

Constituent Briefing

Tuesday, February 4, 2021

Office of Mackenzie Kelly, District 6

Item of concern: #61

Requirements: The purpose of this briefing is to highlight specific constituent comments involving a specific item on this week’s agenda. The requirements are that have been an overwhelming majority of correspondence to the district office from constituents that are voicing whether they are for or against the item number listed above.

Summation: The majority of correspondence featured here are from constituents has been against Item #61 hotel purchase in North Austin. These statements came via email and phone call from constituents that live in or around the area being discussed. **The purpose of this briefing is to focus on the impact to businesses and patrons.**



Constituent Comments

(This is a sampling of 12 constituent correspondence out of 2,264)

Comment	Name	Date
How can the City vote to put a hotel in a District when the only NO vote is from the Representative from that District? I thought the whole idea of re-districting was to give each of the 10 Districts more say in what happens in their District? Wouldn’t that say that the City Council is led by an agenda that transcends district representation, and wouldn’t that be the definition of a Dictatorship? I am concerned that we are losing the entire reason for re-districting into 10 Districts. I understand that we have a democratic voting system, but District Representatives should have a Veto power over what happens in their own District.	Darren	1/27/21
We clearly have a homeless problem in Austin and I support pursuing multiple solutions but I also want to be sure we as citizens have transparency on what those solutions may be and the impacts. I leaned about the Pecan Park motel purchase a couple of days ago. This is very close to our home and to Fredas restaurant, which we enjoy from time to time. I’m sure the hotel will impact that business probably to the point to where they’d have to close. Bigger than this I am concerned that this motel is very near an established family area that has already been inundated with homeless sites at underpasses and solicitation at every intersection. I am upset that we received no notification of a pending purchase. Only told after the sale. I ask that the council reconsider this purchase but most importantly that we as neighbors and taxpayers have the opportunity to be heard and considered.	Cindi	1/30/21
What are you thinking regarding this purchase ... and without discussing with area homeowners and businesses?!? A location where there is NO access to public transportation, or a grocery store; Not accessible to social services, No access to jobs. Next to a busy overpass and intersection, making their panhandling gravely perilous. And paying well over appraised value. Waste of money and no thought. VOTE NO OR WE VOTE YOU OUT	David	1/30/21
This is a terrible location for the homeless. There is NOT direct access to public transportation, no grocery stores close by, no access to jobs and will affect the property value of all the surrounding businesses. I’m not against finding housing for the homeless, but the issues I stated before should be taken into consideration. This is a knee jerk reaction to a complex problem. Please reject this proposal when it comes for a vote in February.	Wendolyn	1/30/21

<p>Any plan for helping people must begin with holding individuals accountable for improvement. Fear of being accused of criminalizing homeless activity or restricting the right to be homeless, or to use drugs, or to panhandle encourages permissive policies that enable homelessness and self-destructive behavior. If the City of Austin does not change the culture and laws, and if they mismanage this building's operation and the screening of who is allowed in, this will just be another failure. A helping hand is great, but not if it does not come with forcing responsible behavior. As a business owner near the Candlewood Suites hotel on Pecan Park I do not want to see a potential failed housing assistance property near so many residential neighborhoods. Here is an example of improperly considered efforts; good intentions are great, but you have to move slowly to assemble resources and be prepared to manage properly before you jump into an endeavor such as this.</p>	Nicholas	1/29/21
<p>This is regarding your purchase of Candlewood Suites Austin Cedar Park. Buying this property for housing the homeless makes no sense. We oppose the purchase of the Candlewood because it's not good for our businesses and our neighborhood but that's not all. I empathize with the homeless, but putting them in an area where there is no transportation, no access to health services, no access to jobs - what good does it do to any one? Spending \$9.5 million tax payer money for this is something I (the tax payer) do not support! The capacity of Candlewood is 60. With same amount of money the city can house more people if proper research is done. This is my humble request to reconsider this purchase for my neighborhood and community.</p>	Yung	1/29/21
<p>Please do not add a homeless hotel on pecan Park. The safety of the residence of pecan Park is a huge concern. There was no notice to the homeowners that live in the area along with the businesses close to the hotel. The homeowner should be able to vote.</p>	Tanya	1/29/21
<p>If changing the outcome of the vote to purchase and transform the Candlewood suites into a homeless shelter becomes inevitable, would it be possible to fight for admendments or obtain some compensation for the residents in the surrounding communities. Several studies I've reviewed say that property values can decline as much as 10% if they are within a mile of a Homeless shelter. This is through no fault of the residents that property values would decline between \$20,000-\$30,000 per home given that the average home in the area is in the \$225,000 - \$350,000 range. In Pecan Park Garden Estates alone there are over 100 housing units. I dont know if a class action lawsuit against the city is an option but I do believe an injustice has been done to our local surrounding businesses and residents should this transaction come to fruition. Aside from that anything that could assist in easing the minds of residents such as increased security or a demand for strict vetting for those homeless that are accepted would be ideal . Im sure families that have fallen on ill fortune and could not afford rent or mortgage should take precedence over a mentally ill or drug addicted homeless person. If those factors could be addressed or fought for in addition with some sort of fair compensation I think this would help ease the minds of those local residents affected.</p>	Patrick	1/29/21
<p>My name is Cristina Gonzalez and I am originally from McAllen, Texas. I am a first-generation college graduate and moved to Austin in 2014 to attend law school. I am currently employed as an attorney in Austin and was blessed to have the opportunity to purchase my first home this past December. I was informed today regarding the City's plans to purchase the Candlewood Suites with the intention of providing housing for the homeless population. While I think all Austinites would like to see a compassionate solution to the homeless problem, I do not think a single person would be pleased with a homeless shelter being situated .2 miles from their home. I moved to this neighborhood in Anderson Mill because I felt it was safe to live as a single female and to eventually grow a family. Several homes in this neighborhood are directly in front of the hotel. I can't imagine a single one of you would feel comfortable walking the neighborhood trails in the evenings alone. Much less would I believe you would feel comfortable with your children playing directly in front of a homeless shelter. While I appreciate the sentiment behind the purchase of this hotel, the ramifications on safety in my neighborhood and on the surrounding businesses, particularly Freda's, severely</p>	Cristina	1/29/21

<p>outweighs the good to the community. It may be appropriate to purchase hotels to house the homeless but not a hotel bordering apartments, neighborhoods and schools. It is unfair to the residents of this community. I truly hope that you will show that you care about your tax-paying residents who are struggling to live in an affordable and safe neighborhood and vote "no" to the purchase of the Candlewood Suites</p>		
<p>I am a nearby resident of the Candlewood Suites on Pecan Park and am extremely concerned about the City of Austin considering this location for purchase and conversion into permanent housing for the homeless. This location provides absolutely no support for a homeless community and would also increase the risk of residents and businesses nearby. There is absolutely no access to public transportation in this area. There are no grocery stores nearby. There are no social services located in this area as well as no access to jobs. How would this provide any help or benefit to the homeless community. Who is this really benefiting? The Council appears to have just arbitrarily chosen this location without a plan or even the faintest understanding of this area. The Candlewood Suites on Pecan Park is not a suitable solution or choice for housing the homeless. Tax payers money and the homeless community can be better utilized by selecting a different hotel option located closer to an infrastructure that can actually help the homeless in all aspects of life.</p>	Wanda	1/29/21
<p>My family owns Hampton Inn & Suites & Homewood suites share driveway with candlewood, the proposed hotel for homeless housing. We are empathetic to the situation of homeless, but all we are saying that the location that the city wants to house is not an ideal location. We are requesting City to listen to sentiments of district 6 members, residents & businesses and not opinion of people that are compassionate but neither have resident or business in district 6, Speakers that are so compassionate are directly not impacted by city's move. We share same sentiment as Mike Mcshane & Susie and we request Ms. Mackenzie & your assistance.</p>	Rupal	1/27/21
<p>Hello, councilwomen and councilmen. I am the owner of Freda's seafood grille which is next to the candlewood hotel. I oppose the purchase of the candlewood hotel by the city for affordable housing. This community is a small peaceful neighborhood with young and old families. They all walk around their neighborhood to exercise, spend time with their kids, and walk their dogs without any worry but now they have to watch their backs. They have already slept in my restaurant patio, stolen my bicycle and tv that was on the patio, came into the restaurant and stole our lobby iPad and even some of our cars have been broken into. Candlewood is only one fence away from everybody. This homeless shelter is 947 ft away from Westwood high school. It is too close. We just don't believe this particular location is the answer. Please reconsider. Thank you so much.</p>	Freda	2/3/21

Conclusion: Based on review of the total constituent correspondence that has come in to-date, 100% of business owners or concerned business patrons are against item #61 – the purchase of the Candlewood Suites on Pecan Park. The majority of the opposing constituents would like to be notified of major real estate transactions in the area and, more time for discussion and input on the project before the approval of the purchase is proposed.

