

1. CORRIDOR TRANSITION ZONES, COMPATIBILITY & MISSING MIDDLE

Page 31 of Imagine Austin acknowledges the need for dense redevelopment of centers and along major corridors, and explains that “harmonious transitions between adjacent neighborhoods is an important component of the development process”. The Mayor indicated in spring of 2017 that “transition zones” would amount to 3 to 5% of the city. Early CodeNEXT working documents, including Draft 1, included the concept of a form-based transect to achieve this goal.

A quick glance at any corridor in the Draft 3 map will reveal these transition zones are totally absent, opting instead to map low-density single-family zones directly behind a high-intensity mixed-use corridor. This carries forward the incompatible scales and intensities we find in today's code, and uses the blunt tool of compatibility triggered from residential zones to try to ensure some type of protection. These compatibility standards hinder development, sometimes creating unbuildable shallow sites, in the place where our policies have said we need it most.

AIA Austin believes this is an issue that can be solved through thoughtful mapping of the palette of available zones, but recommendations have been included to improve compatibility standards for the few areas that may need it.

	AIA RECOMMENDATION	PC AMENDMENTS
1.1	Revise zoning map to include approx. 1/4-mile transition zones between corridors and single-family interior neighborhoods, mostly eliminating the need for compatibility.	<p>Map corridor transition zones per approved matrix. Mapping is dependant on "corridor type", distance from corridor, and whether the census tract is identified as gentrifying.</p> <p>Map all commercial lots on IA corridors as MS2B (lots < 140ft deep), and MS3B (lots 140 - 220ft deep).</p>
1.2	Eliminate compatibility on shallow corridor properties.	<p>Map areas adjacent to IA corridors, core and future core transit corridors such that compatibility is not triggered on at least 90% of the properties along the corridors.</p> <p>Exempt TODs from compatibility either by mapping or text (staff to review policy).</p>
1.3	<p>Recalibrate compatibility stepbacks and setbacks to coordinate with other regulations and standard construction practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase stepback height tiers to industry standard floor heights - Coordinate triggering distances for setbacks and stepbacks - Coordinate landscape buffer species w/ Austin Energy compliant trees 	<p>Compatibility stepbacks and setbacks begin at the triggering property's lot line.</p> <p>More restrictive compatibility stepbacks than draft 3 proposal.</p> <p>25-50ft: 35ft height 50-100ft: 45ft height 100-150ft: 65ft height 150-225ft: 75ft height 225ft-300ft: 90ft height</p>

2. AFFORDABLE HOUSING BONUS PROGRAM (AHBP MAPPING)

Section 23-3E-1010 of the current draft describes a "Citywide Affordable Housing Bonus" [AHBP] which is intended to "implement the goals and policies of the Austin Comprehensive Plan and the Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint". The adopted Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint calls for 60,000 new housing units affordable to 80% MFI or less, much of which will come from expanded density bonus programs. The Housing Blueprint calls for at least 75% of the 135,000 total new housing units to be within a half-mile of Imagine Austin Centers and Corridors.

The need for affordable housing is truly citywide, but the proposed AHBP is nowhere close to being implemented citywide. Current maps exclude transit-rich corridors mapped with MS1 and MS2 zones (S.1st, South Congress, East 6th St., etc.). The maps also exclude high-opportunity central neighborhoods zoned R2 and R3.

An expansion of the AHBP is needed to fulfil the mandate of the Housing Blueprint and move towards a more progressive strategy of allowing affordable housing throughout the urban core, and especially in high-opportunity areas near jobs, education, and public transit.

	AIA RECOMMENDATION	PC AMENDMENTS
2.1	Expand AHBP bonus entitlements and mapping of zones to include incentives for every parcel within the Urban Core.	<p>Fourplex allowed if affordable ADU is built in R1-R4 zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ADU exempt from unit count and FAR (5 total units) - FAR increased to 0.8 <p>ADU bonus within 1/4 mile of IA corridor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Similar to above except additional ADU allowed (6 total units) - Reduced front setbacks - Increased height (no more than 3 stories) <p>NHCD review after 18 months to calibrate zones to reach goals.</p> <p>Significant bonus heights allowed in MU2+ and MS2+.</p> <p>Staff review to ensure new increases in by right density does not have a negative impact on AHBP affordable unit production.</p> <p>Recalibrate Downtown Density Bonus Program to maximize yield of affordable housing units.</p>

3. DETENTION REGULATIONS AS A BARRIER TO REDEVELOPMENT

City staff has consistently reduced the scope of this code rewrite to exclude any "policy changes", but certain far-reaching regulations seem to be invincible to this interpretation. One of the most concerning is a change in the detention regulations that could have a chilling effect on the redevelopment of aging, underutilized, high-impervious-cover uses.

The current code provides exemptions from stormwater detention for any existing impervious cover on a property. This allows new projects to revitalize corridors without the burden of providing large on-site detention ponds and, in some cases, actually reduce impervious cover compared to previous conditions. Redevelopment barriers are especially high on smaller, Missing Middle projects which require careful planning of compact urban sites, and typically don't have the luxury of dedicating large areas to detention.

	AIA RECOMMENDATION	PC AMENDMENTS
3.1	Eliminate new detention requirements and revert back to current regulations.	NONE
3.2	Provide incentives to redevelopment projects that reduce impervious cover compared to existing conditions.	NONE
3.3	Staff to initiate separate comprehensive watershed studies and provide context-sensitive runoff and detention regulations.	NONE

4. DOWNTOWN DENSITY REDUCTIONS

Imagine Austin clearly states that downtown should be the place with the highest density of people and jobs and have the tallest buildings. Over the last twenty years, downtown has taken great strides towards becoming this vibrant, cultural center, thanks in part to a relaxed set of zoning regulations and density bonus program that has leveraged private investment for community benefits.

However, the Draft 3 mapping and rezoning of downtown effectively reduces allowable density overall. It does not provide any additional height or FAR which would allow it to achieve the regional center goals in Imagine Austin. In all properties zoned CC, development entitlements have been reduced below what is allowed in current code. Many downtown sites are already limited by Capitol View Corridors and other overlays. Therefore, the base zoning should allow for zero lot line development. This is especially critical for the developable sites remaining in downtown, most of which are small sites (<1/2 block). It is difficult or sometime impossible for them to comply with all the new ground floor regulations in addition to the new open space, front yard planting landscaping, curb cut and driveway width requirements which are required for both CC and DC zoning.

	AIA RECOMMENDATION	PC AMENDMENTS
4.1	Remap properties from CC120 to DC, especially along the Waller Creek corridor, and north and east of the Capitol.	NONE?
4.2	Restore 100% I.C. and no setbacks for CC zones.	Remove setback requirements in CC zones.
4.3	Increase CC sub-zone building heights.	Increase CC sub-zone building heights: - CC40 > CC50 - CC60 > CC75 - CC80 > CC90
4.4	Reduce "active use frontage" requirements downtown, especially for small mid-block sites.	- Exception for <1/2 block sites - Remove req's in DC to allow district planning process - Allow ground floor office and residential lobbies to satisfy req's

5. BUILDING DESIGN STANDARDS

Charrette teams identified numerous issues with the regulations related to building design, ranging from how overall height is measured to where ADU's are allowed. The full list of recommendations expands on each item, but the list below represents the most critical items.

	AIA RECOMMENDATION	PC AMENDMENTS
5.1	Eliminate building articulation for commercial and multifamily projects.	Eliminate articulation from all R-zones.
		Eliminate articulation from MS1A, MS1B, MU1A, MU1B.
5.2	Establish consistent "overall building height" definition instead of measuring to top plate.	Max. height of 35ft from top of slab to top of roof. Slab height limited to max. 5ft above finished grade and max. 1ft above highest finished grade.
5.3	Remove ADU size tiers and restore current 1,100sf (0.15 FAR) allowance.	NONE
5.4	Increase I.C. for ADU's taking the preservation incentive.	NONE