

CITY OF AUSTIN JOINT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

January 26, 2017

RE: PASSIVE HOUSE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING RESOLUTION

Dear Mayor and Austin City Council,

The Joint Sustainability Committee encloses the attached Passive House and Affordable Housing resolution for your consideration. We urge its adoption by the city council at the earliest opportunity.

City council adoption of the resolution would help accomplish the following things, as well as others:

- it would produce evidence of the dramatic reductions in utility bills for affordable housing tenants and other customers.
- it would produce evidence of the superior interior comfort produced by Passive House buildings, furnishing relief to the asthma and allergy sufferers who disproportionately occupy low income housing. The public health benefits of Passive House are an important consideration in our city.
- Passive House standards meet or exceed the requirements of all versions of the International Energy Conservation Code and would therefore function as an excellent complement should that code be adopted.
- it would help accomplish an important goal listed in our climate protection plan by producing quantitative as well as qualitative data about the suitability of Passive House for the achievement of our stated Net Zero energy goals for the year 2020 and beyond.
- Austin is a signatory to the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, is a member of ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability, and is also a C40 Agreement Innovator City. Adoption of the International Passive House standard would place Austin alongside peer cities such as Frankfurt, Brussels, Portland, Vancouver and New York City, all of whom have made Passive House a centerpiece of their climate protection efforts.

Affordable housing buildings, like schools and hospitals, serve a wider range of functions than minimum code buildings constructed by the private sector. They must be built to last. Passive House construction not only produces positive carbon reduction outcomes, it also dramatically improves the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) costs of Low Income Housing Tax Credit funded buildings whose minimum affordability stipulations envision them being in operation for 40-50 years or longer. Accordingly we recommend that the city encourage construction to Passive House standards in its future letters of non-opposition for tax credit funded developments as soon as possible.

We recommend that the RFQ for the study called for in the resolution be issued by the end of FYI 2017. We also recommend that the Passive House study called for in the resolution be conducted by a qualified contractor in possession of Certified Passive House Consultant credential issued by the Passive House Institute or by the Passive House Institute—U.S. The Joint Sustainability Committee would be willing to assist city staff in the drafting of an RFQ where necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Walker, chair