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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

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West Austin Neighborhood Group
P.O. Box 5722
Austin, Texas 78763-5722



West Austin Neighborhood Group

Organized 1973

*"To preserve our neighborhood
and protect it from deterioration."*

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THE NEIGHBOR

P.O. Box 5722 • Austin, Texas 78763-5722

July, 2003

President's Message July 2003

Howdy one and all:

This message is offered as an introduction to the theme for this year's Annual Social (September 20 at Mayfield Park). At the Annual Social, WANG will be seeking neighborhood input concerning the possibility of pursuing national Historic Designation protection for at least parts of our West Austin neighborhood.

We have started collecting information about the benefits and drawbacks to qualifying as a national "historic district," and we want to make sure this is something the neighborhood wants to pursue. For example, Candace Volz gave a wonderful presentation at WANG's June board meeting about the successful nomination of the Old West Austin Historic District (OWAHD) for admission to the National Register of Historic Places. This grassroots effort covered 2 1/2 years and raised \$50,000 for the preparation of the nomination via the tax-deductible Old Enfield Improvement and Preservation Fund. The money was used to hire two professional architectural historians who presented a compelling and ultimately successful application. If we decide to pursue nomination, we will have the benefit of all the experience acquired by Candace and Laurie Virkstis who spearheaded the OWAHD effort.

Before describing what a national "historic district" is, a quick word is required about what the national "historic district" is not. Many people's first concern is that homeowners would be restricted from remodeling their home if we became an historic district. This is not true. While there is a separate city program for protecting historically designated properties, the federal "historic district" program does not prevent a homeowner from remodeling his or her home. Under federal law, owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that there is no federal involvement. In addition to honorific recognition, listing in the National Register results in the following for historic properties:

- Consideration in planning for federal projects — The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires that Federal agencies allow the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register.

- Eligibility for certain tax provisions — Owners of properties listed in the National Register may be eligible for a 20% investment tax credit for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures such as commercial, industrial, or rental residential buildings.

- Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation, when funds are available.

There are certainly benefits to being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to preserving the quality and character of our wonderful Central Austin neighborhood, being registered as a National Register District offers a way to encourage maintaining the integrity of homes to preserve the unique architectural features of our neighborhood. It can also prevent unnecessary teardowns and scrape-offs through encroachment of federal road and highway expansions. This designation will also discourage demolition of "contributing" historic properties, thus preserving the scale and density of these early neighborhoods. In addition, it will maintain property values and the resulting tax base for the city. And perhaps most important, District status will help to prevent the displacement of older, life-long residents who cannot afford to stay in their smaller homes as demolitions increase. Some of the most affordable housing in Central Austin is located in the West Austin Neighborhood along Scenic Loop 1. These smaller homes are particularly vulnerable to redevelopment.

There does appear to be at least one potentially significant drawback to becoming a national register district that has arisen because of the way that the City handles requests for demolition permits. In particular, now that the OWAHD nomination was approved, it appears that the City staff may be using the list of OWAHD's "contributing properties" as a "flagging" device when an application to demolish a structure was filed with

continued, next page

Be sure to visit our website at <http://www.deepeddy.com/wang/>!

continued from previous

the City. Under existing practices, all demolitions require a permit, and all the permits are reviewed, I believe, by the City Historic Preservation Officer. A property being "contributing" doesn't necessarily prevent its demolition, but rather makes getting a demolition permit a little more difficult. In at least one case, this appears to have caught a new property owner off guard when his request for a demolition permit to remove the old home was denied by the city staff because it is listed on the inventory of OWAHD's contributing historic properties. On the one hand, this outcome is helping preserve the neighborhood, but on the other hand, this amounts to a "de facto" property right limitation.

Some local realtors have pointed out that this could negatively affect property values. For example, if "contributing" homes in an historic district can not be demolished, then homeowners would be forced to remodel their homes, a process which is usually much more expensive than new construction.

This article is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion of the issue. More information will be collected and distributed between at our Annual Social. For example, Joseph Bennett (one of our board members and a local architect from our Deep Eddy area) has spent an incredible amount of effort and time compiling historic data for properties in our neighborhood onto a map so that we can see where the potential qualifying properties (over fifty years old) are located in West Austin. While this is a huge work in progress, this map will be presented at our Annual Social so that we can see what parts of West Austin could even qualify for historic district protection.

TARRYTOWN FOURTH OF JULY PARADE

Tarrytown's 13th Annual Fourth of July Parade was a drippy, happy, sloppy success. Lots of bikers, walkers, watchers, fire men, police motorcycles, mayors, ice cream, hot dogs, hot dogs, hot dogs, gelato, water ice, flags, lemonade, iced tea and American flags were enjoyed by all. Thanks to everyone who came down and braved the drizzle, and special thanks to all the volunteers with Friends of Reed Park who helped organize and execute this year's parade, especially Dinah Barksdale and Kelly von Kreisler.

KEEP YOUR COOL POOLS OPEN!

As reported in last month's message, our neighborhood is blessed with some great swimming holes. However, the city budget only allows the Reed Park pool to be open through August 17. This year's drive for pri-

vate funds to help keep Reed Park open through Labor Day Weekend is underway, and your help is needed. If you use and enjoy Reed Park pool, please send your donation (\$30 or more) to Friends of Reed Park, c/o Louise Iscoe, 3300 Greenlee Drive, Austin, Texas 78703.

And as always, please feel free to contact me on matters of neighborhood concern.

Michael Rocco Cannatti
338-9100 or mike@hamiltonterre.com

WANG Executive Committee Meeting Minutes July 7, 2003

Attending Board Members: Michael Cannatti, Joyce Basciano, Joe Bennet, Stephen Griffith, Gwen Jewiss, Susan Pascoe, Selina Serna and Blake Tollett

Guests: Franck & Nancy Guilloteau, James Cormier, Jim Girardeau, Penny Martin, Mr. Ezell, Candace Volz and several other neighbors were in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the June 2003 meeting were approved.

OWAHD Presentation – Candace Volz provided an overview of the historic districting process as experienced by the OWAHD. She exhibited a map of the area, done in conjunction with the COA GIS, indicating the district's boundaries and the contributing buildings. Enlisting volunteers and training them in how to document the proposed contributing structures to determine whether the neighborhood is eligible was noted as the major first effort. Candace also reviewed the fundraising efforts required to retain the services of an architectural historian and a historian. It was noted that both consultants are required to document the history of the neighborhood, as well as, the historical authenticity of the contributing structures.

It was noted that the possibility of pursuing the historic district designation would be the topic at this year's Annual Social.

Jim Girardeau was unanimously voted in as a Board member.

Committee Reports

Zoning

2711 Bridal Path – Franck & Nancy Guilloteau presented their plans to remodel their house. They indicated that they would

be seeking variances to encroach into both side yard setbacks by 18". Since they had not already done so, the ExComm suggested that they work with their neighbors to determine whether there would be any opposition to their plans. No action was taken.

701 Norwalk and 2502 West 7th Street – Once again, representatives for the Montessori school and neighbors were in attendance concerning the upcoming rezoning request for the Lake Austin Montessori School. Representatives from the Montessori school indicated that the request for rezoning from SF-3 to NO would be going forward with plans to obtain a conditional use overlay. The overlay would be for "Daycare – General, Limited and Commercial".

Neighbors Belinda and Howard Cooke spoke against the daycare use. They stated that the proposed relocation of the school was cause for them to investigate relocating from the area.

James L. Cormier, the Architect representing the school, indicated that the plans had been further modified to meet some of the neighbors previously expressed concerns.

3208 Enfield Road – Mr. Ezell requested the ExComm's support for his variance request for a porch extending four feet over the setback line. He stated that the architect was unaware of the setback requirement, and that the City had approved the plans with the porch indicated. It was noted that there has been a request made to retrieve the original "red stamped" documents to determine if the permit had been granted with or without the porch. Blake reminded everyone that there had been a request for the same variance last year, but that it had been denied. Blake also stated that if the porch was on the original permit documents, nothing could be done.

Communications

It was noted that the Annual Social would be at Mayfield Park. Due to time constraints, Gwen to email further information to Board members.

Other Committee Reports

Reports will be deferred to the next meeting.

**Annual Social
Coming in
September!**

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Some neighbors enjoying the Fourth of July!

