

City Council to Weigh Support for Affordable Housing Project in North Austin

By SYEDA HASAN • 6 HOURS AGO



Developers of the Elysium affordable housing project in North Austin are trying to secure state tax credits to help pay for the project. MIGUEL GUTIERREZ JR. / KUT

The Austin City Council on Thursday will consider throwing its support behind nine affordable housing projects, all vying for competitive state tax credits that could help fund them. But some residents who live near one of these proposed projects in North Austin aren't so happy with the idea.

One person who does support the project is Donna Clayton.

After months of searching for a home, she and her teenage son now live in a two-bedroom apartment in North Austin. They used to own a house in Manor, but then, life happened: Clayton got divorced; she faced health issues; she had to go on disability assistance.

Eventually, she could no longer afford the house.

“I was homeless for, honestly, probably about a year and a half,” Clayton said. “I did have family that allowed me to stay with them, but when you’re an independent person, and you’re used to having your own, it’s still hard.” KUT's Syeda Hasan reports

That’s what drove her to testify at a recent Austin City Council meeting in support of the Elysium affordable housing development in North Austin. Clayton said she wants others to have the same chance at housing that she’s had. The Elysium project is being proposed by the same developer who built her current home.

Council members also heard from several members of the nearby Northwood Neighborhood Association (<https://northwoodna.com/>), which strongly opposes the project. The group declined to comment for this story, but at a council meeting last week, it raised concerns about the potential increase in traffic, flooding risk and other issues it felt could be brought on by the development.

Despite those concerns, council members granted initial approval last week for the rezoning the project needs to go forward. Megan Lasch, a co-owner of the Elysium property, said developers have modified their plans to try to address the neighbors’ concerns.

“We have worked successfully with neighborhood associations in Austin to help show them that we are a developer that is willing to roll up our sleeves and work side by side with them,” she said. “Because that’s all we’re trying to do is provide more homes for people.”

Rezoning is one piece of the puzzle. Developers are also trying to secure competitive state tax credits that make up a significant part of the project’s funding. As part of their application, the developers need to win support from local government leaders; council members will vote on whether to offer that support on Thursday.

They will have to come back for a final vote on rezoning the property before the

project can break ground. If approved, Lasch says, developers plan to build about 90 affordable units.