

Groups File Affordable Housing Complaint Against City

Ashley Goudeau

KVUE.com

Fri, 01/31/2014

[View the original piece](#)



AUSTIN -- East Austin is made up predominantly of African Americans and Latinos. Officials say historically, that didn't happen by chance.

"That segregation that was fostered, or really created, way back in the original founding fathers of the City of Austin where, you know, it's the south, and so they created the segregation intentionally," said Daphne Silverman, regional vice president for the National Lawyers Guild.

A complaint filed against the city by the NAACP of Austin, Gray Panthers of Austin and Coalition to Save Austin Urban Schools under the Texas Civil Rights Project alleges Austin staff and officials have not done anything to end that segregation.

Silverman, one of the attorneys on the complaint, says a lack of affordability creates a cycle of poverty.

"Once someone gets into poverty, it's harder to crawl out if you're living and you've been raised in the area that has less jobs or lowering paying jobs," Silverman said. "You're born in East Austin because of that, and that's where you can access a job, and the job doesn't pay as well as a job over on the other side of I-35."

City of Austin officials would not speak with KVUE News on camera, but released a statement saying:

"In contrast to the allegations, we are clear that the City of Austin is committed to providing and supporting fair housing to all citizens of Austin. Our elected officials and city staff members spend a great deal of time focused on those efforts, and we certainly believe we comply with all federal and local laws."

Mayor Pro-Tem Sheryl Cole could not speak specifically about the complaint, but said she understands affordability concerns.

"We have to be careful about becoming two Austins, an Austin that is very prosperous and an Austin that is very challenged educationally and economically. And some of those economic and educational challenges are located in East Austin," Cole said.

Cole said the larger issue is affordability, and said the city is working to make Austin more affordable for everyone.

"When we look at affordable housing, we have to be careful and realize there's not just one solution. We passed the bonds. We also have to work on regulations that make building costlier that are passed on to citizens buying houses. And we're in the process of re-writing our land development code," Cole said.

The complaint does offer suggestions to help with affordability. Under federal law, the city has 15 days to respond. If it decides not to take any action, the complainants can appeal to a higher city office. If they don't respond, the complaint could turn into a federal lawsuit.

Go [here](#) to read the full complaint.

Tags

[Fair Housing](#)
[Austin](#)