

CENTRAL WEST AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN CONTACT TEAM

June 7, 2017

Organized 2010

"To facilitate the implementation of the Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan."

Honorable Mayor Adler and City Council Members
Austin City Council
301 West 2nd Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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Re: Requested Delay for CodeNext Engagement and Adoption Process

Honorable Mayor Adler and Council Members:

The Central West Austin Neighborhood Plan Contact Team respectfully requests that the City Council slow down and extend the "engagement" process for gathering public input on the draft CodeNext ordinance language and proposed zoning maps. Despite the early promise that CodeNext would create a cleaner, simpler land development code that would help achieve greater housing affordability, diversity, and density along existing corridor streets without sacrificing the character and quality of our existing interior neighborhoods, the draft CodeNext language does not appear to achieve these promises, and we therefore believe additional time is required to make needed corrections and clarifications.

As representatives and advocates for the Central West Austin Neighborhood Plan, we are especially concerned that our Neighborhood Plan Contact Team was never consulted about the proposed CodeNext code changes or zoning maps. Perhaps even more troubling is that, even though our Neighborhood Plan Contact Team has substantial experience and knowledge about land use and zoning matters, we have struggled to understand and assimilate the proposed zoning maps and multitude of zoning categories due to the unfamiliar and confusing terminology and concepts which were effectively presented for the first time in the zoning maps earlier this year. And it is not for lack of effort or on part. We have attended numerous meeting organized by city and neighborhood and community partners, but the such meetings rarely provide insight into the likely development impacts propose by the variously defined (and undefined) transect zoning categories that extend throughout our neighborhood.

Unfortunately, the public facing materials have not helped clarify the likely impacts. For example, the current zoning map published in the city website lists whole stretches of properties along the north side of Enfield Road as "T4N", but this is not a zoning category that is defined anywhere in the 1,130 pages of the Public Review Draft. If this "T4N" category is intended as a placeholder to cover all variations of the T4N.DS, T4N.IS, T4N.IS-Open, T4N.SS, T4N.SS-Open, and T4N.DS zoning categories (and let's just pause for a minute to admire the laughable complexity of that statement), then citizens are not being provided a reasonable opportunity to respond if we don't know which zoning category is actually being proposed for our neighborhood. This same "T4N" labeling defect appears in other areas of our neighborhood (e.g., at the intersection of Exposition and McCullough). Another barrier to understanding the proposed code changes is that we have been not been provided with modelling examples of how the proposed zoning categories could be developed. In contrast, extensive modeling was provided when the McMansion Ordinance was being proposed so that property owners would understand the likely impacts of the code changes.

Mayor Adler's original vision was that CodeNext would provide a simpler, cleaner, easier-to-use code which would also direct most of Austin's increased density along major roadways (e.g., Lamar, Burnet, Guadalupe) to better connect residents to transit and businesses. This is a valid goal, and could be accomplished at the periphery of our neighborhood in line with the guidance from our Neighborhood Plan. However, Mayor Adler also acknowledged that greatly increasing density deep within established neighborhoods would be "at the expense of a lot of blood on the floor." When we look at the proposed zoning maps and see transect zones extending throughout our neighborhood (and not just along major corridors), we see blood on the floor. This is in direct contrast to the extensive public input that resulted in our Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood where we actively identified areas along key core transit corridors for additional density that would promote walkability, multimodality, and a diversity of housing options while limiting adverse impacts throughout the rest of our neighborhoods.

We are concerned that there has not been sufficient time for our neighborhood to absorb and understand the complexities of the proposed CodeNext changes. We are also concerned that the CodeNext proposals do not properly reflect the guidance from our Neighborhood Plan. Accordingly, we urge Council to extend the time periods for comment, demand that Opticos deliver a complete and comprehensive revised LDC, and respect Imagine Austin, the Neighborhood Plans, and our Future Land Use Map.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Rocco Cannatti

Central West Austin Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, Chair