

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 1/25/2017**

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## **Community Priorities for CodeNEXT: Environment, Equity, & Neighborhoods**

*Our Message to the Incoming City Council as the Public Prepares for Draft Code*

**Austin, Tex. – January 25, 2017** – Today, a diverse coalition of environmental, neighborhood, and local community leaders announced a joint effort to approach the City of Austin’s planned public release of the land development code rewrite known as “CodeNEXT,” with a set of shared benchmarks for success.

Austin’s land development code regulates the city’s built environment to provide homes, businesses, and industrial sites that are safe, respectful of neighbors, and consistent with community values. In so doing, the land development code has the capacity to preserve trees, parks, and creeks, require management and reuse of stormwater, and encourage green infrastructure to bring nature into the city. Historically, Austin’s land development code has also been used as a tool of racial segregation, and as relentless growth continues, some communities are bearing the brunt of rapid new development and redevelopment. Long-time residents, many of them people of color, are being displaced from their neighborhoods to the city’s outskirts. Many residents face the dangers and economic hardship of flooding caused by upstream development. And too many neighborhoods still lack nearby necessities, such as parks, healthy food, and safe walkable environments.

Through the CodeNEXT process, Austin has an opportunity to achieve a simpler set of land development regulations, one that could be applied consistently without the exceptions of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) and special ordinances. These new and simpler regulations must, however, reflect the community’s need to protect neighborhoods, support healthy communities and good jobs, preserve the natural environment, and ensure equitable development around the city. These are the values of the newly established and growing coalition, who say these benchmarks are a way to identify, measure, and ensure the success of CodeNEXT.

Lauren Ice, an attorney with Save Our Springs Alliance, and a member of the CodeNEXT Advisory Group or “CAG” described CodeNEXT as a massive and important task. “CodeNEXT will affect every single person in Austin in some way. We formed this coalition to provide a tool for folks to

learn, engage, and provide input on certain issues that we all care deeply about—our environment, neighborhoods, and equity.”

According to its director, David Foster, Clean Water Action is participating in part, to help ensure the city becomes more resilient in the face of climate change. “We are encouraged by what the city has proposed to reduce flooding and protect our waterways and aquifers from runoff pollution. We’re also excited about the potential increase in green infrastructure. We plan to follow through and make sure these goals are realized and that we’re also protecting and expanding our tree canopy and green spaces throughout the city.”

Carmen Llanes Pulido, the Community Director at GO! Austin/VAMOS! Austin (GAVA), which is itself a coalition working to improve the health of Southeast Austin residents, emphasizes the importance that equity and fair access play in the decisions we make about our land development. “All neighborhoods deserve access to healthy food, green space, safe and active transportation options, protection from flooding, and other important environmental protections. As we work to ensure complete communities, we must also guarantee that these policies do not displace people.” David King, active with Austin neighborhoods, echoes that sentiment: “CodeNEXT must respect neighborhood self-determination. Local neighborhoods should play an important role in determining whether future code language and zoning maps will meet the needs of existing residents.”

The coalition invites other groups and individuals to join them and help ensure CodeNEXT meets these benchmarks. Ice says the groups are committed to sharing information and expertise as they work to understand the likely impacts from the proposed changes. “We want to be a resource for the community to learn about how CodeNEXT will impact our environment and neighborhoods, but we also want to listen to what our local communities, especially underrepresented communities, need so that we can provide powerful and focused feedback to the CodeNEXT team. Without greater public involvement, we leave these decisions up to others to determine what’s best for Austin.”

Contact Lauren Ice at [lauren@sosalliance.org](mailto:lauren@sosalliance.org) or 512-477-2320 with questions or to reach any of the coalition members. Attached are the coalition’s shared benchmarks and a list of all participating organizations and individuals to date.

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