

## **AHNA POSITION STATEMENT**

**January 10, 2017**

After much deliberation and thorough research of how other cities are dealing with their storm water drainage problems, the Executive Board of Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association joins many of its members in opposing the proposal by the City of Fort Worth to buy and tear down houses in our neighborhood as a flood solution, even on a voluntary basis.

Our neighborhood association is committed to helping our neighbors on Western and Carleton Avenues who experience flooding in their yards, garages, and some even inside their homes. However, we do not believe tear downs are the best solution at this point. Tearing down flood-prone houses is the most destructive option and not even a 100% guaranteed solution, according to city staff. More importantly, tear downs do nothing to address the root of the problem which is inadequately-sized storm water pipes and poorly regulated upstream and downstream development.

No homes on Western and Carleton appear to be in disrepair, nor have they been condemned by the City. We believe there are other affordable options to help these neighbors. Tear downs should be used only as a last resort and only after all other means have been exhausted.

FEMA funding requires bought out properties be cleared of homes, never be developed again in perpetuity. They will forever be empty lots in the middle of our neighborhood. Many residents are afraid of what this will do to their property value, and if this would invite crime. Therefore, we support flood-proofing opportunities that are less drastic, such as elevating the existing flood-prone homes and their accessory structures and utilities. FEMA provides funding for these measures, as well as rebates for flood-proofing homes with flood insurance. We would like to keep open the possibilities of using future technologies offering new affordable solutions, or even allow the redevelopment of new homes designed to safely withstand the drainage challenges of Western and Carleton Avenues.

Our neighborhood organization is mandated to look at the big picture and support what we believe is best for the entire community, for the greater good. Monies used for buyouts and tear downs on Western and Carleton will do nothing to address the flooding that occurs in the two other watersheds in our neighborhood.

Owning a flood-prone home doesn't mean you won't be able to sell that property. Recent home sales in Arlington Heights prove there are buyers who are willing to purchase properties with flood histories. Many neighbors have taken private measures within their own individual properties to successfully mitigate their drainage problems.

How can the City suggest tearing down one neighborhood, but allow the upstream and downstream neighborhoods to continue contributing to the drainage problem? If the City is considering destroying homes in our neighborhood, they must also concurrently take measures to more rigorously regulate unsustainable development upstream and downstream, especially the unabated proliferation of impervious surfaces.

We believe it is past time for the City of Fort Worth to develop a strategy for financing the long

term 100% fix of replacing the undersized pipes in our watersheds. The Arlington Heights pipes are already more than 90 years old and will inevitably require replacement. If not now, when? If the City can't afford to pay for it, then alternative funding strategies should be developed and implemented immediately. We can't afford to keep kicking this problem down the road.

In the interim, we petition the City to initiate less destructive efforts to address the problem, such as rebates, incentives, and assistance for flood-proofing homes, pass ordinances to address the addition of impervious surfaces to our watersheds, creating medians and public rights of way that drain, green concrete, blue roofs, rain garden programs and so on, as many other American cities have already implemented with great success.

Executive Board

Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association