February 12, 2015

To: Members of the Mayor's Task Force on Preserving Dynamic
And Diverse Neighborhoods.

From: María Antonietta Berriozábal, Task Force Member

Subject: Task Force Draft Report

I am sorry that I have not been able to attend several of the last Task Force meetings. Illness in my family prevented my doing so. I have tried to keep up with the progress of the task force as much as possible.

Today I would like to share my list of recommendations for the report. Some of these are already on one of the drafts I read some time ago but I have not had time to read the most recent draft.

1. **Open up effective opportunities for citizen participation.**

2. Citizen input: Create a mediation process.

At this time the only opportunities citizens have to provide input on issues where they have serious problems are the few minutes allowed going before the various commissions (zoning, board of adjustment, planning, building standards board) and City Council. This is not enough time.

Therefore, there should be a process put in place where the citizens and the proponents of particular cases go before an impartial (not city) and out of city mediation process so that both sides can present their cases. Citizens would initiate the trigger for this process.

2. **Commit to build housing for families at 50% AMI. There must be an understanding that % of our population is living in poverty.**

4. Work with existing community groups interested in creating a Community Land Trust (SLT) so that land will be in the hands of community people and it will be affordable in perpetuity. Such a program already exists in Austin, Texas.

5. Create a Renters Bill of Rights realizing that 45 – 50% of our households are rental and according to the Pew Research Center 51% of Hispanic families live in rental properties.

6. Designate city-owned land for low-income infill and workforce housing.

7. Create an open and transparent process for the distribution of public land so that the general public has timely notice of land being disposed.

8. Create dedicated funding from various sources for the Housing Trust Fund.

9. Secure funds from big developers to be used for low income, workforce and affordable housing.

10. Create mixed use housing but there has to be a serious commitment to investments in rehabilitation/upgrading of existing housing stock, tax incentives and other assistance to the neighbors, the homeowners who have lived in those areas for a long period of time. They should have their homes repaired and/or should be have a first opportunity to live in the new housing.

11. People who want to stay in their older homes should be able to do so.
Create tax incentives for homeowners, i.e., limit increments of tax increases, for those who have lived in those properties for a certain length of time, and/or those who have invested in their properties in which they or their family have lived for a long period of time (10, 20 years?) in gentrifying neighborhoods.

9. **Help for small businesses in gentrifying neighborhoods**.
Create tax incentives for small businesses that have been doing business in the same location for a long period of time. (10, 20 years?)
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10. Use a small portion of real estate transfer taxes for low income, workforce, affordable housing and other purposes described in this report. This can be deposited in Housing Trust Fund.

11. In revitalization one goal should be not to displace people when new development occurs that receive public subsidies; however, when it must happen developers will pay relocation assistance and if he cannot do it he should not receive any city assistance.

12. Demolition prevention/assistance.

A serious study needs to be conducted and amendments made on how demolition orders are issued. How does an order for repairs move to a demolition order? There must be time provided and assistance so that families, particularly the elderly who have lived in those homes for decades, are not left without a home. Vulnerable individuals should not be left to fend for themselves.

Final thought.

A 2017 bond issue for housing is being discussed. In addition a committee of San Antonio leaders have been working on bringing the LISC group to our city. They come with some money and that is a very positive move; however, we need to be sure that we not only depend on bonds and LISC money to address housing in San Antonio for the long haul. LISC funds should be leveraged with local and new funding. We have a serious responsibility to examine, amend, change and replace policies that are reducing our housing stock and displacing people. We must open up and create new avenues for citizen participation and we must find ways to increase funding for rehabilitation and construction of low income, workforce and affordable housing.