

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)
General Public:		Outsourcing?	Tolerance of citizens for infrastructure costs
Inherent conflict between small businesses and neighborhoods (for ex: parking)	"Missing- middle" also affects businesses	Talent pool ->where are they	How long will the drought last?
Permitting is difficult for small/local businesses	Home occupancy rules provide challenges, need flexibility	Technology - video	How departmental silos will be broken down, or will they be?
Code Compliance is challenging	Perception that city has identified contractors prior to asking for proposal	How changes in the global economy will impact small businesses	What's the small business permit flow chat? "1000 yd stare"
Building ownership is a goal	In order to bid, the process is expensive and cumbersome	How is City Council going to vote	What will the impact be of the next rail place?
Availability of space -> affordability	Creative community is not represented in small businesses	How the corridor plans will be implemented	How will the global community and City Council impact our City and small businesses?
"Biz-open" is a new program for small businesses	The community values small iconic businesses	Mapping tools/resources available to build a business plan	Global warming
One size fits all doesn't work anymore	The code creates special challenges; small iconic business (lights in barbershops)	What are the work teams/interdepartmental teams producing?	Affordability
Cost for large business permitting is the same for small businesses	Small business owners can't afford permit expeditors	Tax changes will impact small businesses -> Council actions	Local control vs. state controls
"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	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

What we noticed/insights from the presentations

Without addressing obstacles to Soul-y, how will this program be successful- how do we address it?	Souly-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?	Listserve exist for small businesses to create a community of support to aid businesses
Does "one size fit all" really work regarding current code requirements?	Souly-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>	
How might we...	
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?	