

Turn Around, Don't Drown

*City Council ignores flood warnings
Drives bonds into high water*

WHAT IS, AND IS NOT, included in Austin's November bond election will be the main topic of ZNA's next quarterly meeting, on July 25. Last month the Austin City Council voted 8-3 to place a \$720 million transportation bond proposal on the November 8 ballot. The Council will have to approve the specifics of the proposal and the ballot language by August 20. (See page 2 for a breakdown of the Mobility Bond proposal.)

On page 4, our District 5 Council Member Ann Kitchen touches on the reasons she and Council Members Delia Garza and Ora Houston voted against the proposal and asks for our views on the bond package.

The crux of the issue is whether Austin should tie up the city's borrowing capacity in road projects until the year 2024, without first addressing the need for drainage infrastructure and flood prevention. As Ken Jacob, a South Austin member of the Flood Mitigation Task Force, put it, "We've kicked the can too many times in the past. Let's commit to fixing the problems this time. This is all about public safety, human lives, and quality of life. Efforts thus far have been mainly to help those who have been flooded. More effort needs to be on detention to preclude the problem."

The task force has submitted a report and recommendations covering the entire city, but Ken has identified three main points:

1. The drainage system is badly outdated and in need of repairs. This is major and will require a long-term plan probably funded by bonds to solve it.
2. The increases in impervious cover, due to development and redevelopment along our waterways, need to be more tightly controlled to restrict additional flooding. The task force has recommended a moratorium until the new FEMA maps are released.
3. Onion Creek and the streams that feed it should be a priority to identify detention solutions.



Neighborhood volunteers recently installed this new rock-hop across West Bouldin Creek (see p. 3).
Photo by Ingrid Weigand

And yet, the City continues to approve floodplain variances and increased impervious cover upstream of problem areas.

Elloa Mathews, a task force member from District 9, notes that the buyouts in Onion Creek have already been funded, but prevention measures and repairs to the urban core infrastructure have not. The runoff and drainage problems common in urban neighborhoods like Zilker are called localized flooding (as opposed to waterway or creek flooding). They must be funded through bonds, and there is no discussion about this occurring at the Council level. Nevertheless, the City continues

to process and approve projects in areas like Thornton Road, along the West Bouldin Creek floodplain in the South Lamar corridor, adding impervious cover and density without adequate infrastructure. “This is what happens when infill development occurs without looking at the big picture—and whether there is adequate infrastructure to accommodate this infill,” says Elloa.

Throughout Austin’s history of urban planning, we have avoided the issues surrounding our promotion of growth and increased density without providing the infrastructure to support it. The Flood Mitigation Task Force has identified many of those unanswered questions, such as: Is the City legally liable for development-related flooding? How can we require developers to prove their projects won’t contribute to adverse flooding? What happens when a developer builds detention ponds that later fail? Why does the code allow redevelopment to occur without complying with the newer drainage criteria?

On June 15 the City’s Environmental Commission, which is charged with implementing the task force’s conclusions, recommended that the City Council approve the Watershed Protection Department’s FY17 budget and consider “a bond specifically to address funding for drainage infrastructure per the Flood Mitigation Task Force’s final report recommendation.”

Elloa and Ken have been invited to discuss some of these issues with ZNA members at our July 25 meeting.

For the report and recommendations, see <https://floodmitigationtaskforce.bloomfire.com>.

Proposed \$720 million Bond Package

(Property Tax Impact: 2.25 cents, estimated \$70/year on home value of \$250,000)

\$101 million

Regional Mobility Projects:

Loop 360 (Westlake Drive Intersection), Spicewood Springs Road, Oak Hill Parkway (Old Bee Caves Bridge), Anderson Mill, 620/2222, Parmer Lane

\$482 million

Corridor Improvement Projects:

North Lamar, Burnet Road, Riverside Drive, Airport Blvd, MLK/FM 969, and South Lamar (\$60 million for South Lamar Corridor Improvements Plan, and a South Austin corridor such as Slaughter Lane, Brodie Lane, Manchaca Rd, FM 1626, William Cannon, and South Congress) and preliminary engineering and design for additional critical arterials and corridors.

\$137 million

Local Mobility Projects:

\$55 million Sidewalk Master Plan, \$30 million Urban Trails Master Plan, \$20 million Bicycle Master Plan, \$15 million Vision Zero Master Plan, \$17 million substandard streets/capital renewal.

The Parkland Events Task Force (PETF) needs your input on events at Zilker Park and other City parks.

Please provide input online at: <https://austintexas.granicusideas.com/discussions/alternative-park-spaces-for-events>

For more info about PETF, visit <http://austintexas.gov/petf>

Thank you, David King, PETF Co-chair

Zilker Pint Night



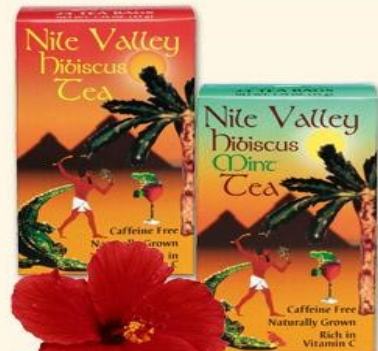
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Neighbors Connect with New Parks

by David King, ZNA President

THE ZNA PARKS and Environment Committee continues to work with the Austin Fire Department (AFD) to determine if city-owned land on Collier Street behind the fire station on Kinney Avenue can be used as a neighborhood pocket park or community garden.

The vacant lot is in a park-deficient area within walking distance of several nearby condominium and apartment complexes on Kinney, Collier, and South Lamar.

The Committee met at Twin Oaks Library last month to get input and ideas from neighbors and residents and will meet with representatives from AFD later this month.

ZNA parks volunteers are also working with the Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association on plans for a nature trail along West Bouldin Creek with connectivity to the Zilker neighborhood. The trail will facilitate neighborhood access to the West Bouldin Creek greenbelt west of the Union Pacific railroad tracks. Last month, neighborhood volunteers installed the new “rock hop” (see photo on page 1) on West Bouldin Creek to provide easier access to the nature trail.

In other parks news, Urban Patchwork is leading workdays for Jabo’s Garden at Zilker Elementary School this summer. To sign up, contact Martine Fedyszyn at mcfedy@gmail.com.

You can also get involved in parks and school sustainability projects through the Friends of Little Zilker Neighborhood Park or the PTA. Contact FLZP at littlezilker@gmail.com.



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Connecting with City Hall by Ann Kitchen, District 5 City Council Member

Zilker Neighbors,

We are well into summer and remain busy working on the proposed 2016 Mobility Bond, recommendations from our Flood Mitigation Task Force, and upcoming budget discussions.

As part of the **2016 Mobility Bond** conversation the City launched Mobility Talks, to learn about community priorities for improving Austin's transportation network. Results for District 5 are consistent with the citywide results. While 82% of D5 respondents currently drive alone most often, 40% would prefer to use public transportation more often, while others would prefer to bike (20%) or walk (10%), and only 18% prefer to drive alone. Congestion management options chosen were to increase public transport options (31%), add road capacity (21%), and strategies to reduce number of cars on the road (19%).

Recently the Council took the first step to place a \$720 million transportation bond package on the ballot for voters to consider this November. The next step will occur in August, when the Council is scheduled to vote on ballot language and supporting information that will serve as a "contract with the voters," specifying what improvements voters can expect from their investment.

I voted "no" at that time because I am not yet comfortable that the bond package balances the needs across the city, especially for South

and Southeast Austin. The August vote provides an opportunity to clarify funding allocations including for specific projects in South Austin. I am optimistic that my colleagues will support this effort and hope to be able to vote for the bond package in August. The package as initially proposed suggested significantly less funding for the South Lamar Corridor. That package also identified less funding for road improvements south of Ben White, particularly in the Southeast (D2).

I had proposed a \$500 million package as a better approach given tax impacts and the other pressing needs for funding we will have to face in 2018 (e.g., flood mitigation, transit options like rail, affordable housing, fire stations, parks, libraries, etc.). But there is no question that our transportation infrastructure needs significant funding and the voters will have the opportunity to decide how they want to invest their tax dollars.

Thank you to everyone who shared their opinions these past few weeks. Your perspective helped me understand the concerns of our district and South Austin and better represent your interests. As we get closer to August, I will need your help as Council Member Garza and I work to clarify the South/Southeast Austin projects specified in the bond package.

After many months of work, in coordination with the Watershed Protection Department (WPD), the **Flood Mitigation Task Force** presented its final report to Council and the Environmental Com-

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mission (EC). Recommendations addressed flooding impacts on property, public safety, and City finances and emphasized flood mitigation solutions and funding options.

The EC is forming a working group to work with Task Force members on implementation. Thank you to District 5 appointees Mary Ann Neely (EC) and Ken Jacob / Rollin McRae (Task Force).

The WPD proposed FY 2017 budget is expected to align with more immediate, impactful recommendations. More costly and complicated items will require longer term planning and funding.

I look forward to working with the EC, Task Force, and WPD on Task Force recommendations and have taken steps to implement ideas for Onion Creek Watershed.

Last, the City of Austin needs your **budget priorities** for the Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget through the new online interactive budget simulator. This tool allows participants to choose funding priorities for city services and shows in real time how those choices impact their combined annual tax and utility bill.

District 5 had the highest responses as of the first week of July. Please urge your neighbors to complete the survey so D5 is represented in the results!

The Budget Office is committed to making the City's budget as transparent and accessible as possible. You can learn about the City's budget by watching the City's Budget Basics video.

*Best regards,
Ann Kitchen*



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**Memo from Jim Duncan:
The Fallacy of Form-based
Affordability**

Jim Duncan chairs the Citizen Advisory Group for the City of Austin Code Next effort to rewrite city code. His comments quoted here on the Housing Affordability prescription paper, discussed at the July 11 meeting of the advisory group, are pertinent to Zilker's affordability issues. The Code Next process and prescriptions will be on the agenda of the July 25 ZNA general meeting.

AUSTIN HAS PRODUCED MANY PLANS, policies, studies, surveys, audits, and reports that address housing. To inform our current discussions, the housing provisions in two of the most relevant of these documents are *Imagine Austin* (pages 28-30 and 135-139) and *Land Development Code Diagnosis* (pages 54-61).

In order to improve housing affordability in Austin, it is generally agreed that at least three major code components need to be reexamined and revised. These are our zoning use districts (to accommodate more "missing middle" housing), off-street parking regulations (to reflect more modern means of mobility), and density bonus programs (to produce more dispersed affordable housing).

To be successful in this effort, "affordability" and "sustainability" have to be our guiding goals. In the past, Austin's land use policies have been more market-driven, with "profitability" given priority over "affordability." Entitlement attorneys and developers promised that, by increasing densities, housing supply would go up and housing prices would go down. In retrospect, they were half right!

There are many good ideas in the "prescription" paper, but there also seems to be a mistaken belief on the part of staff that form-based coding can and will decrease the cost of housing. Nineteen

Current Land Use Cases in Zilker

615 S. Lamar: Neighbors on Josephine are organizing to restrict outdoor amplified sound related to a late-hours alcohol permit at a new event venue (12,900 square feet) with a rooftop patio. Planning Commission hearing July 12.

1400 block of West Oltorf : Rezoning for a new office and restaurant project connected with Olivia's on S. Lamar. Includes agreements with ZNA to protect trees and the West Bouldin Creek floodplain and restrictions on late-hour alcohol sales and outdoor amplified music. Planning Commission hearing July 12.

See hearing backup materials on the City of Austin web site (austintexas.gov).

Site plan applications for office buildings have been filed at two landmark restaurant locations, the old Artz Rib House site at **2330 S. Lamar** and La Feria at **2010 S. Lamar**. No hearings necessary.

ZNA Zoning Committee

times, form-based coding is given as a primary solution. It reminds me of the father in the film "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," who was obsessed with the curative powers of Windex.

While form-based coding has many pluses, creating and preserving affordable housing is not one of them. A quick Google search shows that form-based coding tends to actually increase housing costs, engender gentrification, and widen the affordability gap.

Links to the works cited, including the Google search, can be found on the ZNA website (zilkerneighborhood.org). For more information on Code Next, see www.austintexas.gov/codenext.

The Editor

BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. (Map on page 7.)

Nonresident property owners are not eligible for membership.

Annual dues are \$7 per person. Please list each member's name and e-mail address below.

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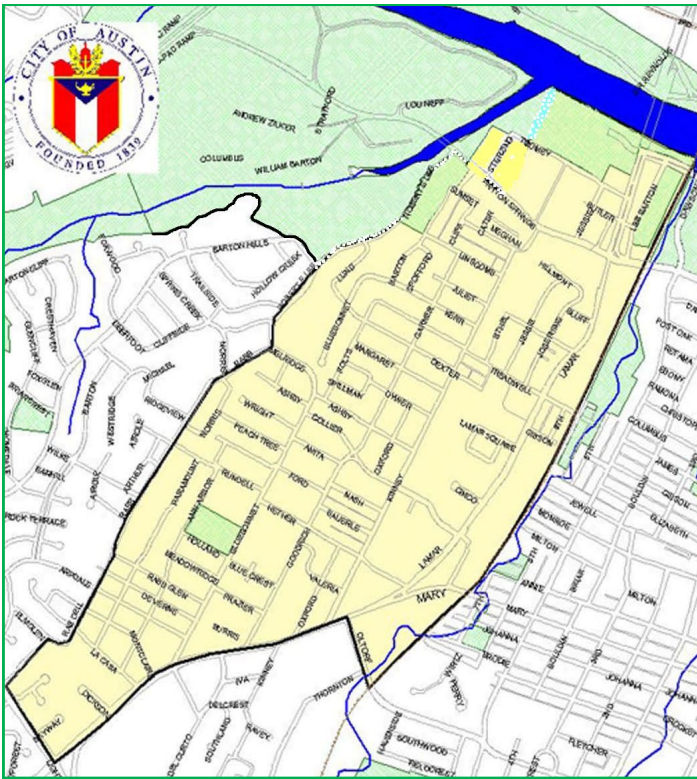
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Please make checks payable to Zilker Neighborhood Association and mail with this form to:

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or bring this form with you to the next ZNA meeting

Or visit zilkerneighborhood.org to join online



The boundaries of the Zilker Neighborhood Association include Zilker Park and Rabb Road on the west and extend to the railroad tracks on the east, Barton Skyway on the south, and Lady Bird Lake on the north. Residents on both sides of boundary streets are eligible for membership in ZNA.

ZNA is within City Council District 5. It contains voting precincts 332 (west of Kinney), 340 (east of Kinney), and a portion of 342.

For ZNA bylaws and other information, visit zilkerneighborhood.org.

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the Zilker Neighborhood
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Transportation Bonds (page 2), Flood Mitigation (page 1), Code Next Prescriptions (page 6)

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