

September 30, 2014

The Honorable Lee Leffingwell, Mayor
Honorable City Council Members
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

Ref: CodeNEXT Code Approach Alternatives & Annotated Outlines

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

When Imagine Austin was adopted in 2012, our community codified the aspiration for all City codes, plans, and ordinances to begin to orient over time toward Austin's collective vision. In this roadmap we committed to setting priorities, thinking holistically, expanding the growth-shaping toolkit, measuring progress, and adapting to our rapidly-developing landscape.

Unpredictable code interpretations, rising costs, and disconnected and overwhelmed infrastructure introduce risk and inefficiency to the development process, inflicting detrimental pressures on our businesses and neighborhoods. Our adopted plan points us toward a healthier future, if we can successfully implement it. Thoughtful urban design can harness—and even capitalize on—the inevitable growth and change of the coming decades in ways that improve quality of life while preserving our neighborhoods' character.

In the absence of a strong central vision, the fight to protect and improve Austin's quality of life has previously focused on implementation of piecemeal development tools. The Code Approaches laid out by the CodeNEXT team provide a general framework for orienting our existing ordinances toward our adopted plan. The recommended "Deep Clean" hybrid path balances reorganization and alignment of existing content with a more robust performance-based toolkit that more fully realizes the intent behind Austin's most embattled and influential ordinances.

AIA Austin strongly recommends that this City Council authorize the CodeNEXT team to continue the "Deep Clean" trajectory. Our community must continue working toward infusing our adopted priorities into all layers of the code and regulatory framework. We cannot ignore the urgency of growth that, in the absence of a healthy regulatory system, threatens to apply destabilizing pressures on our community. This is a historic opportunity for the City's leaders and staff, together with community stakeholders, to strike an utterly crucial balance with a development code that can help avoid unhappy surprises, reduce delays, and promote efficiency—all while preserving the character and appeal that has made Austin such a great destination and place to live. We stand ready to continue our participation in this process and welcome any questions or comments.

Sincerely



Philip Keil
2014 President