

October 20, 2015



Dear Mayor Adler and Austin City Council Members,

The design, development, and building community, who are tasked with compliance with the Austin City ordinances and codes, have joined together to review the proposed changes to the lobbying ordinance, and would like to share with you our concerns with the current proposal.



The draft lobbying resolution in review by the Ethics Committee seeks to require anyone who speaks to city staff on a "discretionary" matter to register as a lobbyist. Hundreds of design professionals, craftsmen, and administrators must interact and communicate with City staff in order to do their job, as it is nearly impossible to take a public (City, County, State, or Federal) or private project through the City of Austin permitting system without speaking to City staff at length. Having those professionals register as lobbyists would not provide any community benefits or more transparency. In fact, such information about who is working with city staff on a project is readily available to the public on the city's AMANDA database website.



We have reviewed the lobbying ordinances of large and growing municipalities both in Texas and across the country. None of these cities, nor the state, have adopted the broad and far-reaching definition of lobbying and lobbyists that is currently being proposed.



Additionally, because lobbyists may not sit on boards and commissions, the draft resolution will ban Austin's design professionals from civic service. Austin has dozens of boards and commissions that depend on the professional resources of volunteer architects, landscape architects, engineers, interior designers, surveyors, and a long list of other professionals who have answered the call of civic service. Trained and experienced professionals help navigate the rising complexity of a growing Austin by educating our community on complex topics including land code and permitting, urban planning, sustainability, resilience, and design for public health. Our current ethics rules for boards and commissions, when effectively enforced, already prohibit any conflicts of interest by design professionals serving on boards and commissions.



We will continue to engage during each step in this process, and would like to meet and discuss ethics reform options centered on healthy, transparent processes for both individuals and groups to participate meaningfully in public policy. We thank you in advance for meeting with our collaborative group.



Sincerely,

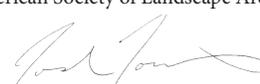



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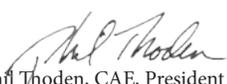

Steven Spears, PLA, AICP, Central Texas Chair
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Josh Tompkins, President
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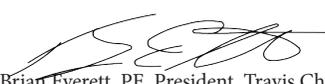



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