

June 3, 2017

Subject: District 9, Heritage Neighborhood zoning

Dear CodeNext Director, Advisors and Planners:

This letter is about the proposed CodeNext zoning for our neighborhood. On behalf of our neighbors, I would like to share with you some reasons why I believe the proposed zoning of T4 to be unsuitable. Please read this and consider our situation. I realize you may be familiar with some of this, but please take it all into consideration. We feel our neighborhood is threatened by CodeNEXT.

As a longtime resident ... I moved into my Historic Landmark home in Heritage in 1984 ... I have had years to observe the various aspects of this small, older neighborhood. I walk it every day, in all seasons, in the mornings and often in the evenings too. In fact, North/West Campus, the greater neighborhood that Heritage is part of, is rated in a national study as the most walk-able neighborhood in Austin. With a Walk Score of 87, it is the THIRD most walk-able neighborhood in the ENTIRE STATE OF TEXAS! <https://www.redfin.com/blog/2016/03/the-10-most-walkable-neighborhoods-in-texas.html>

I predict that if CodeNext changes zoning in Heritage to T4, that excellent Walk Score will drop out of sight.

To gain a sense of what T4 might mean to Heritage, the other day I took a walk on the EAST side of Guadalupe, just NORTH of 38th Street, where development is already the equivalent of what would be allowed in T4. There, I found cars parked bumper to bumper on both sides of the streets, narrowing the streets to a single lane. Traffic stalled at each end of the block to take turns edging through the narrow gauntlet. There were few sidewalks. High metal fences stood close to the street. Inside the fences were paved parking lots filled with cars. Massive two-story apartment complexes built of cheap materials were in the midst of the parking lots. All along the streets, trash was scattered between the gutters and the fences. Big smelly dumpsters made their presence known on the corners. There were only a few remaining older houses, that mostly looked half-abandoned, with broken parts and appliances on the lawns. A few houses contained businesses, again with lawns paved over for parking. Not a pleasant walk, to say the least! It breaks my heart to think that this is

the fate of our lovely, charming old Heritage neighborhood, but I can see that under T4, it would eventually be transformed to this.

Some of us in the neighborhood are astounded that, after so much time, work and negotiating on the part of Heritage residents to craft our Neighborhood Plan not very long ago (a plan that was agreed to and signed off on by the Council), we are now faced with major changes that negate the Plan — and the proposed zoning does not even include aspects of the Plan that allowed for increased occupancy by zoning for Multifamily Residential all along the commercial corridors of Guadalupe, Lamar, 29th and 38th Streets. This alone would achieve the stated goal of increased occupancy for our neighborhood. Our Neighborhood Plan also granted high-rise zoning for the area NORTH of campus and EAST of Guadalupe, where massive residential buildings sprang up without delay. This zoning change, which allowed for a huge increase in occupancy, makes us feel that “We already gave,” as part of the Neighborhood Plan, and should not be expected to give up more.

A puzzling aspect of the proposed CodeNext zoning change is that it would sacrifice one of the most charming, close-in areas for only a projected additional 2,000 occupants, a mere drop in the bucket when compared to the overall number of additional occupancies CodeNext intends to create. The gain in occupancy is SO MINIMAL compared to the loss of a valuable, thriving, 100-year-old close in, mixed family and student neighborhood! This is not Austin Thinking!

Here in Heritage there are quite a few historic landmark houses, plus several that have not been designated yet, but would certainly qualify. (The Theo Belmont House, for instance, would be a candidate. Belmont founded the UT sports program and the UT stadium is named for him.) In effect, this area is ALREADY a Historic District, informally. It would be a shame to destroy that, just to add a few more student rental apartments.

THE SOLUTION: There are vast stretches of property all along the perimeter of Heritage, along Guadalupe, 34th Street, 38th Street, 29th Street, and especially, along Lamar, that would accommodate MANY apartment complexes with commercial spaces on the ground floors. And yet, for some mysterious reason, these properties have not been zoned Multifamily Residential by CodeNext. Surely that is an oversight that when corrected would allow Heritage to maintain its current zoning under the present, and suitable, Neighborhood Plan, while at

the same time allowing CodeNext to meet its goal for increased occupancy.

I can't help but think that if you, as CodeNext Advisors and Planners, were fully aware of the history behind the houses in Heritage and the diverse, lively dynamic of the place and people, you would never consider zoning it T4.

Another aspect of Heritage Neighborhood that makes it unique to Austin is the number of Heritage Trees growing here. We are under a canopy of giant old oaks! This part of Austin is the ONLY place in town where Post Oaks grow. There are so many currently registered Heritage Trees, and yet-to-be designated ones here. Developers would find it difficult to build around them, and these trees must be protected!

During the one-third century I have lived in the historic Manning-Udden-Bailey House on 31st Street, I have watched this neighborhood go from being occupied by mostly retired and older people, to blossom forth with young families, children who fill the classrooms of Brykerwood Elementary and St. Andrews, and play throughout the neighborhood. There is a real community at work here, with block and backyard parties, a Friday night soccer game, Easter egg hunts, Christmas caroling, Trick or Treating, a Little Library for children and neighborhood Fourth of July parades. A change to T4 zoning would also adversely affect attendance at Brykerwood School! In Heritage, children can walk or bike along the creek to school, a rare experience unique in Heritage.

The houses here represent a broad array of architectural styles. Situated among the well-maintained older homes are some nicely designed new ones. There are large, hundred-year-old houses sitting on blocks with bungalows, and tiny houses on tiny streets. Plus the site, at the historic Heritage House property, of an old cabin that was burned down in a Comanche raid! There are duplexes, apartment complexes and condos. Washington Square, once the widest residential street in Austin, is not far from the tiniest street, the comically reverse-named King's Lane. A 100-year-old house on Washington Square that formerly served as a Friends Meeting House is now a Zen Center. Across Lamar from Heritage is a two-mile wooded hike and bike trail along Shoal Creek. Within steps there is a food co-op, a pre-school, a senior center and a funeral home. This is truly a neighborhood that serves its residents "from the cradle to the grave."

As a longtime resident of Heritage neighborhood, I sincerely urge you to recognize and allow us to retain our current Neighborhood Plan and zoning. I am certain that changing the zoning to T4 would be a mistake that would become obvious to all, and regrettable. It would destroy a wonderful 100-year-old neighborhood that helps to make Austin Austin, and for very little gain.

Please help us preserve Heritage!

Sincerely,

Donna Endres
901 W. 31st Street
Austin, Texas 78705
512 377-3737