

TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



ERIC JOHNSON

DISTRICT 100 • DALLAS COUNTY

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Delivered via email: Mike.Rawlings@dallascityhall.com

Dear Mayor Rawlings:

We are experiencing exciting growth throughout our city, much of it in areas that I represent in the Texas House of Representatives. I am proud of the economic development occurring in parts of my district such as The Cedars and the Design District – areas that were once largely abandoned except for some limited industrial or commercial use. These *areas* are now *neighborhoods* and include large residential developments that have attracted many new constituents and retail businesses to House District 100, which is good.

Economic development ceases to be good, however, when it results in the involuntary displacement of low income residents who have lived in a particular community for generations. Gentrification, which has often resulted in such displacement when it has occurred throughout the United States, is a complex phenomenon that needs to be better understood if it is to be undertaken without causing significant harm to longtime residents of areas like West Dallas, South Dallas, and Oak Cliff, all of which I represent in the Legislature.

During the 85th Texas Legislature, I filed House Bill 2480, a comprehensive bill that was limited in its applicability to certain portions of the City of Dallas and which would have required the City of Dallas to implement numerous policies with respect to tax increment financing districts and affordable housing and also to provide relief to residents involuntarily displaced as a result of gentrification. For reasons I will not rehash here, this legislation failed to pass – much to the dismay of the longtime residents of West Dallas and other communities who, understandably, feel threatened by all of the high-end real estate developments they see going up around them.

Fortunately for the City of Dallas, my failure as a legislator does not have to be your failure as a mayor. I humbly request that you consider taking the following actions as soon as possible:

1. ***Form a task force on gentrification.*** This task force should comprise primarily residents of the areas most threatened by displacement due to gentrification – West Dallas, South Dallas, and Oak Cliff – but should also include academics specializing in gentrification and affordable housing policy, affordable housing real estate developers, and other relevant experts. Task them with consulting House Bill 2480 and other national best practices and recommending to the Dallas City Council new ordinances and policies to address the issues House Bill 2480 attempted to address.

2. ***Adopt a policy requiring a study before building in or near “housing insecure” communities.*** The City of Dallas should consider implementing a policy requiring that any major infrastructure project such as a signature bridge, deck park, or other large scale improvement that has been proposed to be built in or near a “housing insecure” community be studied to ascertain what impact the project will have on the availability of affordable housing in the surrounding area and the likelihood the project will result in the involuntary displacement of low income residents.

3. ***Adopt a policy of moving forward with building only if there is a relocation plan.*** The City of Dallas should consider implementing a policy that any project that is expected to reduce the availability of affordable housing in the surrounding area or displace low income residents cannot begin construction until a relocation plan has been adopted by the City of Dallas. Further, it should be the City of Dallas’ policy that such relocation plans must prioritize options that will keep displaced individuals in their communities over options that would require these individuals to move out of their communities.

I appreciate your consideration of my request; I would be delighted to meet with you at any time to discuss the contents of this missive. Thank you for your service to my beloved hometown.

In service,



Eric Johnson

cc: T.C. Broadnax, Dallas City Manager
Larry Casto, Dallas City Attorney
Scott Griggs, Dallas City Council Housing Committee, Chairman

