



BOARD RESOLUTION

Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center Advisory Board

Resolution Number: (20210817-03a) Opposing the Red River Extension

ESB MACC BOARD RESOLUTION OPPOSING PROPOSALS TO EXTEND RED RIVER STREET THROUGH THE EMMA S. BARRIENTOS MEXICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER (ESB MACC) DESIGNATED PARKLAND AND GUTTING RAINEY STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

WHEREAS the City of Austin designated the ESB MACC site as parkland “in perpetuity” principally as moral reparation for the City’s taking of Rainey Neighborhood and nearby East Austin properties from Mexican Americans founders through urban renewal and other City displacement processes in the 1950s and 1960s, and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin historically only takes parkland for required utilities, it would be setting a dangerous precedent by taking ESB MACC parkland for the Red River Street extension, and

WHEREAS, the proposed street extension would further devastate Rainey Street Historic District, designated as such for its distinctive history as a Hispanic enclave since the 1800s, and for its lovely and serene environmental quality protected thus far by Mexican American stakeholders participating throughout the Waller Creek Tunnel development, concurrent land development processes and the ESB MACC PHASE II planning, and

WHEREAS, due to Rainey Street Neighborhood status as a Historic District, and the ESB MACC’s symbolic representation of 182-year presence of Hispanics in downtown Austin, for decades, the City has promised to respect Rainey Street Neighborhood’s integrity, the ESB MACC property, and the bucolic environment that the Hispanic community enjoyed and preserved for many generations, and which due to their diligence and care, Austinites throughout the city enjoyed, and

WHEREAS Mexican American founders and stakeholders of ESB MACC advocated for this particular site, to commemorate our “antepasados” and honor our shared heritage, seeking the

land's designation as parkland expressively to protect the site and historic district in perpetuity, from encroachments and takings, to which the City enthusiastically acquiesced and legally supported, and

WHEREAS, the ESB MACC site on designated parkland, and its stakeholders represent the Mexican American founders of Rainey Street Neighborhood and nearby East Austin residents who created the Rainey Street Historic District and strongly oppose further gutting of the tiny historic neighborhood and its sacred lakefront by locating an intrusive and unnecessary roadway since frontage road of IH 35 (scheduled to be "sunk" in the next decades), Cesar Chavez Street, and River Street provide access to the dense environment recently created by the City, and

WHEREAS, ESB MACC founders and stakeholders have done due diligence in actively participating in the Waller Creek Tunnel Project and in Waterloo Greenway Conservancy planning events for the past 20 years as oversight monitors to protect the integrity, and the vision and mission of both entities, and specifically of the interest and integrity of the ESB MACC property to prevent any encroachments and negative developments such as the proposed street project; and

WHEREAS, during this extended planning process of over 15 years, and of the last 4 years of ESB MACC Phase II planning, neither the Waller Creek Tunnel Project, Waterloo Greenway Conservancy nor the City have ever proposed any Red River Street or other roadway extension projects through this dedicated parkland, and

WHEREAS, cannibalizing ESB MACC parkland will disfigure a gem of a space that has taken decades to create—and with much heart, vision, and community dedication; it would destroy the "parkland feel" of the space in the name of inner-city convenience or architectural progress or styling is exploitative, opportunistic, and deeply offensive, and further would impact the access the ESB MACC now has for school buses and other emergency vehicles, especially those servicing the disabled community, by taking the parking facilities available to the facility, and the very effective circular drive-through entry, and

WHEREAS, Hispanic organizations and others, as stakeholders participating in the ESB MACC Phase II planning events have never seen any plans regarding extending Red River Street through any part of ESB MACC property, and in fact, the entire street extension planning process has been opaque, and confusing, hidden amongst 2 or 3 simultaneous planning processes, with public participation that yields no clear responses as to the status of the street plan, and specifically on February 2, 2021, during the Education and History Stakeholders meeting of ESB MACC Phase II, planners indicated they knew nothing of any street plans, while

at the same time the Phase 2, Expansion and Renovation Programming Report of May 2021 described the Red River Street Project as planned and “already underway,” and

WHEREAS, this disregard for credible responses during public input processes is also a total breach of the City’s commitment to public outreach and transparency regarding the impact of public policy in the lives of tax paying citizens of Austin, and considering that the City must be fully aware that ESB MACC stakeholders would never accept this devastating proposal which threatens the integrity of Rainey Street Historic District, and the survival of the ESB MACC as a viable public servicing institution, one can only surmise that plans are indeed solidified and underway, which like urban renewal of the past, will once again assault the quality of life of the most vulnerable Hispanic citizens of Austin, and destroy what was gained with hard earned taxpayer dollars from the very backbone and builders of this great city, who during the COVID-19 pandemic literally died on the job, and

WHEREAS the environmental health impact to children and families in attendance at the ESB MACC is the most important consideration of its stakeholders, to whom, the apparent expediency for the city in creating a thoroughfare on the ESB-MACC’s precious parkland should not at all override the predictable safety concerns that will put our children and community at considerable risk. After all, as a cultural arts and educational institution, any road immediately adjacent to our classrooms and event spaces will be disruptive due to the added factor of unabated noise pollution, and not to mention other personal hazards, and

WHEREAS, ESB MACC stakeholders have already weathered the constant pounding, ceaseless machinery beeping and shrieking sounds of excavators, bulldozers, and dump trucks of development that correspond to the destructive sounds of gentrification on top of what already is for users, heightened noise, congestion, pollution, and traffic from our proximity to Rainey Street, —a development about which we had no choice in the making, an adjacent street will dramatically alter the valuable parkland setting of ESB MACC, and will greatly impact its vision and mission.

THEREFORE, we respectfully request that the Mayor and the City Council cancel any and all projects proposing to extend Red River Street to any area that would reach and breach any part of parkland and parking facilities set aside, and designated for use by the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center and its citizen stakeholders, supporters, and participants in all of its programs and events.

Date of Approval: August 17, 2021

Record of the vote: Unanimous on an 8.0 vote

For:

David Goujon, Chair

Art Navarro, Vice Chair

Gerardo Gandy, Member

Wayne Lopes, Member

Ricardo Maga Rojas, Member

Claudia Massey, Member

Tomas Salas, Member

Endi Silva, Member

Attest:  _____

Michelle Rojas, Staff Liaison