

People's Fund - Session One - NOTES

Affordable Housing and Tools for Living

- ❖ Introductions and Biographies of Panelists

- ❖ Mary Helen Lopez Presentation
 - Began her presentation by talking about her experience growing up in East Austin. Talked about the strong community connections-filled with respect and honor.
 - Her experience involved attending a first-time home-buyer training at her old school and eventually purchasing her first home in East Austin.
 - She is involved in her preserving her community and keeping the vision of East Austin.

- ❖ Nelda Wells-Spears Presentation
 - Serves as Assessor and collector of Taxes and spoke about saving money on taxes.
 - Home Owners can save on taxes by requesting exemptions online at <http://www.traviscountytax.org/goHome.jsf> :
 - \$15,000 homestead exemption
 - Over 65 years old
 - Home Owners with disabilities
 - Spouse of 65 year old (if you are over 55 years old)
 - Veterans and partners of veterans
 - Also, homeowners can set up an escrow account through the tax office.
 - Homeowners can protest value of home if you notice your home is over-valued.
 - On January 1st, a tax lien is attached to property.
 - Taxes are determined based on appraisal.
 - Forms are on the back of the appraisal notice.
 - If you are over 65, there is tax deferral for the school district portion for rest of life, while at property.
 - There is a tax ceiling for people over 65

❖ D'Ann Johnson Presentation

- Attorney working with Texas C-Bar - offering legal assistance to non-profits.
- No exemptions for rental properties.
- Neighborhoods need to get organized:
 - Legal Aid will do training for neighborhood associations.
 - Community Benefit Agreements - Contract between developers and neighborhoods to protect neighborhoods.
- Homeowners need a will.
 - Value may decrease on inherited property.
- Pressure on property taxes in Texas increases, because of no sales tax.
- Retention of Houses - Grants needed for repairs to maintain existing housing stock.
- Vote!

❖ Questions/Comments from Audience:

1. If state tax is enacted, would property tax/sales tax decrease? Yes, income tax reduces other taxes.
2. Recommendation to unite East Austin communities to cap exemption for people 65 years and older. 65% of bill is school taxes.
3. City of Austin and churches own many properties in East Austin. Nonprofits are trying to buy and in-fill lots.
4. Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan - focusing on zoning to preserve neighborhoods.
5. Neighborhood Association is an unincorporated nonprofit.
6. Community Land Trusts - unsure of what appraisal district will do regarding taxing. Appraisal District can look at income or property value.
7. Condemnation Issues triggers re-assessment which increases value and then increases taxes. If you pull a permit, your house will be re-assessed. However, maintenance is NOT and improvement and should not increase taxes.
8. Taxable value of your house can only increase 10% each year, until it gets to market value.