

HOME Endorsements

HOME Endorsements (Listed Alphabetically)

AARP Texas
AFL-CIO Austin Central Labor Council
AURA
Austin Apartment Association
Austin Board of Realtors
Austin Chamber of Commerce
Austin Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America
Austin Contractors & Engineers Association
Austin EMS Association
Austin Habitat for Humanity
Austin Infill Coalition
Austin Institute of Architects (AIA)
Austin LGBT Chamber
Capital Metro
Central Texas Associated Builders and Contractors
Central Texas Building Trades
Congress for the New Urbanism Central Texas (CNU CTX)
Environment Texas
Farm & City
Friends of Hyde Park
Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce
Home Builders Association of Greater Austin
Housing Works
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 520 (IBEW)
LiUNA! (Laborers International Union of North America)
National Nurses United
Opportunity Austin
Preservation Austin
Real Estate Council of Austin (RECA)
Transit Forward
University Democrats



HOME Endorsements





November 29, 2023

Dear Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and Council Members,

We, the undersigned business community groups, strongly support the HOME Initiative Phase I and encourage you to vote YES on the item at the December 7th City Council meeting. Our organizations represent hundreds of businesses and tens of thousands of employees who are struggling to afford to live in Austin. This item will move our city in the right direction by helping provide attainable housing options for the people who make Austin the economic success that it is.

If the majority of people in Austin cannot afford to rent or own a home within their means, the cost and availability of housing must change. Our area already has one of the highest median family incomes and it still remains unaffordable to everyone from our tech employees to our hospitality workers. This is an unacceptable status quo. If we do not add housing that is attainable for our employees, we will lose our economic engine. The HOME initiative is an important, but not exhaustive, first step in making housing in Austin more attainable.

Austinites today need to make around [\\$180,000 a year](#) to afford a median-priced home in Austin. The dream of homeownership for hardworking Austinites gets more and more out of reach every year despite our massive successes as a city, and is challenging our ability to attract, recruit, and retain the best and brightest employees.

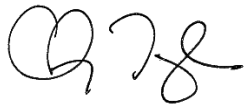
The HOME Initiative Phase I is a balanced way to get attainable homeownership and rental options through the extension of three units per lot while preserving the character of the Austin neighborhoods we love.

The Austin business community is dedicated to attracting and retaining our valued employees, and the HOME initiative will play a pivotal role in achieving this objective. Attainable housing is critical in ensuring a skilled workforce throughout the Austin area. A more diverse housing stock throughout the city can also create new opportunities for local businesses, and more accessible housing in this area will reduce the need for lengthy commutes—a benefit to employees and the whole community.

The business community strongly encourages you to support the HOME Initiative Phase I at the December 7th Council meeting. We stand ready to collaborate with you in your endeavors to expand our city's housing options as we continue to ensure that Austin is the prosperous economic hub that it has been for decades.

Sincerely,

Crystal Smith
President and CEO
Associated Builders and
Contractors, Central Texas
Chapter




Christy Taylor, AIA
President
Austin Chapter of the American
Institute of Architects



Phil Thoden, CAE
President and CEO
Austin Chapter of the Associated
General Contractors of America



Emily Blair, CAE
Executive Vice President
Austin Apartment Association



Emily Chenevert
CEO
Austin Board of REALTORS™



Jeremy Martin
President and CEO
Austin Chamber of Commerce



Brita Wallace
President
Austin Infill Coalition



Mark Duval
CEO and President
Greater Austin Asian Chamber of
Commerce



Silvia Pendleton, CAE
Executive Director
Austin Contractors & Engineers
Association



Taylor Jackson CAE, MPA
CEO
Home Builders Association of
Greater Austin



Ed Latson
CEO
Opportunity Austin



Dianne Bangle
CEO
Real Estate Council of Austin



Bill McCamley
Executive Director
Transit Forward



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aarp.org/TX | [REDACTED] | twitter: @aarptx
facebook.com/AARPTexas

October 24, 2023

Jessica Lemann
Senior Associate State Director, AARP Texas
1905 Aldrich St., Suite 210
Austin, TX 78723

Mayor Kirk Watson
Mayor Pro Tem Paige Ellis
Members of the Austin City Council
Austin City Hall
301 W Second St., Second Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor Watson, Mayor Pro Tem Ellis, and members of the Austin City Council,

I am writing on behalf of AARP Texas in support of the changes to the City of Austin Land Development Code being discussed at the joint meeting of the Austin City Council and the Austin Planning Commission. These changes include allowing three units per lot in single family residential districts, allowing tiny homes and RVs to serve as accessory dwelling units, and eliminating the dwelling unit occupancy limit for residential uses.

The 2021 [AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey](#) of adults age 18 or older shows that most Americans, including the 50-plus, prefer to live in walkable neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing and transportation options — and are close to jobs, schools, shopping, entertainment and green spaces. AARP believes that "Middle Housing" developments can meet these needs. By allowing three units per lot and making it easier for the average resident to add an accessory dwelling unit to their property, Missing Middle housing can become a reality for those who want it.

As the population of older Austinites grow, the importance of creating of a variety of housing options will only increase. Older homeowners who want to sell their residence and move into something nearby that's more affordable, compact, and accessible routinely discover such housing doesn't exist.

With people living longer, more and more older adults will be increasingly reliant on family caregivers. Missing Middle Housing and housing for middle-income earners can ensure their family members can also afford to live in Austin.

AARP Texas believes that these adjustments to zoning laws is an important and vital step to making Missing Middle housing a reality in Austin, and we ask for your support.

I encourage you to review AARP Livable Community's *Discovering and Developing Missing Middle Housing Guide* and *Re-Legalizing Missing Middle Housing Guide* at [AARP.org/MissingMiddleHousing](https://www.aarp.org/MissingMiddleHousing).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica K. Lemann

Jessica Lemann
AARP Texas



Austin City Council Members,

On behalf of Austin EMS Association, I am writing to express our official endorsement of the HOME Act. Actively supporting measures to increase housing supply and affordable homeownership opportunity is fully aligned with the Association's mission to support our members so that we can live in city we serve.

We hope you will help.

As Chief Robert Luckritz has publicly stated, the lack of housing affordable to incoming cadets only worsens an alarming 20% staffing vacancy rate and makes recruitment and retention harder. HOME is intended to make homeownership more accessible and reverse the rising cost of housing that prices our members out of Austin's housing market.

Nearly 78% of EMS medics who work for the city and county live outside Austin because our city has become so unaffordable.

We are alarmed by the widening gap between our salaries and the cost of homes, which threatens the long-term sustainability of our city and the long-term health of Austin-Travis County EMS services. We are also concerned that as more of our members must move farther from Austin, they lose their ability to vote and choose the leaders and policies that accurately reflect their values.

We are essential members of this community. Like Austin's city, county, and state workers, teachers, nurses, and small business owners, we are the life force of this city, and we deserve the chance to thrive and be part of this community as neighbors.

We urge you to support HOME and make sure Austin can be a home for everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Selena Xie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Selena Xie

November 27, 2023

Dear Mayor Watson, Mayor Pro Tem Ellis, and Austin City Council Members:

Austin Habitat for Humanity enthusiastically endorses the adoption of Council Member Leslie Pool's Home Options for Middle-income Empowerment (HOME) with the Planning Commission recommendations which address all issues spelled out in City Staff's Affordability Impact Statement.

Austin urgently needs more housing and more middle-income housing types near jobs, transit, and other public amenities in the city. Unfortunately, our community's outdated land development code creates barriers that make it unnecessarily expensive, time consuming and often illegal to build the housing we need — particularly more moderately priced homes such as townhomes, rowhomes, triplexes, fourplexes and small apartment communities (missing middle housing).

When the vast majority of Austinites cannot afford a home, the restrictions we place on housing and the types of homes we allow must change in order to optimize our land use for affordability.

HOME will help to stabilize Austin's workforce by legalizing more affordable housing types that are more attainable for middle-income workers including teachers, firefighters, EMS medics, nurses, government workers and other essential workforce. HOME will also bolster the wellbeing of Austin families by creating opportunities for seniors to age in place and families to remain together through the legalization of more flexible housing options for intergenerational households.

Austin cannot meet its affordability, climate, equity and transit goals without adding more housing and more affordable housing types. HOME takes meaningful action towards that goal.

While we recognize that there is no single silver bullet to fix Austin's housing crisis, HOME provides a positive step in the right direction. HOME balances the need to build more housing with the rights of existing property owners. Naysayers can rest assured that HOME will not drastically change Austin overnight. Property owners can already build two units on almost any residential lot in central Austin. HOME Phase I would make it legal to build 3 homes — just one additional unit per lot. Moreover, cities develop very gradually, and Austin will continue to have plenty of regulations that limit what can be built beyond base zoning.

Austin is facing a housing shortage that threatens the bright future our city deserves. We urge Austin city leadership to pass the HOME ordinance and set Austin back on the path towards affordability and opportunity.

If you have any questions about this letter please contact Greg Anderson at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Michele Anderson
Chief Executive Officer



Nov 6th, 2023

Austin City Council
301 W. 2nd St.
Austin, TX, 78701

Dear Mayor & Council,

We are writing on behalf of the Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce to express our wholehearted support for the HOME initiative proposed by the Austin City Council. We commend the Council's commitment to addressing the critical issue of housing accessibility, particularly for middle-income earners. This initiative aligns with the chamber's core values of fostering sustainable economic development and creating vibrant communities.

The HOME initiative's emphasis on creating more housing options for middle-income earners is a crucial step toward building a more inclusive and resilient city. By expanding the range of affordable housing choices, we can ensure that the workforce, a vital component of our community, has access to suitable homes. This not only enhances the overall quality of life for residents but also contributes to the economic prosperity of the region.

Furthermore, the provision allowing homeowners to house family members or caregivers on their property or earn passive income is a commendable aspect of the initiative. This not only promotes multigenerational living but also offers a practical solution to support families in times of need. The initiative's recognition of the evolving dynamics of modern households reflects a forward-thinking approach to urban planning.

The commitment to increasing housing supply is essential for addressing the current housing shortage. By doing so, the City Council will not only meet the immediate needs of its residents but also lay the groundwork for sustained growth and development. A diverse housing supply contributes to the creation of resilient communities that can adapt to changing demographic and economic trends.

We appreciate the initiative's alignment with Imagine Austin's goals, especially in creating walkable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types. This approach fosters a sense of community, encourages local economic activity, and promotes healthier, more sustainable lifestyles. By supporting Project Connect transit investment, the City Council is taking a comprehensive approach to urban planning that integrates housing with efficient transportation solutions.

Moreover, the HOME initiative's responsiveness to climate change is commendable. By reducing transportation emissions, slowing suburban sprawl, and incentivizing smaller, more energy-efficient homes, the Council is actively contributing to environmental sustainability. The Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance of environmentally conscious



initiatives, and we believe that the HOME initiative sets a positive example for other cities to follow.

In conclusion, the Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce wholeheartedly supports the Austin City Council's HOME initiative. We believe that this initiative not only addresses the immediate housing needs of the community but also lays the foundation for a more sustainable and inclusive future. We applaud the Council's dedication to creating a city that is both economically vibrant and environmentally responsible.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the well-being of the Austin community.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tina Cannon".

Tina Cannon, CEO Austin LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Cc: Chamber Board of Directors

December 5, 2023

The Honorable Kirk Watson & Austin City Council
Austin City Hall
301 W 2nd St
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor Watson and Austin City Council Members:

Ahead of the Austin City Council's Special Called Meeting this Thursday, I would like to reiterate my enthusiasm for the Home Options for Middle-Income Empowerment (HOME) initiative by way of an additional support letter, submitted on behalf of CapMetro for inclusion as part of the official record.

CapMetro supports the Austin City Council's ordinance amending the City Code Title 25 (Land Development) and the adoption and implementation of the HOME initiative, unlocking transformative potential and opportunity to provide more access to more housing, transit, and positive outcomes for more Austinites. CapMetro cares deeply about the intersection of housing and affordability, and the impact this nexus has on transportation. We know transit thrives in density and density unleashes more opportunities for high-capacity transit and successful equitable transit-oriented development.

As you continue to thoughtfully weigh the many diverse perspectives and meaningfully engage with the various stakeholders invested in our city's future, CapMetro remains a steadfast, collaborative partner in realizing affordability solutions that will ensure more Central Texans can participate in our region's vitality and prosperity. As mentioned in previously submitted comments, we can't have economic mobility without actual mobility, and as cities like Austin grow, it becomes increasingly important to develop policies and programs, which support more options for connected and affordable density.

Thank you again for your continued leadership, service, and commitment to the residents of Austin and our Central Texas region by facilitating a complex, community-wide dialogue about these changes with civility and empathy. We also applaud the City and Council's recent action to eliminate city-required parking minimums in new construction, becoming the largest U.S. city to drop parking-spot requirements in efforts to combat our climate change and affordable housing challenges.

Please continue to count us as a full partner in advancing a more prosperous Austin and Central Texas. If you have any questions, please email me at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Dottie L. Watkins
President & CEO



Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

On behalf of the Central Texas Building Trades, we are writing to express our official endorsement of the HOME Act that will help create more attainable housing opportunities for middle-income residents. CTBT's mission to support our members is fully aligned with efforts to create more housing we can afford, and options to live in the city we're so proud to build.

Our members will be needed for multiple critical infrastructure projects including Project Connect, the new terminal at Bergstrom International Airport, as well as multiple municipal and education district bond projects. We understand the urgent need to address the shortage of housing that is affordable to our members and their families, and we hope you will help by supporting the HOME Act.

HOME takes a crucial first step to making homeownership more accessible, and reversing the rising cost of housing that prices our members out of Austin's housing market. We are alarmed by the widening gap between the average salary and the cost of homes, which threatens the long-term sustainability of our city. We are also concerned that as more of our members must move farther from Austin, they lose their ability to vote and choose the leaders and policies that accurately reflect their values.

We are essential workers in this community. Like Austin's nurses, teachers, EMS medics, public servants, and small business owners, we are critical to building and maintaining this booming City, and we deserve the chance to live and thrive here as homeowners.

We urge you to give this initiative your full support and ensure its successful implementation to make Austin a city for everyone.

Sincerely,

Chap Thornton, President
Ben Brenneman, Vice President
Jeremy Hendricks, Treasurer
Riley Drake, Secretary



**CONGRESS
FOR THE NEW
URBANISM
CENTRAL TEXAS
CHAPTER**

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October 20, 2023

Mayor Kirk Watson
Mayor Pro Tem Paige Ellis,
Council Members: Harper-Madison, Fuentes, Velasquez, Vela, Ryan Alter, Kelly,
Pool, Qadri, and Alison Alter
City Manager Jesus Garza

Dear Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Councilmembers, and City Manager

On behalf of the Board of Directors of The Congress for the New Urbanism - Central Texas Chapter (CNU-CTX) we are writing to express our strong support for the HOME1 initiative proposed by Councilmember Pool to allow 3 residential homes per single family lot and to also express our support for the furtherance of other recent Council resolutions to remove parking requirements, to loosen compatibility standards, and to allow smaller residential lots (to 2,500 square feet).

We support the HOME1 and other Council initiatives for several reasons:

1. Austin faces a housing crunch for lower priced lots. Research conducted by HousingWorks and ABOR, among others, shows that high property values are hurting home owners paying property taxes and renters with leases, and by increasing the housing stock and allowing more small houses we can hope to see housing cost escalation slow down and with luck, level off.
2. The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan states “To accommodate the increasing diversity of Austin area households, more housing options will be needed to address our demographic changes.”
3. We are also informed and guided by the Charter for the New Urbanism which states that “neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population” and also that within “neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.”
4. Evidence presented by the University of California at Berkeley¹ shows that denser housing results in lower greenhouse gas emissions per household compared to less dense housing. This is because with denser housing:
 - a. Homes often share walls, thus conserving heat in cold temperatures and conserving cooling in warmer temperatures;
 - b. Destinations such as schools, shopping, recreation places, jobs, etc. are more likely to be closer, meaning shorter driving trips or more trips made by carpooling, walking, biking, scootering, etc.;
 - c. There is a greater likelihood of nearby mass transit stops, leading to fewer personal motor vehicle trips.

¹ See <https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/> accessed October 2023.

5. These same factors that lead to reduced greenhouse gas emission also mean the residents are likely to save money on transportation and household utilities.
6. Increased housing density will be needed to support the federal grant requests for Project Connect, as more residents near transit generally leads to more transit ridership.
7. Increased housing entitlements do not raise property taxes. TCAD has been very explicit that property appraisals are based on comparables, and a lot with a duplex unit or three units is not comparable to a lot with one housing unit. Comparables are based on actual use of a property and not the zoning or entitlements.

We strongly encourage the City Council to approve HOME1 and to act quickly to implement other measures to boost Austin's housing stock and help provide homes and reduce sprawl and reduce greenhouse gas emissions per household. In addition to zoning code changes to allow more housing, we also encourage the City to look at local amendments to the building code, as well as the City's administrative processes to align the design and production of housing in Austin with the intent of this zoning change. This also provides for lower soft and hard costs associated with housing production.

Very respectfully yours,



Mateo Barnstone, Director
CNU-CTX

Kirk Watson kirk.watson@austintexas.gov
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200 E 30th St.
Austin, TX 78705
Ph: (512) 479-0388
www.EnvironmentTexas.org

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Leslie Pool
Austin City Council
301 W 2nd St.
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Council Member Pool,

I write in enthusiastic support for your HOME Initiative.

Austin is one of America's fastest-growing cities. This growth has brought dynamism to the city, but has also created environmental problems. Because much of Austin's growth has taken place at the urban fringe, the addition of new residents and businesses has caused persistent and worsening problems with traffic congestion, air pollution and water quality, as more undeveloped land is converted into new housing development.

Looking to the future, Austin has a choice. We can continue to sprawl farther and farther outward or we can find ways to accommodate people and businesses within the city's existing neighborhoods.

Focusing new growth in compact, walkable neighborhoods can address many of Austin's growing pains. Done right, compact development can benefit the environment and provide access to types of housing - such as housing in the "missing middle" between high-rises and single-family homes - that can meet Austin's dire housing needs. In fact, this exact approach was recommended in the 2012 Imagine Austin Comprehensive plan and has been consistently reaffirmed by City Council since.

Furthermore, as documented by our 2017 report "Growing Greener,"¹ which reviewed the existing literature produced by academic and government researchers on the environmental effects of different urban densities - compact

¹ "Growing Greener: The Environmental Benefits of a Compact and Connected Austin"
Environment Texas Research and Policy Center, October 2017
<https://environmentamerica.org/texas/center/resources/growing-greener-2/>



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development can deliver tangible benefits for the environment – reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, curbing the flow of polluted runoff into streams and lakes, and protecting natural areas and agricultural lands.

With strong policies to mitigate the local impacts of greater density, such as the city's new green infrastructure requirements and the proposed "Functional Green" program, Austin can develop in a way that will bring lasting environmental benefits. Thank you again for your work on this initiative and your ongoing leadership tackling Austin's environmental needs.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger
Executive Director, Environment Texas

The Mueller redevelopment is an example of a compact, pedestrian-scaled, mixed-use community that will provide homes for 13,000 people close to downtown Austin.



Compact development reduces runoff and can help mitigate floods.

Growing Greener

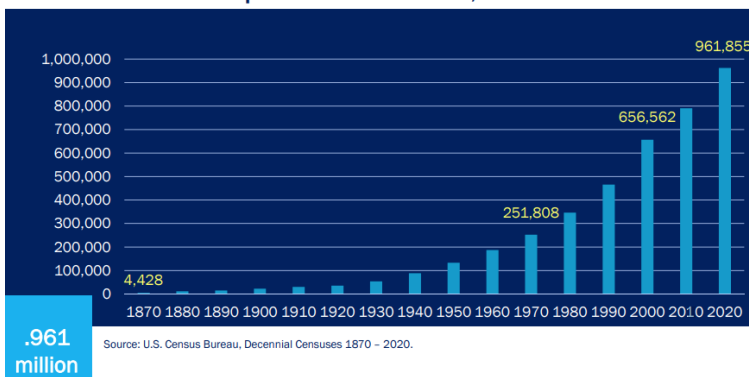
The Environmental Benefits of a Compact and Connected Austin

Compact development can deliver tangible benefits for the environment – reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, curbing the flow of polluted runoff into streams and lakes, and protecting natural areas and agricultural lands. By adopting strong policies to address any local impacts of greater density, such as encouraging the use of green infrastructure to manage stormwater, Austin can develop in a way that will bring lasting environmental benefits.

Austin Is Growing and Sprawling

The city of Austin is experiencing explosive population growth, which has brought both dynamism and environmental problems. Compact development is a greener way for Austin to grow.

Austin Population Growth, 1870 to 2020



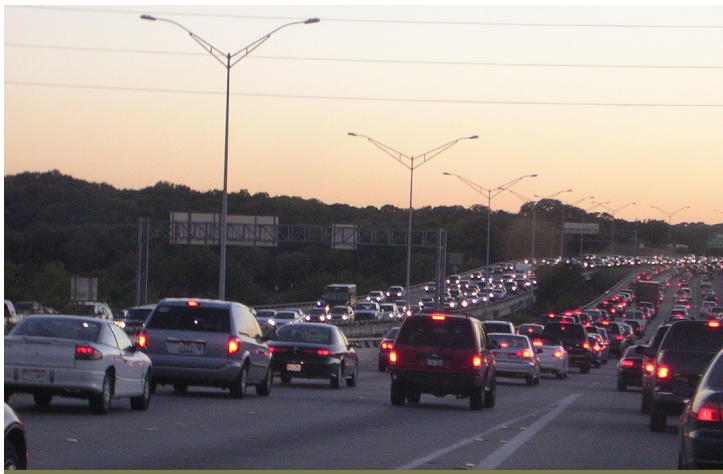
What Is Compact Development?

Compact development focuses regional growth in population and jobs within mixed-use neighborhoods that feature a variety of types of housing, ranging from single-family homes and townhomes to apartment buildings. Compact development enables growth while minimizing conversion of natural land. Successful compact development can yield a high quality of life, creating walkable neighborhoods with open spaces, interconnected streets, access to public transit, and the ability to walk or bike safely and enjoyably.

Compact Development Delivers Environmental Benefits

Compact development benefits the environment in numerous ways:

- **Water quality:** Compact development reduces the total amount of land required for development and produces less runoff to the watershed than sprawl for the same amount of housing capacity.
- **Energy use and greenhouse gas emissions:** People living in compact neighborhoods drive 20 to 40 percent less than those living in sprawling neighborhoods, using less energy and reducing air pollution. Duplexes and low-rise apartments also use half as much energy as single-family homes.
- **Water use:** Reducing lot sizes can reduce demand for watering and other outdoor uses, which accounts for more than a fifth of Austin's annual water consumption.
- **Flood risk:** Taller buildings accommodate more people while covering less land. Compact urban development minimizes the amount of paved land at the watershed scale, which decreases runoff and combats flood risks.
- **Air quality:** Compact cities experience up to 62 percent fewer high ozone days than sprawling cities. Ozone pollution causes approximately 2,100 premature deaths in Texas each year.



Car dependence in Austin is driven by sprawling development patterns and lack of access to public transportation.

Smart Policy Can Reduce Local Impacts of Compact Development

Compact forms of development deliver environmental benefits at the regional level, but may create localized impacts. Through smart public policy, Austin can address many of the local impacts of compact development.

- **Reducing local flood risks and protecting groundwater:** Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) can help compensate for the increase of impervious cover in densely developed areas by using natural drainage processes to capture and cleanse rainwater on-site. GSI features can reduce water pollution and make floods less severe.
- **Improving urban air quality:** Compact development improves regional air quality, but may cause traffic congestion and air pollution on a local level. Improving public transportation, increasing the use of tailpipe emission-free electric vehicles, providing “mobility as a service” that reduces the need for car ownership, and improving conditions for walking and biking can all help improve urban air quality.
- **Fighting the urban heat island effect:** Developed areas tend to have higher temperatures than their surroundings, as buildings and sidewalks absorb and radiate heat. One study focused on development in Houston found that placing shade trees near buildings and using light-colored roofing and paving materials that reflect sunlight could save energy, decrease peak power demand, and cut carbon emissions by an amount equivalent to taking more than 199,000 passenger vehicles off the road.



Well-designed compact development can limit the environmental impacts of urban growth, while creating a wider range of housing options and improving quality of life close to the city center.

Code Changes provide an Opportunity to Shift Away From Sprawl

To accommodate the continued influx of new people to the city while minimizing the increase of developed land, Austin is proposing changes to code. The changes include updates to the number of allowable units on a single-family lot, adjusting minimum lot sizes and parking requirements, the elimination of occupancy limits, compatibility setbacks, and adjusting code that regulates smaller more sustainable housing footprints.

Expanding the areas within Austin where compact and walkable neighborhoods can be built would reduce the pressure for further sprawl, protect our environment, and enhance our quality of life. Austin should adopt code that increases and celebrates neighborhood walkability, provides affordable “missing middle” housing such as townhomes and small single-family houses, and reduces the considerable environmental damage caused by sprawl.

Strategies are available to mitigate many of the potential local impacts of compact development. Compact development should also be accompanied by sustainable public transit, transportation demand management measures, green stormwater infrastructure systems, passive building design, and other policy measures and technologies, to make Austin a sustainable city.



For more information and the full report, please visit:
environmenttexascenter.org

Photo credits: Front — staff photos. Back — right, Jon Lebkowsky via Flickr, CC-BY-SA 2.0. and left, staff photo.



PO BOX 171
AUSTIN, TX 78767
FARMANDCITY.ORG

713-244-4746

OCTOBER 24, 2023

MAYOR KIRK WATSON AND AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL
301 W 2ND ST.
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

Dear Mayor Watson and Austin City Council Members,

Thank you for your consideration of supporting the HOME initiative that will be discussed on Thursday, and for all that you do to remove the burdensome limits to the amount of people allowed to live low-carbon, healthy, affordable lifestyles in the City of Austin.

We strongly support this initiative and urge you not to water it down in ways that will keep people from finding affordable housing options in this City.

Farm&City is dedicated to high quality urban and rural human habitat in Texas in perpetuity. We are a climate change organization that focuses on changing Texas public policies so that the millions of people who want to live low-carbon lifestyles in Texas are allowed to walk to the store, ride public transit to school, and not have to drive so much.

Unfortunately policies at the City of Austin have contributed negatively to our housing crisis – along with county, metropolitan, and state policies – forcing most people to live expensive car dependent lifestyles. The City's continued use of exclusionary zoning limits the amount of people allowed to live in the City to current population plus about 25% of regional growth.

City policy is diminishing the City's share of the region's population, abrogating the City's responsibility to provide for the growing human species on our planet in a more responsible, climate-aware manner, and significantly contributing to the paving over of the hill country. As shown by City of Austin Watershed Department analysis during the CodeNEXT process and the attached EPA report, land use reforms of this type will significantly reduce the future total impervious surface in our region, while actually slightly decreasing the total inside the City, even while allowing significantly more people to live in the City.

The climate costs of exclusionary zoning are profound. Not letting more people live in existing neighborhoods with existing underutilized infrastructure is an extraordinarily unwise choice at this time in history, with what we know very well about climate science and the impacts of housing and transportation policies. The City of Austin should not engage in an anti-science

Farm&City is dedicated to high quality urban and rural human habitat in Texas in perpetuity.



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713-244-4746

position opposed to the overwhelming consensus of environmental groups and policy makers, including the position of the Federal Government and President Biden, urging the City of Austin to abandon exclusionary zoning and replace it with equitable growth strategies. As shown in our second attached report, those living in dense areas in our region are able to live their lives without emitting as much carbon as their neighbors who live in car dependent places. We should remove city limits on the amount of people allowed to not drive so much.

In spite of persistent mis-perceptions – significantly informed by elite projections and a focus on home sale prices – the more dense parts of the Austin region are the most affordable parts of the region, both in terms of housing and transportation costs, as documented in our attached report. Limiting the number of people allowed to live in the City drives up housing and transportation costs for people living in the City and those living in the rest of the region. Displacement is primarily caused by zoning rules that drive housing costs up and accelerate the competition for the artificially limited number of homes remaining in the City.

Our region is growing from 2 to 4 million people with a majority of the additional people expected to be people of color. The Austin City Council should seek to allow as many of those additional people as possible to live within the City in walkable transit-oriented places where low-carbon lifestyles are possible.

The HOME initiative is an important element of a responsible climate and equitable growth policy. While every homeowner can choose to keep their home exactly as they want, the City itself should not enforce broad dictates banning affordable housing types from any neighborhood. As stressed in the UT Uprooted report, allowing low-income homeowners to better utilize their lot, to share their space with other people, is an essential strategy to keep communities connected and preserve the most important character of our City, the people who live here today and their welcoming nature as our human population grows across the planet. Let's not be on the side of exclusion anymore, here in Austin, Texas.

Thank you for all that you do for the people of the City of Austin – past, present, and future – and for your consideration of voting in favor of the HOME initiative.

Sincerely,

Jay Blazek Crossley
Executive Director

Dear Council Member Pool,

Friends of Hyde Park wanted to thank you for voting for the Eliminate Minimum Parking Requirements Ordinance. Without your help Austin would still have excessive parking requirements that would continue to harm housing, affordability, and walkability in our neighborhood and city for years to come.

Friends of Hyde Park advocates for more affordable housing and a more walkable, bikeable, inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and transit friendly neighborhood, which is why our neighborhood association enthusiastically supports the HOME Ordinance. Allowing more housing within our neighborhood will give more people the ability to enjoy our neighborhood, make our high opportunity neighborhood more accessible to more people with lower incomes, and make Austin's future light rail lines more viable since a large portion of the light rail runs next to Hyde Park.

Hyde Park residents want bold, progressive changes to be made to our neighborhood. Friends of Hyde Park collected [physical signatures from over 400 North Hyde Park residents](#) to show the overwhelming support for these types of changes applying to Hyde Park. Our members also overwhelmingly voted (78% in support out of 91 total voters) to change and update the land development code for Hyde Park with similar changes to the HOME Ordinance.

Thank you for your continued effort to make Austin and our neighborhoods better.

Board of Directors of Friends of Hyde Park

Pete Gilcrease
Thomas Ates
Matt Desloge
Teresa Griffin
Tania Oropeza
Scott Snyder



HBA Formal Comments on HOME Initiative

The Home Builders Association of Greater Austin is excited that the City of Austin is taking substantial steps to modernize its code and bringing its land use policies in line with other major U.S. cities. For decades, our city has been unable to keep up with growth due largely to an outdated and antiquated land development code.

Currently, it is possible to build two units on any in Austin. Allowing for three units on a lot will bring gentle, house-scale density throughout the city. This change substantially mitigates one of the largest drivers of home price, by allowing a lot to be developed more efficiently. This, along with other considerations, will help provide much needed housing supply throughout the city, near jobs, and transit. While this change won't transform our city overnight, it is an important first step in combating our affordability crisis.

As with any substantial change, there are critical elements of the ordinance that must be addressed in order to ensure that HOME achieves its intended goals. In this letter, we have provided a high-level analysis of those elements and hope that the Planning Commission will review and resolve them.

Allow for additional floor to area (FAR) for three units

- The stated goal of the HOME initiative is to incentivize three-units on a lot. Considering site conditions like trees and topography, this is already a difficult challenge.
- Without incentives like additional FAR, a builder will likely default to one large single-family house over three-units.
- For example, a three-story home with the same FAR as a two-story home, will actually have less livable once the third-story stairwell is removed from the calculation. Additionally, additional FAR for more units will improve the likelihood that the home has more bedrooms and can accommodate a wider range of families.

Ensure that units are appropriate for families

- According to the National Association of Home Builders, the median home size is 2,200 sq ft. Our city lacks housing of all sizes, including median sized homes that can accommodate a family.
- By placing an artificial limit on the size of a missing middle home, the city runs the risk of pushing out families that would otherwise be able to live in the central of town, near schools and jobs.
- Without access to family-sized housing, families will travel to the suburbs to find the right-sized home for a price they can afford.

Do not apply Subchapter F to two and three units

- Subchapter F was designed to limit the mass of single-family homes. While this ordinance plays an important role in regulating single-family homes, we must recognize that two- and three-unit homes naturally require more space, including height.



- The city will not realize the additional housing supply it requires if regulations designed for single-family homes are also applied to two- and three-unit homes.

Once adopted, calibrate the code to ensure it's meeting the City's needs

- If adopted, Council should direct staff to collect information about the types of homes that are built using the HOME ordinance.
- The City should consider and adopt any tweaks or adjustments to the code once we have a good understanding of its impact on our housing supply.

Ensure other parts of the code don't limit the HOME ordinance

- Our land development code is long, complex, and has been amended hundreds of times over the years. There is a *strong* likelihood that other parts of the code might inadvertently limit the positive effects of the HOME ordinance.
- While some of these parts are identifiable right now, others might not be discovered until after the ordinance is enacted. It is critical that policymakers and staff consult with practitioners and experts to ensure that the code is meeting its intended goals.
- Additionally, policymakers should consider including a blanket preemption clause that enables the HOME ordinance to supersede any other conflicting or restricting parts of the land development code.

Important things to remember

- Site limitations outside of the HOME ordinance, such as impervious cover, tree ordinance, topography, etc. substantially impact the yield of any given lot. Just because a lot is entitled for three units does not mean that property owner can achieve that level of density, due to many other restricting regulations.
- Any FAR caps that might be adopted are tied to the zoning category, meaning that the FAR limits will apply to projects both inside and outside of the McMansion area.
- The City's tree ordinance, one of the most robust ordinances in the state, is not affected by the HOME ordinance. Every project will still be required to adhere to strict tree protection regulations.
- Similar to the tree ordinance, the City's building codes related to health and safety issues, like distance between buildings, construction methods, sprinkler requirements, and others, still apply to all new construction.

Taylor Jackson
CEO
HBA of Greater Austin

David Glenn
Sr. Director of Government Relations
HBA of Greater Austin

Taryn Feigen
Communications Director
HBA of Greater Austin

Don Baylor, Jr., Treasurer
Lafayette Square Holding
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Quincy Dunlap
Austin Area Urban League

Catharine Echols
Department of Psychology, UT at
Austin

Frances Ferguson
Mueller Foundation

Parisa Fatehi-Weeks
Chair-Elect
Indeed

Michael Gerber
Housing Authority of the City of
Austin

Julian Huerta
St. David's Foundation

Diana McIver
DMA Companies

Terry Mitchell
MOMARK Development

Cile Montgomery
VMware

Karen Paup
Texas Housers

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Cookie G. Ruiz, C.F.R.E.
Ballet Austin

Kathy Tyler
Austin Women in Housing

Executive Director
Nora Linares-Moeller



HousingWorks
AUSTIN

October 24, 2023

Dear Mayor Watson, Austin City Council Members, and Austin Planning Commission Members:

HousingWorks Austin supports adoption of the initial set of proposed amendments to the land development code to implement the Home Options for Middle-income Empowerment (HOME) initiative and the removal of dwelling unit occupancy limits in the land development code that are currently under consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council.

HousingWorks believes the intent of proposed amendments would allow for the development of a greater diversity of housing types and living arrangements than currently allowed in single-family zoning districts, which would increase access to attainable housing opportunities for households at a range of income levels, especially for first-time home buyers and seniors wishing to remain in their communities, and increase housing opportunities in high opportunity areas.

We further recommend that the Council consider providing direction to City Staff to increase access to programs that ensure low and moderate income homeowners are able to avail themselves of increased development potential of single-family lots and are protected from predatory real estate activities. Such programs might include financial counseling, access to capital, legal and technical assistance, and ensuring clear titles are held by property owners.

We thank the City Council for their leadership on these issues and hope our recommendations can help improve the efficacy of the proposed amendments. If you have any questions, please email me at nora@housingworksaustin.org and/or John-Michael Cortez, Advocacy Committee Chair, HousingWorks Board of Directors at jmvcortez@gmail.com.

Best Regards,

Nora Linares-Moeller
Executive Director



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

LOCAL UNION 520

4818 East Ben White Boulevard, Suite 300 • Austin, Texas 78741
512.326.9540 • Fax 512.326.9596

November 30, 2023

Re: HOME Initiative

Dear Mayor and Members of the Austin City Council,

As a member and representative of IBEW Local 520, and I am writing to express our strong support for the HOME initiative currently under consideration by the Austin City Council and we ask that you prioritize and expedite its implementation.

The IBEW prides itself in being a strong path to prosperity and security for working class people and we appreciate the role that home ownership plays in realizing that dream for our brothers and sisters in Austin. The HOME initiative aligns with our commitment to fostering a community where all individuals, no matter their past hardships, have the opportunity to live in safe and attainable homes.

The shortage of available housing in Austin has become a pressing issue, impacting not only the well-being of our residents but also the overall fabric of our community. By supporting the HOME initiative, the City Council can address this challenge head-on and make a meaningful impact on the lives of countless individuals and families.

Housing is not only a basic human need, but it is also integral to the overall prosperity and inclusivity of our city. Stable housing allows individuals to thrive, contribute to their communities, build a better future for themselves and their families, and, ultimately, lead to a thoroughly sustainable and enriched Austin. As our city continues to grow, this will be a crucial factor in ensuring that existing Austinites are able to share in the increasing prosperity that such growth will inevitably bring.

Furthermore, the integration of housing initiatives that increase our density, such as HOME, can significantly enhance Austin's eligibility for federal transit grants. By addressing housing availability and concurrently investing in transportation solutions, our city stands to improve its both its economic and environmental sustainability as well as its overall livability.

We also recognize that there is a range of opposition to HOME, but the negative results that the opposition are claiming will be a consequence of these zoning changes, from

what we observe, are without merit as those very results are already being produced by the status quo. However, we do recognize that this measure alone, while a necessary step, contains just a few of the large number of changes to our zoning regulations that are very much needed to improve our quality of life. We look forward to working with you all on further improvements to ensure that HOME results in the maximum potential benefit possible for all Austinites.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our perspective. We appreciate the tireless efforts of the City Council in addressing the critical issues facing our city, and we look forward to witnessing the positive impact that the HOME initiative can have on our beloved Austin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Pollock". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ryan Pollock, Political Director, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 520



Dear Mayor & Austin City Council Members,

On behalf of the Laborers' International Union of North America, Southwest Laborers District Council, and Local 1095, I am writing to express our official endorsement of the HOME Act that will help create more housing opportunities for our members. LiUNA's mission to support our members is fully aligned with the Council's efforts to create more housing we can afford, and options to live in the city we're proud to build and maintain.

Construction workers are essential workers to the future of Austin and Central Texas, but sadly our members are unable to afford to live in the places they work. This is making it more and more difficult to find the skilled workers needed to keep our building boom going, so we understand the urgent need to address the shortage of affordable housing for these workers. Home is an important step in ensuring our ability to attract a robust workforce to keep building on our successes.

Your efforts with the recent Mobility and Infrastructure Summit that focused on supporting and training a larger workforce for those big projects is an important piece of a larger picture that must include more attainable housing for those workers. We are all aware that federal dollars are at stake as part of the Infrastructure Bill and HUD's PRO Housing grant programs, both of which help fund Austin's future and support the people who construct it.

HOME takes a crucial first step to making homeownership more accessible, and reversing the rising cost of housing that prices our members out of Austin's housing market. We are alarmed by the widening gap between the average salary and the cost of homes, which threatens the long-term sustainability of our city. We are also concerned that as more of our members must move farther from Austin, they lose their ability to vote and choose the leaders and policies that accurately reflect their values.

We build this city and are vital members of this community. Like Austin's nurses, teachers, EMS medics, public servants, and small business owners, we deserve the chance to thrive and be part of this community as neighbors and homeowners.

We urge you to give this initiative your full support and ensure its successful implementation to make Austin a city for everyone.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Hendricks
Assistant Business Manager
Southwest Laborers District Council – LIUNA

Austin City Council Members,

The National Nurses United (NNU) fully supports the HOME Act to create more housing opportunities. Our mission to support our member is fully aligned with the Council's efforts to create more housing our workers can afford, and options to live in the city we serve.

More nurses are needed for this growing city, especially with the staffing challenges faced by the existing health care providers and with new hospitals and medical facilities coming online. There is an urgent need to create more housing options to attract and retain nurses in Austin, and we hope the HOME initiative will help.

After a 12-hour shift, many of our members commute over an hour to get home; long commutes are not only unsafe after working such long hours but add more transportation costs and take away time with family. These realities drive our nurses to look for jobs outside of Austin hurting recruitment and retention of essential medical personnel for all of Austin's medical facilities.

HOME takes a crucial first step to making homeownership more accessible, and reversing the rising cost of housing that prices our members out of Austin's housing market. We are alarmed by the widening gap between the average salary and the cost of homeownership and rent, which threatens the long-term sustainability of our city. We are also concerned that our members who work in Austin, but don't live in Austin, are no longer able to vote on issues or leaders who represent their values in the community they serve.

We are vital members of this community. Nurses deserve the chance to thrive and be part of Austin as neighbors.

We urge you to give this initiative your full support and ensure its successful implementation to make Austin a city for everyone.

Sincerely,

Celeste Arredondo-Peterson

National Nurses United - Texas

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December 4, 2023

RE: HOME Initiative

Dear Mayor Watson, Mayor Pro Tem Ellis, and members of Austin City Council,

[Preservation Austin](#) exists to empower Austinites to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and meaningful community culture through preservation. In keeping with this mission, **we write to you today in support of the proposed HOME ordinance with the Preservation Bonus and Sustainability Bonus included.** These bonus programs make HOME stronger, in every sense, by supporting the preservation of existing housing and the affordable, sustainable, and cultural benefits that this housing embodies. Furthermore, they have the potential to **bring our community together by bridging preservation and density goals to create more accessible and vibrant neighborhoods across Austin.**

Adopting these bonuses would support the preservation of historic streetscapes paired with neighborhood-scale density. They would make preserving the original house a viable option for homeowners and developers who might otherwise demolish:

- The **Preservation Bonus** would exempt homes constructed before 1960 from a site's FAR for projects adding new housing units to a property. Homeowners or developers could use that FAR for their new housing units in exchange for preserving 100% of the pre-1960 home's street-facing facade, in addition to preserving at least 50 percent of the pre-1960 home's structure overall. Review criteria for these projects must be based on historic preservation best practices, drawing inspiration from the citywide Historic Design Standards approved by City Council in 2022.
- The **Sustainability Bonus** would exempt homes constructed after 1960 from a site's FAR for projects adding new housing units to a property. Homeowners or developers could use that FAR for their new housing units in exchange for preserving 50% of the post-1960 home's materials. This lower preservation threshold recognizes the challenges that this housing type presents.

No one can say that our current land development code fosters a good environment for preservation. The [numbers are clear](#): Between 2010 and 2021, Austin has averaged 514 residential demolitions per year. Within this period Council Districts 3, 9, and 10 each experienced more than 1,000 residential demolitions; Districts 5 and 7 each experienced more than 800 demolitions; and District 1 saw more than 600. Research from [ReUse People](#) shows that the average size of a demolished home in Austin is 1100 sq ft, while research from AIA Austin's Housing Advocacy

Committee shows that new homes, often built in place of the smaller ones, average over 2,800 sq ft. **We are losing older, smaller, more affordable homes to larger, less affordable ones every day.**

Austin's existing tools for preserving these homes have not kept pace with demolitions. Historic zoning for individual landmarks and historic districts is extremely important, but its scope and reach is limited. To date, less than 1% of Austin's parcels are protected from demolition by historic zoning. Since 2013, the City has designated an average of just eight local landmarks each year, and Austin, which has only eight local historic districts, has not seen a new district since the creation of Rogers-Washington Holy Cross in 2020. District 9 and District 3, for example, contain the highest percentage of Austin's older housing stock, with 65 percent and 37 percent of their homes built before 1960. Most of these homes will never become a city landmark or a contributor to a local historic district; we have to create better avenues for their preservation.

The Preservation Bonus is one such solution. **Balancing true preservation with meaningful development entitlements will change the math on what is preserved and what is demolished, and potentially lead to better preservation outcomes than we are witnessing today.** Like City Council's recent [resolution](#) seeking to remove barriers to relocating houses within city limits, the HOME ordinance will keep existing housing out of the landfill and preserve these smaller, older, more naturally occurring affordable homes for Austin's families.

We thank the City Council and the Planning Commission for seeing the value and promise in the Preservation Bonus and Sustainability Bonus amendments. Preservation Austin's work is grounded in the belief that preservation can meaningfully support affordable and sustainable housing outcomes while maintaining our city's history and culture. These goals should not be at odds, and these bonuses are an incredible opportunity to show that this is possible.

Thank you for your service to the City of Austin.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Melissa A. Barry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Melissa Barry, President



Contact University Democrats Leadership Council

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 21st, 2023



www.udems.org

Statement on HOME Act

Austin City Council Members,

As the University of Texas University Democrats, we are writing to express our strong support for the HOME Act, a critical initiative aimed at creating more housing opportunities in Austin. Our commitment to advocating for student needs and interests fully aligns with the Council's efforts to create affordable housing options for those who study and contribute to the city's vibrant academic and cultural life.

As students, we are acutely aware of the challenges faced due to the lack of affordable housing in Austin. The rising cost of living, coupled with increasing tuition fees, places a significant burden on us; many students are forced to live far from campus, which can hinder academic performance and participation in campus life. Affordable housing is not just a necessity for comfortable living; it's a crucial factor in ensuring academic success and overall well-being.

The HOME Act represents a vital step towards making housing more accessible for students, reversing the trend of escalating housing costs that push us out of Austin's market. The widening gap between student budgets and housing costs is not only alarming but also threatens the diversity and inclusivity of our city's student population.

Moreover, the location of housing significantly impacts our ability to engage in local civic and community activities, including exercising our right to vote. Living closer to campus and within Austin will allow students to be more involved in local affairs and contribute to the community more effectively.

As students, we are an integral part of Austin's community. We bring energy, innovation, and a diverse perspective to this city. Affordable housing ensures that students from all backgrounds can study, thrive, and contribute to making Austin a dynamic and inclusive city.

We urge you to give the HOME Act your full support and ensure it is passed by the council on December 7th.

This initiative is not just about building houses; it's about building a more inclusive, equitable, and vibrant community for all who call Austin home.

Sincerely,

University Democrats Leadership Council
University Democrats at the University of Texas