



Steering Committee Members:
Adrienne Goldsberry, Chair
Sandy Cartwright, Kate Ertle, Kevin Kimbrough, Claudette Kazzoun, Rob Kish, Andi March,
Maureen Metteauer, Oam Parkash, Shawn Shillington, Jim Todd, Brandon Wright

April 14, 2022

The Honorable Kathie Tovo
District 9 Council Member
301 W 2nd Street
Austin, TX 78701

RE: Item 33 on April 21, 2022 City Council Agenda (Vertical Mixed Use buildings)

Dear Council Member Tovo:

On behalf of the Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA) Steering Committee, I write to share our organization's position on a proposed zoning change to the Austin Land Development Code known as Vertical Mixed Use 2 (VMU-2) and the potential for changes to compatibility standards in the Land Development Code.

It is our understanding that this city-wide change is intended to incentivize additional affordable housing units by enacting a density bonus that will result in 30 additional feet of buildable height for areas with the VMU-2 overlay. We understand that the ordinance as currently proposed (as of April 14, 2022) maintains compatibility standards. Compatibility standards are extremely important to many of our neighborhood residents. The OWANA area includes several corridors (such as Lamar Blvd, and 6th Street), where the potential for large commercial structures could be erected adjacent to smaller residential buildings, if compatibility standards are at some point changed or eliminated.

While OWANA supports tools that can provide additional affordable housing, we believe that revisions to the Land Development code **MUST** retain compatibility standards for Austin neighborhoods. We respectfully request that you oppose any potential changes to the VMU zoning overlay that limit or remove compatibility, or that would lay the foundation to remove compatibility standards in future code amendments. We also opposed similar changes that were proposed for the former land development code revision known as Code Next. While we understand the need for incentives to promote more affordable housing options, a blanket limitation or removal of computability standards is not the way to accomplish it.

As you know, our neighborhood has worked productively over the years with developers to support zoning changes that allow for new commercial and residential construction while *carefully balancing the need to protect those long-time residents whose biggest asset are their homes.*

Compatibility standards are a major tool that provide this balance and they allow our neighborhood to work with developers to support exemptions that provide added height or building space in exchange for community benefits. For example, most recently, we worked with a developer to allow

a new mixed-use building for the corner of West 5th and Walsh Street. We supported 15 ft in added height in exchange for several public improvements.

Without this tool, many members of our Association would see their homes degrade in value, not to mention their quality of life.

We support balanced development and tools such as ADUs, and commercial uses that might also support residential uses. The Old West Austin neighborhood has a diverse mix of urban single-family homes on small lots, townhomes, apartments, and duplexes. Most of our neighborhood contains alleys that allow for ADUs, which can provide added living options at lower costs. The same is true of many historic neighborhoods around the city. They have been ground zero for years for mixed housing both in form and cost, and we want to preserve and promote this diversity in housing opportunities.

We embrace this diversity in housing, but we believe that eliminating or restricting the buffer between residential and large commercial development is a bridge too far, especially when such density bonus proposals simultaneously permit 'Fee-in-Lieu' policies that do not result in construction of affordable units within the neighborhood.

Please consider the long-term consequences of opening up building entitlements so close to lower scale development, such as smaller homes.

Thank you as always for your commitment to our city, and for your thoughtful consideration of our opinion. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Adrienne Goldsberry".

Adrienne Goldsberry
Chair, OWANA Steering Committee