



HousingWorks

AUSTIN

HousingWorks Austin’s approach to CodeNEXT is grounded in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, including the focus on creating “complete communities.” HousingWorks Austin’s major goals and priorities for CodeNEXT are detailed below.

Housing Choice. CodeNEXT must increase the diversity of housing types available, including “missing middle” (e.g., duplex, tri-plex, four-plex, ADUs, etc.) and alternative forms of housing, such as cooperatives.

Identified Problem(s): (1) constraints on ADUs, including proscriptive setbacks and other regulations, make it difficult to build; (2) while the entitlements in the T3 transect zone are more generous than previous SF-3, typical site constraints (e.g., trees, topography, etc.) make additional development more infeasible; (3) there are not additional opportunities for creating alternative housing types within the same form (e.g., “internal ADUs” or cooperatives, etc.).

Geographic Dispersion of Affordable Housing. The current “hybrid” draft code (Euclidian and form-based) must be better integrated in order to ensure dispersion of affordable housing in all areas of the city. The new density bonus program (yet to be released) will need to be carefully studied to ensure that we carry forward the positive aspects of our existing programs and maximize the resulting legally-restricted affordable housing.

Identified Problem(s): (1) less intense zones (comparable to SF-2) allow ADUs with a Minor Use Permit, making this housing type less likely west of Mopac; (2) opportunities for density and affordability are generally concentrated in the urban core (rather than reflective of the Imagine Austin growth concept map).

Tools to Incentivize Affordable Residential Development. The incentive tools need to be assessed to ensure that they are effective and responsive to changing market conditions. Companion policies to the code must be introduced that go beyond the code and help achieve the goals of the Strategic Housing Blueprint. Neighborhood planning must be enhanced and updated to work towards affordability goals.

Identified Problem(s): (1) Affordable Housing Incentive Program is to be released on June 16th; (2) with an initial comment deadline of July 14th, there is little time for consideration and response, (3) preliminary analysis shows less resulting affordability than VMU (but more widespread); (4) without FAR (Floor to Area Ratio) as a tool, the triggering mechanism for affordability is limited.

Entitlements/Density. Increased entitlements must be commensurate with community benefits, particularly legally restricted affordable housing. This can help us achieve affordability and geographic dispersion goals. Parking requirements may be considered as an entitlement that would help gain community benefits.

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Development Process Improvement. Ensuring an expeditious and predictable development process can ease the pressure on housing supply and contribute to greater affordability. The CodeNEXT process must create a development review system that is simpler to understand and administer.

Identified Problem(s): (1) the proposed draft actually is three different codes (form-based, Euclidian, and legacy) and needs to be integrated; otherwise, the code is more complicated and cumbersome for both users and staff.

Preservation of Affordable Housing. The impact of gentrification on low-income communities is a pressing challenge. Preservation of affordable housing across the city is one tool to meet the challenge. CodeNEXT will require parallel policy actions to ensure low-income residents can remain in their neighborhoods and have access to high opportunity areas.

Identified Problem(s): (1) the proposed draft should provide opportunities to preserve market affordable housing (or at least not incentivize demolition); and (2) the proposed draft does not recognize the companion policies that will need to be considered and implement in order to mitigate displacement and gentrification.