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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Howson Branch Library
April 2nd, 2001, 7:00 pm

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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Hal Katz
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Linda Neavel Dickens
Vice-President

Gwen Jewiss
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Ian Inglis
Treasurer

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Blake Tollett
Zoning Chair

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Michael Cannatti
Eric Cary
Chris Garrigues
Balie Griffith
Sara Madera
Susan Pascoe
Selina Serna
Irwin Spear

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Hon. Beverly Griffith
Hon. Ann Kitchens
Hon. Will Wynn

THE NEIGHBOR

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

March, 2001

President's Message March 2001

A Little Austin History You May Not Know, Or Want to Know

Have you ever wondered about the City's East-West divide? It is impossible not to acknowledge that there is a difference in the demographics, economic development, and types of concerns that are prevalent on each side of the highway. But was this self-inflicted or imposed?

Most people may believe that I-35 is responsible for the East to West segregation. However, the divide occurred well before IH-35, which was built in the 1950's. East Austin has long been home to many of the city's poorest residents. Many of the City's African-American and Mexican-American communities, as well as many of the city's industrial facilities, are concentrated in East Austin. The concentration of poverty and the lingering effects of racism create challenges in attracting new businesses. Many Austin residents are aware of this problem, but few are familiar with the history. Much to my surprise and disappointment, this racial segregation arose not only from the acts of individuals, but also from the policies of the City of Austin itself, in the form of the City Plan adopted in 1928.

As in many communities at that time, African-Americans and Mexican-Americans were being pushed to a designated portion of the City. While these populations were dispersed throughout the city in 1880, rising land values, tax foreclosures, and deed restrictions forced the majority to move east over the next 50 years. However, it was the 1928 City Plan that introduced systematic racial segregation to Austin. The area east of IH-35 between 1st and 19th Streets officially was designated a heavily industrial "Negro district." Accordingly, all municipal services for African-Americans, including schools, sewers, and parks, were restricted to the East Side. Mexican-Americans also faced similar segregationist policies.

This tactic was not unique to Austin. White city-planners all over the United States frequently concentrated racial minorities and industry in a separate part of town. As in other cities, pushing these elements into a segregated area corresponded with the city planners' overall objective: to beautify Austin and develop its residential, cultural, educational, and recreational aspects. At the time of the Plan's implementation, the living conditions in

Austin were extremely poor. The streets were not well paved, the quality of the water supply was insufficient, the sewage disposal was inadequate, and the health and housing conditions were abysmal. These problems had caused Austin's growth rate to lag behind that of other Texas cities. The 1928 City Plan was largely an effort to correct these deficiencies.

Unfortunately, by forcing most industry and racial minorities into a single part of town, the city planners created an area characterized not only by concentrated poverty, but also by environmental contamination. According to fire department records, 80% of Austin's hazardous liquids, 42% of its gases, and 15% of its solids are located on the East Side. Many houses are adjacent to industrial sites, including the old Holly Power Plant, Austin Oxygen, two trash/recycling facilities, several high-tech manufacturing firms, and a complex of fuel storage terminals known as the "tank farm."

A number of East Austin residents are taking positive steps toward improving these conditions, though. The Ebenezer Baptist Church, located in East Austin since 1885, has played a key role in a development project that residents hope will lead to other efforts to revitalize the community. Surrounded by the second poorest neighborhood in the city, Ebenezer is lead by Reverend Marvin C. Griffin. Van Johnson, an East Austin resident, joined Rev. Griffin to form the East Austin Economic Development Corporation (EAEDC) in 1988. This non-profit corporation developed plans for three projects: a child-care and elder-care center, an office building, and a complex of affordable housing for the elderly. Ebenezer purchased the land surrounding its building and donated it to the EAEDC to provide a site for these structures. In addition, numerous public and private entities, including the City of Austin, agreed to donate or loan money to EAEDC to fund the projects. The completed development, which occupies two city blocks in East Austin, has been named Ebenezer Village.

It may be that I have just been in the dark in not knowing this part of Austin's history. While not pleasant, it is helpful to understand why things are the way they are today and useful when trying to effectuate change.

Hal Katz
703-5715
hkatz@hwlaw.com

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

**Minutes of ExComm Meeting
March 5, 2001**

Members Present: James Allman, Joyce Basciano, Michael Cannatti, Erik Carey, Balie Griffith, Gwen Jewiss, Hal Katz, Sara Madera, Irwin Spear, Blake Tollett, Susan Pascoe, Selina Serna.

Correction

Minutes were approved as amended to reflect that Greg Smith had been contacted, but that there was no confirmation of efforts underway regarding the neighborhood historic designations.

Zoning Issues

Blake provided his zoning report as follows: 2206 W. 11th St. – The applicant did not withdraw the variance request, but instead postponed until the Board's March meeting.

510 Atlanta St. – The zoning change from SF-3 to LO-MU-H goes before the Planning Commission on March 13th. WANG is on record against any zoning change but SF-3-H. The neighbors are actively pursuing a Valid Petition against any zoning other than SF-3-H.

3701 Gilbert – the Board of Adjustment turned down the fence height variance sought by the Owners. The fence has been completed and a neighbor has written to WANG complaining about the height and questioning whether it is in compliance.

TUMC – If the four neighbors stay committed, they have a Valid Petition against the up-zoning to NO. Hal noted that the Agreement between TUMC and WANG has not been signed yet.

Treasurer's Report

The account balances were given as: checking - \$3674.13, savings – \$3557.33, and oak wilt fund - \$1185.05.

Membership Committee

James noted that there are a few minor changes being made to the new membership form, and that it should be ready for use shortly.

Transportation Committee

TxDOT will hold a presentation at the March 12th CAMPO Meeting at the Joe C. Thompson Center. There is no public input at this meeting, which will focus on changes to MoPAC.

There will be a Public Comments Meeting on April 9th. WANG is planning to distribute fliers to encourage residents to attend this meeting. After much discussion, WANG ExComm agreed that Hal would contact adjacent neighborhood associations to discuss participation in flier funding and credits.

Historic District

Susan is trying to follow up with Greg Smith. She and Irwin Spear also will meet with the OWADA group to see what WANG can learn from their efforts to date.

Sidewalks

Selina reported that CapMetro has a survey for proposed sidewalk upgrades along the route of the #9 bus. Discussion ensued regarding various funding possibilities. All ExComm members are asked to document the conditions of sidewalks in the areas adjacent to their homes. Gwen to work with Mike and Selina to distribute neighborhood maps for this purpose.

Liaison Committee

Balie noted that he had continued to monitor the Robert Mueller Airport conversion planning. James noted that he had been in contact with the leaders in East Austin to encourage neighborhood action and cooperation, building on the energy from the recent City Council meeting.

EMS

A letter from Toby Futrell stated that the West Austin EMS completion date had been moved up from October 02 to May 02. Richard Harrington, EMS, had also told James that there is expected to be funding for a part time ambulance to be stationed at Station 32, on Bee Caves Rd., starting this October. The City has ordered five additional ambulances, which will have staggered delivery dates.

Tarrytown Shopping Center

It was agreed that Blake would inquire about the possibility of having a farmers' market at the shopping center as a way to support vivacity and an acceptable neighborhood grocery use.

Goodwill, Inc.

Sarah reported that problems with mildew from outstanding roof repairs are forcing the Goodwill folks to resort to the unsightly receiving and storage conditions discussed at last month's meeting. ExComm members will help to help track down the building Owner and encourage prompt remedial action.

Friends of the Park

ExComm agreed to contribute \$250 to Mayfield Park, thereby becoming a sponsor for the yearly fund-raiser. This year's "Trowel & Error" will take place on Saturday, April 14, 2001, from 10 AM to 1 PM.

Air Traffic Noise

It was reported that there have been several

complaints from residents regarding air traffic noise. All ExComm members to take note for further discussion at a subsequent meeting.

Neighborhood Plan

Hal suggested that we again think about getting organized to start the City sanctioned neighborhood planning process. There will need to be a committee dedicated to the task, as well as participation by all ExComm members. The timeframe to complete the process is expected to be 6-8 months. Linda and Gwen have volunteered to be on the committee. Blake is to inquire as to where 'on line' West Austin is for working with the City's liaisons on this project.

Minutes prepared by Gwen Jewiss

**WEST AUSTIN
NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA
APRIL 2, 2001**

- I. Call Meeting to Order (7:10)
- II. Citizen Communications
 - A. WAYA Compaint
 - B. Camp Mabry
- III. Approval of Minutes
- IV. Committee Reports
 - A. Communications
 - B. Membership
 - C. Transportation
 - 1. MoPac
 - D. Zoning
 - E. Liaison
- V. Treasurer's Report
- VI. New/Old Business
 - A. Tarrytown Shopping Center
 - B. Other
- VII. Adjourn (8:45)

**MAYFIELD PARK
GARDENING SYMPOSIUM**

On April 14, from 10 AM to 1 PM, Mayfield Park combines images, inspiration and design in a series of "must hear" lectures at Trowel and Error, Mayfield's annual rite of spring for Central Texas gardeners. In Lifestyle Gardening, Mark Gibbs, landscape and garden specialist, creates outdoor rooms, areas in the landscape specifically for gathering, meditating, barbequing or just plain "shootin' the bull". Tom Spencer, KLRU producer and free lance writer, ponders why so many of us experience life in a deeper way when we garden, in Finding the Soul of the Garden. To round off the day, Scott Ogden, garden consultant, writer and lecturer, shares his special interest in

Please see Mayfield Park, next page



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Mayfield Park, continued from previous page

night-flowering plants, in the Moonlit Garden.

For those who arrive early enough, Mayfield's hard-to-find heirloom bulbs and perennials are available for your April garden. Also featured is the legendary raffle of "garden goodies". No one leaves Trowel and Error without a smile and many with an armful of heirloom plants.

It's a wonderful way to spend a morning on the day before Easter– a beautiful setting, interesting and useful information and a chance to support one of Austin's favorite and enchanting parks, right in our own back yard.

Sponsored by Friends of the Parks, a non-profit organization, Trowel and Error is the solitary fund-raiser for historic Mayfield Park. A \$5.00 donation is requested. —Karen Cannatti

Help decide the future of MoPac! On April 9, 2001, at 6:00 p.m., provide your feedback about TxDOT's concepts for MoPac improvements. Join your neighbors at the CAMPO public hearing at the LBJ Library Auditorium. There will be a signup table outside the door. This is a critical meeting that will impact central Austin transportation/traffic issues. Please attend!

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 

Take care of your neighborhood! Send in this membership form or call Blake Tollett at 477-4028. Please take forms to your friends and neighbors and ask them to join WANG. An active membership will be a strong voice that's heard when critical issues are debated.

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