

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

City Council Work Session
May 3, 2016



**The Next Austin:
Manage our growth, keep our character**

Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

DRAFT



CODENEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE

The physical form of Austin not only shapes how the city functions, it also is an expression of our city's values and the experience people have living here. The Land Development Code reflects a grand balancing of our public values – livability, affordability, environmental protection, mobility, thriving economy, and preservation versus change.

Overview

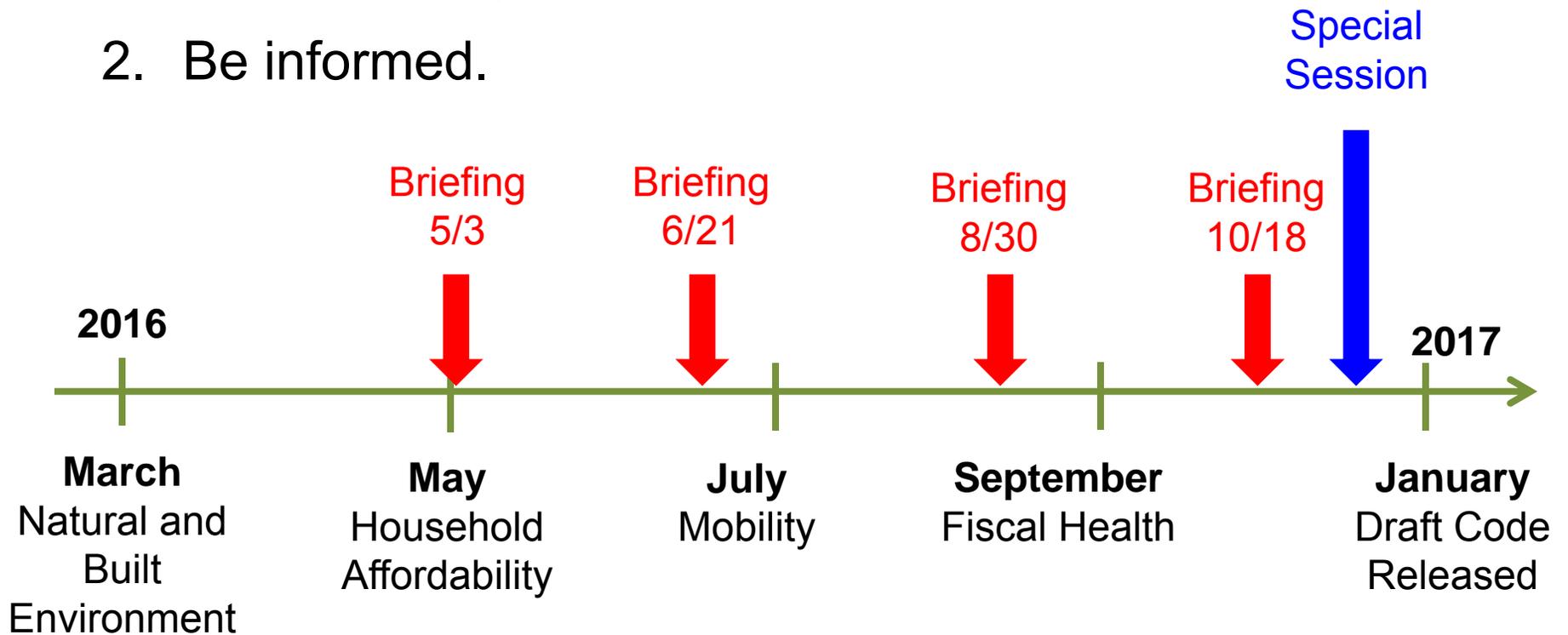
This presentation will cover:

1. Background:
 - How CodeNEXT relates to Imagine Austin.
 - CodeNEXT to date.
 - CodeNEXT schedule.
 - Code Prescriptions: Purpose, what they are, schedule, and how they inform Code development.
2. Code Prescription No. 1 -- Natural and Built Environment: timeline, opportunities for feedback, and topics.

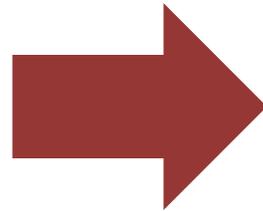
Overview

What do we want from City Council?

1. No action required at this time.
2. Be informed.



Imagine Austin & CodeNEXT



One implementation tool of Imagine Austin...

Priority Program 8: “Revise Austin’s development regulations and processes to promote a compact and connected city.”

Imagine Austin & CodeNEXT



**Integration of all
Priority Programs**

CodeNEXT to Date

1

Listening & Understanding
2013 – 2014

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Listening to the Community Report

INITIAL LISTENING PHASE | APRIL 4, 2014

6
What We Heard

17
How People Participated

28
Addendum: Links to Data

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The report cover features a collage of images: a person looking at a map, a group of people in a meeting, a map with a yellow sticky note that says "A Possible Blue... Private... Close... to...", and a photograph of a street scene.

Community Character MANUAL
May 2014

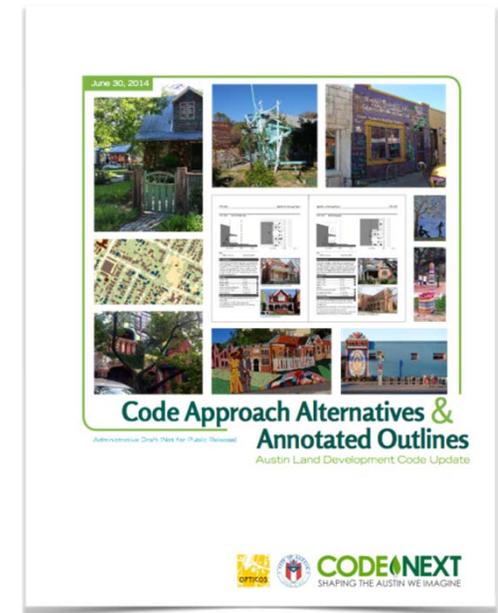
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The manual cover features a grid of 12 small images showing various urban scenes, including a street grid, a building facade, a park, a street view, a building, a street scene, a building, a street scene, a building, a street scene, a building, and a street scene.

CodeNEXT to Date

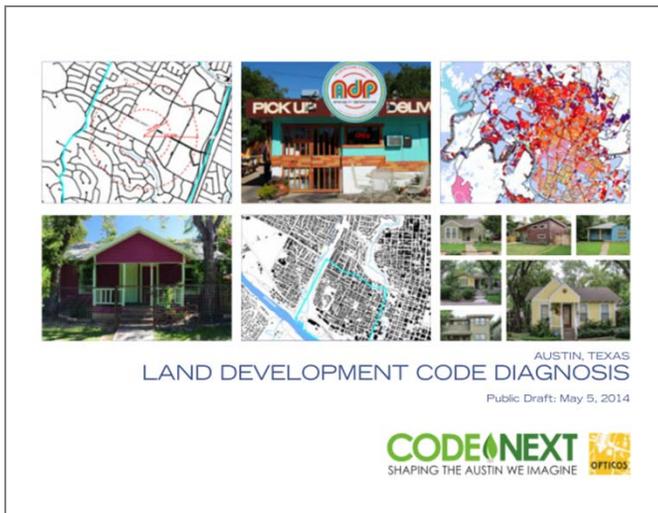
2

Diagnosis &
Approach
2014



CodeNEXT to Date

1. Ineffective (one size fits all) Base Zoning Districts
2. Competing Layers of Regulations
3. Complicated “Opt-In, Opt-Out System
4. Lack of Household Affordability and Choice
5. Auto-Centric Code
6. LDC Not Always in Line with Imagine Austin
7. Lack of Usability and Clarity
8. Ineffective Digital Code
9. Code Changes Adversely Affect Department Organization
10. Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedure



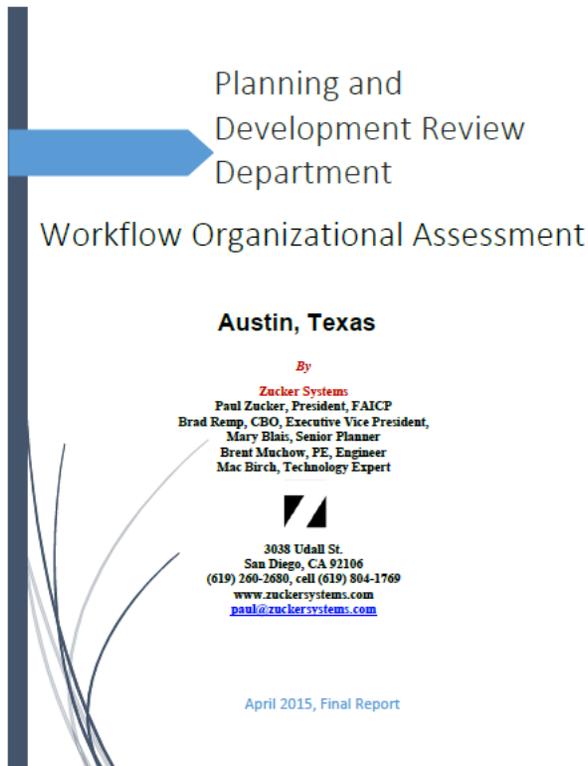
CodeNEXT to Date



1. **Ineffective (one size fits all) Base Zoning Districts**
2. Competing Layers of Regulations
3. Complicated “Opt-In, Opt-Out System
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CodeNEXT to Date

1. Ineffective (one size fits all) Base Zoning Districts
2. **Competing Layers of Regulations**
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8. **Ineffective Digital Code**
9. **Code Changes Adversely Affect Department Organization**
10. **Incomplete and Complicated Administration and Procedure**



CodeNEXT to Date



Planning and
Development Review
Department

Workflow Organizational Assessment

Austin, Texas

By
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April 2015, Final Report



Improvements to the LDC

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CodeNEXT to Date

CodeNEXT Advisory Group:

- “Established to assist in public outreach and to provide feedback on the development and implementation of a revised land development code.”
- 40+ meetings.
- Working Groups (spring 2015):
 - Code issues related to affordability.
 - Infill, compatibility, and missing middle.
 - Obstacles to small business.
- Reconstituted and expanded October 2015.
- Active partner in creating, reviewing, soliciting and providing feedback on Code Prescriptions.

CodeNEXT to Date

Community Engagement:

- During “Listening and Understanding” and “Diagnosis and Approach”:
 - 48 briefings to Boards, Commissions, City Council.
 - 80 interviews.
 - 4 “Listening” sessions.
 - 3 Community Character Workshops.
 - 85 small group meetings.
 - 30+ Community Ambassadors.
 - 15 Community Issue Papers (from stakeholders).
 - 8 ATXN videos.
 - 238 media stories.

CodeNEXT to Date

Community Engagement:

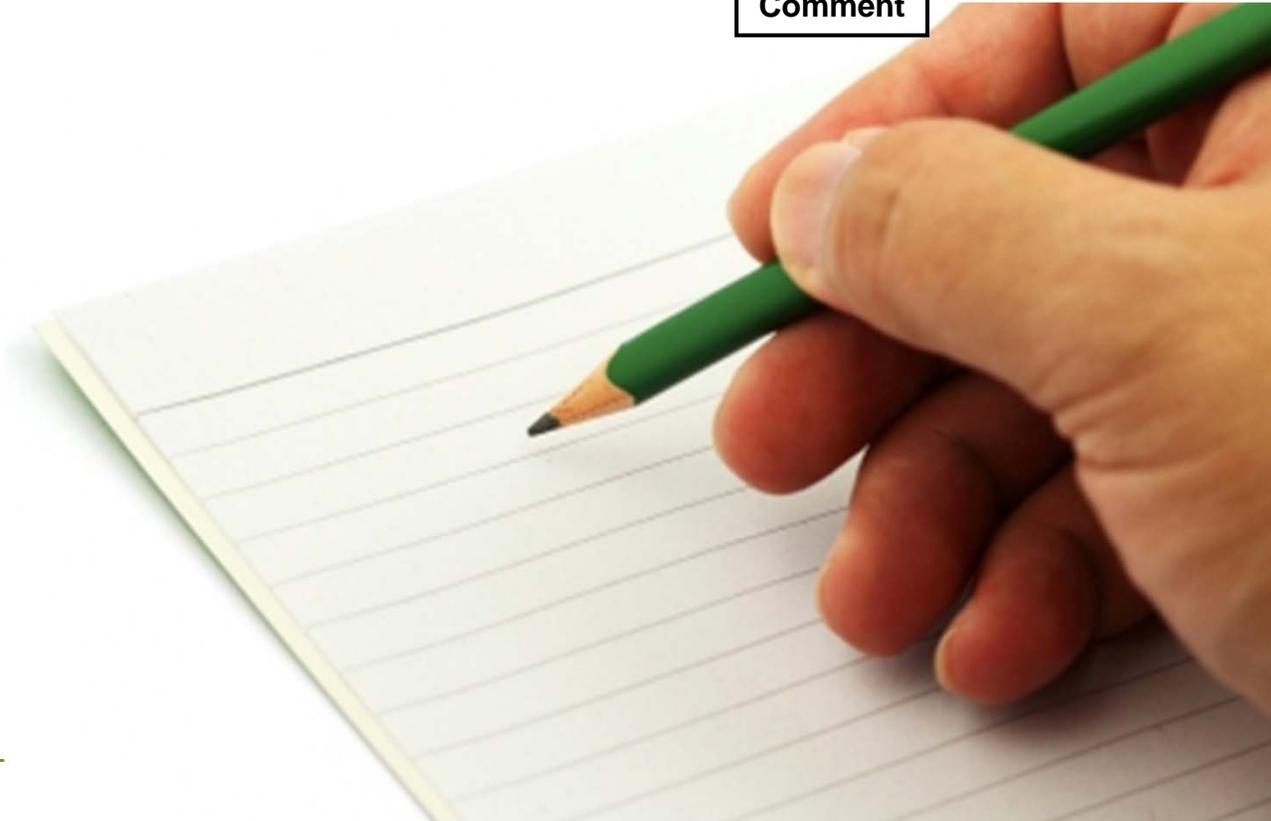
- During the last ten months while drafting code (in addition to the Advisory Group and other Boards/Commissions):
 - 2 CodeNEXT “Meet-Ups.”
 - 4 “Coffees with CodeNEXT.”
 - 9 CodeNEXT “Community Walks.”
 - 31 CodeNEXT “Road Shows.”
 - CodeNEXT “Sound Check” (600+ attendees).
 - 2 CodeNEXT “Code Updates” (large public meetings).
 - 1 CodeNEXT “Reddit/AMA” (Ask Me Anything).

CodeNEXT: Current Status and Schedule



2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
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Listening & Diagnosis	Code Writing	Public Review & Comment	Adoption	Mapping
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Code Prescriptions: General

What are Code Prescriptions?

- A user-friendly way to discuss complex topics and tradeoffs before Code draft debuts (January 2017).
- Prescription topics derived from Code Diagnosis and frequently cited questions and concerns from public.
- Prioritize tradeoffs → align our code with community values:
 - Are we achieving Imagine Austin goals?
 - Is the Prescription too strong? Too weak?
 - How do priorities change based on context?
 - **Have we struck a good balance between competing public values? I.e., trade-offs.**

Code Prescriptions: General

What are Code Prescriptions?

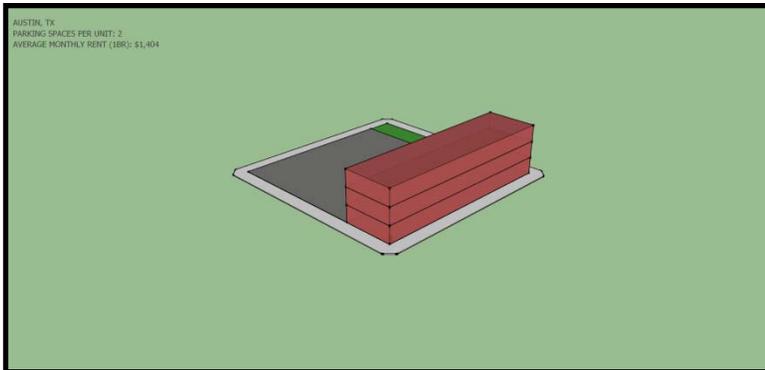
- Have we struck a good balance between competing public values? I.e., trade-offs.



Code Prescriptions: General

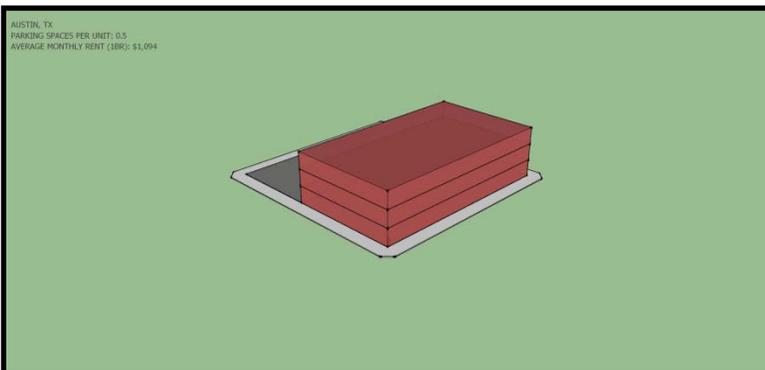
What are Code Prescriptions?

- Have we struck a good balance between competing public values? I.e., trade-offs.



2 parking spaces per unit.

Minimum annual income required for affordability = **\$51,000**.



0.5 parking spaces per unit.

Minimum annual income required for affordability = **\$39,000**.

Code Prescriptions: General

What are Code Prescriptions?

- Professional recommendation from City Staff. In essence, a preview of how the new Land Development Code will address key topics.
- Four topics:
 - Natural and Built Environment
 - Household Affordability
 - Mobility
 - Fiscal Health
- Common Prescription Framework:
 - Where Are We Now?
 - Where Do We Want to Be?
 - What's the Prescription?

Code Prescriptions: General

How do we create Code Prescriptions?

- Primary Responsibility: Planning and Zoning Staff.
- Authors and Collaborators: Opticos (consultants); staff from PAZD, multiple other City departments, and partner public agencies.
- Additional Review and Collaboration: Code Advisory Group members.

Code Prescriptions: General

How do we get feedback?

- Code Advisory Group:
 - Three or four sessions devoted to each Prescription.
 - CAG outreach efforts.
- Community Walks.
- CodeNEXT “Road Show”
- Reddit/AMA (Ask Me Anything).
- “Speak Up Austin” (primary venue for and record of public feedback).
- City Council work sessions.
- Other methods and venues.

Code Prescriptions: General

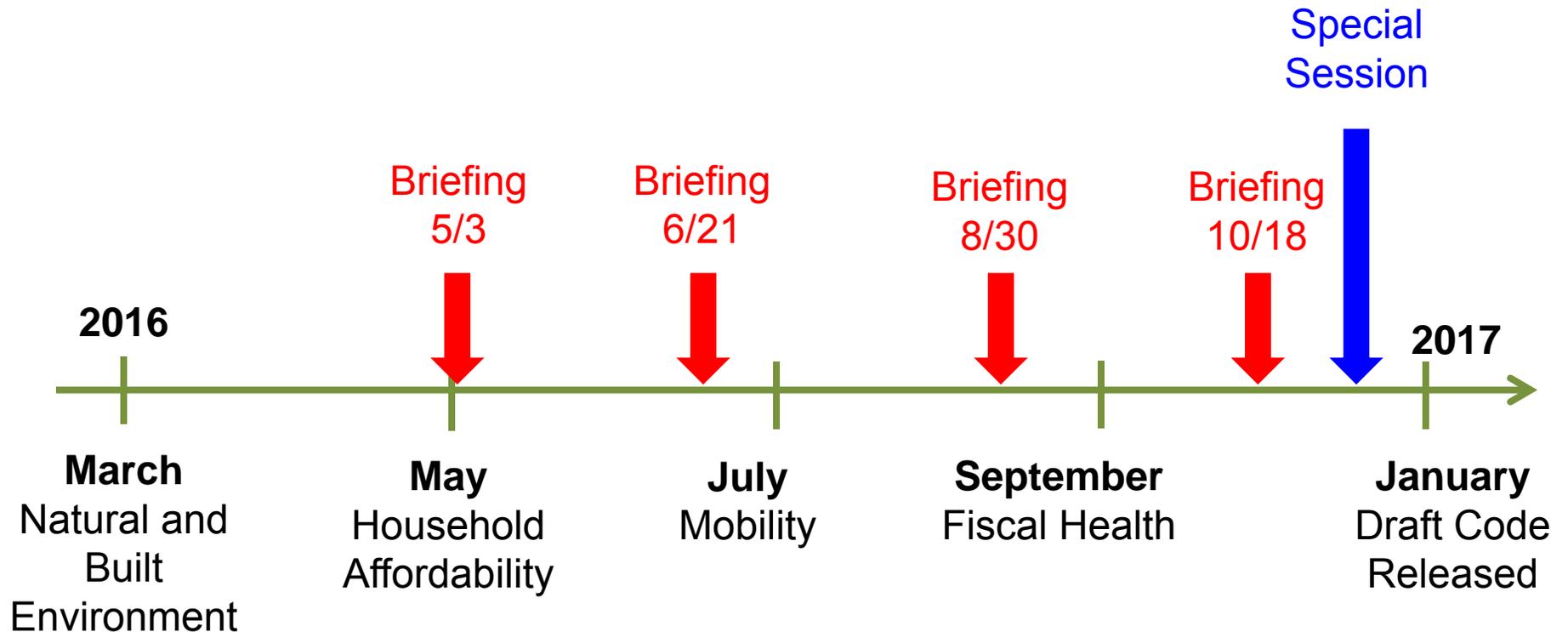
What will we do with feedback?

Feedback will be used to shape the draft Land Development Code that will be presented for public review and input January 2017.

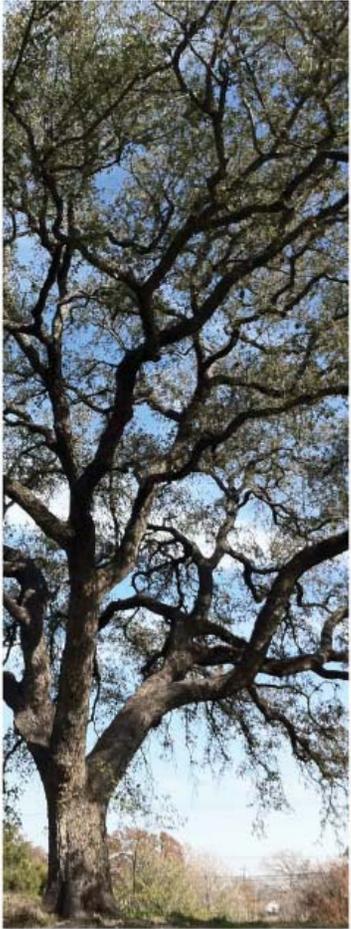


Code Prescriptions: General

Schedule for Code Prescriptions



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment



The Next Austin: Manage our growth, keep our character

Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

DRAFT



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Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Natural and Built Environment has more than 40 Prescriptions for:

- Water and Watersheds.
- Landscape and Trees.
- Compatibility and Transitions.
- Design for Mobility.
- Redevelopment.
- Greenfield Development.
- Parks and Open Space.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Across the board recommendations:

- Ensure the Land Development Code creates an environment that is reflective of Austin’s character and Imagine Austin’s vision and goals.
- Capitalize on recent initiatives, such as the Watershed Protection Ordinance, Green Infrastructure Working Group, Housing+Transit+Jobs Action Team.
- Incorporate new technologies and best practices.
- Clarify existing Code definitions and create new ones where necessary (ex: define “redevelopment”).
- Improve administrative procedures to a ensure clear, consistent, and timely process.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Water and Watersheds – Retain and Strengthen:

- Austin’s waterways are a cornerstone of our identity (Lady Bird Lake, Barton Creek, Bull Creek, Waller Creek), and for decades we have protected them with best-in-class measures.
- Retain those protections, while responding to new “horizon” issues (increased risk of flooding; water as a precious and potentially scarce resource) and new tools.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Water and Watersheds – Code Prescriptions:

- Maintain Austin’s historic watershed regulations and recent Watershed Protection Ordinance improvements.
- Redevelopment will be required to mitigate for the site’s share of existing downstream flooding, matching rates of discharge in undeveloped conditions.
- New and redevelopment sites will be required to retain and beneficially use stormwater onsite.
- Utilize excess right of way for green infrastructure.
- Incorporate green streets throughout Austin that are calibrated for context.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Landscape and Trees:

- Leverage prior tools and successes, while recognizing new realities and knowledge:
 - Urban Heat Island Effect.
 - Climate Change.
 - Context-Sensitive Approach.
 - Water Scarcity.
 - New methods and technologies.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Landscape and Trees – Code Prescriptions:

- Integrate landscape elements throughout a site in lower-density development rather than relying solely on a “streetyard.” Use a palette of urban green options closer to the core.
- Set impervious cover limits as a maximum, not a guarantee of buildable land.
- Allow double counting of Landscape and Watershed Protection requirements.
- Use a site-by-site approach to tree preservation rather than quantitative, one-size fits-all approach.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions:

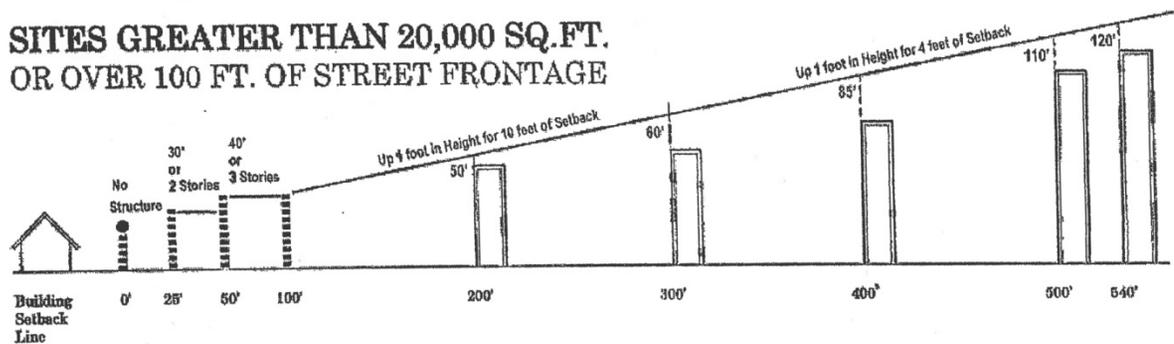


Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

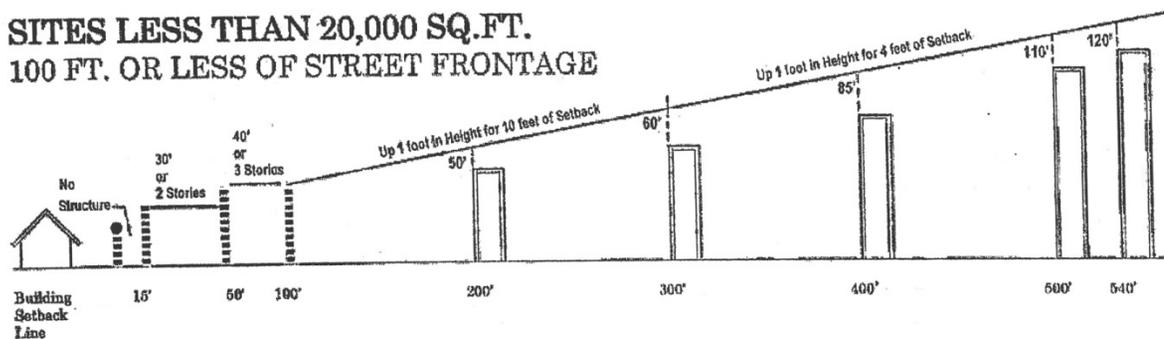
Compatibility and Transitions:

COMPATIBILITY: HEIGHT + SETBACKS

**SITES GREATER THAN 20,000 SQ. FT.
OR OVER 100 FT. OF STREET FRONTAGE**



**SITES LESS THAN 20,000 SQ. FT.
100 FT. OR LESS OF STREET FRONTAGE**



Notes:

Compatibility Standards are applicable to all property adjoining or across the street from a lot zoned or used as a SF-5 or more restrictive or within 540 feet from a lot zoned SF-5 or more restrictive.

Compatibility includes:

- (1) Height
- (2) Setback Provisions
- (3) Scale & Clustering
- (4) Buffering
- (5) Recognition of passive uses within flood plain
- (6) Design of Signs
- (7) Noise of Mechanical Equipment
- (8) Lighting
- (9) Parking & Driveways.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions:

- Compatibility and transitions between land uses are crucial, but Austin's Compatibility Standards have significant limitations.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions – Limitations:

- Compatibility Standards are “generic,” and thus fail to take into account context-specific factors such as topography, vegetation, and building design.
- Because they are tied to use or zoning, which can change, the Standards fail to provide long-term predictability.
- Narrow, and sometimes mis-placed, reliance on two simple factors – height and building placement.
- Potentially detrimental impact on achieving Imagine Austin’s directive to accommodate new growth along Corridors and in Centers.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions -- Limitations:

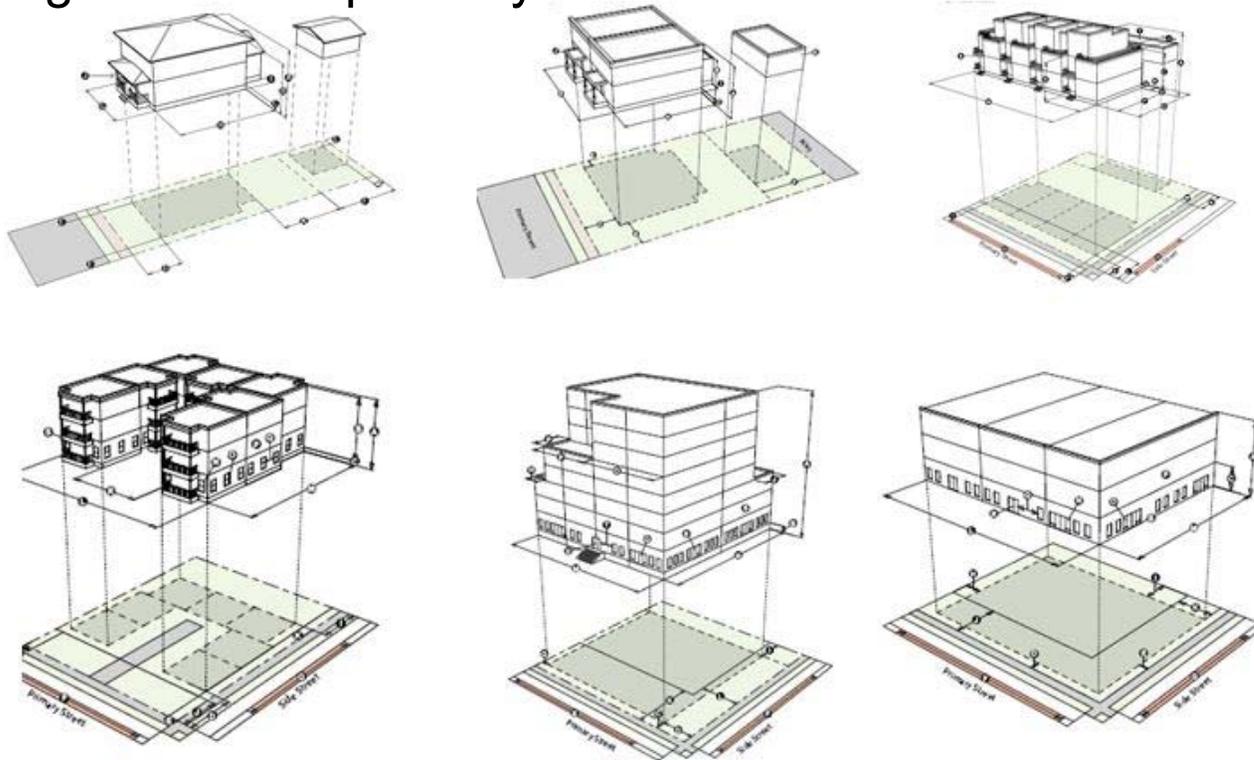


Burnet Road – showing influence of Compatibility Standards

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions -- Code Prescription:

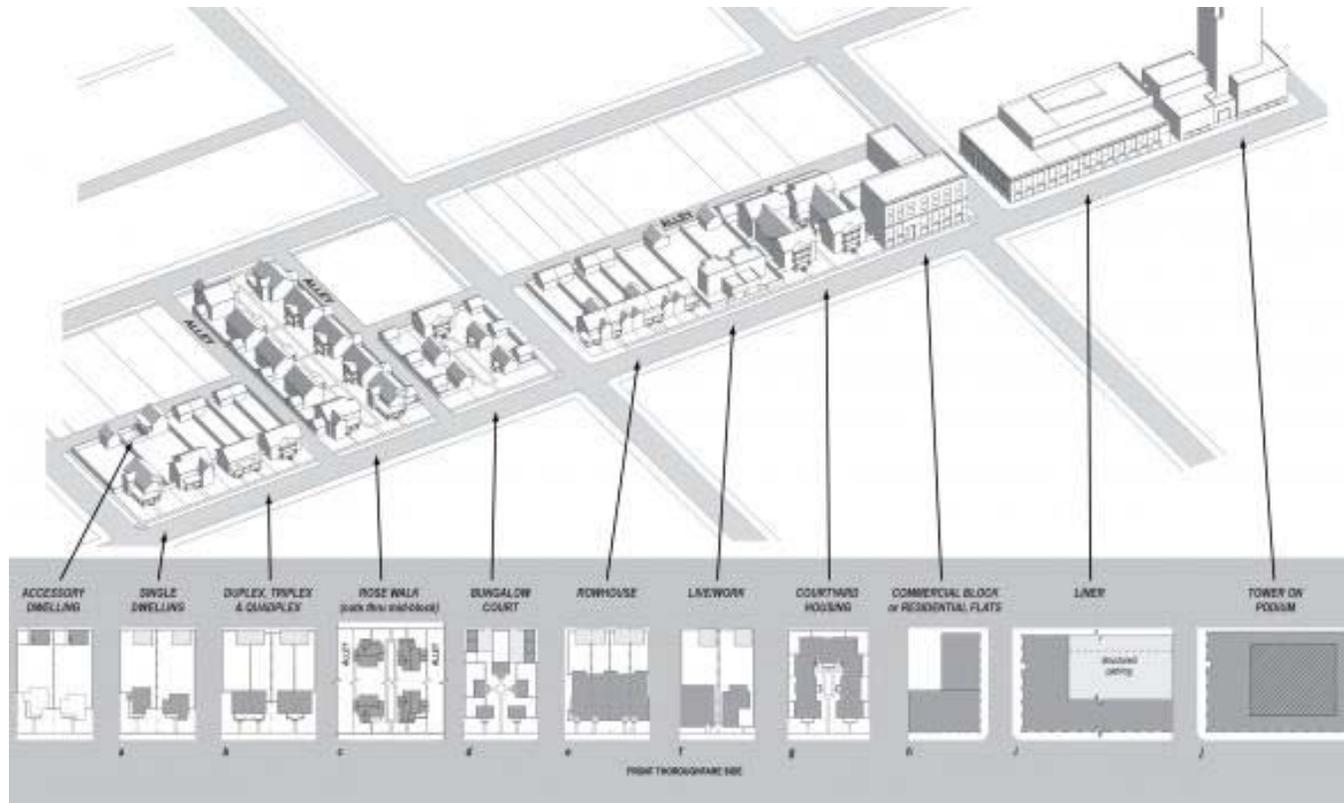
- In areas where form-based zoning districts are applied, achieve compatibility through the development standards built into the district (e.g., building height and placement, mass, parking placement) rather than generic Compatibility Standards.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions – Code Prescription:

- Further ensure compatibility by tying specific Building Types to specific zoning districts.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions – Code Prescription:

- Utilize a greater array of housing types, including “missing middle,” to promote compatibility.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Compatibility and Transitions – Code Prescription:

- In use-based zoning districts, retain something similar to current compatibility standards.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility:

Note: The third Code Prescription will specifically address a wide range of issues regarding Mobility.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility:

- General Theme: Tame the negative impacts of mobility infrastructure on our natural and built environments



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility:

- while maintaining convenient access to life's necessities.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

- Minimize negative effects of parking: “drivewalks,” parking lots without trees, etc.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

- Reduce parking requirements in areas targeted for compact development, especially in the presence of transit.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

- Revised roadway design process:

Old Process:

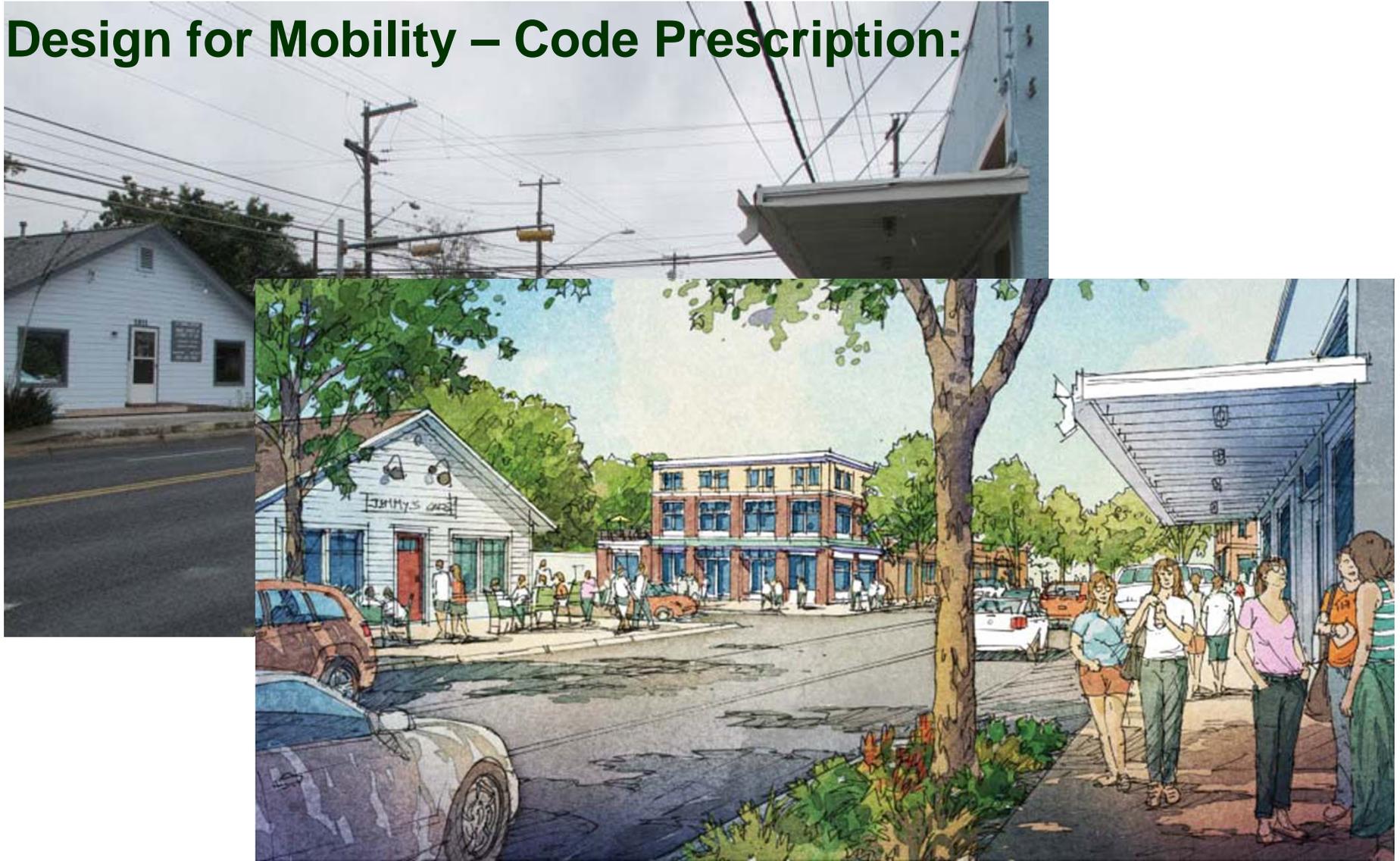
Roadway Function  Roadway Design.

New Process:

Roadway Function + **Context** + Mode  Roadway Design.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

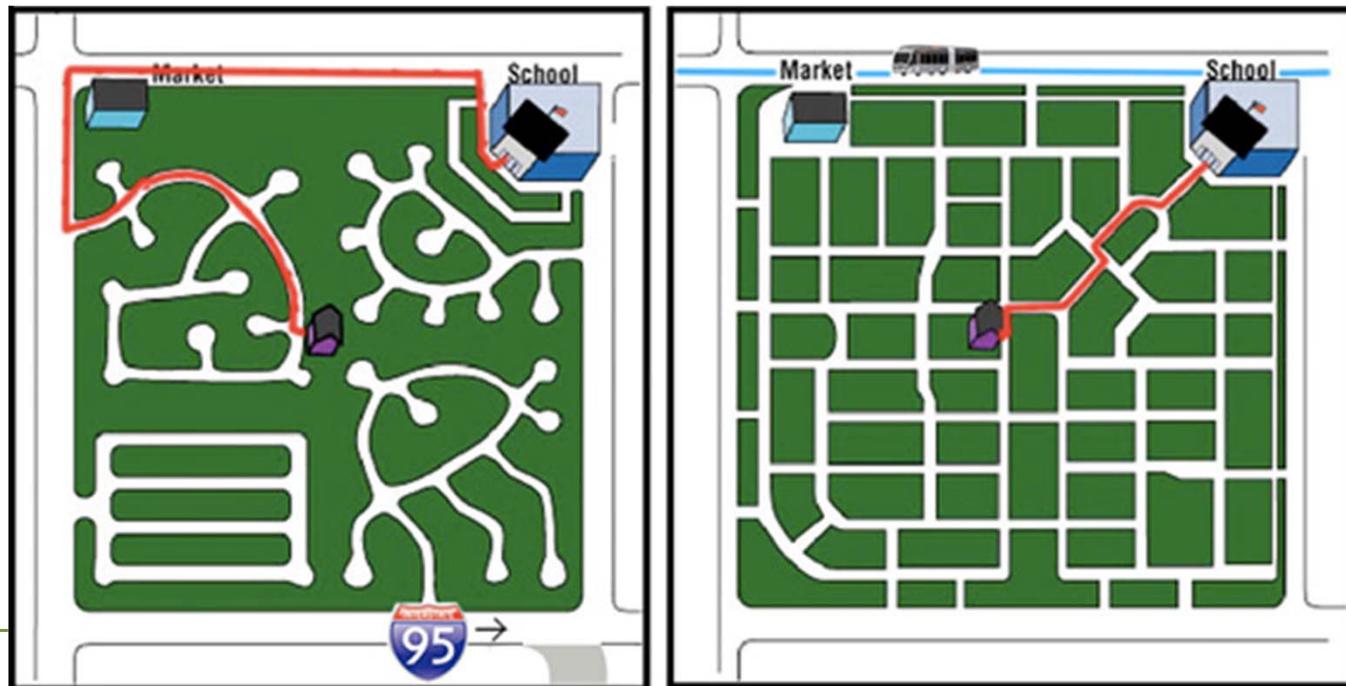
Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

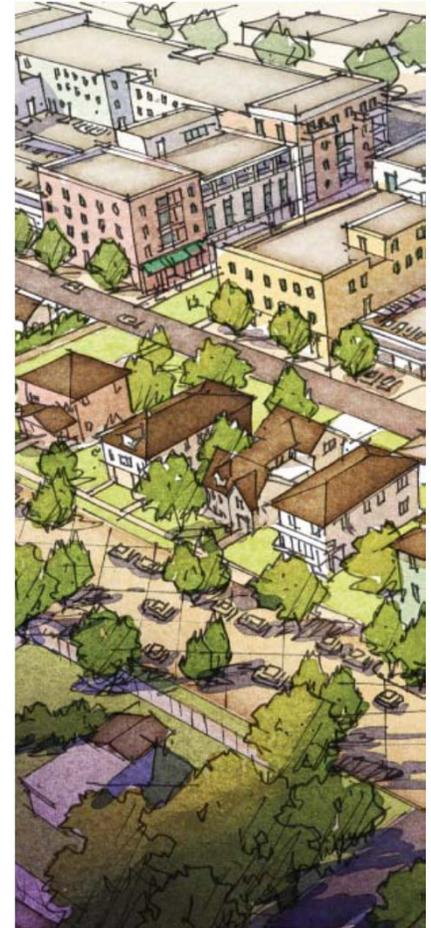
- Require better connectivity (street, sidewalk, bike lane, and trail).
- Use greenways to build new transportation systems.
- Implement Complete Streets Policy.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Redevelopment:

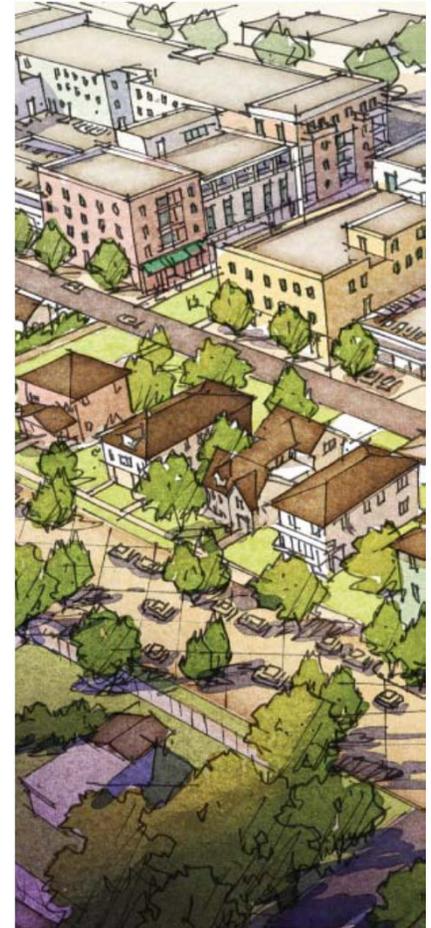
- Imagine Austin calls for:
 - Promoting a compact and connected city.
 - Promoting infill and redevelopment as opposed to low-density, greenfield development.
 - Focusing new development in Corridors and Centers.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Redevelopment:

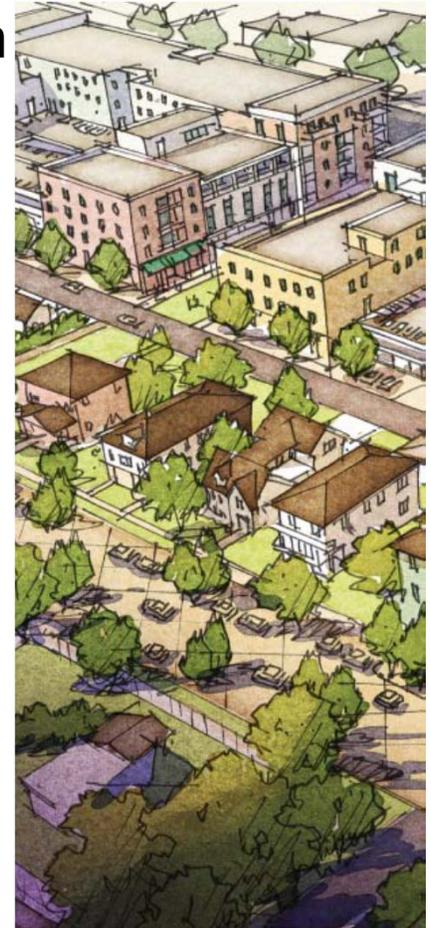
- But undeveloped land is scarce in those Corridors and Center.
- So CodeNEXT must create a regulatory environment that supports redevelopment while balancing it with:
 - Water Quality and Stormwater Protection.
 - Mobility and Parking.
 - Neighborhood Character and Compatibility.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Redevelopment – Code Prescriptions:

- Reduce parking requirements in walkable urban areas served with transit.
- In areas zoned to Form-Based Standards, address compatibility through the development standards of the base zoning.
- Require road, alley, sidewalk, trail, and bike lane connections as opportunities allow.
- Require walkable block sizes.
- Allow for diverse and compact lot sizes.
- Integrate components of existing programs, such as Subchapter E, into base zoning.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Greenfield Development:

- Ensure that new development occurring in previously undeveloped areas meets our current standards and values, and contributes to sustainable growth and well-being of the city:

- Mobility choice.
- Sustainability.
- Connectivity.
- Housing choice.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Greenfield Development – Code Prescriptions:

- Refinements to Subdivision code:
 - Subdivision code will contain only the process and standards necessary for creating a legally platted lot; physical standards (e.g., design, connectivity) will be handled via Zoning code.
- Increased connectivity requirements (road, alley, sidewalk, bike lane, trail).
- Potentially smaller lot sizes.
- Use new tools to encourage creative design that respects the natural environment, such as conservation subdivisions
- Promote green spaces that are connected, desirable, and multi-functional.

Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Parks and Open Space:

- As we move towards the Imagine Austin vision of a more compact and connected city, ready access to meaningful parks and open space becomes even more important



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Parks and Open Space – Code Prescription:

- Increase the range of park and open space types, and calibrate to particular contexts.
 - Pocket parks.
 - Neighborhood parks.
 - Greenways.
 - Active/passive recreation parks.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Parks and Open Space – Code Prescription:

- Enact changes drawn from recommended code amendments to Parkland Dedication Ordinance.
 - Update fees to account for actual costs.
 - Increase amount of land to be dedicated.
 - Credits for private space dedicated for public use.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

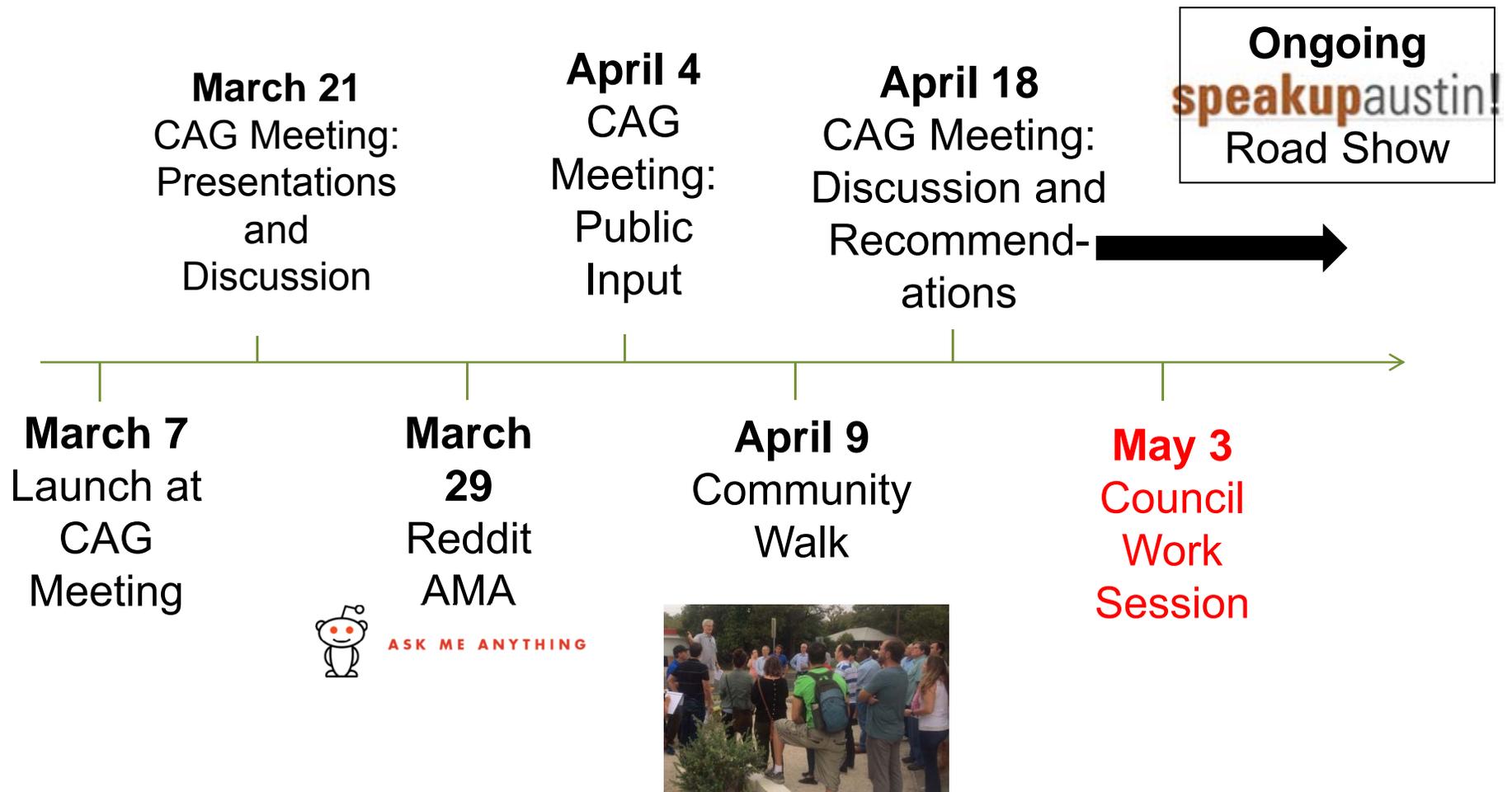
Parks and Open Space – Code Prescriptions:

- Incentivize and develop metrics for green infrastructure that meets open public open space needs.
- Require connections between new and infill projects to adjacent or nearby parkland.



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Schedule:



Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Summary:

Natural and Built Environment has more than 40 Prescriptions for:

- Water and Watersheds.
- Landscape and Trees.
- Compatibility and Transitions.
- Design for Mobility.
- Redevelopment.
- Greenfield Development.
- Parks and Open Space.



The Next Austin:
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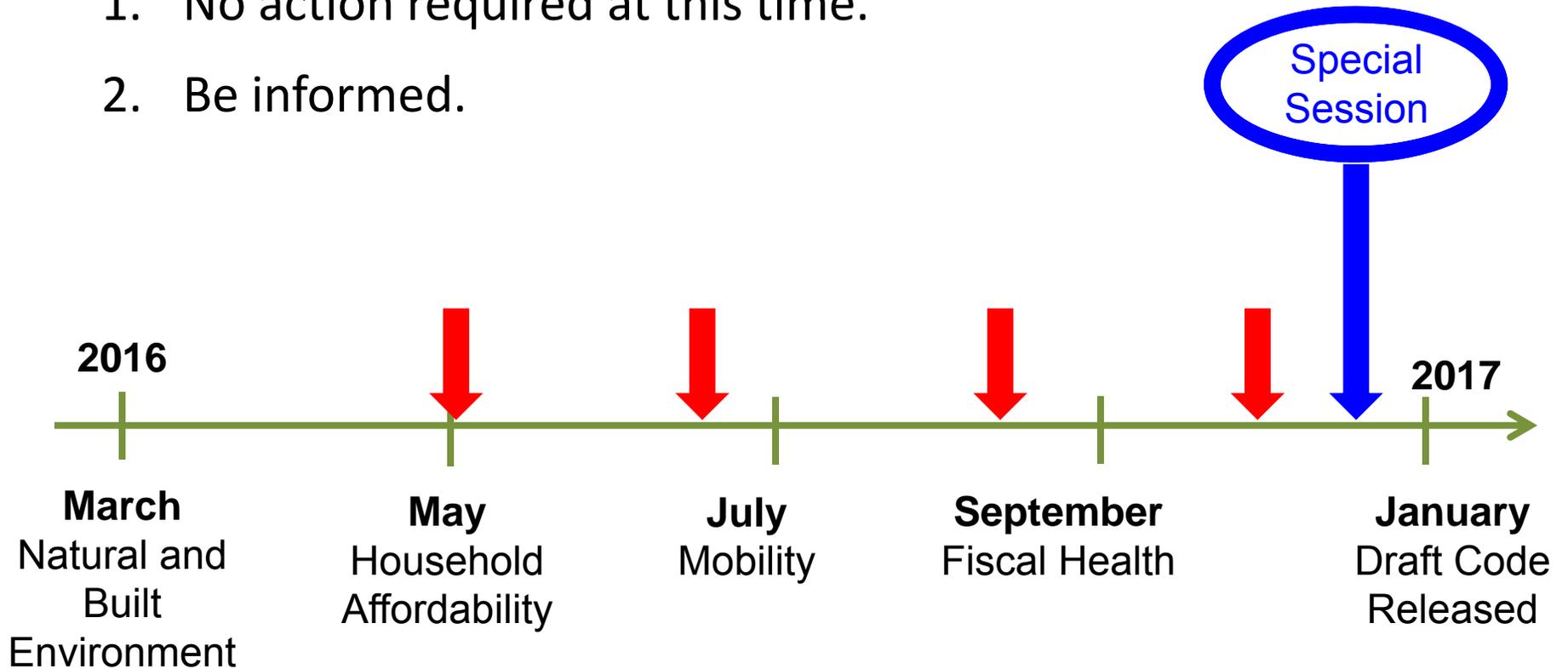
Policies Affected Include:

- Watershed protection.
- Water quality.
- Water conservation.
- Landscape/Tree protection and enhancement.
- Climate change.
- Neighborhood character.
- Affordability
- Parking.
- Infill and redevelopment.
- Sustainable growth patterns.
- Parks and open space.

Overview

What do we want from City Council?

1. No action required at this time.
2. Be informed.



Summary

Some key policy trade-offs for future discussion:

Environmental
protection



Affordability
Compact Development

Parking



Affordability
Neighborhood Character

Compatibility



Neighborhood Character
Compact Development

Questions?

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