



DATE: August 26, 2019
TO: City of Austin Planning Commission
FROM: Allie Runas, Chair of the West Campus Neighborhood Association
SUBJECT: Proposed Changes to the University Neighborhood Overlay

On behalf of the West Campus Neighborhood Association, I would like to extend the support of the Association for the proposed changes to the University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO). The West Campus Neighborhood Association (WCNA) supports the changes in order to promote a more rich, walkable community in West Campus, and urges the Commission to adopt these changes to improve the West Campus neighborhood. As residents, we are excited to see a plan that will benefit our community, promote more affordability, and plan for our growing future.

The WCNA supports mixed-use developments to create a more diverse, engaging neighborhood for all residents. Our neighborhood's residents are passionate about an increase in affordable housing and walkable amenities, and the proposed changes are in line with these goals for West Campus. With the expansion of where local uses are permitted in Outer West Campus, residents will be able to enjoy greater access to places that make West Campus feel more like the vibrant and lively neighborhood residents want to see it become.

Incentivizing affordability is critical for an area that is already a leader in Austin affordability. The proposed changes expand and help support the work that UNO already does to provide affordable units to renters. Affordable units are critical in a dense student population in order to provide students of all income levels to advance their education and give themselves the best chances at academic success as possible. In addition to the proposed changes, West Campus neighbors support expanding Inner West Campus boundaries. Broadening the densest part of West Campus will reduce the displacement effects of redevelopment impacting our neighbors in Riverside as well as reinforce the City's commitment to true affordability.

Many residents move through our neighborhood as pedestrians as well as bike, scooter, skateboard, or use public transportation. With the plethora of transportation modes, residents are not as reliant on a car, and existing on-street parking in the neighborhood provides many options to visitors. Therefore, parking should be provided at an absolute minimum, excluding accessible parking requirements. Members unanimously support 0% parking minimums for all of UNO. The expansion of uses for excess parking spaces is an excellent way to utilize unused parking to benefit residents. Implementing alternate uses for excess parking is an investment in enriching the lives of West Campus residents with more places to study, socialize, and engage with new ideas.

To handle the high pedestrian traffic we see daily in our neighborhood, the Association unanimously supports expanding sidewalks in Inner West Campus beyond 12 feet. The expansion of sidewalks would enhance our already walkable neighborhood and reduce friction between neighbors whether on their commute or out for an errand.

We hope that the Planning Commission shares our vision for a more walkable, diverse, and affordable West Campus. The improvements being made today have not only the potential to renew our commitment to a successful program, but can have a measurable impact on the lives of future Austinites for years to come.