



Friday, April 14, 2017 by [Joseph Caterine](#)

PLANNING

In lieu of Imagine Austin update, Planning Commission recommends mixed-use project

The city's comprehensive plan is starting to show its age. On Tuesday, the Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve a mixed-use zoning request, against staff's recommendation, for three commercially zoned properties on the border of one of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan's "Job Center" nodes in Montopolis.

Applicant John Stratton is requesting that 2507, 2509 and 2511 Montopolis Drive be rezoned to accommodate a multifamily residential development of around 200 units. Maureen Meredith, who is a senior planner in the Planning and Development Review Department, explained that staff's recommendation to deny the request was based on the guideline that there should be a commercial buffer between residential and industrial zoning districts. To the south of the parcels lies the Austin Energy System Control Center, a semiconductor chip lab and a Praxair Distribution, Inc. facility.

Praxair produces industrial gases and has above-ground storage tanks on-site down the street from the properties in question. The Austin Fire Department has recommended a 1,000-foot buffer between the tanks and any residential units.

Leah Bojo, the agent representing the applicant, said that they were happy to comply with the safety requirement and assured the commission that the neighborhood wanted residential in this area, despite Imagine Austin's intention of making it a job center for businesses not suited for residential or environmentally sensitive areas.

"The neighborhood contact team voted unanimously to support both the rezoning and the (Future Land Use Map) amendment," Bojo said. "They also specifically requested that the parkland

dedication money for the residential project go towards fixing up existing parks in the area rather than an on-site dedication.”

Among the commissioners, the case became a question of which direction, in terms of land use, the area was going, and if it was too late to turn back. The parcels north of the applicant's are zoned mixed use, and a SMART Housing project is in development to the east. Senior planner Andrew Moore clarified that staff approved that project in 2011 before Imagine Austin was adopted, and that if the application was put in front of them today it would be denied.