

RESOLUTION NO. 20140501-042

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan directs growth to areas with existing infrastructure capacity including roads, water, wastewater, drainage, and schools as illustrated by the Growth Concept Map and envisions preservation of neighborhood character; and

WHEREAS, the South Lamar neighborhood residential area, located east of a major transportation corridor, is identified as the 8th densest neighborhood out of 59 analyzed in a city staff “Zoning Capacity and Redevelopment Analysis” in 2011 and is currently undergoing significant numbers of rezoning cases and redevelopments, some being located in areas vulnerable to flooding along W. Bouldin Creek and having more rural quality of roadway, lacking curbs, gutters and sidewalks; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan sets forth a vision of density along transportation corridors and within centers while preserving the integrity and character of neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, density in appropriate places can have positive impacts when infrastructure needs are met; and

WHEREAS, the cost of that infrastructure is generally more affordable when development patterns are dense and central, however, in the South Lamar neighborhood and others, infrastructure capacities have been exceeded with unknown costs for mitigation upgrades or replacement; and

WHEREAS, as a result, the South Lamar neighborhood area is currently experiencing the following challenges:

- Flooding of streets, storm water systems, and private property

- Degradation of area creek beds and loss of stabilizing vegetation and tree canopy
- Missing sidewalks and limitations of roadway sight lines due to area topography and narrow roadways, limiting pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Increased costs of housing

WHEREAS, due to the historic subdivision pattern of large lots and the existence of aging multi-family properties in the South Lamar neighborhood area, redevelopment of several additional properties in the area may be on the horizon, further exacerbating the challenges that create hazards to safety and property; and

WHEREAS, the City's Watershed Protection Department is currently evaluating stormwater conveyance in the West Bouldin Creek Watershed in the South Lamar neighborhood area, and have identified the need for capacity improvements, capital funding, and code changes; and

WHEREAS, due to impacts of climate change, it is likely the city will experience more frequent and intense storm events and there is opportunity to explore state and federal funding sources for addressing aging infrastructure such as the Texas Water Development Board Fund, State Water Implementation Plan for Texas (SWIFT) and the FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance Program; and

WHEREAS, cross-departmental efforts are also needed to mitigate the broader array of challenges that threaten the vitality of the South Lamar neighborhood area; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan outlines “The Road Ahead” directing the community to, in part, “expand the growth-shaping toolkit”; and

WHEREAS, challenges faced by the South Lamar neighborhood area have not adequately been addressed during zoning cases and development review by existing tools which do not deal with cumulative impacts of, for example, traffic, impervious cover, and burden on storm water systems; and

WHEREAS, a study of the South Lamar neighborhood area presents an opportunity to craft enhanced tools to measure cumulative impacts of small tract developments in neighborhood areas, which could serve to inform discussions of the community and staff, Boards and Commissions and the City Council, on zoning cases as well as the budget; and

WHEREAS, the Imagine Austin “Priority Program” to rewrite the Land Development Code, CodeNext, is currently underway; and

WHEREAS, an examination of the challenges faced by the South Lamar neighborhood area may prompt recommendations for new considerations in the Land Development Code to proactively avoid such challenges in the future, for example, including requirements on water quantities as well as quality, modified triggers for sidewalks or gutters, or revised assessments on proportional traffic impacts; and

WHEREAS, other neighborhoods in Austin are also experiencing significant increases in concentrations of density and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, along with the challenges that could be avoided or ameliorated with better tools and improved approaches with CodeNext;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Council directs the City Manager to work with the South Lamar Neighborhood and to include cross-departmental perspectives to propose a Mitigation Plan for the South Lamar neighborhood that addresses the challenges created by many years of development on a site-by-site basis, lacking water detention and exacerbated by recent infill developments where inadequate infrastructure exists, including a potential implementation timeline and potential financial resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to use the South Lamar neighborhood area as a study area to develop:

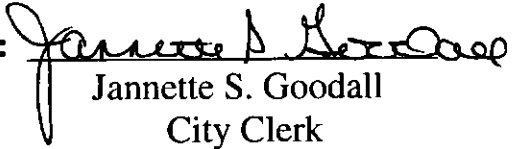
- Recommendations for enhanced tools that will better anticipate the cumulative effects of increasing density on a neighborhood's natural and manmade infrastructure, to preserve the quality of life for residents and to better inform zoning and budget deliberations; and
- Opportunities within the context of the CodeNext rewrite to incorporate methods to define and protect a neighborhood's character, infrastructure and safety and provide commensurate mitigation requirements to better manage density and its associated costs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to report to Council by August 15, 2014, with a presentation to the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Council Committee by August 4, 2014, with a timeline for the Mitigation Plan and a

detailed approach to develop the recommendations for the enhanced tools and related opportunities for the CodeNext effort.

ADOPTED: May 1, 2014

ATTEST: 
Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk