

## **ESB-MACC ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATION**

Date: 17 August 2021

Subject: ESB-MACC Advisory Board Recommendation Opposing Red River Street Extension

Motioned By: (name)

Seconded By: (name)

### **Recommendation**

Recommendation to stop any planning or consideration of an extension of Red River Street through the Mexican American Cultural Center which has received Dedicated Parkland status in perpetuity (Ordinance No. 20160128-086) as well as serving as the heart of the Rainey Street Historic District since 1985.

### **Description of Recommendation to Council**

In 1956 when East Avenue was converted into I-35, the Rainey Street neighborhood began a transformation from a single-family, Mexican-American neighborhood to the most densely populated corner of Texas. Part of the symbolism that is ingrained in I-35's legacy is the division of our community by way of a street. This legacy is at the heart of the current discussions and on-going community engagement sessions for the renovation of the I-35. An extension of Red River Street through the ESB-MACC campus would repeat the mistakes of 1956 by dividing the community once again with the construction of a street.

Recently, a variety of mobility studies and pilot programs have been executed by the Austin Transportation Department to help understand the effectiveness of mobility concepts that are intended to help the area adapt to the rapid increase in density. The ESB-MACC Advisory Board and community have found the conclusions on these reports to grossly mischaracterize the true concerns from MACC staff and patrons. It is therefore imperative, that the ESB-MACC Advisory Board clearly state our opposition to any recommendation set forth by any city department or partner that may use as reference the Rainey Street Pilot Program, Rainey Mobility Study, or any other document that did not deliberately or consistently engage with the MACC staff and patrons through a meaningful community engagement process.

Furthermore, the MACC community intends to ensure that the city honors the Designated Parkland protection which was granted in perpetuity. The community is concerned that a Red River Street extension could set the precedent for other Designated Parkland sites in culturally sensitive areas to be converted into roadways thereby cementing the city's practice of cars over people and developers over community..

Lastly, the ESB-MACC community embraces the opportunity to expand our center through a Phase 2 expansion and we do not want to see the advocacy and hard work that went into the creation of the MACC once again become compromised by the design of a road. Just as our city and the Rainey Neighborhood have grown rapidly, the ESB-MACC would like nothing more than to focus on our expansion without the danger of having a road bypass our center. The ESB-MACC is in agreement that improved mobility and safety in the neighborhood needs to be taken seriously, but the ESB-MACC, its patrons, supporters, and community stakeholders will not agree to any solution that does not fulfill our mission and commitment to preserving the legacy of the Rainey Street Historic District and the Mexican American and Latino communities.

## **Rationale**

Commissioners from the ESB-MACC Phase 2 Working Group have been in discussions with our planners and designers to understand all of the potential outcomes - positive and negative - from a street expansion.

Commissioners from the ESB-MACC Transportation Working Group have analyzed the diagrams and plans presented to the ESB-MACC Board by the Austin Transportation Department and have concluded that a road extension would create heavy vehicles during some of our most active hours. This would be in contrast to the concept of greater accessibility because Red River Street would become a “shortcut” for drivers trying to merge on I-35.

Rainey Street Neighborhood is a Historic District because of its distinctive history as a Hispanic enclave since the early 20th century, and its lovely and serene environmental quality. We insisted on the ESBMACC land’s designation as parkland expressively to protect this sacred land, as special as Barton Springs from this type of proposed encroachment.

The 2018 ESB-MACC Master Plan describes “the possibility of creating a connection to the ESB-MACC from the vacated Red River Street right-of-way,” and that “it does not seem likely that a connection is possible.” Therefore, the master plan did not include a street extension.

Because of Rainey Street Neighborhood status as a Historic District, and the ESBMACC’s symbolic representation of 182-year presence of Hispanics in downtown Austin, for decades, the City has promised to respect Rainey’s integrity, and the bucolic environment that the Hispanic community enjoyed and preserved for many generations.

City employees disregard basic tenets in Chapter 26 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code when they fail to publicly acknowledge the harm that Red River Street traffic will cause the regular operations of the ESB-MACC, nor do they offer any alternatives to the proposed Red River Extension Project

Vote            #-#

For:  
(names)

Against:  
(names)

Abstain:  
(names)

Absent:  
(names)

Attest:  
(names)