



**GREG TRAVIS**  
Houston City Council Member, District G

January 27, 2016

Mr. Lance Gilliam  
Chair, Board of Commissioners  
Houston Housing Authority  
2640 Fountain View Drive  
Houston, TX 77057

Dear Mr. Gilliam,

On behalf of my constituents in Houston City Council District G, I write in opposition to the Houston Housing Authority's (HHA's) proposed 233-unit multifamily development at 2640 Fountain View Drive. Since taking office on January 4, 2016, I have received numerous objections to the proposed project's location. Among my major concerns are the following items:

First, there was insufficient notice of the project given to members of the nearby community. This project came as a surprise not only to me, but more importantly to residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. HHA made no attempt to reach out to community leaders to gauge support for this location, and there was no well-advertised opportunity to provide community input. Earlier this month, I strongly suggested HHA place this matter on hold until such input was received. I reiterate this request again—please reach out to the community to solicit public comment and support before moving ahead, if at all.

Second, this project will place an undue burden on the local elementary schools and on the children and families attending and desiring to attend those schools. Briargrove Elementary School is currently operating beyond its capacity and cannot accommodate an influx of new students. According to Houston Independent School District (HISD) Trustee Harvin Moore, Briargrove, the school to which students residing at 2640 Fountain View would be zoned, has capacity for 788 students and enrollment is already at 834. To compound matters, Mark White Elementary, the school being constructed to relieve overcrowding at Briargrove, will already be at capacity when the proposed project is completed. It makes no sense for the government to finance a project which will add students to an already stressed situation.

I understand the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has charged HHA with building affordable housing in neighborhoods of "high opportunity" where access to good public schools is a key factor. Since the closest school is over capacity, there is no guarantee families moving into the proposed project will have such access. Either these families will end up having to send their children to a school much farther away or there will be an increase in class sizes, neither of these probable scenarios promote better education. All of this seems to run counter to what HUD is trying to accomplish.

Third, there are concerns about the safety of the children and families who are the intended occupants of this project due to the project's location. The proposed site is located near the intersection of two heavily

trafficked major thoroughfares, Fountain View and Westheimer. Fountain View is very widely used by motorists traveling south to Westheimer and Highway 59 and north to San Felipe and Woodway. The area is largely commercial without any greenspace or places for children to play. Further, the area is not conducive to foot traffic due to the high volume of traffic and the various ingress and egress of the commercial properties. I am interested in reviewing an analysis of the project's impact on traffic, as well as any proposed plans to safeguard residents and children from the effects of living so close to this very busy intersection.

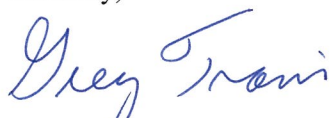
Fourth, there are objections to the overall cost and timing of the project. It is my understanding that this project will cost in excess of \$50 million. Certainly the cost is impacted by the location itself as HHA has chosen prime real estate. Consequently, this project comes to nearly \$215,000 per unit, nearly three times the cost of other similar housing. This is not affordable housing, rather this is unaffordable housing. HHA could easily serve more people with more units at another location. I would think in these tight times, HHA would want to stretch its dollars and maximize its effect so as to serve more people. I certainly hope that is the intent of HHA, but when I see a project such as this I begin to wonder. This project seems to be wasting away precious resources.

HHA should also give greater consideration to the timing of this project. With current oil prices and the expected slump in the economy, combined with all of the apartments which have been built lately, there will soon be a great deal of affordable housing on the market. Prices will soon reflect expected reductions due to supply and demand. Why build more housing only to compete with the private sector when there is already appearing to be too much supply? Economically, this project makes little to no sense.

During the last month I have spoken to many concerned neighbors and parents about the project. Knowing the diversity of the local schools, I assure you these are not people who are opposed to low-income housing. In fact, there is already a high prevalence of low-cost rental housing in the immediate project area. These are simply citizens who are upset that they were not engaged in a constructive dialogue about this publicly-funded project and who are justifiably concerned about the project's economics, safety and impact on the local elementary school.

Thank you for your prompt attention to the matters I have outlined. I look forward to working with you to make sure my constituents' concerns are fully heard, considered and addressed.

Sincerely,



Greg Travis

cc: Congressman John Culberson  
Senator Joan Huffman  
Representative Jim Murphy  
Mayor Sylvester Turner  
Mr. Harvin Moore