

April 7, 2026

Mayor Kirk Watson, Council Members, City Manager Broadnax
P. O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

RE: NPA-2026-0022.01.SH and C14-2026-0010.SH located at 206 E. Annie Street

Dear Mayor Watson and Council Members,

The City of Austin spent many taxpayer dollars to produce the Greater South River City Combined (GSRCC) Neighborhood Plan in 2005, a plan that exists in ordinance today. The Austin City Council voted to adopt Ordinance 20050929-Z001 as an amendment to Chapter 5 -22 of the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan. The ordinance is signed by Mayor Will Wynn and City Attorney David Smith reflecting the work of 27 city staff who worked on the plan.

Part 2 ADOPTION AND DIRECTION of the plan subsection (B) states that “the City Manager shall prepare zoning cases consistent with the land use recommendations in the Plan”.

The proposal to amend the Future Land Use Map from CIVIC to MF-4 is not consistent with the Neighborhood Plan as listed in the above referenced section of the Ordinance. And for the reasons also listed below in this letter, the GSRCC Contact Team DOES NOT support this proposal to amend the FLUM from CIVIC to MF-4.

Residents of Travis Heights and Sherwood Oaks spent 16 months in twice monthly meetings with City of Austin planners from 2003-05. The South River City Citizens used membership dues to mail surveys and newsletters to 6,000 households to gather feedback for the creation of the Neighborhood Plan. City staff held neighborhood and preserve walks to see neighborhood concerns, look for opportunities and talk to residents who came outside to engage.

The number one Planning Priority recommendation from this use of taxpayer funds and residents’ efforts was that “New construction and remodeling should be built in proportion to surrounding homes. This includes limiting height, massing and maintaining appropriate setbacks”.

The proposed development at 206 E. Annie St. does not even adhere to the first Neighborhood Plan recommendation. It proposes a five-story apartment building across an alley from single story homes built in the early 1900’s. This apartment building is not proposed on S. Congress Avenue but instead two blocks interior to the neighborhood on a neighborhood street.

The proposal is on property that ostensibly is a church but, while receiving 100% exemption from all property taxes for many years, has not been used as a place of worship during recent times. Neighbors report the church had its corporation involuntarily terminated over ten years ago. With the City of Austin facing dire financial shortfalls, having such a valuable property not contributing to the tax base without proper exemption has cheated the taxpaying residents and other businesses. To add insult to injury, the proposal seeks fee waivers that will create further unequitable burdens to Austin taxpayers AND according to the City’s Smart Housing Certification letter dated February 6, 2026, the Affordability period is ONLY FIVE YEARS.

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In the 38 years prior to the adoption of the GSRCC Neighborhood Plan, the plan area added approximately 2635 multifamily units or about 39 units/year. In the 14 years following adoption of the Plan (ending in 2019), the plan area added approximately 1776 multifamily units or approximately 126 units/year.

So following adoption of the FLUM and Plan a THREE FOLD increase in construction of multifamily units has occurred with only a couple of FLUM amendments including one supporting a FLUM amendment for this same applicant to build an appropriately sited multifamily project on the S. IH 35 frontage road. Not one interior to a single family neighborhood.

A member of the Neighborhood Plan Contact Team who as a private landlord has provided affordable housing for several decades adds the following about the proposed land use change:

“The ‘Affordable Housing’ initiative as envisioned by our local city government will never provide ‘affordable housing’.

1. Housing prices are controlled by hugely powerful external variables that the local city government does not control or influence.
2. The administrative, planning, and implementation cost burden for the city’s efforts serve only to add to the tax burden. These added costs make housing more expensive, not more affordable.
3. The city has no plan or method to measure results from its initiatives. Even if the city can track the costs associated with the initiative, the city has no way to mark success. It’s another perpetual spending boondoggle, guided by vague feelings, not economic reality.
4. Even if the city could reduce local housing cost, the effects of supply and demand would be noticed, and there would be an increase in local demand at the temporarily-reduced cost. Market forces would then cause the supply of those in search of less costly housing to migrate here. That migration would subsequently create greater demand, and that demand would raise the local cost of housing as a result of market forces.

In short, the initiative has “good intent” but it will never change the economic reality. It’s entirely a waste of tax money. Concessions to developers in the name of ‘affordable housing’ enrich the developers at the expense of all taxpayers. Taxpayers suffer; developers gain wealth; housing cost is not reduced. Not a good plan for the city of Austin. There is no mandate for our government to compete in the housing market.”

Please proceed with reason and intelligence to deny this unwarranted change to the FLUM and support the Neighborhood Plan.

Elloa Mathews, NPCT member since 2005 and immediate past Chair

David Swann, NPCT member since 2005

Cc: Maureen Meredith, Jonathon Tomko COA Planning
Anita Tschurr South River City Citizens Neighborhood Association Zoning Chair