



South River City Citizens
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srccatx.org

Noah Balch, President
Ken Burnett, Co-Vice President
Will Andrews, Treasurer
Chris Phillips-Frushman, Secretary
Mary Janecek-Friedman, Membership

December 5, 2023

Re: HOME Initiative

Dear Mayor Watson and City Council Members:

The South River City Citizens (SRCC) Neighborhood Association has analyzed Council's HOME initiative and the effect it would have on our neighborhood. We strongly support Council's goal to increase affordable housing. However, we do not believe this initiative as currently drafted achieves that outcome. This initiative would detrimentally affect our established and cherished neighborhood and increase taxes on middle-income residents who may be forced to sell their properties and leave our community.

To protect the integrity and beauty of our neighborhoods, we propose incorporating the following changes into the HOME initiative:

- Include preservation protections for 50-year old homes and protections for existing homes under the sustainability bonus proposal;
- Include enforceable protections of heritage and other established trees to retain and increase the tree canopy consistent with the city's Climate Equity Plan;
- Obtain feedback from city departments about impact on infrastructure and flood risk in SF-1/SF-2/SF-3 neighborhoods to draft rules that avoid overtaxing infrastructure and increasing flood risk;
- Limit impervious cover to prevent flooding;
- Regulate short-term rentals to prevent degradation of single-family zoned neighborhoods;
- Promulgate regulations that encourage well-governed co-op housing for units in which more than six unrelated adults reside; and
- Protect designated Historic Districts and National Register of Historic Places.

In addition, we request that Council take more time to study the HOME initiative's potentially significant impacts on our community, and then present a more cohesive, comprehensive proposal to the public. We agree with comments presented by the Austin Neighborhoods Council on November 14, 2023. The HOME initiative relates to very "important social justice and public safety issues for our community," yet there have been very limited opportunities for the public and neighborhood organizations to provide input.

We believe that rushing this phased initiative to a vote is a rash action that could have strong repercussions on our community. We believe continued open discussions are needed to accomplish the city's desired goals. For that reason, we urge Council to re-open the process so that community members may effectively present practical suggestions that address affordability, such as:

- Conditions or restrictions on pricing of "affordable" units built on previously zoned single-family lots to allow persons earning 50-60% MFI (such as school teachers and many professionals) to qualify for such units;
- Include pricing restrictions on the resale of affordable units for a certain period of time, e.g., 10-20 years, to maintain affordability; and
- Provide property tax protections for current residents to avoid overtaxing them and forcing them to relocate.

If Council incorporates these suggestions into the HOME initiative, we believe many neighborhood associations and Austin residents would benefit and in turn would support Council's initiative. Please let us know if you would like to discuss our suggestions further by emailing: president@srccatx.org.

Sincerely,

Noah Balch

Noah Balch, SRCC President

SRCC adopted this stated position by vote of its
Executive Committee on December 5, 2023