



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Recommendation number: 20131118-002: Preservation of the AACHD & the AAQLI

WHEREAS, the African American Resource Advisory Commission (the “commission”) is authorized by Austin City Code § 2-1-101 to advise the City Council on issues related to the quality of life for the City’s African American community; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is specifically authorized to recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront African Americans in social, economic, and vocational pursuits, including (1) health care; (2) housing, including affordable housing, home ownership, and homelessness; (3) entertainment opportunities for professionals and students; (4) employment; and (5) cultural venues, including museums, theaters, art galleries, and music venues; and

WHEREAS, the hard-won designation of the African American Cultural & Heritage District (AACHD) was many years in the making during which nearly all African American residents and businesses have been displaced due to gentrification;

WHEREAS, many of the facilities and services made available through the African American Quality of Life Initiative (AAQLI) and the AACHD could easily be of benefit to non-African American, specifically to the new largely Anglo population which has replaced the African American population;

WHEREAS, property within the AACHD continues to be lost to African American residents and businesses at an alarming rate—particularly along the 11th and 12th Street corridors;

WHEREAS, the median income level of African American residents and businesses (\$47,868) living within the AACHD as well as the entire population of Austin is **well below** that of Anglo residents and business owners (\$89,444), the loss of properties that will preserve the culture of the AACHD will undoubtedly continue;

WHEREAS, some of the most important, high-profile properties in terms of their location to IH-35, the most important boundary of AACHD and representative of the history and struggles of African Americans in Austin are currently vacant and are owned by the City of Austin, specifically those properties owned by the City of Austin within the 11th Street and 12th Street Redevelopment Area (NCCD) and other properties deemed to be “critical” within the district;

WHEREAS, plans are in progress for walking, biking and bus tours of the Historic African American District as part of the remedies set forth in the AAQLI Final Report;



WHEREAS, so few remaining items of interest in the AACHD that it is quickly becoming an almost irrelevant undertaking to conduct a tour of the district for lack of African American Cultural presence, and;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is obligated to work in the best interest of its citizens in improving the quality of life specifically for African American families within the City of Austin as clearly expressed in the AAQLI;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

THAT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMISSION HEREBY RECOMMENDS THAT THE AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR:

- Designation of key city-owned vacant properties (lots and buildings included) specifically along the all-crucial 11th and 12th Street corridors as “AACHD-critical”;
- The sale of any City-owned Properties within the AACHD “critical zone,” require first a review of the proposed purchase by the African American Resource Advisory Commission to determine if the intended use of the property aligns with its location and significance within the AACHD;
- Offer of financial incentives and technical support to the few remaining African American Businesses and venues within the AACHD so that there is real accountability to the City’s promise/mission to meet the needs set forth in the AAQLI; and
- Work with the African American Cultural Heritage District Board and the Capital City African American Chamber of Commerce to identify **viable** ways to attract, nurture and maintain local African American businesses within the AACHD.

Date of approval: November 18, 2013

Record of the vote: Approved by the African American Resource Advisory Commission on a vote of 6-0 with Commissioner Eugene absent.

Attest:

Melodye Foust, Staff Liaison