



KeepAustinAffordable.org

Did you know the Austin City Council is considering a proposal that would mandate energy efficiency requirements for existing homes, requiring you to potentially spend thousands of dollars on upgrades?

What's this about?

In early 2007, Austin Mayor Will Wynn released the Climate Protection Plan with the goal of making Austin the "greenest" city in the country. One part of that plan involves establishing mandatory energy efficiency standards for existing homes that would be enforced when a home is sold (called "point of sale").

Where are we now?

The program the task force has created for single-family homes would begin with a voluntary phase 1. During phase 1, the number of homes that participate in making recommended upgrades would be tracked. If the number of homes participating does not meet specific percentages set by the city, then the upgrades would be mandated as part of phase 2 of the program. The upgrades needed would be based on the findings of a home energy-audit and the expenditures would be limited to 1% of the value of the home (that means around \$1,900 for the average Austin home). The mandated upgrades would have to be completed within one year after the purchase of the home or before the sale of the home.

Isn't that a voluntary program?

Though the framework of the current proposal appears voluntary, it is actually a deferred mandate (which is triggered if aggressive participation requirements are not met). This has several issues:

- The success of the voluntary program requires a true partnership between the City of Austin and ABoR. What motivation would the City have to make this partnership a success if they know that the program's failure will trigger the mandatory program they prefer?
- The participation requirements do not factor in the many ways a voluntary program could be successful. For example, though a homeowner may not comply fully with the City's recommendations, they may choose to make selected changes that contribute to

our City's overall energy efficiency. This clearly achieves the goal of energy efficiency in Austin, but would not be counted toward the success of a voluntary program.

- The prospect of a mandate lingering over Austinites' heads will be a detractor from the voluntary program's success. Rather than feeling positive about contributing to the Austin environment, participants will feel they are avoiding punishment by the City. Further, many who would have participated in a voluntary program are likely to wait, in the event the upgrades they choose no longer qualify for the mandatory program and they're required to spend more money in the future.

A better idea

Like you, we support energy efficiency. However, there are better ways to achieve it that don't negatively affect homeowners, such as strengthening incentives and educating Austinites. Let's work together to inform homeowners about energy efficiency and incentivize them to take action without limiting homeownership opportunities in our city.

Get involved

There are three things you can do to get involved in this important issue:

1. Tell your friends. The more people we can inform about this issue, the more ability we have to keep Austin homes affordable.
2. Tell the city. Your Austin City Council has the ability to keep Austin affordable. Tell them how you feel about the Proposed Point of Sale Ordinance using KeepAustinAffordable.org
3. Get a yard sign. Contact the Government Affairs Staff at the Austin Board of REALTORS® at 512-454-7636 or government@abor.com to ask for a yard sign to be delivered to your yard. Show your support to all your neighbors!
4. Stay tuned. As this issue works its way through the city's process, we'll keep you posted with updates and let you know how you can make your views heard with the City of Austin. Check the website for more information on staying informed.

For more, visit KeepAustinAffordable.org, brought to you by the Coalition to Keep Austin Affordable led by the Austin Board of REALTORS®.