

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN-IT

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW DEPARTMENT TO HIGHLIGHT NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN CONTACT TEAMS

Hot off the press

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *The Neighborhood Plan-It*—a quarterly newsletter produced by the Planning and Development Review Department (PDRD) for Neighborhood Plan Contact Teams.

Contact team members have volunteered countless

hours over the years and PDRD wanted to recognize their efforts. The newsletter will also be used to share a variety of important information to contact teams.

The newsletter will be emailed to all contact team members, posted on the

city's neighborhood planning website and available at the PDRD receptionist area at One Texas Center (5th Floor). Hard copies will also be available upon request. We hope you find the newsletter informative and useful and welcome your feedback.

Who is the implementation staff?

There are four planners who work on the variety of tasks required to implement neighborhood plans. These tasks range from organizing a contact team; helping them write and adopt their bylaws; helping them operate in a fair and open manner; and sometimes giving a boost to a flagging contact team by recruiting new members. In addition, continuing education on a variety of topics is offered on a quarterly basis.

Staff works closely with contact teams for proposed plan amendments that change or add text to a plan, or more often, change the land use designation of a piece of property on the

Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

In addition, staff tracks implementation of neighborhood plans. Contact teams are periodically asked to prioritize their plan's top recommendations that the community would like to have implemented and coordinates with other departments to find ways to fund or implement these priorities. Staff also works with contact teams to establish partnerships with City of Austin departments and other organizations to implement different aspects of neighborhood plans.

Melissa Laursen, Principal Planner—Supervises the implementation group; oversees implementation;

coordinates with Capital Planning Office.

Maureen Meredith, Senior Planner—Case manager for all neighborhood plan amendments; oversees front yard parking and mobile food vending applications.

Margaret E. Valenti, Senior Planner—Organizes, assists, and educates neighborhood plan contact teams; oversees Austin Community Tree program.

Justin Golbabai, Senior Planner—Works on neighborhood plan implementation; coordinates with other departments/agencies and contact teams; and reviews neighborhood plans for rezoning cases.



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Points of Interest:

- The first Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 1998 for the Dawson Planning Area
- There are 28 adopted neighborhood plans that cover 48 planning areas
- PDRD maintains a database of nearly 4000 neighborhood plan recommendations

Implementation Highlights

Safer route for kids to McBee Elementary

New sidewalks along Plains Trail in the North Austin Civic Association (NACA) Planning Area are an example of how persistence can pay off. The NACA Neighborhood Plan recommended that a sidewalk study be conducted for the area surrounding McBee Elementary School. Plains Trail is the most direct southern neighborhood route to the school; however, the combination of a lack of sidewalks, cut-through traffic, and deep bar ditches made it unsafe for children to walk or bicycle to school. Heavy rain would make the streets impassable and contributed to lower school

attendance.

The project to provide a safe route was a top priority for 10 years for the City's Child Safety Program Coordinator, Chris Moore, who was able to secure a \$500,000 Safe Routes to School grant from the State of Texas. A combined effort by the City of Austin's Watershed Protection and Public Works Departments addressed the drainage, public safety, and transportation problems along Plains Trail. The projects were completed this past August—just in time for the new school year.



New sidewalks and improved drainage along Plains Trail—provides a safer route to McBee Elementary

Pavilion at Dottie Jordan Park

***Recommendation #88:** Construct a shade/rain pavilion that can accommodate approximately 100 people in the west side of the park near the playground.*



Realizing the Neighborhood Plan's vision for a pavilion in Dottie Jordan Park required partnerships and determination. Constructed this past spring, the pavilion was a collaborative effort between the Friends of Dottie Jordan Park, the University Hills Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, the University Hills neighborhood association, the Austin Parks Foundation, and the City's Parks and Recreation Department.

The Friends of Dottie Jordan Park took the lead by successfully applying for a grant from the Austin Parks Foundation for partial funding of the pavilion. To make up the gap in funding, the Friends of Dottie Jordan

Park and the contact team worked with the neighborhood association to raise the rest of the money.

Discussions with the community identified potential issues related to where the pavilion would be located inside the park and noise mitigation from community events. As a result of these talks, the design for the pavilion was adjusted to address community concerns.

The pavilion offers an amenity to the neighborhood, and demonstrates how cooperation, identifying the right partners, and willingness to work through differences, can realize a community's vision.

“Drive Out, Drive In”

In July 2011, the Battle Bend Springs neighborhood (located in the South Congress Combined Neighborhood Plan Area) experienced several household burglaries over a two week period. In response, Battle Bend Springs HOA President and contact team member, Mario Cantu, initiated a “Drive Out, Drive In” crime watch program. From time to time partici-

pants take different routes when driving in or out of the neighborhood while keeping an eye out for suspicious activity. Drivers call 911 if they witness a crime or suspicious activity in progress, or call 311 for a crime that has already occurred. Since the inception of the program, there are far fewer burglaries in the Battle Bend area and the neighborhood

believes the “Drive Out, Drive In” program is responsible for the decrease. This type of program can easily be instituted in neighborhoods across of Austin.

To learn more about the program and how to set one up in your neighborhood, contact Mario Cantu at: info@battlebendsprings.com

We Need Your Information

From time to time city staff, neighborhood residents, property owners or other contact teams wish to communicate with you. Having the most current contact information assists staff in this communication effort.

Implementation staff is in the process of collecting current information on contact team members. The City's Land Development Code requires that contact teams submit information about themselves on an annual basis. This information includes: membership lists with membership category (property owner, residential renter,

business owner, or neighborhood organization representative who owns or rents property within the planning area); names of officers; and contact information (emails and/or postal address). Be assured that personal information is only used for contact team related purposes. In addition, staff is looking to update their files, and requests that contact teams send their most current copy of bylaws.

Questions and contact team information should be directed to Margaret E. Valenti at 974-2648 or margaret.valenti@austintexas.gov

UPDATE THE CITY OF AUSTIN COMMUNITY REGISTRY

The City of Austin Community Registry is open to any community group who wishes to be notified of issues relating to their area. Contact teams should check their information in the community registry to ensure that it is current. Contact teams can also utilize the registry to share their meeting information with the public.

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/neighborhoodservices/>

Community Input First—plan amendment recommendations

A major responsibility of all contact teams is to make recommendations to the Planning Commission and City Council on plan amendments affecting their neighborhood plan.

All applicants are required to meet with staff for a pre-application meeting prior to submitting a plan amendment application. During this meeting, staff encourages the applicant to talk to the contact team early in the process. Beginning the conversation early provides an opportunity to start addressing issues before any public meetings or hearings are held.

After a case is filed, staff schedules a

community meeting to discuss the proposed plan amendment. Contact teams, neighborhood organizations and people who live and/or own property within 500 feet of the subject property are invited to the meeting (as required by Code) to listen and discuss proposals. The meeting provides the surrounding property owners and renters an opportunity to support and/or voice concerns about the proposed change. Contact teams and neighborhood associations should send at least one representative to attend these community meetings to listen to the opinions of the surrounding neighbors who will be more im-

pacted from a change in land use and/or zoning.

Contact teams are charged with representing—to the best of their ability—the variety of stakeholders' interests. To fulfill this responsibility, all community input should be considered by contact teams when making recommendations **for** or **against** a case. The contact team letter of recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council should be written after the community meeting is held.

Mobility Corridor Studies

The Austin Transportation Department (ATD) is conducting mobility corridor studies along 4 major routes to consider transportation improvements:

- **Airport Blvd**—from N. Lamar Blvd to US-183
- **North Lamar/Burnet**—North Lamar Blvd. from US-183 to I-35 and Burnet Road from Koenig Lane to Mopac
- **East Riverside Drive**—from I-35

to SH-71

- **FM 969 (East MLK Jr. Blvd)**—from US-183 to the City of Webberville

In preparation for these corridor studies, ATD was provided the neighborhood plan recommendations related to these corridors and contact teams were invited to participate in the public input sessions.

For more information: <http://www.austinstrategicmobility.com/>

DID YOU KNOW...

- **There are 32 contact teams who represent 48 planning areas.**
- **The St. John and Coronado Hills contact teams will be ready to serve by the time their neighborhood plan is adopted in early 2012.**
- **There are quarterly contact team trainings on a variety of topics and the next training is scheduled for Tuesday, February 21, 2012.**

East Cesar Chavez neighborhood is getting cooler

On October 22nd, over 200 trees were delivered to residents in the East Cesar Chavez (ECC) neighborhood. This neighborhood is the latest recipient of free trees from the Austin Community Tree (ACT) program. Volunteers from the ECC Neighborhood Planning Team, neighborhood residents and other organizations made this event a success. These volunteers assessed which properties were eligible for free trees; delivered door hangers; delivered trees; and, in some cases, planted trees for those who needed assistance.

The ACT program seeks to reduce the Urban Heat Island effect by encouraging the planting of trees on private property to shade sidewalks and streets. Besides providing a shady place to walk, these trees can improve air quality

and lower the daytime temperature up to four degrees. The ACT program offers between 8 and 10 different species of large shade and smaller understory trees.

Past program participants have included: Central East Austin, Crestview and Wooten, Old West Austin, Rosewood, South Congress Combined and Montopolis.

For more information please contact Margaret E. Valenti at (512) 974-2648 or margaret.valenti@austintexas.gov

The ACT program is a partnership among neighborhoods, the Planning and Development Review Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Austin Energy.

CONTACTS

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WEB LINKS

Neighborhood Plan Implementation Chart—spreadsheets of action items/recommendations for each neighborhood plan.

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/neighborhood/imp_reports.htm

Grant and Community Resources—information on where to obtain grants and in-kind services; and links to relevant city master plans and programs.

http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/neighborhood/downloads/grantresources2011_2.pdf



Volunteers planted trees for neighbors in need



Mountain Laurels and Redbuds with their adoption papers



Loading up the trucks for deliveries

