

## A MESSAGE TO AUSTIN'S PLANNERS: THIS IS NOT PLANNING

The current scheme of rezoning vast swaths of the city is not planning.

It is simply a way to put decisions about growth into the hands of speculators, taking these decisions away from both the city and citizens! This provides speculators with many areas where if they can find a house to demolish, they can build something much bigger on the block and move on to find another such opportunity.

Think back to the McMansion issue. For decades the city's SF zoning had allowed 35' of height (average of ridge and eave) and unlimited bulk, but folks never really built to this limit, preferring one to two stories and leaving some green space. When speculators started maxing out these entitlements in the early 2000s, it was shocking to homeowners to see such huge buildings in single-family zoning. Thus the City set an interim control and crafted new regulations to control bulk and form. Note that those buildings already in place will be there for many decades to come!

The now revived CodeNext (I call it CodeWorse) program will result in a similar scenario where vast areas of upzoning will provide many options for speculators to seek out spots where they can maximize and move on to another area where they can do the same. This will result in blocks similar to the Hyde Park blocks that still today are pockmarked by city spot-zoned apartments from the 1960-70s. West of Speedway there is about one apartment building per block. These resulted in heat islands that are only livable because their residents view historic buildings and heritage trees and walk along shady sidewalks cared for by adjacent homeowners. (The homeowners look at the heat islands and always will!) Is this the city we really want? These heat islands will be around forever, so this is not something you just correct after you see it happening! It is so clear this will occur that Austin would be quite stupid to perpetuate this on its citizens!

Planning is what you do if you want to direct growth to certain areas where it is appropriate and at the will of both the city and citizens who have investments in maintaining appropriately compatible land uses in their area.

So why is Austin perpetuating a scheme that will result in spot-zoning, damaging many blocks around the city instead of doing the work of directed growth? Directed growth is what we all endured in the neighborhood planning process. Apparently, that's not good enough for this City Council that now wants to accommodate speculators with more extensive areas available for choosing properties to redevelop.

Also, most capacity lies in the vast stretches of mixed use overlay the city applied to almost all commercial zoning in neighborhood plans and lies also in the potential to redevelop one- and two-story multi-family properties – not in multiplying units in single-family zones to the detriment of neighborhoods.

While most of the City Council seems lost and sold to this direction, how can Austin's professional planners and consultants be complicit in supporting such an ill-advised scheme?

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