



## **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION**

### **Joint Sustainability Committee**

#### **Recommendation 20191218-3C.b - Equity and the Land Development Code**

WHEREAS, Austin has been experiencing a significant and steady decline in its African American population, especially families with children, and we only have to look to the Austin Independent School District to understand that Latino families also are being rapidly displaced from East Austin neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, we also are witnessing displacement of lower-income families from Central and East Austin neighborhoods, many of which were once predominantly minority and working class, and Downtown Austin has become the near-exclusive domain of wealthy, white residents; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by minority communities and people with low incomes; and

WHEREAS, a fair and equitable process that examined the impacts – both intended and unintended – on Communities of Color was not utilized prior to adopting previous land use and zoning plans (including 1928, Urban Renewal, Save Our Springs and the resulting Desired Development Zone, S.M.A.R.T Housing, etc.) before they were approved and codified in law; and

WHEREAS, the City is doing a wholesale revision of its zoning code and has failed to do either an anti-displacement study or equity analysis to determine what effects a sweeping revision of the land-use code – and upzoning in particular to Central and East Austin neighborhoods -- would have on Communities of Color, and

WHEREAS, the City has failed to examine the impact of upzoning and sweeping zoning revisions on the health, social and economic welfare of African American and Latino residents – and especially seniors and people on fixed incomes, and

WHEREAS, the City continues to talk the talk about addressing institutional racism, creating greater equity in communities that historically were neglected, addressing displacement of People of Color and working to advance policies and values that foster a city that is economically, ethically and racially diverse, and

WHEREAS, many African Americans and Latinos are suffering financially from high taxes due to gentrification (which triggered land values to soar) and lack of affordable rents and mortgages, and

WHEREAS, many displaced People of Color are paying more for transportation, driving farther distances to their jobs and churches, transferring their children to schools outside Austin and spending less quality time with their families.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Joint Sustainability Committee requests the Austin City Council to conduct an equity-impact analysis (which includes a displacement study) utilizing the Equity Office and City Demographer. The study should be conducted and available before third reading so City policymakers, taxpayers and the public, know and understand the impact of proposed zoning revisions and up-zoning on Austin's African American and Latino communities, which historically have been discriminated against by city policies and practices (including the 1928 plan, redlining, restrictive covenants, school segregation and attendance boundaries, etc.). Having such a tool, in addition to the September 2018 UT Austin "Uprooted" study, could prove invaluable in helping the City Council to produce a zoning code that is fair, equitable and balanced. Where burden of change may be felt, adequate policy should be proposed to help community mitigate impact and build resilience.

We recognize that the City is well-intended in revising its zoning and land-use code as it aims to meet housing needs and make the city more livable and environmentally sustainable. Those are laudable goals. Density is a given in addressing such needs. But density must be balanced and exercised in ways that don't repeat Austin's racist practices of the past. Density goals must incorporate the needs of People of Color and particularly lower income residents, seniors and those struggling with poverty. Without an equity analysis, the potential to repeat that history is very real.

Record of the vote: Motion to approve by Commissioner Phillips, Second by Commissioner White.  
Motion passes 8 approve, 0 opposed.

Date of approval: December 18, 2019

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Zach Baumer, Liaison