

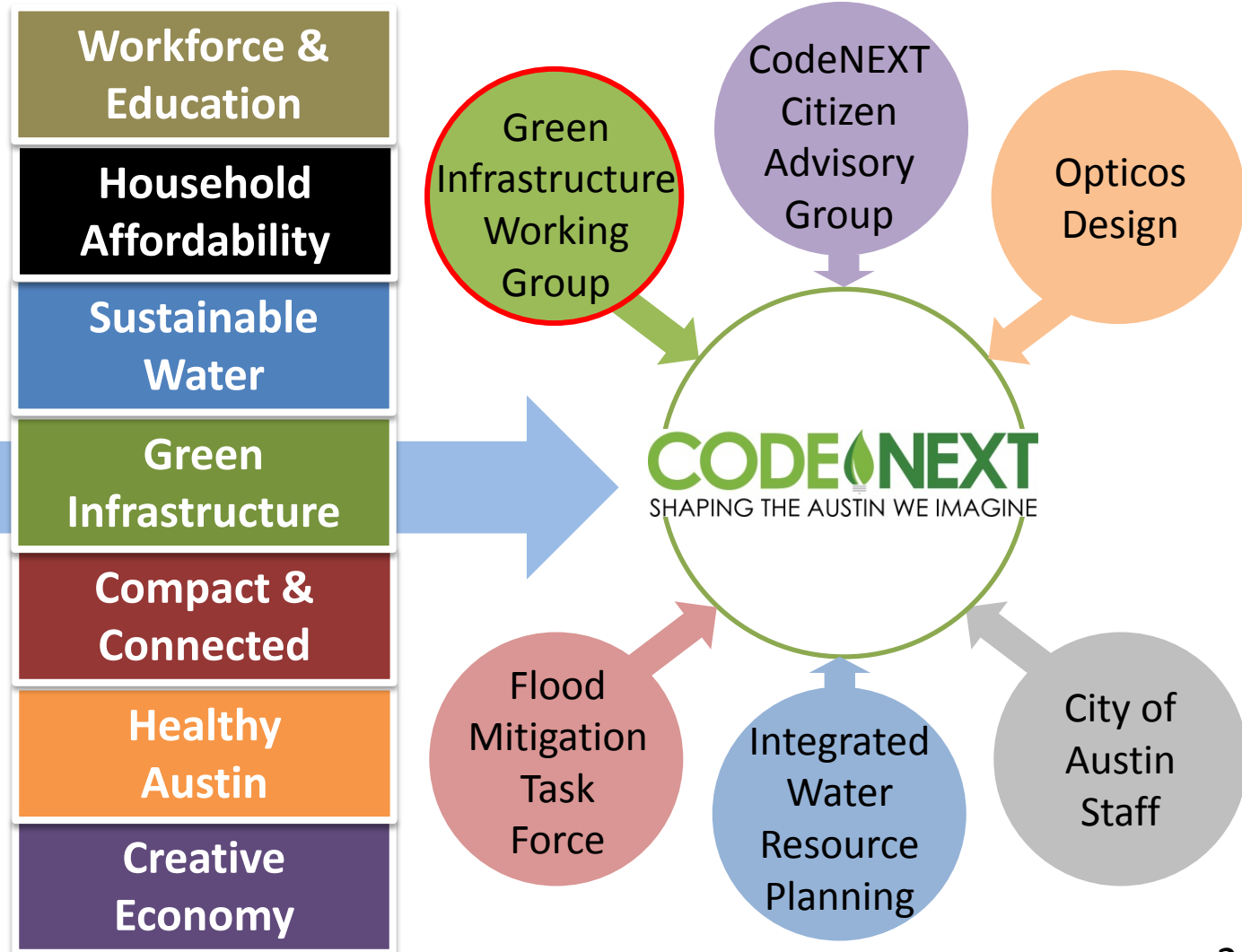


Green Infrastructure Working Group: Summary of stakeholder input

August 26, 2015

Rainwater harvesting at Twin Oaks Library

CodeNEXT Process: Implementing Imagine Austin



Green Infrastructure Working Group

Council Direction (November 20, 2014)

- Asked that the CodeNEXT focus include green infrastructure & sustainable water management

Purpose of Green Infrastructure Working Group

- How we can achieve the Imagine Austin goals of **integrating nature into the city**, **sustainably managing our water resources**, and **creating complete communities** through revisions to the Land Development Code?

Green Infrastructure Working Group

- Over 300 stakeholders on distribution list
- Six meetings between January & July 2015
- Engineers, landscape architects, developers, neighborhoods, environmental groups, and staff from multiple departments



Four Green Infrastructure Themes

1. Land Cover and Natural Function
 - How to achieve functional, purposeful, connected open space?
2. Integrate Nature into the City
 - How to ensure adequate, multifunctional landscaping in every context (e.g., urban vs. suburban)?
3. Beneficial Use of Stormwater
 - How to optimize on-site use of stormwater runoff?
4. Stormwater Options for Redevelopment/Infill
 - How to address longstanding flooding problems resulting from development without sufficient controls or conveyance?



Summary of Stakeholder Input

Major themes, opinions, & proposed solutions

Land Cover & Natural Function

Functional pervious areas

- Preserve/protect open space, key natural assets
- Protect/restore trees, soil, vegetation, natural function
- Prefer flexible & incentive-based systems
- Use metrics to ensure function of pervious areas
- Protect or restore all pervious areas during construction
- Allow for flexible site designs to enable preservation of larger areas of contiguous pervious cover

Land Cover & Natural Function

Publicly-accessible open space

- Open space and green connections are vital
- Need for parkland within walking distance to mitigate for higher density in development centers & corridors
- Provide parkland onsite wherever possible; use payment-in-lieu offsite as a last resort
- Big percent of required open space should be pervious
- Use open space as buffer between differing land uses
- Maintain or increase 5% private open space requirement

Integrate Nature into the City

Integrate landscaping into all contexts

- All sites should have some form or percent of green area
- Incentivize larger offsite areas & smaller, onsite green elements
- Use flexible, menu-based approach (per Green Area Ratio and Green Factor*), especially in denser areas
- Design for multi-purpose landscapes that serve hydrologic, wildlife, and human purposes
- Use landscaped green transitions between different land use intensities to address compatibility concerns

* Washington, D.C. & Seattle systems used to require and quantify green elements for new development

Integrate Nature into the City

Integrate landscaping into all contexts (continued)

- Require landscaping in some form for commercial remodels
- Add more green space to subdivision requirements
- Allow for flexible site designs to preserve existing natural areas
- Include landscape architect/designers early in process
- Integrate green stormwater controls in landscapes/open spaces
- Allow/encourage urban agriculture in front and back yards

Integrate Nature into the City

Landscaping in right-of-way & site setbacks

- Strong support for Green Street designs, elements
- Provide more trees for walkable, shaded corridors
 - But cannot rely on the ROW for all green elements
- Ensure building setbacks sufficient to provide green elements on both sides of sidewalk (10 - 15 feet)
- Use technologies like porous pavement, structural soil, continuous planting beds to accommodate street trees

Integrate Nature into the City

Provisions for shade trees

- Trees and shade are critical to mitigate urban heat island and promote walkability
- Retain existing tree protections (e.g., Heritage Tree)
- Preserve & protect mature, healthy trees as well as smaller caliper trees (e.g., mature understory)
- Institute soil volume requirements and other design criteria to protect tree functions
- Plant more trees in surface parking lots

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Onsite infiltration/retention

- Maintain/restore predevelopment hydrology
- Require onsite infiltration/retention per other U.S. models
- Use decentralized green options like rain gardens, porous pavement, and rainwater harvesting
- Provide a menu of alternatives to reach requirements if cannot infiltrate due to site constraints
- Reduce barriers to speed approval of innovative controls & rainwater capture systems
- Work to address maintenance questions

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Re-use/conservation

- Water conservation essential, must incorporate into designs
- Work towards goal of no potable water for irrigation
 - Others: Still need a potable irrigation system as backup
- Require potable water budget; use non-potable to exceed
- Incentivize efficient irrigation through technology
- Use regionally-appropriate plant list; Limit turf grass
- Increase soil health and depth

Beneficial Use of Stormwater

Special considerations for redevelopment

- Reduce retention requirements to encourage other redevelopment benefits (e.g., transit-oriented)
 - Others: do not support special considerations for redevelopment—should be held to same standard
- Consider additional offsite mitigation options such as the provision of open space and tree plantings
- Any offsite mitigation should occur within same watershed

Stormwater Options for Redevelopment & Infill

- Redevelopment should help mitigate flooding
- Reverse degraded hydrology in incremental fashion
- Manage smaller storms onsite (e.g., 2 and 10 year); pay-in-lieu for City to mitigate larger storms offsite
- Offer density bonuses to incentivize onsite detention where none existed previously

Big Picture Comments

- Re-establish intent language in new code
- Write the code to enable site-specific differences: honor different contexts (urban vs. suburban)
- Use watershed/existing infrastructure data to help inform land use planning decisions— “Watershed Growth Plan”
- Account for Austin’s unique climate & geography as we consider solutions from other jurisdictions
- Want performance-based, not prescriptive, requirements

Big Picture Comments

(continued)

- Consider affordability impacts of new requirements
- Don't want to (too easily) allow variances
- Make innovation and desired outcomes the easy path —not the prohibitive, alternative path
- Consider extending these policies to single-family subdivisions and individual building permits

Going Forward

CodeNEXT Process

- Fall 2015: Draft Code Testing
- Summer 2016: Public Review Draft Anticipated
- Fall 2016: Public Review Process

Future GIWG Meetings

- What is being proposed in the draft code?
- Topic-specific meetings as key issues arise

Contact Information

Erin Wood

Watershed Protection Department
City of Austin

(512) 974-2809

erin.wood@austintexas.gov

Matt Hollon

Watershed Protection Department
City of Austin

(512) 974-2212

matt.hollon@austintexas.gov

Green Infrastructure Working Group:

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/green-infrastructure-working-group>