

Barton Hills News

It's what's going on in your neighborhood

Envision Central TX

Results from the Envision Central Texas survey are in and we wanted to share some of the results with you. The following statistics are from the Fregonese Calthorpe Associates (FCA) tabulations of the returned surveys. Over 12,000 surveys were returned—half by internet and half by mail. As found in other surveys of this type, the respondents were generally older and “less ethnic” than the population as a whole, similar to the pattern of voter participation.

FCA felt it important to point out that the results were not a random sample. The people who participated made the choice to do so and, therefore, represent those who were sufficiently motivated to participate. On the other hand, the survey represents a very large proportion of the population—about one out of every 100 residents, 40 times more than would be counted in a random sample scientific survey. These 12,000 people chose to listen to and consider the materials ECT presented and responded thoughtfully. FCA, therefore, feels this should be reported as the largest public conversation ever conducted in this region and indeed Texas. And that the people who took the time to respond are “the natural opinion leaders of their communities”. While the respondent group is self-selected, it consists of citizens from throughout the region, and represents people of all races and ages.

Scenario D was the overwhelming preference of the four scenarios presented. A brief summary of Scenario D is in order, then, to give the results a context. To find a very in-depth summary of all four scenarios, as well as the results and any other aspect of the ECT survey, go to www.envisioncentraltexas.org. Scenario D uses the greatest amount of mixed-use development and redevelopment of all four Scenarios. It concentrates the greatest amount of development in existing towns and cities. It consumes the least amount of total land, agricultural land and ranch land. Development in aquifer recharge and contributing zones is minimal, yet slightly greater than Scenario C. Scenario D offers the greatest range of housing and transportation options of all four Scenarios, but has the most change in current neighborhoods due to extensive infill and redevelopment, and would be most different from the kinds of housing built in the last 10 years. Scenario D includes more extensive commuter rail, light-rail and express bus networks than Scenario B.

The most significant deviation from the choice of Scenario D came with the questions of development over the Edwards Aquifer and the best future housing options. Both of which Scenario C edged out Scenario D. This shows a substantial sympathy for a scenario with the most reduction in development on the Aquifer and a preference for the housing style of Scenario C with the land-use pattern of Scenario D. It would also indicate that the respondents really took the time to read and understand the survey, as these are fairly nuanced responses.

ANC Letter

The Austin Neighborhood Council (ANC) has reviewed the Envision Central Texas survey report and published a letter stating some of their key concerns. Here is the text of the letter:

The Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) is celebrating our Thirtieth Anniversary of working to enhance and preserve Austin's unique neighborhoods. Over the past three decades we have seen changes in our region significantly impact our community. Many of these changes are directly related to continued population growth in Central Texas. The ANC recognizes that how Central Texas grows has and will continue to affect our neighborhoods. We also acknowledge that many of the issues our neighborhoods face cannot be adequately addressed except from a regional perspective.

With that recognition in mind, we are supportive of the many planning efforts underway in the area. The Envision Central Texas (ECT) five county visioning processes is unique among these efforts. It holds significant promise in developing a comprehensive approach to guiding our policies and strategies for managing future growth. This process has opened a wide ranging community discussion on growth issues and is a positive step in building awareness of the critical choices before our region. We appreciate the opportunity to have an ANC representative on the ECT Board

continued on page 3

Presidents Message

Springtime in Austin and the living is easy! Because of all the rain and I would like to think the loving devotion of our Greenbelt Guardian volunteers, who surely must earn us the special graces of nature, this spring promises to be ablaze with Bluebonnets and Wisteria and wildflowers everywhere. And of course vibrant with Barton Hills neighbors enjoying the beauty and fellowship of our community with picnics, walks, hikes, outdoor concerts, and especially paying their membership dues to BHNA and reminding their neighbors to do so also!

Our first meeting of the year was a great success. Special thanks to the volunteers who delivered 1,400 newsletters, and most importantly to you – your interest and commitment is why BHNA exists and coming together to put this commitment to work is how we flourish. Thanks also to Austin Police Department community liaison, Officer Dawn Leonard, who was so helpful that members demanded a repeat command performance. Officer Leonard (dawn.leonard@ci.austin.tx.us, Phone: 947-4405) will come to our next meeting and among other things help us reactivate our Neighborhood Watch. This request came up at the last meeting and already we have numerous volunteers interested in helping. Also thanks to Elizabeth Drozda-Freeman, who explained the Grow Green program and distributed brochures on landscape plant and tree choices, toxicity ratings of products, and planning a sustainable garden and yard.

Our next general meeting is April 13th, which is also Thomas Jefferson's birthday. If you are like me, it is never too early to start thinking about July 4th! I would like to share Jefferson's own inspiring words, in declining an invitation to be guest of honor at the Grand Jubilee celebration on July 4, 1826: "All eyes have opened, or are opening, to the palpable truth that the mass of mankind were not born with saddles on their backs nor the favored few, booted and spurred, to ride them legitimately by the grace of God." He, with another great patriot, John Adams, magnificent adversary and friend, would die on that very day. I look forward to our traditional neighborhood parade. Rain or shine, we will celebrate! An advertiser has generously offered to sponsor the parade. All those inspired by Jefferson (or Hamilton) please answer this call for volunteers!!

We would like to institute a new feature at BHNA meetings to recognize members of our neighborhood as special guests. We have so many interesting, creative and talented neighbors, either famous, infamous, or not famous enough. We will begin this at our June meeting with a very special guest (you will have to be left in suspense at least until the next newsletter). Please let us know if you are or know someone who fits the playbill! We also welcome newsletter articles from members.

Many members have not been able to come to meetings because of needing to stay home with children. We are planning to provide professional babysitting during general meetings. A special thanks to Father Bill and his staff at St. Marks for making this possible. Further details will come in a message to the listserv.

Also in response to a request at the last meeting, we have invited Charlie Jones and Jody Goode of Capital Sports Entertainment, the producer of Austin City Limits music festival, to come to the meeting to discuss this year's festival. Please see related article. City of Austin staff will also present on the neighborhood planning process (we have several articles on planning in this issue that I encourage you to read before the meeting). And finally, the May election concerns the important issue of health care and the creation of a hospital district. Robbie Botto, BHNA representative to the Austin Neighborhood Council, has an article on this issue.

The agenda for the April 13th meeting is full and a must-attend event.

Don Long

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Robbie Botto
Austin Neighborhood
Council Representative
448-0693 (h)

Greenbelt

I've spoken with John Cook, our ICOA Parks liaison person, and we came up with a Greenbelt Guardian schedule for the rest of the year:

April 24 – which also just happens to be "It's My Park" day, a citywide effort for citizen caretaking, sponsored by Austin Parks Foundation and COA.

October 16 – which is the week before the National Trails Day Conference that will be visiting the Homedale trail on their field trips.

We will also post these on the BHNA website schedule. We will send out notifications before each event re: which trailhead we will be working from and the tasks we will be undertaking.

Thanks, Glee

ANC Letter cont.

and to participate in this process. The ANC is committed to work in good faith with all members of our community on these important issues.

The Austin Neighborhoods Council is a strong supporter of the City of Austin community based neighborhood planning process. Neighborhood planning has, from its beginning seven years ago, sought to address growth issues within the appropriate context of the local community's desires and expectations of maintaining the viability and character of their neighborhoods.

With 21 neighborhood plans and their associated zoning already adopted by the Austin City Council, these plans form the backbone of our community's vision for the future. These plans were developed with extensive community input and professional planning assistance, and have endured lengthy public scrutiny at Planning Commission and City Council. The approved plans balance long-term community goals with detailed analysis of specific land use decisions. Therefore the ANC has strongly advocated the neighborhood planning process be supported as the primary regulatory mechanism for preserving, protecting and enhancing our neighborhoods.

In reviewing ECT's draft "Vision" statement we are pleased at the emphasis given to the goal of preserving the unique character of our communities. We particularly appreciate the many references to protecting the character, identity, uniqueness and values of our neighborhoods.

However, a broad endorsement of these goals does not in itself clearly indicate that Austin neighborhood plans, those completed and those yet to come will be acknowledged as the overriding planning instruments for future land use decisions. Of particular concern is the lack of balance in the vision statement between the competing calls for densification and preservation. This is particularly troublesome, considering over 60% of the ECT survey respondents indicated that "retaining the character of existing urban neighborhoods" is important. This ambiguity could result in the ECT "Vision" being used to undermine the legitimacy of the neighborhood plans and threatens the community's effort invested in the neighborhood planning process.

We understand that the draft "A Vision for Central Texas" is a work in progress. We hope that in the final version of the "Vision" statement ECT takes a stronger stance to affirm the primacy of existing community plans, including the Austin neighborhood plans. Without such a clear statement of intent to respect neighborhood plans Austin Neighborhoods Council cannot endorse or support a vision that does not adequately safeguard the will of our constituents.

This matter has been discussed at length at both the ANC Executive Committee and general meetings. At the ANC's

January 28th general meeting it was the consensus to wait until the final ECT vision document is available for review before taking any formal position. We hope that our concerns can be addressed in the final document so the ANC can support the results of the ECT process. We look forward to continuing to work with ECT in finalizing this regional vision.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Pascoe, ANC President

St. Mark's Dates

April 9 – no school

April 14-19 – Used Book Sale in Parish Hall(fundraiser)

April 14 & 15 – Children's Art Show in Parish Hall
with parent coffees from 8:30-9:30

May 1 – Carnival (9:30-1:30) and Chicken Barbeque



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Austin City Limits Festival Report

The 3rd annual Austin City Limits Music Festival is slated for September 17-19, 2004. The producers of the festival, Capital Sports & Entertainment (CSE) will have representatives at the April 13th BHA meeting. Please visit www.aclfestival.com for the latest news.

In response to the request of members at the January 27th BHNA General Meeting, BHNA has invited Charlie Jones and Jody Goode of Capital Sports & Entertainment (CSE) to our April 13th General Meeting to give an update on plans for the next festival. BHNA feel that we and other area Neighborhood Associations, the Austin City Parks and Recreation Department, and CSE have established a very good working relationship and dialogue over the years in trying to address neighborhood concerns that have been raised by the concert. At the same time, we have represented many in our community who consider this a "signature" Austin event that contributes significantly to the cultural life of our city. Our April 13th meeting is therefore your opportunity to join directly in this dialogue. Please refer to the January BHNA newsletter article, available online at <http://www.main.org/bhna> which was written from our neighborhood perspective for a summary of the concerns. But please read on to see the ACL concert from the perspective of those who create it.

Award Nominee The 2003 festival was nominated for a Pollstar Industry Award for "Music Festival of the Year", along with several other well-established and prestigious festivals such as the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

Economy In 2003, 30% of Festival attendees came from outside Austin, contributing \$11.2 million into the local economy. (Source: Clickin Research and Austin Convention & Visitors

Bureau) In 2004, the economic contribution from out-of-town Festival attendees is estimated to be \$13 million. (Based on Formulas Provided by The Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau)

Public Image "In the short term, [the Festival] brings in tourist dollars, and that's good. In the mid- to long term, it increases the community's visibility. If someone is thinking of relocating or moving a company, and Austin is a little closer to the top of their mind, (that's) a positive effect." –Jon Hockenyo, Managing Director of Texas Perspectives Inc., an Economic Consulting Firm, to the Austin American-Statesman, September 17, 2003.

"Austin is fortunate enough that the ACL Festival burnishes an already exciting music scene that is the envy of the nation and famous around the world. The Festival is a welcome addition that brings even more energy, glitz and fame to this lively city." –AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN Editorial

Safety In the ACL Festival's two years of existence, 225,000 passed through the gates, and there were only two medical transports and one arrest (for selling counterfeit tickets).

"We insure over 1,500 special events every year and this was the most professionally run, well organized and safe event we have covered." –James Chippendale, President, CSI Entertainment Insurance

Volunteer Support The ACL Festival relies on the efforts of about 550 dedicated volunteers for vital patron services such as providing general information, assisting with accessibility needs, managing the recycling program, and managing the Tag-A-Kid program.

News In Brief

The **Alamo Drafthouse Cinema** is opening its third multi-screen theater in the Austin area later this year, on South Lamar in the former Fiesta Market space at 1120 S. Lamar Boulevard. It is set to open in seven months.

Your assistance is requested in **The Pfluger Bridge Extension Project** to complete the James D. Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge. Our neighborhood association is allowed only one representative, so this requires a serious commitment. The original Pfluger Bridge design included a northwest arm, which was removed from the construction project due to budgetary shortfalls. The northwest arm was intended to cross West Cesar Chavez Street and Sandra Muraida Way and continue across the Sand Beach Reserve, landing just south of the Lamar Underpass. An

additional underpass of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) for bikes and pedestrians, which was not included in the original design, would have been required to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements to connect users to 5th and Lamar. Subsequent planning projects in the Seaholm District, including the Seaholm District Master Plan and the Lance Armstrong Bikeway, require consideration of alternative design solutions for extending the Pfluger Bridge. If interested, please let me know by e-mailing me at DonWLong@austin.rr.com. Community Advisory Group members will be expected to keep their respective organizations abreast of Project progress at defined milestones throughout the Project duration, rather than relying on a single staff briefing at Project completion.

Neighborhood Planning Report

As mentioned in the last newsletter and at our January 27, 2004 general meeting, the City of Austin (COA), after several false starts, has now made Barton Hills a priority in the next round of neighborhood planning. However, given budget cutbacks in staff and resources, the COA Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department (NPZD) is again pushing us back in the calendar, now saying the expected official start is January 2005. This actually works to our advantage for a number of reasons. Before explaining this, let me announce that we have scheduled a Senior Planner from the COA NPZD to give a presentation at our April 13th BHNA General Meeting. The staff member will provide a comprehensive overview of the purpose, benefits, and process of planning.

First, the reduction in city staff and resources creates a unique opportunity for a fully engaged neighborhood association, one that is well-informed and educated about planning and zoning, to take a much more significant role in the development of the plan than under normal circumstances. Moreover, BHNA already has worked hard over the years to cultivate a good working relationship with city officials and staff. With this earned reservoir of good will, we can expect not only to have the benefit of taking a leadership role in becoming educated about planning but also in having a more enhanced collaborative role with city staff. This relationship, crucial to advising stakeholders and shaping the ultimate plan, is perhaps the most significant factor (at least within our circle of influence) in developing the plan we desire that best reflects our values and vision for our community.

To be as fully-engaged and educated as possible and cultivating good working relationships with city staff and other stakeholders involved is my primary goal as BHNA President. I was overwhelmed by the response to the call for volunteers to serve on the Neighborhood Planning Committee. I found it necessary to limit the size to its present 10 members for the sake of an effective work group. But please be assured there will be many and varied opportunities for those who are interested. The first meeting generated insightful discussions and some good leads for further research. In addition, we are drafting a series of questions to discuss with Mark Walters of COA NPZD at our next meeting. The group also is committed to making this process as inclusive as possible and explored creating our own survey, holding "house meetings," and other activities. You are welcome to attend these meetings as an observer but just let me know in advance given limited space.

Second, this delay gives us a greater chance to create a genuinely inclusive and deliberative process before beginning the officially sponsored process as guided by city staff. Why do we want this process to be so inclusive? Because if you do not participate in developing this plan, it will be developed by others for you. This warning cannot be taken lightly. Our growing city is so dynamic, complex, and fluid, with many competing visions and interests, and the Neighborhood Plan is a powerful instrument in

the development process. If we do not embrace it and use it for our own shared vision, others definitely will. For example, our planning zone includes the area west of the Greenbelt to Mopac, which is actually outside our BHNA boundaries. These are stakeholders in the development of our plan, too. Their vision of the future is probably not the same as many of ours. We therefore must not only participate but seek to build good working relationships with all the various stakeholders involved in this process. The greater strength in numbers we can demonstrate, the greater our influence with City Staff and the City Council, who ultimately must approve our plan.

Third, another benefit of more time is that there are a number of factors that make our planning process at this moment in time particularly complex. For example, we need to find how best to write a plan so that it is as bullet-proof as possible. That is, while it is supposed to be held almost inviolate by city staff and the City Council when development and zoning alterations come up, this is not always true. The City Council still has the prerogative to override a Neighborhood Plan, as done just a few weeks ago in a case involving the Bouldin Creek plan. While this may be the exception to the rule, we should still study this issue to determine if there are ways to avoid this type of exception altogether.

It is also complicated by the competing regional planning initiatives underway. It is unclear what the interaction will be between the Envision Ctr. Tx. survey and individual neighborhood plans. Certainly, we must take a larger view of our community in order to responsibly and effectively address the increasing problems of living in such a vital city. The risk is high for great harm to the beauty of our environment and the unique quality of life and sense of community we currently enjoy. To respond to this challenge, the Council and the City has a vested interest in working with Neighborhood Associations and other stakeholders in a consensus-driven planning process. We in turn must be responsible citizens and consider how our plans can fit with larger regional visions of the city's growth.

Finally, there is the added complexity of working with four other Neighborhood Associations in developing our plan (including Zilker, Galindo, and South Lamar and one additional?). This is so City staff can consider broader impacts and issues along this part of the South Lamar corridor. This is unprecedented I believe and there are still a number of questions as to how it will work. We will seek to get these answers from City Staff. In the meantime, we continue to meet on a monthly basis with the South Austin Coalition as a partner with Zilker, Galindo and South Lamar NA's to identify issues, resources, and research questions of mutual interest.

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/default.htm>

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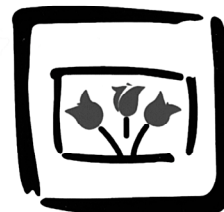
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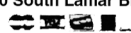
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B.H.N.A. General Meeting

This Issue

Tues. April 13th, 2004
St. Mark's Episcopal Church

APD Report
Dawn Leonard APD

AGENDA

6:00 – 7:00

Meet & Greet Social
BBQ Dinner catered by
Green Mesquite

7:00 – 9:00

General Meeting

**Neighborhood
Planning update**

Mark Walters COA,NPZD

ACL Festival update

Committee Reports

Open Forum

Envision Central Texas	1
ANC Letter	1
Presidents Message	2
Greenbelt Guardians	2
ANC Letter cont	3
St. Mark's dates	3
ACL Festival report	4
News In Brief	4
Neighborhood Planning	5

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Barton Hills News

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