

# Neighborhood Newsletter

An occasional printed publication of the South River City Citizens Neighborhood Association, established 1973



## René Barrera 1958–2019

We regret to share that René Barrera, manager of the Austin parks system's nature preserves, former SRCC President, environmental activist, chimney sweep, Uncle Sam in the local July 4<sup>th</sup> parade, great friend, and many more things, passed away April 15<sup>th</sup>. We cannot overstate the impact he had on Austin's natural environment, and especially on our own neighborhood parks. Here are a few memories our neighbors have shared about René:

"My first visit to Blunn Creek Nature Preserve was in September of 2010, to help René lead a volunteer group from Dell. At that time, I had been a park volunteer for several years but had never seen a preserve in as bad shape as Blunn Creek. Literally hundreds of thousands of ligustrum, chinaberries, nandinas, and others had destroyed native species, habitats, and their ecosystems. With René's guidance, we embarked on an ambitious (perhaps quixotic) project to remove the invasive plants, and restore Blunn Creek with native Texas plants. René tirelessly corralled the involvement of City departments, contractors, SRCC, Blunn Creek Partnership, and countless volunteer groups. René's work, still in progress, stands proudly today. Blunn Creek's grasslands, springs, birds, and wildlife are coming back strong as a living memorial to his devotion."

—Jerry Levenson,  
Blunn Creek Wilderness Preserve Super Volunteer

2014 that led me to start a neighborhood effort that got the city (and later the county) to end the trapping and killing of coyotes. René's civic-mindedness is what made "our little piece of Austin" the great place it is, and what we are working to preserve."

—Pat Valls-Trelles, Sherwood

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## Get Involved with Your Neighborhood Association!

Your neighborhood association needs your help! We have several open volunteer positions providing great opportunities to get involved, meet your neighbors, and make a difference:

**Co-Vice President**—We're looking for someone to work alongside our vice president, Dan Fredine, learning the ropes of the vice presidency and helping to lead the SRCC neighborhood association. Duties shared between co-vice presidents include: Developing agendas for and attending general membership and executive committee meetings, managing area coordinators, processing and forwarding city notices and serving as president in their absence. *Note: This is an elected position, requiring a vote of the general membership.*

Contact: Dan Fredine, SRCC Vice President, [vicepresident@srccatx.org](mailto:vicepresident@srccatx.org)

**Committee Positions**—SRCC maintains several standing committees focusing on different areas of interest, as well as temporary ad-hoc committees to address specific issues or goals. Being a part of a committee is a great way to get involved in an area you are already interested in, or to develop a new interest. The standing committees are: Planning and Zoning, Historic Preservation, Finance, Mobility, Public Safety, Parks and Environment, Schools and Communications. *If you are interested in joining or learning more about any of these committees, please contact the committee chair listed on <http://www.srccatx.org/officers/> or contact Eric Cassidy, SRCC President, [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org)*

**Several committees are currently seeking new chairs!**—Committee chairs are voting members of SRCC's executive committee and have the opportunity to help lead and shape the organization as a whole. General duties of committee chairs include: Staying informed and engaged regarding the committee's area of responsibility, focusing on issues that directly impact the neighborhood (acting as a liaison between SRCC and city and other agencies as needed), providing a contact point for neighbors' questions and concerns, and reviewing issues and making policy recommendations to the executive committee.

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## Fulmore Middle School Name Change and Mural/Crosswalks Project



*Sarah Lively and AISD Superintendent, Dr. Paul Cruz, 12/17/18*



It's official! The AISD board of trustees voted to change the name of Fulmore Middle School to ***Sarah Beth Lively Middle School***, and the new name will be in place for the upcoming school year this August. The new name is in honor of former teacher, Sarah Beth Lively, who taught at Fulmore for 25 years and then volunteered at the school for another 22 years. The school mascot will remain the Falcons, and new logos have been created. Over the summer, signs around the school will be replaced or repainted.

This fall, Lively Middle School students will partner with the City of Austin and SRCC on a project to create a mural along the fence in front of the school, as well as specially painted crosswalks around the school which will both highlight the name change, as well as improve safety. Recently, in May of 2019, a student was hit while crossing Brackenridge during dismissal. We hope that by painting many of the crosswalks that lead to and away from the school with the new logos and student

-created artwork, it will reduce the likelihood that a student will be hit by a car in the future. Students will also be doing PSAs about the crosswalks and getting support from the community for the designs. When students return to campus in August, they will pick up the project started by the Student Council in Spring 2019, through various student organizations and classes that focus on the outdoor spaces around the campus.

Our middle school has a rich history going back to 1886, and with the name change to Lively Middle School this year, students had the idea to create a mural along the fence in front of the school that will chronicle the development of the site from a Ward School in 1886, to the school you see today—Lively Middle School. The students hope to create an iconic City of Austin style mural where people stop to take photos, and learn a little about the history of the school as represented by student and community art. Students hope to collaborate with other artists in our community who want to help commemorate our unique heritage through this project.

Lively Middle School uses project and problem-based learning methods, which means that students are presented with a problem or a design challenge through their course or club activity, design solutions, make presentations to the community stakeholders, and then use that feedback to strengthen the design and implement the solution. The projects are facilitated by adults, but are conceptualized and implemented by students as requirements of their affiliation with clubs and organizations, or enrollment in the outdoor learning program. Students will be expected to survey neighbors, present ideas to groups of stakeholders, use engineering design thinking principles and collaborate with volunteers to make ideas come to action. Please check future SRCC agendas for a presentation by the students, possibly happening in August or September.

*—Gretchen Otto, SRCC Schools Chair,  
and*

*Sherry Lepine,  
Academic Director for Sarah Beth Lively Middle School*

## Neighborhood Watch Update

### We are still in need of volunteers for the Neighborhood Watch Patrols.

Our goal has been and is to get all of the 8 areas of SRCC covered by patrols at some point, for walking, bicycling and/or driving for periods of a minimum of 30 minutes to an hour. There are different viewpoints on what type of patrol is most effective, such as the benefit of patrolling the area around your street so that something or someone out of place is easier to spot. Paramount in this is the goal of having all of the areas patrolled at one time or another, and in particular, at times and in areas where the most criminal activity is occurring, and recognizing that many (if not most) participants are typically not able to patrol late into the night. New magnetic patrol signs for vehicles are available to volunteers at locations in Travis Heights and we are looking for ways to make them available in other neighborhoods of the SRCC. Any ideas on where to make the signs available will be appreciated!

### Neighborhood Watch Patrol works!

Residential and vehicle burglaries have declined rapidly in neighborhoods where patrols are active. The SRCC Neighborhood Watch Patrol Program is an extension of the classic Neighborhood Watch concept, but provides a more proactive element to enhance the ability of a neighborhood to reduce criminal activity. It involves neighborhood volunteers patrolling in clearly-marked vehicles looking for signs of criminal activity, suspicious persons or Vehicles, and providing a visible presence in a neighborhood to deter criminal activity before it occurs. Criminals attempting to operate in a neighborhood patrolled by volunteers become more at risk of detection.

Recent crimes reported in the SRCC neighborhood list-serv such as Nextdoor Neighborhood Travis Heights in the past month in the SRCC Neighborhood Areas include: armed robbery, car burglaries, mail box break-ins, trespassing, front porch package thefts, and indecent exposure.

### Neighborhood Watch Patrols are non-confrontational.

**Volunteers must understand and agree that no volunteer is to confront a suspicious person or approach a suspicious vehicle.**

Instead, they are to call 911 and report their concerns to the Austin Police Department. The Austin Police Department representatives for our area have emphasized that we should not be shy or hesitant about reporting something by calling 911, even if it turns out to be nothing, as it is better to be

safe than sorry. Together, being vigilant about what we observe, it is equally important to make it difficult for criminals to operate in our neighborhood:

- Lock doors and windows of homes and vehicles; do not leave valuables in vehicles or where they otherwise can easily be seen
- Turn porch and other outside lights on at night, particularly in dark or secluded area
- Keep bushes and shrubbery trimmed around windows and doors close to the house
- If possible, install security systems and security lights.

As always, feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or concerns, and **please volunteer!**

—Tom Groce, SRCC Public Safety Chair  
tgroce71@gmail.com

## St. Edward's University: Fireworks Alert

St. Edward's University will welcome students, their families, staff, faculty, and alumni back to campus on

**Saturday, August 24th**

with the annual Hillfest Celebration.

In consideration of the neighborhood, the **fireworks display is scheduled an hour earlier at 9 pm and will conclude within 10 minutes.**

Please be sure to secure your pets to keep them safe.



## Historic Preservation Committee Seeks Volunteers

The neighborhood's Historic Preservation Committee advocates for preservation when needed and serves as a resource to neighbors about neighborhood history and preservation. We vote on recommendations to the SRCC on neighborhood preservation issues, and we're planning a celebration in the coming year to showcase and celebrate the neighborhood's history. Stay tuned for more information! The committee meets quarterly, or more as needed. The committee currently consists of five members and is looking to grow. If you're interested in joining our group, please contact one of the co-chairs, Angela Reed at [reed.as@gmail.com](mailto:reed.as@gmail.com), or Michele Webre at [michele.webre@gmail.com](mailto:michele.webre@gmail.com). You don't need to be an expert in historic preservation or in the neighborhood's history, just have an interest in preserving our eclectic, historic architecture.

## Son of CodeNEXT: LDC Revision Restart

The Land Development Code (LDC) revision process formerly known as CodeNEXT has been restarted by city council and the city manager. On May 2, the city council adopted a policy direction for the city manager which, in most cases, directs city staff to make changes to the LDC that would result in more density than CodeNEXT proposed. The policy direction calls for more new housing units by reducing compatibility standards, reducing site development standards, reducing parking requirements, and creating transition zones next to all corridors in which single-family housing would not be allowed.

This new plan is on a fast track to be brought to council this fall with minimal time for public input. Neighbors in SRCC are concerned about the possible impacts to folks who live near South Congress,

Oltorf, and Riverside, all of which are corridors with transition zones. Other concerns include the loss of impervious cover and heritage trees and resulting exacerbation of flooding danger, the loss of historic homes and neighborhood character through incentivizing demolition, and the decrease of affordable housing by demolishing older, affordable homes and complexes to make way for newer “market rate” luxury buildings.

SRCC has created a new ad-hoc committee to study the proposals, track the code revisions, and communicate our feedback to city council and staff. If you would like to get involved, please contact *Eric Cassady, SRCC President*, at [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org) For more information on the process, please visit <http://www.austintexas.gov/lcd>.

## More Volunteer Opportunities

*continued from page 1*

### Mobility Committee Chair

If you're interested in issues regarding streets, sidewalks, public transit, traffic (including bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles), and other matters of transportation that affect our neighborhood, this position is for you!

Contact: *Eric Cassady, SRCC President*, [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org)

### Historic Preservation Committee Chair

Help preserve the historic character of our neighborhood! The historic preservation committee provides guidance on issues of preservation by reviewing applications for demolition permits, certificates of historic appropriateness, and supporting efforts to create and sustain local historic districts. Contact: *Angela Reed, Committee Chair*,

[reed.as@gmail.com](mailto:reed.as@gmail.com)

### Land Development Code Ad-Hoc Committee Chair

CodeNext may be in the past, but new efforts to revise Austin's land development code are underway. Keep up with what's happening and make sure our neighborhood's voice is heard on these issues by leading this committee. The committee already has several members and a secretary, so plenty of support is available to get the new chair up to speed! Contact: *Eric Cassady, SRCC President*, [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org)

### Outreach Ad-Hoc Committee Chair and Members

A new ad-hoc committee is forming to brainstorm creative ways to increase SRCC's membership, member participation, and engagement with the neighborhood. We are currently seeking a chair and members for this committee, which has not started meeting yet. Contact: *Eric Cassady, SRCC President*, [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org)

Getting involved with SRCC is a great way to get to know your neighbors, stay informed, and make a difference on issues that affect you every day. If you would like to volunteer, but don't see an opportunity here that seems right for you, please contact **Eric Cassady**, [president@srccatx.org](mailto:president@srccatx.org) to learn about additional ways you can participate.

## Memories of René Barrera

“I remember René helping guide 2nd grade field trips from Travis Heights Elementary to the Blunn Creek Preserve. We started creekside near the school with the all-important plant identification lesson of poison ivy. He added willows and wildflowers to teach that good and bad in life are mixed together, and we can learn to tell them apart. Then we trooped down Eastside to the preserve. René would lead them to an ammonite mold in the creekbed, mollusk shells in the exposed limestone, and native springs. He’d recount the legend of Mr. Blunn’s demise, and show more plants, including the prickly pear and its risks. The kids were especially impressed, and sometimes anxious, when standing on the ancient volcano. René would assure them that it would not blow up anytime soon. For many kids, this was their first exposure to nature outside concrete and cut grass. The lessons he gave them, and us, were as much about the stewardship within us as the environment around us.”

—Steve Jackobs, *Alta Vista*

“René was dedicated to the Blunn Creek Preserve and through that, he and Brother Daniel Lynch (a beloved professor and ecologist at St. Edwards) became close friends. Because of his love and dedication to Br. Daniel, René extended open arms to all of us at St. Edward’s. He spent endless hours helping educate our students about the benefits of the Preserve and the importance of restoring it to some semblance of its original condition. Above all, René was a kind person who brought education and happiness to so many people. We have lost a great friend but we have gained so much because of René.”

—William Quinn,

*Chair of Biological Sciences, St. Edwards University*



“In 1999, Home Depot proposed to buy part of Ascension Cemetery from the Holy Cross Brothers to develop a large store and two fast-food restaurants at the corner of Woodward and I-35. Our neighborhood was up in arms. There was immediate opposition, and René joined the SRCC leadership to try to stop the sale and construction. Unfortunately, City Council made it clear that they would not oppose the project, so we entered into negotiations with Home Depot. One of our greatest concerns was the increase in dirty runoff and erosion from such a development. After months of negotiation and with René’s invaluable knowledge of the creek and wilderness area, Home Depot agreed to cede about one-third of the land to the city (at the time valued at over \$2 million) as a conservation easement. We were saved from having the entire area paved-over for a couple of fast food vendors.”

—Betty Weed, *Alta Vista*

“Back in the 90s René was working to reintroduce native species to Blunn Creek Preserve. He asked who had Turk’s Cap in their yards. I happened to have a massive oversupply and René himself came over to pick the seed pods. I imagine there are many Turk’s Caps growing in the Preserve now, thanks to his efforts.”

—Donna Morrow, *Terrace*



## 2019 Travis Heights Art Trail

Join your neighbors  
for the  
17th Annual Travis Heights Art Trail  
Nov. 2-3  
11am-5pm each day

Stroll the streets of our wonderful neighborhood  
as you visit the homes and studios of local artists.

For more information, please visit  
<http://travisheightsarttrail.org>  
or email  
[info@travisheightsarttrail.org](mailto:info@travisheightsarttrail.org)

See you this fall!

# SRCC Meetings

1st Monday of most months at 7:15pm at  
Life in the City United Methodist Church, 205 E. Monroe

We thank all of our officers, area coordinators, committees, and representatives for their dedication to our community!  
Call your area coordinator for SRCC questions, volunteer opportunities, or to help deliver newsletters.

<u>Area Coordinators</u>	<u>Standing Committees</u>	<u>Representatives</u>
<b>Area 1</b> Claudette Lowe 512-447-1514 Marylin Orton 512-440-7770	<b>Planning &amp; Zoning</b> Russell Fraser (Chair) russell_fraser@msn.com  Jean Mather Kent Anschutz Marc Davis David Swann Ian Reddy Sarah Campbell	<b>Austin Neighborhood Council</b> Gabriel Pereira ancrep@srccatx.org  <b>City District 3</b> Kim Lanzilloti 512-658-8565  <b>City District 9</b> <i>Volunteer Needed</i>
<b>Area 2</b> Russell Fraser 512-771-9736 Eugene Kubelka 512-441-9262	<b>Historic Preservation</b> Michele Webre (Co-Chair) 512-422-1262 Angela Reed (Co-Chair) reed.as@gmail.com Melanie Martinez Ian Reddy Bob Gee	<b>East Riverside (EROC)</b> Toni House 512-447-8090  <b>Greater South River City NPCT (GSRC)</b> Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986
<b>Area 3a</b> Jo Webber 512-441-3117 Sara Newsom 512-444-8292	<b>Finance</b> Sam Martin (Chair) 512-441-5222 Will Andrews	<b>South Central Coalition</b> Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986  <b>South Central Waterfront</b> Wendy Todd (Chair) wendypricetodd@gmail.com
<b>Area 3b</b> Brooks Kasson 512-444-8100 Marc Davis 512-656-2841	<b>Mobility</b> <i>Chair Volunteer Needed</i> Mike Sledge Jeff Kessel	<b>St. Edwards</b> Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986  <b>Travis Heights Art Trail</b> Charlotte Bell 512-447-2150
<b>Area 4a</b> Sam Martin 512-441-5222 Megan Spencer mary7megan@yahoo.com	<b>Public Safety</b> Tom Groce (Chair) tgroce@gmail.com	<b>Travis Park Apt/Austin Interfaith</b> Terry Franz 512-447-8786
<b>Area 4b</b> Kris Asthalter 512-443-4963	<b>Parks &amp; Environment</b> David Todd (Chair) 512-416-0400	<b>South Central Affordable CDC</b> J.B Sigmon jb.sigmon@gmail.com <b>SRCC Officers</b>
<b>Area 5</b> Neal Nuwash 512-462-9093 Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986	<b>Schools</b> Gretchen Otto (Chair) 512-227-1507	<b>President Eric Cassidy</b> president@srccatx.org <b>Vice President Dan Fredine</b> vicepresident@srccatx.org
<b>Area 6</b> Rachel McClure 512-326-5572 Laura Gass Weaver gassweaver@sbcglobal.net	<b>Communications</b> Betty Weed (Chair) communications@srccatx.org Gretchen Otto (Newsletter Editor) Maia Reeves (Newsletter Designer)	<b>Secretary Mary Friedman</b> secretary@srccatx.org <b>Treasurer Oliver Caruso</b> treasurer@srccatx.org
<b>Area 7</b> Richard Whymark richard@apaproductions.com		<b>Membership Secretary Carol Martin</b> membership@srccatx.org
<b>Area 8</b> Kim Lanzillotti 512-658-8565 Vicky Moerbe 512-442-5678		

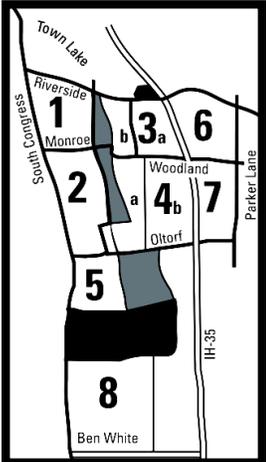


Membership Levels		
# of Years	Individual	Family
1	\$20	\$35
2	\$35	\$65
3	\$50	\$95

**Become a member and be eligible to vote!** Join or renew online ([www.srccatx.org](http://www.srccatx.org)) or at meetings. To pay via PayPal, go to [www.srccatx.org/membership-dues/](http://www.srccatx.org/membership-dues/). You can also send a check made payable to SRCC, along with this completed form to:

**SRCC, Attention: Treasurer, P.O. Box 40632, Austin, TX. 78704**

**Notes**—for family memberships, please provide the names of each family member (adults residing at the same address). When paying via PayPal, you can include the names of family members in the *Instructions to Merchant* or *Shipping Details* areas. Dues are **not** tax-deductable. If dues lapse, renew at a SRCC meeting and be eligible to vote. New members can vote after 28 days.



Number of Years (*circle one*)

1      2      3

Membership (*circle one*)

Individual      Family

Membership Fee Due:	\$ _____
Additional Donation to SRCC General Fund:	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL:</b>	\$ _____

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

SRCC Area (*see map*): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email (s): \_\_\_\_\_