Code Prescription: Natural and Built Environment

Open Space, Environment, and Sustainability Committee

October 26, 2016

The Next Austin:
Manage our growth, keep our character
Natural and Built Environment Code Prescription

DRAFT

CITY OF AUSTIN CODE❖NEXT
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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 provide an:

- Understanding of why we are doing Code Prescriptions

- Overview of how the Code Prescriptions fit with Code development

- Understanding of the Code Prescription timeline

- Overview of Natural and Built Environment Prescription topics

Imagine Austin & CodeNEXT
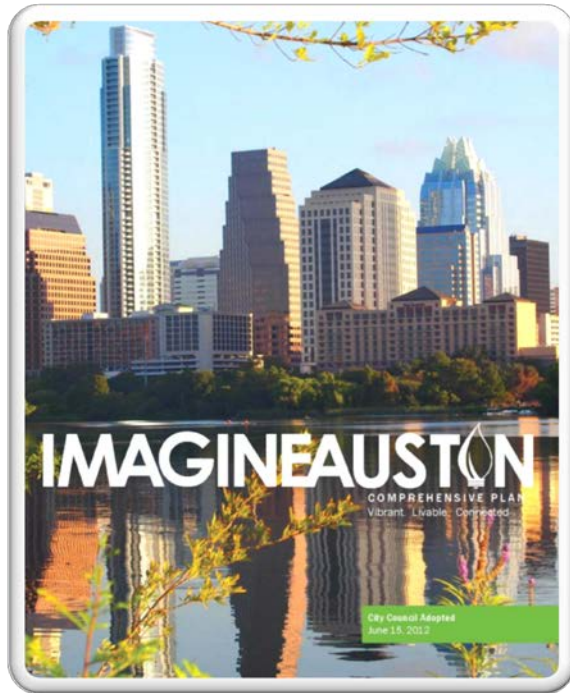
Green Infrastructure

Household Affordability

Sustainable Water
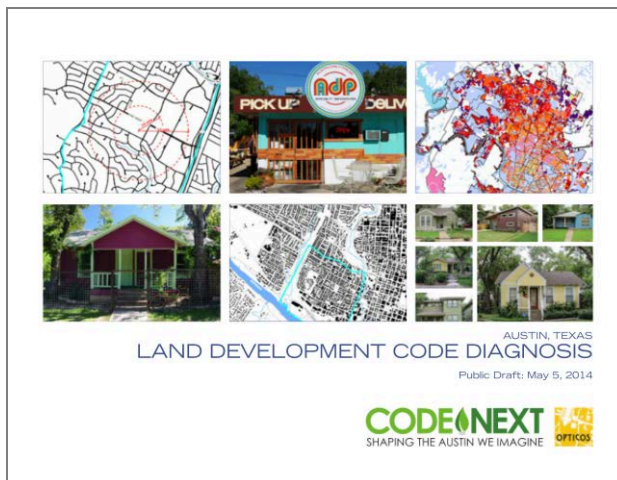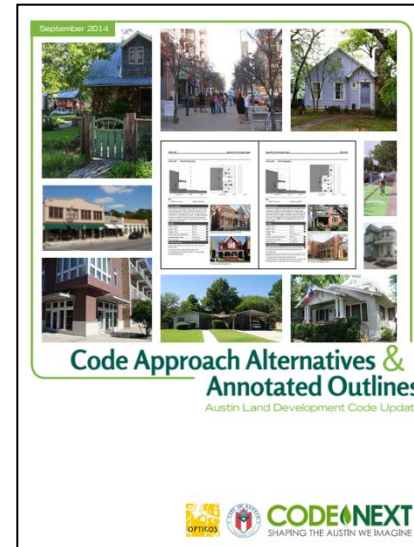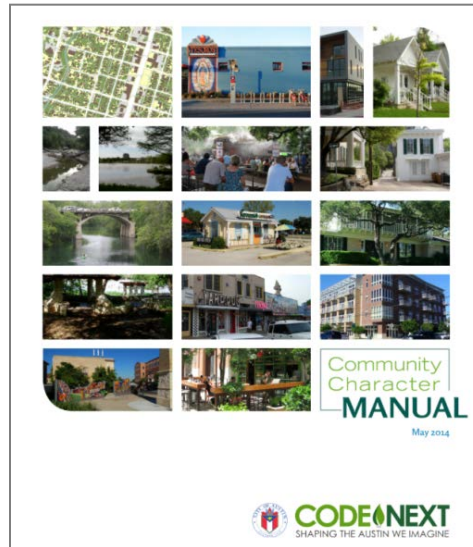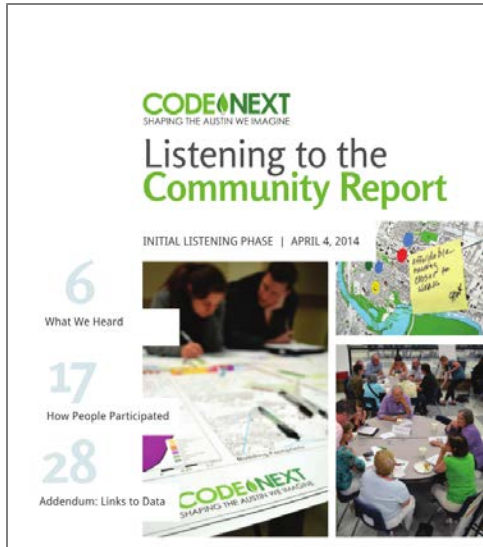
Workforce & Education

Creative Economy

Healthy Austin

Compact & Connected

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Priority Program 8 & Integration of all Priority Programs

Where We've Been

Listening to the **Community Report**

INITIAL LISTENING PHASE | APRIL 4, 2014

6 What We Heard

17 How People Participated

28 Addendum: Links to Data

Community Character **MANUAL**

May 2014

Code Approach Alternatives & **Annotated Outlines**

Austin Land Development Code Update

AUSTIN, TEXAS
LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE DIAGNOSIS
Public Draft: May 5, 2014

Workshop Report

Prior work leading to the Prescriptions and Code

- **Code Advisory Group**
  - 40+ meetings
  - Working Groups (spring 2015)

- **During last 12 months, informing draft code**
  - 45+ road show meetings
  - 9 community walks
  - 4 Coffee with CodeNEXT events
  - 4 SpeakUpAustin! discussion forums
  - 2 meet-ups
  - 2 Code Updates
  - 2 Reddit AMAs (Ask Me Anything)
  - 1 Sound Check
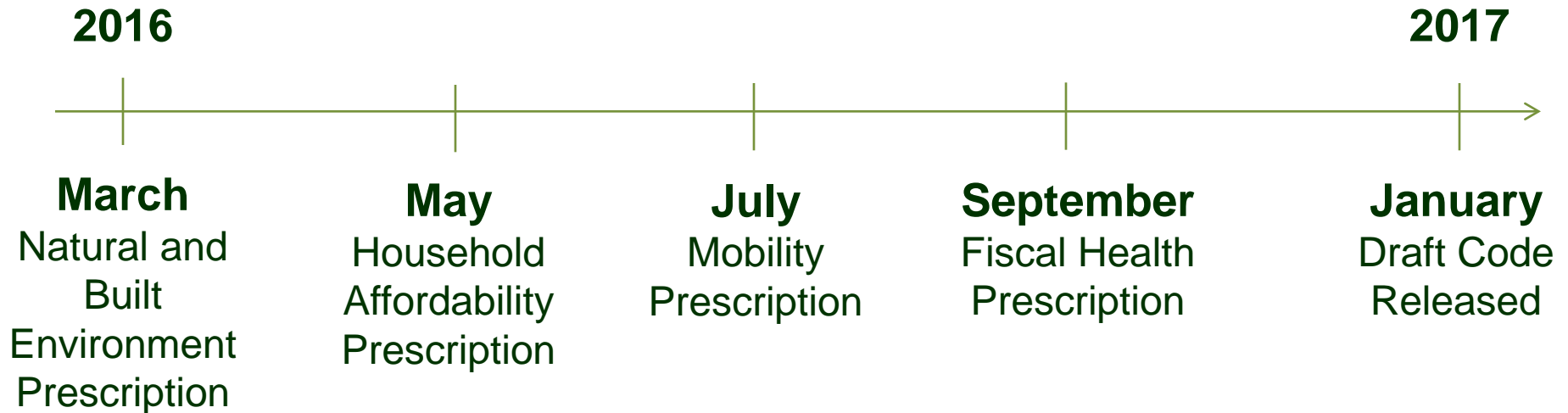
Why a Code Prescription?

- **Frame discussion of 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 the code with community values:**
    - Are we achieving Imagine Austin goals?
    - Is the Prescription too strong? Too weak?
    - How do priorities change based on context?

- **Support from Mayor, City Manager, CAG leadership**

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Have we struck a good balance between competing public values?

Prescription Schedule and Framework

2016   **2017**

March	May	July	September	January
Natural and Built Environment Prescription	Household Affordability Prescription	Mobility Prescription	Fiscal Health Prescription	Draft Code Released

Prescription Framework

- Where Are We Now?
- Where Do We Want to Be?
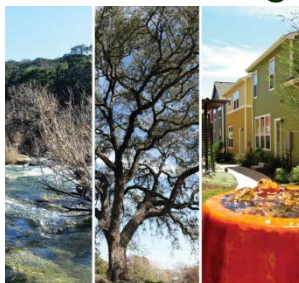- What's the Prescription?

Natural and Built Environment Schedule

March 21
CAG Meeting
Presentations and Discussion

April 4
CAG Meeting
Public Comment

April 18
CAG Meeting
Discussion and Recommendations

May 10
Planning Commission Briefing

March 7
Launch at CAG Meeting

March 29
Reddit AMA

ASK ME ANYTHING

April 9
Community Walk

May 3
Council Work Session

Ongoing

speakupaustin!

Road Show

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Roles and Responsibilities
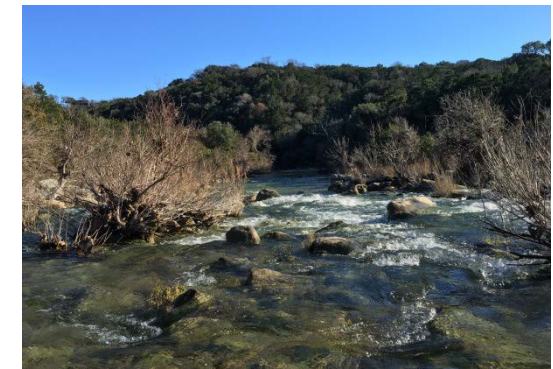
- **Planning and Zoning Staff**
  - Lead authors, coordinate with other writers, reviewers, and Opticos
  - Coordinate outreach and engagement
    - CAG, Mayor, Council, public, city departments and organizations
  - Review feedback and evaluate for influence on code

- **Code Advisory Group**
  - Review Prescription
  - Offer and collect feedback
    - Public and CAG
  - Outreach
    - Meet with stakeholders
    - Attend public events (ex: Community Walk, Road Show)

What Can You Expect from a Prescription?

- **Professional recommendations**

- **Natural and Built Environment has more than 40 Prescriptions for:**
  - o Water and Watersheds
  - o Landscape and Trees
  - o Compatibility and Transitions
  - o Design for Mobility
  - o Redevelopment
  - o Greenfield Development
  - o Parks and Open Space

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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

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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 incorporating new tools

Water and Watersheds – Code Prescriptions:

- Maintain Austin's historic watershed regulations and recent Watershed Protection Ordinance improvements

- New and 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

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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

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

Compatibility and Transitions

Compatibility and Transitions -- Code Prescription:

- In areas where form-based zoning district are applied, achieve compatibility through the development standards built into the district (e.g., building height and placement, mass, parking placement)
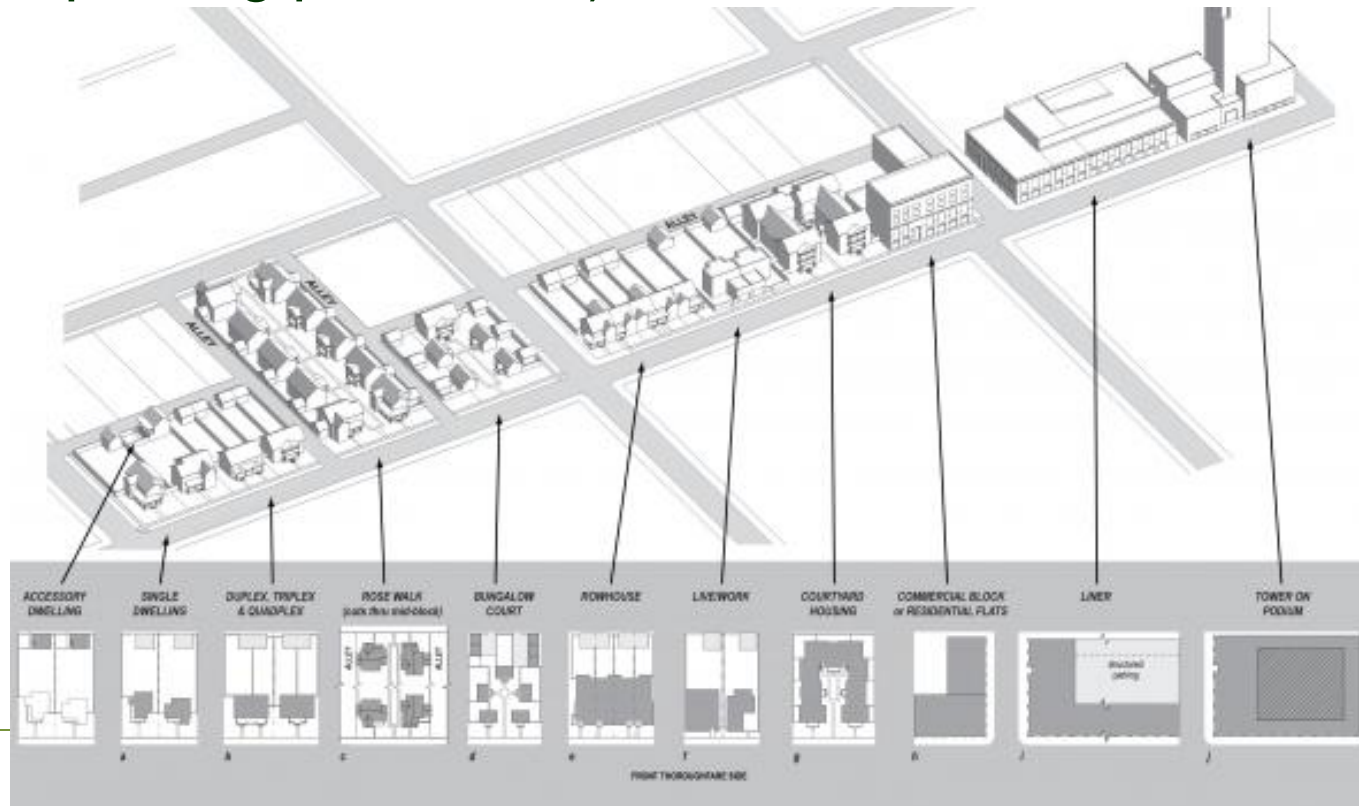
Compatibility and Transitions – Code Prescription:

- Allow for a variety of housing types, including "missing middle," to promote compatibility

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

<u>Note</u>: The third Code Prescription specifically addresses a wide range of issues regarding Mobility.

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Design for Mobility

Tame the negative impacts of mobility infrastructure on our natural and built environments such as "drivewalks" and parking lots without trees

Design for Mobility:

- . . . . while maintaining convenient access to life's necessities.

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

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

Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

Design for Context

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Design for Mobility – Code Prescription:

- Promote street, sidewalk, bike lane, and trail connectivity

- Use greenways to build new transportation systems

- Implement Complete Streets Policy
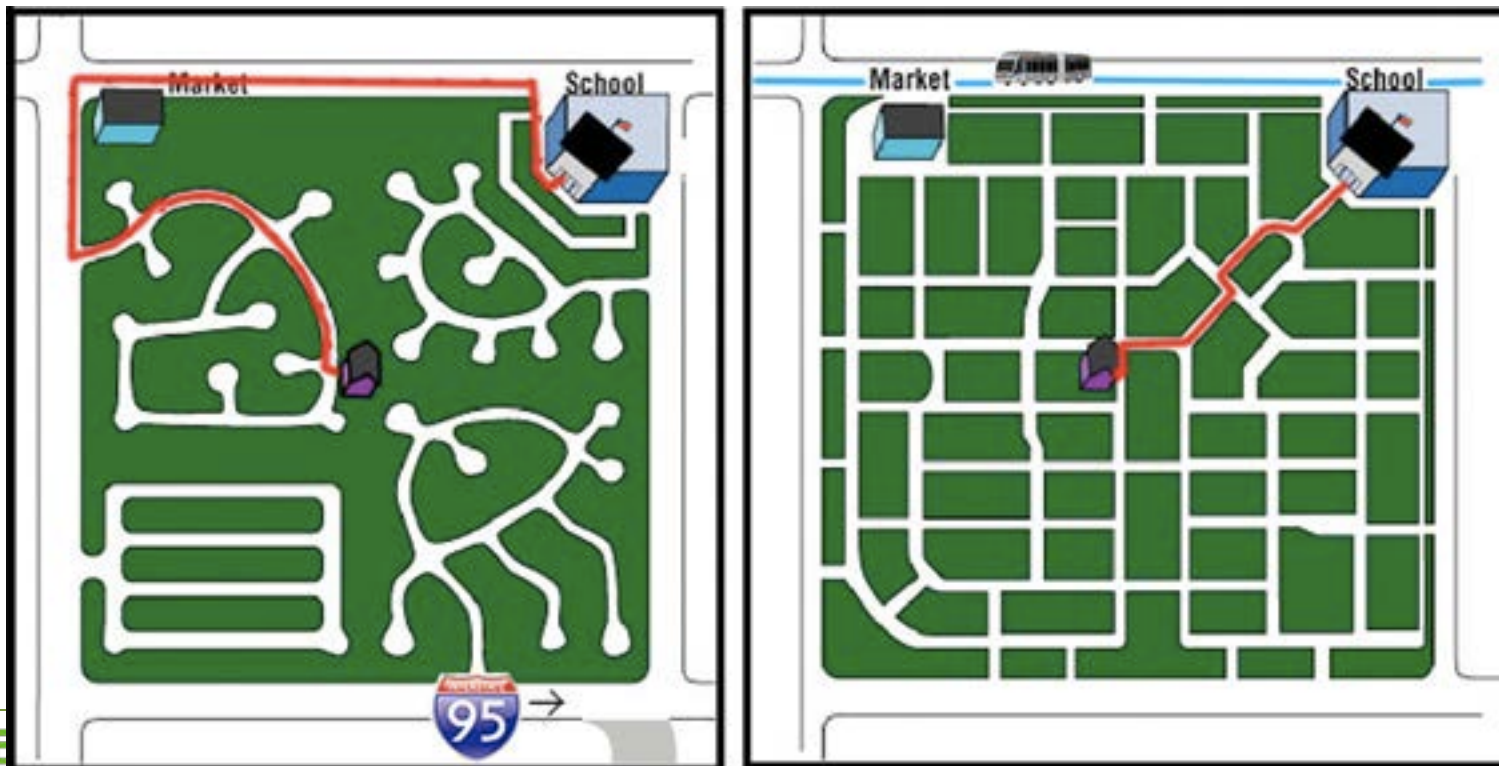
Redevelopment:

- 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
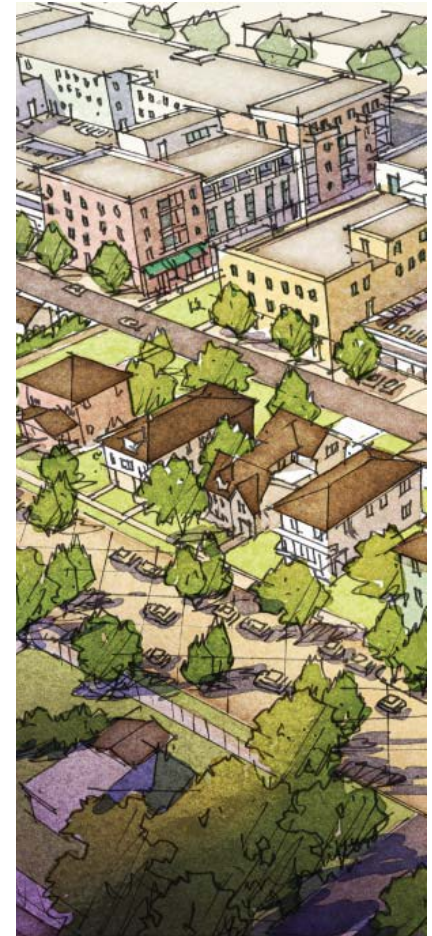
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Redevelopment:

- Undeveloped land is scarce in Corridors and Centers

- 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

Redevelopment – Code Prescriptions:

- <u>Primary Goal</u>: Encourage infill over sprawl

- 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
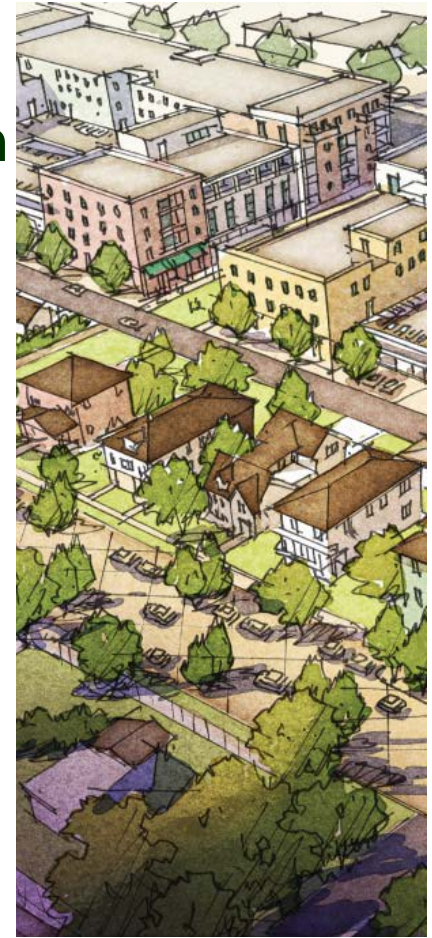
Greenfield Development:

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

  - Mobility choice

  - Sustainability

  - Connectivity

  - Housing choice

Greenfield Development – Code Prescriptions:

- Refinements to Subdivision code:

  o 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

  o Require road, alley, sidewalk, trail, and bike lane connections

- 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

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

Parks and Open Space – Code Prescription:

- Increase the range of park and open space types, and calibrate to particular contexts. For example:

  - Pocket parks

  - Neighborhood parks

  - Greenways

  - Active/passive recreation parks

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

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

- **Frame the Conversation**
  - How does/can Code solve this issue?
  - Where does a solution work best?
  - Is something missing?

- **Prioritize tradeoffs → align the code with community values:**
  - Are we achieving Imagine Austin goals?
  - Is the Prescription too strong? Too weak? Too vague?
  - How do priorities change based on context?

- **Staff CodeNEXT team and Opticos review, use to refine Code**

Questions?