AIA Austin Commercial Advocacy Roundtable
February 24, 2014

Agenda & Minutes

In December, AIA Austin and a Codenext task force communicated materials to the City of Austin and the Codenext team as a start to establishing a position on the Land Development Code rewrite. A compilation of that information can be found at the following link:

https://www.aiaaustin.org/content/codenext-task-force.

In an effort to effectively advocate for AIA members, the commercial round table is hosting a series of round table discussions this year to help determine how AIA Austin can best advocate. The purpose of the round table is to offer a venue for AIA members to express what they feel is important to them and to communicate that information to the Advocacy Commission for action.

1. Introduction (5 mins); Jeff Needles

2. Community Character in a Box – and - Compatibility: a brief background (10 mins); George Zapalac

   - Introduced CodeNext's Community Character in a Box and encouraged AIA Austin and its membership to participate by joining or forming groups in their neighborhoods

   - The next phase of CodeNext is the diagnosis phase to be done by the consultant team, one year from now public forums will be held on "hot topics" such as compatibility standards

   - Gave a very brief history of Compatibility as it pertains to the LDC. Compatibility Standards were first formed in 1984 to address how single family zoning meets commercial and multi-family uses, this portion of the code has not changed much since then.

   - Currently, compatibility standards use height, massing, screening and other rules to mitigate compatibility, it has been generally embraced by the neighborhood organizations.

   - Only about 30+ of 103 identified neighborhoods have adopted an official Neighborhood Plan

3. Imagine Austin on Compatibility (5 mins); Jana McCann

   - Imagine Austin is not specific about compatibility standards, but does speak to Austin being more connected and compact.

   - How we can look to other cities for good examples of compatibility?

   - Currently, SF to Commercial uses are divided solely by a line of zoning and use, is there a better way?

   - Design can have a strong role in compatibility

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4. Discussion on Compatibility; Jeff Needles

    a. City-wide "blanket" compatibility requirements (10 mins)

- Instead of zoning being a citywide 'blanket' it can be tailored to an area, however another participant was concerned about even more 'overlay complexity' for professionals, staff and laypeople if the plans become 'too tailored'.

- Too many area specific rules could create projects that are even more challenging to understand, design, review or enforce.

- Perhaps simpler citywide rules but with some localized specificity is a better balance than all or none approach.

    b. Transitional areas of zoning (10 mins)

- 'Transition" is a key word in describing Austin, current codes don't address what city is becoming, the code is not dynamic enough, how can CodeNext be more nimble to address all of the new situations that arise in a complex city's growth?

- Member stated that in her experience SF neighbors were more accepting of structured parking garage next door rather than an apartment building because of the fear of apartment dweller noise, parties and loss of privacy looking into SF lots

- Concern of SF owners losing property rights, privacy and value to 'buffer zones' and commercial uses if rules change, encouraged SF stakeholder involvement and asked how better design can be a tool to help

- Currently dramatic differences in land <u>use</u> is the problem, if transitional zones can be scaled and massed properly then they can allow and provide more appropriate mixed uses instead of just SF against CS uses. i.e. small MF, home office, small services, low visit commercial, more affordable housing etc.

- Develop design-oriented rules for transition zones between SF and other uses.

- Should old styles determine how all new homes should look in an area?

    c. Role of NH plans in achieving Compatibility (10 mins)

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- Recognize that different citizens in different neighborhoods have different ideas and aspirations on what their neighborhood should be, some want more neighborhood commercial/mixed-use integration, others do not. Need to engage each area and situation to fact find.

- Should only the people who currently live in an area be the only ones who determine the future of a neighborhood and the City? How can the code allow for good decisions for future residents who aren't there yet, and for the Austin overall? How can this encourage diversity of residents and income levels in each area?

- Should rules lock in neighborhoods as a snapshot of how they currently look and work or should they respond to what they can be as Austin evolves?

- Look to other examples of neighborhood plans that have been successful:
  - o UNO, possible loss of old SF neighborhood character but put students close to campus, reducing travel and traffic, more sustainable, example of transitioning area with pros and cons
  - o Mueller, success story with it's own development rules, highly desired area that did not conform to LDC compatibility rules, shows how alternate design/development rules are creating a successful neighborhood with housing and use diversity
  - o Airport Blvd Plan, stakeholder input (staff working with neighborhood residents and commercial property owners) making for a positive process, creating unique rules with transitional zones and not using LDC compatibility rules

- AIA can help show good projects to neighborhood groups, good design as positive and desired solutions instead of what people fear most, bad projects that do not add to quality of life or neighborhood character

  d. Other questions

- Can GIS be better utilized to provide more information and be a more powerful tool to giving clarity to the development process, relying less on staff and non-graphic code that is at times easy to misunderstand, conflicting or unclear?

- How will 10-1 council in 2015 affect the CodeNext process?

5. What about reaching out to other organizations? (5 mins)

- CNU? ASLA?

We will post the results of this meeting in the form of a blog on AIA Austin's CodeNEXT page of our website. The next Urban Design Committee meeting is this Wednesday, Feb 26th at noon, here at the Center, and we will keep you posted for the next Commercial Advocacy Roundtable. Thank you for your participation!