

# Z NEWS

Newsletter of the  
Zilker Neighborhood  
Association

APRIL 2012

Austin, Texas  
Established 1981

## ANC Picks Brigid Shea for Mayor

by Lorraine Atherton, ANC South Central Sector Rep

AUSTIN'S CRISIS OF AFFORDABILITY was the deciding factor in the 2012 endorsements of City Council candidates by the Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC). On March 28, ANC overwhelmingly endorsed Brigid Shea, the mayoral candidate with the strongest record on issues critical to neighborhoods. Shea has offered the clearest vision for an Austin that preserves vibrant urban neighborhoods, including healthy public schools and local businesses. Much like Kathie Tovo's successful 2011 City Council campaign, Shea has made affordability a priority, proposing policies to help stem the displacement of families who find themselves unable to afford to live in Austin as the cost of housing, including property taxes and utility bills, climbs and incomes stagnate.

Shea's qualifications and campaign platform are focused on the two topics that are closest to the heart of the Zilker neighborhood: our schools and our environment.

When Shea first served on the City Council, in

## ZNA Mayoral Candidate Forum, April 30

Monday 6:30-8:45 PM

Zilker Elementary School

1900 Bluebonnet



Also, Creek Restoration (page 10)

Barton Springs Road

Bike Lanes and Sidewalks (page 11)



Newcomers, old-timers, homeowners, renters,  
business neighbors

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the nineties, she launched a joint use initiative between the city and AISD to share facilities and reduce costs, which later inspired many proposals to save neighborhood schools during AISD's recent budget crisis (see the April 2011 *ZNews*). Today, with two children in AISD, she serves as a VP of their school's PTA. As a candidate for mayor, she has pledged "to develop a comprehensive

## CITY COUNCIL ELECTION



Early voting  
April 30-May 8  
Election Day,  
**Saturday, May 12**

**Precincts 332 and 340**  
(previously 462) vote at

Zilker School (1900 Bluebonnet)

**Precinct 342** votes at  
Barton Hills School  
(2108 Barton Hills Dr.)

Check your precinct through the  
Voter Name Search at  
[traviscountytx.org](http://traviscountytx.org)

## Putting South Lamar on the Bond Map

A Message from ZNA President Andy Elder

ONE SILVER LINING to the storm of redevelopment along South Lamar is that these residential projects generally improve the sidewalks and bicycle lanes nearby. In the case of Lamar Plaza, Treadwell and Lamar will benefit from dramatic improvements to the sidewalks and new bicycle lanes that will hopefully offset the increase in vehicular traffic.

Even with these improvements, Zilker is left with a patchwork of connections for people on foot or bikes. Neighbor Kim McKnight has posted a series of photos at [zilkerneighborhood.org](http://zilkerneighborhood.org) showing how woefully inadequate South Lamar is for pedestrians. To connect Zilker, we need a bigger vision with bigger projects. A City of Austin mobility bond committee is currently evaluating projects across Austin. This bond development process (Continued on page 6)

business plan to ensure neighborhood schools stay open and surrounding communities do not lose value or stability."

For 25 years she has been an environmental leader in Austin, with roles in Clean Water Action, Save Our Springs Alliance, Livable City, Austin Clean Water Project, and Chamber of Commerce Clean Energy Council. Her career combines a commitment to environmental principles with a practical grasp of exactly what needs to be done. She has proven herself to be exceptionally well qualified to balance Austin's environmental and economic needs; indeed, she understands that we can't have a healthy economy without a healthy environment.

ANC SETS A HIGH BAR for its City Council endorsements, requiring that a candidate earn at least two-thirds of the membership's vote. At the 2012 meeting on March 28, ANC endorsed

**Brigid Shea** for Mayor

**Laura Pressley** for Place 2

**Sheryl Cole** for Place 6

No candidate was endorsed in Place 5.

Twelve candidates filled out the ANC questionnaire on planning, budget, economic, transportation, zoning, community values, environment, and city government issues:

Richard "Clay" DaFoe, Lee Leffingwell, and Brigid Shea in the mayor's race; Mike Martinez and Laura Pressley in Place 2; Audrey "Tina" Cannon, Dominic Chavez, John Duffy, John Rubine, and Bill Spelman in Place 5; and Sheryl Cole and Shaun Ireland in Place 6. Their responses to the questionnaire are posted at [www.ancweb.org](http://www.ancweb.org).

### The Incumbents

In 2009, ANC endorsed Lee Leffingwell, Mike Martinez, and Bill Spelman, citing their commitments to planning, community participation, and budget priorities, as reflected in their responses to the ANC questionnaire. Three years later, however, it is difficult to identify any real progress on specific issues, such as water and electric rates, infrastructure planning, the local labor force, and budget and tax reforms. Existing taxpayers are still subsidizing growth, and those taxpayers are still outraged by subsidies and incentives handed out to businesses like Formula One, a downtown hotel, and now Apple. The disparity between residential and commercial tax appraisals has grown, shifting still more of the property tax burden to middle and working class residents. As a result, the economic worries expressed by neighbors in 2009 have deepened into a crisis of affordability, and ANC chose not to endorse these incumbents.

ANC members are especially disappointed by the failure of Leffingwell, Spelman, and Martinez to lead the effort in election reform for geographic representation. The Mayor specifically committed to convene a charter commission in 2009 "to work to educate and engage the community in a process of crafting the best possible proposal" for a single-member district system, but the process that he initiated two years later, in 2011, did not include any community engagement. ANC had to lobby other council members to sponsor the resolution to form a charter committee. (Mayor pro tem Sheryl Cole has the distinction of *(Continued on page 8)*)

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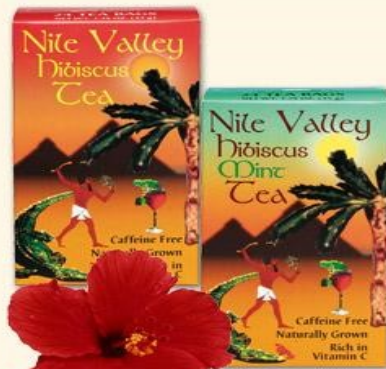
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**SUPPORT ZILKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT SPRING FLING, Friday, April 27, from 6 pm, at Gibson Bar, 1109 South Lamar**

The Zilker Elementary PTA is hosting its fifth annual Spring Fling at the Gibson Bar on Friday, April 27, 2012. The fundraiser, which features live and silent auctions, is the school's largest annual fundraiser. (For a real-time update of live and silent auction items, see [zilkerspringfling.blogspot.com](http://zilkerspringfling.blogspot.com)).

Tickets are only \$15, at the door or in advance, at [www.zilkerelem.org](http://www.zilkerelem.org). Appetizers from Luke's Inside Out, a critically acclaimed food trailer recently featured on the Food Network, are included.

Funds go toward tutoring for at-risk kids and other educational enrichment programs. About 35 percent of Zilker's student body is eligible for free and reduced cost lunch.

For more information about Zilker Elementary, visit [www.zilkerelem.org](http://www.zilkerelem.org).

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### Parking Restrictions on Bluebonnet Unveiled at May 2 Open House

by Neil Kopper, City of Austin Bicycle Program

THIS SUMMER the City of Austin’s Neighborhood Connectivity Division is planning to improve facilities for both cyclists and pedestrians near Zilker Elementary School. Proposed improvements include a new sidewalk along the west side of the school on Ann Arbor, new curb ramps for existing sidewalks around the school, safety improvements to the intersection of Rundell and Ann Arbor, and a two-way family-friendly bicycle facility along Bluebonnet and Melridge. To accomplish these improvements, on-street motor vehicle parking will be prohibited on one side of the street on Bluebonnet (from Lamar to Ashby) and Melridge (Ashby to Rabb Road). All construction is currently scheduled to occur while school is out of session for the summer. You can obtain additional information and provide feedback for the proposed improvements at an Open House on May 2, 6-7:30 pm, in the Zilker Elementary School Library, 1900 Bluebonnet Lane.

### May 5: Second Annual Zilker Elementary Pet Parade

by Helen Snook

Saturday, May 5, 10 a.m.  
Little Zilker Park track  
next door to Zilker Elementary School  
1900 Bluebonnet Lane



A pet parade of a different color, from the Kinney median. Photo by Richard Gravois

Does your family have a favorite pet — an unusual one, a talented one? Show it off at the Second Annual Zilker Elementary Pet Parade!

Back by popular demand, this old-fashioned, free, kid-driven event is fun for participants and observers alike. All neighborhood children are invited to parade their pets around the school track. All types and sizes of animals are welcome, as are costumes and tricks. Kids without animals can bring instruments or wear costumes and help lead the parade.

#### May is Bike Month!

Find more information about Bike Month events in Austin at [www.biketoworkaustin.org](http://www.biketoworkaustin.org).

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**New to Zilker?  
Don't miss  
Kindergarten Round-Up**

ANY CHILD WHO WILL BE 5 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2012, is eligible for kindergarten for the 2012-2013 school year, but a parent or guardian must register the child. If your child will attend kindergarten at Zilker Elementary next fall, please come to Round-Up on Tuesday, May 1, at the school library, at 9 AM, and spread the word to families of other new kindergarteners.

This event is an introduction to the school and an opportunity to meet other families as well. New students are welcome to attend with their parents, but it is really intended for adults.

When registering, please bring the child's birth certificate, Social Security card, current immunization record, proof of parent's address in the Zilker attendance area (such as a current utility bill or lease agreement with valid address), parent's or guardian's driver's license or other photo ID.

**If you bring two copies of each document with you, it will speed up the registration process tremendously and will be greatly appreciated!**

If you cannot attend Round-Up, you may still register at the school office May 2-4 (8:30 AM to 3 PM). Please try to register in May so the school staff can plan for fall classes. Children may be registered until June 1. Later registration will also be available in early August.

If you have questions about registration, please call the school at 414-2327.

*Randall Thomson, Principal  
Zilker Elementary School*



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(Continued from page 1) is crucial. It sets city-wide priorities for capital improvement projects for the next several years, and Zilker is in danger of being left out of this process. As it currently stands, South Austin will bear a substantial burden of more cars and more people, with no coordination of infrastructure improvements. At the same time, Capital Metro is planning to reduce bus service along the South Lamar-Manchaca corridor.

The Zilker Neighborhood leadership believes the following items should be considered in the current bond package to help develop sustainable connectivity in our area.

**Mobility Corridor Study**

As two of the fastest growing corridors in the city, S. Lamar and Barton Springs Road warrant inclusion as a top priority for the 2012 bonds. Assessments, stakeholder meetings, and planning are already under way for five of the city's other corridors as part of the 2010 mobility bond package. Considering the city's focus on sustainability and the critical location of South Lamar Boulevard, it is past time for a Mobility Corridor Study of South Lamar (see [www.austinstrategi mobility.com/corridors](http://www.austinstrategi mobility.com/corridors)).

**Crosswalks**

As cyclists, pedestrians, and public transit users know, safe opportunities to cross South Lamar



*Redevelopment of Lamar Plaza, S. Lamar and Treadwell*

are few and far between. It is clear that in addition to an overall corridor study, crossings such as those along South First Street and South Congress Avenue are needed immediately.

The distance from Barton Springs Road to Ben White is 3.1 miles. There are several areas where traffic signals are too far apart to be practical to pedestrians and public transit users: Barton Springs Road to Treadwell is 0.4 miles, Lamar Square to Hether is 0.4 miles, Oltorf to Bluebonnet is 0.4 miles, Bluebonnet to Manchaca is 0.3 miles, and Barton Skyway to Panther is 0.5 miles (although a light may be required at the new development near the Broken Spoke).

**West Mary**

Completing the sidewalk along West Mary from South Fifth to Lamar is a major connectivity need in the area. This part of West Mary has a



*Headed east on Mary, toward Twin Oaks Library and the South Fifth bus stop. Photo by Kim McKnight*

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railroad crossing, public housing nearby with many children, the Twin Oaks Public Library, and it connects two major bus routes. Completing the sidewalk along this corridor is a critical need and must be addressed in the 2012 election.

**Treadwell and Kinney**

Treadwell is a major entry into the Zilker neighborhood. With redevelopment of Lamar Plaza coming, greater connectivity between South Lamar and Kinney is critical to pedestrian accessibility from within and across the neighborhood.

**Bridge over Barton Creek**

This bridge is currently a hazard for bicyclists and pedestrians. Its narrow width creates a choke point that makes it difficult for nonautomotive traffic to traverse the extremely busy intersection. Added to the problem is that the bridge was recently hit along Robert E. Lee, leaving it exposed and crumbling on one side. This historic structure desperately needs attention to serve the cyclists and pedestrians who rely on access between MoPac, Zilker Park, the hike and bike trails, and central neighborhoods. (See pages 4 and 11 for proposed bike lane projects.)

If you have any suggestions for infrastructure projects to keep Zilker mobile and connected, please let me know. Better yet, reach out to the Austin mobility bond committee and let them know you expect the South Central neighborhoods to be included. Our taxes will pay for these bonds whether we benefit or not. We need to make sure our transportation choices grow, not shrink, as Barton Springs Road and South Lamar evolve.

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(Continued from page 2) being the only incumbent in the current election to follow through on this issue, and that was a factor in the ANC decision to endorse her reelection.)

Most ANC members appreciate incumbent Bill Spelman's support on broad environmental and planning issues (notably Water Treatment Plant 4), but his reversals on other, specific votes cannot be ignored. Especially troubling is his position on the Park Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 801 Barton Springs Road. Although the area's neighborhood plan encouraged mixed use (with multi-family housing) on the site, Spelman voted instead to approve a corporate office tower with an oversized parking garage, against the staff recommendation and a unanimous decision of the Planning Commission, and breaking five specific promises from his 2009 campaign relating to neighborhood planning and the Waterfront Overlay.

Like most candidates, Spelman says he tries to "strike a balance between whole-city interests, such as encouraging infill development, with the desires of individual neighborhoods."

ANC is looking for candidates who recognize and respect that neighborhood plans represent that balance. The Park PUD showed how far these incumbents will go to redefine the interests of a single real estate speculator as a "whole-city" benefit, outweighing accepted principles of urban and neighborhood planning and the city code itself. That bias in favor of the big real estate deal operates on a much larger scale in the corporate incentive packages mentioned above. That is why ZNA cannot rely on Spelman, Martinez, or Mayor Leffingwell to support livable urban neighborhoods like Zilker.

**Place 2: Laura Pressley**

As a relative newcomer to neighborhood and city hall activism, Laura Pressley has displayed an admirable grasp of the issues that need attention. Before she filed for Place 2, she worked to win support in East Austin. Her responses to ANC's questionnaire (see ANCWeb.org) reflect her recognition of the importance of tackling issues of affordability. The hope is that her experience in the semiconductor industry, her ownership of a small local business, and her service on nonprofit

**BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY**

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. Nonresident property owners are not eligible for membership.

Membership affords you the opportunity to vote on important issues that are addressed at our association quarterly meetings. Please note that voting privileges are activated thirty days after membership dues are received. However, if you were a paid member last year, you can renew your membership anytime this year (prior to and including the general meeting dates) and retain voting privileges.

Be sure to note issues that are important to you in the comments section below.

**Annual dues are \$7 per person. Please list each member name and email address below.**

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Please make check payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:  
ZNA Memberships, 1115 Kinney Ave. #42, Austin, TX 78704  
or bring this form with you to the next ZNA meeting

Comments:

Questions? Please email: [membership@zilkerneighborhood.org](mailto:membership@zilkerneighborhood.org)



boards (Women's Advocacy Project and SafePlace) will bring a fresh perspective to city government.

**Place 5: Chavez v. Spelman**

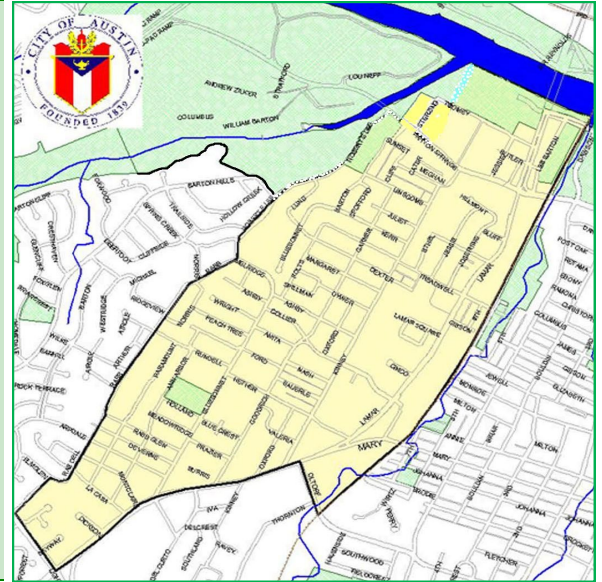
Challenger Dominic Chavez is largely unknown to ANC members, but his written questionnaire responses (see ANCWeb.org) earned him enough support to deny incumbent Spelman the ANC endorsement. He offered well-crafted statements on the shortcomings of Imagine Austin, the flaws in the city's economic development incentives, the need for consistent code enforcement (including strong support of the ANC position on short-term rentals), and the need to reform the utility rate structure and city budget process. His statement that "we must make affordability a critical component of any policy" aligns with the priorities of ANC. Those statements could not overcome uncertainty regarding his positions on specific transportation and environmental questions (such as SH 45 Southwest) and on single-member districts, or ease concerns about his ties to interests traditionally opposed to ANC.

Perhaps the most important difference between Bill Spelman and Dom Chavez is the issue of police staffing ratios and effective use of public safety resources. Spelman is a nationally recognized authority in this field, and much of his neighborhood support is based on the hope that he will make significant improvements to community policing and the city's public safety budget process—someday. His Problem-Oriented Policy strategies have been highly effective in other cities, but at the end of his second term, it is not clear whether Spelman is capable of turning his theory into practice in his own city's police department (see his Web site at billspelman.org). It should be a major issue in this race.

*Visit ANCWeb.org for more info.*

*ZNA boundaries include Zilker Park and Rabb Road on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east. The south boundary is Barton Skyway, and the north limit is Lady Bird Lake.*

*Residents on both sides of boundary streets are eligible for membership.*



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## City of Austin No Mow Campaign Comes to Robert E. Lee

THE WATERSHED PROTECTION and Parks and Recreation departments, together with the Austin Parks Foundation and Tree Folks, have joined forces under the Future Forest Project to improve the health and functionality of Austin's urban forests. With this partnership the City of Austin hopes to improve water quality, provide more efficient use of City resources, and improve the natural environment of our parks for both human and wildlife uses.



**Long Term Goal:** To establish a healthy riparian buffer on each side of the creek, with a woody canopy, understory, and diverse and dense ground cover while providing frequent open view corridors between 3 and 7 ft.

One focus of this agreement is the establishment of protected “no-mow” buffers in the riparian zone (land adjacent to the creek) along streams within specific City of Austin parks. The Robert E. Lee tributary in Zilker Park has been selected as a site in need of riparian zone restoration. Through the upcoming growing season, City staff will monitor the vegetation community, work on establishing a rain garden, and adaptively manage the new growth to maximize ecosystem function. An overview of this approach will be presented at the ZNA meeting on April 30.

Managing for healthy riparian buffers, with minimally maintained vegetation, can provide these outcomes and benefits: Filtering of overland

flow, removing pollutants; Prevention of stream bank erosion; Slowing of flow, reducing downstream flooding; Absorption of water, providing for base flow in streams; Shade, reducing water temperatures; Reduced mowing and maintenance by City staff; Reduce the City's carbon footprint via both sequestration and reduced emissions; A greenbelt forest with diverse tree and plant communities for walkers, hikers and wildlife observers.

*For more info, contact Alex Duncan, Environmental Scientist Associate, City of Austin Watershed Protection Dept.*

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**Barton Springs Road Bike Changes**  
*by Annick Beaudet, Austin Public Works*

THE NEIGHBORHOOD Connectivity Division of the City of Austin Public Works Department has planned a project to improve mobility on Barton Springs Road, which scope is to:

- ◆ add improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities between Congress and Robert E. Lee,
- ◆ improve bicycle accommodations on the Barton Springs Road Bridge over Barton Creek; and
- ◆ improve trail connections from Barton Springs Road to the Roy and Ann Butler Trail (formally Town Lake Trail) and trail system in Town Lake Park.

This is a very exciting project, given the amount of bicycle and pedestrian and wheelchair activity in this corridor. We currently have a preliminary design and would like to share it with you.

The project was a named mobility project in the 2010 Transportation Bond Election, where \$750,000 dollars was allocated to the project. The construction of bicycle, pedestrian, and trail improvements is not as intensive as typical road reconstruction projects and can be designed and constructed fairly quickly. As such, we are looking to have these improvements in place by the end of the summer. Currently, we have a briefing scheduled to the full Parks and Recreation Board on April 24, which is a public meeting. Everyone who wants to learn more about the project is encouraged to attend.

For more info, contact Annick Beaudet at 974-6505.

*Editor's note:* The ZNA executive committee hopes to have a brief update on this project at the April 30 general meeting.

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

[www.zilkerneighborhood.org](http://www.zilkerneighborhood.org)  
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## **2012 Executive Committee of ZNA**

### **Elected Officers:**

*President:* Andy Elder, 428-9180  
*1st VP:* Richard Gravois, 441-3430  
*2nd VP:* Steve McGuire, 447-2928  
*Secretary:* Ryan Stryker, 431-4245  
*Treasurer:* Skip Smith, 592-8038  
*Social Chair:* Matt Ditlow, 590-0929  
*ANC Delegate:* Open  
*ZNews Editor:* Lorraine Atherton, 447-7681

### **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. Watch the Web site for updates.

**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.

### **Committee Chairs:**

*ACL Festival:* Steve McGuire  
*Holiday Family Program:* Barbara Cossie, 447-4437  
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