

April 30, 2024

Council Members,

We were inspired by the agrihood concept immediately upon seeing Village Farm at Green Gate Farms in 2018 and became residents in 2019. We now own 2 homes in the community, with our adult son living in one of them while my husband and I live in the other.

Our initial decision to go “tiny” was prompted by the realization that the property tax structure in Texas would leave us destitute in our old age if we remained in the beautiful, vintage home where we had raised our 3 sons. As they reached adulthood and left our nest, it became clear that it was untenable for 2 people to try to maintain a 3500 square foot home on an acre of land on our own. The maintenance was unending and most of the house was rarely used, yet somehow endlessly required cleaning and repair, and utility costs were through the roof.

The draw of a beautiful community, with shared spaces, and everything we loved about our rural Texas town, but right in the heart of Austin was an instant YES for both of us. We loved the idea of a tiny footprint and limiting our use of precious resources. We valued communal spaces and like-minded neighbors. Having the organic farm at the heart of our community was the cherry on top. Engaging with the farm, learning from Skip and Erin, being connected to the land, our food, and the work that it takes to grow it is amazing, while sharing experiences around food, cooking, growing, and living with community is magical.

For younger residents, having an affordable home within a vibrant community is empowering. Many of our younger neighbors use this community as their launching point, eventually moving to more traditional homes once they’ve built up some equity and are expanding their families. But the array of folks who choose to live here makes the community unique.

Being in town is certainly another draw. Access to everything Austin has to offer within a 15 minute drive due to our prime location near all the diagonal connecting roads is great, but the new transportation hub going in just up the road will expand that access by connecting us to alternatives to personal vehicles.

Not everything is rainbows and butterflies, as our developer doesn’t always see things through the eyes of the farmers or the residents, and we are certainly a work in progress. But as a resident, I have experienced that the concept works. I believe the more residents we have and the louder our voices become, the closer we will come to our ideal vision.

Village Farm truly is a unique model for a community, enabling access to home ownership for a wide range of folks, and connecting people to the earth. I hope the city council expands on this model and makes it possible within the city limits, rather than limiting it to extra-territorial jurisdictions on the periphery. We are well aware that our voice is limited due to that designation, but that is a topic for another day.

Angela and Neal Kopit