



Newsletter of the
Zilker Neighborhood
Association

APRIL 2018

Austin, Texas
Established 1981

Winding Down CodeNext

A Message from ZNA President Dave Piper

THE END OF THE CODENEXT PROCESS is upon us, with public hearings scheduled to begin April 28 on 1,500 pages of unfinished land development regulations. The process has been rushed and chaotic, despite dragging on for years. The disturbing aspects of CodeNext3 are too numerous to list in this newsletter. For a sampling, visit the ZNA website at zilkerneighborhood.org or browse the last nine issues of *ZNews*.

After reviewing all three versions of CodeNext, the ZNA Zoning Committee wanted to get our foot in the door of the rushed approval process, so we developed a draft proposal for residential zoning summarized here (on page 4) and posted on the ZNA website. It reduces a small part of CodeNext3 from 60 pages to 3 pages. In a nutshell, our proposal limits the size and scale of new residential construction; remodels can go up in height or spread outward from the original footprint, but not both. The ZNA proposal retains existing parking requirements, except that most houses can go from two parking spaces to one if there is a contiguous sidewalk to South Lamar or Barton Springs Road.

Few people have the time or background to wade through this stuff, but if you are so inclined, please compare the ZNA proposal with what the City offers. On the ZNA website you'll find links to CodeNext drafts, maps and data specific to Zilker, ZNA responses, and special editions of *ZNews*. The City's CodeNext website allows comments, and I am told that they are actually read. Comments can also be sent to our City Council rep, Ann Kitchen.

As always, ZNA welcomes questions and comments at zilkerneighborhood@gmail.com.

Your neighbor, Dave Piper

Editor's note: *Ashton Green on Kinney, with 63 townhouses built in 1983, is targeted for commercial redevelopment in a mixed-use zoning district under version 3 of CodeNext. Keep that in mind as you read the analysis from the ZNA Zoning Committee, beginning on page 4.*

ZNA General Meeting

April 30

Monday 6:30-8:30 PM

at Zilker Elementary School
1900 Bluebonnet



Updates on CodeNext (page 4)
Variance for Pathways
at Goodrich Place (page 3)

ZNA Bylaws Amendments (page 3)



Newcomers, homeowners, renters,
business neighbors

❖ ❖ **All Welcome** ❖ ❖

YES YOU CAN VOTE
in the District 21
Runoff Elections



Both the Democratic and Republican primaries for Zilker's Representative in Congress resulted in runoffs.

On **May 22**, Democrats will choose between Mary Street Wilson and Joseph Kopser, while Republicans can vote for Chip Roy or Matt McCall.

If you did not vote in March, you can still vote in one of the runoffs.

Just be sure that you are registered to vote in precinct 332, 340, or 342 before **April 23**. If you changed your address recently, check your registration at traviscountyelections.org or 512-238-VOTE.

Early voting begins May 14.

**Volunteer for a springtime boost
in Little Zilker Park on April 28**

GIVE LITTLE ZILKER PARK a boost on April 28! The flowering trees and shrubs that the Friends of Little Zilker Park (FLZP) planted last year around the new Bluebonnet entrance to our neighborhood park made it through the hard freezes, and now they need a little care and attention to prepare for the summer. So join your neighbors at the playscape next to Zilker Elementary on Bluebonnet, on Saturday, April 28, at 9 AM, for a Spring work day.

Some of the tree wells need to be cleared of bermuda grass and lightly mulched. Other tasks may include replacing gravel and planting groundcover in eroded spots. Depending on how much it rains between now and then, we may be giving the new trees a good long drink.

Despite the name, these work days are fun for the whole family and a great way to visit with neighbors and school friends. Bring work gloves, shovels, rakes, wheelbarrows, and other useful implements. Be sure to wear a hat and bring your own water bottle and coffee mug. *RSVP to Gina Diehl at littlezilker@gmail.com*

To volunteer in Zilker's neighborhood parks, contact the **Friends of Little Zilker Park** at FLZP@yahoo.com or littlezilker@gmail.com. Or contact Gail Rothe, ZNA's parks chair, at grothe@austin.rr.com.

2018

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On the ZNA Agenda April 30

Goodrich Place Variance

The Housing Authority of the City of Austin has asked ZNA to support a variance for a new 120-unit apartment building between Bluebonnet and Goodrich. Called Pathways at Goodrich Place, the project was first presented to the ZNA membership in January 2017. It was designed to replace 40 existing duplex and fourplex units with modern apartments, using a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. The variance would reduce the site area per dwelling for 76 apartments with two or more bedrooms (an FAR increase of 15,200 square feet). Details of the project and the variance request will be posted on the ZNA website and presented at the general meeting on April 30 for review and a possible vote.

ZNA Bylaws Amendments

Proposed amendments to the ZNA bylaws have been posted on the Calendar page of the ZNA website at zilkerneighborhood.org. As required by the bylaws, the amendments will be presented at the April 30 meeting but will not be voted on until the following meeting, in July.



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Zoning Zilker from the Ground Up

Grassroots Priorities and CodeNext

BEFORE GLOBAL WARMING became a hot topic, environmental protection was a grassroots movement in the Zilker neighborhood. The Memorial Day flood in 1981 focused attention on watershed protection and its role in land development regulations. Since then, Zilker residents have been leaders in planning initiatives and environmental causes, like the Save Our Springs (SOS) movement. The neighborhood has been built out under the 1984 code, the SOS ordinance of the 1990s, the 2006 McMansion ordinance, and the 2008 Vertical Mixed Use overlay. Like so many urban neighborhoods, Zilker is already dealing with more than its share of Austin’s growth. At the same time, the lax administration of the Land Development Code has allowed loopholes to accumulate and gaps in infrastructure to widen.

Those problems led the ZNA Zoning Committee to propose a simpler approach to residential zoning, summarized here.

Zilker’s Baseline Data

Density: ZNA’s density ranking, based on 2010 Census data, was 28th out of 103 Neighborhood Reporting Areas. That means, with 7.7 persons per acre (ppa) living in 4.8 housing units per acre, Zilker was more dense than Downtown Austin (44th, with 6.8 ppa) and more than twice as dense as the widely touted Mueller area (77th, with only 2.8 ppa). The densest neighborhood in Austin in 2010 was West University, with 35 ppa. Recent counts indicate that the Zilker area may have added more than 3,000 housing units to those reported in 2010, increasing the total from 3,652 to about 6,900. At that rate, Zilker could soon have

Site Development Standards for Urban House-scale Zone

New Construction		Number of Dwelling Units ¹		
		1	2	3 or more
Lot size	Min site area	5,750 sf	7,000 sf	10,000 sf
	Min lot width	50 feet		
Max impervious cover ²		35%		
Height ³	Overall max height	32 feet		35 feet
	Max to top plate	22 feet		32 feet
Building placement ⁴	min front setback	25 feet		varies, depending on form
	min side street setback	15 feet		
	min side setback	5 feet		
	min rear setback	10 feet		
Required parking	parking spaces per dwelling	2		
	on sites ⁵ with uninterrupted sidewalks to a major corridor	1		
Existing Structure, Remodeling Within Existing Footprint		Number of Dwelling Units ¹		
Lot size	Min site area	3,500 sf		
	Min lot width	?		
Max impervious cover ²		45%		
Height ³	Overall max height	32 ft		35 ft
	Max to top plate	22 ft		32 ft
Existing Structure, Additions to Existing Footprint		Number of Dwelling Units ¹		
Lot size	Min site area	3,500 sf		
	Min lot width	?		
Max impervious cover ² (Must maintain existing height; impervious cover cannot increase outside building footprint)		45%		
Height of addition	Max overall	24 ft		
	Max to top plate	14 ft		
Building placement ⁴ and parking ⁵ requirements are the same as New Construction				

This table lists the dimensions of a simplified residential zoning district proposed by the ZNA Zoning Committee. Code language and other details, including the footnotes to this table, have been posted on the CodeNext page of the ZNA website at zilkerneighborhood.org.

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10 dwellings/acre and 20 ppa. The question now is: Can Zilker's watersheds and infrastructure support that target density?

Impervious Cover: Last November, the Watershed Protection Department analyzed impervious cover across Austin. Take for example West Bouldin Creek, one of Zilker's watersheds; the City analysis estimates that existing impervious cover is 47.4%, current code would allow build-out to 62.4%, and CodeNext would allow 61.5%. In other words, impervious cover across the West Bouldin Creek watershed could increase more than 30%, with or without CodeNext.

Trees: A June 2006 list of tree canopy percentages placed Zilker sixth among neighborhoods, but it indicated that our tree coverage has declined from close to 50% to less than 45%. The current code and CodeNext all allow unsupportable increases in impervious cover, at the same time promoting the destruction of the urban tree canopy.

To mitigate the heat island effect and keep Zilker a healthy place to live, the ZNA Executive Committee would like to see those trends reversed. We hope that Austin will seek to decrease impervious cover to

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less than 45% and increase the tree canopy to cover more than 50% of the city.

Zilker's Residential Dimensions

Inspired by a suggestion from the City's Planning Commission, the ZNA Zoning Committee drafted the table on page 4 to replace the McMansion ordinance and consolidate seven of the current code's residential districts and eleven CodeNext zones into one simplified zoning district.

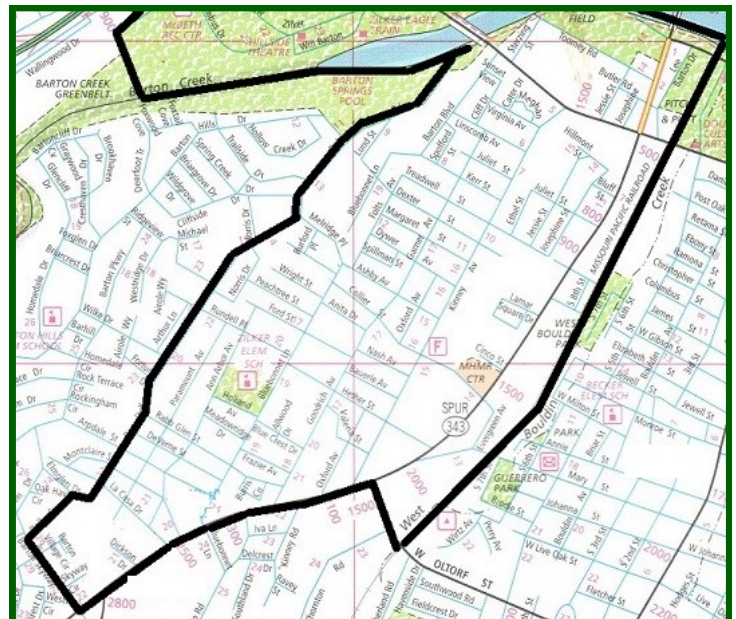
We wanted objective environmental criteria for impervious cover, building height, and setbacks that would allow homeowners to design their houses as they please within rational limits, to make it easier to maintain and remodel existing homes, and to remove incentives that result in the demolition of Zilker's existing housing. To be effective, the proposed dimensions must be treated as limits, not as starting points for the negotiation of exemptions or other loopholes. Within the new limits, the building codes (technical and safety regulations) would govern the details of construction, and the current occupancy limits would apply.

Floor-to-area ratio (FAR) is responsible for most of the complaints about the McMansion ordinance. Although CodeNext has eliminated that ordinance as a separate section of code, it continues to rely on FAR to regulate the size of residential buildings. ZNA residents have revisited the question of FAR many times over the last ten years, with increasing frustration. There are sound reasons to require FAR limits for apartment buildings and commercial structures, but for homeowners trying to remodel an

existing house in a neighborhood like Zilker, FAR calculations are an unnecessary complication.

Zilker's Commercial Corridors

Many of South Lamar's parking issues could be resolved to the benefit of small businesses and traffic safety if the City required landlords to close unsafe driveways and work out shared parking plans, as described in the South Lamar Corridor Plan. That is why the ZNA Zoning Committee believes no further parking reductions should be applied in blocks that do not already meet Great Streets or



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.

BECOME A ZNA MEMBER TODAY

Membership is open to Zilker residents (renters or homeowners) 18 years old or older. (See map.)
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: _____

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

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

ZNA Memberships, 1510 Oxford St, Austin, TX 78704

or bring this form with you to the next ZNA meeting

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

Corridor standards, including sidewalks on cross streets leading into residential areas.

Zilker's existing mix of multiple dwellings includes some of the most affordable housing in the area and some of the most expensive, often side by side. They must be preserved as housing and not converted to mixed use, and the zoning entitlements (height and compatibility setbacks) should not be increased. To promote the preservation of existing housing and the construction of new housing, CodeNext should adopt the principle that guided the Vertical Mixed Use overlay: zoning for commercial uses should not be applied to properties with existing residential zoning or uses. Small properties that ZNA opted out of VMU in 2006 are ideal for house-scale remodeling for live-work uses. A mixed-use zoning district could be tailored to those properties. Which brings us back to the Ashton Green question hinted at on page 1: Can larger townhouse and apartment complexes be accommodated in the simplified residential zone on page 4, or should they have their own zoning district?

*Lorraine Atherton
ZNA Zoning
Committee Member*

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**Newsletter of the
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Distribution: Open

Advertisers: ZNA reserves this newsletter's limited advertising space for businesses based within the boundaries of the association.

**2018 Executive Committee of
the Zilker Neighborhood
Association**

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The Executive Committee may be contacted by e-mail through zilkerneighborhood@gmail.com

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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, 6:30 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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