? And fairly, what are we looking at? And what are our limits, so adding one unit to the back of a preserved home, is not hard. It can be done. We're being capped right now by both impervious and the, point four fa cap of any one unit, if we were to waive that existing buildings site coverage. So that's impervious and the building coverage up to 10, then we get a lot more flexibility on how we lay it out, if we look at the first one, it's two stories all, sort of bunched up in one footprint here. We're able to kind of spread out a little bit, and it will work for nicer buildings, we're still being limited by the point four fa and, this is a great scenario to see. We actually have less entitlements than if we had demoed the existing house. For the full site development, we're at 0.54 fa. If we had demoed it, we'd be

[3:13:15 PM]

fa. If we had demoed it, we'd be allowed to build 20.55. So it's a small, small, bump down. But again it's not an increase. This is actually a decrease. Okay. So then the next examples get more interesting, this is when you add two units based on a 45% impervious coverage. The remaining square footage makes adding two units very difficult, and even at three stories, the full coverage doesn't reach the 65% fa. We're actually at 57, fa, which is significantly below entitlement. So if you're looking to add two units, one of these lots, it would not, preserving the existing home is not incentivized, and of course this

square footage that we're looking at here is very small. And it'd be very difficult to make these, townhomes work once you calculate in parking requirements and staircases and

[3:14:16 PM]

requirements and staircases and things of that nature, with the building coverage waived, and the impervious cover waived, we have a more generous area to build, and we are able to get to that .55 fa that caps our two units. Now, again, that is, the limiting factor on this is, is the is what we're calling the fa fix. So we're able to get 2.69 in this scenario. But that's only with the building and impervious cover waived from the existing preserve structure. So now let's look at what a minimum lot is. And this is a typical of a lot of the central city homes. They're on smaller lots typically. So we're looking at 1100 square foot home on a 57, 50 lot, one building or one unit in the back. We're going three stories on this one, we aren't even able to reach the point for fa and, you know, that would be

[3:15:17 PM]

fa and, you know, that would be a very difficult thing to make work, with the building coverage wave, we're back to two stories, and it's a more generous area to sort of expand out and build really a better home. And this is for one unit. That's not really where the issue gets. It's when you start adding two units. So with two units on a small lot with an existing home that we're trying to preserve, we're floating the living space over parking. This is the, it's in the dingbat tradition, these would be extremely difficult to make work with. The building coverage waived. Oh, and if we go back here, we are far below entitlement. We're 15, below what we would be able to build if we had torn down that existing house. That's that's about 850ft S. That's a unit that we're missing out on by preserving the existing home. So this is how the existing

[3:16:18 PM]

this is how the existing preservation bonus in a lot of scenarios is actually disincentivizing preservation, and the fix is, to fix the fa the fa caps on any 1 or 2 units and a 2 or 3 unit development, or to, and or to increase the size of coverage, both building and, impervious by waiving the existing, and then, of course, bringing the fourth unit back is key as well, with the site coverage waived, we're now able to get to a more, you know, we're we're incentivized to build something more dense while preserving that wonderful little house up front. Okay. So we also partnered with cedar. These guys are super cool. They're they've got, like, a, a giant data crunching machine, Ann that has, all of the city lots and a lot

[3:17:21 PM]

all of the city lots and a lot of data from the city. And they're also using ai to sort of generate site layouts and feasibility studies. Very much what I do. So thank you. And that's we'll either make it easier or make me obsolete. But they but they did a really great study for us. And I'm super proud to present this, they looked at three scenarios. And they limited their study to the urban watershed. This was a suggestion that came from, the watershed department. And it makes sense for us, the urban watershed covers most of the older neighborhoods that are going to have the homes that are from 1960s or earlier. So it's not a big loss for us to limit it to the, to the urban watershed. And and, when we're talking about waiving building coverage, waiving impervious cover, it makes sense to put a limit to that. And really to locate it, within the central city urban area. So the three scenarios that they looked at

[3:18:25 PM]

scenarios that they looked at are first scenario is just a preservation bonus as it is written now. Second scenario is, is that bonus with the existing homes is impervious and building coverage waived. Now the way they did that was, they just gave it a 10% bump. So that is actually a conservative estimate, but I think a 10% bump is kind of the sweet spot. So we're, we're we're happy to look at that. And then the third one is with that, impervious and building coverage bump. And the fourth unit, the way that they did, the fourth unit is they were looking at typologies where it's an internal Adu. You're taking the existing home, and you're building a fourth unit within that home. Now these are the, on the right. These are the typologies that they brought, there's an attached second unit. There's a detached second unit, there's some cool typologies on the bottom, like, stacked triplexes in the back. That'd be

[3:19:26 PM]

triplexes in the back. That'd be a very cool typology. It would probably require bringing small multifamily into the irc, but we looked at that and then three townhomes in the back as well, and their results were super surprising and really encouraging. Citywide, there are 22,709 parcels that the preservation bonus would apply to, and from those, only 8% of them, could be used as it's currently, as it's currently written, which is, 1817 parcels and about, 2500 new units with the site coverage waived or, yeah, site coverage waived. That number jumps five times over five times. And then with the fourth unit, we're getting eight times the units that that, are, are able to be produced,

[3:20:29 PM]

are able to be produced, currently. Now, I do have to put a huge caveat because, we don't have the data for trees. And, this is an imperfect system of figuring out how many units per lot were because some of

the lots are strangely shaped. And I know that they have an ai algorithm that that goes in and really crunches those numbers really well. But I there's still a huge caveat that, that this is, this more gets to the trends than actually hard data. So so there's probably not exactly 20,507 units that are going to be produced or could be produced. And these are units that are being produced without tearing down any homes. I think that that's the super important thing to keep in mind, so they looked at a bunch of neighborhoods. I'm showing two right here, this is old west Austin on the left, judges hill and Clarksville on the right. We're looking at Windsor park university hills, and the, the lots in red are the ones that do

[3:21:32 PM]

lots in red are the ones that do not work for the preservation bonus as it's written now, the ones in yellow are the ones that would work. For two units and then the ones in green, which there's none on this screen, are the ones that could get, three additional units or four units in total. So there's no green because we can't do that right now. Very little yellow with the site coverage waived, the amount of yellow jumps dramatically. That's that five times increase. And then with the fourth unit reinstated, the lots in green are the ones that, would benefit from that. And these are again, these are lots where we're adding density to our neighborhoods without tearing down a single home, they did a whole bunch of, of, sample neighborhoods, and it's all in the backup documents. We have the entire cedar presentation, and I it's really interesting data. I encourage everyone to get in there and, and crack into it, and that's all that I've

[3:22:33 PM]

it, and that's all that I've got. So I'm going to pass it back to Lindsay. >> Okay, some other policy work that we've been doing around housing. Is house relocation something that we were really excited to work on with district five. And Ryan alter's office, just to highlight these policy changes that we think could be really impactful. The combination of being able to relocate more houses and increase density on central city lots is really exciting, because you could have a lot that's vacant and move three houses there, or you could have a house with or a parcel with an existing house and move another home there, just to highlight these, because it's something that we're looking at now, is just making it easier to move houses, right now it's really hard to move houses within the city. And so they all get moved outside of city limits. So what we are really hoping for, not that the resolution has been passed, is really easy. Switches from demolition permits to relocation permits, to streamline those processes, make them a little more affordable. A lot of times if someone wants to tear a house down, then they

[3:23:34 PM]

tear a house down, then they find a buyer. They need to get that building off their site now. And so if it takes six months to do that, the house is going to get demolished. We add more to our landfill, and we've just lost a housing unit that could benefit a family, so these are things that, that we're looking at again, just to make it easier, we'd like to be really flexible with just saving houses, saving older houses, and keeping them in use. Some other things that preservation Austin is looking at that are very much a part of this issue. We partnered with the city on a uli technical assistance panel last year, specifically with the displacement prevention department, looking at how you can use older and historic housing to prevent displacement. So preserving culture, keeping people in their neighborhoods, same premise. It's easier to demolish than to preserve right now. So what kinds of things could the city do to start to change those dynamics? We brought in affordable housing experts, preservation policy experts. A lot of those recommendations surrounded, investing in the city's community land trust program, building out home repair programs, things like the

[3:24:36 PM]

programs, things like the preservation bonus, streamlining processes for homeowners. There are a lot of programs that exist, but people don't know how to access them. Fundamentally we're really excited about the resolution that council passed after the home ordinance in December, looking at how we can support homeowners to access homes. So, low interest loans or forgivable loans. That's something that preservation Austin is really excited about because buildings are important, but they're only as important as the people who live in them. So that's, you know, we're we're looking to support partners in that area to and just to recap the things we would love council to take action on that we feel are extremely important to make sure the bonus is as broadly applicable and is used as possible, the fa fix that Chris and Kai discussed, adding the fourth unit, that we really talked a lot about last year, and then the site coverage issue, looking at impervious cover and building coverage, additional benefits. We would love council to take action on is making subdivision easier for preservation projects, reducing setbacks and then, kind of tying together relocations with the

[3:25:38 PM]

together relocations with the preservation bonus. These changes must be incorporated with the preservation bonus is to be a useful and beneficial tool to the community. As council, you know, as was council's intent last fall. And so we ask that you all make these recommendations to council as soon as possible. Thank you. >> Thank you very much, colleagues. Do we have any questions? I appreciated that, presentation. I definitely have some questions. Okay yeah. Council member qadri. Can I say first? >> Okay, I'm going to do my statement first. >> So Paige doesn't steal it. No I mean, I don't think she'll steal it, but, and also, for the record, I like puppies and the preservation bonus, but no, I appreciate the presentation. Ann. I noticed a lot of love for d-9, in the presentation, district nine has a lot to gain from the addition of the preservation bonus, because we have some of the oldest homes in the city, I think most homes built before 1960, are our office was proud to champion, the preservation bonus and home

[3:26:39 PM]

the preservation bonus and home phase one, you know, it's a real. It's really unfortunate we couldn't fit those updates into phase to phase two. I think that was already mentioned, but I just want to say I look forward to working with staff and stakeholders and getting it right and making sure that these changes, have, you know, are, are it's able to work out as, as, as well as should and be as robust out as, as much as possible. So that was my statement. >> I also like the puppies for preservation bonus. So maybe your next meet and greet. We can have some some adoptable dogs out there or something, really be fascinated by that tool, I know that a lot of the work we do up here sometimes we don't always agree on how far to change a rule, sometimes we don't agree on what the actual impacts are going to be. And so I think this is really helpful in the conversation of making sure that we're working with the same facts and understanding as we make these regulatory decisions. But I love knowing that we can work with realistic expectations and really understand how much of an impact

[3:27:40 PM]

understand how much of an impact are we trying to make, because I think every conversation we've had up on this dais, someone says it goes too far and someone else says it won't go far enough or it won't actually be useful. It won't play out in real time, so this is a fascinating tool, and I'm very excited about it. And I appreciate the work that you all have put into this to help us make these informed decisions. >> Thank you, so I actually wonder our dsd folks are still in here. Can I confirm something with you real quick? There was a statement made that the subdivision process takes up to 360 days. Is that accurate? Keith, Mars development services, as I mentioned earlier, subdivision covers everything from preliminary plans, Greenfield all the way to infill. >> I mean, as it pertains to this preservation effort, short answer is, I don't know. >> Okay. But I can I can get you numbers on that. >> Okay. >> And then the follow up question, there would be one of our presenters was, suggested that, for the preservation

[3:28:41 PM]

that, for the preservation effort, that that process take 30 days. I'm curious to know if that's possible. You can let me know that later to I look for. Well, in fact, if you could. Oh dang it, we don't have a quorum. >> I think we could still discuss. >> We have a couple things we were supposed to take some motions on. Oh, yeah. All right. So moving right along. Thank you. Preservation Austin and Austin infill coalition for your presentation. I really appreciate it. Thank you. Oh wait I'm sorry I did. I have one more question. Oh, also, by the way Paige you're funny. You said how far do we take it? >> I got that. >> Okay. Waving site coverage. Can you expand on that for me? What would that look like? Essentially is what I'm trying to ask. Sure.

[3:29:41 PM]

to ask. Sure. >> So just in the same way that we're waiving the far from the existing house, what we're proposing is that you waive the existing site coverage of the existing house, and that would be a combination of impervious cover and building coverage. But we understand that, that just saying it's waived without limit is, is, probably not a good idea. So we're saying, it would be the lesser of the existing home or a 10% increase in either site coverage or, building coverage or impervious coverage. So there's a there's a there's a limit to how far you can waive it. But in general, the idea and the, the philosophy behind it is the same as the far waiver that if you have an existing home and you're trying to preserve it and build new homes in the back, and it's been there since since 1960, just go ahead and waive the far the impervious and building coverage and the unit count, that's the other one that

[3:30:42 PM]

count, that's the other one that we're saying. So we're kind of saying let's pretend, that it doesn't exist in relation to building more units on the site. >> I'd be curious to see that all written out, especially like you just gave the example of a 1960 house. But is that the, you know, is that the threshold or is it 48 or 71? I would like to know more specifically, sure, what the threshold would be there. >> Currently it's 1960. So the preservation bonus kicks in for homes 1960 and older. There's a whole, reason for that. But that's kind of where it sits right now. >> Okay. And then my final question is you introduced me to a new term today, pole, I'm not familiar with that. When you say minimum pole. Oh, what, which of our departments are associated with that? Is that E or is that development. >> So the pole. So if you have a lot and you're subdividing it front to back, the front lot is going to be against the street,

[3:31:43 PM]

going to be against the street, and it has easy access for utilities. The back lot is not against the street and it doesn't have easy access. So that's called a flag lot, subdivision. And that back lot has to have a pole that reaches from the back of the lot to the front of the lot. Now, that's not a physical pole. That's a slice of land, a very skinny slice of land that reaches from the back of the lot all the way to the front of the lot. And that's so you can run utilities. And right now, I believe that the, there's a minimum size that that is required for that, tract of land that reaches to the back of the lot, we're requesting Lang. What is the smallest we can go on that if we're not trying to drive a car back there? And if it's just for waste and water house, how skinny can we make that pole? >> I think that brings me back to the question that I asked which departments does that touch? >> Do you know any city of Austin folks know?

[3:32:46 PM]

Austin folks know? >> Subdivision I would guess subdivision. >> But it also kind of Austin water would want to weigh in. Probably Keith Marcel services again. It is in the subdivision requirements and it is for the purpose of providing utilities and access, to his, assumption that was it also Austin water or exclusively the subdivision folks, what is what is triggered by it is also Roig, director for dsd. >> It's actually the subdivision the way they actually subdivide the lot, but that's going to be the access where they're going to run utilities, electrical, water, drainage. And it's also it has to be a certain size for fire access to the unit in the back. >> I guess ultimately, what I'm trying to ask is generally speaking, rules aren't arbitrary. I'm trying to figure out why the rule exists, are there some specific parameters that were considered because of

[3:33:47 PM]

that were considered because of whatever the thing is? Or is it something that can be changed and if so, what department does that affect? I hear you saying subdivision, but I'm just trying to figure out when I go to do my due diligence and ask more questions. Who should I be asking? >> It will involve several departments because we have to get involved with fire to make sure they had the right access to it and the utilities. So it will be a collaboration between different departments. >> Respectfully, could you, send to me and my colleagues that list, just in case anybody else is curious about doing that due diligence? Thank you very much. Thank you. Sure >> I excused you, sir. No I would just like to say on the on the flag are the pole, there has been an idea that we need the pole to be a certain size for these reasons, but I'd like to point out that with with condo regimes, we've been doing it without that size of a pole for 15 years, and the city, as far as I know, is not blown up yet. And everything's been fine. So I'd just like to put that out there that I understand there's more stringent regulations for

[3:34:48 PM]

more stringent regulations for subdivision, but we have not been doing those with condos for a long time, and I think they'd be a good test case to see, hey, does it work? And it does. So yeah, I appreciate that contribution. >> Anybody else have a questions . All right. Thank you folks I appreciate the presentation. Colleagues I meant to say this earlier about another item that we were discussing, so after our presentation on, before the infill and home presentation, we had the presentation about site plan, light infill, lot process and the home tree amendment, I would like to know, so if, if we have a motion to bring that item before the body. Sounds like that's a no, in which case. >> So just to bring the presentation essentially as the recommendation. Correct. I think that sounds great. I'll make the motion. >> So motion by council member Ellis and seconded by council member qadri. All in favor. That's unanimous, and then before we get to future items, the other question I had so, so.

[3:35:49 PM]

the other question I had so, so. Oh, vice chair alder. It's okay. Give me just a moment. Thank you. All right, so, actually, I don't have any further questions. I think this is where we get to highlight any future items that we'd like. The committee to discuss, and I will save mine. And colleagues, do you have any that you'd like for us to discuss in the future? >> I have one quick one. It actually goes back to a conversation you and I started back in 2019, and there is no timeline on this, but I am just very curious about the discussion around impervious cover. I think at this point it's either it's not impervious cover zero or it is counted as impervious cover. But now there's been a lot of technological advances in materials, and so I'd like for us to see when that fits into

[3:36:50 PM]

us to see when that fits into the schedule of the housing and planning committee to talk about what's on the horizon, what you know, what can we learn from other cities that have that have adopted these? And can there be any sort of like mitigation or offset work in the conversation around something that is not concrete, but is actually designed to absorb water and even support plants at some stages? >> I think that's a fantastic recommendation. Ed to your point, materials have changed. And, I really think that it's time to revisit the conversation, and so for myself, I'm excited to announce that we will be hosting a panel of local experts and our staff on agrihood. Y'all know how I feel about agrihood, the concept that I introduced to the committee last month, my office will be working with staff to ensure that any recommendations from our local advocates and best practices from around the country can be pursued, and our future planning efforts, and with that, if there are no further. I thought that was you raising your hand. If there are no further items, I think we can adjourn the housing and planning

[3:37:52 PM]

adjourn the housing and planning committee meeting at 3:37 P.M. Thank you everybody