

Newsletter of the **Zilker Neighborhood Association**

exas Established 1981

APRIL 2007

Now Is the Time to Join

OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

A Message from Jeff Jack, President of ZNA

If you are reading this, you are probably one of the lucky residents or business owners in the Zilker neighborhood. I say lucky because we have such a wonderful neighborhood full of great places and incredible people. As Austin continues to grow, we will have many opportunities to make Zilker even better, and many challenges as well. Maintaining and enhancing our quality of life even as the neighborhood continues to grow is the prime objective of the Zilker Neighborhood Association. If you love living or working in Zilker, enjoy getting Z-News, find our quarterly meetings interesting and informative, and support the work of ZNA to address the many issues affecting our neighborhood, then please join or renew your association membership this month.

Membership dues are only \$7 per year per person. It is a great investment in making sure your association continues to provide important information through this quarterly newsletter. There is a membership application form on page 8; please fill it out and send it in today. Your financial support is appreciated, but more important is your participation in the association. The ZNA Executive Committee is charged with the day-to-day work of the association, but we need to hear from you on the many issues facing our neighborhood. At our next quarterly meeting, on Monday, April 30, we will be discussing both the Barton Place Condominium project and the restart of our neighborhood planning process (see pages 2 and 9). We hope you will take the time to read about these important issues, come to the association meeting on April 30, and participate with your neighbors in shaping the future of the Zilker Neighborhood.

See you on April 30!

Jeff Jack, Your Neighbor

Next Quarterly ZNA Meeting

Monday, April 30, 2007 Zilker Elementary School 1900 Bluebonnet

Meet your neighbors. Learn about issues affecting you and the neighborhood you live in.

6:30 pm Happy Half Hour
7:00 pm Business Meeting
Lamar-Bluebonnet Water Project
Barton Place Condos
Neighborhood Plan Restart
Rolling Stones Park Fund
Vertical Mixed Use

Homeowners, renters, and business owners all welcome.

WHO CAN JOIN? WHO CAN VOTE?

ZNA's bylaws limit membership to "persons 18 and over residing in the neighborhood." Property owners who do not live within ZNA boundaries are not eligible for membership.

New members may not vote until 30 days *after* receipt of their dues, which means they cannot vote at the same meeting where they pay their dues. The previous year's members, however, may vote at the same meeting at which they renew their dues.

The bylaws list 10 objectives of the association. Some of them addressed in this issue of *ZNews* are:

- 1. Represent and advance the interests of residents in the neighborhood.
- 7. Provide a greater emphasis on inclusion of apartment dwellers as integral members of the community.
- 9. Work toward development and preservation of natural green spaces, parks, trees, landscaping, and general land-use management.
- 10. Develop, adopt, and monitor a neighborhood plan, including an inventory of land uses and facilities.

THE BARTON PLACE REZONING CASE

Will Trees and Trailer Parks Give Way to Condos?

While Austin's neighborhoods have been grappling with questions of future density and zoning in the City's formal planning process, the neighborhood associations still have to keep up with the weekly grind of public hearings on individual zoning cases, which are, let's face it, deciding our future right now. Although every zoning case is important, some are precedent-setting, with ramifications that are likely to go far beyond their immediate neighbors. Such is the case with the proposed Barton Place Condominiums, a project proposed at 1600 Barton Springs Road behind Austin Java Café.

The area between Barton Springs Road and Toomey Road has been called the South Bank, and all of it is currently zoned Commercial Services (CS). Most of the properties are occupied by modest one- or two-story buildings today, but the current zoning allows structures of 60 feet and 95% impervious cover. For a sense of the maximum allowed here, check out the Bridges Condominiums under construction on the east side of South Lamar, south of the Taco Cabana at Riverside. Last year, several commercial property owners in the South Bank area presented a plan to city planning staff suggesting that the zoning in this area be increased to

that runs from Barton Springs Road through to Toomey. He has formed a joint venture with some local developers to redevelop the trailer park currently on the site. When they first approached ZNA about this project, they were going to request a zoning change from CS to Multifamily-6 (MF-6) to allow a 90-foot-tall condominium building. They were also going to request variances to the setbacks from both Toomey and Barton Springs roads required under the Waterfront Overlay Ordinance, and they wanted

which would further limit their height.

Town Lake in recent years.

allow heights starting at 75 feet and stepping up to 95, 120, and even 200 feet on some sites. This was not

surprising, considering that the City Council has granted

The owner of Austin Java has an option on a parcel

additional heights between 120 and 200 feet all along

waivers from the residential compatibility standards

triggered by the homes just south of Barton Springs Road,

The ZNA executive committee has been concerned with the increase in traffic along Barton Springs Road for many years. The proposal to increase the zoning entitlements (and therefore the density) for this property beyond its current very intense zoning would, we believe, put too much additional burden on the infrastructure, especially given all the other new projects in the immediate area. We also could not support any waiver of compatibility standards or variances to the Waterfront Overlay Ordinance. Finally, any increase in height above 60 feet would have to be accompanied by significant community benefits.

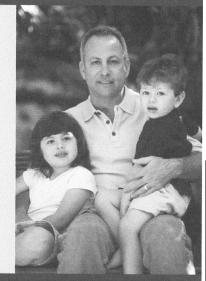
The developers had indicated that they wanted to save the two existing restaurants and build the condo units farther back on the site. After some debate, the ZNA executive committee concluded that preservation of Restaurant Row was a positive for the neighborhood, especially if the scale and character of the existing restaurants could be maintained. One of the comments we often hear about Zilker is how great it is to have so many retail, entertainment, and dining opportunities in the area; Restaurant Row is a noteworthy part of what makes Zilker special. The site of the restaurants, however, is not includ-



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ed in the zoning case, so measures to preserve that site cannot be incorporated into the new zoning ordinance for the rest of the property. There would be no guarantee that the new property owners would not turn around and redevelop the front of the site at 60 feet anyway.

So that was the starting point for negotiations. In the end, the developers have agreed not to seek (A) waivers from compatibility standards, (B) variances from the Waterfront Overlay, and (C) increases in zoning density beyond the current entitlement. The future building height on the restaurant sites will be limited to only 20 feet (allowing minor additions to the existing buildings). This will be enforceable, along with the other provisions of the agreement, by a private restrictive covenant to run with the land between the neighborhood association and the owners. The RC will be accompanied by a \$50,000 bond for twenty years. In addition, the new condos will be set back 130 feet from Barton Springs Road (the current setback is only 35 feet). In exchange for limiting the developable area on the front of the site, an equal volume of buildable space will be transferred to the rear of the property, but instead of the 90 feet the developer was originally asking for, the height will be limited to 75 feet. In keeping with the spirit of the original Waterfront Overlay, the developers are offering the following community benefits.

- This proposal will preserve onsite the largest pecan tree (57-inch diameter), three large trees along Toomey, and eight trees around the existing restaurants on Barton Springs Road. The developer has also agreed to move five of the remaining trees across Toomey to public parkland. (Under the current zoning, all of the existing trees could be lost if the property was redeveloped.)
- The developer will grant a public easement for foot and bike access all the way across the property to Toomey Road (not triggered by current zoning).
- Vehicle access to the condo project will be limited to Toomey, with the restaurant access continuing on

Barton Springs Road. This will reduce the traffic on Barton Springs Road from what it could have been under the current zoning.

- If the City will provide some fee waivers and expedited permitting, the developer will provide between \$500,000 and \$1 million for affordable housing within the neighborhood, to mitigate the loss of the affordable housing in the trailer park.
- The MF-6 zoning will reduce the allowable impervious cover on the site by 15% (the current CS zoning allows 95%, MF-6 allows only 80%).

One downside of this proposal (aside from the loss of the iconic trailer park and the wonderful neighbors who live there) is the encroachment on the views that some of our neighbors enjoy from the top of the cliff on Barton Springs Road. If a project were built out to the 60 feet allowed in the current zoning, however, the views from these homes would be significantly reduced anyway. By limiting the height of the front portion of the site to 20 feet, we are at least preserving the view of the UT tower that everyone in the neighborhood has coming down the street on the Kinney hill.

Finally, the executive committee believes that this agreement is setting an important precedent that will limit future zoning requests in the area. This project is not only conforming to the current Waterfront Overlay but also to





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4 «Z·News» April 2007

the original and more stringent 1986 Waterfront Combining District Ordinance, which tied any zoning height increases to significant community benefits. By holding this project to no additional density and limiting the additional height at the rear of the property to only 15 feet, while maintaining Restaurant Row, saving many of the trees, securing public access, reducing permitted impervious cover, reducing traffic on Barton Springs Road, and donating significant dollars for affordable housing, this project should set a positive precedent for all other projects proposed for the South Bank area.

At ZNA's meeting on April 30 we hope to have more information on the Barton Place project.



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Second Annual Neighborhood Planning Conference May 5, 2007

Austin Community College, Eastview Campus

The Next Ten Years Building Community Capacity

The 2007 Conference includes 40 workshops that could be useful in enhancing and empowering our communities.

Working together is the only way to a sustainable future

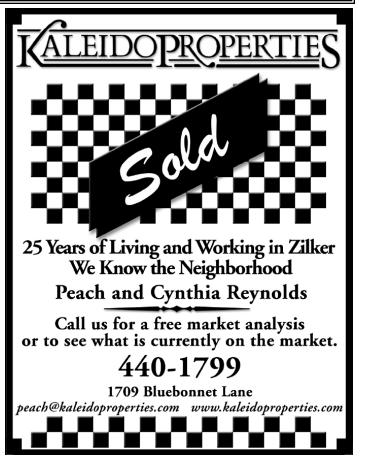
and ZNA needs you to help us get the most out of this conference.

Early registration is only \$25.
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(It's \$35 after April 27, and space may be limited.)
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Click on "Agenda (pdf)" for descriptions of all the workshops.

To register offline, please contact Lorraine Atherton at 447-7681.



Lamar-Bluebonnet Construction Starts Later This Year

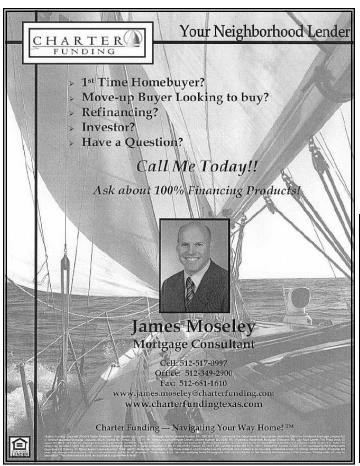
by Julie Strong, City of Austin Public Works

The Lamar-Bluebonnet Project, a water and wastewater improvement project, is slated to start construction in late 2007 and is expected to take about a year to complete.

The project will replace aging and deteriorated wastewater facilities and eliminate wastewater overflows currently occurring in the area. The majority of the wastewater work will take place west of Bluebonnet Lane on La Casa, Paramount, and Montclaire streets and east of Bluebonnet on Frazier, Goodrich, and Hether streets.

The waterline work will help reduce leakages and service outages. That work will take place along South Lamar Boulevard between West Mary and Manchaca Road, along Manchaca from Lamar to Edgeware, and along Bluebonnet Lane from Lamar to Collier Street.

Staff from the Public Works Department and the Austin Water Utility will attend the Zilker Neighborhood Association general meeting on April 30 to discuss the project and answer questions. Larry Mendez of Public Works is the project manager and the contact for the project. His number is 974-1581.



ALL THE BEST TO A FRIEND OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Dear Neighbors,

B. C. Allen worked for the Lamar Plaza Drug Store as a Registered Pharmacist for 37 years. He has been not only an extremely competent pharmacist but also a dear friend and wise advisor to many people in Zilker and the surrounding neighborhoods. He always went above and beyond the call of duty and had a wonderful capability to cheer folks up.

Those who would like to wish him well on his retirement may call him at 452-1644 or write to him at 2901 Dover Place. Austin. TX 78757. He will definitely be missed.

> Kathy Green, Your Neighbor

Editor's note: Although B.C. is 74 years old and hasn't had a real vacation in decades, he says he will probably spend only a couple of months traveling and "not doing things," like a real retired person. The chances are good that before long we will see him at drug stores around town doing relief work.



ROLLING STONES PARK IMPROVEMENTS ENTER DESIGN STAGE

Since our last report in the February *ZNews*, Zilker Neighborhood Association and the Zilker Elementary PTA have gathered a list of 75 possible improvements to the city parkland next to the school. Suggestions range from turning on the existing lights to building a wading pool. A committee of school staff, parents, and ZNA members is organizing a community forum on May 2 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Zilker Elementary School to develop a master plan for the neighborhood park. The forum will be in the form of a charette, and two local design professionals, Earl Broussard and Mindy Cooper, have agreed to help out.

As part of the negotiations surrounding the Rolling Stones concert last fall, the promoters agreed to donate \$300,000 from the event ticket sales to improve Austin's parks. This was beyond the usual fees and expenses associated with the use of Zilker Park as a concert venue. Half of that donation goes directly to the Parks Department to be spent on Zilker Park. The other half has been divided among the neighborhoods most affected by the concert to be spent on park improvements chosen by the neighborhood association. A fund has been set up with the Austin Parks Foundation, which will act as the business agent to disburse the money.

The Zilker neighborhood's share is \$31,500, to be spent on improvements to the Zilker Playground and Neighborhood Park, the City of Austin parkland immediately south of Zilker Elementary School. That includes the tennis courts, the children's playscape, and the ball field south of the school.

Through the ZNA Executive Committee, Heather Way has been working with Zilker Elementary Principal Bren McCullar and the Zilker PTA (Kevin Lungwitz,

Park Design Charette

Help plan a park in the heart of Zilker neighborhood

Now is the time to participate in shaping a community vision for our neighborhood's closest, most accessible park! Come to the planning forum Wednesday

May 2, 2007 6:30 to 8:30 P.M.

Zilker Elementary School

Everyone is welcome.

Hope to see you park lovers there!

Questions? Contact Heather K. Way at hway@austin.rr.com

president) to come up with a list of possible improvements to that park. With your help at the May 2 charette, we hope to develop a master plan for the park. From there we will work with the Parks Department to price out the projects included in the master plan and determine how they will be implemented. There is the possibility that the Stone's donation can be supplemented by other grants and fund-raising projects, and the results of the May 2 charette can certainly be incorporated into a neighborhood plan to inspire and guide future projects. If you have any ideas for improvements to this park or any other park in our area, please call Gardner Sumner, the ZNA parks chair, or e-mail ZNA at ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com.

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SCHOOL UPDATES: KINDERGARTEN ROUND-UP AND BACKYARD CONCERT

Any children who will be eligible for kindergarten for the 2007-2008 school year should have a parent or guardian attend Kindergarten Round-Up Tuesday, May 1, at 9:00 a.m. in the Zilker Elementary Library to register them. Children who will be five years old on or before September 1, 2007, are eligible to be enrolled.

To register a child, bring:

- Child's birth certificate,
- Proof of parent's residence in the Austin School District such as a current utility bill or lease agreement with valid address,
- Parent or guardian's driver's license or other photo identification.
- Current immunization record
- and Social Security card (optional).

If you can make copies of the items you need to bring to Round-up and bring both the copies and the originals with you, it will speed up the registration process tremendously.

Future students can attend the event as well.

If you are not able to attend the Round-up, you may register your child at the school office May 1–4, between 7:45 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. If you have questions about registration, call the school at 414-2327.

Mary Christine Reed, Zilker PTA

Support arts education and enjoy the finest of South Austin at an outdoor concert at Zilker Elementary School on Friday, April 20, from 5:30 to 9:00 pm.

Local favorites Paris 49 and Guy Forsyth cap off an evening full of music, including performances by The Blazing Bows and Ramsey Midwood. The family-friendly event, held at the school's outdoor learning center on Ann Arbor, is open to the public and just \$10; kids are free. Concessions will be available.

Paris 49 (regulars at The Continental Club) blend electric guitar, tenor sax, upright bass, and drums for a surreal Be-Bop beat. Their beloved French jazz will be followed by Guy Forsyth's eclectic Austin blues.

The evening serves as a fundraiser for Zilker's PTA and renowned Arts in Education program. Zilker Elementary prides itself on bringing Austin's working artists into the school throughout the school year. Students from Pre-K to sixth grade benefit from creative movement classes, African drumming demonstrations, storytelling, puppet shows, and creative multicultural explorations.

Liz Scanlon and El Crose

Zilker parents and Committee Co-chairs

For more information about Zilker Elementary and the PTA, visit www.zilkerelem.org.



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Peter Stiles 663.7619





8 «Z·News» April 2007

MORE PARK UPDATES: MASTERING BARTON SPRINGS POOL AND TOWN LAKE PARK GRAND OPENING III

After this newsletter went to press, the City of Austin held a Town Hall Meeting to discuss a master plan for the future of Barton Springs Pool (April 16, 2007). On Oct. 19, 2006, City Council approved a resolution directing the City Manager to develop a comprehensive master plan for the pool through a public process that will address improvements to facilities, the grounds, infrastructure, water quality, and salamander habitat. Much like the master plan ZNA is trying to develop for our neighborhood park (see page 6), the city hopes to prioritize and evaluate a list of short–and long-term projects for the pool. The short-term projects will be presented to City Council for review in early summer, and the master plan is expected to be finalized by the end of summer and presented to City Council for approval. (Contact: Victor Ovalle, Public Information Manager, 974-6745.)

According to the city's Parks Web site, the summer schedule for Barton Springs Pool starts April 24. The pool opens at 5 a.m., when you can swim at your own risk. Lifeguards come on duty at 8 a.m., and admission is charged beginning at 9 a.m. The pool is open till 10 most nights but is usually closed Thursdays, 9 a.m.-7 p.m., for cleaning.



BE A FRIEND TO THE POOL

To learn more about the pool, visit the Friends of Barton Springs Pool Web site (friendsofbartonspringspool.com). The Friends are celebrating their first anniversary this month. You can volunteer to help clean the pool by emailing Service Committee chairman Ben Rosenberg at service@friendsofbartonspringspool.com. Address general questions to the group's president, Robin Cravey, at robin@robincravey.com.

ONE MORE TIME AT TOWN LAKE PARK

Look for the next installment in the long-running series of Town Lake Park Grand Opening celebrations toward the end of May. We have lost track of the actual number of Grand Openings that have been staged for this gem of a new park between the Dougherty Center and the Palmer Center on Barton Springs Road. After the last Grand Opening celebration, the park was scheduled for completion by April 1, 2007. Then construction stalled and the children's area of the park was redesigned. Work has resumed, and the target completion date has been moved to the end of May. Knowing the intrepid supporters of this park (notably Zilker's own Kaye Trybus), there will be a Grand Opening event in May whether the park is ready or not. See you there.

The Editor

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.)

E-mail:
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RESTARTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The Zilker Neighborhood began the City's formal neighborhood planning process in 2005. The Zilker Planning Area is grouped with three other planning areas (Barton Hills/Barton View, Galindo, and South Lamar neighborhoods) in the South Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SLCNPA). One of the first steps in the City's process is establishing a Future Land Use Map (FLUM). While not exactly a zoning map, the FLUM is used by staff as the basis for making recommendations on future zoning cases. So establishing the FLUM is a critically important element of our neighborhood plan.

In preparation for the City's neighborhood planning process, the Zilker Neighborhood Association circulated a survey in 2004 to assess what our community wanted in our plan. Your responses to that survey indicated a strong desire to preserve the residential fabric of our neighborhood, including the following factors:

- 1. Prevent "commercial creep" by retaining the current proportion of residential area in our neighborhood and limiting any conversion of residential properties to commercial or other nonresidential uses.
- 2. Keep the single-family feel of the neighborhood by maintaining or increasing the proportion of single-family housing to multifamily housing.
- 3. Grow (add density) by better utilizing existing zoning rather than changing zoning.
- 4. Maintain the existing character of residential areas by prohibiting the relaxation of site development standards and limiting the subdivision of existing residential lots into smaller lots.
- 5. If additional residential density is allowed, add it to existing commercial areas (mixed use zoning), in places that have adequate street and sewer capacity.
- 6. Respect our current deed restrictions.

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These clear preferences then became the basis for the stance that the ZNA executive committee has taken during the process of developing our FLUM.

Although the FLUM has different categories for various land uses, it has only one designation for single-family residential, failing to distinguish between the many levels of zoning labeled SF in the City Code. The FLUM single-family designation includes not only the traditional SF-3 lots (minimum area of 5750 sq. ft.) that make up almost all of the residential area in Zilker but also SF4-A, SF4-B, cottage lots, and urban infill lots (as

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10 «Z·News» April 2007

small as 3500 sq. ft. or even down to 2500 sq. ft.). A FLUM with that broad single-family designation would be inconsistent with Survey Result 4, the desire to maintain the neighborhood's existing character. Therefore, we have asked that a separate category be added to the FLUM, a medium-density single-family choice, that would include the options for much smaller lots. Such a category would give us the freedom to decide that a small-lot option is appropriate in a particular part of the neighborhood, without risking that the option will be applied everywhere.

Another stumbling block with city staff was our request for information concerning existing infrastructure carrying capacity. Our request was consistent with Survey Result 5 above, and it seemed reasonable to ask just how much traffic our streets can hold or where our sewer system is underutilized as we consider where to add density. City staff, however, have seesawed between offering information and denying that the information is needed or available. The focus in many meetings seemed to be on pushing additional density now and letting someone else deal with the resulting problems later.

The final obstacle we encountered in the process was our request for some analysis of our current zoning capacity. In zoning case after zoning case, we hear that we need to upzone property to allow for greater density, and these zoning changes are often supported by city staff. The push for increased density is based on the assumption that we are going to double in population and we must capture as many folks as we can in our older neighborhoods. Yet we do not know if our current zoning could allow for a significant increase in density without any further upzonings. The City Council is making zoning decisions without that critical data. Even the city's long-term planning process is based on the shortsighted notion that we can develop a FLUM as the basis for future zoning with no supporting analysis of our current zoning capacity.

Last fall, neighborhood leaders in the four SLCNP areas agreed that the city's refusal to address these three issues (the inclusion of small lots in the FLUM single-family designation, the capacity of our infrastructure, and an analysis of our current zoning data), among others, had become an impasse to progress. After almost a year of meetings, the process was halted for all four planning areas.

Recently the City has engaged the Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Texas to assist the SLCNP process, made some staff changes, and restarted our process with a series of meetings with community leaders. The Planning Commission has also begun to analyze the zoning capacity for all of Austin's



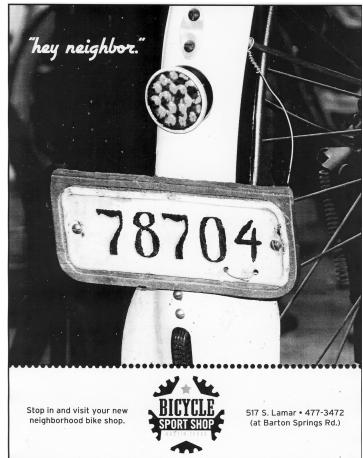


neighborhoods, which will benefit our plan. We are now hopeful that additional information will be made available about our street and sewer capacities in the near future. The issue of the single-family designation on the FLUM, however, remains unresolved. Should this issue be a deal breaker for our neighborhood? Do we want to risk accepting a FLUM that would suggest that we approve of the conversion of our SF-3 lots into much smaller lots? Will this spur the demolition of more older homes to make way for new, expensive, so-called urban homes? Or do we continue to push for a separate medium-density category on the FLUM?

The planning process and the implications of the FLUM will be discussed in depth at our quarterly meeting on April 30. If you are concerned about the density and character of our neighborhood and how the City's neighborhood planning process will affect Zilker, please come to our April meeting to weigh in on this important subject.

At the same time, all neighborhoods on major corridors (in our case, South Lamar Boulevard and Barton Springs Road) are facing a deadline for recommendations regarding the new Vertical Mixed Use overlay. Look for a progress report on that effort at the April 30 meeting as well.







12 «Z•News» April 2007



Newsletter
of the Zilker
Neighborhood
Association

www.main.org/znaweb

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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.

2007 Executive Committee of Zilker NA

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: Rachel Elder, 428-9180 ANC Delegate: Robert Singleton

ZNews Editor: Lorraine Atherton

Committee Chairs:

Holiday Family Program: Barbara Cossie, 447-4437 Neighborhood Plan: Dave Piper, 916-9636

Parks: Gardner Sumner, 462-0210

Town Lake Park Rep.: Kaye Trybus, 447-4437 Zoning: Peggy Pfaff, pfaffpt@yahoo.com



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