District 7 Community Feedback Report

The Office of Council Member Leslie Pool
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Throughout May and early June, the District 7 office led and participated in a number of outreach and engagement opportunities to solicit community feedback on the first draft of the CodeNEXT proposals.

This document will describe these outreach efforts and summarize the broad themes District 7 staff heard from residents regarding what residents would like to see CodeNEXT achieve and their feedback on the draft Land Development Code and draft zoning map.

To that end, this document reflects the feedback that District 7 residents have provided to the District 7 office. This document is not intended to be a position paper or a CodeNEXT educational resource; it is intended to broadly reflect the community feedback that the District 7 office has received to date.

This document is organized into three main sections:

- **District 7 Outreach & Engagement** (Page 2). This section summarizes the major community engagement events and opportunities that the District 7 office has led and participated in since the release of the draft Land Development Code and draft zoning map.

- **Main Ideals or Goals Expressed for CodeNEXT** (Pages 3-4). This section will summarize the feedback residents have provided to date to the District 7 office regarding what they would like to see CodeNEXT achieve.

- **Feedback & Concerns** (Pages 5-8). This section will summarize the feedback residents have provided to date to the District 7 office regarding the draft Land Development Code and draft zoning map.

District 7 Outreach & Engagement

OVERVIEW
This document will summarize the feedback the District 7 office has received from residents through regular communications (emails, phone calls, in-person discussions), as well as through the outreach and engagement opportunities the District 7 office has conducted to date (the Community Conversations, Open House, and Office Hours opportunities described below).

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
The District 7 office hosted a series of CodeNEXT "Community Conversations" to solicit feedback and initiate a dialogue throughout the district regarding the draft Land Development Code and draft zoning map.

The three meetings were held on Tuesday evenings in different areas of the district and focused on the type of zoning that is currently proposed for each area:

1. Tuesday, May 2 – Proposed Transect Zone Neighborhoods.
2. Tuesday, May 9 – Proposed Non-Transect Neighborhoods without Small-Area Plans.
3. Tuesday, May 16 – Proposed Non-Transect Neighborhoods with Small-Area Plans.

In each meeting, we invited a few of our District 7 appointees and land use experts to present some introductory information about the proposed code and then the attendees broke off into smaller discussion groups. Each discussion group then relayed their ideals, questions, and concerns so that our office could gather their input.

OPEN HOUSE
The city's CodeNEXT team coordinated with the District 7 office to host an open house on Saturday, May 20 to discuss the draft Land Development Code and draft zoning map. The event began with an open house segment in which residents could speak directly with CodeNEXT staff. After that, CodeNEXT staff presented on the draft code and zoning map and then took questions from attendees. Finally, the CodeNEXT team finished the event by offering attendees another opportunity to speak with staff members individually in an open house format.

OFFICE HOURS ("FEEDBACK SESSIONS")
The District 7 office hosted three office hour "Feedback Sessions" in coffeehouses across the district to continue the dialogue and help residents navigate the online CodeNEXT feedback tools (the Civic Comment and mapping tools):

1. Thursday, May 25 (10 AM to 2 PM) at Summer Moon Coffee Shop (11005 Burnet Rd.)
2. Tuesday, May 30 (4 PM to 8 PM) at Genuine Joe Coffeehouse (2001 W. Anderson Ln.)
3. Thursday, June 1 (12 PM to 4 PM) at Brentwood Social House (1601 W. Koenig Ln.)

Main Ideals or Goals Expressed for CodeNEXT

OVERVIEW

This section will summarize some of the broad ideals or goals that many residents expressed when communicating with the District 7 office about CodeNEXT. The content of these discussions was largely aspirational and does not reflect residents' opinions of whether they believe the current CodeNEXT draft achieves these goals.

In general, many of the residents expressed that they would like to see CodeNEXT make the Land Development Code and city processes more accessible, support the ability of residents to stay in their homes, support resident neighborhoods and neighborhood character, manage growth responsibly and provide housing options, improve affordability, implement Imagine Austin and neighborhood plans, improve mobility, improve flood mitigation efforts, provide more quality parkland, and maintain public participation in city decision-making.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ACCESSIBILITY

- **Make City Code & Processes More Accessible**. Many residents indicated that they would like CodeNEXT to simplify and re-organize the city's Land Development Code in order to make it more accessible and understandable to the layman.

- **Measure and Judge**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see the city project the impact that CodeNEXT will have upon many different indicators, such as housing costs, impervious cover, flooding, etc. in order to inform decision-making. They also indicated that if the city ultimately adopts the CodeNEXT proposals, they would like to see the city measure how these changes are affecting residents.

HOUSING & LAND USE

- **Support Ability of Residents to Stay in their Homes**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see the CodeNEXT effort improve their ability to stay in their homes. This extended both to working residents who are facing large increases in their property valuations and to retired residents who would like to see the city adopt policies that make it easier for them to age in place.

- **Support Residential Neighborhoods & Neighborhood Character**. Many residents indicated they would like the revised Land Development Code to support the character and the residential nature of the neighborhoods. They indicated that if new development does occur interior to a neighborhood, they would like to see it done in a way that is compatible and consistent with the scale, feel, and use of the surrounding neighborhood.

- **Manage Growth Responsibly & Provide Housing Options**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see CodeNEXT improve the city's ability to provide a more managed level of growth that increases housing diversity without overwhelming and fundamentally changing their communities. They indicated that they would like to see Austin grow in an 'evolutionary' manner, rather than rapidly and radically.

- **Improve Affordability in Austin**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see CodeNEXT improve the city's ability to provide more affordable housing, and expressed a desire to see existing affordable units preserved. They also indicated they would like to see the city adopt policies that allow residents to age in place.

- **Implement Imagine Austin & Neighborhood Plans**. Many residents indicated that their communities spent a significant amount of time and effort contributing to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and their own neighborhood plans – and they wanted to see that work incorporated into CodeNEXT in a clear and meaningful way.

MOBILITY

- **Improve Walkability & Mobility**. Many residents indicated that they would like CodeNEXT to improve the city's ability to provide important mobility infrastructure, especially sidewalks.

- **Improve Public Transit Planning**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see CodeNEXT improve coordination between the land use planning and public transit planning in order to ensure that transit supports land development patterns and vice versa.

ENVIRONMENTAL & OPEN SPACE

- **Improve Flood Mitigation Efforts**. Many residents indicated that they would like to see CodeNEXT improve flood mitigation requirements for developers. They noted that many District 7 residents live in floodplains or otherwise face localized flooding problems and indicated that they would like the new Land Development Code to improve the city's ability to require flood mitigation on properties that are redeveloping.

- **Provide More Quality Parks and Open Space**. Many residents indicated they would like to see CodeNEXT improve the city's ability to acquire and maintain quality public parkland and public civic space that can serve existing residents and support new residents.

PUBLIC PROCESS

- **Maintain Public Participation in Decision-making**. Many residents indicated that they would like the draft Land Development Code to preserve the public's ability to engage and participate in the city's planning efforts and decision-making processes, such as at public hearings before commissions and before the City Council.

OVERVIEW

This section will summarize much of the feedback that the District 7 office has received regarding CodeNEXT. It is intended to provide a high-level description that outlines the broad themes the District 7 office has heard to date, not necessarily a comprehensive listing of individual comments.

Many residents indicated that they felt that CodeNEXT is moving quickly and the city has not adequately explained its implications and that they feel CodeNEXT will affect their homes and residential neighborhoods in a number of different ways.

Many residents expressed concerns relating to: the types of uses allowed in new zoning districts, the impact CodeNEXT could have on property tax appraisals, the way new zoning categories are mapped across the city, changes to compatibility standards, how the city incorporated neighborhood plans into the draft zoning map, changes to parking requirements, coordination with public transit, whether processes for public input will be changed, and the impacts on infrastructure (such as sidewalks, public parks, drainage, etc).

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ACCESSIBILITY

- **Communications**. Many residents expressed their concern that the CodeNEXT proposals are very complicated, and they feel as if the current communications strategy has not adequately explained the proposals and their implications. They are not clear on what is changing and what is staying the same. The CodeNEXT website is cluttered and not user-friendly; while educational materials are available, they appear to be dispersed across the website without a clear sense of organization.

- **Community Engagement & Timeline**. Many residents expressed concerns that the main feedback tools are not easily accessible to many residents, that the comment period for the first draft of the code ends too soon (June 7) and they feel unprepared to provide informed comments before that date, and that the comments they do make may be disregarded because staff has not clearly articulated how comments will be reviewed and used to inform subsequent drafts of the code. They generally indicated that they did not feel prepared enough to engage with CodeNEXT and that they felt it was rapidly moving forward without them.

- **Visualizing & Modeling**. Many residents expressed the desire to see visual models of potential development under proposed new zoning categories to get a better sense of how CodeNEXT would affect their communities. They also expressed the desire to see modeling of other expected impacts (such as amount of redevelopment, additional impervious cover, traffic, etc.).

HOUSING & LAND USE

- **Translation vs. Planning**. Many residents expressed concerns that they felt that the city had misrepresented the CodeNEXT effort. Specifically, they felt that the city had previously presented CodeNEXT as an effort to streamline the code and 'translate' old zoning into roughly equivalent new zoning categories, but instead the new proposed zoning map appears to 'plan' areas by upzoning certain properties and increasing entitlements.

- **Residential Neighborhoods**. Many residents expressed concerns that the new code could affect the residential character of their neighborhoods by expanding the types of uses (such as commercial uses) that can occur on properties. The current CodeNEXT proposal introduces new zoning categories that would expand the ability for mixed use, commercial uses, or home businesses; residents indicated that they wanted to keep incompatible uses, especially those that might involve late-night noise or a high volume of traffic, separate from residential areas.

- **Zoning Entitlements & Property Tax Appraisals**. Many residents expressed concerns about how the CodeNEXT proposals would affect their home values and their ability to afford their property taxes. They were concerned about a scenario in which the CodeNEXT proposals increase entitlements on their lots (ie. provide the ability to construct more units than is now possible) – potentially leading to higher property valuations by the Travis Central Appraisal District (TCAD) and higher property taxes that could displace them and their neighbors.

- **Equity**. Many residents expressed concerns that the CodeNEXT proposal applies different types of zoning to properties that today have the same type of zoning. For instance, the draft zoning map may propose to zone one property that is currently SF-3 to a new T3 zoning ('transect' zoning) while zoning another SF-3 property to a new LMDR zoning ('non-transect' zoning). Specifically, residents were concerned that 'transect' zoning exists in much of central and east Austin but is largely absent from west Austin. Many residents expressed concerns that transect zoning would make those neighborhoods more attractive to developers and they felt it was inequitable to only apply transect zoning to certain residential neighborhoods. Some residents expressed concerns that their 'non-transect' zoning in the urban core would limit the amount of work they could do to their homes relative to their 'transect' neighbors.

- **Compatibility**. Many residents expressed concerns that the CodeNEXT proposals reduce current compatibility standards that regulate the height and distance of nearby developments; they also expressed concerns about changes to how these compatibility standards are 'triggered.' Specifically, neighbors were concerned that taller buildings could be built closer to residential homes under the CodeNEXT proposal; they were also concerned that the proposal only applies compatibility standards when the development is adjacent to certain residentially zoned properties, rather than the existing code in which compatibility is required when the development is located a certain distance from a home.

- **Neighborhood Plans**. Many residents expressed concerns that they feel the city has not followed through on its commitment to honor neighborhood plans. They felt that an extensive amount of time and energy went into the creation of neighborhood plans and would like to see those efforts fully honored through CodeNEXT. Additionally, residents wanted more clarity on how the city will treat existing neighborhood plans and approach new neighborhood plans going forward.

- **Short-Term Rentals and Accessory Dwelling Units**. Many residents expressed concerns that the CodeNEXT proposals appeared to change the new Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Short-Term Rental (STR) regulations Council adopted over the last two years. They wanted clarity on whether the CodeNEXT proposals expanded the size of ADUs or the types of STRs allowed. *(CodeNEXT staff have since indicated that they intend the code to reflect Council's adopted regulations and will be clarifying that in the next draft.)*

MOBILITY

- **Parking Requirements**. Many residents expressed concerns that reduced parking requirements in the CodeNEXT proposals could lead to more vehicular congestion and limited parking availability on residential streets. Additionally, there were specific concerns about the impact that expanding the ability for commercial uses and home businesses in some zoning categories could have on parking availability because of the parking needed for employees and customers.

- **Pedestrian Safety**. Many residents indicated that they believed that the changes proposed on the CodeNEXT zoning map would increase the density along major corridors (such as Burnet Road and North Lamar Boulevard) and in parts of internal neighborhoods. They indicated that this increased density would add more vehicles onto neighborhood streets that do not currently have sidewalks, posing problems for pedestrian safety. They expressed a desire to improve the city's ability to require sidewalks during redevelopment and ensure that fee in-lieu is only paid when truly appropriate.

- **Public Transit**. Many residents felt that the proposals they have seen for the north central corridors (mainly Burnet and North Lamar) did not appear to adequately coordinate proposed zoning changes with rapid transit stops. They indicated they would like to see CapMetro publicly engaging with the city on CodeNEXT.

ENVIRONMENTAL & OPEN SPACE

- **Flooding**. Many residents wanted to see more information on the potential impacts increased impervious cover would have on flooding in Austin and also wanted to ensure that CodeNEXT proposals raised the standard for flood mitigation. They expressed support for "greenfield development standards" for redevelopment, requiring that property owners fully mitigate flooding impacts when redeveloping a property. However, participants also indicated that

they wanted to examine the provisions governing when a project may pay a fee in-lieu of onsite mitigation to the Regional Stormwater Management Program (RSMP), to ensure that projects are only paying fees in-lieu when appropriate.

- **Parks & Open Space**. Many residents indicated that they wanted to improve the city's ability to acquire and maintain public parkland, especially in park-deficient areas. They expressed concerns that increases in development and redevelopment in Austin would decrease the amount of green space and open space in the city and they indicated that they would like to see the city provide more public parkland in order to both retain green spaces and help serve the city's growing population.

PUBLIC PROCESS

- **Public Notification and Input**. Many residents expressed concern that the CodeNEXT proposal appeared to reduce notification time periods for zoning cases, conditional use permits, appeals, and administrative permits and waivers. *(CodeNEXT staff have since indicated that they intend to keep the notification periods the same and that the next version of the draft code should reflect this.)*