

Z NEWS

APRIL 2019

Newsletter of the
Zilker Neighborhood
Association

Austin, Texas

Established 1981

City Council Considers Our Options, Again; Zilker Continues to Grow

by ZNA President Dave Piper

VARIOUS INITIATIVES to establish rules and regulations about how to "best" utilize Austin's expensive real estate are wending their way through commissions, boards, councils, and staff of our city government. CodeNext, the previous effort to reform Austin's land development rules, was recently killed by the City Council after five years and three versions, but it is far from dead.

The Council directed City Manager Spencer Cronk to come up with a new process, and he suggested several major areas of focus: housing capacity, "missing middle" housing types, compatibility standards, and parking requirements. Council is expanding the list somewhat, too. For each area of focus, the City Manager suggested three options: maintain the general planning policies of the current code, make changes consistent with version 3 of CodeNext, or go beyond CodeNext to "provide for greater densification." (Read the City Manager's memo at austintexas.gov/lcdc.)

Before CodeNext was scrapped, City staff and consultants had attempted to create it with little direction from the Council and Mayor. Not so for these new initiatives. The Council and Mayor are driving the process, although not everyone shares the same vision, as is to be expected from a group of elected officials with differing constituencies. The City Manager has recommended that CodeNext be used as a baseline for the next round of land-use regulations, but the council members are free, of course, to do whatever they please, as long as it's legal in the scrutinizing eyes of the Texas Legislature. (Texas prohibits certain types of zoning used in other parts of the country, such as requiring a given share of new construction to be affordable by people with low to moderate incomes.)

Everyone knows that Austin is in an affordability crisis. Land prices and rents are being driven up by the influx of talented people with good incomes. The Texas property tax rises commensurately, and homeowners who can't afford it are displaced. The intent of City Council, to be reflected in the forthcoming Land Development Code (LDC), is largely to mitigate the effect of rising prices, whether for land, structures, or rents. The distinction between land and structures is critical, because one can build more "dwelling units," but the supply of land is fixed. A common misperception is that increasing the supply of housing will drive down costs for everybody, but for an established homeowner who pays most of his property taxes on the land, that is no help. I would even argue that a zoning change that allows more construction on a piece of land usually raises the value of that land.

Initiatives that would change the way land is to be used go by names such as Strategic Housing Blueprint, Affordability Unlocked, People's Plan (not from the City), and the undead CodeNext. The plethora of ideas for different ways to utilize real estate includes parking cars on the street instead of on the premises, allowing smaller houses, allowing larger houses, allowing smaller lots, allowing a six-plex *anywhere* if it has three "affordable" units, allowing retail and commercial uses in more places, allowing taller buildings to be closer to homes, allowing increased density within a quarter mile of a "core transit corridor" (for example, South Lamar), allowing any street to be designated a core transit corridor, reducing setbacks from the street and between structures, . . . I could list more, but you get the idea.

ZNA General Meeting Monday, April 29

at Zilker Elementary School
1900 Bluebonnet Lane

Meet and Greet 6:30 PM

Business 7-8:30 PM

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Council Member Ann Kitchen
on land-use and transportation changes:
Effects on District 5

Oak Wilt Update

Zilker Park Working Group
reports on traffic and parking

Bouldin Creek Urban Trail Update

❖ ❖ ❖

Newcomers, homeowners, renters,
business neighbors

❖ ❖ **All Welcome** ❖ ❖

A lot of these proposals haven't been fully thought out; we don't know how they would look on the ground or how they would affect the functioning of neighborhoods. The hope is that there will be a balance between achieving density and turning central and east Austin into a congested mess. The City's land use plan is predicated on needing 135,000 dwelling units in the next 10 years, but that number is actually a forecast for the five-county metro area. Some initiatives contradict each other. For example, the Vision Zero initiative addresses driver and pedestrian safety, but other initiatives would park up streets that have no sidewalks, forcing pedestrians into the single travel lane.

Hot zoning topics in ZNA include two Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) proposed in Butler Shores, the area between Barton Springs Road and the river. Both will need approval from City Council, and neither offers any affordable housing (Schlotzsky's site is to become an office building, and the old Taco Cabana is to become mostly a hotel). PUD zoning contains no height limit. I oppose both towers because I think Butler Shores should retain its character as a gateway into Zilker Park



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Just a reminder:

To limit the risk of oak wilt,

DO NOT trim trees

between February 1 and July 1.

For more info, visit TexasOakWilt.org

Also see pages 4-5 in the

April Barton Hills newsletter at bartonhills.org/newsletter/2019news/

Keep up with ZNA on the web at
zilkerneighborhood.org

Next ZNA social
Wednesday, May 8, 5-7 pm
Location to be announced

james, showgoer
shortcut, \$29

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with its iconic Restaurant Row among the pecan trees. Allowing these PUDs would only increase the financial incentives and pressure to redevelop the area.

The City Council is on track to make all these decisions this spring and summer. People who write the Mayor and Council make a difference, and people who say something at a public hearing make an even bigger difference. You don't have to know the ins and outs of zoning policy, just say what you want or don't want to see in your neighborhood as it continues to rapidly change.

At ZNA's quarterly meeting on April 29, District 5 Council Member Ann Kitchen will be helping us get a handle on the City's land-use initiatives such as the Strategic Housing Blueprint, the Strategic Mobility Plan, the new code revision process, and their potential effects on the neighborhood. I look forward to seeing you then, and at the many other upcoming events celebrating art and history in Zilker. *Your neighbor, Dave Piper*



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Connect with Your Neighbors

The Art of the Craftsman Style
Saturday, April 27, 10am to 4pm

This year's Preservation Austin Homes Tour includes a Zilker home constructed in 1936. The seven houses on the tour give a glimpse of Craftsman-style living in the early 20th century, and creative updates show their seamless adaptation to modern life today.

Tickets and more info:

www.preservationaustin.org

West Austin Studio Tour

May 11-12 & 18-19, from 11am to 6pm

Two weekends, four days, 28 hours, to tour home studios, studio complexes, and stand-alone commercial studios, along with galleries, temporary exhibitions, happenings, and library shows, all within an easy bike ride of home. WEST, the annual West Austin Studio Tour, offers "a special glimpse into the inspiration, process, and techniques" of artists in your own neighborhood.

Visit <http://west.bigmedium.org>

to map out creative neighborhoods all along South Lamar, and from MoPac to I-35. You can help Big Medium bring Austin artists and audiences together by donating to the tour or becoming a member.



Saturday, May 4 at 7:00pm

310 W Willie Nelson Blvd

Food by Taco Deli



Get ready to FIESTA at Zilker Elementary

PTA's annual adults-only fundraiser

Buy tickets online now for a discount!

Online auction open April 22

See zilkerelem.org/events-socials/



Know Your District History-District 5

Saturday, May 18, noon to 4 pm,
Manchaca Branch Library,
5500 Manchaca

The Austin History Center is hosting a series of pop-up exhibits, one for each City Council district.

Residents are invited to share their stories of neighborhood history.

For more info:

<http://library.austintexas.gov/event/know-your-district-history-district-5-558886>

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ZNA is in District 5, represented by Council Member ANN KITCHEN, at district5@austintexas.gov or 512-978-2105. Email the Council at www.austintexas.gov/email/all-council-members

Our Austin Police District Rep is Officer Shawn Rougeou, at 512-974-5490 or Shawn.Rougeou@austintexas.gov

2019 ZNA Executive Committee

President: Dave Piper

Vice Presidents

Executive: Gary Hamilton

Communications: Open

Parks and Environment:

Gail Rothe

Social: Pat Cramer

Zoning: Bill Neale

Secretary: James Russell

Treasurer: Bruce Wiland

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Email ZNA@zilkerneighborhood.org

UMLAUF sculpture garden & museum

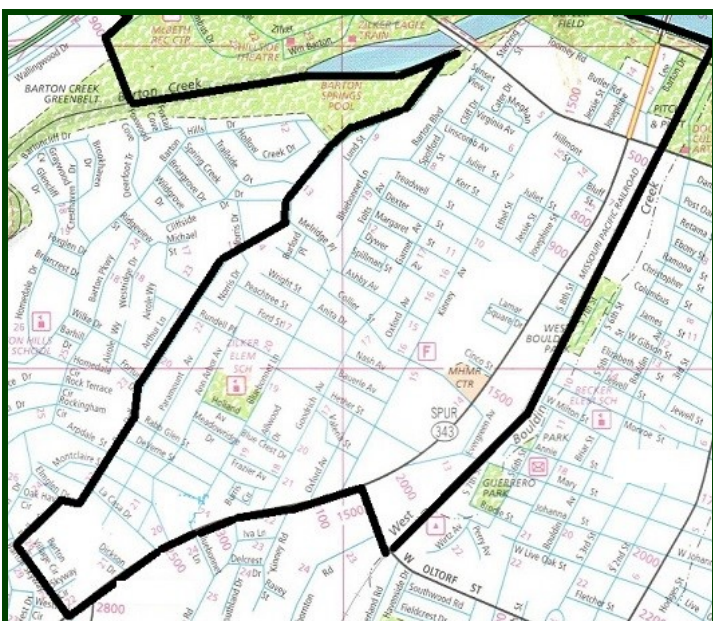
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umlaufsculpture.org
605 Azie Morton, Austin TX

The Executive Committee meets the first Monday of most months at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum, 605 Azie Morton, 6:30 PM. Watch zilkerneighborhood.org for updates.

For ZNA bylaws and to join online, visit www.zilkerneighborhood.org



ZNA boundaries include Zilker Park and Rabb Road on the west, from Lady Bird Lake to Barton Skyway, and the railroad on the east to Oltorf and then S. Lamar.

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.

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: _____ Donation: _____ 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, or join online.

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