

CodeNEXT: Win-Win or Land Grab?

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The CodeNEXT text came out in January and map in April.

Austin has now had over six months to digest and debate both, and the only thing everybody seems to agree upon is that neither the text or map is anywhere near ready for prime-time.

However, staff and consultants have said they are listening.

Revised versions of both are to be released in mid-September.

We will see then how well is their hearing!

Are We Creating A More Livable, Affordable and Compatible Austin?

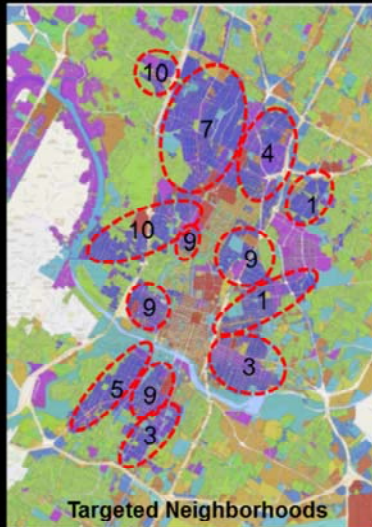


The most controversial aspect of CodeNEXT is its mission to densify most single family neighborhoods within the urban core.

With neighborhood densification, comes many changes. Home prices, rents and taxes increase and the less affluent are forced to move. Parked cars crowd streets and bigger buildings displace yards and trees. Neighborhood character changes!

Local examples are West Campus where densification increased land values, rents and taxes, causing many less affluent students to relocate; and East Austin where densification is rapidly displacing low-income families.

Or Just a More Profitable Austin for Builders and Developers?



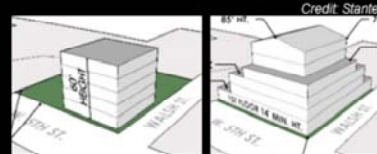
Credit: Chris Allen

Residential

T4N. Shallow Setback
One > Six Units
600% Density Increase

Nonresidential

T5 Main Street
21,500 sf > 55,325 sf
275% FAR Increase



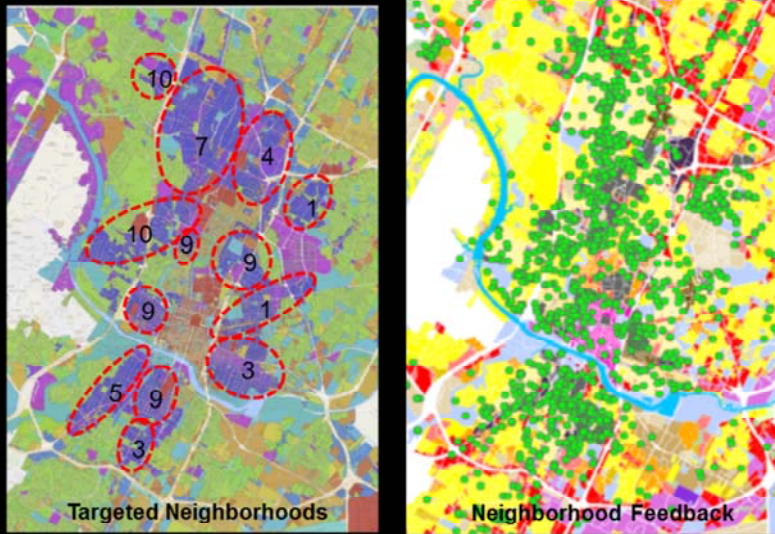
Credit: Startec

The blue areas are urban core neighborhoods targeted by CodeNEXT for a significant increase in densification.

As shown in this Rosedale example, CodeNEXT would allow six dwelling units to replace one single family home.

Here is a nonresidential example on West 5th that shows CodeNEXT would allow almost three times the floor area.

Or Just a More Profitable Austin for Builders and Developers?



As indicated by the green dots on this citizen feedback map, negative public concern and response has closely coincided with CodeNEXT densification recommendations.

And the CodeNEXT Debate Goes On!



"What's striking about the current CodeNEXT debate is its unusual local polarization – between those who believe the code can be remade to solve all Austin's problems, and those who believe it can only make them worse – with as yet no clear path to a public consensus for some middle ground." Michael King, Austin Chronicle

While over 400 Brentwood and Crestview residents were protesting CodeNEXT last month in north central Austin, 20 persons were promoting it at an Evolve Austin Partners press conference in south Austin.

However, to be totally fair and accurate, it probably should be noted that five of the Evolve Austin attendees were Press and seven were hired door-to-door canvassers.

So you might say that "on that particular day at least, the CodeNEXT nays significantly outnumbered the yays!"

Who Are Evolve Austin Partners?

Austin Community Design and Development Center (ACDDC) *Austin UP*
Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA) *Bike Austin*
Homebuilders Association of Greater Austin (HBA) *College Houses*
Austin Cooperative Business Association (ACBA) *Skillpoint Alliance*
Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (ACC) *Urban Patchwork*
Alliance for Public Transportation (APT) *Reconnect Austin*
Friends of Austin Neighborhoods (FAN) *Environment Texas*
Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU) *Desegregate Austin*
Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA) *One Voice Central Texas*
Austin Apartment Association (AAA) *Habitat for Humanity (HH)*
Austin Technology Council (ATC) *Austin Tech Alliance (ATS)*
Austin Board of Realtors (ABOR) *Austin Music People (AMP)*
Austin Downtown Alliance (ADA) *Austin Justice Coalition (AJC)*
Austin Housing Coalition (AHC) *Ecology Action of Texas (EAT)*

So, just who is this Evolve Austin Partners outfit? ...

According to its website, it is an organization dedicated to “leveraging decades of combined experience in” and “established relationships with” City Hall towards influencing the type, amount and location of growth within Austin.

In essence, it is Austin's most prominent growth lobbyist!

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And that is not surprising since four of its key members also represent the pro-growth real estate and development industry:

- the Homebuilders Association of Austin
- the Austin Chamber of Commerce
- the Real Estate Council of Austin
- the Austin Board of Realtors



As in many places, a significant measure of your political clout in Austin is who your partners are and how many you have ...

Maybe ANC Needs More Partners!

Supporters for Prevention of Increased Taxes (SPIT)

Progressive Austinites for Pervious Area (PAPA)

Advisory Council for Irritated Drivers (ACID)

Group Outing Growth Oligarchies (GOGO)

Society of Pissed-Off Taxpayers (SPOT)

Partners for Equity and Equality (PEE)

Friends Against Rising Taxes (FART)



Residents Exposing Cronyism in Austin (RECA)

Citizens Against Variances and Exceptions (CAVE)

Austinites for Rational and Intelligent Density (ARID)

Citizens Alliance for Sustainable Environment (CASE)

Political Action Committee for the Environment (PACE)

Members of the Peoples Automobile Coalition (MOPAC)

Austinites for Affordable and Reasonable Growth (AARG)



So in order to level the “political playing field,” I would suggest that ANC might want to embrace the following new partners:

- *Supporters for Prevention of Increased Taxes (SPIT)*
- *Progressive Austinites for Pervious Area (PAPA)*
- *Advisory Council for Irritated Drivers (ACID)*
- *Group Outing Growth Oligarchies (GOGO)*
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Thank You!