

VIA HAND DELIVERY

March 6, 2006

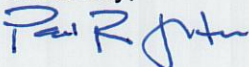
Austin Independent School District  
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Austin, TX 78703

Fairfield Residential is actively involved in the development of residential projects in urban areas throughout the country as well as the central core of Austin. It has been our experience that the re-population of our central cities is occurring in more and more areas and is being encouraged by more and more city governments. Inevitably, many of the first wave of "urban pioneers" tend to be young and single or empty-nester residents who do not have school-age children. These residents help support that initial wave and, if things move correctly, they help bring about the possibility of retail and other supportive uses once a critical mass is reached.

Once this stage is achieved, the next residential wave in cities that support and plan for re-populating their city centers is young families who either have, or are planning to have, young children. This is particularly true in cities such as Austin, where strong public and quasi-public efforts have been made to establish and support public spaces - be it parks, community centers, or arts and cultural venues. Obviously, a key component to any young family is access and proximity to schools. If the schools are not there, the young pioneers will follow earlier patterns of moving outward and will just be replaced by a new wave of temporary residents.

The lesson we have seen nationally is that unless there are vibrant public school options in urban settings for young families with children, downtown residency takes on a revolving door aspect and the opportunity of establishing longer - term, permanent residents is missed. When this happens there is a huge hole in the implementation of re-populating cities and it's goals of reduced sprawl, support for the public investment in central public spaces, and a healthy, sustainable downtown. Downtown neighborhoods are no different in many ways to neighborhoods in other areas, they look for the stability of local, accessible public schools.

Sincerely,



Paul R. Johnston, AICP

cc: Austin City Council