

Z NEWS

FEBRUARY 2008

Newsletter of the
Zilker
Neighborhood
Association

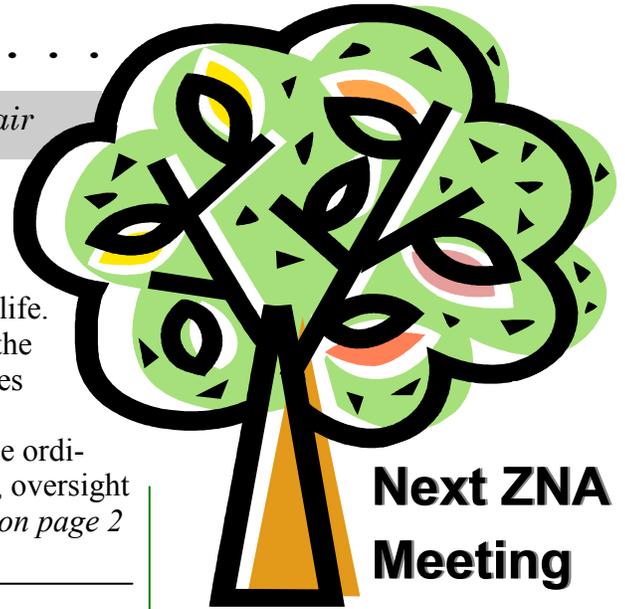
Austin, Texas
Established 1981

Urban Trees: Now You See Them . . .

by Gardner Sumner, ZNA Parks and Environment Chair

We are fortunate in having a wonderful community in Zilker, which includes our urban forest—our trees. These stately friends, many decades, even centuries old, provide us with beauty, shade, oxygen, delicious nuts, and homes for our wildlife. Unfortunately, many infill builders are moving or destroying the early bungalows that characterize Zilker, together with the trees that have adorned our yards for many years.

Many of these trees are protected by the City of Austin tree ordinance, but they need your help because the ordinance is weak, oversight *continued on page 2*



Next ZNA Meeting

Monday, February 25
Zilker Elementary School
1900 Bluebonnet
6:30-8:45 PM

☆☆☆

Meet and Greet Social
Clean Water project updates
Kinney, Oxford, School, and
other traffic issues
Democratic Candidates for
Our County Commissioner
Yard Parking and
Mobile Vendors
N'hood Plan Vote?

Newcomers, old-timers,
homeowners, renters, and
business owners
all welcome.

☆☆☆☆☆☆

Zilker Leap Day Celebration and Social

Come celebrate our latest neighborhood success story! See new improvements to our park: a beautiful quarter-mile, crushed-granite walk/run track, exercise equipment, and new soccer goals.

- ◆ Where: Zilker Neighborhood Park (next to Zilker Elementary School)
- ◆ What: Ribbon-cutting ceremony
- ◆ When: Leap Day, Feb. 29, 3-4 PM
- ◆ Who: Kids and families, neighbors, supporters, and YOU
- ◆ Fun: Celebratory lap(s) around the track, leaping contest! Refreshments! Prizes! Community! Don't miss it!



To get involved: Volunteer for neighborhood park projects by contacting: littlezilker@gmail.com or Kim McKnight at kimmcknight@austin.rr.com.

To contribute: Donate toward future park improvements by sending your contributions made out to the Austin Parks Foundation (write "Zilker Neighborhood Park" in the memo line) at 701 Brazos #170, Austin TX 78704.

To see the park master plan: Visit www.main.org/znaweb/parks/index.html.

What is a protected tree?

Any tree 19 inches in diameter (60 inches in circumference) or larger is protected, whether at a single-family residence or on commercial property. On public land, trees are considered protected beginning at 9 inches in diameter (36 inches in circumference). These measurements are made 4 feet 6 inches above the ground.

How is a tree protected?

A protected tree may not be cut down, nor can more than 30% of its crown be removed, nor can its critical root zone be encroached upon by any structure, including concrete structures. In addition, no process that results in the demise of a protected tree is permitted.

is often lacking, and the environmental protection department can at times be undermanned or overworked. Most important, builders are often ignorant of the tree protection regulations, or are ignoring the regulations for monetary gain as rising land prices increasingly trump tree preservation.

If you are concerned about this problem and would like to help, call for help immediately when you see any sign of infill activity such as house moving, house demolition, lot clearing, or tree pruning crews. Michael Embesi, the city arborist, can be reached at 974-1876; however, he is usually checking trees during the day. The Environmental Inspection Specialist for our area is Frank Delaplane (Area 6); his number, 974-6451, would be a better number to call if you need immediate help, as the environmental inspection group consists of 14 members. Rebekah Barney, his receptionist, at 974-2278, will connect

you with another team member if Frank is busy.

These officers will help enforce tree protection by requiring a completed Tree Ordinance Review before any work is started that endangers protected trees. When this is not done, we often lose valuable trees. This is important because many trees are destroyed before any plans are approved regarding tree protection. There is no significant penalty for illegal tree destruction, and a protected tree can be felled and cut up in one to two hours. A recent example of this tragic loss was the unpermitted destruction of a magnificent 36-inch pecan tree at 2215 Bluebonnet, after the owner promised to protect it.

Only we, the citizens of Zilker, can stop the disappearance of our urban forest. To help city staff enforce the tree ordinance, you must call for help immediately if you believe protected trees are at risk. Few sights are as disheartening as the amputated trunk of a beautiful tree sitting on a construction site that you were going to look into the next day. If you have questions, please call me, Gardner Sumner, at 468-6200.

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Your Zilker Neighborhood Association Executive Committee for 2008

Profiles of ZNA officers elected for 2008:

Jeff Jack, President: resident of Zilker 24 years, ZNA member at least 20 years, ZNA officer 6 years. Lives on Rabb Glen, architect.

Richard Gravois, Vice President: resident 36 years, member 27 years, officer 6 years. Lives on Kinney, retired state employee.

Bobby Rigney, Vice President: resident 20 years, member 9 years, officer 6 years. Lives on Anita, University of Texas employee.

Ryan Stryker, Secretary: resident 2 years, member 2 years, officer 1 year. Lives on Goodrich.

Andy Elder, Treasurer: resident 5 years, member 3 years, officer 2 years. Lives on Treadwell.

Kurt Koegler, ANC Delegate: resident less than 1 year, new member, new officer. Lives on Bauerle.

Bill Bunch, Social Chair: resident 18 years, member 12 years, new officer. Lives on Oxford, attorney.

Lorraine Atherton, ZNews editor: resident 25 years,

member 10 years, officer 10 years. Lives on Arpdale.

Besides the elected officers, ZNA relies on members to fill some very important unelected positions. Those committee chairs for 2008 are:

Kim McKnight, Membership chair and ZNews distribution coordinator: resident 5 years, member 3 years. Lives on Anita, nonprofit director.

Dave Piper, Neighborhood Planning chair: resident 4 years, member 3 years. Lives on Jessie, telecommunications manager.

Peggy Pfaff, Zoning chair: resident 9 years, member 2 years. Lives on Oxford, physical therapist.

Gardner Sumner, Parks and Environment chair: resident 2 years, member 2 years. Lives on Treadwell, retired pathologist.

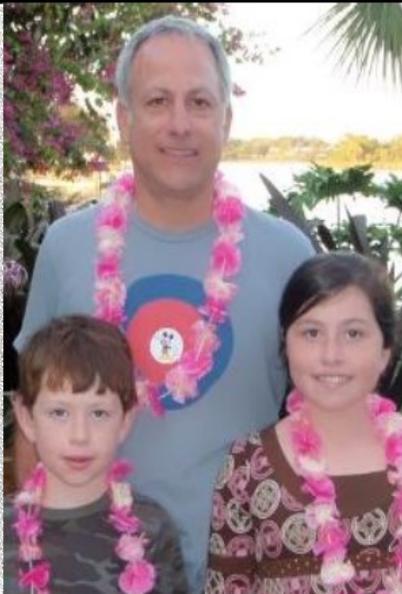
Ba Cossie, Holiday Family coordinator, Kaye Trybus, Town Lake Park representative, and Fontaine Maverick, ZNews advertising director, like Richard Gravois, are founding members of ZNA.

Buying or Selling Your Home?

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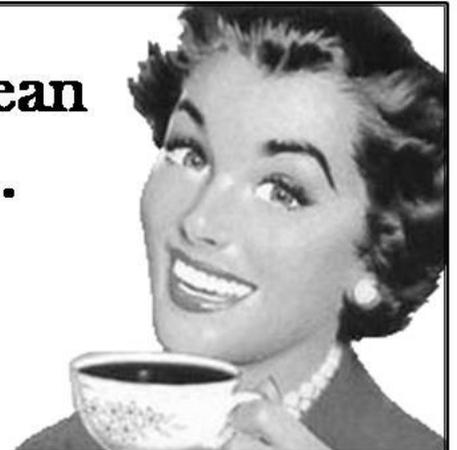
Zilker
neighborhood
specialist and
resident



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What You Should Know About Zilker Neighborhood Association: Frequently Asked Questions

Who does ZNA represent? Directly: The membership of our association, which is open only to residents within ZNA's boundaries. Indirectly: A larger cross-section through neighbor-to-neighbor discussions and circulation of more than 2800 newsletters.

How many members does ZNA have? As of October 2007, 126 paid members and another 79 eligible for renewal. An update will be available at the February meeting.

Is Zilker@yahoo.com the official list serve for ZNA? The Yahoo group is a useful communication vehicle, but it is not the official list serve for the association. It is open to all residents, whether they are members of ZNA or not.

How many people belong to the Yahoo group and how many of them are members of ZNA? There are about 380 active e-mail addresses on the list serve, of which about 70 appear to be ZNA members.

How can I contact the association by e-mail? Our e-mail address is ZikerNA@austin.rr.com.



Zilker Park Kite Festival

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Family,
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March 2, 2008

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How much are the dues, and what are they spent on? The dues are \$7 per person, which entitles the member to vote at meetings through Oct. 31. The dues pay for association operating expenses, our Watermelon Social, and other neighborhood work.

Who represents ZNA at various boards and commissions and at City Council hearings? The executive committee members who volunteer to go.

How does the ZNA Executive Committee arrive at a position on an issue? The committee considers several factors in determining a position that is consistent with the sentiment of the neighborhood, beginning with the by-laws of the association and including, depending on the issue, the ZNA neighborhood planning survey conducted in 2004, the City of Austin neighborhood planning survey conducted in 2005, input gathered from discussions and resolutions adopted at our quarterly meetings, discussion on the list serve and e-mail input from neighbors, and political consultation with board and commission members and City Council members.

The ZNA by-laws may be viewed on the Web under the Site Map at main.org/znaweb.

Are you ready for . . . The Z?

The Z is the 3rd Annual Zilker Elementary Art Auction to be held the evening of February 21 at Zilker Elementary.

Each year the Z Art Auction raises money for the Zilker Arts in Education Fund, which supplements the school's academic framework with mind- and heart-expanding art programs like Circle of Light, performances by One World Theater, yoga classes, and much more.

You'll find art in many forms at the Z Art Auction: painting, photography, sculpture, glass, jewelry, textiles. It's wide open!

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Z Art Auction

Thursday, February 21, 2008

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ZNA Wants to Hear from You About Parking and Traffic *by Lorraine Atherton*

Complaints about traffic and parking have been popping up all over the neighborhood. It began last July with events at Zilker Park (a perennial problem) and at Lamar Plaza (a fairly new complaint). Then overflow from the Austin City Limits Music Festival pushed even farther south into the neighborhood. In response to traffic from new condos and ongoing public works projects, a ZNA subcommittee was formed to study problems on Kinney. Meanwhile, residents on the south end of Oxford are seriously considering the city's Residential Parking Permit program, parents at Zilker Elementary are proposing changes to Rundell, and residents on Melridge want to connect their sidewalk to Bluebonnet.

When individual citizens ask the City for help with traffic problems, they are usually told to work through their neighborhood association. In the case of the parking permit program, the City requires the association to invite the entire neighborhood (not just the residents on the affected street) to discuss the program. The ZNA executive committee would like to take a comprehensive approach to all our current traffic issues. Clearly, it is time for ZNA to form a transportation committee to work with City departments on our myriad traffic concerns in an inclusive, unified, and timely way.

ZNA wants to hear from you about your traffic con-

cerns. Subcommittees who look at problem areas tend to be mostly residents on the affected streets; we also need to hear from neighbors who don't live there but use those streets. This discussion will continue at our Feb. 25 meeting, with reports on Kinney and on the parking permit proposal for Oxford. There may also be an update on staging areas for the Austin Clean Water work to replace wastewater lines and how it will affect neighborhood streets for the next year. (See ACWP on the city Web site.) Parking can be tight around the school; you might want to walk to the meeting.

Dear Zilker Elementary neighbors:

The Zilker Elementary Campus Advisory Committee has concerns about student safety and traffic issues around the school, specifically along Rundell, between Bluebonnet and Ann Arbor. One solution might be to make this section of Rundell one-way in the morning and afternoon. The ZNA executive committee has graciously agreed to provide time to discuss these issues at the upcoming ZNA general meeting in the school cafeteria on February 25, at 6:30 p.m. If you have an interest in these issues, please attend this meeting and join in the discussion.

*Kevin Lungwitz, on behalf of the
Zilker Elementary Campus Advisory Committee*

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ZILKER AREA REAL ESTATE PROS
 24 area homes sold in 2007

1820 Spillman	2113 A Ann Arbor
2124 Bluebonnet	801 Spoford
1707 Bauerle	1305 Garner
1501 Hillmont	1804 A Ann Arbor
2202 Arpdale	2113 B Ann Arbor
902 Lund	1504 Bluebonnet
2606 Tip Cove	2307 Wilke
1816 Margaret	2111 Ann Arbor
1821 Spillman	900 Lund
1701 Nash	1817 Treadwell
1701 Bauerle	1914 Goodrich

2021 Bluebonnet Units #107 and #209

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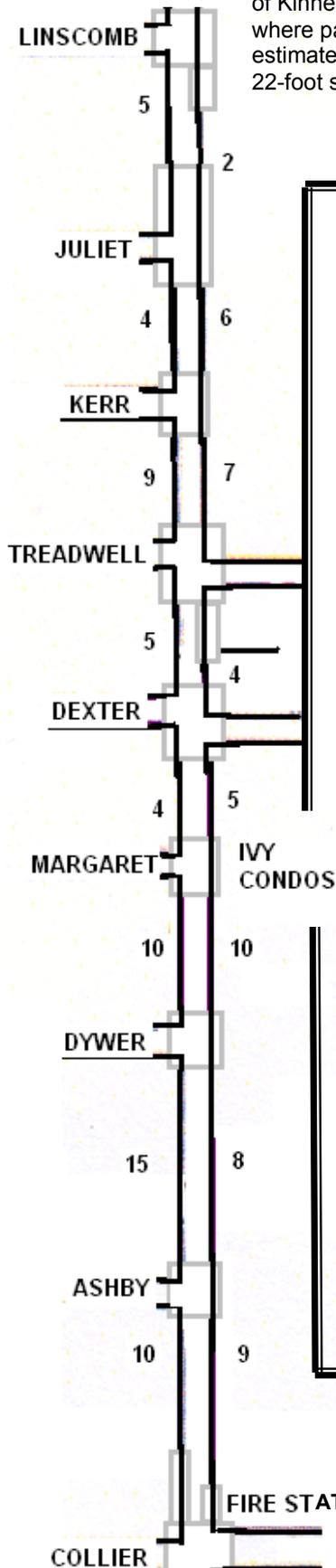
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Where not to park on Kinney This diagram shows the parking on each side of each block of Kinney Avenue between Linscomb and Collier. The gray boxes at the intersections indicate areas where parking is prohibited by state or city regulations. The numbers between the boxes are estimates of the maximum number of cars that could be parked on the remaining curb space. (If the 22-foot standard for parallel spaces were applied, the numbers would likely be smaller.)



STATE LAW PROHIBITS PARKING:

- ◆ In an intersection
- ◆ Within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection (whether the crosswalk is marked or not)
- ◆ Blocking a crosswalk, alley, or driveway
- ◆ Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant

- ◆ Within 30 feet upon the approach to a stop sign or other traffic control signal
- ◆ Within 20 feet of the driveway of a fire station and, on the side of the street opposite the fire station, within 75 feet

Austin does not post signs or paint curbs to mark these areas, but motorists are expected to know these regulations, and you can be ticketed for violating them. Cars parked illegally in these areas create a hazard in that they are likely to obstruct visibility for motorists on intersecting streets or driveways. Such hazards should be reported to the police. If you encounter these or other problems on Kinney, please let the ZNA traffic committee know, through Richard Gravois, rgravois@yahoo.com.

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8-4-1 for City Council Representation

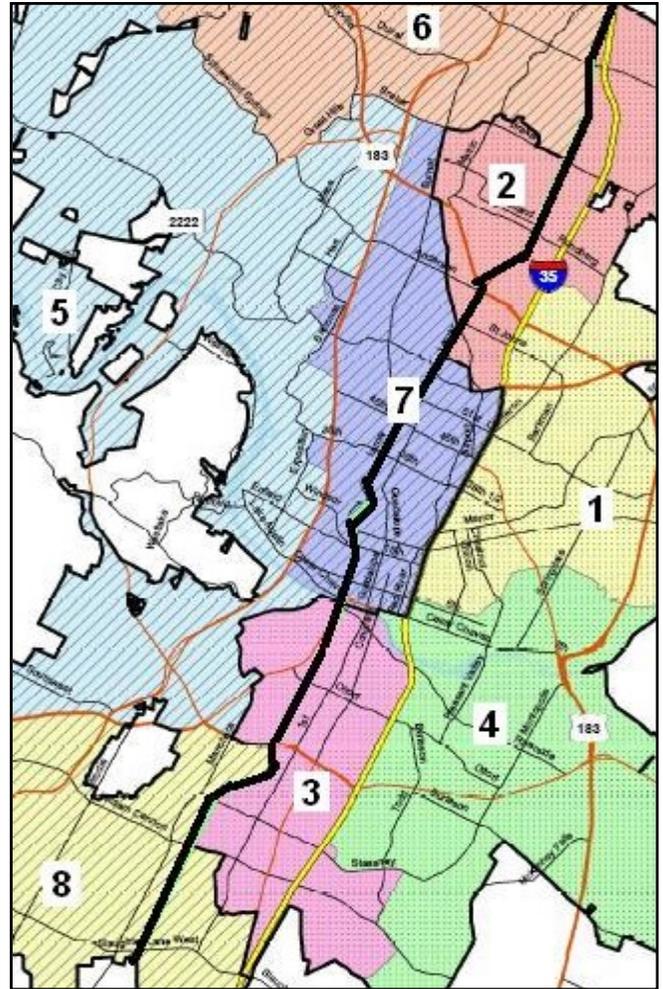
by Lorraine Atherton

The Austin City Council must decide early in March whether to place the question of single-member election districts on the May ballot. The League of Women Voters has recommended a hybrid election system for the city council, combining single-member districts and at-large seats. The Austin Neighborhoods Council recently recommended a hybrid system with a majority of single-member seats. The most specific recommendation so far is from a group of citizens who have been studying the issue for more than a year; they call their proposal the 8-4-1 superdistrict model.

Why Change? In the May 2006 election, voter turnout in individual council races was an abysmal 8%. People who vote in their county commissioner race in November will not vote in a city council election in May; in fact, 120,000 citizens who voted in November 2006 did not vote in May 2006.

The divide between east and west Austin is most pronounced during council elections. Voter turnout for city elections in the eastern half of Austin is about half that in the western precincts, with the result that the entire council is now elected by the same 40,000 or so westside voters. Turnout in council elections is now so low in the eastern half of the city that the council's claim to represent the entire city is no longer credible. The sharp reduction in voting in these precincts (which include the city's major concentrations of minority populations) confirms that minority voters have been denied "an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice" in city council elections, as required by federal law.

Why Superdistricts? Communities will not turn out to vote if they understand that candidates of their choice can't get on



the ballot. We know from Travis County and State Legislature races that Austinites *will* turn out and vote for minority candidates in relatively large single-member districts.

The superdistrict model is based on the system in

BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. Annual dues are \$7 per person. Additional contributions are welcome. (Many couples pay \$25.)

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Dues: _____ Contribution for ZNA general fund: _____

Contribution for special project (specify): _____

Please make checks payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:

ZNA Memberships, 1818 Treadwell St., Austin, TX 78704

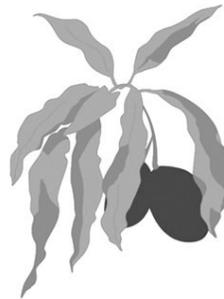
Memphis. The 8-4-1 formula has **eight single-member seats, four at-large seats** (two members from each of two superdistricts), and **the mayor**, for a total of 13 council members.

In this model, each member elected from a single-member district would represent about 80,000 people, which is small enough to assure substantial minority representation and accountability. The four members elected from the superdistricts would each represent about 325,000 people, which is large enough to require a city-wide perspective but small enough to allow a greater range of candidates to compete and to answer the need for representation of overlapping constituencies (small business owners, environmentalists) that cross geographic boundaries. The mayor, of course, would still be elected by the entire city. Every voter could vote for four council representatives: one member from the voter's district, two members from a superdistrict, and the mayor.

Where Does It Put ZNA? The map shown here is based on a demonstration plan drawn for the City Council's Charter Revision Committee by J. Gerald Hebert, Director of Litigation, Campaign Legal Center, Washington D.C., paying particular attention to neighborhood boundaries. ZNA is in District 3. The heavy line through the center of the city indicates one possible boundary between the two superdistricts. In this plan, Zilker residents would vote for one person to represent District 3. They would also vote in two other races to elect the two at-large representatives for the western superdistrict. Neighborhoods east of the railroad tracks would vote in the eastern superdistrict races. Note that four of the districts straddle the superdistrict boundary. In those districts, the residents east of the boundary would vote for two representatives in the eastern superdistrict, and residents west of the boundary would vote for two representatives in the western superdistrict. Such a plan would provide opportunities for the representative of, for instance, District 3,

to work with and build alliances with superdistrict reps from both sides of town, and vice versa.

The Charter Revision Committee considered a different superdistrict boundary, one that followed the boundaries of the single-member districts, with the first four districts entirely within the east superdistrict and districts 5, 6, 7, and 8 entirely within the west superdistrict. That committee did not select a particular model, but it did recommend that council put a charter amendment creating some form of geographic election districts on the May ballot. See the committee's Web pages on the city site, www.ci.austin.tx.us/charter.



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Our Neighborhood Plan: Restarted or Rehashed *by Jeff Jack*

As our neighborhood enters the third year of working with the City of Austin planning staff to craft our neighborhood plan, we seem to be once again back at square one. When the planning process was started back in 2005, we had many issues with how staff had changed what was supposed to be a community-driven plan into a staff-directed plan. For over a year we, along with the other four neighborhoods in the South Lamar Combined Planning Area, worked in good faith to move the process forward. In October 2006, however, it became apparent that little had been accomplished and we were still dealing with the basic issues discussed at the start of the process.

As reported in our last *ZNews*, at that point City staff halted the effort and called in the UT Law School Dispute Resolution Center to facilitate negotiations to resolve those issues. The facilitated meetings lasted for almost a year, and many improvements were agreed to in the proposed planning process. At the end of those meetings, what we thought was left to decide was how the restart of the process would work and how the stakeholder group would decide on its recommendations to City Council.

Recently we received a draft of the City staff's proposed new process. Unfortunately, this proposal appears to circumvent the agreements that were reached in the Dispute Resolution process, rendering a year's worth of work irrelevant. At the heart of the issue is who will be making recommendations to Council about zoning changes in our neighborhood. Although we had agreed that a neighborhood stakeholder working group (called the Planning Team) would represent all interest groups in a weighted, consensus-based decision-making process, staff now has proposed limiting the role of the Planning Team so that it does not include zoning

recommendations. Further the City proposal would establish an entirely different group, called the Contact Team, to decide zoning issues, and the composition and decision-making process of that group is not defined in the City's new proposal. So the Planning Team members who represent their constituencies' interests in developing a plan would not necessarily be the same folks who make recommendations on zoning changes. Also, while acknowledging staff's role as only one stakeholder in the planning process, City staff wants essentially to be able to veto any plan the community comes up with, if staff does not agree with it. In short, the new proposal puts all the power back into City staff hands and leaves the neighborhood with little more than an advisory role in the most important decisions.

We have responded to the staff proposal and have suggested that if the agreements we had reached in the UT process cannot be implemented throughout the planning effort, then it may not be reasonable for ZNA to continue to participate in neighborhood planning. We hope that the fundamental issues of whose plan this is and exactly how the process will work can be resolved so



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that all of the interests in the neighborhood can feel confident that their time and effort to develop a neighborhood plan will be meaningful and respected. We have asked City staff to respond to our concerns before our February general meeting. We have also invited them to present their proposal, and if our concerns are not addressed, we may call for a formal vote of the association to withdraw from the neighborhood planning process at this time. Some of the other neighborhoods in the South Lamar Combined Planning Area are also considering withdrawing from the planning process. So if

you are concerned about our neighborhood's future and want to have a neighborhood plan that truly reflects the sentiments of the community, then please come to the February 25 meeting for this important update.

Editor's Note: For an informative look at the ZNA Vertical Mixed Use recommendations, see Katherine Gregor's article in the Feb. 1, 2008, issue of the *Austin Chronicle*.

Scouting for Food, "Keep Texas Fed"

The Capitol Area Council Boy Scouts of America invite Central Texas residents to help make a difference for the 40,000 people who rely on the Capital Area Food Bank each week. Leave a donation of healthy, nonperishable food on your doorstep to be picked up on Saturday, April 12. Look for your door hanger for more details. Donations collected in your area help your local community! Donations benefit CAFB and its Partner Agencies. A recent study shows that a family of four must earn at least \$53,080 (that's 257% above the federal poverty level) to live in Austin. Three quarters of CAFB households are "working poor," earning below the poverty level.



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Z Newsletter of the Zilker Neighborhood **NEWS** Association

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2009 Arpdale St., Austin, TX 78704

E-mail: ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com
Editor: Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681
Ad Sales: Fontaine Maverick, 443-3290
Distribution: Kim McKnight, 663-6422

2008 Executive Committee of ZNA

Elected Officers:

President: Jeff Jack, 447-5877
jjack2@austin.rr.com
1st VP: Richard Gravois, 441-3430
2nd VP: Bobby Rigney, 471-3758
Secretary: Ryan Stryker, 431-4245
Treasurer: Andy Elder, 428-9180
Social Chair: Bill Bunch
ANC Delegate: Kurt Koegler
ZNews Editor: Lorraine Atherton

Committee Chairs:

Holiday Family Program: Barbara Cossie, 447-4437
Membership: Kim McKnight, 663-6422
Neighborhood Plan: Dave Piper, 916-9636
Parks and Environment: Gardner Sumner, 462-0210
Town Lake Park Rep.: Kaye Trybus, 447-4437
Zoning: Peggy Pfaff, 383-1595

About the Zilker Neighborhood Association

ZNA holds general meetings the fourth or fifth Monday of February, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School. The Executive Committee meets at 7 PM the first Monday of each month, usually at Artz Rib House.

Our Purpose: To improve the quality of life in the neighborhood in matters of land use, environmental protection, public services, consumer protection, preservation of the historic and unique character of the community; to provide support in other matters of neighborhood concern; and to promote and participate in the civic life of the city.

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