

Hello Honorable Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, City Leaders and City Staff -
Hopeful New Year to all and y'all.

I am writing on behalf of the EMLK Combined Contact Team in regards to the Regiene Rd. case with Leah Bojo representing the developer for this case. With all that everyone has accomplished in 2021, it's important we give some helpful details here to get everyone up to speed.

We have all been working super hard on this development case. From the onset of the planning commission hearing to the current city council first reading this case has proven to be complex and confusing at times. **First, we apologize for any confusion that the community was initially in approval with the development. We thought we were making progress in the negotiations to provide full community benefits in exchange for a significant rezoning of this size and height.** As we went along, we were informed that the community was not satisfied with the negotiations for this project. In fact, the day these decisions were being made City Council voted against the staff's recommendation to keep the building at about 125 feet versus the 275 feet. Also, we were informed by staff that these negotiations were still being worked out the day that Reading 1 went through at city council. Former Mayor Pro Tem Natasha Harper Madison was really sick that day and working from her home bed. Prior to the planning commission moving this project forward to city council with no recommendations, the discussion was stuck on a beer tower and did not have the time to go through staff's recommendations at the planning commission. In fact, we were all surprised. Before this meeting at the planning commission, we had another meeting with planning commissioners letting us know we were not asking for enough community benefits. In fact, everyone was quite impressed that no one was completely shutting this project down. Everyone knew that negotiations needed some work.

Collectively, as five strong women on this contact team, we have come up with negotiations that would make sense for the community to help with anti displacement solutions and help with securing more real affordable housing and real affordable commercial. We have also worked on being real patient with Leah as we have had the discussions. Her only answer to not working with the community on further negotiations is that this would be a slippery slope. We even kindly asked to speak with the developer with which the developer declined to speak with us directly according to Leah. Leah was willing to do a LOI aka as a letter of intent which holds no validity unless you are willing to have this set up with Travis County. By which Leah declined to have the LOI set up with Travis County. The intention was to return to negotiation discussions once the project progresses. Later on the day of Reading 1 passing City Council, we confirmed that the LOI holds no real binding power with very helpful Austin city council staff.

We took everything into mindful consideration. Especially the words of our Mayor, Lauren, Commissioners, additional city council leaders and more. We are simply not getting what the community deserves for what this project is about to become. Even with the 10,000sq ft of affordable commercial.

We clearly understand after several contacts and meetings that you as leaders cannot do anything when it comes to negotiating community benefits with the community. However, you can do something when we are trying to pull out more affordable housing and affordable commercial space within a development. With no outs if this development switches hands down the road.

We have kindly asked Leah to provide the net price per square feet that this project intends to profit now and over time; and to provide financials. All answers have been no over and over.

Last year at the final 2021 planning commission meeting there was a separate breakthrough development case for the Austin American Statesman area. This gentleman changed the development game being the first developer we know of who will provide the financials to the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem and City Council leaders. This same gentleman did not pressure the planning commission. In fact, he is working diligently with the planning commission to come up with a plan in Austin that makes sense for the community. He is completely transparent. It is a wonderful learning video for everyone involved in development decisions in Austin. He also provides the price per square feet.

We already met with Leah earlier this January 2022. Her answers remain the same, which are not satisfactory to the community. We have gone way above beyond expectations to do our due diligence to confirm what will help our community with anti displacement solutions as projects rise on land that have historically belonged to owners of color. One of these solutions is to channel funding into Dr. Jereka community non profit, Central Texas Allied Health Institute. Another being the Austin Ed Fund and more that will directly impact the community in a positive direction.

As a strong and united team, we are surprised to receive so much push back for the questions we are asking. These questions do not seem unreasonable according to many on that dais and other developers on other projects in our community that we have had the pleasure of working with throughout the years in our heart community. We have also provided examples of community benefits that have been offered on other similar projects. We welcome any guidance and ideas with what else we can do here. Otherwise, **we will be forced to oppose the project because the height and size of the project will lead to negative impact to the community due to displacement, if there are no further negotiations. We request that you oppose the development, or recommend it for 2nd reading only.**

We wish each of you peace, prosperity, good health and well being throughout 2022.

Sincerely,
Angela Co-Chair
EML Combined Contact Team

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Co-Chairs, [East MLK Neighborhood Plan](#) Contact Team
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