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RG4N STATEMENT ANNOUNCING LAWSUIT AGAINST CITY OF AUSTIN AND LINCOLN PROPERTY COMPANY

AUSTIN, Texas, June 28, 2007 -- On Tuesday, June 26, the City of Austin approved Lincoln Property Company's second site plan for Northcross Mall. Today, Responsible Growth for Northcross (RG4N) filed a lawsuit in Travis County District Court against our City and Lincoln to invalidate the site plan.

RG4N concluded in December 2006 that Lincoln's first site plan was illegally approved by the City. The developer implicitly acknowledged its agreement with our conclusion by filing a second site plan. Unfortunately, our City has once again failed to follow several of its own laws in approving the second plan.

RG4N and others in the Northcross area sought for months to reach a mutually-acceptable resolution with the developer. However, the developer made it clear that our concerns and our vision for our neighborhood are at best secondary to its desire to make a quick buck. And to the shock and dismay of thousands of us across Austin, our City cynically made a show of sympathizing with neighborhood concerns while proceeding with business as usual in a city management environment that operates as a rubber stamp for the development community.

The proposed Supercenter is big, but the reasons we are fighting it are bigger. While the conflict was sparked by a Wal-Mart Supercenter, it really isn't about Wal-Mart at all. RG4N's fight is fundamentally about two issues that affect everyone in Austin: how Austin handles growth, and good government.

The significant growth Austin has experienced in recent years is expected to continue. We can choose to accommodate growth through a car-dependent sprawl model that encourages central city Supercenters and strip malls. Or we can choose a more responsible vision for Austin's future, accommodating growth by increasing central city density and reducing sprawl, in order to protect our environment and ensure that central Austin isn't only for the wealthy. Northcross is just one of many battles that Austinites for responsible growth will face in the coming years as we work toward that vision.

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RG4N's fight is also about good government. You would think it would be unnecessary to argue that government should uphold its own laws, be responsive to its citizens and operate in the public interest. Yet here we are, filing a lawsuit necessitated in many respects by our City government's failure to do those very things.

The proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter still isn't a done deal. Lincoln takes a big risk if it chooses to keep putting money into work at Northcross while awaiting this lawsuit's outcome. Once RG4N prevails in court, the developer will have to start from scratch with a new site plan – one that, unlike the current plan, will be subject to the big box ordinance, vertical mixed-use requirements and commercial design standards. These laws will ensure that Lincoln's next site plan comes a lot closer to reflecting the values and concerns of the surrounding neighborhoods.

For RG4N to prevail, we need financial support not only from our Northcross area supporters, but also from people all across Austin. Please donate online at www.rg4n.org. Join us each Saturday from 11AM-noon at the corner of Anderson Lane and Burnet Road to show your support for a better vision for Northcross. You can learn more about our lawsuit and other activities at our next community meeting, which will be held on Wednesday July 18 at 7PM at the First Unitarian Universalist Church, 4700 Grover Avenue.

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