



Willis Hunt – ARA Board Chair | Gregory L. Smith – President & CEO

October 8, 2021

Dear Urban Renewal Commissioners,

As many of you know, the Austin Revitalization Authority (ARA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has been in existence for over twenty-five years. Our mission is to encourage commercial, residential, and cultural development that promotes community well-being while respecting the people, the institutions and the history of East Austin and other underserved communities. Today, among many other roles, ARA owns and manages the Street-Jones and Snell Buildings on the East 11th Street corridor, which provide essential commercial and retail spaces in the African-American Cultural Heritage District. ARA also owns and manages two restored historic buildings, the Haehnel Building and the Herman Schieffer House, and a dynamic food truck park on the corridor, encouraging further economic vibrancy in the District. In addition, ARA maintains Dr. Charles Urdy Plaza, the creation of which it facilitated in 2002.

With a strong desire to continue the legacy of East Austin, ARA has been diligently preparing a development proposal for Blocks 16 and 18 to meet and/or exceed the Urban Renewal Agency's standards for accepting an unsolicited proposal, as well as, your development priorities for the corridor. On September 2nd, City Council approved [Resolution #20210902-048](#), which in conjunction with providing substantial tools to achieve a more robust manifestation of the African-American Cultural District, also outlined priorities for the Cultural Heritage District. ARA's proposal addresses the majority of the priorities articulated in the September 2nd Resolution.

Current criteria prohibit the Urban Renewal Agency from accepting ARA's unsolicited proposals because it requires modifications to the current zoning regulations. City Council is scheduled to consider proposed modifications to the East 11th Street Neighborhood Conservation Combining District (NCCD) on October 21st. ARA support the URA's recommended modifications, which gives the most flexibility for development within the NCCD. Upon City Council approval of the proposed modifications, ARA will finalize its proposal for submittal shortly thereafter.

We understand that the URA is currently preparing a time-consuming process to conduct a community engagement initiative, develop a Request for Proposals and scoring matrix, and initiate a solicitation process to select a responsive proposal. At a minimum, this would result in a year-long process before a responsive proposal is selected. Alternatively, ARA's unsolicited proposals that are in compliance with priorities identified by both the URB and City Council's [Resolution #20210902-048](#) would require approximately 60 days to review and accept once received.



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In closing, we strongly support the URA's recommended modifications to the 11th Street NCCD and would encourage that the most expedient and respectful process is selected to develop the remaining two Urban Renewal blocks in the African-American Cultural Heritage District.

We look forward to collaborating with the Urban Renewal Agency in fostering a thriving Cultural Heritage District for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. L. Smith", is written over the printed name and title.

Gregory L. Smith
President & CEO