

The City of Austin decision to locate a Sunrise-type facility in its new homeless HUB represents a lost opportunity to reduce the number of homeless population on the streets of Austin. Instead of focusing on pre-eviction services that we believe are consistent with the idea of a Housing HUB and that the City promised was the focus of the new center, they are going with a range of services to the homeless population.

While there is an ongoing need for services to the homeless population, given the security challenges of the Navigation Center location, the focus should be on prevention strategies and making sure that individuals who are about to be evicted remain housed. We know that is the most cost-effective use of tax dollars and is the solution to reducing homelessness in Austin.

The new Navigation Center is located with a 1,000 yards of Travis High School, on the access road of IH-35, and also within a 1,000 yards of Blunn Creek Preserve. Each of these sites has a security risk associated with the Navigation Center location and the security planning the City has presented is totally inadequate to address these risks.

The existing neighborhoods are not the only population at risk for more crime. Studies have shown that homeless population are also the victims of crime, “The prevalence of physical or sexual assault victimization within the past year has been estimated to range from 27% to 52% in homeless populations.” ([Lancet June 2020 Homlessness and Police -recorded Crime Victimization](#))

Recently, in South Austin near the Sunrise Center there were two major criminal incidents: the incident of the mentally ill homeless individual who threw bricks and rocks from the overpass and a

homeless individual was murdered on Pack Saddle Pass. While the majority of homeless individuals are seeking assistance, the potential for high risk behavior next to a school population is daunting.

We have listened to the Homeless Strategy Director, David Gray, tell us they have a solution to the security risk by working with school crossing guards, fencing, cameras and maybe some private security. All of this ignores the fact that this location already has an existing crime hot spots located along E. Oltorf and adding a population with behavioral issues to the mix is only going to make life more difficult for the existing neighborhood.

The City of Austin Homeless Strategy Office did not listen to the input of neighborhood, schools or existing business on the RFA for services. They also did not have the benefit of input of their appointed board on the nature and scope of the RFA. The City version of public input during this process was to have a meeting and then disregard any public comment. Even worse communication about what services would be present at this location were misleading at best. We believe the focus and the expenditure of funds are misplaced.

While the City is reconstructing the building for ADA compliance because the site did not have an elevator, we believe there is time to seek the missing input and produce an innovative services plan for a Housing HUB. WE want the City to listen to the neighborhood, the schools, and the local businesses.