



**604 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, TX 78701**

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**13 August 2021**

**RE: OANA's opposition to ACC's demolition permit request for 812 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street**

Dr. Richard M. Rhodes, Chancellor  
Austin Community College District  
Highland Business Center  
5930 Middle Fiskville Rd.  
Austin, TX 78752

Dear Dr. Rhodes:

On behalf of the Old Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA), I want to voice concerns raised by your July 26, 2021 letter to the City's Historic Landmark Commission, and express OANA's opposition to ACC's demolition permit request for the building at 812 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street.

Your letter notes that ACC has been planning the demolition of this building since 2007; that this was part of the Rio Grande Campus master plan, which the ACC Board adopted in 2011; and that the Regional Advisory Committee has approved this plan. The letter urges the commission to approve the demolition permit so the College can demolish the building and expand the garage "to better serve the renovated and expanding Rio Grande Campus."

A lot has changed since 2007. Based on the circumstances we face today, we urge the College to abandon its plan to demolish the building at 812 West 12<sup>th</sup>, and to rethink its plans for parking near the Rio Grande campus. Please consider the following key points:

1. There is no immediate need for additional parking to serve the Rio Grande Campus. According to ACC's recent Districtwide Campus Master Plan, the Rio Grande campus is currently overparked. The page on existing facilities (p.93) indicates that the ideal capacity of the current campus is 4,000 students. If parked at the recommended ratio of 0.15 spaces/student, it would have **600** spaces. The campus currently has **775** spaces: 523 in the garage and 252 surface parking spaces.
2. The neighborhood would be better served by maintaining the current use of 812 West 12<sup>th</sup>. As noted in our August 11, 2021 letter, older buildings with active uses contribute significantly to the vitality of our neighborhood. The current tenant at 812 W.12<sup>th</sup> has cultivated a loyal and diverse customer base, as demonstrated by the outpouring of support at the 7/26/2021 meeting of the Historic Landmark Commission. Replacing this destination with parking would make the neighborhood less inviting for many.

3. The College's vision for parking in our neighborhood is outdated. The parking plan reflected in the Districtwide Campus Master Plan, which is essentially unchanged from the plan adopted over a decade ago, ignores numerous changes that have developed in recent years:

- **On-street parking is now managed.** The streets in this area offer hundreds of spaces that are now controlled, and users can now pay for spaces using apps on their phones. If on-street parking is in short supply in the future, the price can be raised to ensure that spaces are always available.
- **Rail transit is in progress.** With the approval of Project Connect last fall, plans are now in motion to place a rail line down Guadalupe, with a Capitol West station planned between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> – a 5-minute walk from the Rio Grande Campus. The success of this rail line is critical to achieving the goals of the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan, adopted in 2019, which envisions a 50-50 mode split by 2039.
- **Non-automotive transportation in this area is trending upward.** We now have major bike/scooter corridors on Nueces and Rio Grande, and protected lanes planned on West 12<sup>th</sup>. Microunit apartments are under construction across the street at 817 W.12<sup>th</sup>, and other parking-light residential projects are in progress nearby, indicating that the area is on track for continued increases in bike/ped/scooter/wheelchair activity.
- **Transportation Demand Management has evolved.** An array of organizations, partners, and resources are now available to help apply current best practices in managing the flows of car traffic to and from the Rio Grande Campus.

We welcome these changes. We envision our neighborhood streets as inviting places where people will feel safe and comfortable, with a variety of shops and restaurants within easy reach. We believe achieving this vision would serve ACC well and would enhance the appeal of the Rio Grande Campus.

The College's plans, in contrast, seem to fly in the face of these changes. At a time when many are striving to shift toward more sustainable travel patterns, the College seems bent on moving in the opposite direction. If the College were aiming for the same parking ratio it has approved in the past, it would need only 20 more spaces to serve its short-term construction plan, which envisions a new building (Building 2000) where the Annex stands today. Instead the College is planning a garage expansion in the short term that would result in an excess of hundreds of parking spaces.

Additionally, the College's short- and long-term plans reflect a disregard of City development regulations intended to promote walkability. Along 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the College appears to be planning nothing other than a garage, despite the City Code provision requiring that ground-level garage space in this zoning district be separated from the street by a pedestrian-oriented use (§ 25-6-591(B)(5)). Similarly, the plans for the new Building 5000, on West 13<sup>th</sup> Street, appear to contemplate a "dingbat" structure, which would violate the same provision.

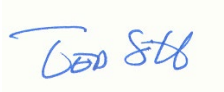
We urge the College to rethink its plans for expanding the garage on 12<sup>th</sup> Street and consider other potential uses for this very prominent property, which stretches all the way to West Avenue – directly across the street from the newly renovated Rio Grande building. We believe a residential, educational, or office building at this site, with pedestrian-oriented uses at the ground level, would better serve the interests of both the College and the surrounding community than the parking garage shown in the College’s plans.

We also urge the College to revisit its plans for parking in this neighborhood and join us in the effort to create a more walkable and inviting area around the Rio Grande campus.

OANA reps Chris Riley and Dan Keshet and I met with Neil Vickers last week to discuss these issues so I’m copying him, as well as Exec VP Molly Beth Malcolm and John-Michael Cortez in his capacity as Chair of ACC’s Central Campus RAC.

We look forward to working cooperatively with ACC toward the achievement of shared goals. In the meantime, please keep us posted on any imminent steps the College is contemplating for demolition or additional parking in this area.

Sincerely,



Ted Siff, Board President

xc: Neil Vickers, ACC Chief Financial Officer  
Molly Beth Malcolm, Exec VP  
John-Michael Cortez, Chair, ACC – Central Campus RAC

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