

Staff response to second set of questions from South Lamar Neighborhood Association regarding C14-2012-0031 and C14-2013-0032 (received August 9, 2013)

We have reviewed your questions which, in general, involve complete communities, infrastructure impacts of the proposed zoning cases (C14-2013-0031 and C14-2013-0032), and the conformance of these zoning cases to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. First, a review of this set of questions indicates the need to further clarify the purpose of a comprehensive plan as well as the intent of the complete communities' concept. As such, we have answered the questions broadly and not on a question by question bases. Second, many of the questions submitted in your follow-up email were addressed in our response to your first email.

Generally speaking, a comprehensive plan provides guidance for a local government to make land use decisions, capital investment strategies, regulatory changes, and program development supporting the long term objectives of the community. As stated in our earlier email,

"The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan is a forward-looking and wide-reaching policy document that provides direction for Austin to become a more sustainable community. It is an aspirational plan that sets high-level, strategic directions. Its vision and principles relating to sustainability are coalesced through the plan's concept of complete communities."

The underlying purpose of the complete community concept is to create places throughout Austin where people have easy access to their daily needs: shopping, learning, open space, recreation, employment, and other amenities and services within a short trip. Locating these necessities close to people's homes reduces the length of trips and time spent travelling—regardless of how they get there. While this is the aspiration of the concept, the reality is that some communities will be more complete than others. This is due to many reasons such as a community's location, the built environment, and topography and environmental restrictions. The establishment of complete communities happens over time and is the result of many incremental decisions.

A second review of the cases' relationship to the comprehensive plan supports the initial staff conformance review. Under the existing base zoning of SF-3 the two sites combined (1.92 acres) could allow up to 7 duplexes (14 units) if all required regulations and variance/waivers could be met. The initial plans presented by the petitioner indicated a planned project of 9 duplexes/patio homes (18 units) and at the Planning Commission hearing agreed to limit the project to 16 units (8 duplexes) and amended his request, as per the PC vote, to SF-5 and MF-1 to SF-5 and SF-6. The number of proposed units allowed under the existing and proposed zoning is substantially the same and the planned residential uses are similar to adjacent ones—existing apartments, duplexes, as well as single-family houses.

This project as initially proposed and the amended rezoning request agreed to by the applicant at the Planning Commission were found by staff to be contextually appropriate for an infill project not located in a designated activity corridor or center and therefore in conformance with Imagine Austin. The plan contains descriptive text of the plan Growth Concept Map which applies the vision statement to the city's physical development pattern and defines how to accommodate new residents, jobs, mixed-use areas, open space, and transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years. On page 107, the plan states:

"While most new development will be absorbed by centers and corridors, development will happen in other areas within the city limits to serve neighborhood needs and create complete communities. Infill development can occur as redevelopment of obsolete office, retail, or residential sites or as new development on vacant land within largely developed areas. New commercial, office, larger apartments, and institutional uses such as schools and churches, may also be located in areas outside of centers and corridors. *The design of new development should be sensitive to and complement its context.*"

Based on the above excerpt and policies cited in the initial review, the project's adjacency to an apartment complex and existing duplexes scattered throughout the neighborhood, staff stands by its initial assessment.