



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION 20231206-005

Date: December 6, 2023

Subject: Land Development Code “HOME” Amendment

Motion by: David Sullivan

Second by: Jennifer Bristol

WHEREAS, testimony was presented to the Environmental Commission on October 4, 2023, that to help reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, Austin needs to increase population density, as demonstrated by modeling conducted by the University of California at Berkeley (<https://coolclimate.berkeley.edu/maps>)¹; and

WHEREAS, these population density increases lead to more shared walls that conserve heat and cooling, thus requiring less energy consumption; higher population density attracts closer business and services, thus reducing travel distances and allowing more trips to be made by foot or bike or other micro-mobility means; and higher population density slows urban sprawl, which protects farmland and wilderness areas; and

WHEREAS, efforts to increase population density will need to be demonstrated in the application for federal money to finance Project Connect’s light rail system and expanded Metro Rapid buses;

THEREFORE, the Environmental Commission supports the proposed Land Development Code “HOME” Amendments to allow more household units per lot, and other measures to increase Austin’s housing stock and resulting population density. Furthermore, this support is conditional on maintaining current protection for trees and current impervious cover requirements and the elements listed below:

The HOME Initiative should be implemented in accordance with [Austin’s Climate Equity Plan](#) to ensure racial and environmental justice in how Austin implements the HOME Initiative on Communities of Color and underserved Austin communities. Special attention should be expended to prevent involuntary displacement of persons or families of low income.

The City should proactively within ninety-days of passage share information about flood insurance and information from FloodSmart.gov via certified mail with residents who live in areas designated as being at flood risk, including areas designated in the Atlas 14 study.

Council shall require all relevant departments to assess the impacts of additional units in single family neighborhoods and the related needed infrastructure improvements including, but not

¹ See the graph at the end of the resolution showing the relationship between population density and household greenhouse gas emissions for the Austin Metro Statistical Area using the Univ. of CA at Berkeley data. The densest and greenest zip-code in the Austin MSA is UT’s West Campus area, and is excluded as an outlier case.

limited to schools, parks, mass transit, water/wastewater, electric utilities, internet, Wildfire Urban Interface, First Responder response times. In the interest of transparency and good governance, the City Council should fund an independent analysis of the impact of HOME1 changes. There should be a signed and sealed report from professional registered engineers on the water, sewer, electrical grid, storm water, and traffic infrastructure needed to support the projected increase in urban density. The Council should fund a report from a CPA on the cost of these infrastructure repairs or upgrades.

Recommend Council adopt the Planning Commission recommendation on efforts to preserve older housing stock by granting modest bonuses in floor to area ratio when an existing structure is preserved, so as to reduce the waste from home demolition.

Require new construction under the “HOME” Amendments adhere to the [Austin Green Building Program](#). All new construction should meet any and all other Environmental Code requirements.

Require new construction under the “HOME” Amendments meet the objectives of the [Watershed Protection Master Plan](#).

Require new construction under the “HOME” Amendments take advantage of Austin Energy’s solar power incentives for [single](#) or [multi-family](#) dwellings funded by Austin Energy.

Prohibit new construction under the “HOME” Amendments from being used as Bed and Breakfasts or Short Term Rentals as currently allowed under SF and MF designations.

Specifically prohibit the use of Recreational Vehicles and other mobile vehicles from being used as residences under the “HOME” Amendment.

Recommend Council amend the Land Development Code to allow greater height for multi-family housing along transit corridors.

Recommend Austin Energy sell its share of the Fayette Coal Power Plant by 2027 as part of Austin Energy’s [2020 Climate Protection Plan](#) and the [Austin Climate Equity Plan](#).

Require that a quarterly report be presented to the Environmental Commission with information on program implementation regarding effects on water quality, flooding, and tree canopy.

Require the City increase and improve park land and multi-use trails from denser neighborhoods to parks.

Require the City to balance tree canopy and new housing so HOME does not reduce Austin’s tree canopy.

Recommend City Council change zoning in commercial zoning to mixed use to allow more housing along corridors.

Recommend City Council support the Community Development Commission recommendation that HOME promote more affordable housing, prevent demolition of existing housing, and provide more localized flooding mitigation.

Vote: 7-0

For: Perry Bedford, Richard Brimer, Jennifer Bristol, Mariana Krueger, Haris Qureshi, Melinda Schiera, and David Sullivan

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Hanna Cofer, Peter Einhorn, Colin Nickells, and Kevin Ramberg

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kaela Champlin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kaela Champlin

Environmental Commission Liaison

Figure 1 Using zip-code data for the 5 county Austin MSA from the 2014 University of California at Berkeley Cool Climate Projects dataset, 79 of 80 zip-codes, excluding UT West Campus, which is the densest and greenest zip-code.

