



Planning Our Communities Land Development Code Statement

Planning Our Communities (POC) is a group of people of color who are affordable housing, economic opportunity and transit advocates, community organizers, and social justice activists in Austin. Our mission is to promote equitable access to healthy and affordable homes and neighborhoods for communities of color and working-class people in Austin through outreach, education and advocacy.

Planning Our Communities (POC) envisions a land development code that advances the interests of communities of color and working-class people. We have an affordable housing crisis that we need to solve equitably, and that requires a commitment to considering how every policy and every process affects economically disadvantaged and historically marginalized residents living here today and in the future. We understand that additional policies and investment will be required to provide deeper affordable housing and other services but see the Land Development Code revision as a key opportunity to create a more equitable Austin. To achieve this goal, we recommend the following.

Maximize Affordable Housing

The Land Development Code must increase opportunities for creating affordable income-restricted housing throughout the city, specifically in high opportunity areas. The bonus incentives on the transit priority network and in Imagine Austin Centers must be strengthened and expanded to ensure that the greatest number of income-restricted units are produced to serve working class Austinites. Tenants in these affordable units must have increased rights and protections. We support expanded density bonus programs, except where they would displace existing communities of color and working-class people. Furthermore, the code must support the needs of Austinites experiencing homelessness by making it easier to create supportive and transitional housing.

Minimize Gentrification and Displacement

Austin's housing crisis is causing the destruction of historic communities of color and forcing the displacement of working-class people. We must be proactive and intentional in fighting gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods identified as vulnerable in the "Uprooted: Residential Displacement in Austin's Gentrifying Neighborhoods and What Can Be Done About It" report. If any Transition areas are to be mapped at all in vulnerable areas with the aim of increasing income-restricted housing, they should have the minimum possible depth and should be located where they will not intensify ongoing patterns of displacement. Furthermore, we must protect renters by disincentivizing the



redevelopment of existing multi-family housing, reconsider the unintended consequence of development incentives, and stop the pattern of making areas most susceptible to gentrification the main targets of new development. This could be achieved through eliminating bonus entitlements on existing naturally occurring affordable multi-family housing and zoning them for their current use, so they are less susceptible to redevelopment. Corridors in gentrifying areas that have only recently seen infrastructure investment after years of neglect should not have to bear the undue burden of increased density as opposed to areas that have historically excluded increased housing capacity. Austinites of color and working class Austinites who have fought for increased investment in their communities must not be penalized for getting better infrastructure and services. Additionally, we support helping low-income homeowners stay in place by providing them with flexible housing options within the code.

Equitable Distribution of Development

Considering the history of racial segregation, disinvestment and injustice in Austin, the Land Development Code should make it easier to add housing in historically exclusive and expensive neighborhoods. In our attempt to rectify historic injustices, we must remember that equal zoning allowances do not lead to equitable outcomes. The Land Development Code must increase housing capacity in high opportunity areas and West Austin. We must push for fairer housing and provide more housing choices for those with low-economic power so we can diversify and desegregate exclusive parts of Austin. The majority of Austinites of color live in non-single family housing. If we want to desegregate Austin, we must expand housing choice by allowing multi-family and missing middle housing types across the city, specifically by identifying corridors for increasing capacity in high opportunity areas. Neighborhood Conservation Combining Districts (NCCDs) must be eliminated to expand the creation of income-restricted housing in these neighborhoods, overcome patterns of past injustice and segregation, and provide all communities with equitable opportunities for shaping their neighborhoods. Where possible, properties zoned F25 must be transitioned to match the new code as quickly as possible to ensure that all parts of the city are equitably mapped. We support implementing an “Equity Overlay” that identifies vulnerable areas requiring special attention to mitigate displacement, disincentivizes the redevelopment of existing multi-family housing and increases opportunities for income-restricted affordable housing. In addition, we support the creation of Corridors of Equitable Opportunity to serve communities of color and working-class communities in Austin.



Healthy and Connected Communities

Communities of color and working-class communities deserve a healthy built environment where they have access to healthy foods, transit, and complete communities. Unfortunately, Austin's history of disinvestment and inequity has left many communities of color behind. The Land Development Code should support accessible childcare, eldercare facilities, intergenerational housing, grocery stores, and minority owned businesses in these communities. This will require increasing public investment in communities of color and working-class communities in East Austin. Furthermore, as we address historical injustice through intentional investments and planning in areas such as parks and transit, it should not lead to the displacement of the very people we are aiming to serve.