

SOUTHWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

August 30, 2017

Austin City Council
Attn: Mayor Adler and City Councilmembers
301 W Second St
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Austin City Councilmembers:

For over a year and a half, Southwood and Western Trails neighborhoods have been working with Councilmember Ann Kitchen, Advisor Ken Craig, and as a united community to tackle the growing presence of panhandlers, vagrants and homeless individuals in the neighborhood. The substantial increase has had a negative impact on our community with residents who have become fearful of walking to nearby businesses because of the intimidation of aggressive panhandling, harassment at bus stops and filthy environment of those living under the Ben White bridge at Manchaca. We have had an increase of criminal behavior in the area intermingled with the panhandlers and vagrants which has led to an increase in emergency 911 calls based on APD reports. We do not want to see our neighborhood turn into a blighted area.

Over several meetings, CM Kitchen and our community have developed four proposals to begin tackling this difficult situation. This is an issue that is bigger than District 5, but we believe we can make the positive changes necessary if you lend your support to the following proposals.

They are:

1. A resolution to develop a pilot program in the surrounding areas initiating an educational campaign through the use of multiple technology platforms as an alternative to panhandling - such as "Keep the Change" in Milwaukee and "Text to Give" in Philadelphia.
2. Funding for four (4) Navigation Centers, located at existing public facilities outside of downtown and throughout the city.
3. Lighting under the Ben White bridge along with trash cans and maintenance services.
4. An agreement with TxDOT which would allow APD to enforce city ordinances, including but not limited to, trespassing, loitering and consuming alcohol under the Ben White bridge.

The Southwood officers encourage you to support these proposals. We believe that they will benefit the city as a whole.

Sincerely,



Gregory Trippe
President, Southwood Neighborhood Association



Joan Owens
Vice President, Southwood Neighborhood Association

Michael Lazarus
Treasurer, Southwood Neighborhood Association

David Foster

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Secretary, Southwood Neighborhood Association