



ADAPT of Texas Comments to the Austin Human Rights Commission February 24, 2014

Affordable, Accessible, Integrated, Housing

The waiting list for Section 8 Housing is about 6 years long; Public Housing is about a year. Housing costs are through the roof, especially the new housing which would be more likely to be accessible. The City's current "affordable" housing development targets people with incomes at 80% of Median Family Income, MFI, (about \$39,850 for a single person). Most of our members and many in the disability community are below 15% MFI (SSI payments are about \$710 per month; \$8,520 a year.) Social Security Disability is a little higher. Attendants who provide home health services to people with disabilities make about \$13,836 a year.

According to National Low Income Housing Coalition, in Texas, there are only 24 affordable homes available to extremely low income families for every 100 renters. Yet 78% Texas extremely low income families have a severe cost burden. Lack of affordable, accessible, integrated, housing options for extremely low income people with disabilities in the Austin area remains one of the greatest barriers to living in the community. ADAPT recommends the following policy changes to help solve this problem:

Increase the funding for the Housing Trust Fund and set aside a majority of the funding for projects that serve people at or below 30% of the MFI.

Increase tax increment financing efforts throughout the city. Currently the City of Austin is funding affordable housing projects with tax increment financing only in east Austin. The City of Austin should be more aggressive about requiring companies who receive tax breaks to support affordable housing by setting aside funds to build projects that serve low income people with disabilities.

25% of the new development in Colony Park should be set aside for low income people. Half of that 25% should be set aside for people at or below 30% of the MFI.

Supportive housing is a national and local trend. ADAPT believes that housing and support services should be separate. We have received a commitment from both the City and developers that the services will be offered on an optional basis. We remain concerned that this commitment will weaken over time and that supportive housing projects will be the only type affordable housing projects that extremely low income people will qualify for because it is what is being built for people at or below 30% MFI. The city needs to provide additional housing options that are affordable, accessible and integrated in the community. One size does not fit all.



Sidewalk Accessibility

The City of Austin has made a great deal of progress in the area of sidewalk accessibility. However, we still have miles to go. Since 2005 The Department of Public Works constructed 82 linear miles of sidewalk and constructed 2,200 curb ramps. Everyone in ADAPT is proud of the progress that has been made. However, The Americans with Disabilities Act became law in 1990. The ADA required that a transition plan be implemented in 1992 and all of construction accessibility improvements be FINISHED by 1995. Yet 23 years later thousands of locations throughout Austin need access. The City's own Sidewalk Master Plan estimates the city still needs to do more than \$ 800 million worth of sidewalks and curb ramps. That is why in 2008 City Council approved the Department of Public Works plan to fund sidewalk accessibility projects every year for the next 20 years (with adjustments for inflation) by a minimum of \$5 million per year, to reach compliance with the ADA.

ADAPT recommends that the Austin Human Rights Commission endorse Public Works Department's the 20 year plan and that the Commission receive updates from the Department on the their efforts to achieve full compliance with the American's With Disabilities Act.

Parks and Recreation Department

Since the early 1990s ADAPT has been working for ADA access to Austin's parks system. We have helped with evaluations, campaigned for bond money, gone to the parks department board meetings and even filed a lawsuit against the City. Improvements have been made in some places like Barton Springs Pool but accessibility improvements need to be made in parks and on trails throughout Austin. The Human Rights Commission should recommend the City Council direct the City Manager and his staff to work with PARD staff to create a transition plan as required by the ADA. The City needs to identify barriers that exist throughout the parks system and set aside funds to make improvements. In addition, the City is required to ensure organizations that contract to use parks facilities for their businesses are accessible to people with disabilities.