



**COMMISSION ON SENIORS BUDGET RECOMMENDATION
20220309-04Cvi
RENTAL AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE FOR OLDER ADULTS
Strategic Direction: Economic Opportunity and Affordability**

Date: March 9, 2022

Subject: FY23 Budget Recommendations

Motioned By: Temperley Seconded By: Lopez-Guerrero

Recommendation

Expand funding for rental and utility assistance for all; and unlink rental payments for older adults from calculations based on median family income.

Description of Recommendation to Council

The Commission on Seniors recommends increasing funding for rental and utility assistance funding and programs for all, including older adults and discontinue basing rental payments for older adults on area median family income.

Background and Rationale:

Agencies serving older adults report that they are receiving an increased number of requests for rental and utility assistance. Austin is facing an unprecedented housing crisis as rent and utility costs increase. This has an even greater impact on older adults who are living on fixed incomes such as social security. A recent study, which compares the growth in the Social Security cost of living adjustments with increases in the costs of goods and services typically used by retirees, found that since 2000 Social Security benefits have lost 32% of their buying power. (<https://www.thestreet.com/retirement/social-securitys-cola-raise-cant-keep-up-with-inflation>)

Housing costs and rents continue to increase exponentially in Austin. As noted in the City of Austin Comprehensive Market analysis for 2020 (https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Austin%20HMA_final.pdf)

- Austin's median rent increased 38% from 2010
- Naturally occurring (market-rate) affordable rentals continued to decline

Additional funds are needed to support older adults who may be at high risk for homelessness due to these increasing costs.

Housing costs were cited as concerns of residents during the budget townhalls held by the Joint Inclusion Committee member commissions. An older adult from the Mueller neighborhood noted that affordable housing supported by the city base qualifications, and rent, on area median family income. However, median family income in Austin continues to rise at a much higher rate than social security or other retirement plans. The Commission on Seniors supports the request to no longer base rent increases for older adults on changes to area median family income.

Vote

For: Briesemeister, Varteressian, Angel, Bauman, Bordie, De Maria Nicola, Garcia-Pittman, Kareithi, Lopez-Guerrero, Lugo, Spain, Temperley, Van Sickle

Against: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Cagle

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janee Briesemeister", written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Janee Briesemeister, Chair