

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Austin, Texas
Special Called Meeting -- January 30, 1979

The Special Called Meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:45 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

Present

Miguel Guerrero, Chairman
Leo Danze
Freddie Dixon
Sid Jagger
Mary Ethel Schechter
Sally Shipman
Bernard Snyder
Bill Stoll
Jim Vier

Also Present

Richard Lillie, Director of Planning
Tom Knickerbocker, Assistant Director of Planning
Luther Polnau, Supervisor Advanced Planning
Mayor Carole Keeton McClellan
City Manager Dan Davidson
Assistant City Manager Jim Miller
Councilman Lee Cooke
Ouida Glass, Senior Secretary

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R200 Consider recommendation and adoption of
"Strategies for the Economic Redevelopment
of Central Austin"

R200 Consider recommendation and adoption of
proposed Overall Economic Development Plan

Mr. Lillie explained the strategies for the economic redevelopment of Central Austin. He explained that out of the 16 items identified, ten have been initiated by the City Council. City Manager Dan Davidson introduced Mr. Dave Nesbitt of the American City Corporation, who discussed the central city economic development in general and how it could be handled. He discussed the contract they had entered into with the City of Austin and explained that the fundamental issue is the need to create a "critical mass" which allows development to happen. He explained the areas that would be involved and discussed the retail market; the critical need for Austin to try to capture the tourist market, pointing out the totally inadequate facilities for large-scale meetings and the need for the creation of additional meeting space as well as hotel space. He discussed the office market and that current trends indicate class "A" office space is in great demand in the downtown area. They believe there is a demand for residential housing in downtown Austin, but not for low-income housing. He felt that the city should take a development approach rather than a governmental approach in carrying out its redevelopment goals.

Mr. Lillie then introduced Mr. Chester Snyder, chairman of the Economic Development Task Force. Mr. Snyder named the members of the task force and explained they were created in 1978 by the City Council, and explained the task force and their charge. He discussed the Special Impact Area, the income of persons living in that area, the percentage of minority inhabitants, and the goals of the OEDP. There was discussion of the job market and the skill level for the unemployed as well as the underemployed. He discussed the need to conduct market analysis for land use and to develop a master plan for the special impact area; the need to conduct a feasibility analysis for convention and/or civic center for the city; an urban design plan for Sixth Street-Congress Avenue and the corridors in the general business district; and to create a local nonprofit corporation to implement Economic Development and preparation of a plan to link manpower programs in support of this development.

The Commissioners then discussed and asked about the potential funding that is available if the educational facilities, such as job training programs through community college would be included and of federal funds. Mr. Nesbitt discussed IRS guidelines and the use of private funds, pointing out some examples he knew of in other cities. There was discussion of the area from Fifth Street to the Town Lake being different from the remainder of the city. The use of eminent domain was discussed and how it would affect persons living in the area.

PERSONS APPEARING

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R. M. (Bob) Tinstman, 2406 Pemberton Place
 Ina Ray Smith, Historic Landmark Commission
 Nadine Sustaita, East First Neighborhood Advisory Council
 John Gaynor, 1614 Wheless, No. 102
 Charles Bergstrom, 7000 Rufus Drive
 Rev. J. Burnet, 1206 East 9th Street
 Webb Smedley, 621 West 30th Street
 Manuel Mena, representing Edward Rendon, East Town Lake
 Citizens Neighborhood Association
 Paul Hernandez
 Mrs. Frank Mann
 Bert Adams
 Betty Phillips, Save University Neighborhood Association
 Phillip Conard
 John Darozzet, ad hoc committee for Human Relations Commission
 Elmore Rice
 Isa Davis
 Frank Modess
 Mike Elfant
 Allan McCree
 Zeke Uballe

Bob Tinstman suggested employment opportunities be emphasized rather than unemployment to show the good parts of downtown. He discussed the service function, the need to acquire and clear some of the blighted areas, the problem of absentee owners and the possibility of condemnation. He suggested to keep the Task Force going. Ina Ray Smith read a statement by Mr. Philip Creer, chairman of the Historic Landmark Commission, expressing concern for the protection of historic structures, and also concern that they had not had an opportunity to review the plan, but did endorse the concept of the plan. Nadine Sustaita discussed the decline in the number and quality of residential units in the area and pointed out the need for balanced program protection, as well as the need for zoning to protect residential neighborhoods. There was citizen discussion regarding bicycle travel and walking corridors and a request that this be encouraged. Rev. Burnett expressed concern for eminent domain and how this might affect homeowners living in the area should the area be determined for other use. He stated these persons needed adequate recompense to allow them to relocate in another area equal to the housing they now have. He would hope that some funds could be used for remodeling homes or find a means for providing suitable low cost housing on the now vacant lots. He also expressed concern for industry envisioned in the area and would question whether or not an industrial park is the best thing for that area. Spiraling rents were pointed out and the need to discourage urban sprawl. Manuel Mena, representing Edward Van Doren for the East Town Lake Citizens, stated they had lots of concerns regarding this plan and would like to have input from their areas. He stated they might be for revitalization, depending on what is in it for their area, and questioned the placing of industrial parks in a residential area. He discussed the job market, the skills that would be needed, and requested training programs be initiated to raise the skill levels of the community. They invited members of the Planning Commission to meet with members of the East Town Lake Citizens Group in a worksession to be fully aware of the situation and the needs of the people in the area. Paul Hernandez expressed concern for the use of federal funds for projects that will not benefit the people that were meant to benefit from such funds. He urged the use of City personnel and stated there is no need to create another administrative bureaucracy with these funds.

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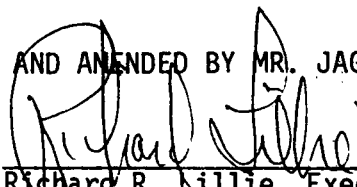
There was discussion of the need for more citizen input, the needs of the small businessman, and the fact that East Austin is being left out. Betty Phillips, representing Save University Neighborhood Association, urged that redevelopment concentrate on building on the assets which now exist, particularly in re-using historic structures. She discussed the linkage of the university area with the downtown area and pointed out some of the needs in their area, such as police protection, stricter housing and zoning code enforcement, sidewalk repairs, sewer problems, and parking enforcement. She pointed out that the inner city neighborhoods do need extra help. Phil Conard felt the city should preserve and build an ethnic diversity, maintain this, and urged not to move people out. John Darozzet, representing the ad hoc committee for the Human Relations Department, discussed problems with jobs, the displacement of residents in the area and requested an opportunity to develop positive responses and would hope that the Human Relations Commission could be a cooperating agency and would like to see the Human Relations Department included in the planning of this. He felt the people should get some results of the money. Elmore Rice urged the Planning Commission not to forget about people, stated that people make this town; cannot have anything without people. He questioned what happens with the money that is received in these blighted areas. He also urged the city to look at the people in the ghettos and not to forget about them. There was citizen discussion of the need for a public transportation system, as well as recreational, cultural, and educational facilities for the citizens of Austin. Allan McCree requested the endorsement of the proposal as submitted, stated it can work, he had seen it done in other cities.

Mr. Vier asked how this would be paid for and how much would come out of the general operating budget for the city. It was explained that the request at this time was only to determine the eligibility for future projects and there was no cost or commitment to the City at this point. Mr. Dixon pointed out there are some things that need to be looked at. He stated there is a human factor here and warned against raising the level of expectation to cause backlash. He felt the community should be kept together. Mr. Jagger felt the document should state the things that were intended to be done and also the things not intended to happen. He felt there should be some control for the fears that had been pointed out, that the citizens should have input, as well as the City boards and Commissions, especially the Human Relations Commission. Mr. Danze felt that the report should include the "shall nots". Mr. Guerrero felt the questions should be answered and citizens given an opportunity to respond.

COMMISSION ACTION

After much discussion, considerable motions, amended motions, and reconsideration of action, the Commission unanimously endorsed the concept of both reports and recommended the Economic Development Task Force be continued, that the City Council send the plan back to the Planning Commission for further consideration prior to its adoption, and that the Strategies report be distributed to the City Boards and Commissions.

MOTION BY MR. SNYDER, SECONDED BY MR. DIXON, AND AMENDED BY MR. JAGGER.


Richard R. Lillie, Executive Secretary