

C445

Planning Commission – 6/26/12 – University Neighborhood Overlay

My name is Stuart Harry Hersh, and like most in Austin, I rent. I was a City staffer when UNO housing affordability was established back in 2004. For more than two years, I have been the pro-bono scribe for UNO stakeholders who have worked so creatively to bring you the code amendments you are considering tonight. Thanks to all the UNO stakeholders who could have given up over the past 2 ½ years but did not. And thanks to all of you on the Planning Commission who provided such critical support for these community-initiated code amendments.

If you recommend and Council adopts the amendments before you tonight, more students will have more affordable rents for a longer period of time. More money will flow into the University Neighborhood Overlay Housing Trust Fund for the co-ops to build new housing where students may pay rents in some cases less than \$500 or \$300 a month. And there are no federal funds, or state-approved tax credits, or bond funds making this happen. It's all about linking zoning entitlements to housing affordability goals.

CANPAC, the neighborhood association in West Campus, worked with for-profit housing developers, not-for-profit housing developers and student government representatives first in their initial neighborhood plan development and now in this stakeholder process to produce deeper levels of housing affordability and longer-term affordability not only west of IH 35, but west of Congress Avenue and west of the Drag as well.

If we pay attention to what they have achieved, this linking of incentives to housing affordability goals and accessibility standards can be replicated in the implementation of code amendments for the adopted Downtown Plan and the recently adopted Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. When we work together in Austin, we can accomplish great things. Please recommend this set of code amendments to the City Council.

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