

One of the most pervasive problems in our community is ever increasing Property Taxes. The city , county and school board has consistently raised property taxes on homesteaders and small rental homes to the point that it has forced the poor and middle class to choose between paying astronomical property taxes and increasing rents or moving out of the central city.

We have yet to demand changes to our taxing structure and therefore our local governments have felt free to:

- Finance unnecessary projects in bad economic times
- Provide tax incentives to businesses with little or no return on investment or local hiring
- Allow the under assessment of business property taxes while increasing taxes on homes
- Allow the public safety Budget and consent agreements with the police and fire departments to balloon to more than 65% of the city budget

The City, County, AISD and other taxing authorities have relied primarily on property tax appraisals and property tax increases on our homes as its primary funding mechanism. The large increase in values on homes and subsequent increases in property taxes in our communities (especially East Austin) has caused unnecessary harm to the integrity of our neighborhoods, our most vulnerable elderly residents and our schools.

It has been researched and verified that large businesses and large tracts of investment property have not been paying their fair share of property taxes

<http://costofgrowth.com/Cases/Tax-Inequity-Texas.html>

<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/downtown-austin-properties-undervalued-appraiser-says-1153154.html>

It is the responsibility of the City, County and AISD to demand that TCAD provide an accurate assessment of Business and Investment property and ensure that they are paying their fair share

There is an intrinsic and critical value to viable neighborhoods. It is a fatal mistake of our local governments to ignore this value by taxing them out of existence. Allowing Business and investment property taxes to not pay their fair share of taxes is unfair at best and harmful to neighborhoods and local governments at worst.

It is the responsibility for local government to not only lobby our state legislature for no changes in the property tax structure but to work together to change the property tax system to one that is fair, efficient, and flexible enough to improve our neighborhoods instead of destroying them. This is **THE** critical issue.

Austin Center for Peace and Justice
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