

November 2nd, 2022

Wendy Rhoades
Case Manager
City of Austin Housing & Planning Department
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RE: Letter of Support for Zoning Request at 220 Ralph Ablanedo (Case No. C14-2022-0077)

Dear Councilmembers and Commissioners:

As a nearby stakeholder, please accept this letter as my support for the above referenced zoning case. I work nearby on Ralph Ablanedo and am also a member of Crux and love the community. I think you'd be hard pressed to find a more kind, considerate, neighborly bunch than the Austin climbing community, and think the proposed Crux gym would be a great addition to the area. At their south location where I currently climb, they have been active members in their community who have hosted local groups, served as a pickup location for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes, and hosted cleanups in the neighborhood, green spaces and waterways around their property. I believe Crux makes a positive impact and builds connection wherever they put down roots. I understand concerns around traffic but if it is helpful I personally have not found current traffic to be an issue, and while any new build in the area may increase traffic, it seems like a gym would produce less traffic than an apartment building or another similar build.

Thank you,

Cali Chidester
512-627-4939

November 1, 2022

City of Austin City Council

Re: Zoning Case Number C14-2022-0077 – 220 Ralph Ablanedo Drive
(the “**Property**”)

Dear Council:

We are property owners who live directly adjacent to the Property on Ralph Ablanedo in the Park Ridge neighborhood. We live with a constant barrage of roadway noise because of the nonstop traffic on Ralph Ablanedo.

We object to any classification of zoning that does not preserve the 300 trip per day conditional overlay currently established on the property or the rezoning to a category that is incompatible with residential uses, as set out in the following principles of the City of Austin Zoning Guide:

- Zoning should satisfy a public need and not constitute a grant of special privilege to an individual owner; **the request should not result in spot zoning.**
- Zoning should promote the policy of **locating retail** and more intensive zoning **near the intersections of arterial roadways or at the intersections of arterials and major collectors.**
- Granting the **zoning should not in any way set an undesirable precedent** for other properties in the neighborhood or within other areas of the city.
- Zoning changes should promote compatibility with adjacent and nearby uses **and should not result in detrimental impacts to the neighborhood character.**

The Zoning Guide further defines CS – General Commercial Services as:

General Commercial Services district is intended predominately for commercial and industrial activities of a service nature having operating characteristics or traffic service requirements **generally incompatible with residential environments.**

The Neighbors request that the City Council deny the application based on above zoning principles and on the plain language of Item 3, Page 3 of the Neighborhood Traffic Analysis (the “NTA”):

- 3. The City Council may deny an application if the neighborhood traffic analysis demonstrates that the traffic generated by the project combined with existing traffic exceeds the desirable operating level established on a residential local or collector street in the neighborhood traffic analysis study area.**

The NTA does not deny that current traffic on Ralph far exceeds the desired level of 1200 vpd by more than 600%. Nor does the NTA indicate the abysmal condition of Ralph, with potholes that pose hazards to all traffic, especially to the first responders. The Austin Traffic Department will not commit to putting Ralph on a priority improvement list, even after being pressed by Commissioner King at the zoning hearing. The NTA gathered information on only one day, June 15, 2022, and we dispute the accuracy of the numbers. The NTA also does not account for the traffic that will be generated by the 450-unit multi-family development currently under construction at Ralph and Cullen Lane

Applicant has lobbied the City and our neighbors with a kumbaya story of how this development will become a beloved hub of community and culture, and of all the good and wonderful things they do in the community. We do not doubt their sincerity and belief in their story, but what they are saying really

means the gym should be teeming with people from 6am to 11pm Monday through Sunday. It can't be a low-attended gym and also be an events center that hosts as many activities as they say.

Additionally, Applicant said that the retail portion of the development is fundamental to the bottom line of the gym. If that is true, then the yet-to-be-identified tenants in the retail strip center will need high turnover, high impact customers to enable tenants to both fund the gym and be profitable themselves. That means the traffic numbers offered by Applicant in the NTA cannot be accurate.

Crux has said at the Zoning Hearing that a possible tenant could be a climbing gear business that would cater to its clientele. Crux did not disclose that the climbing gear tenant is "Crux Gear Shop", which is located **inside the gym** building and not in a separate building at its other locations. It's curious that they would withhold this information from the Zoning Commission. Their website also lists all the food establishments "in the 'hood" of their other locations and not on Crux's property. **Our 'hood** already has all these things too just a few blocks away.

Development is Not Compatible with Residential Uses

The planned development will be at least 50 feet on the side adjacent to the single family homes on Shallot Way in Parkridge Gardens, and the retail center component is planned to be along Ralph Ablanedo adjacent to homes that back up to Ralph in Park Ridge. Applicant claims the building will be beautiful and the heights will articulate in a way that they won't be obvious. Those are just words, and the beauty of a 30,000 square foot, 50 feet tall building is in the eye of the beholder. Over 50% of the neighbors in the surrounding neighborhoods will see nothing but this development from their homes. Applicant has suggested that it will provide landscaping to obstruct the buildings but have not produced any plans evidencing what type of landscaping would be installed that would hide the building.

The business plans to have hours of operation of 6:00 a.m. to 11 p.m, which is wholly incompatible with residential uses.

First Responders

The NTA does not indicate the condition of Ralph, which is 22' wide and laden with potholes that makes travel unsafe for all traffic, but especially for the first responders with stations on Ralph Ablanedo.

Congress Traffic Signal

The traffic signal that was installed at the intersection of Ralph and South Congress Avenue after the opening of the extension of Ralph to the interstate is an unmitigated disaster that causes traffic to backup on Ralph for blocks, and takes numerous changes of the signal to get through. This intersection must be addressed and Ralph must be improved before any more traffic is allowed to be generated onto Ralph.

School Zone

The school zone on Ralph at Peaceful Hill is largely unobserved by drivers and exceeding the speed limit is not enforced (or even observed) by APD. The school zone street signs contradict each other as to the miles per hour and hours of reduced speed, and they are largely obscured by overgrown vegetation. The times of school bus pickups and drop offs do not even coincide with the time on the street signs. The safety of our school children on Ralph Ablanedo apparently is not even a motivating factor to the City's Transportation Department to get this roadway fixed. Their fix was to install crosswalks on Ralph Ablanedo so the children actually have to cross the street twice to get to the school bus instead of just fixing the road and adding sidewalks. The City Council should not allow more development on this road until the City makes a binding commitment to fix all the issues.

The City Council has undeniable and valid reasons to deny the petition in both the Zoning Principles and in the plain language of the traffic analysis. At a very minimum, we ask that you not remove the conditional overly that is currently maintained on the property. Ralph Ablanado is at critical mass and should be deemed a dangerous roadway in its current condition.

**Sincerely,
Park Ridge Neighbors who are Party to the Valid Petition**