

Late Backup

My name is Stuart Hersh, and like most in Austin I rent. I worked for the City of Austin for over 30 years, and have been a paid or unpaid consultant with a few not-for-profit organizations for the past 4 years. I help these not-for-profit organizations create S.M.A.R.T. Housing under very trying circumstances.

I am speaking tonight about the Needs Assessment for the Action Plan. I am speaking for myself and am not speaking for any of the organizations that I provide support on either a pro-bono or fee basis.

I work with organizations that provide affordable rental housing for some people who can afford rents in the \$135 - \$350 range. Those organizations who otherwise could serve these extremely low income renters will be unable to do so if there is a city decision to decrease its commitment to housing affordability.

The GO Bonds were marketed in 2006 as a supplement to existing investment in housing affordability, not a tool to supplant federal and local investment. But supplant is what they did.

The voters in 2012 approved affordable housing bonds for some of the poorest among us, women and children who were homeless. The voters did not approve bonds for housing that lacked specific performance measures and a commitment to geographic dispersion.

Please recommend funding at a level that shows Austin's commitment to the poorest among us who need their homes repaired as well as more opportunities to rent or own housing that is safe, in mixed-income neighborhoods, accessible for people with disabilities, reasonably-priced, and transit-oriented and meeting Austin Energy's internationally recognized Green Building standards. We used to call this S.M.A.R.T. Housing at the beginning of this century, and hopefully we will invest in S.M.A.R.T. Housing once again.

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