

EMLK Contact Team
Re: Regiene Rd project
Case NPA-2020-0015.03
Oct 24, 2021

Hello Planning Commission, City Council Members, Mayor Pro Tem and Mayor,

The EMLK NPCT has been meeting with the developer's agent in the Regiene Rd case throughout 2021 and had multiple meetings in late summer and early this fall. It's a big project and we had a lot to cover!

We appreciated the creativity that the developer's agent, Leah Bojo, brought to our conversations. Our Co-Chairs led the discussions with Leah, because we don't have a neighborhood association which covers this area, and there aren't any other residents immediately impacted.

We were initially encouraged by the project because after the enhancements to Highway 183 have been made recently, it is exciting for our area to have some of the expected growth come our way. Also, we appreciate that the plans for the project have been updated to accommodate many of the standards outlined on [our website, EMLK Contact Team](#), including:

- access to the nearby Walnut Creek Trail
- a Cap Metro lite rail stop
- 1-star rating in the Austin Energy Green Building Program

There are other positive aspects of the project as well- (1) we understand that affordable commercial space, which we prioritized in our conversations with Leah, was incorporated into a private agreement. We believe that is one of the first agreements of that kind in the area, and hope that this becomes more standard. (2) We requested that the developer prioritize deep affordability in the residences, and at this time, they can commit to 10% of the units at 60% of MFI, which is a step better than many developments in our area; our request was 15-20% of the units at 50-60% MFI because our area specifically is seeing that the standard "affordability" is not helping residents stay or return to our area. 60% MFI should be reflective of fitting rents to this MFI. 80% MFI should not have the same rents as 60% MFI. We look forward to discussing housing affordability solutions further, separately. (3) A mix of uses on the property, which seem likely to be a significant destination for Austinites to frequent.

However, at our recent monthly meeting on Oct 18, our membership unanimously voted against the project as it currently stands: our primary concern is that the developer has not made a satisfactory commitment to ensure that the project will uphold the needed financial and safety protections for the workers on the jobsite. Our website states that, "In order to receive support, projects shall achieve... Certification in the Better Builder Program through the Workers Defense Project, or provide equivalent standards." The developer has signed a private agreement with the General Contractors of America - Austin chapter (AGC), but that organization does not have an existing program (we requested documentation and references)

to uphold these important standards. It is current knowledge in the Austin community that only the Workers Defense Project has a rigorous program in place to establish and monitor that the workers' financial and safety rights are upheld. As a working class neighborhood with many families that are impacted by the decisions made on construction sites, as well as residents that are other stakeholders in the construction industry, the discussion among our Contact Team centered around confusion - why wouldn't the developer make these important commitments to the community?

Since the Contact Team vote on Oct 18, we have been in touch with Mayor Pro Tem's office staff, Lauren Hartnett, and included supporting evidence that the General Contractor's lobby voted against and garnered support against worker's rights on several occasions at the state level.

And finally, we proposed a package of both short term benefits to the community as a gesture of goodwill from the developer, based on our knowledge of the needs of the area, and those were not accepted. We also discussed how long term benefits could be structured- community profit sharing based on square footage. We sent that framework to the Mayor Pro Tem's office separately, as requested.

As Mayor Pro Tem knows, the EMLK Contact Team members are working diligently with the community, to support the community amidst this period of great change in Austin. We respectfully submit this letter of recommendation not supporting the Regiene Rd project as it currently stands. It is our hope that our representatives will support us and require conditions or edits to the Regiene Rd project based on the concerns raised here.

Thank you,
Angela B Garza, Melonie House-Dixon, Dianna Dean, Alexandria Anderson, Nadia Barbot
Co-Chairs, [East MLK Neighborhood Plan](#) Contact Team