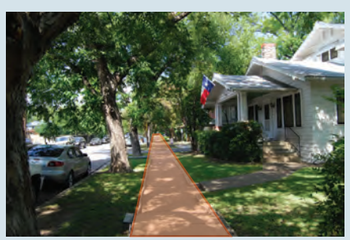
EXAMPLES OF PHOTOGRAPHS TO TAKE

The light orange highlight on the photos below shows what to look for in each type of picture.

	Residential	Commercial	
Elevation			Take front, or elevation, photos to show how tall and wide a building is. • Look for unique details in the architecture • Capture shots of important landmarks or historic structures.
45-degree Angle			Take 45-degree angle photographs to show how deep a building is.
Proximity of Buildings			Take photographs of buildings together, to show how far apart buildings are, and to show how tall a building is compared to a nearby building.
Sidewalks			Take photographs looking down the sidewalk to show how a building relates to the public street (front yard, porch, stoop, outdoor seating, etc.). • How far back from the street is the building? • Take photos of parks and civic spaces too.
Streets			Take photographs of streets to show what kind of streets are in your area. • Look for street trees and landscaping. • Take photos of the street furnishings (like lamp posts or trash bins). • Notice how the street follows the hills, creeks, or other features in your area.

HOW TO STAY INVOLVED

Stay plugged in at the Imagine Austin Facebook page and at the project website at www.austintexas.gov/codenext

CITY OF AUSTIN CONTACT:

Matt Dugan, codenext@austintexas.gov, 512-974-7665

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CODENEXT
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE

Community Character in a BOX

A do-it-yourself kit

Community Character in a Box is a do-it-yourself kit for you and your neighbors to map and document your community's character. Through a two-part process, you will identify areas that are assets, constraints, and opportunities for improvement for your community, as well as photo document characteristics that are both typical and unique about your area.

HELP US UNDERSTAND YOUR COMMUNITY

For the first time in 30 years, Austin is updating its land development code: the rules that determine how land can be used throughout the city - including what, where, and how much can be built.

This process, called CodeNEXT, is an opportunity for Austinites to realize our Imagine Austin vision of the future. But to be effective, the Code must consider the character of communities throughout the city. By mapping and documenting your community, you'll help the CodeNEXT Team understand its specific characteristics, along with things that are strengths and areas to improve. This will allow the Code to be more finely tuned and appropriate for the different kinds of places throughout Austin.

The Community Character process doesn't replace neighborhood plans and is not neighborhood planning. It will help inform the creation of the Code and be the basis for a new planning tool – the citywide Community Character Manual that will visually tell a story of each area of the city and bring new information to future planning efforts.

Neighborhood Reporting Area:

Email:

3 Steps TO DOCUMENT YOUR COMMUNITY

STEP 1: MAP

Meet with fellow community members to talk about what you like, and what could be improved in your local area. Place multi-colored dots on your map with an explanation of why you consider these places assets, constraints, or opportunities for improvement.

STEP 2: PHOTOGRAPH

Explore your community on foot or by bike, taking photos of the buildings, streets, sidewalks, and public spaces that capture the character of your community.

STEP 3: RETURN

Return your maps and Community Character in a Box to the City and submit your photos via email to the address provided.

STEP 1 - COMMUNITY MAPPING

Mapping your community can be quick, easy, and fun. Review the two large map posters provided. The "Area Map" represents a Neighborhood Reporting Area and may be larger than your neighborhood boundaries. The "Learn About Your Community" poster provides more details about existing infrastructure and current zoning, as well as a future land use map from the existing neighborhood plan (if applicable).

HOW TO MAP YOUR COMMUNITY

1. As a group, discuss what you feel are assets (strengths), constraints (weaknesses) and opportunities for improvement. Mark those sites with the corresponding colored dots: Assets = Green. Constraints = Red. Opportunities = Blue. Write your comments directly on the map and connect them to the colored dot.
2. After about 45 minutes, see if there is anything missing from what you have indicated with sticky-dots. Should anything more on your map be brought to the attention of the CodeNEXT Team?

EXAMPLES OF PLACES TO LOCATE ON YOUR MAP:

Locate the following items on the maps provided:

Assets (Strengths)

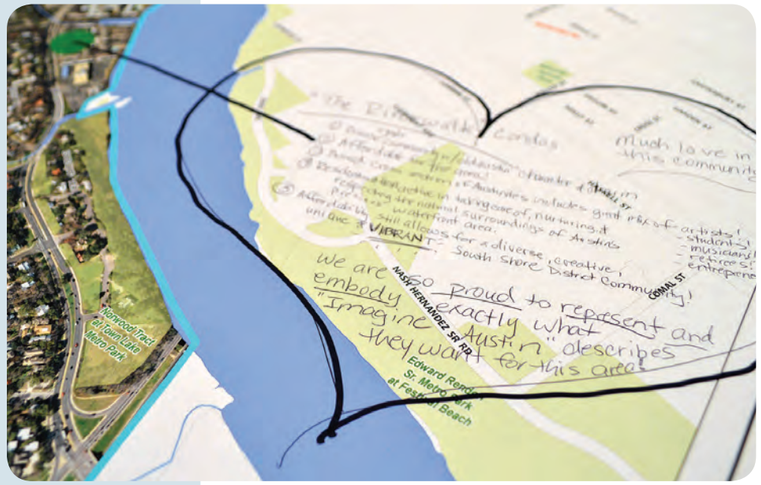
- Places where everyone in the community goes, such as: favorite restaurants, coffee shops, stores, and public spaces
- Amenities (services or places) that you like in your community
- Civic institutions (schools, libraries, churches, museums, etc.)
- Parks or natural beauty you wish to preserve
- Important streets for walking, bicycling, and/or driving

Constraints (Weaknesses)

- Abandoned building(s)
- Dangerous routes
- Eye-sore(s)
- Environmental hazards
- Land uses or activities you wish would relocate

Opportunities for Improvement

- Empty lot(s)
- Public space that needs improving
- An amenity (service, business, or improvement) that your community needs (food market, coffeehouse, etc).
- A good spot for public art or a community garden
- *You tell us!*



STEP 2 - PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

Photo Documentation is a key tool to understand the character of a community. Take photos of the typical types of buildings and streets that best represent what your community looks like, as well as the places that are distinctive or unique. This will help the CodeNEXT Team fine-tune the Code and make sure it's appropriate for different areas throughout Austin.

WHAT TO BRING: A digital camera (or mobile phone with camera), a street map of area, and this instruction handout.

WHAT TO DO

- Work in teams of (ideally) 2-4 people to cover different sections of your area without overlapping.
- Each team should have a camera and a street map.
- Head out on foot or by bike to take photographs. It's okay to drive to an area, but you should take photos while walking around, not from a car.
- Take photos that best represent what your neighborhood looks like and places that are distinctive or unique.
- If camera or phone has "location services", turn that setting on so the locations of the photos can be determined when they are submitted.
- Mark the route you took on your street map.
- Remember to be careful and respect private property – stay on sidewalks and in public areas.
- If someone asks what you're doing, you can say "I'm participating in a City of Austin project to document the character of neighborhoods as part of a public input for the new land development code."

WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- Set the photograph quality on your camera or phone to its highest resolution, preferably 1 meg file size or larger.
- Take pictures of residential and commercial buildings, sidewalks, streets, special places, etc. (see back page for examples).
- Photograph a variety of features and from a variety of perspectives described in the "Examples of Photographs to Take" on back page.
- There are no set number of photos you need to take but avoid taking duplicate pictures.
- Avoid taking pictures with things that block what you are photographing (trash cans, light poles, traffic, power lines).

STEP 3 - RETURN YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

- Email photos you have taken directly to the address provided on the front page of this handout.
- 1st round of Box materials and photos are due by March 22. Additional submissions of information will be accepted through the end of 2014.

Remember that all comments and photos received from each completed "Box" will available online for the public to view.

HERE'S HOW YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE USED

The CodeNEXT Team will use your photo documentation and comments from the mapping exercise to:

- Compare types of buildings and spaces across the city to understand similarities and differences.
- Understand the distinctive qualities of your community.
- Create a citywide Community Character Manual to visually tell a story of each area.
- Bring more information to future planning efforts.