

February 21, 2017

A Community, Not a Commodity

WHAT IS CODENEXT?

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE? Because CodeNEXT may have a profound impact on your home and community.

CodeNEXT is the name given by the City of Austin to the ongoing total rewrite of the City's land use and building rules, known as the Land Development Code. It will address what can be built, where it can be built, how much can be built, and how it can be used.

The initial draft sweeps away decades of zoning and land use rules relied on by all of us when we moved into our homes and communities, and it replaces them with a set of substantially different rules developed by consultants and City staff with little meaningful input from neighborhood advocates.

Our City Council and land use commissions, and we citizens, must get this right. We do not want the new code to change the character of our neighborhoods, result in increased demolitions and displacement of residents and families with children, or result in higher taxes, higher rents, and the erosion of the quality of all our lives.

We are concerned that the new code seeks to squeeze more people and cars into our existing neighborhoods without taking into consideration the adverse impacts of the building of triplexes, fourplexes, and small apartment complexes without adequate parking. It may allow more businesses uses in many of our established neighborhoods. If the new rules are adopted, existing older homes and apartment complexes might be torn down at a faster pace. People who rent houses and apartments might see rents go up, resulting in more displacement at an even faster pace.

In addition to changing the zoning rules, the new code will address a variety of other important rules, such as those controlling drainage, landscaping, and tree protection, all of which could have dramatic effects on the safety and quality of life in our neighborhoods.

Why does the City want to change the Code? Austin's Code is over 30 years old, and many sections have been added. It has become cumbersome and difficult to apply to a specific site, and it needs to be updated to conform to the City's master plan (*Imagine Austin*) adopted in 2012. The question, however, is how extensive should this update be?

The goal of *A Community, Not a Commodity*, is to help the City Council shape CodeNEXT so that it reflects Austin community values of managed growth, protection of our neighborhoods and

natural environment, and equity for *all* residents, regardless of their economic status.

The City Council has set out a schedule for public comment on the draft code. It can be found, along with other information, on the City's website by searching for "CodeNEXT" or by going here: <http://austintexas.gov/department/codenext-community-engagement>

The proposed zoning maps will not be released to the public until April 18, 2017. Until then, we can only speculate about the scope of the pending changes. If you have time only to look at the drawings of streetscapes in the Zoning chapter of the draft code, do so, and ask yourself the question, "How will this affect my neighborhood?"

We need to inform ourselves, come together, and take action to persuade a majority of our City Council to update the code in a reasonable and responsible manner. You and your neighbors need to get involved. You likely will be affected.

We with *A Community, Not a Commodity* are in the process of reviewing the draft code. In the meantime, we ask that you consider the following questions as you familiarize yourself with the draft code. We will be pursuing the answers ourselves and will be posting them on our website. Please stay tuned and stay in touch.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Will the new Code take away my home's single-family zoning and change my neighborhood's character?
- Will the Code result in displacing my neighbors and me from our community?
- Will inappropriate businesses and commercial activities now be allowed in my neighborhood?
- What will be the impact of increased density in my neighborhood?
- Will affordable, older existing houses and apartments be demolished?
- Will some neighborhoods get special privileges and protections that my neighborhood won't?
- Will the new Code lessen my right to influence and alter new developments in my neighborhood?
- How can my neighbors and I get involved to ensure that the City Council treats our neighborhood like a community and not as a commodity?