**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Francis Reilly, Planning and Development Review, (512) 947-7657

**DATE:** August 7, 2014

**RE:** South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan
Case #s: NP-2013-0030,
C14-2014-0017 (Westgate),
C14-2014-0018 (South Manchaca),
C14-2014-0019 (Garrison Park)

**Description of Backup Information**

Backup information for the South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan is attached, including:

- Draft neighborhood plan document
- Character District Map (FLUM)
- Revised infill options recommendations
- Comment forms & emails
- Deed restrictions
- Affordability Impact Statement

**Participation Summary**

The South Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan was initiated by City Council Resolution (20120628-039) in June 2012. The kickoff meeting was held in January 2013. Over the course of the year, Planning and Development Review staff conducted 12 workshops and meetings and administered 4 main surveys (available both online and in print) to engage the neighborhood. This public process culminated in a draft neighborhood plan that was presented at the Open House on December 7, 2013. Another public meeting was held in April of this year to address outstanding concerns about the infill options, further described below. Staff and Commissioner Stevens also reached out to and met with interested neighborhood associations during May.

| Meeting | DATE | WORKSHOP | PARTICIPANTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | January 12, 2013 | Kickoff Workshop | 129 |
| 2 | February 16 | Visioning Workshop | 131 |
| 3 | March 23 | Civic Center Community Design Workshop | 86 |
| 4 | April 29 | APD, Code Compliance, and | 43 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Implementation Forum | |
| 5 | May 18 | Character District Workshop | 57 |
| 6 | June 15 | Frontage Road Community Design Workshop | 55 |
| 7 | August 22 | Creativity & Collaboration Community Conversation | 48 |
| 8 | September 10 | Environment Community Conversation | 54 |
| 9 | October 3 | Transportation Community Conversation | 41 |
| 10 | October 26 | Character Districts Community Conversation | 38 |
| 11 | November 19 | Household Affordability Community Conversation | 24 |
| 12 | December 7 | Open House | 131 |
| 13 | April 3, 2014 | Infill Options Special Meeting | 200+ |

**Please see plan appendix for more details on meetings.**

| DATES | SURVEY | RESPONDENTS |
|---|---|---|
| Dec. 14, 2012 – Jan. 28, 2013 | Initial Survey | 546 |
| Apr. 29, 2013 – June 30, 2013 | Code, Crime & Implementation Survey | 198 |
| Dec. 9, 2013 – Jan. 13, 2014 | Final Survey (all plan policies + actions) | 198 |
| Nov. 25, 2013 – Jan. 13, 2014 | Final Survey (process + plan satisfaction) | 61 |
| Jan. 29, 2013 – Feb. 5, 2014 | Infill Options/Design Tools Survey | 180 |

**Other Outreach**

- Postcards
- Flyers, including door-to-door flyering for Civic Center (4/23) and Frontage Road (6/15) workshops
- Press releases and coverage in *Community Impact*, *Austin Chronicle*, KUT, YNN, *Imagine Austin* blog/City Shaping News, Time Warner Cable News
- Regular email updates to listserv (800+ people)
- Neighborhood Association meetings, including 5 regarding infill options:
  - Southwood 5/8/14
  - Southern Oaks 5/12/14
  - Cherry Creek Village 5/15/14
  - Cherry Creek Central 5/21/14
  - Woodhue/Armadillo Park 5/22/14
  - Also offered to meet with Western Trails, Cherry Creek Southwest, and Manchaca Estates
- Collaboration with Go! Austin Vamos! Austin
- Collaboration with AIA Austin for Community Design Workshops
- Partnered with Austin Cycling Association to host 2 community bike rides, including one with APD and Code
- Participated in Friends of Armadillo Park workdays

**Plan Summary**

Throughout the yearlong public engagement process, the neighborhood created a vision and goals that are aligned with *Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan*. The participatory public process provides a voice for the values of the neighborhood and applies a more local, on-the-ground understanding of an area's assets, liabilities, and opportunities to the citywide issues and values identified in *Imagine Austin*. This informs a more localized vision for the neighborhood that refines how *Imagine Austin* applies at the scale of the neighborhood.

***Vision:*** Create a complete community that is:

- mobile and interconnected;
- compact, accessible, and affordable;
- natural and sustainable;
- healthy, safe, creative, and engaged.

Each element of the vision corresponds to the four chapters in the plan. The elements of the vision and their goals are highlighted below:

***Chapter 1: Mobile and Interconnected:***

Goal 1: Encourage walking, bicycling, and transit through design and education

***Chapter 2: Compact Accessible, and Affordable:***

Goal 1: Maintain the residential character of the Residential Core, ensuring that future development or redevelopment is appropriate to the district. Create walkable, people-friendly destinations in Neighborhood Node, Mixed-Use Activity Hub/Corridor, and Activity Center districts. Expand housing options in all districts.

Goal 2: Encourage a diverse, intergenerational, family-friendly community by maintaining household affordability.

***Chapter 3: Natural and Sustainable:***

Goal 1: Improve access to and amenities in area parks.

Goal 2: Protect, enhance, and expand the neighborhood's green infrastructure.

Goal 3: Promote environmentally sustainable practices.

***Chapter 4: Healthy, Safe, Creative, and Engaged:***

Goal 1: Increase the overall health of the SACNPA.

Goal 2: Improve the community's safety and upkeep.

Goal 3: Increase creativity and collaboration in the SACNPA to promote a sense of community and a unique sense of place.

**Summary of Major Themes**

- Improve walking, biking, and access to transit
- Maintain the character of residential parts of the neighborhood
- Improve commercial areas by making them more walkable, by increasing the mix of uses, and by encouraging neighborhood-serving businesses
- Turn the area around Stassney and Manchaca into an identifiable, cohesive district
- Transform the area along Ben White into a community asset
- Preserve and improve household affordability
- Preserve the neighborhood's tree canopy
- Improve area parks and look for new opportunities for additional parks/green space
- Incorporate art into infrastructure, parks, and public buildings
- *See Top Plan Actions in Plan Appendix*

**Issues and Concerns**

**Household Affordability**

Concern: After the Saturday, Oct. 26 "Character Districts Community Conversation" meeting some participants expressed a concern about whether the neighborhood plan adequately addressed household affordability. The Oct. 26 meeting had touched on household affordability in relation to the character districts.

Action: Following this feedback, staff scheduled a special "Household Affordability Community Conversation" meeting on Nov. 19 to focus on and further explore the issue of household affordability. The meeting began with representatives from Community Advancement Network, HousingWorks, Foundation Communities, and the City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department partaking in a panel discussion. After, neighbors worked in small groups, discussing what they heard and developing actions.

Additional household affordability actions were added to the draft plan based on the results of this Nov. 19 meeting.

**Infill Options**

Concern: Following the mailing of the public notice for the Planning Commission hearing, many residents voiced concerns about the widespread application of some infill options, particularly in the Westgate and the western part of the Garrison Park planning areas.

Action: Staff held a special meeting on infill options on April 3 to provide information about the options for residents who had not participated in the planning process and to poll participants by neighborhood on the inclusion of the options. Staff also met with all interested neighborhood associations in the planning area. Staff has revised the recommendations to address concerns and to be consistent with the deed restrictions staff has been made aware of. A summary of workshop and survey results regarding these options is included in the revised Special Use Infill

Options & Design Tools Recommendations included in backup. The changes to the recommendations are shown below.

The revised infill options affect household affordability and the implementation of several *Imagine Austin* policies (these policies are further outlined in the section discussing character districts). The draft Affordability Impact Statement written by the City of Austin's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department (NHCD) states,

> "Limiting these tools minimizes the support of development and preservation of affordable housing."

and furthermore,

> "NHCD Staff recommends that all infill development tools be adopted as options in all parts of the combined neighborhood planning area in order to provide the greatest support of the *Imagine Austin* Household Affordability goals."

The reduced application of infill options has limited the implementation of *Imagine Austin*'s goals, but also contradicts the neighborhood's goals of creating and preserving household affordability.

| **Changes to the Infill Option Recommendations** (see attached staff recommendations for details) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Infill Option** | **Original Infill Recommendations March 25 (postponed)** | **Revised Infill Recommendations June 24 (postponed)** | **Revised Infill Recommendations July 22** |
| Small lot amnesty | Adopt area-wide | Adopt in South Manchaca and Garrison Park planning areas | Adopt in South Manchaca and Garrison Park planning areas. |
| Secondary apartments | Adopt area-wide | Adopt in South Manchaca and Garrison Park planning areas | Adopt in the South Manchaca planning area and a subdistrict of the Garrison Park planning area. |
| Cottage lots | Adopt area-wide | Adopt in Garrison Park planning area, in Neighborhood Transition Character District only | Adopt in Neighborhood Transition Character District only in a subdistrict of the Garrison Park planning area. |
| Urban homes | Adopt area-wide | Adopt in South Manchaca and Garrison Park planning areas, in Neighborhood Transition Character District only | Adopt in Neighborhood Transition Character District only in the South Manchaca planning area and a subdistrict of the Garrison Park planning area. |
| Corner store | Adopt on residentially-zoned properties along arterials | Adopt in South Manchaca, in subdistrict along Manchaca Rd. only | Adopt in South Manchaca, in subdistrict along Manchaca Rd. only. |

**Neighborhood Transition character district**

Primarily residential in character, the Neighborhood Transition character district serves to provide a transition from busier roadways or more intense character districts to the Residential Core. The definitions and boundaries for this (and all) character districts were defined and refined by participants through the course of the yearlong planning process.

Concern: More recently, the Neighborhood Transition's definition and boundaries have been challenged by some residents concerned that the designation will drive development. Staff strongly supports the Neighborhood Transition district boundaries as shown in the draft plan, as they align with and further define the Activity Corridors in *Imagine Austin* and work to implement *Imagine Austin* by channeling population growth to these Activity Corridors where it can support local businesses and transit investments, as well as protect the neighborhood's existing character. Staff also supports these boundaries and definitions to respect the time, hard work, and trust of the neighbors who participated in the yearlong participatory public process.

The Neighborhood Transition district, along with the Neighborhood Node district, supports *Imagine Austin*, corresponding largely to the Activity Corridors identified on the Growth Concept Map. The neighborhood planning process allowed participants' local knowledge of these areas to tailor the boundaries and descriptions of the character districts as well as the more general plan policies. As the community identified through the planning process, the Neighborhood Transition district provides an opportunity to accommodate a variety of housing types, including the cottage lot and urban home infill options. All of the character districts help implement several *Imagine Austin* policies, including:

- LUT P4: "Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change that include designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites. Recognize that different neighborhoods have different characteristics, and infill and new development should be sensitive to the predominant character of these communities" (p.118).

- LUT P7: "Encourage infill and redevelopment opportunities that place residential, work, and retail land uses in proximity to each other to maximize walking, bicycling, and transit opportunities" (p.118).

- LUT P10: "Direct housing and employment growth to activity centers and corridors, preserving and integrating existing affordable housing where possible" (p.119).

- HN P1: "Distribute a variety of housing types throughout the city to expand the choices available to meet the financial and lifestyle needs of Austin's diverse population" (p.137).

- HN P11: "Protect neighborhood character by directing growth to areas of change and ensuring context sensitive infill in such locations as designated redevelopment areas, corridors, and infill sites" (p.138).

- HN P15: "Protect neighborhood character by providing opportunities for existing residents who are struggling with rising housing costs to continue living in their existing neighborhoods" (p.138).

- S P12: "Increase the variety of housing options (such as the types of housing and number of bedrooms) to meet the needs of family and non-traditional households, including households with children" (p.172).

Without the adoption of the infill options, the neighborhood plan is severely limited in the tools available for implementing the neighborhood's vision and *Imagine Austin* policies in the Neighborhood Transition character district.

**Impervious cover and flooding**

Concern: Heightened risk of flooding due to increased impervious cover is one of the concerns with allowing the infill options. A sizeable swath of the planning area along Williamson Creek is within the creek's 25- and 100-year floodplains. Many of these homes built were either built in the floodplain or the floodplain has moved to them as the city has grown. At the January 2013 Kickoff, participants were given an opportunity to map areas of localized flooding or debris, which were mapped and many preliminarily assessed by Watershed Protection prior to the February 2014 workshop.

Action: While in some instances the infill options allow an increase impervious cover over what is allowed by base zoning, building the infill options require applicants to comply with existing stormwater management policies and procedures. To create the urban home and cottage lot infill options lots, an applicant will need to go through the subdivision process. Both site plans and subdivision plans are reviewed to determine:

1. The pattern and quantity of stormwater discharge to assure no adverse impacts.
2. The control of water quality to assure compliance with the Land Development Code.
3. Assurance that the stormwater discharge does not cause erosion downstream.
4. Determination of drainage easement requirements.
5. Modification of floodplain (FEMA and CoA fully developed 100-year).

If urban home or cottage lots are 4,000 s.f. or less, 65% maximum impervious cover is allowed. For larger lots, the percentage is the same as base zoning requirements. For more than eight urban home or cottage lots, 250 s.f. per lot of open space is required (§ 25-2-1423).

The City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department (WPD) has identified the length of Williamson Creek from approximately West Gate to Congress as a future floodplain study area. WPD has also identified a need for storm drain improvements in Cherry Creek (surrounding Blarwood and currently in progress), the Miles Ave. area, the Woodhue area, and surrounding Nancy Dr. During the planning process, participants also asked that rain gardens be incorporated into right-of-way projects and on city property.

Flooding issues must be addressed at the scale of the watershed, which is larger than the neighborhood scale.