



Newsletter of the
Zilker Neighborhood
Association

JANUARY 2017

Austin, Texas
Established 1981

When Code Changes Meet Neighborhood Character

A message from ZNA President Jeff Jack

THE ZILKER NEIGHBORHOOD certainly fits the old adage, “There is nothing constant but change.” Having lived here over 32 years, I have seen a lot of change in our neighborhood. Most of it has been incremental, almost organic, in that it reflects the changing circumstances of residents and local businesses. Houses are remodeled as children are born and grow up; a successful business moves down the road to a larger location, and a new business converts the old space to a new use. All very compatible with the character of our neighborhood. But in recent years, the pace of change has accelerated, responding to the external dynamics that have come with Austin’s growth.

This is plainly seen in our residential areas, where in the last year, older homes have been demolished in almost every block to make way for new construction. Much of this is driven by economic speculation. Thirty years ago, when Zilker was a backwater in south Austin, on the wrong side of the (Continued on page 9)

ZNA General Meeting January 30

Monday 6:30-8:30 PM

at

Zilker Elementary School

1900 Bluebonnet



Travis Chief Appraiser Marya Crigler on
residential appraisal changes
Council Member Ann Kitchen on CodeNext
Priority Sidewalk update
City Entertainment License proposal
Goodrich Place public housing redevelopment
Other Zoning and Land Use updates
AISD bond election update



Newcomers, homeowners, renters,
business neighbors

❖ ❖ **All Welcome** ❖ ❖

“It’s now or never, again”

25 years of saving our Zilker springs

by Bill Bunch, Executive Director, Save Our Springs Alliance

RIGHT HERE IN ZILKER WE ARE BLESSED with a natural wonder of global significance: Barton Springs, the fourth largest in Texas, home to two endangered aquatic salamanders, sourced by a cave-forming, karstic limestone aquifer more vulnerable to pollution than any other aquifer in Texas. The capital was located here in large part because Barton Springs provided a reliable source of drinking water. Quite literally, we are here because the springs are here. They save us in the heat of August.

More than half a million locals and tourists every year enjoy swimming and snorkeling in, and sunbathing beside, Barton’s cold clear waters, sharing the waters with largemouth bass, blue gill, cormorants, ducks, kingfishers, the (Continued on page 6)

Inside this issue:

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School Yard Updates: NO NEW TRANSFERS AT ZILKER ELEMENTARY

From the Principal's Desk:

ZILKER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL is frozen to new student transfers for the next school year.

What does this mean?

According to AISD Board Policy, we will not be accepting any new transfers for kindergarten-5th grade* for 2017-2018. Priority transfers (sibling and majority-to-minority) will not be approved, nor will any other general transfers.

Why is Zilker Elementary frozen to new transfers?

AISD Student Services and associate superintendents reviewed all schools' enrollment and capacity at the end of the first six weeks of this school year. At the elementary level, any school that was over 115% capacity was placed on the frozen list. Zilker was at 122% capacity at that time. This is part of the AISD Board of Trustees' attempt to address overcrowding issues at schools throughout the district.

If families wish to go ahead and apply for transfers, they may do so. Upon denial of these transfers, families may follow the district's regular appeal process.

*Randall W. Thomson
Principal, Zilker Elementary School*

* NOTE: Pre-kindergarten transfers are not part of this policy and will be handled differently in collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood Education.

From *zilkerelem.org*, Dec. 29, 2016

Jabo's Garden has been approved as a Garden to Café provider by AISD Food Services. On Wednesday, December 14, we made our first contribution to the cafeteria. Our excellent cafeteria staff worked hard to prepare our mixed greens into a beautiful salad.

Jabo's Garden is one of only two school gardens in the district approved to be a food provider for a school cafeteria. We are so excited about this program and are planning for many more contributions in the new year.

This has been a big year for Jabo's Garden. This fall Ms. Lauren Maples of the non-profit PEAS began providing guided garden lessons. Now every Zilker student receives an outdoor garden lesson every month. We of course could not do this without the generous support of our families, volunteers, and PTA. We also owe a huge debt of thanks to the Odd Duck restaurant for their continuing support.

You, too, can help at Jabo's Garden

The Zilker PTA's Sustainability Committee has scheduled workdays in Jabo's Garden on February 2 and 16, March 2 and 23, and April 6 and 20, at 2-4 PM.

To sign up, contact Martine Fedyszyn at mcfedy@gmail.com. Look for updates on the school's web site, zilkerelem.org. Please stop in at the front office to check in if you are on campus during school hours (until 2:57 PM).



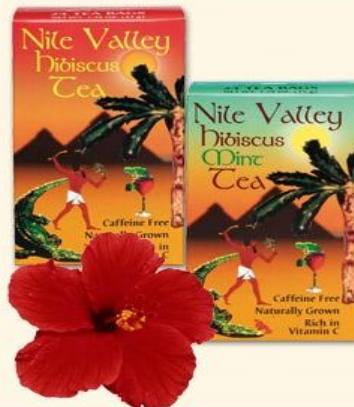
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Help Celebrate 10 Years of Tree Planting at Little Zilker Park

WHAT'S MISSING in the photo on the right? Here's a hint: The photo was taken a few hours after a thunderstorm dumped about an inch of rain on Little Zilker Park.

Regular park users will notice that there are no piles of gravel covering the sidewalk at the bottom of the ramp. Yes, 10 years after ZNA secured parks funding from a Rolling Stones concert in Zilker Park, the Bluebonnet entry to our neighborhood park and school playground has been revamped, and it works! The new entry makes more room for people near the playscape, protects the playscape from storm runoff, reduces pavement over the tree root zone, and adds a landing and seating area.

The concept started back in 2007, when ZNA and the Zilker Elementary PTA joined forces to



Little Zilker Park Bluebonnet entry, Jan. 13, 2017

create a master plan for the park and school campus and established the Friends of Little Zilker Park to implement it. The entry project is the last major element to be completed from that master plan. It was funded by ZNA and the City of Austin through the Neighborhood Partnering Program and designed and managed by Charles Mabry of the Austin Parks Department.

Now that the hardscape is in place, FLZP will be organizing several volunteer events to complete the new entry landscape, beginning with It's My Park Day on March 4.

For the last 10 years, whenever there was an opportunity to plant or protect a tree, ZNA turned to Gardner Sumner, the chair of our Parks and Environment Committee. So, to celebrate this turning point in the history of our neighborhood park, the ZNA Executive Committee will recognize Gardner's dedication to Zilker's parks with, you guessed it, another tree planting. To help with these events, contact littlezilker@gmail.com.

The March 4 event will be coordinated with *(Continued on page 5)*



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This Year, Neighbors Resolve to Restore South Zilker Park ***by Gail Rothe, ZNA Parks Committee***

TWO SMALL CREEKS, Robert E. Lee (REL) Tributary and Old Little Zilker (OLZ) Channel, are located in “South” Zilker Park, the part of the park bordered by Robert E. Lee Road and Barton Hills Drive. Since 2014, a group of neighbors, now called Friends of South Zilker Park, has been supporting a City grow zone project here. Our successes in 2016 include:

- Ragweed removed from the detention pond, followed by intensive planting with hundreds of native plants to displace the ragweed.
- 600 native grass plants purchased with a grant from Austin Parks Foundation, planted between the sidewalk and creek to outcompete ragweed.
- Limestone rocks placed to protect a heritage pecan tree.
- Fence constructed along park side of REL Tributary to protect vegetation on the creek bank.
- Hundreds of invasive plants removed.
- More than 50 species of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers planted or seeded.
- Numerous bags of trash collected.
- Keep Austin Beautiful annual award presented in November 2016.

Thanks to City of Austin Parks and Recreation and Watershed Protection departments, Texas Conservation Corps, Keep Austin Beautiful, Austin Parks Foundation, ZNA, Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, and the many volunteers who have worked to restore and beautify our parkland.

Friends of South Zilker Park 2017 Workdays

The following workdays, all Saturdays, are opportunities for neighbors in Zilker and Barton Hills to continue the efforts to restore and beautify these creeks, by planting native plants, removing invasive species, and cleaning up trash.

February 18: monthly workday

March 4: It’s My Park Day (Austin Parks Foundation)

April 8: Clean Sweep Day (Keep Austin Beautiful)

Time: 9–11:30 AM each day, but any amount of time you can volunteer is appreciated

Meet in the parking lot near south entrance to Barton Springs Pool

Bring a water bottle and wear a hat, closed shoes, long pants and long sleeves

Tools, clean-up supplies, and gloves will be provided.

Children 13 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Contact: Gail Rothe, grothe@austin.rr.com, 512-659-7955
(See page 7 for more volunteer action near the pool.)

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(Continued from page 3) a workday hosted by the PTA Sustainability Committee, on the school side of the Zilker Elementary School campus. Any interested neighbors are welcome to come and join the effort. The current plan is to focus on a group of raised beds by the portables to weed and replant with native plants.



Gardner Sumner explains the fine points of tree mulching. FLZP 2009

Support the Friends of Little Zilker Park. Help refurbish the park entry and plant more trees. Contact FLZP@yahoo.com or littlezilker@gmail.com to keep up with park projects, planning, and events. Or donate to the Friends of Little Zilker Park through the Austin Parks Foundation. Visit austinparks.org/sfaform/support-little-zilker-neighborhood-park/

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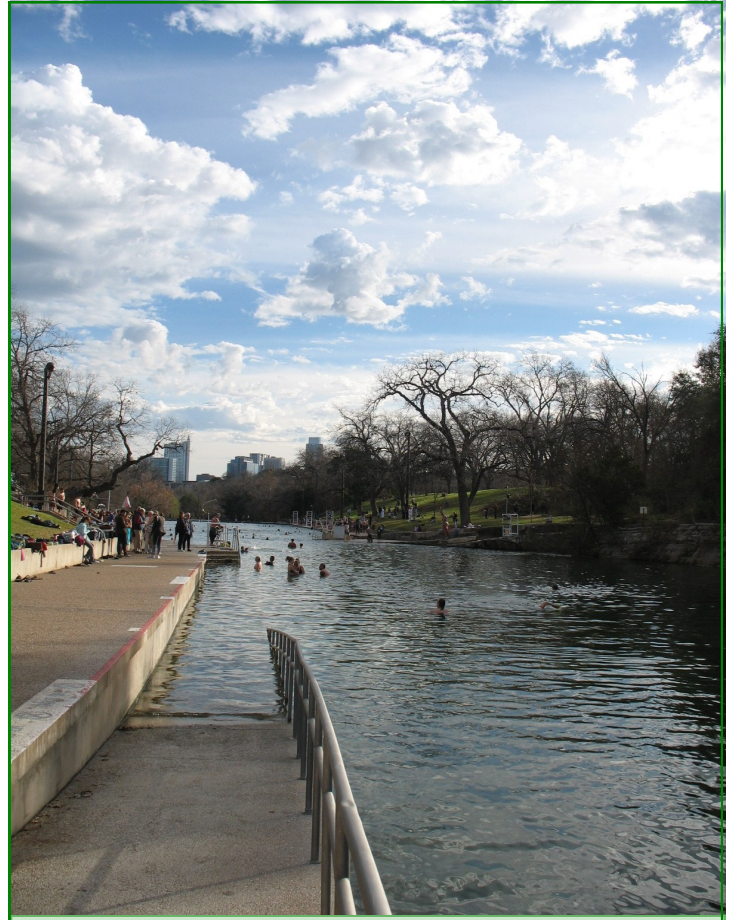
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(Continued from page 1) mysterious salamanders and river eels, and many other native species.

Since the 1970s Zilker and Barton Hills residents, and the Zilker Neighborhood Association, have played leading roles in protecting our home springs from paving, pollution, and pumping driven to increasing levels by urban growth marching south and west over the watersheds that feed Hill Country rains into the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer. At the top of the list: Zilker resident Shudde Fath, who turns 101 this month, has been a leader in efforts by the Save Barton Creek Association, the Save Our Springs Alliance, and ZNA to keep Barton Springs clean and flowing since the 1970s.

This year is a landmark and potential turning point in our community campaign to save our springs. Twenty-five years ago this August, Austin voters cast their ballots by a two-to-one margin in favor of the citizen-initiated Save Our Springs ordinance. Developers and the Chamber of Commerce spent vast sums opposing the ordinance, insisting that it would chase away employers and jobs. Since the SOS ordinance passed, our economy has boomed. The Texas Supreme Court upheld the ordinance as valid, but developers won grandfathering legislation (signed by then-Governor Bush) that has exempted much of the development that has occurred in the Barton Springs watershed since 1992.

Austin's SOS movement didn't rest with



Barton Springs Pool, on New Year's Day, minutes before crowds of swimmers dive into 2017. Photo by L. Atherton

the ordinance. We won "endangered" status for the Barton Springs and Austin Blind salamanders. Since 1992, we pushed for and won Austin voter approval for City bonds to permanently pro-

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photo by alison narro

tect more than 30,000 acres of Barton Springs watershed land.

This year we need our City officials to commit more funds to buy more land before it's too late: it's far cheaper to save the Barton Springs watershed than pave it with billion-dollar toll road expansions intended to serve sprawl development that will further pollute our springs. We need our elected officials to stand with ZNA, SOS, and the Keep MoPac Local coalition and stop the conversion of MoPac into a second Interstate 35 through Austin. Hyper-growth threatens not only Barton Springs but also much of what we love the most about Austin, including our ability to afford to live here.

If you have been a part of saving our springs, thank you! If you have yet to join in, please do so now by joining the Zilker Neighborhood Association and the SOS Alliance. Donations to the SOS Alliance are tax-deductible and support SOSA's work to protect Barton Springs with scientists, lawyers, educators, and citizen action. Stay informed and engaged by signing up for the SOS email news list at SOSAlliance.org. Check out our website for the highlights from 2016. Commit to lending your voice at key meetings and with email messages to officials. Volunteer when asked. It takes a community to save a community spring. If we don't do it, no one will. And, as Austin songwriter Bill Oliver tells us, "It's now or never, again."

Bill Bunch, ZNA member and Executive Director, Save Our Springs Alliance

This Year, Resolve to Restore the Pool

ESTABLISHED IN 2006, the Friends of Barton Springs Pool is an all-volunteer organization that creates a community of people to restore the Pool to its rightful glory.

Volunteering to help with pool cleanings is a great way to learn more about the Pool. On the first Thursday of the month from March to October, FBSP volunteers scrub rocks, vacuum the pool bottom, clean algae off steps and railings, skim algae off the pool surface, plant flowers and help maintain the pool grounds, paint benches and trim, and generally lend a hand to make the pool and grounds as clean and beautiful as possible.

Pool cleanings are usually organized in three two-hour shifts. Three to ten volunteers per shift work with experienced volunteer shift leaders. To sign up for a pool cleaning, go to the FBSP web site friendsofbartonspringpool.org or send an email to president@friendsofbartonspringpool.org.

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The Zilker Elves Deliver Again!

by Harmony Grogan, ZNA Holiday Families Program Coordinator

LAST MONTH THE ZILKER HOLIDAY FAMILIES Program once again provided gifts to ten families with children who attend Zilker Elementary School. Since 1999, Zilker neighbors have given generously to those who need assistance for the holidays, and in 2016, a record number

of you contributed. The program would not exist without the help of our Zilker Elves, volunteers who give their time and energy to shop, wrap, and deliver presents to the families themselves.

Thank you all for making this a very special holiday for so many families!



Thank you to these neighbors for their support as donors or volunteers for the Zilker Holiday Families Program in 2016. Please know your donations were received with smiles and delight.

- | | | | |
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BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. (Map on page 9.)
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.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Dues amount: _____ Additional contribution: _____ Total Enclosed: _____

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

ZNA Memberships, 2009 Arpdale St, Austin, TX 78704

or bring this form with you to the next ZNA meeting

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

**First Tuesday Happy Hours
by Pat Cramer, ZNA Social Chair**

GREETINGS, ZILKERITES!

Interested in visiting venues in Zilker and meeting some neighbors?

As your new ZNA Social Chair I'm proposing a first Tuesday happy hour get-together for Zilker residents at a different place each month, beginning with the Cantine in Lamar Union on Tuesday, February 7. Here's the lineup so far:

February 7, 5-7 pm:
Cantine, 1100 S. Lamar (by the Alamo), parking in their garage.
1/2 off beer, wine, and pizza

March 7, 5-7 pm:
Irie Bean, 2310 S. Lamar.
\$1 off beers

April 4, 5-7 pm:
Maudie's, 1212 S. Lamar.
Happy Hour prices on beverages and some appetizers

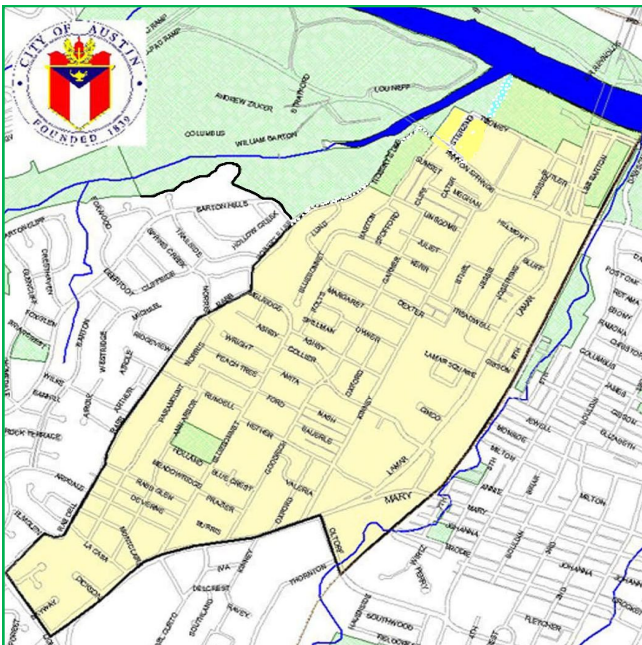
Other neighborhood venues will be explored as the year progresses. Look for updates on the ZNA web site, zilkerneighborhood.org, and on the Yahoo group zilker@yahoo.com.

Or email me directly at patcramer42@yahoo.com.

(Continued from page 1) tracks and the laidback side of the river, investors began to see our location—close to downtown, next to Zilker Park, and convenient to other “urban amenities”—as immensely desirable for financial speculation; they brought a corresponding drive to maximize return on investment through construction of upscale new homes.

Change has also accelerated in our commercial areas. In the 1980s, most were zoned Commercial Services (CS), allowing 60-foot-tall buildings, but they were already occupied by one- or two-story buildings, so higher-density development did not seem economically feasible. When Austin’s economic growth took off, this dormant zoning opportunity came alive. It presented a major problem for nearby residential property owners, who were not expecting a commercial building to loom 60 feet over their back yard. To reduce the intrusion of new development on residences, the city adopted “compatibility standards,” requiring commercial structures to step back and step down to provide a reasonable transition between full-blown commercial use of the CS entitlements and adjacent homes.

Other zoning regulations have been changed to allow for greater development. In Zilker, the Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) ordinance has had a monumental effect, seen in new apartment and condo projects such as Lamar Union and the Hanover, as well as an increase in other types of multistory construction. All told, more than 3,600 multifamily housing units have been added to our neighborhood in the



ZNA includes Zilker Park and Rabb Road on the west and extends to the railroad on the east, Barton Skyway on the south, and Lady Bird Lake on the north. Residents on both sides of boundary streets may join ZNA.

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last 10 years. The mixed-use development has impacted existing residential areas with major changes in traffic patterns, noise, and parking problems, all affecting the character of our neighborhood and our quality of life. The Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations may also change the neighborhood's character. One intent of these zoning changes is to increase the housing supply to address the growing affordability crisis in the city. The verdict is still out on whether such changes can actually affect affordability in a hot market like Austin.

While these regulations have influenced the character and quality of life in Zilker, coming down the road are more zoning changes that could have much greater effects. City staff have been working on a complete rewrite of Austin's Land Development Code (LDC) that may change significantly what is allowed to be built in Zilker, both in residential areas and along our commercial corridors. Called CodeNEXT, the first draft will be released for public review on Jan. 30, 2017. ZNA committees are preparing a plan to analyze the new code's effect on Zilker and to make sure Zilker residents are engaged in the extensive public review process. Find out more at our next quarterly meeting, on Monday, Jan. 30, at 6:30 PM, at Zilker Elementary School.

Taken together, the code rewrite and the Mobility bond programs could significantly change the character of Zilker. Fortunately, the

Austin Neighborhoods Council has been monitoring both processes and has presented to the City Council and the Mayor an outline of concerns about their impact on our urban core neighborhoods. In response, the Mayor has issued the following policy statements:

"We must consider each neighborhood's context, character, shape, and size, as well as input from affected neighborhoods, to determine appropriate transition rules [transitions between commercial and residential development]."

"I oppose changes through CodeNEXT that would result in elimination of current single family zoning outside of the areas of transition in single family neighborhoods, without sufficient notice, input, and *consent* of affected neighborhoods." [Emphasis added.]

The Mayor further states, "I am committed to protecting neighborhood character for all Austinites."

If we can rely on the Mayor's statements to ANC, and he has the support of the other council members, the question for ZNA is, just how much more change can we accept such that we maintain the character of the Zilker neighborhood?

ZNA has invited Ann Kitchen, our District 5 City Council member, to discuss this and other questions at our general meeting on January 30. We hope all our Zilker neighbors will join in the discussion.

*Your neighbor,
Jeff Jack*



Zilker is in City Council District 5,
represented by

Council Member ANN KITCHEN
Contact district5@austintexas.gov

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DONNA TIEMANN, Chief of Staff;

donna.tiemann@austintexas.gov

KEN CRAIG, Senior policy advisor;

ken.craig@austintexas.gov

JASON LOPEZ, Policy advisor;

jason.lopez@austintexas.gov

AT THE JANUARY 30 general meeting, the **ZNA Zoning Committee** will be reporting on two recent cases: a driveway variance for a new office building at Hether and South Lamar and the removal of two Heritage trees for a new hotel on Jessie. These are the latest among more than 100 projects we have reviewed in the last year.


The Zoning Committee reviews building permit applications, both commercial and residential, in the neighborhood. Austin's current land development code (LDC) is complex and open to interpretation in some areas. The City processes thousands of construction applications each year, and unfortunately, many emerge with significant code violations.

During the building boom of the last 10 years, problems such as flooding from adjacent lots, congested parking, snarled or cut-thru traffic, outdoor music near established residences, and other issues rose dramatically as Zilker's population jumped and the size of projects increased. The Zoning Committee attempts to keep size and usage of residential and commercial development within legal limits, as defined by the LDC.

When size and use are allowed to expand unchallenged, they set precedents that can become accepted practices incorporated into the LDC. It's critical to monitor and challenge such deviations at an early stage, ideally before construction starts. The Zoning Committee constantly works with developers before plans are finalized and ground is broken.


We hope to incorporate some of the lessons we have learned into our recommendations for future code revisions.

David Piper
ZNA Vice President




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11am - Worship

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**2017 Executive Committee of
the Zilker Neighborhood
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2nd Vice President: Bobby Rigney

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Lorraine Atherton

Other executive members:

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Gardner Sumner

Zoning and Code Chair:

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About the Zilker Neighborhood Association

ZNA holds quarterly meetings on the last Monday of January, April, July, and October, at Zilker Elementary School, 1900 Bluebonnet Lane. The Executive Committee meets at the Umlauf Museum, 605 Robert E. Lee Road, 7 PM the first Monday of most months. 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.

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