



Anatomy of a Train Wreck

train wreck (noun) A disaster, especially one which is large in scale and readily seen by public observers.

The most important thing to know about CodeNEXT is that the City does not want you to know important things about CodeNEXT.

A mere six business days after releasing a new, 1,300 plus page version of its proposed land development code and a map that changed the zoning on over 25,000 properties, the City Council is holding a hearing leading to a vote this week on the new text and map. At this hearing, they will propose even more changes never seen by average citizens, who have jobs and families to attend to, and who will have had no realistic chance to know what is being proposed for home or their neighborhood.

This is an established pattern. The Council releases a new version of the text and map, and before citizens have even a fighting chance to learn how it will affect their homes, apartments, neighborhoods or shops, the Council approves the new version and then directs the Staff to make more changes which will not be revealed in time before the next vote. The City never allows citizens time to catch up, keeps them in the dark, and deprives them of any opportunity for meaningful participation along the way. And then it will be too late.

Here is what we have been able to discover in the limited time allowed:

1. Three units on a 5,000 sq. ft. lot are still permitted in single-family neighborhoods with homes at least 30 years old through the "Preservation Incentive," which still does not require the structure to be preserved as that term is generally understood. The City's definition of "preservation" permits demolition or removal of 50% of the exterior walls and structural support. For second reading, Council Member Casar is proposing reducing the age to 15 years to allow three units on more homes.
2. High-density transition zones remain throughout the City. New transition zones have been introduced in areas where they did not exist before – some only tenuously connected to a corridor. Some transition zones were removed and some were slightly reduced resulting in about a 28% reduction in transition zone acreage city-wide. But some of those transition zones were replaced with zoning that allows 3-4 units. Four units are the low end of what is allowed in a transition zone. And, the density of some other transition zones was increased.

3. Some areas vulnerable to displacement were mapped with R2B, R2C, and R3 zones. These zones have higher density available through the so-called Preservation Incentive and shorter front setbacks and higher impervious cover than what exists today. These characteristics will incentivize displacement and redevelopment. There are still transition zones in Central East Austin. The intensity of commercial uses has also been increased in the eastern crescent.
4. New: Grocery stores of up to 20,00 square feet – no parking required – will be allowed on residential lots in neighborhoods with a conditional use permit.
5. New: Businesses – now with up to 5 outside employees - are allowed on residential lots as a Live/Work use in RM1 transition zones and all multifamily (RM). Home occupations are allowed in all residential areas– but now it is being proposed to allow 2 outside employees, and 32 vehicle trips per day, a 1000% plus increase over current limits of 3.
6. New: Greater height, bulk (FAR), and impervious cover are now permitted in various zones in or near neighborhoods, with greatly reduced compatibility (500-1000% less).
7. Occupancy has been raised to 6 unrelated people per unit from existing 4 unrelated people per lot. For second reading, Council Member Harper-Madison is proposing that 6 people be allowed in each sleeping unit in co-housing.
8. Parking requirements – even for high-traffic generating commercial uses - are still significantly reduced or eliminated within ¼ mile of a corridor – including around neighborhood elementary schools. Onsite parking requirements are also reduced generally outside corridor areas.

Want to take action? Here's what we recommend:

Make Sure You've Filed an Official Rezoning Protest

If you own property in Austin, go to [FileYourProtest.com](https://www.austintexas.gov/department/file-your-rezoning-protest) and file an official rezoning protest. The process is easy, safe, and takes just 30 seconds. Once you've filed a protest, our legal team believes the City of Austin will be unable to legally rezone your property without support from three-fourths of the city council (9 of 11 votes).

Attend and Speak at One of This Week's City Council Meetings

The Austin City Council is meeting on [February 11](#), [12](#), and [13](#) to discuss the latest draft of the rezoning plan. Please consider attending—and demand that the city council postpone its Thursday vote until the community has a chance to be heard! Residents who wish to speak may use the electronic kiosks in City Hall to sign up, and they must do so before the meeting they are attending begins. Click on the above links to learn more.

Contact Mayor Steve Adler and Your City Council Member

No truly democratic city government would give local residents just six business days to review and comment on 40,000 proposed zoning changes. Let's make sure our mayor and city council

hear it! Call and email them using the contact information at the end of [this blog post](#), and demand that they postpone their Thursday vote. [Check this map if you aren't sure which council member represents you.](#)