

Obstacles to Small Businesses  
Working Group

# Meeting 4: Discussion of tools

Monday, March 2, 2015



# Where we've been

January  
2015

Vetted action list  
categorized by  
working group  
topic

## Working Group Adventure

High/Low  
Impact

- Prioritize

Current Code  
and Barriers

- Explore

Best Practice

- Explore

Discussion of  
potential tools

- Explore

Recommend  
tools

- Converge

Return to full  
CAG

March 2015

## Insights from Obstacles to Small Businesses Meeting #1: January 26, 2015

Presentation on Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and topic specific presentation to frame context and prioritization of Imagine Austin actions

\*\* Working group comments are incorporated with participant comments

What we KNOW		What might we have overlooked/What DON'T we know?	
Complications leasing/owning site specific regulations	Obvious overlap with neighborhood serving businesses complexity	Sales-> technology -> how it will affect	How will values/ideals created in new LDC be realized/align with partnerships? City, County, State > private
Where can we build/develop businesses	We have iconic businesses but how do we capture that	Robotic cars-> future tech and how it will affect businesses	Adaptive reuse policies?
Location/cost	Academic exp produced results of 2002 study	What will the markets be in the future	How do we make permitting simpler, shorter, easier? (size driven)
Inherent conflict between small businesses and neighborhoods (for ex: parking)	"Missing- middle" also affects businesses	Outsourcing?	Tolerance of citizens for infrastructure costs
Permitting is difficult for small/local businesses	Home occupancy rules provide challenges, need flexibility	Talent pool -> where are they	How long will the drought last?
Code Compliance is challenging	Perception that city has identified contractors prior to asking for proposal	Technology - video	How departmental silos will be broken down, or will they be?
Building ownership is a goal	In order to bid, the process is expensive and cumbersome	How changes in the global economy will impact small businesses	What's the small business permit flow chat? "1000 yd stare"
Availability of space -> affordability	Creative community is not represented in small businesses	How is City Council going to vote	What will the impact be of the next rail place?
"Biz-open" is a new program for small businesses	The community values small iconic businesses	How the corridor plans will be implemented	How will the global community and City Council impact our City and small businesses?
One size fits all doesn't work anymore	The code creates special challenges; small iconic business (lights in barbershops)	Mapping tools/resources available to build a business plan	Global warming
Cost for large business permitting is the same for small businesses	Small business owners can't afford permit expeditors	What are the work teams/interdepartmental teams producing?	Affordability
"Comments" you receive in the permitting process is more overwhelming for a small business to receive than a large business	We won a lot of awards for Imagine Austin, there must be things we learned/feedback from others	Tax changes will impact small businesses -> Council actions	Local control vs. state controls
		How will large businesses displace/negatively impact small businesses?	Can the code level the playing field

What might we have overlooked/What DON'T we know? <i>(continued)</i>		Insights out of voting	Add any actions to list?
Can process improvements be implemented to benefit small businesses - separate for different types?		What we've done over 20 years; what is working and what's not?	none
How would the "living wage" policy impact businesses?		If we solve EA03 we'll nail it	
Property tax caps for small businesses		Can food production tie in EA03	
Special agreements; how can/will PUD's (for example) address infrastructure needs to lessen small business costs? (Example: Colony Park -> HUD partnership)			
Subsidize incentives for small businesses			

## Insights from Obstacles to Small Businesses Meeting #2: February 9, 2015

Presentation on existing code issues related to obstacles for small businesses

\*\* Working group comments are incorporated with participant comments

### What we noticed/insights from the presentations

Without addressing obstacles to Soul-y, how will this program be successful- how do we address it?	Soul-y concept is great! Provides grassroots support
A lot of conversation needs to happen between PDRD and EGRSO to make Soul-y happen	Dichotomy between small grassroots businesses and neighborhood contact groups working against small businesses
Three vehicles trips per day - is it realistic?	List serves exist for small businesses to create a community of support to aid businesses
Does "one size fit all" really work regarding current code requirements?	Soul-y dovetails in the activity corridors; seems to support idea in Imagine Austin
Mobile businesses - we need to talk about what really makes sense	Small businesses need help with: accessibility of code to small business owners; differing information from inspectors; point person; what's the reasonable timeline for a permit
Parking - this is something we need more info on	We need to change the paradigm of neighborhoods and businesses
Stuff is great, but only if we can make it happen	Small businesses don't come to contact team meeting because they feel unwelcome
Austin Energy commercial rates may not be appropriate for home businesses	We need to reform the implementation of the code
What comes first - safe building/permit?	We also need an implementation plan
Alternative compliance to 25' setback applying to home businesses?	The presentation from last Friday's modeling, how does that impact this topic
Can we match public art to branding districts throughout the City? (Place making)	
How do best practices address parking, signage, setbacks	
Question regarding number of trips and daytimes - best practice nationwide	
What role and how does code compliance enforce rules	
Interested in best practice cities and their updated (if any) timelines	
Neighborhood parking management available perhaps to address parking in neighborhoods	

<i>Insights continued</i>	
<b>How might we...</b>	
Make a plan to help everyone come to the table	Can we get NIMBYs to become YIMBYs
Create some certainty in the code for everyone	Add a new chapter to encourage development as it relates to small businesses
Streamline the process for businesses	Prototype some of these neighborhoods to better understand how they work and how to fine tune
Find project managers for small businesses	Take into consideration the redevelopment of dangerous buildings to provide for incentives as a benefit
Create some predictability	Create more predictable timelines for reviews for small businesses
Encourage flexibility for adaptive reuse	Allocate resources to ensure compliance goals are achieved to help small business
Allow "by right" variations in the code to allow small businesses to rehab and re-use	Provide for online permit processes for small business
Encourage alternative compliance decision more clearly and more manageable for staff	Encourage the legal department to review small business applications more quickly
Create more tolerance in our community	Encourage utility reviewers to review small business applications more quickly
Manage overlap between our current code with future code?	Create a system that translates the code to be scaled to the size of the business
Allow for the transition between what we're doing now and the new code?	Encourage the systems at the City in place that are working to continue in support of small businesses
Allow for ample time to bring everyone up to speed?	Define a small business
Target and educate pockets of our community who are unaware of what the new code requires (or that we are in the process of updating our code)	Protect small, independent, local, iconic businesses
Allow unique character of neighborhoods to be preserved but also allow for small businesses to flourish	
Amnesty a broader range of businesses (not just those before 1986)	
Change the dynamic between businesses and neighbors from reactive to cooperative and proactive?	

### Obstacles to Small Businesses Meeting #3: February 20, 2015

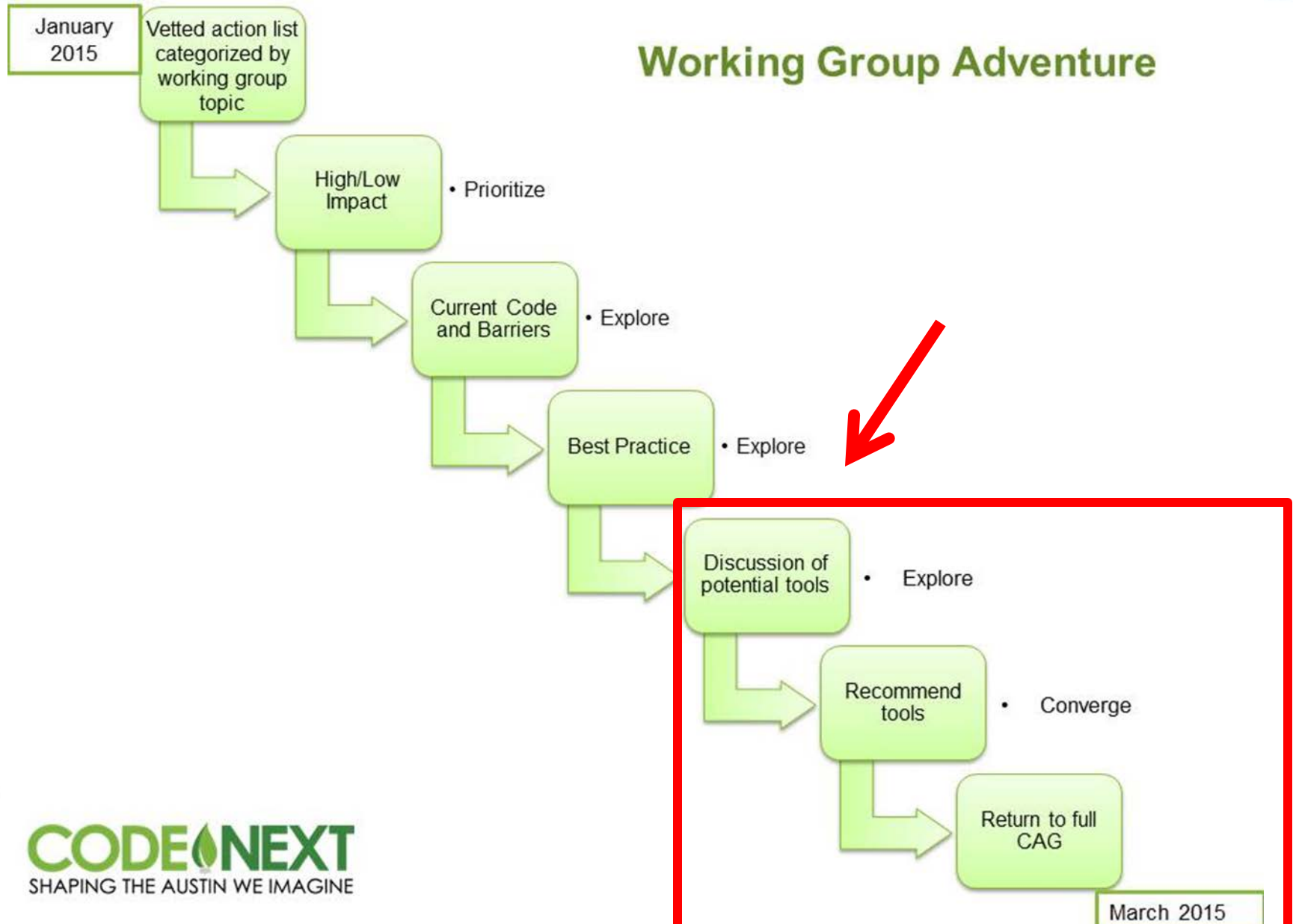
*Reflects questions that received a high number of votes for "were addressed in today's discussion"			*Reflects questions that received a high number of votes in both categories		
*Reflects questions received a high number of votes for "are still important"					
How might we	Heard relevant best practice information today	Still relevant	How might we	Heard relevant best practice information today	Still relevant
Make a plan to help everyone come to the table?	1	2	Change the dynamic between businesses and neighbors from reactive to cooperative and proactive?	0	4
Create some certainty in the code for everyone?	2	3	Allow for the transition between what we're doing now and the new code?	0	2
Streamline the process for businesses?	0	3	Create more tolerance in our community?	0	1
Find project managers for small businesses?	0	1	Manage overlap between our current code with future code?	0	2
Create some predictability?	3	3	Allow for ample time to bring everyone up to speed?	0	2
Encourage flexibility for adaptive reuse?	1	1	Allow "by right" variations in the code to allow small businesses to rehab and re-use?	1	3
Encourage alternative compliance decision more clearly and more manageable for staff?	1	3	Target and educate pockets of our community who are unaware of what the new code requires (or that we are in the process of updating our code)?	0	2
Allow unique character of neighborhoods to be preserved but also allow for small businesses to flourish?	2	2	Amnesty a broader range of businesses (not just those before 1986)?	1	2

How might we	Heard relevant best practice information today	Still relevant	How might we	Heard relevant best practice information today	Still relevant
Can we get NIMBYs to become YIMBYs?	0	3	Add a new chapter to encourage development as it relates to small businesses?	0	1
Take into consideration the redevelopment of dangerous buildings to provide for incentives as a benefit?	0	1	Prototype some of these neighborhoods to better understand how they work and how to fine tune?	1	1
Create more predictable timelines for reviews for small businesses?	1	4	Encourage the systems at the City in place that are working to continue in support of small businesses?	1	2
Allocate resources to ensure compliance goals are achieved to help small business?	0	1	Protect small, independent, local, iconic businesses?	0	3
Provide for online permit processes for small business?	0	3	Encourage utility reviewers to review small business applications more quickly?	1	2
Encourage the legal department to review small business applications more quickly?	0	3	Create a system that translates the code to be scaled to the size of the business?	1	3
Define a small business?	1	1			



Insights from Obstacles to Small Businesses Meeting #3: February 20, 2015		
Flexibility remains important	How do we manage pedestrian customers in home businesses in neighborhoods without sidewalks?	
Parking conversation needs to put everything on the table to consider	White paper to include language that recommends alternative compliance and director's discretion	
Public/private partnership to manage neighborhood parking district program	Should some requirement be made that property owners make available the certificate of occupation for the leasee/visitor? Should this information be available on the City website?	
Ex: convert free spots into metered spots to encourage turnover and to create revenue streams to maintain sidewalks/bike lanes, etc.		
Ex: West Campus parking district has been very successful		
When is/are expected results of the Mueller Parking Pilot program going to be available?		
Sometimes expired permits are irrelevant to the new businesses		
Predictable flexibility		
Home businesses might be encouraged without any hazardous mfr. Code should be clear and easily understood		
Contextual issues should be considered when requiring/limiting parking and trips		

# Where we are going



# What we hope to achieve

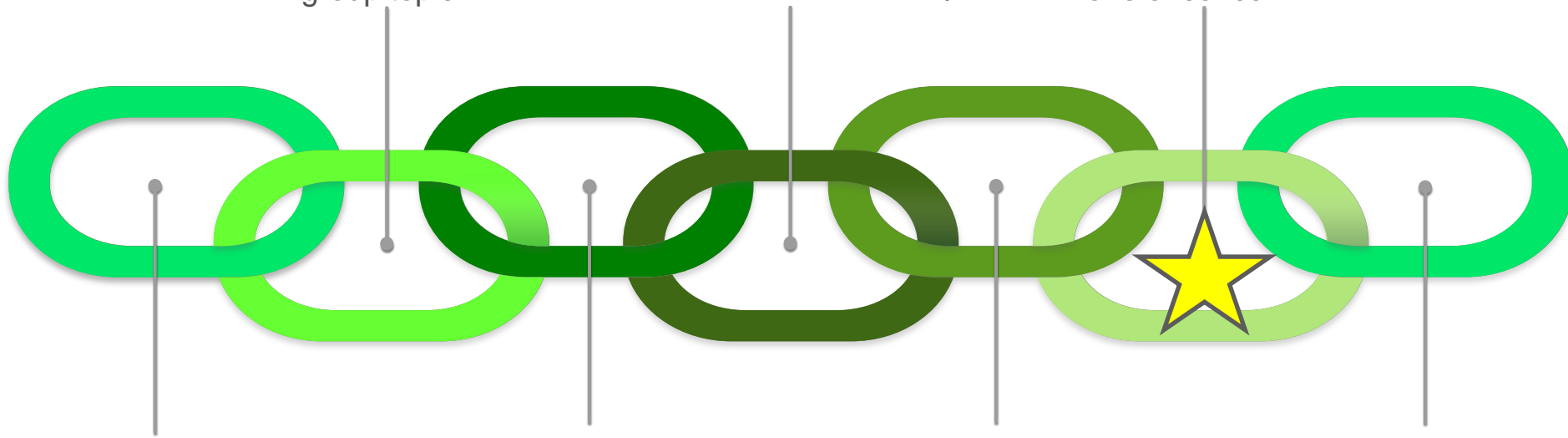
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- High level recommendations
- Working together
- Format
- Flag potential tradeoffs with other working group topics
- Submit to full CAG

What insights do we have  
from voting on most  
relevant Imagine Austin  
Action Items that related to  
the code and the working  
group topic?

Which best practices  
related to “how might  
we...” statements?  
Which “how might we  
statements” rise to the top?

Of the “how might we...”  
challenges, which ones  
are in the code’s zone of  
control, zone of influence,  
zone of concern?



How might we...?  
Statements

Recommendations:

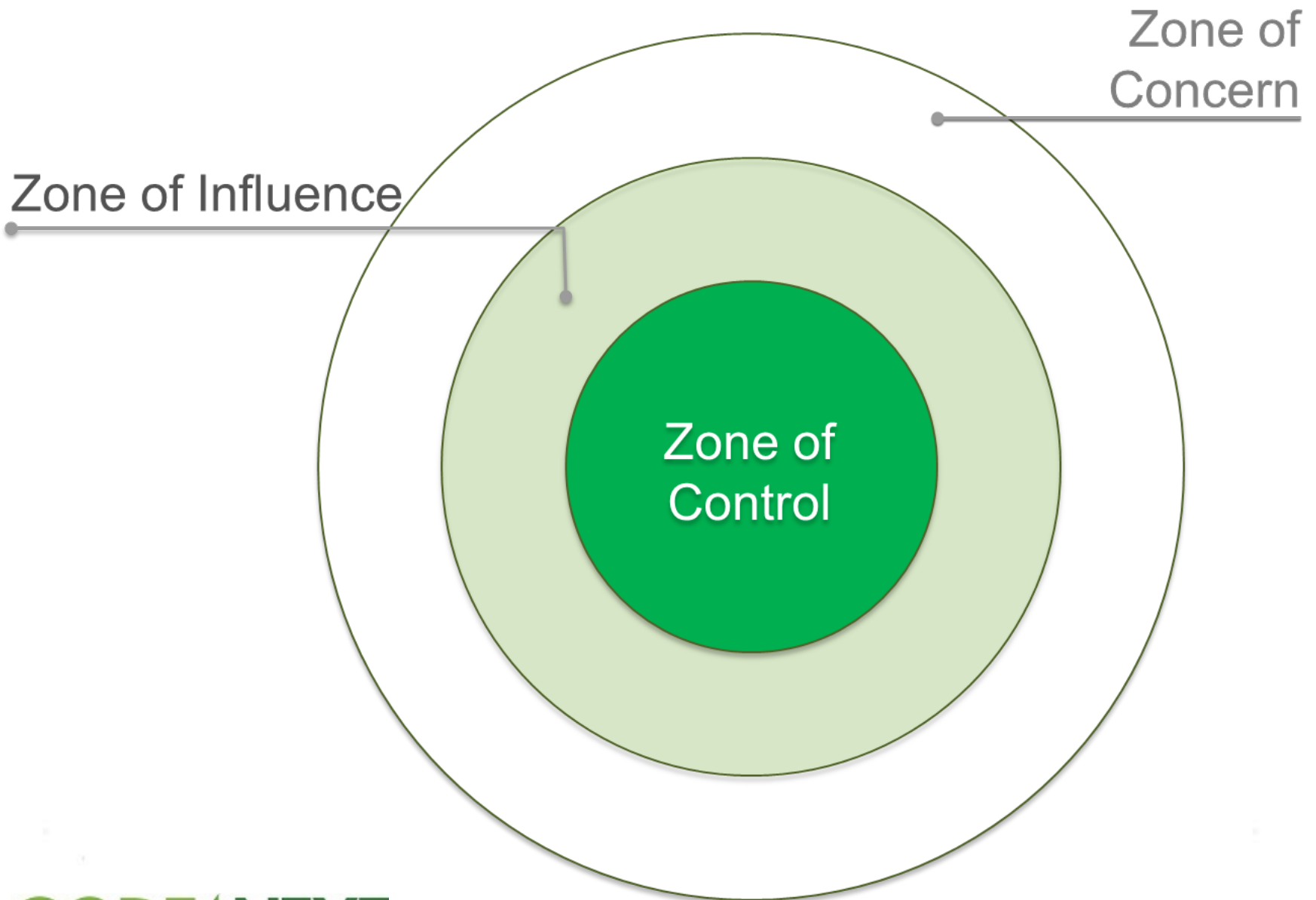
What do we know?  
What don't we know?  
What might we have  
overlooked or assumed?

Map practices we heard  
and liked to the “how might  
we...” challenges that rise  
to the top

# What we need from you today

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- Build off of what we've done
- Conclude exploration phase
- Cooperation and patience in working together
- Begin converging in order to form recommendations



# Today's exercise

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**Step 1:** match best practices heard to  
'how might we' questions

**Step 2:** place 'how might we' questions  
into appropriate zone

**Step 3:** assess and form  
recommendations

Clarify	Focus	Frame	Learn	Match	Focus	Recommend
Background briefing	What is our area of focus?	Hear barriers, list challenges	Hear best practices	Match practices to challenges	Align challenges to zone of control, influence, concern	What we want to solve for, and practices that might get us there (if known)
What we know	Area of focus from Imagine Austin Actions	How might we...?	Practice	Relevant challenge + heard practice	How might we...-> zone of control	
What we know	Area of focus from Imagine Austin Actions	How might we...?	Practice	Relevant challenge + heard practice	How might we...-> zone of control	
What we don't know	Area of focus from Imagine Austin Actions	How might we...?	Practice	Relevant challenge – did not hear practice	How might we...-> zone of influence	
What we don't know	Insight from voting	How might we...?	Practice	Relevant challenge – did not hear practice	How might we...-> zone of influence	
What may be overlooked or assumed	Insight from voting	How might we...?	Practice	Heard Practice	How might we...-> zone of concern	
What may be overlooked or assumed	Insight from voting	How might we...?	Practice	Heard Practice	How might we...-> zone of concern	





<http://www.austintexas.gov/codenext>

# Questions/Comments

**CODE****NEXT**  
SHAPING THE AUSTIN WE IMAGINE