

Elisa Montoya, East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association

Let me introduce myself, my name is Elisa Rendon Montoya. I am a landowner and a native of East Austin. Also I've been very active as an activist and a community leader in the East Town Lake Citizens Neighborhood Association. Therefore, there's legacy in my area, where the park is named after my dad. My dad was recently deceased in February, so I've been really busy with his illness, so I haven't been back to...

Also, Commissioner Delgado is my daughter and whatever I hear, what's happening in the community, I get involved or let her know. But my concerns are that I saw a little bit of what y'all are going to speak on behalf, I don't have too much time to stay but I did want to voice my concerns to all, that you're the commissioners and thank you for allowing me this time and I just wanted to give out a commendment to, how would you say it, a thank you very much to one of the agencies that is looking for re-funding and that is Meals on Wheels and More. I would say that for the last decade they've been working with the community, and because of that program... I was also the pioneer of the commission board on the Holly Neighborhood and we had affordable housing doing some home repairs.

So, Meals on Wheels and More, since they started growing, they were the ones that were very, very helpful to our community. They were helpful to our elders and to repairing our homes with the funding of the Holly commission program. So I wanted to address that, so y'all would know publicly that they fixed 22 homes in our area. And another one is that they were very responsive to the needs in that community, and I want to thank them and y'all to know that we're very grateful. East Town Lake has worked with them hand in hand in getting these home repairs done with them.

Of concern right now, there's a lot of changes, we've been gentrified in the area, we have problems in keeping our homes. Some gentrification because developers are coming in and buying our homes at a very cheap rate. We're losing our elders, we're losing our homes because of taxes, and we need some support or something from this commission to help us out. The natives are still there. We're being bombarded with everything in that area. City of Austin is promoting a special event community in that area, we're being surrounded by bars, we're surrounded by restaurants, and so many things.

And our park is also being destroyed by building supposedly what I hear is affordable housing...that is a park. We already have homes, and the homes, if we get the support from the commissioners and City Council, to support us and the taxes, like putting a cap on them, so we can still live there. The houses that are being built are not being affordable to us and to our kids. I have a lot of family members that live in Kyle, Del Valle, because they can't afford to live in this area. It's just become, I mean, the houses are fine you know. They're suitable for families, but they're not affordable to our families. And that's basically I wanted to say that y'all look at the overall and support us – we're still there. And we need help, we need protection from developers that we're being bombarded every day with wanting to buy our

homes. This is our neighborhood, we've preserved it for many years and I stand firm, and I will fight as far as I can to keep our neighborhood as it is... that's what I wanted to speak about.

Phil Thomas and Carol Stall (community members)

A friend once told me you can't read the label if you're in the bottle--which seems to be happening here. Here in Austin we see a lack of perspective, a lack of clarity and foresight in our planning that needs to be addressed.

The good news is that we have a vibrant city. But continued vibrancy does not require the sacrifice of communities and neighborhoods or quality of life.

I'll speak plainly. When private real estate and development interests have so much influence at city council and even city staff level that the neighborhood community voice is being ignored or drowned out—we have big problems.

Code Next is the embodiment of a developer wish list. And if we let it pass, we will see gentrification and a cultural exodus on a larger scale than the 1928 segregation master plan. But this time people are being scattered not contained.

Ironically developer-backed Urbanists claim their policies de-segregate the city, but what it does is allow entire communities to be displaced and scattered. And we're watching it happen. The back-story includes a well-meaning but misguided policy called "Compress and Connect" (which we locally refer to as DEPRESS & EJECT)—which has already created a great deal of scattering of the poor, low income and Hispanics, African American cultural groups from central Austin. The African American population of Central East Austin has in a few short years has been whittled down to 10% of the former stable population. And now the Hispanic population is dwindling as well.

Groups of so-called Urbanists claim that Manhattan-izing Austin is the only way to save the future from endless urban sprawl. But Urban sprawl is not abating and in fact is filling up with low and middle income people who can no longer afford to live in the central areas. And by the way, who must commute in to work.

More housing = lower prices they say. But that has not happened and it won't happen unless there is a big bust. Despite developer incentives rents and housing prices have increased significantly. To the point where teachers, nurses and state workers cannot afford live centrally—and the poor are fleeing to the outskirts and other cities.

Visit Manhattan, Toronto, Paris and other large cities that are allowing developer-dominated policies to infill urban areas. Ask which income percentage can live in the central areas. Without the few precious rent control dwellings, Manhattan is simply not affordable. That's no secret. In fact the central areas of many cities are following the model set forth by an increasingly powerful real estate/development interests.

and becoming increasingly exclusive and only for the very rich. Which illustrates that **Market forces are not how we should plan our city growth. And Smart growth is not necessarily WISE growth.**

In Austin, time and time again, we subsidize developers with our tax money in the form of abatements, discounts etc. and TRUST them to provide affordability--only to have them scale down or instead pay into a fund for rainy affordability that never seems to come.

Our neighborhood groups charged with protecting residential standards are being compromised and infiltrated with development oriented interests, shadow neighborhood groups have formed that are funded by development interests. Residents are being shamed by this group—for having back yards and for expecting to be able to park in front of their homes--expectations that actually came with extant zoning.

And yet the Urbanist density solution offered comes with a slew of destructive problems, crowding, traffic, noise, compromised safety, and basically a gutting of residential quality and stability that **zoning has ensured for many decades.**

Well I personally am tired of subsidizing untrammled growth in the central areas only to see compromised neighborhoods, schools destroyed history eradicated. I can only imagine what kind of flood and fire danger we will soon face given the number of impervious cover exemptions being allowed. AND I'm not EVEN addressing increasing gridlock which is supposed to encourage use of mass transit.

The only ways we can save affordability and/or recreate it is:

- 1) SUBSIDIES: Redirect developer subsidies to people. Directly subsidize affordable housing of all types and particularly that geared toward families.
- 2) REPAIR: Help elders stay in their homes by supporting incredibly valuable home repair programs. We've seen them at work in our neighborhood, allowing elders who might otherwise be forced to leave due to poor housing conditions. A few repairs can let them stay in their homes many years longer with pride, comfort and dignity.
- 3) STOP STRS: We must protect our neighborhoods from defacto hotels—i.e. investor driven Short Term Rentals. Homeowners should be able to rent out a room or garage apartment a few times per year. But commercial STRs are terribly destructive in many ways including changing the nature of a community and gutting school attendance and severely impacting affordability. We must rein in the STR industry with meaningful reforms and yes, fines. Currently little is being done to control them.
- 4) TAXES: Investigate and work with State, County and City level property tax abatement and or grandfathering for those who have lived here a long time. We cannot ignore this! We must work to change the tax policies to be sure that skyscraper buildings pay their fair share.
- 5) EDUCATE: Currently in our area, East Town Lake/ Holly we've currently reached a balance of diversity—But it's rapidly changing. If the same policies remain, the balance will continue to shift allowing only wealthier white folks to live here.

The good news is that new people who moved there to be near downtown are starting to discover and embrace the existing community. Let's subsidize efforts to bring people together to understand value and help preserve elements of these communities. Help sponsor orientations for newcomers to learn the history of their new community.

Established communities and neighborhoods do not arise overnight, they take decades to create and, in this day of growth, must be carefully protected.

It's time to halt damaging policies that will ultimately compromise safety and peace and stability of our residential neighborhoods.

Austin isn't government, isn't lobbyists, Austin isn't bars, or businesses, Austin is communities. Growth will continue and that can be positive IF carefully directed. Residents of these communities **deserve** to have a strong voice in how to direct that growth. We need to listen carefully to the communities.

Thank you

Kate Moore (Austin Tenants Council) (See ATC documents posted under Item3b)

Michael Montoya

Michael Montoya: I had some questions regarding the data in the presentation that Ms. Sommers presented. On the slide about funding sources, is that for – do y'all get state funding as well?

Erica Leak: No, we as the City of Austin do not receive any funding directly from the state. Though many of the affordable housing developments that we help to fund, that we provide gap financing to, they receive low income tax credits, and that's through the state. In terms of our local sources, it's general obligation bonds, housing trust funds and general funds from the city.

Michael Montoya: And then on the data, on this same \$27.5 million that's been spent over the last two fiscal years, can y'all, I think the commission would benefit and maybe the community would benefit if they knew what bucket those [funds] are actually going to throughout these programs [re: Investment Categories slides] in a similar pie chart type of graph to say between the \$27 million, maybe \$20 million all went to one, and only 1 (million) to another. Like, slicing that information in that way, by investment category would probably be helpful for the commission to figure out which programs are actually being funded more than others.