



Pre-Submitted Questions

Texas Organizing Project (TOP)

Mu Son Chi, Bexar County Director

Background Statement from TOP

San Antonio's Westside has extremely poor residential infrastructure compared to more affluent neighborhoods. These conditions have negative impacts on our health and cause our communities to be less safe. Leaders at Texas Organizing Project (TOP) have been organizing for better lights, sidewalks, roads, drainage, and home rehabilitation. We also know that we have the right to participate fully in this process and we have a right to stay in our homes. Most TOP leaders have lived on the Westside all of their lives. Our collective family history here goes back over 1,000 years.

Pre-Submitted Questions

1. What are your policy recommendations to make sure that we are not forced out of our homes by new development? We do not want relocation assistance. We do not plan on going anywhere. How can you help us stay in our homes?
2. The entire community benefits when residents have the resources to keep up and maintain their homes. It makes little sense to provide incentives to developers and to not provide sufficient resources to residents for home rehabilitation. What are specific ways to ensure that more resources are made available for low income residents for home repair?
3. What are the recommendations by members of this task force that will ensure that developers are required to offer quality jobs, neighborhood improvements, environmental protections, and benefits to local small business on any new development projects?
4. As we stated before, we know that we have the right to fully participate in this process. Will you give us a seat at the table on the city commission that will track implementation of these policies?

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center

Graciela I. Sanchez, Director

1. Five members of the commission have said that this report was not their work product? So who did write this report and how was the Task Force involved in the drafting of this report?

2. The **Task Force Charge** includes this **Goal**: “Identify policies and programs that encourage investment in inner city neighborhoods but minimize or prevent displacement of people or adverse impacts related to history, culture, and quality of life of unique neighborhoods.” It appears that the only recommendations addressing displacement of current residents are those relating to new housing construction. Why doesn’t the report recommend aggressive and creative ways to enable residents to remain in their own homes?
3. The first item in the **Task Force Charge** subsection entitled “**Task Force Purpose**” is “**review current policies**,” referring to current City policies that relate to the **Goal** of “*Identifying policies and programs that encourage investment in inner city neighborhoods but minimize or prevent displacement of people or adverse impacts related to history, culture, and quality of life of unique neighborhoods.*” We have a series of questions about this aspect of the Task Force’s work:
 - a. Why doesn’t the report include a review of existing ordinances and policies affecting the displacement of people or other adverse impacts on inner city neighborhoods?
 - b. It is clear that the recent **Vacant Building Ordinance** will enable the City to acquire and demolish buildings more rapidly than in the past which will accelerate gentrification. Why doesn’t the report recommend repeal or amendment to that ordinance?
 - c. The Task Force report notes that there was discussion of how rising property taxes can force out current residents. Why doesn’t the report review current ordinances and policies regarding the City’s property tax revenues and recommend the use of some of those revenues for property tax assistance for current inner city residents who are at risk of being forced out?
 - d. Why didn’t the task force report evaluate the impact of City policies on parks and other open space on gentrification and changing neighborhoods?
 - e. The Task Force Charge includes consideration of how to “minimize or prevent ... **adverse impacts** related to history, culture, and quality of life of unique neighborhoods.” Why doesn’t the Report even mention this part of the Task Force Charge?
4. The population and culture of the Westside is and always has been Mexican and Mexican-American, with residents, being both documented and undocumented. What recommendations has the Task Force made to minimize or avoid displacement of undocumented residents?
5. For a significant number of inner city residents, their culture and quality of life include the uniquely close-knit community life in mobile home parks. What recommendations has the Task Force made to minimize or avoid displacement of mobile home park residents?
6. Current neighborhood master plans were created with significant community input, yet in recent years, we have seen those master plans disregarded by Council Members, City Staff and developers courting support from a small group of neighborhood association officers. This raises two questions:

- a. Did the Task Force review the City's policies regarding neighborhood associations, particularly the policies regarding recognition of neighborhood associations and evaluation of their internal procedures?
 - b. Did the Task Force review the City's policies regarding the influence of lobbyists on City Council decisions?
7. In recent years, more City demolition orders have been issued for the Eastside and Westside properties than in other parts of the City and we know that demolitions pave the way for gentrification. Yet the City spends between \$10,000-\$20,000 to carry out each of those demolitions. Given all of this, why doesn't the Task Force recommend that this money instead be made available to homeowners to maintain and preserve their homes?
8. The Report's First Long-Term Recommendation, on page 12, is to develop a "Inclusionary Housing Policy for City-Incented Residential Development" which would provide City funding to subsidize inner city construction of residential units, the vast majority of which would go to middle or upper income families. So this would directly subsidize gentrification. How does the Task Force justify this?
9. Why were statements and comments submitted by the Right to the City SA Coalition and the Mission Trails Community to this Task Force not acknowledged or incorporated into the Plan?
10. Why are we rushing the process to finalize this report?