

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT RIGHT TO STAY AND RIGHT TO RETURN PROGRAMS FOR EAST AUSTIN

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has promoted for decades destructive, racist policies in East Austin resulting in segregation, economic marginalization, environmental injustice, and neglected infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the City has designated East Austin as a “desired development zone”, and the City has failed to take action to prevent wholesale gentrification or to stop massive displacement of lower income residents of color, devastating their neighborhoods, community relationships and culture; and

WHEREAS, Right to Stay and Right to Return programs would begin to alleviate and make reparations for Austin’s years of racist zoning, inequitable development, and total disregard of the residents of the Eastside; and

WHEREAS, Right to Stay programs exist in many cities, including Houston, Texas, and contain specific strategies and concrete tools to help both renters and homeowners who are historically residents of lower income communities of color to remain in their historic homes, such as:

- 1) working with nonprofits and other local government entities to develop policies to reduce or freeze property taxes for low income residents and seniors in the target districts;
- 2) outreach to all seniors in the target districts to ensure they apply for and receive homestead and senior property tax exemptions;
- 3) creating well-funded home repair programs to enable elderly and disabled district homeowners to receive needed repairs, even without clear legal title, and a legal program to help clear titles;
- 4) funding and staffing fully an on-line housing application process, such as in Portland, Oregon, that lists all available affordable units in one location accessible to the target populations; and this database would include unit size, number of bedrooms, bathrooms, rent and costs; and
- 5) enforcing strictly the building codes for multi-family apartments to ensure that affordable housing remains habitable, with a focus on housing that has received government subsidies; and

WHEREAS, Right to Return programs include specific strategies and tools to assist people of color who grew up in or are otherwise members of generations of families of color of East Austin to return to East Austin; and.

WHEREAS, Portland, Oregon’s “right-to-remain or return” policy is a model that Austin should look to and that contains these essential features:

- 1) funding and staffing to fully support bringing former residents back to a gentrified area (with people displaced or at risk of displacement having priority access to housing developed through this initiative);
- 2) supporting production of units that can lead to home ownership for returning working families, including different housing types such as modular-manufactured-mobile-tiny units, condominium apartments with multiple bedrooms, and rent-to-own options; and
- 3) using public-owned property to build new land-banked and land trust homes for lower-income former East Austin residents of color who want to return, with a variety of housing; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED:

The City Council directs the City Manager to develop within 60 days a comprehensive plan, budget, and ordinance for the Council’s consideration to adopt and fund an effective, robust Right to Return and Right to Stay Program for East Austin.