



## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

**Date:** August 26, 2015

**Agenda Item #:** 6

**Agenda Item:** Update and discussion on CodeNEXT and the recommendations of the Green Infrastructure Working Group.

**Vote** No action taken.

**Sponsors/Department:** Watershed Protection Department

#### **Summary of Discussion**

Jim Robertson, Development Services Manager with the Planning and Development Department, provided background information related to the CodeNEXT project. CodeNEXT came about from the Imagine Austin Plan and consists of eight priority programs: Compact and Connected; Sustainable Water; Workforce Education; Green Infrastructure; Creative Economy; Household Affordability; Healthy Austin; and Revise Land Development Regulations. Mr. Robertson further explained the five phases of CodeNEXT and explained that the project is currently in Phase 2 in which staff will develop a draft administrative review that will include overview of several internal City departments. The teams associated with CodeNEXT are: Code Advisory Group (CAG); and the Core Team: 13 City Departments, Consultants, and the Planning and Zoning Department.

Erin Wood, Principal Planner, and Matt Hollon, Environmental Conservation Program Manager, with the Watershed Protection Department provided a summary of stakeholder feedback and recommendations received during the Green Infrastructure Working Group stakeholder process, which spanned a period of six to eight months. Per Council Direction in November 2014, Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Water Management were to be a focus of CodeNEXT. The purpose of the Green Infrastructure Working Group is to determine how to achieve the Imagine Austin goals of integrating nature into the City, sustainably managing the City's water resources and creating complete communities through revisions to the Land Development Code.

The working group consisted of 300 stakeholders and six meetings between January and July of 2015. There were four themes that were addressed in the meetings: 1) Land Cover and Natural Function, 2) Integrate Nature into the City, 3) Beneficial Use of Stormwater, and 4) Stormwater Options for Redevelopment/Infill. Summary of stakeholder input has been published on the website and staff will continue to add to the document as staff continues to receive feedback from stakeholder groups. This feedback consisted of opinions, and proposed solutions regarding the four themes mentioned above.

The big-picture comments included a desire for reestablishment of intent language in new code, writing the code to enable site-specific difference, using watershed data to help inform land use planning decisions, accounting for Austin's unique climate and geography, and performance-based, versus prescriptive, requirements, consideration of affordability impacts, less variances, and to consider extending these policies to single-family subdivisions and individual building permits.

The next steps include draft Code testing in the Fall of 2015, completion of a draft review in the Summer of 2016, and a final public review of the draft in the Fall of 2016.

- *Cost-benefit ratio*

CM Zimmerman inquired about the affordability of some of the proposed solutions. Speaker Eleanor McKinney explained that one of the next steps that staff will pursue will be a cost comparison in November of 2015.

#### **Public Comments**

- Sam Rusek spoke in favor of the item.
- David King spoke in favor of the item.
- Eleanor McKinney spoke in favor of the item.

#### **Direction**

None taken.

#### **Recommendation**

None made.