

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Dawn Roberson](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 4:02:02 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, June 24, 2014 8:33 AM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Tuesday, June 24, 2014 - 08:33

Agency: DEPARTMENT AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DADS

First Name: Catherine

Last Name: Kyle

Title: President

Organization you are affiliated with: West Austin Neighborhood Group

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I am writing on behalf of the West Austin Neighborhood Group to inform the Commission of West Austin's support for and desire to retain the State Supported Living Center located in Austin (f.k.a. Austin State School). Over the years, our neighborhood has expressed a strong and sustained desire to keep the ASSLC open and to recognized its role as a valued member of our community. Following are excerpts of feedback from the neighborhood in support of the ASSLC.

2005 State School Survey and Testimony: At www.westaustinng.com/SurveySummary.pdf, we've posted the survey results from our 2005 planning area residential survey which was undertaken in response to proposed development of the Austin State School property. As reported in our March, 2005 newsletter (www.westaustinng.com/newsletter/Mar_2005_Newsletter.pdf) a majority of respondents favored keeping the Austin State School open. We also submitted two letters regarding the Rider 55 Study reporting on our survey results, an article reporting on the results of the Rider 55 Study. The first of these letters states:

On behalf of the West Austin Neighborhood Group, this letter is to provide input regarding the Marketability Assessment of Facilities related to the Austin State School. The Group represents the area bounded by Lake Austin Boulevard to the south, Lake Austin to the west, 35th Street to the north, and MoPac to the East. In addition, we are joined by the Brykerwoods Neighborhood Group adjacent and that represents the area bounded by 35th Street (northern boundary), MoPac/Loop 1 (western boundary), Westover Road (southern boundary) and Harris Boulevard/Oakhurst Street/Shoal Creek (eastern boundary). As State taxpayers, the Group recognizes and commends the effort of the State to evaluate resources and their best use during a time when the State is under tremendous financial pressure. To ensure the best public policy decision is made, the Group strongly recommends that the State make an independent public policy decision as to the need for the Austin State School facility before considering the marketability or value of said facilities. As we are sure you recognize, this

inherent conflict has the potential of jeopardizing the legitimacy of the decision making process. The area around the Austin State School has been challenged by serious transportation issues that have not only impacted those that live within the immediate area, but also those that must travel through this area. Not only have there been challenges, that worsen daily, but there has been no consensus at the state or local level as to any potential solution to these daunting transportation issues. Were the Austin State School to be developed, these same issues could be magnified tremendously based upon ultimate land use and development densities of the tract. In addition, depending upon the proposed use for the land, there will be significant infrastructure improvements that must be met, including water, wastewater and other utility requirements. Without considering these issues, or having a plan in place to address these issues, the State not only may create the potential for additional challenges, but likely may create greater costs for the State, and local government, when it ultimately attempts to resolve these issues.

In a supplemental submission, West Austin Neighborhood Group informed the Ombudsman of the survey results:

For purposes of providing additional information for your study, we conducted a survey of the property owners in the adjoining neighborhoods to collect information from the adjoining neighborhoods that would be most directly affected by any changes at the property. This survey requested neighborhood input on whether the Austin State School should be closed, and on what type of residential and/or commercial development should occur at this part of our neighborhood if the property were sold.

First of all, a substantial majority of the neighborhood (75% of the respondents) favors keeping the school open. This reflects our neighborhood's appreciation for the services provided by the Austin State School, as well as the desire that such important social services not be eliminated by closing the school. This also reflects our desire to keep a good neighbor and valuable resource as a part of our neighborhood.

If the Austin State School property is sold, the survey responses show that there will likely be strong neighborhood opposition to any significant commercial development of the property. In particular, the survey responses show that:

- most respondents (75%) would prefer that the property be generally used as recreational and open space.
- about half of the respondents would prefer that the residential properties be located as a buffer to all streets around the school, or at least Westover and Exposition.
- the ratio of commercial to residential (or less intensive) development preferred by the neighborhood is 24% commercial and 76% residential (or less intensive).

As for preferred locations of different types of development, most respondents (75%) indicated that new single family housing would be appropriate anywhere on the property. More respondents indicated that higher density housing, "8 to 5" businesses, new professional offices, mixed use development, extended hours businesses, adult-oriented businesses, big box retail, and shopping malls was "not appropriate anywhere in the property," with the second favorite location for these types of development being MoPac and 35th Street.

We also considered the ASSLC's role in our neighborhood when we developed and wrote the Central West Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan. There are numerous references to the Austin State School in our neighborhood plan (<ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/Austingo/cwa-combined-np.pdf>) which reflect the value of the School to our neighborhood and our desire to retain this key feature.

In the "Neighborhood In Context" section of the plan (page 20), the following description is provided:

The school is a substantial, though quiet, presence in the neighborhood. For some, the school's campus provides visual greenspace as they drive or walk by. The public uses the playing fields near W. 35th Street for youth sports such as soccer. For the families of residents, though, the school was a reason to move to this area, so that they could be near their family members.

Today, family members and neighbors are concerned that the State will sell the school's campus to a private developer. This concern was partially formed because the State sold approximately two acres of school land along Exposition Boulevard in 2007. At this time, the State has not publicly stated any intent to sell the remaining land. Most stakeholders, including the School itself, would like to keep the School at its current location. Should the State decide to sell a portion or all of the property, stakeholders and the City hope that the State will work with them to ensure consistency with the neighborhood plan. The Land Use Chapter includes recommendations related to the State School.

In the "Land Use Chapter" section of the plan (page 42), the following description is provided:

West of MoPac, the most pressing concerns are the potential neighborhood-changing impacts of any redevelopment of the Brackenridge Tract and the Austin State School as well as the intrusion of commercial uses (and their impacts) into the immediately surrounding residential neighborhood, especially along Exposition Boulevard. There is particular interest in preserving harmony among land uses and in guarding against potential negative effects of future redevelopment of properties along Lake Austin Boulevard and Exposition Boulevard.

I've also attached the "Land Use Chapter" section of the plan (page 46-47) which states the Land Use "Objective 5: Encourage the State of Texas to keep the Austin State Supported Living Center in its current location and become a more integrated asset in the neighborhood," as well as the "backup" Objective 6: "If the Austin State Supported Living Center redevelops, it should be done in harmony with the adjacent neighborhood, transportation system, and natural resources."

In the "Parks, Open Space and Environment" section of the plan (pages 66-72), the plan discusses our goal of preserving, connecting and enhancing existing parks and recreational areas and facilities in the Central West Austin Planning Area, as well as open-space on large properties (e.g., Austin State School and the Brackenridge Tract) for the health, recreational and historical benefits they bring to the community.

In the "Community Life Chapter" section of the plan (page 81), the plan discusses our desire to help "create the Austin State School Life Trail as well as volunteer participation in the Austin State School Volunteer Services Council activities."

We therefore urge the Commission to recommend that the ASSLC remain open to continue its significant role in our community and to continue to serve the needs of its vulnerable residents.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

The imminent opening of the medical school at UT Austin provides an opportunity for the ASSLC that should not be ignored. In partnership with UT, DADS could develop a "state of the art" facility at the ASSLC to better provide services to its residents.

Further, the numerous historically significant buildings on the campus could be re-purposed, either for the ASLC itself, for the medical school, or for other state needs. Selling the property off to the highest bidder and shuttling the residents to other facilities or group homes, away from friends, family and familiar surroundings, is a short-sighted and ultimately harmful response. We urge the Commission to seriously consider other alternatives and to view the ASSLC as a resource to the community and to the State.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree