

# Z-News

The Newsletter of the Zilker  
Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 33546 • Austin, Texas • 78764-0546 • July 2002

## Join Your Neighbors for a Watermelon Social!

Where:

Zilker Elementary School  
Outdoor Learning Center

When:

Monday, July 29  
7-9 pm

Agenda:

7-7:30 Short Business Meeting  
City Proposed Changes in SF-3 Zoning  
Nominations for Officers  
Thank Z-News Walkers

7:30-9 FUN!!

Ice-Cold Watermelon for Everyone  
Watermelon Seed-Spitting Contest  
Music (bring your acoustic instrument)

In case of rain, meeting will be held at  
the Kinney Avenue Baptist Church.



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Saturday 9:00am-12:00pm

## Message from ZNA President Jeff Jack

It is summertime in Austin and no better time to honor our many Z-News delivery folks and no better way than with a South Austin Watermelon Social! Since ZNA was founded in 1973, one of the most valuable services provided to our neighborhood has been the publishing of the newsletter. Our newsletter, the Z-News, is an important vehicle to keep our neighbors informed about events that impact our area, about neighborhood and transportation planning, and what the City is up to. It also lets us know what is happening with our neighbors and has provided our local businesses with a great advertising opportunity. But as important as it is, it would be worthless if it did not get to you. And that is why our many volunteer newsletter delivery folks are so important to our neighborhood. Z-News has over 30 volunteers that walk our newsletter around; some have been doing this for over 20 years!

In appreciation for all their work and commitment to the neighborhood we just want to say thanks and hope everyone will turn out for the party. Hope to see you there.

### Membership Subscriptions

After paying for the printing of this July's newsletter, the ZNA bank account balance is nearing zero. We still have some funds coming from our advertisers for the fourth newsletter but we need an additional \$700 from other sources to cover the cost of printing the October newsletter. This shortfall can be made up by adding more advertising or by donations and new association memberships dues.

To cover this shortfall entirely with new memberships we would need an additional 100 Zilker residents to subscribe in the coming few months. If you receive Z-News and find it helpful and informative, even if you do not attend the meetings, please become a new member of the association. We need you! The subscription form is on page 5, and we hope you will clip it out and mail it in with your dues as soon as possible. Thanks for your support.

### Congratulations Zilker on May 2002 Voter Turn Out!

This past May's City Council election was filled with many surprises, but it came as no surprise that once again the Zilker Neighborhood had an outstanding voting turn out when compared to the rest of the city. Citywide the voter turn out was a dismal 8.95%

Of the 474,089 registered voters in the city only 42,431 turned out to cast their ballots. What is most alarming is that we have a new City Council member who was voted in with only 16,485 votes, less than 3.5 % of the registered voters!

Zilker neighborhood, on the other hand, did much better than the city average. Precinct 332, with a 20.34% turnout, and Precinct 325, with 18.98%, led the way. However precinct 462, that area east of Kinney, which has a large number of apartments, had a turn out of only 9.70%. An estimate of the average of these three precinct gives a turn out of about 17% for the entire Zilker area, almost twice the citywide vote. Well done, Zilker!!

### ZNA Officers for Next Year

The ZNA executive committee is still looking for volunteers to be on next year's executive committee. If you would like to get more involved in the neighborhood association, there is a place for you! The executive committee will be accepting nominations for officers at the July meeting in preparation for presenting a slate of candidates at the October general election meeting. So if you want to step up to a leadership role in the association, contact anyone on the current executive committee at our July meeting or just give us a call. Working with the association is rewarding, interesting, and fun, and you can make some wonderful new friends, so throw your hat into the ring as a candidate for next year's ZNA executive committee.



## Proposal for Two Family Residences in SF-3 Zoning

While this election was something of a “sleeper” with no state or national contests to turn out the vote, it was a very important election for our neighborhoods and environment. One of the first issues that this new Council will tackle will be the proposed change in the permitted uses in Single Family zoning districts.

This change is being proposed by City Staff and follows the changes that were approved by City Council two years ago for SF-3 zoning districts. The changes made in 2000 allowed the building of a second detached residence on any lot zoned SF-3 that was over 7,000-sq. ft. in area. The second residence became a “Permitted Use” and had certain criteria such as limiting the total living area to 850 sq. ft., all of which had to be within the existing impervious cover restrictions. The intent of those changes was to allow folks in our older neighborhoods to build a “granny flat” to accommodate a relative or as a way to generate additional income to offset the rising cost of property taxes. However many objected to these changes, contending that this was essentially a real zoning change, not just a simple change of use, and as such all property owners effected by the change should have been notified but weren't. However, over this objection and others, the Council did approve the second family amendment.

Now the staff has proposed modifying the second family ordinance further by allowing the building of a second residence on lots as small as 5,750 sq. ft. (with a limit of 850 sq. ft. of living area) and then removing the area cap on all lots above 7,000 sq. ft. They have also proposed to make this change to all lots in SF-1, SF-2 and SF-3. In effect this would essentially eliminate any single family zoning in the entire city, making all SF zoning multi-family!

There are many concerns raised by this proposal and since the majority of our neighborhood is SF-3 this proposed change will impact us all.

### Deed Restrictions

While the City is pushing this change, they are ignoring the fact that in many of our subdivisions we have deed restrictions that prohibit a second residence outright or place limits on the additional unit that are in conflict with the City's proposal. What the City is failing to respect is that for many of us the deed restrictions were an important consideration when we bought our homes. Along with location, good schools, or convenient services, we wanted a single home on a lot with setbacks, yards, and trees, and we wanted consistency with our neighbors. To come in after the fact and change the rules will mean new homes popping up in our neighbor's back yards and in most cases in violation of our deed restrictions. Unfortunately, the City takes no responsibility for enforcing deed restrictions. And as we have already begun to see in the neighborhood due to the changes made in 2000, we have folks getting a building permit for a second unit thinking that since it was approved by the City all is okay, only to find out later that it is in violation of the deed restrictions. But the real problem is that if your neighbor decides to build that second unit in violation of the deed restrictions, the only way to stop it is to take them to district court, an expensive and time-consuming process.

### Traffic

It is as simple as this: If everyone built a second residence on their lot, there will be more cars in the neighborhood. And since the City code requires only one additional parking space, we will see considerably more parking problems. When you also consider that the City is considering making front yard parking illegal, then I think we could be seeing a lot more on street parking on our already crowded residential streets.

This added traffic would also impact our ability to get into and out of the neighborhood. As we see the commuter traffic on South Lamar

Blvd. and Barton Springs Road increase at peak rush hours, the City is responding by lengthening the green cycle for these arterials, shortening the green time for our neighborhood collectors. Just imagine how long it will take to get on South Lamar Blvd. from Heather with twice the cars stacked at the light.

### Flooding

These past few weeks have once again shown that even in Texas it can rain a lot and that flooding is still a big problems. The City has estimated that it will cost \$800,000,000 over the next 20 years to take care of the drainage problems we already have due to existing impervious cover in the urban core. Impervious cover is any hard surface where rainwater cannot soak into the ground. In our older neighborhoods with SF-3 zoning the impervious cover is limited to 45% of the lot area. In most of our neighborhood the average original house and driveway probably uses about half of the impervious cover allowance. As the neighborhood has matured, we see the addition of decks, storage sheds, carports, etc. Many of these improvements have never been calculated with regard to the allowable impervious cover. So even if there is no increase in the allowable impervious cover we would see significant additional impervious cover added to our neighborhood if this proposal is passed and additional units began to pop up all over the area.

Staff has not addressed this problem and there is no estimate on how much more it would cost for additional drainage improvements to take care of the added run off, a cost that surely would mean new bond elections and possibly additional taxes or higher utility rates.

### Increased Property Taxes

But the biggest concern about this proposal is the unintended impact on all of our property taxes. As we are seeing with the SF-3 lots of 7,000 sq. ft., the ability to build a second residential unit is encouraging speculative development in the neighborhood. With close in lots at a premium, builders can buy an older home on a large lot at or above the market rate and essentially get their second lot for free. They can then either tear down the existing house (which changes the character of the neighborhood) and build two new units (which may encourage more renters) or just add the additional one unit. In either case the appraised value for that lot just went up considerably.

The new houses being built in the area are usually larger and with asking prices way above the existing homes. And, as we have seen, the appraisal district has already transferred the major portion of the value of our homes from the building to the land. All of this results in the Appraisal District raising the valuation on all the other properties in the area that have these larger lots. If the City proposal passes, then the same thing would happen to the smaller lots in our neighborhood as well.

### Getting Our Concerns Heard at City Council

If you are concerned that the quality of your life will be adversely impacted by losing the single family character of our neighborhood, if you worry about increased traffic congestion and that more flooding will reduce the safety of the area, and if you want to stop seeing your property taxes go up every year, then you need to let the City Council know that this staff proposal is not in our best interest.

While there are some advantages to being able to add a “granny flat” and increasing some density, the downside of this proposal far outweighs these benefits, so lets keep this to only the existing 7,000 sq. ft. lots and see how it impacts us before rushing to include the smaller lots. Please call, write or e-mail the City Council to urge them to stop this proposal now. The contact information for the City Council is included on page 6 of this newsletter.

*Your neighbor, Jeff*





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# Walking Zilker

by Lorraine Atherton

On June 15, ZNA sponsored a Pedestrian Safety Workshop to address the Zilker neighborhood's lack of pedestrian access to Barton Springs Road and Zilker Park. Based on last summer's ZNA sidewalk survey, our top priorities were to settle on a plan of action to complete the sidewalk on the Kinney hill between Virginia and Barton Springs Road and find some practical solutions to the dangerous situations on the east side of Robert E. Lee near Lund.

The event was part of the statewide workshop program organized by the Trans Texas Alliance and conducted by Charles Gandy. Charlie is a former state representative and a one-time resident of Kinney Avenue. He still lives in South Austin, and he is now a bicycle and pedestrian advocate who travels the country as a consultant for Livable Communities. Zilker is lucky to have the Trans Texas Alliance and Charlie so close to home.

Our workshop was attended by two city staff members, a representative from Capital Metro, and sixteen neighbors, a full house for host Carol Ginn. Many thanks to Carol for opening her home to us on a Saturday morning.

We watched Charlie's slide show comparing our problem areas with other communities around the country, and Charlie outlined his recommendations. Then we stepped outside to the intersection of Kinney and Virginia to get a good look at our first priority, the hill on Kinney.

The new Lost Canyon condos are required to build a sidewalk from Barton Springs Road an undetermined distance up the hill, after Barton Springs Road is finished and before they receive occupancy permits. Our initial estimate of the remaining distance to the existing sidewalk at the top of the hill is 150 feet, or less than \$5500 worth of sidewalk. Our mission is to get the city to work with the condos to complete the sidewalk all the way up the hill at the same time, as soon after the completion of Barton Springs Road as possible. Through Janet Howard at the city, we

are trying to determine the precise status of the condos' share of the sidewalk and what design or planning work has already been done, if any. A committee of volunteers from the workshop will be looking for funding sources, and ZNA will organize a campaign to raise private donations if necessary. As always, prospects for city funding are grim: the city has about 600 sidewalk requests and essentially \$0 available. Capital Metro may be more willing to help out, since this project would represent the only pedestrian access to bus routes and to the Dillo stop on Toomey.

Besides Janet as our city contact, the committee includes Deborah Bice Broussard, Carol Ginn, Richard Gravois, and Ken Marsh. They will also be considering several ideas that sprang from Charlie's suggestion that the intersection of Virginia and Kinney be reconfigured to make it safer and less confusing for motorists.

The second priority is pedestrian access to Zilker Park from Lund, including a crosswalk across Robert E. Lee at Lund, access to the bus stops on the east side of Robert E. Lee, and access from Lund to the Umlauf Sculpture Garden. The committee working on this will be trying to incorporate some of Charlie's ideas into the existing but currently stalled traffic calming plan for Robert E. Lee. Bobby Rigney and Lorraine Atherton will be organizing the committee on this effort. One of Charlie's suggestions was to narrow the lanes on Robert E. Lee so that the bike lanes on the hill can be continued from the Barton Hills intersection north to Barton Springs Road. Another Gandy idea, the Shoal Creek bike lane plan currently being considered by the city should be applicable to Robert E. Lee and perhaps on up the hill to Rabb Road.

A third committee (Larry Akers, Ken Marsh, and Bobby Rigney) will work on the Robert E. Lee hill. Our neighbors in Barton Hills have already scheduled another sidewalk workshop for September, to focus on the part of that hill above Trailside.

If you would like to help on any of these projects, get in touch with one of the committee volunteers or call Lorraine Atherton at 447-7681.

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**Zilker Neighborhood Association  
Membership Form**  
ZNA annual dues \$7.00 per person

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Send completed form and check  
(payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association) to:  
**Zilker Neighborhood Association  
Kaye Trybus, Membership Chair  
P.O. Box 33546  
Austin, TX 78764-0546**





**To contact City Council Members, go to  
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/council/default.htm>.**

You may automatically e-mail council members collectively or individually and obtain phone numbers and the preferred mailing address from this site.

Council Members' Phone • Fax • E-mail

- Mayor Gus Garcia: 974-2250 • 974-2337 • [gus.garcia@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:gus.garcia@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Mayor Pro Tem Jackie Goodman: 974-2255 • 974-1888 • [jackie.goodman@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:jackie.goodman@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Council Member Raul Alvarez: 974-2264 • 974-1887 • [raul.alvarez@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:raul.alvarez@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Council Member Betty Dunkerley: 974-2258 • 974-1886 • [betty.dunkerley@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:betty.dunkerley@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Council Member Daryl Slusher: 974-2260 • 974-3212 • [daryl.slusher@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:daryl.slusher@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Council Member Danny Thomas: 974-2266 • 974-1890 • [danny.thomas@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:danny.thomas@ci.austin.tx.us)
- Council Member Will Wynn: 974-2256 • 974-1884 • [will.wynn@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:will.wynn@ci.austin.tx.us)

Mailing Address for All Council Members

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_ (name)  
Austin City Council  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767

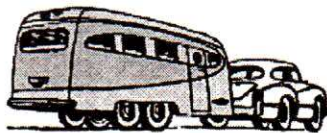
Physical Location to Visit Council Members

Municipal Building, 124 W. 8th St.

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**It's almost time for Zilker Elementary's Passbook Fundraiser. It will begin the last week in August. Zilker Elementary does not condone children going door to door to sell the Passbooks. It's best to purchase the book from a child you know, and please use a check for payment.**

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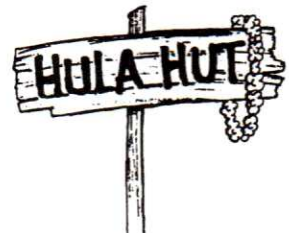
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## JOIN YOUR E-MAIL GROUP FOR A FAST, EASY ZILKER CONNECTION

"I do not consider it progress to do the unnecessary three times as fast." I mention this quote for those of us who know computers have limited usefulness. The quote reminds me that they cannot replace a plumber to fix our pipes. They do not serve us meals in our local restaurants. We don't even relate to them well as pets (remember pet rocks?). In fact, the highest value a computer possibly has is as a tool for meaningful communication. But that really is valuable. It's not the method of communication that's valuable, it is the communication itself. And that's how e-mail groups became so popular. Folks with some common interest agree to keep the communication to/from the e-mail group within the bounds of that common interest. The Zilker Neighborhood is our common interest, and zilker@yahoogroups.com is our e-mail group.

It works this way: An e-mailed question to the group about a Kinney Road detour (for example) will result in hundreds of Zilker members reading about that detour whenever they check for messages. Only those with specific knowledge send answer e-mails back to the group with that info. At that point, hundreds have found out about an issue they are glad to know about. Then, no more posted messages until something else comes up. With this e-mail "tool," lost cats/dogs are found faster. Con artists and rip-offs are revealed to hundreds instantly. Issues can be discussed. Even a party has been announced, inviting the whole Zilker neighborhood. And complaints (written politely) can be redirected to where the problem gets solved. In other words, this is truly your group to connect with by just joining and reading, even anonymously, at your leisure. It's asked that you try to follow polite e-mail etiquette (the golden rule works), and nobody counts off for spelling (sic). Join and unjoin as you wish, but please try it for a while.

You won't be surprised at the high level quality of Zilker's group input. I participate in lots of other e-mail groups, and by comparison

we are underutilized. That's no problem as long as it's available when needed. So everyone should at least join. It is unlikely to get "information overload" since zilker@yahoogroups.com had only 9 total messages in all of June. And when posting a message, please make the subject line indicate the message content so members can screen messages. Also, don't feel compelled to reply if you don't have time, someone else probably will. You may view past e-mails in the archives before you sign up. See for yourself at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/zilker/>.

*Hoping for participation at all levels,  
Bobby Rigney (your ANC Rep)*

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## Which of These Costly Homeseller Mistakes Will You Make When You Sell Your Home?

**Austin, Texas**—A new report has just been released that reveals the seven costly mistakes most homeowners make when selling their homes and the 9-Step System that can help you sell your home fast—and for the most amount of money.

This industry report clearly show how the traditional ways of selling homes have become increasingly less and less effective in today's real estate market. The fact of the matter is that fully three-quarters of today's homesellers don't get what they want for their homes and become disillusioned and financially disadvantaged when they put their homes on the market.

As this report uncovers, these seven deadly mistakes homesellers make will cost them literally thousands of dollars when they go to sell their homes. The good news is each and every one of these mistakes is entirely preventable.

In answer to this issue, industry insiders have prepared a free special report entitled, *The 9-Step System to Get Your Home Sold Fast for Top Dollar*.

**To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your free copy of this report, call 1-800-278-5449 and enter ID# 1086. You can call anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

Call NOW to find out how you can get the most money for your home.

This report courtesy of Thom Lemon, Broker.  
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### **Z-News** The Newsletter of the Zilker Neighborhood Association

Z-News is published quarterly by the  
Zilker Neighborhood Association  
P.O. Box 33546  
Austin, TX 78764-0546

Visit us online at:  
[members.tripod.com/~znaweb/](http://members.tripod.com/~znaweb/)

#### **ZNA Officers**

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Jeff Jack  
447-5877

##### Vice Presidents

Fontaine Maverick  
443-3290  
Lorraine Atherton  
447-7681

##### ANC Co-reps

Bobby Rigney  
471-3758

##### Co-secretaries

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443-8755  
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##### Treasurer

Steven Sides  
851-7494

##### Membership Co-chairs

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Kaye Trybus  
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##### Newsletter Editor

Shannon Smithson  
443-7078

##### Commander's Forum Rep

Laura Albrecht  
445-5469

Zilker Neighborhood Association (ZNA) general meetings are held four times each year (February/April/July/October) on the last Monday of the month. General membership meetings are open to all Zilker residents and others interested in the preservation of the Zilker neighborhood.