



# Formal Comments on CodeNEXT Map 2017 Draft

7<sup>th</sup> July 2017

# About the HBAGA

As the largest trade association in central Texas, the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin (HBAGA) represents over 700 member companies. In 2015, our members built 2933 homes in the City of Austin alone. The mission of the HBAGA is to promote the practice and professionalism of the home building industry here in Greater Austin; with the vision that all people live in homes and communities that enable them to thrive. It is with this mission that the HBAGA works actively with elected officials, city staff, our members, and the community at large, to advocate on housing issues that impact our community.

With the release of the draft Land Development Code in January, the HBAGA formed a task force including a wide variety of members with expertise in many different development areas. Throughout a series of meetings, the task force explored the practical implications of the code's first draft through case studies and modeling. On June 6, 2017, the HBA task force produced a position paper regarding the draft text of CodeNEXT. Since that date, the group has devoted several meetings to reviewing the implications of the draft map.

It is our hope that the final version of CodeNEXT will improve the city in which we live and work, and that the HBAGA can be an ally and a resource to ensure that everyone can afford to live, grow, and play in our community.

## Mission

*The mission of the Home Builders Association of Greater Austin is to advance the practice and professionalism of the home building industry in our community.*

## Vision

*All people in the Greater Austin area live in strong communities and homes that enable them to thrive.*

## Core Values

*Integrity  
Collaboration  
Professional Excellence  
Community-Minded  
Prosperity for All*

# Overview

In 2012, the City of Austin adopted the Imagine Austin Plan to memorialize the vision for the future of our city. In this plan, the city outlined 6 core principles for action that the city should take to enact our shared vision:

1. Grow as a compact, connected city
2. Integrate nature into the city
3. Provide paths to prosperity for all
4. Develop as an affordable and healthy community
5. Sustainably manage water, energy and other environmental resources
6. Think creatively and work together

The HBAGA agrees with Imagine Austin's vision for the city, and believes that a successful zoning code and map will work together to pursue its 6 core principles. While the code should provide the means to reach the goals of Imagine Austin, these goals can only be reached by applying the code to the maps. Projections to meet these goals are based on the maps and the assumptions contained within them, and are vital to the success of CodeNEXT.

The HBA's Infill Builders Council's CodeNEXT task force has identified several major concerns with the 2017 draft map. In this first draft, it is natural for there to be areas that need improvement, and the HBAGA is committed to following the entire editing process to assist throughout the map's evolution. The problems identified by the task force are significant, and if not properly addressed, will result prevent us from achieving our shared goals of affordable and plentiful housing. The HBAGA has broadly summarized our concerns, choosing to focus on the map's general assumptions with the understanding that we cannot address every specific area, block, or lot. With that, we respectfully present our insight and recommendations.

# Comments

## 1. Continue to use Imagine Austin to guide mapping

Imagine Austin is the path our city must, by ordinance, follow to reach the goals contained therein. Widely supported by the public and represented by the Evolve Austin Coalition, Imagine Austin was the impetus for the CodeNEXT process and should be followed in the creation of the maps. We found efforts to meet the goals of Imagine Austin in every neighborhood we reviewed, but those efforts were applied inconsistently. This approach increases uncertainty among homeowners, neighborhoods and businesses alike, both now and in the future. Establishing consistency through the application of zoning will benefit everyone and is paramount to achieving our goals as a city, such as:

- a. Improving traffic and encouraging the use of pedestrian and public transportation resources by placing appropriate zoning along corridors and in transitions from commercial areas.
- b. Put “Missing Middle” housing on the map. Missing middle housing options are absent from our current code, and this appears to have significantly reduced the areas where they appear on the CodeNEXT draft map. Several new zonings that are present in the draft text are almost completely absent in the draft map. Including missing middle housing on the map will reduce the cost of living and reduce suburban sprawl by offering homeowners more choices besides expensive single family homes.

## 2. Adjust assumptions or we fall short

Our review of both the code and the maps, in conjunction with the AIA Charrette findings, has called into question the assumptions that we, as a city, are making to address affordability, development outside of the City, and transportation issues through the maps. In modeling exercises, it became apparent that all residential zonings were more impacted by the combination of existing lot configurations, protected trees, and increased restrictions or prescriptions in the code than expected. Modeling demonstrated that fewer new units could feasibly be built on existing lots, and this effect was widespread across both the map and the various zonings. Assumptions about units per lot, redevelopment rates, and number of permits necessary to achieve our city’s goals must be examined, adjusted, and mapped accordingly for CodeNEXT to succeed.

### **3. Maps make or break affordability goals**

There is no question that Austin needs additional housing to address our affordability crisis. To meet our affordability goals over the next decade, we must create 135,000 new units for people to live in, both as renters and homeowners. Our review has concluded that there are simply not enough housing options on the current map to get us there. It is paramount for the maps to accurately account for these units, and to take into account the on-the-ground challenges that those seeking development may experience; or we will never be able to provide the amount of housing that is accessible for our neighbors, that our city desperately needs.

Because CodeNEXT and its map will impact our city for years to come, it is our hope that the process will adequately account for the long-term goals our City has made.

As the maps continue to evolve, the HBAGA will commit to maintain a partnership with the City staff, consultants, and all stakeholders as we work together to build the Austin we imagine.



## CodeNEXT Task Force Members

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