



# CLARKSVILLE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## Comments and Recommendations of the Clarksville Community Development Corporation Regarding CodeNEXT & the New Zoning Maps

For nearly 40 years, the Clarksville Community Development Corporation (CCDC) has worked to preserve the unique history of the Freedman's community of Clarksville. The organization has maintained a degree of (economic) diversity in the neighborhood through its affordable housing program. The CCDC has also helped preserve the neighborhood's historically contributing homes and kept the neighborhood family-friendly by hosting community events throughout the year. In addition, it has unceasingly organized and educated Clarksville's residents about neighborhood-related issues and communicated with the Mayor, the City Council and with relevant boards and commissions on behalf of Clarksville.

After studying CodeNEXT and the new zoning maps, the CCDC board of directors is concerned that without significant changes to the proposed new land use code and maps, CodeNEXT will undermine the CCDC's years of effort and permanently transform Clarksville.

### Our Key Concerns

- Our neighborhood will be up-zoned from SF-3 to T3. Although the consultants refer to this change as “right zoning,” increasing the number of allowable units on a given lot, increasing the allowable square footage of a unit, and reducing parking requirements amounts to up-zoning.

The CodeNEXT consultants claim the change in zoning is necessary because under the current code, the use of land in our neighborhood and in others zoned SF-3 is “economically inefficient.” We do not believe that this is an appropriate concept to apply to residential neighborhoods like Clarksville. CodeNEXT should work to enhance our neighborhood and preserve its character. It should *not* accelerate the pressure to demolish what is here now and to build new structures that will be more expensive. Our neighborhood is not a commodity to be developed to its “highest and best use.”

- Many residents of Clarksville struggle with our neighborhood's high property taxes. Adding additional new units to our neighborhood will further increase those taxes and make Clarksville increasingly unaffordable for middle-income households. In other words, the neighborhood will once again become the victim of gentrification and as a result, Clarksville will become a neighborhood where only the affluent can live.
- Increased density and decreased parking requirements will exacerbate existing problems in Clarksville. For example, some of our streets are virtually impassable during certain times of the day because of overflow parking

from businesses along West Lynn. We've also experienced an increase in drive-through traffic. These problems combined with the lack of sidewalks put pedestrians in danger. Furthermore, the problems also make it increasingly difficult for emergency vehicles to drive down the neighborhood's narrow streets.

- It is unlikely that the infrastructure in older Central Austin neighborhoods, like Clarksville can support the increased density that CodeNEXT will inevitably bring.
- The drafters of CodeNEXT have treated the citizens of Austin with disdain. For example, they have ignored the goals of *Imagine Austin* as well as the thousands of hours of work by hundreds of dedicated Austinites who created neighborhood plans. Those plans, which reflect the unique goals and needs of each neighborhood and are important components of *Imagine Austin*, should absolutely be reflected in CodeNEXT.
- The density bonus proposal allows T4 structures to be as high as 3.5 stories. Although all of Clarksville would be zoned T3 under CodeNEXT, there are areas of our neighborhood that are across or down the street from properties that are zoned T4. Taller structures would negatively impact Clarksville residences in those areas.
- Compatibility standards have been dramatically reduced in CodeNEXT and the standards that remain are very difficult to understand.
- CodeNEXT makes decision-making less representative. It gives city staff the power to make important decisions related to zoning and parking and at the same time diminishes the involvement of boards and commissions, whose members are appointed by our elected officials, as well as Austin citizens in land use-related matters.

## **Our Recommendations**

- Revise CodeNEXT to reflect the goals of *Imagine Austin* and neighborhood plans. The plans should be treated as overlays.
- Revise the zoning maps so that no properties zoned T4 are located across the street or adjacent to T3 properties.
- Add disincentives for demolishing existing houses and incentives for preserving existing structures.
- Require that when a property is demolished in Clarksville or in any other T3 zone and replaced with three new units, one of those units must be designated affordable.
- Maintain the current allowable square footage of ADUs, which is already the largest in the U. S.
  - Reinstate a FAR limit for properties in Clarksville and in all T3 zones. Also, reinstate FAR along commercial corridors and use it as an affordability incentive.
- Reinstate missing compatibility standards.
- Reinstate current parking requirements for residential and commercial buildings in Central Austin.
- Explore opportunities to push more density into areas not currently rezoned by CodeNEXT. Land is less expensive in Austin's suburban areas and the infrastructure is newer. It is sensible to encourage more density in

areas with the greatest potential for growth and to encourage the construction of middle income housing in those locations.

- Give neighborhoods the opportunity to have meaningful input into the process. For example, Opticos should be required to visit with leaders of each neighborhood and those meetings should take place within each neighborhood. The meetings will help the firm learn about the character, concerns and challenges each neighborhood faces and allow Opticos to ensure that CodeNEXT supports the existing character of each neighborhood.
- Reverse the increase in power that CodeNEXT gives to city staff and reinstate and expand opportunities for relevant boards and commissions as well as neighborhoods to have meaningful input into land use-related issues.