

Day Labor Community Advisory Committee

TO: David Lurie, Director, Austin/Travis Co. Health and Human Services Dept.

February 1, 2007

FROM: Day Labor Community Advisory Committee

Paul Sherr, Chairperson, CWA/AFL-CIO

Jennifer Long, Casa Marianella Shelter

Parisa Fatehi, Commission on Immigrant Affairs

Lori C-Renteria, Austin Neighborhoods' Council

Pedro Luis Carralero, Day Laborer Committee of St. John

Emily Timm, Co-Chair, Workers Defense Project

Bruce Banner, Education Austin/AFL-CIO

Kim Bernson, Ridgetop Neighborhood Association

DeCandice Crozier, St. John's Neighborhood Assoc.

SUBJECT: Recommendations regarding potential sites for a new Day Labor Center in South Austin

All members really appreciate the staff and the City Council members for bringing us together to find the best solutions for the long term. We are very proud of our City Council to consider expanding Day Labor services when many cities are shutting them down thinking that all day laborers are not entitled to seek work as best they can.

Our Committee defined the search area and considered sixty potential sites in an area bounded by the River to South of St. Elmo, from South First Street to East of Pleasant Valley Road. *We are willing to give staff our input – both pro and con – for each of the five sites that city staff considers feasible with the understanding that the Committee does not endorse any particular site.*

2101 E. Ben White Blvd. (would co-exist with Pro Con residential facility for offenders and TX Dept. of Parole Office)

Pros: Creates a mixed-use facility that increases density in an existing building zoned CS; good access for employers using I-35 or US 183; easy access for Pro Con transitional housing residents who may need to secure day labor until they secure permanent employment; good bus service; provides commercial buffer for residential neighborhoods.

Cons: Too far away from existing, informal day labor work corners on Riverside Drive; severe traffic congestion because driveways are too close to busy Woodward St. intersection causing safety issues for students using the adjacent bus stops to attend American YouthWorks High School across the street as well as residents from the area who rely on this intersection when commuting to work in the early morning hours; stigma and signage issues that site is primarily used as a Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice Parole Office, facility houses up to 100 transitional housing residents including some ex-offenders who live on-site and who would have to share common areas with non-residents using the day labor services; physical layout of existing facility may require substantial changes; proximity to existing school and sharing bus stop with students during morning rush hour; driveway and grade issues create contractors' ability to maneuver large vehicles and trailers difficult; poor visibility due to busy intersection and building footprint.

Community Input received: On September 18, 2006, a community meeting was held at this location with about 15 people who live near or own commercial property close to the facility. Area business people were concerned about the image of their neighborhood related to massing of workers and vehicles in the parking lots. Area residents were not opposed to a day labor center in their area but could not support this location due to traffic hazards with large trucks and trailers trying to negotiate the left turn into the driveway being too close to the pedestrian crosswalk, bus stop, and traffic signal at Woodward St. Some suggested looking to commercial and industrial properties further east on Ben White.

During Citizen Communications on December 12, 2006 and January 23, 2007 and at our community meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2007, neighborhood residents, business owners, neighborhood association members, and planning team members from both the Ben White and Riverside areas all expressed concerns about locating a day labor center near homes and schools. Some neighborhood associations and business representatives objected to both Ben White locations while others supported a Ben White site.

On Sept. 19, 2006, day workers visited the site and expressed concerns about sharing space with a TDCJ Parole Office and transitional housing facility. Day worker survey responses and focus group participants from the Riverside area (held on 12-11-06) said it was too far from the existing informal site on Riverside Drive and they prefer a Riverside location for the new day labor center.

2201 E. Ben White Blvd. (would co-exist with Midnight Rodeo Dance Club open nights only, Thursday – Sunday)

Pros: Creates a mixed-use facility that increases density in an existing building; decent access for employers using I-35 or US 183, contractors' ability to maneuver large vehicles and trailers is adequate and there is a large parking lot; visibility from Ben White is adequate; easy access for residents of the Pro Con transitional housing program; existing physical layout is suitable for the operations; includes use of nice furniture; decent bus service; not too close to existing school; provides commercial buffer for residential neighborhoods.

Cons: Too far away from existing, informal day labor work corners on Riverside Drive; missing the site's single driveway requires a long drive to turn-around because of new and limited entry and exit ramps on both I-35 and US 71/E. Ben White; image of co-locating a labor center at a dance club that serves alcohol is controversial for some.

Community Input received: During Citizen Communications on December 12, 2006 and January 23, 2007 and at our community meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2007, neighborhood residents, business owners, neighborhood association members, and planning team members from both the Ben White and Riverside areas all expressed concerns about locating a day labor center near homes and schools. Some, but not many, agreed that a day labor center in South Austin is needed and that so long as it was located in an industrial or commercial area – they would not oppose a new center in their area.

Day worker survey responses and focus group participants from the Riverside area (held on 12-11-06) indicated a preference for the Riverside over any other sites because of the distance of other sites from their existing informal site on Riverside Drive. Survey results did indicate that some workers would consider using a Ben White location if there were direct transportation available.

1919 E. Riverside Dr. (would co-exist with Bingo Hall)

Pros: Creates a mixed-use facility that increases density in an existing building; located at the same intersection of an existing informal day labor work corner on Riverside Drive; workers can easily walk to and from their homes in Riverside area apartments; easy access to employers using I-35; contractors' ability to maneuver large vehicles and trailers is adequate and there is a large parking lot; visibility from Riverside Drive is adequate; includes use of nice furniture and amenities; existing physical layout is suitable for the operations; great bus service; existing traffic congestion can handle larger vehicles without much impact on Riverside Drive; mixed-use redevelopment planned and currently underway creates excellent demolition and construction opportunities for day workers who live in the Riverside area; greatest level of day worker interest and acceptance.

Cons: Property is currently zoned General Retail and the proposed future land use calls for a mixed-use General Retail designation which could include residences on the same block; there is substantial neighborhood opposition to locating day labor centers next to residential uses; a day labor center is not in the proposed East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Area Plan. There is substantial opposition from business representatives to formalize a day labor center in the East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Planning Area because of major, mixed-use redevelopment planned and currently underway.

Community Input received: During Citizen Communications on December 12, 2006 and January 23, 2007 and at our community meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2007, neighborhood residents, business owners, neighborhood association members, and planning team members from both the Ben White and Riverside areas all expressed concerns about locating a day labor center near homes and schools. Some, but not many, agreed that a day labor center in South Austin is needed and that so long as it was located in an industrial or commercial area – they would not oppose a new center in their area. The East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Area Planning Team opposes this site because it is not in their proposed plan, would create traffic congestion and pedestrian hazards, conflicts with current redevelopment of large tracts into mixed-use projects along both sides of Riverside from I-35 to Pleasant Valley Road and could increase crime in a known high-crime area known as APD Patrol Sector H3; concerns were raised that day workers massing in a single location could increase targeting by robbers leading to victimization of the individuals using the center; many planning efforts regarding traffic on Riverside Drive have called for reducing speed and creating a scenic boulevard and uses that attract uses of large construction vehicles would take away from the scenic aspects of the roadway. Business

representatives redeveloping properties in the East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Planning Area expressed concerns that a day labor center located in the EROC area would negatively affect their projects and could jeopardize project financing.

Day workers, many who live in the Riverside area, and their advocates believe the currently planned redevelopments for the Riverside area will have a tremendous amount of construction and demolition jobs created over the next few years naturally generating quite a number of informal sites to support this work. The area would benefit from having a formal structured day labor center to accommodate workers seeking jobs. Then, when this temporary site gets ready for redevelopment, it would be time to re-evaluate whether the Riverside site is an appropriate location for a day labor center. Day worker survey responses and Focus Group participants from the Riverside area did support this site because it is within walking distance from their homes and it is at the same intersection that they currently use as an informal day labor site.

1500 Pleasant Valley Rd. (would co-exist with El Mercado's current lessees)

Pros: Creates a mixed-use facility that increases density in an existing building;; located near the same intersection of an existing informal day labor work corner on Riverside Drive; workers can easily walk to and from their homes in Riverside area apartments; existing traffic congestion can handle larger vehicles without much impact on Pleasant Valley Road; contractors' ability to maneuver large vehicles and trailers is adequate and there is a large parking lot; visibility from Pleasant Valley Road is adequate; mixed-use redevelopment planned and currently underway creates excellent demolition and construction opportunities for day workers who live in the Riverside area.

Cons: Proposed future land use calls for a mixed-use designation which could include residences on the same block; there is substantial neighborhood opposition to locating day labor centers next to residential uses; a day labor center is not in the proposed East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Area Plan; there is substantial opposition from business representatives to formalize a day labor center in the East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Planning Area because of major, mixed-use redevelopment planned and currently underway; the Committee was not able to get inside the space we would use (an old Movie Theatre) so the physical layout of existing facility may require substantial changes; there may be conflicts with the weekend Flea Market that operates in the same parking lot during the weekends.

Community Input received: During Citizen Communications on December 12, 2006 and January 23, 2007 and at our community meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2007, neighborhood residents, business owners, neighborhood association members, and planning team members from both the Ben White and Riverside areas all expressed concerns about locating a day labor center near homes and schools. Some, but not many, agreed that a day labor in South Austin is needed and that so long as it was located in an industrial or commercial area – they would not oppose a new center in their area. The East Riverside/Oltorf Combined Area Planning Team opposes this site because it is not in their proposed plan, would create traffic congestion and pedestrian hazards, conflicts with current redevelopment of large tracts into mixed-use projects along Pleasant Valley Road and Elmont Drive and could increase crime in a known high-crime area known as APD Patrol Sector H4. Concerns were raised that day workers massing in a single location could increase targeting by robbers leading to victimization of the individuals using the center;

Day workers, many who live in this area, and their advocates believe the currently planned redevelopments for Pleasant Valley Road and the Riverside area will have a tremendous amount of construction and demolition jobs created over the next few years naturally generating quite a number of informal sites to support this work. The area would benefit from having a formal structured day labor center to accommodate workers seeking jobs. Then, when this temporary site gets ready for redevelopment, it would be time to re-evaluate whether the Riverside site is an appropriate location for a day labor center. Day worker survey responses and Focus Group participants from the Riverside area did support a site in this area because it is within walking distance from their homes and it is very close to the same intersection that they currently use as an informal day labor site.

4122 Todd Lane (currently leased to City Solid Waste Services, **owner has since withdrawn from offering property**)

Pros: Properly zoned and not in conflict with the area's adopted neighborhood plan; sole use, would not have to coordinate with other entities to share building with other users; few traffic concerns for entry; similar industrial-type uses with larger vehicles will not burden other nearby businesses;

Cons: Too far from major highways; poor visibility from major thoroughfare for both workers and employers; difficult to give directions to; public transit not very frequent or accessible;

Community Input received: During Citizen Communications on December 12, 2006 and January 23, 2007 and at our community meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2007, neighborhood residents, business owners, neighborhood association members, and planning team members from both the Ben White and Riverside areas all expressed concerns about locating a day labor center near homes and schools. Some, but not many, agreed that a day labor in South Austin is needed and that so long as it was located in an industrial or commercial area – they would not oppose a new center in their area. Of the few that were open to a new site, only a few endorsed the Todd Lane as viable.

Day worker survey responses and focus group participants from the Riverside area (held on 12-11-06) indicated a preference for the Riverside over any other sites because of the distance of other sites from their existing informal site on Riverside Drive. Many workers polled did not know where this site is located.

xc: Mayor and Councilmembers