

# Process to Revise Austin's Land Development Code

Comprehensive Planning and Transportation  
October 8, 2012

A priority program of **IMAGINEAUSTON**

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- Why revise the code?
- What to revise?
- Who will revise the code?
- How will the code be revised?
- When will the project be complete?

Presentation Overview

# Why?



Implementing Imagine Austin

- Last comprehensive revision was in 1984
- 181 proposed code amendments since 2005
- Multiple overlay districts on a single property
- Too many lot-by-lot "custom" zoning cases (Ex. *CS-1-MU-V-CO-H-NP*)
- Multiple duplicative and conflicting requirements
- Over 60 zoning districts

It's Time to Revise the LDC when...

- Only a handful of people know the answers to a question about the code
- Complexity convolutes the permitting and approval process
- BOA variances used as planning tools
- It's not user-friendly

It's Time to Revise the LDC when...

***Imagine Austin*** offers clear direction for code revisions

- Vision statement
- 30+ policies
- 40+ actions
- Priority Program # 8

Imagine Austin Provides Opportunity

**Priority Program #8**

Revise Austin's development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.

- Complete neighborhoods and expanded housing choices
- Neighborhood protection
- Household affordability
- Environmental protection
- Efficient service delivery
- Clear guidance and user-friendly

Imagine Austin's LDC Revision Goals

# What?

## **Regulations relating to...**

- Procedures for review & approval
- Zoning
- Subdivisions
- Site Plans
- Drainage
- Transportation
- Environment
- Signs

On the Table for Reconsideration

**Euclidean/Conventional**—Separates land uses into discreet, separate zones such as residential, commercial, industrial, etc.

**Performance**—Uses performance-based or goal-oriented criteria (e.g., traffic flow, density, noise, and access to light) to establish review parameters for proposed projects

**Form-Based**—Addresses the relationship between building facades and the public realm; the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another; and the scale and types of streets and blocks

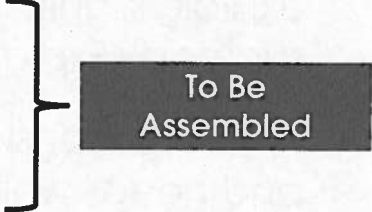
**Hybrid**—Combines one or more types of codes such as Form-Based and Euclidean

## Types of Zoning Codes

# Who?

### Putting the Team Together

- City Council
- Planning Commission
- Steering Committee
- Consultant
- Staff



To Be  
Assembled

Code Revision General Steps

- Three new staff positions in PDRD in the FY 2012/2013 budget
- Support from multiple PDRD divisions and other departments as needed
- Up to \$2M for consultant services and other expenses

New Resources

- Deep knowledge and experience in revising big city land development codes
- Ability to listen to the public and explain highly technical and complex subjects (*Explainer-in-Chief*)
- Highly responsive to community issues and needs while retaining professional neutrality

What should the consultant bring?

- Expertise in different types of codes
- Courageous and straightforward in discussing likely outcomes and unintended consequences

What should the consultant bring?



# How?

## **Briefings**

**Planning Commission**—September 11

**Zoning and Platting Commission**—October 2

**Comprehensive Plan and Transportation  
Committee**—October 8

**City Council**—October 18

Review the General Approach

- Preliminary outreach to key stakeholders—development and business community, affordable housing, neighborhoods, environment/sustainability, etc.
- Steering committee
  - Council appoints 7, Staff appoints 3-4
- “Code 101” and best practices through the end of Step # 1
- “Headliners” ongoing throughout the process
- Release RFQ in late October 2012
- Hire consultant—Phase 1 contract (Listening and Education)

## Organizing the Process

### Four Steps to Revising the Code

**Step 1**—Listening, Issue Identification, & Education

**Step 2**—Diagnosis & Outline

**Step 3**—Preliminary Draft Code

**Step 4**—Code Adoption



## Code Revision General Steps

## Step 1

- Designing listening sessions—Steering committee, consultant, and staff
- Conducting listening sessions
- Generate contact list of interested parties for ongoing outreach and information
- Results of listening sessions compiled and synthesized

## Listening and Education

## Step 2

**Code Diagnosis**

*(Generated by consultant)*

- Direction from Imagine Austin
- Listening sessions (what works, what doesn't work, and divisive topics)
- Prepare draft diagnosis (what's left alone, what's to be revised, and what to explore further)
- Steering Committee and staff review
- Public and Boards and Commissions review
- **Planning Commission recommends and City Council approves diagnosis**

## Diagnosis &amp; Outline

## Step 2

**Annotated Outline**

*(Generated by consultant)*

- Summary organization of the revised code
- Steering Committee and staff review
- Public and Boards and Commissions review
- **Planning Commission recommends and City Council approves outline**

## Diagnosis &amp; Outline

## Step 3

**Initial Draft of Code**

*(Generated by consultant)*

- Based on annotated outline
- Conduct workshops on draft sections of the code
- Develop roll-out process for mapping
- Broad events to allow public to explore and comment on code
- Steering Committee and staff review
- Public and Boards and Commissions review
- Adoption draft of code based on input

## Preliminary Draft Code

## Public Hearings

Step 4

Planning Commission recommends and  
City Council adopts

Code Adoption Process

- Austin's land development regulations and process need a holistic review
- Imagine Austin provides a clear, community-based vision
- Consultant team authors work products
- Iterative, step-by-step process and community review
- Planning Commission recommendations and City Council approvals throughout process

Summary of Proposal

- Open to all
- Engaging people who use the code
- Respectful and fair
- Informative and educational
- Focus on common ground to move forward
- Don't make assumptions
- Don't let perfection get in the way of improvement

**A clear, predictable, user-friendly code that  
implements *Imagine Austin***

## What Does Success Look Like?

- Future development will reflect the community's vision
- Permit process will be fair, clear, predictable, and timely
- Property owners will know what they can and cannot do with their property
- More people will be able to more easily meet their daily needs with shorter trips
- Expanded housing choices to meet the needs of an ever changing city
- Make it easier to do right thing and harder to do the wrong thing

## Potential Benefits of the New Code

# When?

- Steering Committee appointed—December 2012
- Consultant on board—April 2013
- Listening sessions completed—June 2013
- Diagnosis approved by City Council—February 2014
- Annotated Outline approved by Council—June 2014
- Preliminary draft code approved—March 2015
- Adoption draft code complete—September 2015

Next Steps

Questions?