

## **Consistency with Neighborhood Plans**

### **Submitted by a community member**

#### **Requested Action**

As required by Imagine Austin, all modifications to the city code included within CodeNEXT should be evaluated to measure their consistency with adopted neighborhood and other small area plans:

"Modifications to the City code and building code should be measured with regard to their ability to preserve neighborhood character, **consistency with adopted neighborhood and area plans**, impact on affordability, and the ability of existing families to continue to reside in their homes." (*emphasis added*) [Imagine Austin, Page 207]

To accomplish this task, City staff and/or the applicable consultants should compile a report detailing the goals and directives of the adopted neighborhood plans and small area plans, and then, reevaluate CodeNEXT to measure its consistency with such goals and directives. Such report should be provided to the neighborhood planning contact teams, the Planning Commission and City Council for further evaluation and feedback.

For parcels within areas under adopted neighborhood plans, the proposed zoning districts for each parcel should correspond to its designated land use on the Future Land Use Map ("**FLUM**") along with the text of the neighborhood plan, to the fullest extent applicable. In the event that a proposed zoning district on the CodeNEXT mapping is inconsistent with the applicable neighborhood plan, such proposed zoning district should be modified to conform to the adopted FLUM and plan.

#### **Explanation**

**CodeNEXT has failed to carry out its primary directive to implement Imagine Austin by disregarding adopted neighborhood plans.**

As noted in the purpose statement of CodeNEXT, the primary purpose of the Land Development Code is to codify development regulations and procedures that are consistent with and are designed to implement the City's comprehensive plan, Imagine Austin.<sup>1</sup> Imagine Austin explicitly recognizes that neighborhood plans are integral components of the City's comprehensive plan, which present "a detailed view based on local conditions" and provide guidance on which "parcels are appropriate for redevelopment".<sup>2</sup>

With regard to zoning decisions, Imagine Austin is clear on how this directive should be implemented:

"Where a small area plan exists, recommendations should be consistent with the text of the plan and its Future Land Use Map or equivalent map (if one exists)."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Draft CodeNEXT, §23-1A-1020(A).

<sup>2</sup> Imagine Austin, Page 219.

<sup>3</sup> Imagine Austin, Page 220.

However, upon review of the draft code and the recommended zoning map, **it is unmistakable that the neighborhood plans were disregarded in their entirety.** From calls to reduce impervious cover to mitigate flooding (eg. Bouldin Creek) to preventing the influx of additional bars and cocktail lounges (eg. Govalle), the concerns raised throughout decades of neighborhood planning efforts, representing over 48 neighborhood planning areas, have been overlooked.

Neighborhood plans represent thousands of hours of public input, dialogue, and debate. The decisions reached through such plans are the result of compromises within communities and collective aspirations for the future. The plans' recommendations range from the broad to the specific and are more informative than any of the town-hall-style meetings that have occurred throughout the CodeNEXT process.

The wholesale disregard to the adopted neighborhood plans is an insult to decades of public involvement and waste of millions of taxpayer dollars.

Perhaps the most obvious example of how our neighborhood plans have been ignored is CodeNEXT's proposed widespread rezoning of Austin's central neighborhoods from single-family to multi-family. The most consistent theme across all neighborhood plans has been to the need to preserve existing single-family neighborhoods. The following is a quick sampling of the directives across the adopted neighborhood plans:

- **Central West Austin:** "Preserve the existing single-family uses within the neighborhood by not changing them to non-residential or multifamily uses."
- **East MLK:** "Preserve established residential areas and improve opportunities for home ownership by promoting the rehabilitation of existing housing and new, infill housing compatible with the existing style of this neighborhood."
- **Bouldin:** "Maintain the Single Family Residential Character of the Neighborhood Interior. Properties located within the interior of the neighborhood that are zoned single family should remain as single-family land uses."
- **Govalle/Johnson Terrace:** "Preserve and protect current and future single-family neighborhoods."
- **West University:** "Reduce the negative effects of multi-family housing on the West University Neighborhood."
- **Heritage Neighborhood:** "Preserve the current pattern of single-family and smaller-scale multi-family land use in the neighborhood."
- **OCEAN:** "Preserve the existing housing stock."
- **Shoal Crest Neighborhood:** "Reduce the negative impacts of the multi-family housing on the Shoal Crest Neighborhood and allow for modest increases in single-family density that is in character with surrounding development."
- **North University:** "Prevent single-family houses from being constructed that result in dormitory-like structures with numerous cars."
- **East Riverside:** "Preserve and enhance the character of existing residential neighborhoods."
- **Hancock Neighborhood:** "Remove multi-family and commercial zoning along Duval Street where the current and traditional use is single-family."
- **Chestnut:** "[Adopted a conditional overlay] to promote a compatible mix of residential and commercial uses along the neighborhood's commercial corridors,

to protect the residential character of the neighborhood's interior, and to encourage compatible uses along its corridors.”

Each of these plans make the preservation and protection of the existing single-family housing stock a ***priority***. Not one of these plans suggests that we should rezone single-family houses to encourage their redevelopment and removal or the displacement of the families living in them. Yet, entire blocks of single-family homes within neighborhoods throughout our neighborhoods have been rezoned to the equivalent of multi-family zoning.

Such changes were intentionally avoided in the adoption of the Growth Concept Map included within Imagine Austin, as the Growth Concept Map was amended and adjusted to ensure consistency with adopted Future Land Use Maps.

While single-family housing is noted as the most obvious and widespread example of the inconsistency between CodeNEXT and the neighborhood plans, there are dozens (if not hundreds) of recommendations included within the neighborhood plans that have been ignored.