

May 9, 2007

Mayor Will Wynn and City Council
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

Dear Mayor Wynn and Councilmembers:

The undersigned organizations request a moratorium on the implementation of the Vertical Mixed-Use Ordinance in East Austin until October 1, 2007, and a suspension of permits on properties zoned mixed-use and vertical mixed-use in the interim. The area we define as East Austin is bounded by IH-35 on the west, Manor Road on the north, the Colorado River on the south with the Montopolis Neighborhood Planning Area included, and the eastern city limits.

We witness that East Austin is experiencing rampant gentrification under the present city policies and that the application of mixed-use zoning has accelerated that process. We believe that the application of vertical mixed-use zoning will further speed the loss of affordable housing and locally-owned businesses. Many of our neighborhood planning teams adopted mixed-use zoning with the vision of small businesses with owners and operators living above, in neighborhood-friendly and neighborhood-scaled structures. We did not foresee the advent of expensive, multi-family housing above chain businesses.

Those developments are alien to the cultures in East Austin and do not foster a sense of community. The higher property taxes that these developments force our traditional businesses and residents out of the neighborhoods and the city. In light of this grim specter, we ask for additional time to review our experience with mixed-use zoning and amend our neighborhood plans accordingly. During this period, we ask the Council to revisit its zoning initiatives to create planning tools and ordinances that we can apply to meet our affordability goals, maintain and foster our local businesses, and retain our community culture.

Specific concerns to be addressed during this moratorium:

- (1) The affordability component of VMU will not produce a significant number of units at lower income levels that will accommodate the housing needs of East Austin. What alternative strategies can be employed to address this need?
- (2) The VMU and MU zonings may have negative impact on our locally-owned, independent businesses. We need time to review our neighborhood plans and possibly revise our application of mixed-use zoning.
- (3) There will be impacts on taxes on properties on and near the transit corridors. We need to assess the extent that the VMU and MU developments may have on the long-term sustainability of our affordable housing and small businesses.
- (4) We need additional time to complete the designs for Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) so that application of VMU and retention of MU zoning will integrate with, and compliment those plans.

(Continued page two)

While we appreciate the City's efforts to prepare for Austin's future, we believe that the time frame in which we are asked to make these decisions is far too short to integrate into existing neighborhood plans. Unless we are granted more time to weigh the long-term consequences of application of this ordinance, we will consider opting-out of VMU zoning entirely.

We respectfully ask that you work with us to address the issues above and respond no later than June 1.

Signed,

Eastern Sector, Austin Neighborhoods Council, Daniel Llanes & Bo McCarver
Austin Neighborhoods Council, Laura Morrison
Tillery Square Neighborhood Assoc., Courtney Enriquez
Rosewood Neighborhood Association, Jane Rivera
Blackland Community Development Corporation, Lewis Rowland
P.O.D.E.R., Susana Almanza
Vargas Neighborhood Association, Librado Almanza
Larch Terrace Neighborhood Association, Corazon Renteria
Govalle/Johnston Terrace Neighborhood Planning Team, Daniel Llanes
Gardens Neighborhood Association, Johnny Limon-Chair, Janie Rangel Co-chair
