

Signs of the Times: Rethinking Transportation

by Lorraine Atherton, ZNews editor

"IT'S A DIFFERENT STREET. I had forgotten what a nice street this is to live on." That was how Brent Cook summed up the Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program that went into effect on his block at the end of June. The program restricts parking in the 2100 block of Oxford and one block of Valeria to vehicles with residential permits at all times. Vehicles without permits can be towed.

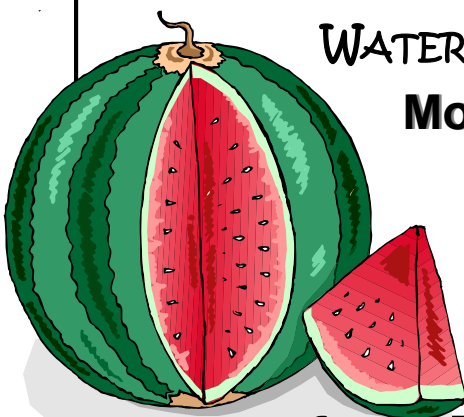
Restricting parking like this is just one of many ways that Zilker residents are rethinking their relationship with cars this summer, as Steve McGuire suggests in his Austin City Limits Music Festival report on page 10.

According to Sarah Glasscock, Oxford residents first attempted to work on street safety in 2006, when the city allowed seven new businesses to occupy the building at 2110 South Lamar, which had barely enough parking for one retail business. The overflow parking created a hazard for traffic turning off and onto Oxford and for residents, in or out of their cars. "We've gotten info on the RPP program from the city, but don't feel that we'll be able to meet the requirements," Sarah wrote at the time (she has since moved out of the

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)



These signs now mark RPP Area 18, on Oxford and Valeria.



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Updates on
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neighborhood).

Sarah and several other neighbors spoke with the landlord, Charlie Tomes, and Michael Portman of Birds Barber Shop, and arrangements were made to provide employee parking in the Office Depot lot across South Lamar. The problems continued, however, and early in 2008 Brent made the first concerted effort to gather the residents' signatures and fill the other application requirements for the RPP program. Unfortunately, the city was in the midst of revising the program process, and so completion of the application was delayed.

As Peggy Pfaff reported in the July 2009 ZNews, Robert Guillory picked up where Brent left off. Around the same time, the opening of Black Sheep Lodge immediately north of 2110 S. Lamar made everything much worse, not just for the neighbors on Oxford but also for the existing businesses. The shopping strip now bristles with No Parking signs, public and



The 2100 block of South Lamar bristles with No Parking signs, as businesses compete for space.

commercial, as businesses jealously guard every parking space. When we must pass a gauntlet of angry red and black signs at every entrance, it's difficult (even for a walker like me) to maintain the relaxed, friendly attitude that we in Zilker like to share with our business neighbors.

Early this year, Robert completed the residents' revised application and presented it to the ZNA general meeting in February, as required by city staff. The entire effort was driven by the residents (not by ZNA), and their hard work has paid off. The good news is that Brent and his neighbors seem to have reduced the traffic problems to a tolerable level and restored some of



Residents in RPP programs receive green stickers, like the one on the left, for their vehicles, along with a supply of guest passes.

 Advertisement for Southpaws Playschool. It features a cartoon dog on the left. The text includes:

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- Every Dog Has His Daycare.
- www.southpawsplayschool.com

 Advertisement for Nite Valley Herbs. It features two boxes of tea: "Nite Valley Hibiscus Tea" and "Nite Valley Hibiscus Mint Tea". A large red hibiscus flower is in the foreground. The text includes:

- Enjoy it Hot or as a Delicious Refreshing Iced Tea!
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their South Austin quality of life. The bad news is that the overflow parking from Black Sheep Lodge continues to fill the next block of Oxford and two blocks of Kinney.

As the owner of Birds Barber Shop said more than once at the February ZNA meeting, the problems of managing a business are not the neighbors' problems. That is one reason ZNA has been reluctant to recommend RPPs to neighbors. Back in September 2006, when the Oxford residents decided against RPP, Bobby Rigney noted that the city staff who approve site plans without adequate parking should take some responsibility for the problems they allow, but instead, the RPP "process shifts some hassle off the ones actually responsible, and onto neighbors."

City staff continue to approve unrealistic parking plans for car-reliant businesses along South Lamar (see page 4), and so other neighbors on other blocks will no doubt be taking a close look at the Oxford neighbors' experience with RPP. ZNA hopes that they will be spared the trouble, but it seems unlikely that city staff will offer any alternative relief. That would require a more comprehensive rethinking of the city's relationship with cars.

New bike lanes on S. Lamar

As the RPP signs were going up on Oxford, new bike lanes were being striped on South Lamar from Hether south to Manchaca. Last year bike lanes were added on the South Lamar hill, between Barton Springs Road and Treadwell. The stretch of South Lamar between Treadwell and Hether has not been repaved and so has not been restriped. It is posted

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)



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Outdoor Music Venues: One Year Later

It has been about a year since the city's new sound ordinance went into effect, and it is currently under review for possible revisions. Perhaps the biggest disappointment has been the continued mismatch between the ordinance and police policies. Enforcement of Outdoor Music Venue (OMV) permits has been inconsistent, and stated APD policy has amounted to a refusal to issue citations for clear violations. In May, Chief Acevedo told a meeting of the Austin Neighborhoods Council that APD procedures such as waiting for half an hour after the permit end-time to shut down a venue were not acceptable. The APD policies have made it difficult for neighborhoods to negotiate reasonable terms for annual permits, because we cannot rely on APD to enforce them. For instance, everyone may agree that 10 pm is a reasonable end-time for an outdoor concert, but if APD is giving all the venues a 30-minute grace period, the neighbors will have to ask for a 9 or 9:30 time on the permit.

The latest development in Zilker is that Don Pitts (the city music coordinator), David Murray (the city sound engineer), and Carol Gibbs of the city's Neighborhood Assistance Center have been helping Raf Robinson of the Irie Bean Coffee Bar meet the 70-decibel limit for its series of small outdoor events behind 2310 South Lamar. Their expertise has been very helpful in bringing the neighbors and the applicant together.

Robinson had applied for an 85 db permit,

Outdoor Venues Near You

Within ZNA's boundaries, these restaurants have OMV permits. Four can play till 8:30 PM Sun-Thu and till 10 PM Fri-Sat:

Austin Java, 1608 Barton Springs Road (expires Aug 12)

Baby Acapulco, 1628 Barton Springs (Nov 6)

Lift Cafe, 215 S. Lamar (Sep 24)

Uncle Billy's, 1530 Barton Springs (Aug 12).

The **Paggi House** permit is for 3 PM Sun, 9 PM Mon-Thu, and 10 PM Fri-Sat, Lee Barton Drive (Mar 15).

Opa, 2050 S. Lamar (Mar 9) has a permit for 10 PM every night.

As restaurants, all of these are limited to 70 decibels. Only **Shady Grove**, 1624 Barton Springs (Oct 10) can play up to 85 db, till 10 PM on any night.

The 85 db permit for the **Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf**, 221 S. Lamar, expired June 25, and no application for a renewal is on the city Web site, so far. It was limited to 8:30 PM all week.

rather than the 70 db required of restaurants, based on a city staff decision that the 70 db requirement did not apply to limited restaurants like the cafe. (ZNA is opposing this reinterpretation of the ordinance.) Unfortunately for Robinson, the change in classification triggered a review of his liquor license (limited restau-

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rants can't sell alcohol), so the business is now facing a number of other code compliance issues.

As Bill Neale, the ZNA sound committee chair, reported in the April *ZNews*, ZNA is appealing the OMV permit abruptly granted in March to Opa (formerly the Music Café), on South Lamar. ZNA contends that the business does not meet the requirements for a general restaurant. On July 9, the city's Development Review staff denied a site plan correction because the "Deck does not appear to be included in parking calculations." The site is in the same block as the offsite parking for the Black Sheep Lodge (see page 1), but lack of adequate parking is just one of the problems here.

The permit allows amplified sound outdoors seven days a week till 10 pm, with a limit of 70 db. These terms were authorized without input from the neighbors. Regrettably, the music coordinator's office was not up and running at the time, so there was no real negotiation. Another reason for the appeal is that the adjacent single-family (SF-3) property predated the venue and that outdoor amplified sound is incompatible with the nearby residences.

This is the only OMV permit issued in ZNA south of Barton Springs Road and the only new permit for a venue adjacent to single-family homes. This is also the same business that applied unsuccessfully for a late-hours permit last year (see *ZNews* April 2009).

In March, the City Council granted the OMV appeals of two neighborhood groups. ZNA's hearing date has not been set.

Lorraine Atherton

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If this photo had been taken a week earlier, the camera would have been drenched by the spray from passing cars.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3) with signs stating that bicycles may occupy an entire lane.

Poor drainage has always made the sidewalk south of La Casa impassable during and after rains, as cars would plow through the runoff along the curb and throw a wall of water across the sidewalk. An unexpected benefit of the new bike lanes is the elimination of these splash zones. Bike lanes, it turns out, provide just enough separation between cars and the sidewalk to make walking a lot more comfortable. That buffer zone also makes waiting at bus stops, such as the bench south of Barton Springs Road, much more tolerable and safer. This latest restriping was required by the repaving of South Lamar, and so these sidewalk improvements were essentially free. Conventional solutions to the splash zone problem would have required capital improvement projects to address the underlying drainage problem, to acquire additional right-of-way for the standard four-foot buffer strip, and to demolish and rebuild that part of the street—which brings us to the bond package that has been so much in the news this month.

Parks as part of the transportation solution

The Austin City Council is considering a transportation bond package to be placed on the November ballot, and you may be hearing from various advocacy groups asking you to support or oppose particular projects. If we are to rethink our relationship with the personal automobile, we will first need to calculate the true cost of our travel habits in terms of the entire city budget, not just a handful of massive street projects. For most of the last 10 years, the city of Austin has been spending Capital Metro money on expensive congestion management projects, mainly for the convenience of single-occupant vehicles. As a result, Austin's rate of vehicle miles traveled per person is among the highest in the country. The new bike lanes on South Lamar show how we can get more for less and also make it easier to get out of our cars, just by making smarter use of what we already have. Less obvious is how the ACL Music Festival has changed our transportation priorities.

Because of our proximity to and love for Zilker Park and Lady Bird Lake, our neighborhood has an unusual perspective in this regard. Since 2001, the promoters of the ACL Festival have been working with lakefront neighborhoods and the parks department to redefine how we take care of and value our parks. The parkland along the south bank of the lake has become one of the premier outdoor event venues in the country and a significant economic engine driving the tourist and music industry in Austin. At the same time, the festival has led the way in moving parking lots and cars out of the parks and providing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access to park



At Mary and S. Lamar, a typical pedestrian-friendly traffic sign blocks the sidewalk

events, again, changing the way we think about our cars.

Yet, when it comes time to set budget and bond priorities, city management still classifies our parks and their transportation infrastructure as frills, not worthy of full funding in good times or bad. Neighborhood and nonprofit groups are expected to fill in the gaps with bake-sale fundraising efforts. Now is the time to reset our priorities, walk the walk, or as Steve McGuire says, bike it.

This summer, please take a careful look at the transportation projects being considered for bond funding. You can find them on the City of Austin Web site, www.ci.austin.tx.us.

Rethink your transportation needs, and help our City Council navigate a new direction for Austin.

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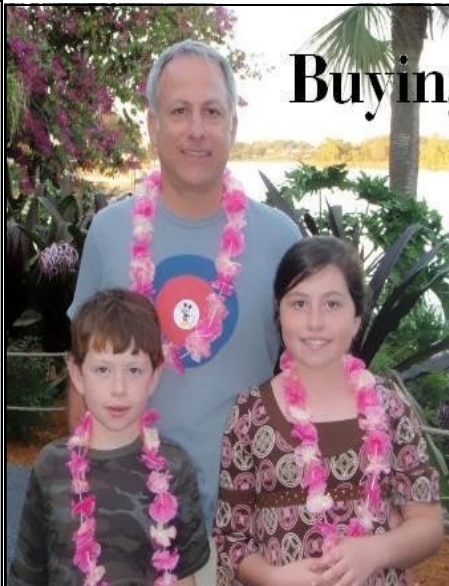
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Neighborhood Watch

To get involved with Neighborhood Watch and other crime prevention efforts, call Laura "Ole" Olesen at 663-5776 or ole@oleaustin.com. Also, watch the Zilker Yahoo group for further updates.

Go to www.Yahogroups.com and search for "Zilker," then click on "Join this group."



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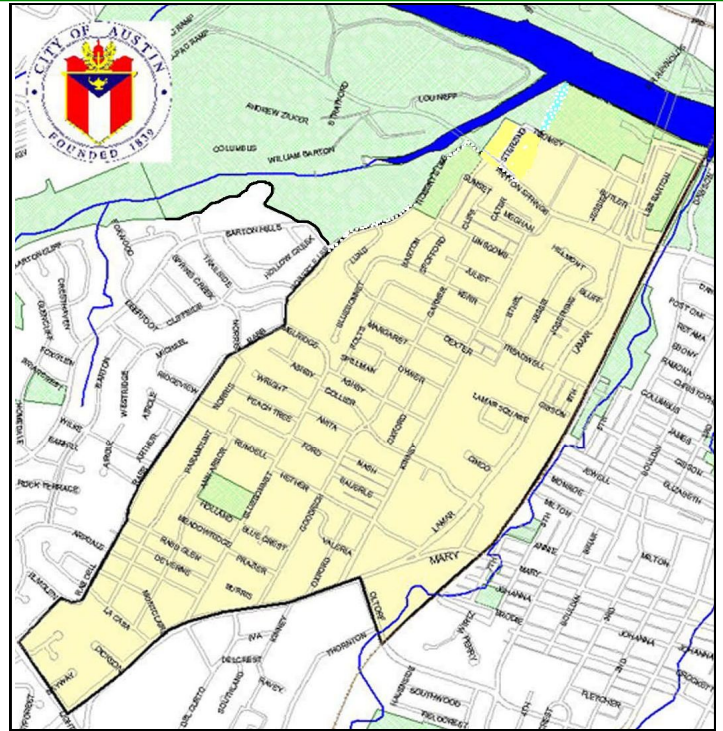
Time to Volunteer for ZNA

The Zilker Neighborhood Association will be nominating officers and committee chairs in September to serve in 2011. We will specifically be looking for vice presidents, delegates to the Austin Neighborhoods Council, and zoning and planning committee members, but we also welcome those who want to focus on a particular project. Would you like to organize a car-share program? Improve recycling programs for condo and apartment residents? Retrofit affordable housing for energy efficiency? Set up a community development corporation? Now is the time to think about what you can do for the neighborhood. Call Richard Gravois or any other executive committee members listed on the back of this newsletter, or e-mail ZilkerNA@austin.rr.com, or come to the **Watermelon Social on July 26**, to volunteer (or to nominate someone else).

Frequently asked questions:

How often does ZNA meet? Quarterly, in February, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School. The Executive Committee meets at 7-9 PM the first Monday of each month, usually at Artz Rib House, at South Lamar and Bluebonnet.

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 of residents through neighbor-to-neighbor discussions and circulation of 2800 newsletters.



The boundaries of ZNA include Zilker Park on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east. The southern boundary is Barton Skyway. The northern boundary is the lake.

How many members does ZNA have? As of February, 212 members had paid dues or would be eligible to vote as soon as they renewed.

Is Zilker@yahoo.com ZNA's official list serve? No, but the Yahoo group is a vital communication vehicle, with 667 members. All residents are welcome, whether they are ZNA members or not. (See Neighborhood Watch, page 7.)
I want to build something that does not comply

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.)

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Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Dues: _____ Contribution for ZNA general fund: _____

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

with city code. Will ZNA support my request for a variance? ZNA has a longstanding policy of not supporting variance requests if the applicant does not show a qualifying hardship unique to the property, as defined by the Board of Adjustment. ZNA encourages all neighbors to comply with city ordinances. 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 association's bylaws. The committee may consider the ZNA neighborhood planning survey conducted in 2004, the City of Austin neighborhood planning survey from 2005, specific ZNews surveys, 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 and City Council members.

For more information, including the ZNA bylaws, please visit the ZNA Web site at zilkerneighborhood.org.

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A Green, Safe, Pedestrian-Friendly ACL Festival

by Steve McGuire, ZNA Festival Representative

A recent *Austin Business Journal* article ranked Austin fourth in traffic congestion, although we currently are the fifteenth largest American city. Our population is expected to double in the next 20-25 years. If you have not been thinking about your relationship with the automobile, the time may be fast approaching to do so.

Many of the streets in the Zilker neighborhood were laid out in the early years of the twentieth century, when the entire population of Austin was less than the number of people attending the Austin City Limits Music Festival in one day. Most streets in our neighborhood are too narrow to accommodate parking on both sides plus two-way traffic.

The festival Web site (www.aclfestival.com) strongly encourages people to use Capital Metro or other alternative methods of transportation and not to drive and park in the neighborhoods adjacent to Zilker Park. Capital Metro will offer a free shuttle from Republic Square at Fourth Street and Guadalupe to Zilker Park. The producers of the festival place "No Event Parking" signs throughout our neighborhood, and they do so for good reasons.

Traffic congestion is at best unpleasant and at worst can lead to collisions, injuries, and slowed response by emergency vehicles. In the

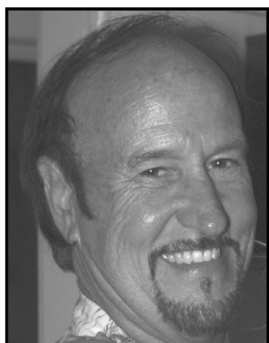
1980s, before Austin had serious traffic problems, I witnessed an attic fire destroy a house within a few minutes. Imagine a fire truck attempting to negotiate peak festival traffic through narrow streets.

This year, consider suggesting to your friends to bus it or bike it to the festival. The neighborhoods surrounding Zilker Park will breathe freer for it in more than one way. (See page 6.)

The Austin City Limits Music Festival will be October 8-10 this year.

These roads leading into the park area will close at midnight on Thursday, Oct. 8, and reopen midnight on Sunday, Oct. 10: Barton Springs Road at Robert E. Lee; Barton Springs Pool accessible via the Robert E. Lee entrance; MoPac frontage at Columbus Drive (no travel allowed into Zilker Park or Barton Springs Pool from this road); Stratford Drive at Nature Center Drive, near the canoe rental. Access into neighborhood is also usually restricted at Kinney and Virginia, at Sunset and Barton Springs Road, and at Lund and Rabb Road. ZNA has been working with city departments and C3 Promotions to ease traffic flow on Kinney.

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2010 Executive Committee of ZNA

Elected Officers:

President: Richard Gravois, 441-3430
1st VP: Bobby Rigney, 471-3758
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Secretary: Ryan Stryker, 431-4245
Treasurer: Andy Elder, 428-9180
Social Chair: Greg Shotwell, 797-4376
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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, 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.

Committee Chairs:

Holiday Family Program: Barbara Cossie, 447-4437
ZNews Advertising: Dave Piper, 916-9636
Parks and Environment: Gardner Sumner, 468-6200
Sound: Bill Neale, williamneale@hotmail.com
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