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April 28, 2026

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I write today on behalf of UNITE HERE Local 23 in support of items #4 and #5 on today's agenda amending the Greater South River City neighborhood plan and rezoning to build affordable, multifamily housing.

UNITE HERE Local 23 is a union of hospitality workers including hotel housekeepers, cooks, bartenders, dishwashers, servers, and cashiers at locations in downtown Austin and at Austin International Airport. For our members that work downtown in District 9, there are not very many options to live close to work. In fact, most of our members commute from more affordable areas to work downtown, many commuting over an hour to work. While they have won wages and benefits that go far beyond the standard for non-union hospitality workers in the city, the cost of living and specifically the cost of housing remains high, especially in downtown.

For many years, the community has been advocating for more of this type of development. This project is what working people need, and as the backbone of this city, they deserve to be able to live downtown and close to work.

This is really a choice about what kind of city do we want Austin to be in 10, 20, 30 years. This is an opportunity to have an impact on that future. Austin is special, not because of the towers downtown, but because of our culture and diversity. Allowing for a more diverse population in all areas of the city will only make our community stronger. In addition to the location, the fact that this property will be 100% income restricted affordable housing, include free onsite pre-K, and is connected to public transit, this project will help move us toward the future we want and deserve.

Sincerely,

Rachel Melendes

Political Director

UNITE HERE Local 23

c. 210-887-1167