

March 6, 2006

**TO:** AISD Trustees, Dr. Forgione, Paul Turner, Larry Thom, Ryan Robinson, Austin City Council

**FROM:** Kathie Tovo, President, Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association

**RE.:** Future Residential Development Near Becker Elementary School

On February 20, I presented to the AISD trustees a list of planned new housing developments in the area surrounding Becker Elementary. While I appreciate Dr. Forgione making available to me on March 2 Paul Turner's February 28 response on behalf of AISD, I believe the AISD memo obscures rather than clarifies the question of development and growth in 78704.

**•NUMBER OF PROJECTS**

Mr. Turner writes, "Only 11 out of the 30 entries [from the list provided by the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association] were found in Metro Study." As indicated in the prefatory comments, the BCNA list of 28 larger-scale residential projects and 32-34 individual houses includes **future** projects as well as those in construction or newly completed. Metro Study database, my research suggests, includes some future projects, but primarily collects information on a quarterly basis about projects that have filed city building permits.

Mr. Turner further explained in a phone conversation on March 3 that Metro Study tracks projects by name rather than by address and that he was unable in the time allotted for this task to cross-reference all of the entries on the original list. I believe that the AISD letter inadvertently gives the impression that my list was inaccurate, not that staff did not have time to thoroughly verify the information.

I have reviewed with Mr. Turner which of the projects he was able to verify with Metro Study, and I will provide documentation of as many of the additional 19 future projects as possible. That these additional projects have not yet appeared in Metro Study does not make their construction any less certain. While many have not yet filed building permits, most have appeared before City of Austin boards or committees; met with neighborhood associations; hired architects; and begun reserving or pre-selling units.

**•NUMBER OF UNITS**

Mr. Turner notes that "Out of these 11 entries, approximately 300 fewer units were projected, than what had been projected on the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood List." In point of fact, Metro Study's unit count differed from my list for **6** of the **11** entries and in **4** of those instances, Metro Study projected a higher unit count than did my original list. In the case of the 5<sup>th</sup> entry, Spaces 2525, I verified the higher figure of 51 with developer Will Steakley while conducting my initial research. SoCo Lofts, which appears on my list with 369 units and on Metro Study with only 40 units accounts for the 300 fewer units to which Mr. Turner refers, but information on the SoCo Lofts website lists the higher unit count.

**•HOUSING COST**

While it is certainly true that some of the projects on my list may fall into the \$350,000-\$600,000 range that Mr. Turner cites, I believe this is a faulty generalization. Please note in the attached materials, for example, the recent classified advertisement for Spaces 2525 as starting at \$184,900. Furthermore, it is my understanding that **housing type** and **bedroom count** are better indicators for projecting the potential number of children than is **housing cost**.

As I acknowledged when I distributed the list, housing types such as one-bedroom lofts are not likely to attract families, and I offered to provide bedroom counts so that AISD could consider that additional information when reviewing the impact these planned developments will have on student numbers. When I asked Mr. Turner and Dennis Harner in separate phone conversations on March 3 to clarify the connection being made in the AISD memo between housing cost and projected numbers of children, both seemed to link housing costs with parents' tendency to send children to private school. I respectfully request clarification on this point as well as evidence to support the claim that "the costs of the new housing in this area would limit access to families with younger children."

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#### •CONCLUSION

I have attempted to provide an accurate list of planned developments in this area and am working to secure data from the Comparative Neighborhoods study of 2000–2005 that would enable me to eliminate residences that now appear in the "Planned Residential Development" list but were completed by 2006. Certainly, unit counts may fluctuate as projects change, and projects will undoubtedly be added, and a few may in the short term be eliminated. The city's map of emerging projects, for example, shows another project in the Zilker attendance district (1426 Toomey Rd. with 100 units) not included on my original list. But these additions and small variations don't alter the larger point. **The available data clearly suggests that significant residential development is occurring or planned in 78704, and AISD data collection appears not to have taken this development into account when projecting future growth patterns in this area.**

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