

My name is Melinda Barsales and I live at 4114 East 12th Street in a home built in 1964 original to this area of East Austin. I am writing to the Planning Commission today to express my concerns regarding Zoning Case C14-2020-0089, Twelfth and Springdale Residences, Item 6 on today's agenda. Not only do I believe the zoning change from GR-MU-NP to GR-MU-V-NP is unnecessary, but due to this tract's proximity to the historic African-American burial ground of Bethany Cemetery, I strongly believe that a downzoning of this tract should be proposed.

The Martin Luther King Neighborhood Association is currently in the process of collecting signatures for a valid petition for this case. I have been made aware that the signature of the representative for Bethany Cemetery, Ms. Sue Spears, will not be considered valid unless we can furnish written proof that she has been given authority on such matters from the property owners in spite of the fact that her name appears on the TCAD for the cemetery, that notice of the proposed rezoning was sent care of Ms. Spears, and that City contractors, Davey Resource Group, sought out her consent for a vegetation work plan on the cemetery's grounds.

Ownership of the property at 1308 Springdale Road was transferred to the Bethany Cemetery Association in 1976. The members are now all deceased and the association defunct. Ms. Spears, who grew up in this neighborhood and attended Sims Elementary across the street from the cemetery, has been the steward for this neglected burial ground and was instrumental in securing historic status for the site. Through her dedication to the cemetery she facilitated a program for maintenance of the grounds through the Travis County Sheriff's SWAP program.

Due to the undetermined status of ownership for the cemetery, I strongly encourage the Planning Commission to postpone making any recommendation in this case until it is determined who has the authority to speak for its deceased owners and those interred on its grounds.