

# Quality-of-Life Town Hall #3, Compiled Notes, January 14, 2023

## Opening

## Quality of Life Survey/Discussion

*What is the top priority/issue for you in determining your quality of life?*

### Trust & Credibility/Public Safety

**Hernando “Blue” Delgado Resident:** Military retiree and resident for over 50 years. Trust in our leadership is a main issue. When you put laws into effect, we don’t enforce it. We have observed folks taking packages off of the porch. I can understand why the police can’t address this because they are short handed. This room should be full, folks should be voting, but they are not participating because of lack of trust. I’ve been trying to get folks to get their [COVID-19] shot, to go vote, and to go to a meeting. At 80 years old, I hope for changes for the good, I want people to better themselves, and be informed. But we are not coming across to the people at the leadership level.

*In terms of credibility/trust in government, it was 71% during President Kennedy’s time. It has now flipped from 71% to 17%. So what you are referring to is a nationwide issue. It typically is better at a local level, but it is alot harder to get back that trust than to keep it.*

**Senior Resident:** One of the things I have seen over time is that Austin works on wheel that squeaks the loudest. The West side is the rich side. I have found that where we live, on the East Side, change happens very racially. For example, I lived in the Govalle neighborhood where the park had very little resources. Ever since Anglos moved to the area, you see how the area has improved with McMansions and new park areas. Why do they get that when we have been there the longest? The city doesn’t go around and see that this area needs this, they just respond to whoever makes the loudest noise. That is how we have found how the city works. It does not respond to true need, just whoever is loudest and most funded.

### Transportation/Mobility

**Huma, Resident:** Lives in North Austin. Teacher and lover of books, brought a book to share with the group, *The Mitten*. The investors found the City of Austin, and we are losing our serenity and peace as a city. Please think as a layman and plan for a layman. Investors do not live here. We cannot have mansions here for them. We need to learn how to say no to investors, because they are here for the money, not the people. Physical and mental health and the public safety of the people of Austin is at risk. For students at UT Austin, they cannot afford to drive a Tesla, this is a bicycle town. It is becoming a trash town and the U.S. is going down

the drain. I am not a Texan, I moved here in 2008 from Pakistan. Please stop overfilling and overstretching the city of Austin with giant investors. Stop turning this city into Silicon Valley. Invest in local people and people's health and safety so we can have peace and serenity. I am a single lady living by myself and I have no place to go. I thought Austin is lost, but is it not lost. It is being bullied by giant bulldogs.

*In terms of issues concerning growth, what is the top priority (health, safety, transportation, etc)*

Road safety: If you're bringing the luxury condos and Teslas, we are not equipped for this infrastructure. I have lived here for 40 years and I have had three auto accidents here in Austin. I have lived all over the world and have never experienced this kind of traffic and driving

**Zoom Chat Comment:** mutually connected to housing, I'd like to see transportation added in. Housing can be built/acquired but unless the housing public transit accessible, it's not going to be functionally useable for somebody unable to drive.

### Health & Environment

**Schiller, Resident:** Lived in Austin for 30 years. Traffic, public safety, and senior health are main priorities, particularly mental health and physical health issues for our senior communities. For this session, I would like to focus on mental and physical well being. I was born in Taiwan. Over there, people go to the park to do exercises like tai chi, which is a slow motion and low impact exercise. You can see people doing tai chi across the city, and it is accessible for the senior community. I think the City of Austin should let people do tai chi in the park and teach people tai chi. I want to see Austin become the tai chi capital of the U.S. It is possible because we do have a lot of green spaces throughout the city. I have been teaching tai chi for over 30 years. However, PARD has some regulations which makes exercising in parks difficult. This includes requiring a license and permit to practice and teach exercise, which is totally wrong. We should allow people to practice and breathe the cool air to improve their health.

**Hanna Huang, Resident:** Austin Asian American Film Festival Director and Cultural Community Organizer. Priorities are community building and mental health for BIPOC communities, including our Asian communities.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Health options should be made closely available to the rural areas especially since so many people are being pushed out to the areas

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I would love to see more spaces for organized sports for children. Anything that would support my children's health and development. I understand more centrally located housing is more costly but it's where I find more opportunities for my sons. If public transit became a more convenient option, I wouldn't have a car, I would save on gas, car insurance and car note.

## Housing/Affordability

**Resident:** Born and raised in Austin for 35 years, went to Huston-Tillotson University. Seen a lot of changes and they also have been a part of the change. Small business owner. Austin has always been a melting pot. But we are losing the soul of the city because it is so money-driven. I just recently purchased a home in the 78742 area and the cost of the home was astronomical. I wouldn't have been able to afford it if I wasn't in a two-income household. I have two kids and the schools are terrible. I went to schools everywhere as a kid so I know the system. I had to put my kids in charter schools to get a quality education. And the quality of life is deteriorating.

**Vince Cobalis:** Affordable housing is a major problem for Austin because prices are rising so much. But I am concerned with rental housing, because that hits people at the margins. Even if you provide affordable homes to buy, you need to also make rental properties affordable so folks don't end up on the streets.

**Ivanna Neri, Member of District 4, Up Together Representative:** Up Together has been hosting pilot programs across the country to provide unrestricted cash transfers to people living in undervalued communities. Up Together has had a presence in Austin since 2018. Through conducting these pilots, we were able to see how nearly half of the households reduced their overall debt, with 53 percent cutting debt by 75 percent or more. 6% of renting participants were able to purchase homes. \$1.1M dollars was approved by the City of Austin to have the first government-funded guaranteed income program in the state. Up Together gets calls all the time to be a part of the program because there is a need and there is demonstrated success. This is why I am advocating for the City to make unrestricted cash transfers to be made more widely available for our undervalued communities in the next budget cycle for future guaranteed income programs.

**Ruth:** Grew up in Austin, been here since the 70s. My biggest concern is affordable housing, and I echo a lot of what has been said, coupled with the living wage. The city minimum wage was raised to \$20/hr, which is great, but our City Council got a 40% wage increase when they were already making a nice salary. It just seems like even with the minimum wage going up, people can't afford housing on a 40K salary. Prices have exploded over the past two years especially. I just think affordable housing really needs to be addressed.

**Resident, Follow up:** I also think we need to be mindful when we say affordable. "Affordable" income is based on MFI, we can't call it affordable when it is 60-80% below MFI. There is not a lot of low-income housing, housing for recent graduates or single parent families. I remember when we could get housing on Riverside, but now it just isn't available. I don't understand why this affordable, low-income housing disappeared. What does the city have to say about that?

**Sara Acevedo, Resident:** Single mom, two preschoolers. One of the things most important to me is anything enhancing my children's health and education and eventually employment opportunities. I really want to speak to the single mom struggling to find affordable housing. We

need quality, affordable housing so they have extracurricular, sports, and infrastructure to support social skills. It is important that these things do not get lost.

**Resident:** The city also needs more resources for Black and brown folks living in East Austin, especially our Black and brown seniors. They can't even afford the taxes on their properties. They should not have to risk losing their homes, that is not fair. This is important because these longstanding homes are opportunities to build generational wealth. We are being pushed out and no longer have access to the services and culture in that area.

**Schiller:** As part of the Network of Asian American Organizations (NAAO), I have also seen that there are a lot of young artists living in Austin. This creative community can't afford the big auditorium and other large-scale rental spaces to perform and create. This is why we need additional funding for Phase Two of the Asian American Resource Center, so that we can provide different, affordable options for our creative community.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Hi! Born and raised Austinite. The issue with the quality of life is the cost of living skyrocketing while the pay is trash. The schools are terrible also. Austin needs to get back to slogan that use to describe our city beautifully: Keep Austin Weird, meaning we support and local businesses, not all or these investors and corporations that are causing the rising cost

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Top priority: Cost of Living. Apartments raise rent 30% in one year.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I am a single mother. I had to go back to school to be able to get a better job and break out of the poverty. I completed certification at ACC for Computer Programming and learned Web Development by myself. I've been searching for a job for over 6 months, applied for over 200 tech positions and still was not able to find a job. Even for entry/junior level position they require 2-3 or 3-5 years of experience. There are so many Tech companies but only few of them offer training and most of them come to Austin with the employees from California, they aren't offer that many job opportunities for locals.

### Senior Services

**Resident:** Came to Austin from Bastrop 60 years ago, and volunteers regularly. Her and her husband were on the committee advocating for the Gus Garcia Recreation Center to be built on this side of town. They live on the edge of the county and it took 30 years to get the Center opened. She teaches exercise to seniors at Gus Garcia. We need a senior activity center on this side of town. The city has turned a deaf ear to the senior community and this was amplified during the pandemic. At Gus Garcia, we want to see seniors at their home longer. We have been paying taxes for a long time, yet seniors are being left out and it is very upsetting to see money going to everyone except for our community. We don't have a computer or don't always know how to use one. Therefore we couldn't participate in all of the Zoom activities during the pandemic.

*We do have commissioners from the Commission on Aging. What are the key priorities you'd like to share with them?*

I'd like to see more activities for seniors, and education initiatives so they can catch up. I am trying to stay upright for as long as I can. I have found through my life that the commissions will hear you out and they write it down but it still goes down by the wayside because it is just a commission. So we need actual provisions and action. There are only three senior activity centers and they are all too far away for us to get to.

*Schiller: I'd like to circle back to the lack of action taken in commissions. We need action, not just to be heard. What are the follow-up actions we can take after these conversations? We should make a list of actions that need to be taken, and even if they can't be met, we should identify why (budget, etc)*

*City Council is not obligated to respond to city commission recommendations.*

**Janee, Chair of the Commission on Aging:** *We've got Jackie and Helena here, so reach out to them. Discussed the Quality of Life Survey.*

**Huma:** I am not older yet, but I am disabled. It took so long for me to get approved for in-home care. I finally got approved and the insurance company gave me care company names, but aides are not available. There is a staff shortage because the pay is too low. These companies even recommended that she try to find a friend or family member that can get paid through the agency and then take care of them. The pay is only \$8-\$9/hr. Nobody can help me for that wage and I don't know what to do. I can't stand for too long so I can't wash the dishes. It took a year and half to get approved for the care, but now I can't find any agency with employees because of poor pay. Domestic care/home care is another issue. How can we fix that?

**Commissioner Jackie:** *There are several organizations that will provide navigation support that can help point you in the right direction.*

**Zoom Chat Comment:** We have not done a good job at protecting our seniors at all

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Does the city have an interdepartmental strategy for aging in place/ senior services?

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Pay community liaisons to go into the neighborhoods to get the data needed in order to help those vulnerable citizens get the access they deserve. That's a starting place for those who don't have Internet access or help. Pay them as city employees with the minimum being \$20 per hour

**Zoom Chat Comment:** The Commission on Aging requested community health workers and care navigators for older adults in last budget, but was not funded. There are limited community health worker services for older adults at one Foundation Communities location

## Budget Presentation

*What is included in the “Other Revenue” section of the General Fund?*

Fines, fees, and other random revenue. That includes parking tickets. Fees from programming, paying for a swimming lesson, etc. Can include parking.

*Kirk Yoshida AAPI QoL: How is the city dealing with the 3.5% cap on additional revenue, since that has impacted the amount of money spent on quality of life initiatives.*

In 2020 the cap on additional revenue went from 8% to 3.5%. In response, we have really been striving to cut our costs to ensure a structurally sound budget. With COVID and other downturns we have still seen a lot of growth in sales tax revenue with ARPA and COVID relief which has helped us. We are planning to keep that cap in mind as we develop our financial forecast.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Visualizing strategic initiatives of each department along with the overlapping departments that would be needed to achieve the aims - The budget presentation isn't clearly linked to the strategic aims. This creates frustration and gaps in communication and reflects why the community FEELS as though these meetings are not reflected. There also is no SWOT analysis of each department, its budget and its strategic aims. I've learned nothing about the city budget from this presentation that assists in giving clear feedback.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I'd be interested in a SWOT analysis added in

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Curious why the policing budget is so large and if there are plans for oversight of both spending and effectiveness?

## Quality-of-Life Town Hall #2, Compiled Notes, January 11, 2023

### Vanessa Fuentes Remarks/Opening

- Entering a new chapter in 2023
- Speaks on the importance of community engagement
- She participated in this process prior to council service
- Emphasizes affordability, particularly for the senior community, that is difficult to grow old in Austin

### Quality of Life Survey/Discussion

*Based on the survey participation, what was the most important priority for you in terms of budget spending?*

## Affordable Housing/Anti-Displacement

**Adrian Macias, Student at ACC and part-time youth coordinator for PODER.** There is a low-to-moderate income families. With skyrocketing rent and very few renters' protection, the city has created a severe housing crisis in the Austin metro area. Home ownership is no longer available for low-to-moderate income families. Families, businesses, and long-standing communities who have been in Austin for generations are being displaced, and those that stay have little money for food, education, and basic needs as rent keeps building up. One out of three neighborhoods in Austin are in risk of gentrification, it will only keep building up as the city grows and rent keeps going high. You need to make sure that the City Council is implementing the recommendation put forward by people of color, review "The People's Plan" and the UT "Uprooted" study. If you do not act now, in the future there might not be a need for the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Commission—we will all be displaced.

**Monica Guzman:** It is difficult to put one priority above the other, as the systems are interconnected. As a Board member at Caritas, they have seen that it is important to start with housing (as opposed to other priorities like job security). We need access to quality, *healthy* housing first and then have access to jobs that pay enough for families to live in Austin.

**Susana Almanza:** The purpose of the Project Connect Anti-Displacement Acquisition Program (ADCAP) is to provide community-based 501 c3 non-profit organizations with fund to acquire real property for the development, preservation, and renovation of affordable housing to be leased or sold to low-income households in gentrifying areas within one mile of propose Project Connect rail and bus lines. We must demand that the programmatic affordability guidelines listed in the ADCAP be de-defined. We must remove the reliance on HUD MFI criteria which set a 60% MFI for rental housing and 80% MFI for ownership. There are no legal requirements to use HUD Median MFI guidelines. Most resident being displaced live at 20%-40% MFI. For example, MFI for Montopolis is different from the MFI for Travis County. 2019 ACS data, the per capita income for Montopolis is \$20,859 and the median household income is \$42,344. Our overall poverty rate is 26.4%, our childhood poverty rate (under 18) stands at 30% and the poverty rate for seniors (over 65) is 32%. These numbers reflect increases in both population and income caused by already occurring gentrification. Again, redefine the programmatic affordability guidelines in the ADCAP. Stop this Displacement!

**Deborah:** There is a lack of deeply affordable housing for low-income folks, particularly for the disabled community. People with disabilities are deeply impoverished and are often living on the edge of homelessness. This also includes our senior communities. We need our city programs and budget to prioritize these communities more impacted by poverty with deeply affordable spots for city housing.

**Frances:** A lot of the issues we are seeing are happening in Dove Springs and North Austin in the 78752/3/8 zip code areas. If we don't make the right recommendations or changes, these residents are and will continue to be displaced. Even our most active community advocates can no longer afford to live here, including myself. As someone who lives along the Pleasant Valley

corridor, she faces a very real possibility of being displaced as a result of the density initiatives spearheaded by the city. Accommodations are prioritizing newcomers who want downtown access instead of the communities that have lived here for generations. This particularly impacts our senior community, who are likely to lose their home to the city when they die instead of being able to pass it on to surviving family. ‘

*In addition to density initiatives, what are other factors that lead to displacement?*

Income available is not compatible with the housing available. One bedroom is \$1800 while folks still make \$10/hr. These folks have to choose between paying the light bill and feeding their children. We are losing the people that have created a culture in our neighborhoods. That is not a fair trade for the capital the city is gaining from newcomers.

**Emile (sp?) Rodriguez:** As a resident from the Dove Springs community, it is sad that so many people are being displaced. I know a lot of people who are used to living in more expensive cities come to Austin thinking it is great and affordable. Yet how can a single mother with three kids afford an apartment that costs \$2k per month on a \$12/hr salary? I am the mother of a child with special needs and I was evicted in the middle of the pandemic. I know a lot of other families like this, particularly single mothers and elderly folks who don't have transportation access and are living on the edge of homelessness. Mothers have to move from school to school, which is really emotionally hard for the state of the kids. And while I am able to advocate and protest, I am also a citizen. Imagine if I was a refugee? The services provided are not always available to folks without the right status. The priority seems to go to the investors as opposed to our communities, it is a beautiful city but they are leaving the low income families in the streets. They look at us like numbers, the survey should take into account these lived experiences of what we are going through as single parent families.

**Senior Resident:** I am over 70 years old and I never thought I would be worried about where I can live at this age. Most of the homes are all taken now and I'm too old to move elsewhere. I worry about when I get too old to drive, how will I get around?

**Zoom Chat Comment:** the city needs to provide more deeply affordable spots

**Zoom Chat Comment:** We can no longer live with those salaries under the very expensive rent and you could not survive with your children if you are a single mother or eat or pay rent to not live in the street.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Community Land Trusts should move up the list of options to provide create affordable housing.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Austin is about to have a lot of homeless people with such low wages and such high rents.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** Increasing housing affordability issues also significantly impact available workforce, often more significantly in social service arenas, personal attendant

childcare, support services for older adults, etc. including city services. Without addressing these affordability issues, potential solutions for public safety, education, employment, basic needs, mental health, social engagement and family support issues cannot begin to be addressed.

### Transportation/Mobility/Project Connect

**Robin:** As a person living with a disability, they rely on the bus system for transportation. If CapMetro moves bus stops suddenly, it drastically impacts their ability to move throughout the city to access the services and resources they need to survive. Public transportation is a lifeline for so many people and it is terrifying to consider bus stops and routes being removed and altered. For example, when the 240 bus was removed from their partner's neighborhood, that made it impossible for them to live with them. When addressing housing affordability, we need to center accessible housing and mobility. That is why transportation is their number one priority.

**Pedro Hernandez, PODER Community Organizer:** On the Project Connects website you state that your goal is to create a "comprehensive transit system expansion that will help transform Austin into one of the most sustainable, inclusive and innovative regions in the country." This project was created and funded on the rhetoric that it will center and expand equity in Austin. Additionally, Project Connect is to be evaluated by Equity Tools. Using the equity framework, it is important to evaluate who the rail is serving. Your rail fare prices are unaffordable, they are \$7 for a daily pass, as opposed to the \$2.50 daily bus pass. This means that working class communities of color are unable to ride the light rail. This is textbook definition of race-based discrimination, as the high cost is an inequitable barrier for low income and communities of color. It is also precisely those low income and communities of color in East Austin who rely on public transport for going to work, school, running errands, etc. Therefore we need access to this form of transportation, more so than choice riders. We are asking you to lower the rail price from \$7 to \$2.50 to match the cost of a daily bus pass. This is crucial in order for Project Connect to be accessible and inclusive.

**Huma, Resident:** They are a teacher and life coach for kids. I don't feel safe in Austin at all, physically and mentally. Their health depends on the surroundings and planning at large. Traffic is a concern. Why do investors/outside care for Austin? Money. We have to remember that TX is a cowboy state and Austin is its capital city. We are turning Austin into Silicon Valley, we are seeing homelessness and trash. They don't like seeing these things and they tell folks to not come to Austin because they think Austin is a trashy city. Are we stretching the limit of Austin as a city?

**Zoom Chat Comment:** It is estimated that 100 cities around the world offer free public transit, with many of them in Europe. But recently, cities across the U.S. have started considering this.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** The North Central Community Clinic was planned at its specific intersection location because there was (at the time both a 240--and a full 392 route. That

organization said capital metro never contacted them for potential impacts prior to implementing 'remap'

## Health & Environment

**Ana Aguirre:** One thing that is missing from this survey is prioritizing the environment. Low-income residents may be poor, but we don't deserve to live in a poor environment. The city should be doing *for us* not *to us*. East Austin has a heat island, a tree canopy that is degrading, poor sidewalks, and this area has a high level of industrial zoning. We have to breathe poorer air as poor people. The city is making decision about the land development code and we need to pay attention. While a lot of affordable housing options only provide 10% of units at 80% MFI, we have been advocating for 10% at 50% MFI. The city also needs to pay attention to decisions made around housing compatibility. More expensive homes are located at a higher elevation whereas the drainage and runoff impacts the lower-income homes at the lower elevation. We also need to pay attention to short-term rentals, as these are investment properties that aren't made available as a solution to our housing crisis. These communities are rarely at the stakeholder table when city staff take their meetings. When it comes to determining quality of life, we should be centered as the stakeholders.

**Valerie Menard, PODER Project Director for Colorado River Conservancy:** I am asking you to make two things a priority in 2023:

1. Expanding Watershed Overlay Ordinance to cover all of East Austin

The biggest environmental threat to the poor and the working poor in East Austin is development. Judging from the platform of our recently elected mayor, that threat is about to ramp up with even more smart growth that will continue to displace communities of color. Companies like Tesla, Endeavor, and Meredith Properties have purchased multiple acres of lakefront property in East Austin. An unprotected and vulnerable area, it is critical that we do what can be done to offset damage from the impending development. The Watershed Overlay Ordinance is one way to do so but it currently only extends to Pleasant Valley Road, leaving a large portion of East Austin unprotected. We would like the city to expand the ordinance to the city limit and then to work with the county to expand coverage to the county line. This will not stop development but it will provide a little protection to the river and neighboring communities from environmental degradation, brought on by impervious cover and traffic.

2. Following up on the environmental equity plan requested by former Council Member Kathy Tovo

Regarding the Desired Development Zone, the ordinance has directed polluting development to East Austin for decades through a lack of regulations that offers little protection for the environment. The Drinking Water Protection Zone, adopted at the same time as the Desired Development Zone, protects water in West Austin with more restrictive development regulations. The negative effects on East Austin from these ordinances were quantified in 2020 with the city's State of Our Environment Annual Report. The contrast in water quality that has resulted from them accounts to environmental racism. Last year Council Member Tovo sought

to rectify this by passing Resolution 20220609-061 that directed the city manager to address equitable protection of the environment throughout the city as part of the Watershed Protection Strategic Plan with a plan to be provided by Nov. 1 of last year. We would like you to investigate and report on the status of that plan. Thank you for your time and attention and best of luck in 2023.

**Marian Sanchez, Solar Equity Coordinator/Organizer, PODER:** Working class and people of color communities have historically been underserved, underrepresented and therefore disproportionately overburdened by Austin's energy rate hikes. If Austin refuses to lower rates and/or maintain energy rates at an affordable level, it should work toward providing equitable energy alternatives, such as solar. PODER has begun Solar conversation with UT regarding their land at 2706 Montopolis Dr, and partnerships have been facilitated between PODER, UT's RESET lab (Rapid, Equitable, and Sustainable Energy Transitions), and J40 initiatives to commence this process. Breaking down steep financial barriers to Solar and providing education and career opportunities in Solar are suggested as energy in Austin becomes increasingly unaffordable and inequitable to those who could benefit the most.

PODER's Recommendations are:

1. Create Inclusive Pilot Programs
2. Award grants for community solar projects
3. Develop financial incentives
4. Eliminate income & credit score checks for low-income customers
5. Offer short-term contracts for renters
6. Waive low-income upfront costs
7. Limit monthly fees

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I want to highlight the tremendous support that Council Member Fuentes has provided for Community Health Workers (CHWs) at Austin Public Health. More needs to be done this year.

### Disability Services

**Deborah:** Bilingual Mother of an adult child with Down syndrome and autism spectrum disorder and another adult child with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome. The city has insufficient programming or people with disabilities. Alamo Rec Center and McBeth Rec Center and Dotty Rec Center are the only city locations that provide recreational programming for adults with disabilities and that programming is all segregated (only for folks with disability) and limited. In my experience, my children with disabilities weren't able to participate in other rec center programming as there is insufficient accommodations or support provided to include people with disabilities. If you don't have family who can care for your children, then you can't work, which furthers poverty. After 22, money and funding is cut at the city's rec centers. There are no spaces/spots, they won't serve your child unless they have an attendant that you have to pay for. You can't keep a job and provide an attendant. The waiting list for Medicaid waiver programs in Texas is up to 20 years to pay for an attendant. If your child was not born in the U.S., they cannot even access

those services. Programming needs to expand for both children and adults with disabilities in Austin. We need unsegregated programs, children with disabilities do not need be kept in a separate room or rec center. Work with city council so that all new facilities are looking at inclusion in terms of physical and intellectual disabilities when we are designing buildings and are planning for all Austinites (Deborah)

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I would like to take into account the elderly single mothers with children with disabilities who do not have access to much help due to their different status

### Early Childhood Investment/Guaranteed Income Program

**Michelle Mejia, Early Childhood Health Equity, GAVA:** Traditional childcare isn't working anymore because parents have to work multiple jobs and have to choose between bills and food. As ARPA funds are ending, we need to reinvest in early childhood and prioritize a family-friendly city. Even when families can get rental assistance, the complex will either not accept it, change their lease to month to month, or create a hostile environment for the tenant. GAVA is not designed to be a direct service provider and yet we are often put in this position due to our relationship with the community. Caretakers often work for \$20/day in variable or unstable home environments. Majority immigrant and Black women. We can't have an affordable quality of life like this. We want to see a guaranteed income program that would prioritize caregivers, childcare workers, and mothers because they are a critical part of our community. I have lost so many friends and organizing comrades to displacement. Right now it's not about building affordable housing, it's about paying people's rent.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** The City of Austin must fully develop a Guaranteed Income program. This will address the current inequity.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** A guaranteed income program can address many of these issues and improve economic mobility. How can we get support from council and the new mayor on this or is this a city management decision and if so by whom?

**Zoom Chat Comment:** We should be fully funding the guaranteed income program.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** I really want to come to next years town halls and celebrate how the city took on the challenge and generational poverty was prevented and broken by taking a multi-prong approach which included the implementation of a guaranteed income program.

**Zoom Chat Comment:** How can we get economic development opportunities to the youth . Can we budget a pilot for his to provide access to computers, tablets, etc. Or small grants for youth businesses. They have great ideas and can generate economy, especially with the growth of Web3 etc

## Budget Office Presentation & Questions

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### Joint Inclusion Commission (JIC) Commission Town Hall FY 2022-23 Budget Town Hall Notes, December 15, 2022

#### Quality of life survey/discussion

**Jeremy:** What's issue has greatest impact on your quality of life? (add survey list items)

**Raul:** Community and social support; intersecting issues, housing and health are important but to keep people in the community we need a strong community support network

**Brenda:** Lots of intersectionality in the list but income is the biggest concern

**Participant:** public safety; haphazard construction going on, too much unplanned construction; moved here in 2008, domain used to be relaxing, but now it's too chaotic and car traffic is dangerous/confusing; afraid to drive, especially Parmer/I35 intersection, has already had 3 major accidents leading to concussion/serious injury; stop bringing investors, Tesla impacting the city and drivers of Teslas inconsiderate; too much construction, too many big investors thinking Austin is a gold mine, "life of actual people affected by that"; Tesla, Apple, Dell won't bring happiness and peace to Austin; moved from New Jersey; the city is not livable for regular people

**Jeremy:** What specific steps can the city take to make positive change?

**Participant:** Stop bringing big investors to the city.

**Jeremy:** The city does often incentivize development..

**Participant:** Education opportunities are growing, progress in what is available, private institutions, happy with education in Austin

**Charles:** Are there any issues that are not listed in the survey participants think are important for the city to address?

**Ricardo:** Community and social support my number 1, starting here can open up opportunities around other issues like housing, etc.

How do people in the room see community support positively impacting health, education, etc?

**Ramón:** City of Austin Transportation Dept.

Community support is important especially as we see rent rise, people paying a big percentage of income on rent. Social support is important in keeping people housed. Community support is crucial to keep people connected, can fight the changing demographics of the city by anchoring folks to the people around them.

**Charles:** What should the city do to add to community support?

**Ricardo:** Austin Public Health providing social services through community health workers is the right direction. One thing to consider is how much the city spends on police, for example, compared with community health workers.

A community health worker is a person who's established trust in their community and can provide help to people who may trust them more than the city. They can help connect people to transit, fill out forms, etc; they look at all elements of social health needs and help individuals navigate the public health system.

**Amanda A:** re: what do we want more of from the city? Mental health support. Especially after COVID and for children, what's available is not enough. The process is difficult to navigate, even with insurance it is expensive, what can the city do to improve support?

**Participant:** The city is overloading the capacity of our city's infrastructure, "making the city not for normal people...for rich, elite people." The city is not taking care of people with disabilities or those who can't afford to live here.

The city is small, it's a capital city and needs to be safe for the tourists, for the people who come here. I feel unsafe on the roads, imagine how people who visit feel? It's not safe.

**Jeremy:** 10-15 minutes left for discussion, then we will transition to the budget presentation. The mission of the commission is to get feedback on what to fight for in the budget process, especially for underrepresented folks in town.

**Participant:** My sister and her 5 kids live in Canada, I used to take them around, show them the city. Now I tell them not to come!

**Ricardo:** It's important for the city to consider its support for the equity office, the work it's doing is overarching. Funding is only one aspect, the city can support in many ways because it's critical to the community engagement.

**Charles:** This meeting is starting a process for making recommendations to City Council for the budget next year, which will be voted on in August. We have some people from the City of Austin budget office who will tell us about the process.

## Budget office presentation/questions

**Ricardo:** Why is the budget so focused on police compared with Austin Public Health, especially after COVID

**Erik Nelson, Budget Office:** It all comes down to staffing, police have a lot of staff. City council is looking at that, but since the police have been getting so much of the pot for so long, it takes some time to reflect that shift...city council has tried to shift around those resources...

**Amanda A:** Following up on what Ricardo said, even prior to COVID and Reimagining Public Safety, APD had a lot of vacancies, like 400...what happens to those funds?

**Erik N:** We budget in vacancies, we look at budgets on an ongoing basis, part of the budget office's role is looking at department's budgets and track that money. At the end of the year those vacancy savings are diverted to the general fund and council decides how to use it.

**Participant:** I want my city of Austin back, can never bring back the physical part but you can bring the peace back, keep the money in your hands, not to big investors, think with mind, soul and heart. Help bring back the peace!