

passed by voice vote 11/24/2014

AR 21 - In Opposition of Reducing Occupancy Limits in Austin From Six To Four Non-Related Residents

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WHEREAS, there is an initiative to reduce occupancy limits in areas zoned as single-family housing from six to four non-related residents over the age of 18, citing issues with structures termed “stealth dorms;”¹ and,

WHEREAS, “stealth dorms” are identified as “single-family houses and duplexes that illegally house more than 6 unrelated adults,” which “when occupied by students, dorm duplexes and houses with six bedrooms become stealth dorms;”² and,

WHEREAS, these structures known as “stealth dorms” are High-Occupancy Units, which are currently permitted under the city’s single-family zoning laws;³ and,

WHEREAS, students have traditionally chosen to live in the West Campus and Hyde Park/North University areas because of their proximity to campus⁴; and,

WHEREAS, students typically have chosen to live in areas such as North University or East Riverside because of their price relative to neighborhoods like West Campus, sometimes sharing rooms in order to make the price of rent more affordable;⁵ and,

WHEREAS, initiatives like “Stop Stealth Dorms” use testimonials of residents and language that specifically targets students;⁶ and,

WHEREAS, there has been no tangible evidence of interaction between residents in ‘stealth dorms’ and other neighborhood residents as well as no tangible numbers as to the complaints levied against those living in ‘stealth dorms;’⁷ and,

WHEREAS, there is a “Stealth Dorm Working Group” that includes members of the Planning Commission Codes and Ordinances Sub-Committee and “various stakeholders,” without any explicit student input whatsoever;⁸ and,

¹ Austin City Council Meeting Agenda Item Number 53 - 11/21/2013

<http://austin.siretechnologies.com/sirepub/cache/2/tak154xzjdiic2c0cs0bd5vl/65153211192013124635281.PDF>

² <http://stopstealhdorms.com/background/q-a/>

³ p. 6 - http://centralaustincdc.org/fair_affordable_housing/Family_Displacement_in_Central_Austin.pdf

⁴ <http://www.dailytexanonline.com/opinion/2013/11/04/living-far-from-the-40-acres-may-be-cheaper-but-it-certainly-isnt-easier>

⁵ <http://www.dailytexanonline.com/news/2012/09/21/a-tale-of-two-neighborhoods>

⁶ <http://stopstealhdorms.com>

⁷ <http://austin.siretechnologies.com/sirepub/cache/2/tak154xzjdiic2c0cs0bd5vl/65171011192013124708796.PDF>

WHEREAS, students have expressed that they will continue to live in such conditions whether or not permissible under proposed changes because of its affordability;⁹ and,

WHEREAS, a reduction in the number of students permitted to live in a dwelling would mean more affordable options for student housing would have to be found; and,

WHEREAS, the inability to live with more than three other individuals would force students to either pay more for rental properties in target neighborhoods or move to areas further away from the campus; and,

WHEREAS, one of every eight residents in the City of Austin is a student¹⁰, and

WHEREAS, students are a protected class in the city of Austin that cannot be discriminated against in their pursuit of housing;¹¹ therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That the Student Government of The University of Texas at Austin opposes reducing the occupancy limits in single-family neighborhoods, particularly those in close proximity to campus; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Student Government asks that the City encourage dialogue between both City groups as well as neighborhoods to engage students residing in these neighborhoods to address issues such as noise, trash, parking, etc. that have brought about this proposed ordinance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That Student Government encourages all future reference to targeted property units be referred to as High-Occupancy Units and not 'Stealth Dorms,' to not single out the protected class of students; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this legislation be sent to the Office of the Mayor of the City of Austin, members of the Austin City Council, the Office of the President, the Vice President of Diversity and Community Engagement, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, the Daily Texan, and all other media outlets deemed necessary.

⁸ <http://austin.siretechnologies.com/sirepub/cache/2/tak154xzjdjic2c0cs0bd5vj/65153211192013124635281.PDF>

⁹ <http://www.dailytexanonline.com/news/2013/11/18/all-on-the-house-austin-city-council-may-consider-cracking-down-on-stealth-dorms>

¹⁰ p. 1 - http://centrallaustinedc.org/fair_affordable_housing/Family_Displacement_in_Central_Austin.pdf

¹¹ 1992 Code Section 7-1-1; Ord. 031106-12; Ord. 031211-11; Ord. 040610-7

Suspension of the Rules Justification

The Austin City Council will decide on Thursday whether or not to move forward with creating a proposed ordinance change, so creating this as new business before the meeting occurs would send a message that we are aware of what is occurring and are preparing a response to the issues being heard.