

**The Graduate Student Assembly
The University of Texas at Austin**

Resolution: G.R. 14 (S) 6

Introduced By: Virginia Luehrsen
Rep., School of Information

Authors: Virginia Luehrsen
Robert Svoboda
Olivia Arena

Action Taken: Passed

Certified: 
David Villarreal
President, GSA

Regarding the Need for Increased Multi-Family Housing in Central Austin

Summary: A joint resolution with UT Student Government urging the City of Austin to acknowledge the student need for affordable housing, and develop strategies and incentives to increase appropriate, safe, and affordable multi-family housing in central Austin

Whereas (1): Rental prices in the City of Austin have risen as much as 30% in the last five years; this percentage is even higher in the city core, which includes areas to the north and west of campus that have traditionally housed many undergraduate and graduate students.

Whereas (2): There is an acknowledged shortage of housing in the City of Austin, including affordable housing options in the city core and around the University of Austin at Texas^{1,2}

Whereas (3): The alarming rate of rent inflation and lack of affordable housing options for students prompts the Graduate Student Assembly and the UT Student

¹ Data from data.austintexas.gov, Affordable Housing Inventory Map

² Marty Toohey, "As Austin becomes more expensive, some fight to keep it affordable," *Austin American Statesman* (Austin, TX), Jan. 5, 2014.

Government to come together on a joint resolution to provide recommendations to the City of Austin on affordable housing options.

Whereas (4): Single-Family 3 (SF-3) zoning was enacted by the city with the intent of having structures meant for single family use. SF-3 use is defined as a Family Residence where “[d]uplex use is permitted under development standards that maintain single-family neighborhood characteristics.”³

Whereas (5): In the last ten years, developers have been buying up property in North Central Austin, tearing down existing homes, and building duplexes that are intended to house six or more adults on the same 5,750 ft² lot. These high occupancy structures have been dubbed “stealth dorms” by various working groups due to the fact that they primarily house six or more students who are unrelated to each other.

Whereas (6): Outside the limited multi-family zoned structures along main corridors in North Central Austin, students have few options for affordable housing. High occupancy structures in SF-3 zoning have offered some alternatives; however, these housing options are not affordable unless fully occupied, and still average between \$800-\$850 a bedroom according to various rental websites in February and March, 2014.

Whereas (7): Existing homeowners in these neighborhoods have expressed anger and fear about the mis-appropriation of SF-3 zoning in the city^{4,5}; this resentment has made situations uncomfortable for some students who live adjacent to single family homes.

Whereas (8): Single family neighborhoods do not have the infrastructure to deal with the existing high-occupancy SF-3 uses; problems include lack of parking, trash accumulation, roden populations, and excessive noise.

Whereas (9): Many students select to live in these neighborhoods because they value the sense of community and safety these areas of the city can offer while still remaining close to campus.

Whereas (10): The City of Austin has moved forward since the beginning of 2014 on reducing occupancy limits for SF properties from 6 to 4 unrelated adults.

³ City of Austin, “Zoning Guide”.

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Planning/zoning_guide.pdf, p. 16

³

⁴ Northfield Neighborhood Association. Executive Summary: Stealth Dorms in Northfield Neighborhood.

<http://www.northfieldna.org/StealthDormsinNorthfieldNeighborhood.pdf>

⁴

⁵ “Home Page” Stop Stealth Dorms Neighborhood Coalition, accessed February 18, 2014.

<http://www.http://stopstealthdorms.com/>

Whereas (11): Multi-family zoning is intended to maximize density, and is an acceptable way to increase diversity of housing options, affordability of housing, and maintain good neighborly relations between University students and respective neighborhood associations.

Therefore

Let It Be

Resolved (1): The student body of the University of Texas, through the Student Government and Graduate Student Assembly, request that the City of Austin enact a full review of SF zoning rules, to include conducting any necessary economic, environmental, and social impact studies.

Be It

Further

Resolved (2): Current structures with SF-3 zoning that were built for an occupancy limit of 5 or 6 persons be grandfathered into allowing their intended occupancy; however, properties that have been deemed unsafe, or have been found to exceed the six person limit, shall have their grandfather status conditionally revoked.

Be It

Further

Resolved (3): That the city devise a two-year plan for how they will increase multi-family zoning options, including incentives for developers to create affordable and appropriate multi-family housing structures in the city core and along main corridors and bus routes, including the zip codes of 78731, 78751, 78752, 78756, and 78757

Be It

Further

Resolved (4): That the Austin City Council accept this resolution as a formal statement on behalf of the undergraduate and graduate student bodies at the University of Texas regarding SF-3 zoning use, and the need for increased availability of affordable multi-family housing.