

MAYOR,

BRUCE FAIRCHILD – LONG-TIME RESIDENT OF HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD;
HNA TREASURER; HNA REPRESENTATIVE ON CANPAC, WHICH AS YOU
KNOW IS THE CENTRAL AUSTIN NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

BEGIN BY DESCRIBING THE HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD, WHICH IS
RELATIVELY SMALL:

45TH ON NORTH, 32ND ON SOUTH, I-35 ON EAST, AND DUVAL STREET ON
WEST, WITH WALLER CREEK RUNNING DOWN THE MIDDLE

A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD SURROUNDED BY COMMERCIAL:

900 HOMES (APPROXIMATELY 50% ARE OWNER OCCUPIED AND
REMAINDER ARE RENTAL UNITS)

200 DUPLEXES AND GARAGE APARTMENTS

19 APARTMENT COMPLEXES (16 < 32 UNITS AND OTHERS UP TO ALMOST 300
UNITS). A 600 UNIT COMPLEX IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT THE
CONCORDIA SITE

HANCOCK SHOPPING CENTER ON THE EAST. THE CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
DEVELOPMENT ON THE SOUTHEAST CORNER, MEDICAL OFFICES ON 32ND
ON SOUTH; A STRIP CENTER AND OFFICES ON SOUTH RED RIVER; DUVAL
CENTER ON THE WEST; A CONVENIENCE STORE AND GAS STATION ON
NORTHWEST CORNER. AND MOST RECENTLY, ACROSS FROM HANCOCK
SHOPPING CENTER, THE PERRY MANSION ESTATE IS BEING DEVELOPED
INTO AN EVENTS CENTER WITH A HOTEL AND RESTAURANT

NEIGHBORHOOD IS ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE:

THERE SOME VERY NICE HOMES, BUT THE VAST MAJORITY ARE MODEST AND OLDER, HAVING BEEN BUILT BETWEEN WWI AND WWII (SOME OLDER, SOME NEWER)

HOMES ARE OCCUPIED BY LONG-TIME RESIDENTS, UNVERISTY AND GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, ARTISTS, AND SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS. NEW FAMILIES THAT HAVE MOVED IN, AND MANY OF THE RENTALS ARE OCCUPIED BY STUDENTS

AFFORDABILITY AND DENSITY

BECAUSE THE MAJORITY OF THE HOMES, DUPLEXES, AND APARTMENTS ARE OLDER, THEY RENT AT RELATIVELY AFFORDABLE RATES. ALSO, BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF DUPLEXES AND APARTMENTS, HANCOCK IS ONE OF, IF NOT THE, MOST DENSELY POPULATED NEIGHBORHOOD IN AUSTIN.

HOW HAS DEVELOPMENT OCCURED IN HANCOCK?

HANCOCK IS PART OF THE CENTRAL AUSTIN COMBINED NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED THROUGH TWO YEARS OF WORK BY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE COMMUNITY AND WAS ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL IN 2004. THIS PLAN HAS SIX PRIMARY GOALS:

1. PRESERVE THE INTEGRITY AND CHARACTER OF SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS
2. PRESERVE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER AND RESOURCES OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS

3. ALLOW MIXED USE ALONG EXISTING COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS THAT IS PEDISTRIANORIENTED, NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDLY, SCALED, AND MEETS NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS
4. WEST CAMPUS SHOULD BECOME A DENSE, VIBRANT, MIXED USE PEDISTRIAN FRIENDLY COMMUNITY
5. PROVIDE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT
6. ENHANCE AND PRESERVE EXISTING OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS BACKGROUND IS TO EXPLAIN WHERE THE HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD IS AND HOW IT GOT HERE. NOW LET'S TURN TO WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED UNDER THE CURRENT REZONING PLAN.

TRANSIT CORRIDORS:

THERE WOULD BE 3 TRANSIT CORRIDORS IN HANCOCK (PLUS I-35 ON THE EAST). DUVAL STREET WOULD BE ON THE WEST, WITH 38TH STREET AND RED RIVER RUNNING THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

WE UNDERSTAND THAT THESE WERE SELECTED SIMPLY BASED ON CAPITAL METRO ROUTES, NOT ANY MEANINGFUL ANALYSIS. INDEED, IT IS HARD TO UNDERSTAND HOW DUVAL CAN BE CONSIDERED A TRANSIT CORRIDOR, WHEN IT IS SIMPLY A 2-LANE RESIDENTIAL STREET, AND 38TH STREET IS ALSO 2 LANE WHERE IT RUNS THROUGH THE HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD.

ALSO, THE DISTANCE BETWEEN DUVAL AND RED RIVER IS 4 BLOCKS, AND BETWEEN RED RIVER AND I-35 IS LESS THAN FOUR BLOCKS. WITH COMMERCIAL AND HIGH DENSITY APARTMENTS ALLOWED ON EACH SIDE OF THESE TRANSIT CORRIDORS, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE ROOM LEFT FOR TRADITIONAL RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS, NOT TO MENTION THAT THOSE

RESIDENTS STILL THERE WOULD BE SURROUNDED BY HIGH DENSITY BUILDINGS.

COMMERCIAL/HIGH DENSITY ZONING:

MY BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPOSED REZONING OF HANCOCK IS THAT IT IS INTENDED TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DENSITY; IN OTHER WORDS, DEMOLISH THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK AND REPLACE IT WITH NEW, HIGH DENSITY HOUSING. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PLAN?

1. IT IS AT DIRECT ODDS WITH THE CANP, WHICH WAS A “GRASS ROOTS” PLAN DEVELOPED THROUGH A CONSENSUS OF CITIZENS, NOT BY OUTSIDE CONSULTANTS LOOKING AT A MAP AND WHOLLY UNFAMILIAR WITH WHAT WAS ACTUALLY ON THE GROUND IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS THEY WERE PROPOSED TO REZONING
2. IT WILL DECREASE, NOT INCREASE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. DEMOLISHING OLDER STRUCTURES AND REPLACING THEM WITH NEW, HIGH DENSITY RESIDENCES IN A CONVENIENT NEIGHBORHOOD DOES NOT RESULT ON LOWER RENTS (WE NEED TO LOOK NO FURTHER THAN DOWNTOWN TO SEE THAT)
3. IT WILL PUSH LONG-TIME RESIDENTS (MANY OF WHICH ARE ELDERLY AND ON FIXED INCOMES), FAMILIES, AND LOW INCOME RENTERS OUT OF HANCOCK, LEAVING IT MOSTLY OCCUPIED BY TRANSIENT STUDENTS AND THE AFFLUENT
4. WE TALK A LOT ABOUT THE SO-CALLED “QUALITY OF LIFE” IN AUSTIN. BUT THE PROPOSED REZONING, WHERE REAL HOMES WITH FAMILIES, OLD AND YOUNG, TREES AND YARDS, AND NEIGHBORS KNOWING NEIGHBORS WILL BE GONE. INSTEAD, IT WILL BE REPLACED BY IMPERSONAL HIGH-DENSITY APARTMENTS AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS. THIS IS NOT MY, OR MOST HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS’, IDEA OF A QUALITY LIFE

MAYOR, WHAT THE PROPOSED ZONING IS DOING IS TAKING AN URBAN PLANNER'S THEORY OF HOW A NEIGHBORHOOD SHOULD BE STRUCTURED AND FORCIBLY IMPOSING IT ON HANCOCK. IF THE DESIGNERS OF THIS REZONING PLAN HAD LOOKED AT THE HANCOCK NEIGHBORHOOD, THEY WOULD HAVE SEEN THAT IT ALREADY EMBODIES THE TRAITS THAT MOST PEOPLE THINK MAKE A GOOD, LIVABLE, NEIGHBORHOOD. PUT ANOTHER WAY, HANCOCK ALREADY IS A MIXED USE, DENSE, AND AFFORDABLE NEIGHBORHOOD, WHICH ACCOMPLISHES WHAT EVERYONE IS SAYING THEY ARE TRYING TO DO. REZONING HANCOCK AS PROPOSED WILL DO NOTHING TO IMPROVE IT; RATHER, IT WILL ONLY DESTROY WHAT ALREADY EXISTS.

THANK YOU.