Planning Commission
Austin, TX
May 23, 2016

Chair Oliver & fellow Planning Commissioners:

The working group regarding the amendment to change the garage location language in the Subchapter F ordinance has completed their research and discussion. The mission of the working group was to determine if there were alternative ways to address the issue of residents converting their carports to garages thus exceeding their Floor to Area Ratio by creating a structure that is no longer in line with the original exemption to the code. As part of our research we met with multiple people who participated in the creation of the original Subchapter F ordinance.

We explored various ways in which the code and ordinance could be adjusted to better address the garage placement without limiting the current exemptions to the code. Upon investigating the unintended consequences of changing other regulations to better accommodate the non-compliant garages, we found that adjustments to areas such as the allowable FAR would adversely affect the compromise and intention of the original research and ordinance.

We were unable to come to an agreement as to whether to strike the language or not. In the end we decided to put the question back to the full commission. We hope this will give the full commission the opportunity to hear insight from Commissioner McGraw and Commissioner Burkhardt, both of whom served to help craft the original ordinance, as well as the staff, and the community that would like to speak on this topic. Although this exercise did not lead us to a consensus or a clear recommendation on the language rewrite, it did bring to our attentions the need for CodeNext to pay special attention to the issue of parking in our neighborhoods.

Our main recommendation to CodeNext is to address the residential parking component in a way that is specific to our many diverse neighborhoods. CodeNext should incorporate garage location requirements based on the unique development patterns and vernacular of existing neighborhoods. This would ensure that the intention and compromise of the original ordinance is preserved as we move forward with our code rewrite.

Sincerely,

Trinity E. White
Chair of the Garage Placement Working Group