Compatibility Q&A Part 4 *(August 28, 2014)*

If compatibility regulates form, how do we influence/regulate behavior and use?
Some behaviors (such as noise and lighting) can be regulated by performance standards in the code. However, it is up to individuals to be good neighbors because codes can't regulate every type of behavior. Use is regulated by every zoning code, including form-based codes.

How can the code provide adaptability for new uses as they change over time?
The code can be written to encourage the extent to which existing buildings are re-used. When uses are changed there are many factors to consider, such as building code requirements, parking needs, ingress and egress, and effects on surrounding properties. How these factors are considered can determine how adaptable a building is for re-use.

There have been lots of greenfield examples. How do we address compatibility in existing development (situations where zoning and uses are already adjacent)?
The intent of compatibility standards is to address new construction in proximity to existing development. Part of the CodeNEXT process is to propose improvements to our existing regulations to better deal with transitions between different land uses.

How will we manage traffic in the code?
Our existing code contains some performance standards related to traffic, such as requirements for a traffic impact analysis in some cases. However, traffic is a complex problem that requires a coordinated approach between land use and transportation. Imagine Austin encourages the development of complete communities that offer a wider variety of ways to be connected in order to reduce the need for automobile travel.

How can the code address privacy?
There are design issues related to privacy that the code can address. For example, screening of different uses in the form of fencing or vegetation, placement of windows and balconies, setbacks, lighting and noise can be regulated by the code.

How do we encourage developers to consider how a project impacts the area? How can the code encourage them to be more creative?
One way to encourage creativity is to have a review process that is clear, simple, and easy to use. The developer may then be able to devote more effort to creative design within the general framework provided by the code.

Where will all the new cars be parked?
The number of parking spaces that are needed or required should be determined based on context. Areas that are intended to be walkable environments that utilize and support transit would have different parking requirements than areas of less density, where surface parking lots could be more appropriate. The number of parking spaces required does not need to be the same in all parts of the city.

How do we determine when compatibility is applied?
Our approach is that compatibility is built into the way that the code is calibrated, and not as something that is additionally applied. How you calibrate different standards and how they apply is a function of where you are; regulations will vary by context.

How do we integrate the encouragement of infill and density while maintaining quality of life and addressing transportation challenges?
Imagine Austin has put a great framework in place for that to happen. There are major deficiencies in Austin's transportation and mobility choices right now and the city is trying to catch up. The code is not going to solve that problem, but we can make decisions within the code rewrite to help encourage that. Imagine Austin's growth concept map defines activity centers and corridors. In this process, the CodeNEXT team has to understand how the new code can help implement focused and targeted evolution in those designated areas.

Specifically how will the CodeNEXT team honor the neighborhood's idea of compatibility?
First, we need to define what a neighborhood defines as effective compatibility. Secondly, context is very important. Neighborhoods that share characteristics (example: walkable urban neighborhood) would share compatibility tools and approaches with minor tweaks that are specific to their own neighborhoods.