



MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable Steve Adler, Mayor, City of Austin
Members of the Austin City Council

From: Joe Cascino
President, University Democrats at the University of Texas at Austin

Re: **University Neighborhood Overlay Amendments**

On behalf of the University Democrats at the University of Texas at Austin, I write to urge you to adopt the amendments to the University Neighborhood Overlay as recommended by the Planning Commission.

As the Democratic Party club at UT, we care about ensuring UT students can live in healthy, affordable communities. The UNO amendments will spur us to develop enough housing for the growing student population—including affordable housing for students who need it—while safeguarding the heritage of West Campus.

We wish to comment further on three of the Planning Commission amendments, referenced by their numbers in the Staff Report in the Council backup:

Height Bonuses on 24th and San Gabriel (Amendment 2). The south side of 24th Street and the west side of San Gabriel Street mostly hold commercial buildings and small apartment complexes, not single-family units. There is little need to add a step-down buffer across the street from these developments. Additionally, a height bonus in the proposed areas will encourage developers to build affordable units.

Expansion of Inner West Campus Subdistrict (Amendments 2 and 3). The area proposed to be added is small, so it will not significantly alter the character of West Campus. But it will allow developers to build more housing, including affordable housing incentivized by ample height bonuses. The proposed addition to the Inner West Campus Subdistrict is a natural one based on the subdistrict's current shape and the character of the area in general.

Abolition of Parking Minima (Amendment 7). Eliminating parking minima doesn't mean West Campus will have no parking; it simply lets developers build as much parking as they believe is necessary. Most West Campus residents can easily travel on foot or by bus to campus and other destinations, so there is very little demand for parking. Small restaurants can continue to provide the parking their customer bases need, while student housing complexes can focus on adding more units instead of lines on pavement that nobody will use. Additionally, the amendment language will ensure there is ADA-accessible parking for residents who need it.

Austin has a housing-affordability crisis, and as students, we see its effects in West Campus as a microcosm of the entire city. If we want to have ample, affordable student housing in thirty years, we need to encourage ample, affordable student housing now. The amendments to UNO as recommended by the Planning Commission are a critical step in that direction, and we urge you to support them.