

50th Anniversary Edition

Neighborhood News

Est. 1972

October 2022

srccatx.org



A Travis Heights resident, age 6, enjoys the newly installed sculpture at Little Stacy Park, 'The Magic Portal', by local artist James Talbot. The sculpture was unveiled at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on August 28th, 2022. See KaBoom! article on pg. 7 for more on Little Stacy Park.

South River City Citizens Association Celebrates 50 Years

History of an Urban Neighborhood

How did our area become the first Austin neighborhood to plan its own development? It started with Jean Mather. A landscape architecture graduate from Harvard and former employee of the Stockholm Parks Department, Jean moved to Austin in 1961. She soon became very active in local neighborhood

planning and environmental concerns. When major changes in zoning, building, and roadways began in the 70s and 80s, we were lucky to have Jean living in our neighborhood. In 1972, when the City of Austin announced it would seek neighborhood input in the Austin Tomorrow Goals Program (a citywide planning effort to guide urban development), Jean and a few friends, including Huston Tillotson College professor Harriet Buxkemper, saw an opportunity to be heard by the city.

While Jean's interest in a neighborhood group included participating in setting city-wide goals, Harriet's interest was much more personal. It began one fateful morning in 1972, when she was awakened by a loud noise. She ran down the hill from her home on Betty Jo Drive and saw bulldozers razing ancient oak trees. The razed area extended from her street to the IH-35 frontage road. In response to her demand to know what was going on, a reluctant foreman explained the property owner planned a 3-story *(continued)*

50 Years of SRCC



Jean Mather (left) in 2002 and Harriet Buxkemper (right) in 2014, co-founders of SRCC.

office building with parking garage on the hillside. The development meant indiscriminate destruction of ancient oaks and installation of a new road to the building through her street to connect it to the access road. As the development threatened the neighborhood's trees and quiet character, Harriet was incensed! She could not allow such projects to ruin her neighborhood. She and her husband, Buck, a teacher at Travis High School, belonged to Faith Presbyterian Church (FPC). They began informing church members who lived nearby, and anyone else who was interested, about the damage to the peaceful neighborhood. They proposed an association to protect the neighborhood. They met at FPC, Grace United Methodist Church, and at surrounding local schools, and recruited hundreds of families to help plan their actions, draft petitions, get them signed and presented to officials, all to protect the neighborhood's residential character. It was just a matter of time before Jean and Harriet met and agreed to work together. They soon realized that an engaged resident group could have a significant impact on their future, so they decided to form the South River City Citizens neighborhood association. The group adopted as its boundaries those of Travis Heights Elementary School. These volunteers advocated on issues pertaining to neighborhoods and became a resource for neighbors trying to navigate city procedures and negotiate with the city departments, boards, and commissions that shaped policies relevant to residential neighborhoods. SRCC residents sought to preserve and protect natural environments and to manage land use so that it was compatible with single family zoning. The SRCC organizers even invited input from a UT architecture class and created their own 'master plan' for the neighborhood.

In its formative years, SRCC, a truly grassroots association, had a significant impact on the City's Tomorrow Plan. Jean's vision was not limited to a single neighborhood. Over the years, she served on a number of important city commissions and boards, and became a well-known and respected city leader. As an SRCC representative, backed by a large and tenacious SRCC membership, Jean's opinions were influential across Austin. Without a doubt, Jean, Harriet, and the other SRCC founders forged an association that helped define and protect the SRCC territory and identity. Rather than operate only in response to crises, the SRCC founders, and their successors, operated in a proactive manner. Demanding and receiving "a seat at the policy table," they endeavored to be part of project planning from the beginning. This approach enabled them to understand project details that might adversely affect the SRCC area and to develop effective resistance. They also worked to create and maintain positive relationships with city staffers and council members and to craft compromises when possible. They believed finding ways to shape policy could be more enduring and beneficial to communities, not only to the SRCC neighborhood, but throughout the city.

SRCC's primary environmental priorities were preservation of creeks, trees, and green spaces, control of oak wilt disease, prevention of flooding, and infrastructure matters. Land-use concerns included mitigating the adverse impact of roadways, traffic, and business growth on the area. Following are examples of some of the projects SRCC has undertaken during the past 50 years. *(continued)*

50 Years of SRCC

Impact of Roadways on Communities

1981: Riverside Dr.

Although the Riverside Drive at Travis Heights Blvd. intersection was extremely busy, there was only a stop sign to manage traffic. SRCC requested a Traffic Study to evaluate feasibility of installing a traffic light. The Urban Transportation Department concluded a light was not justified. However, SRCC continued to advocate and ultimately obtained a crucial traffic light at Travis Heights Blvd, as well as a hybrid pedestrian crossing at Alameda and Riverside.

1983: E. Live Oak Street

IH-35 frontage road allowed traffic directly onto Live Oak as a short cut to Congress Avenue. Because Live Oak was the route students and families used to walk to and from Travis High School, Travis Heights Elementary, Fulmore (now Lively) Middle School, and Stacy Park, this posed a dangerous situation. SRCC negotiated a reconfiguration so that traffic went primarily to Oltorf.

1986: Double Deck

Texas Highway Department studied putting a double-deck design for IH-35 from Town Lake Bridge to Ben White Blvd. SRCC opposed the idea raising concerns about negative impact on the surrounding residential communities.

Land Use Issues

2000—Home Depot

When construction of Home Depot was proposed, SRCC negotiated an agreement with the corporation that included: (a) a conservation easement of 4 acres on Woodward; (b) limited impervious cover; (c) provided water quality retention that exceeded city requirements; (d) limited entrances (one at IH-35 and one on Woodward); and (e) funded a \$50,000 grant that was used for park projects such as Heritage Oaks pocket park and additional work for Blunn Creek Preserve.

Environmental Highlights

1980 – 1982: Blunn Creek Wilderness

See article on the creation of the Blunn Creek Nature Preserve, pg. 6.

Beyond creating the preserve, SRCC's efforts to protect the area creeks led to the creation of Austin's Creek Ordinance that manages construction near creeks.

1982: Stacy Park

SRCC worked with City departments to develop trails through Stacy Park. This led to the creation of a Park Management Plan whereby residents would be involved in shaping their parks. See article on Little Stacy Park, pg. 7.

1985: Oak Wilt Disease

Because SRCC became active in support of the City's efforts to combat the fatal disease, we were selected to be an experimental tree planting program with the Texas Forest Service. Strategic trenching was recommended. Although residents paid for their own disease management procedures, SRCC set up an Oak Wilt Prevention Fund and ramped up education on best practices to prevent disease spreading. The trenching was eventually completed in 2009.

Clearly, the SRCC has had a strong, long history of effective civic engagement. As our neighborhood progresses into the 21st century, we encourage all its residents to learn more about what South River City Citizens represents and get involved. You can start by visiting the website (srccatx.org) where you will find links to meeting information, current issues that we face, and how to connect with others who want to preserve this unique and historic neighborhood.

We will continue to share other challenges and successes we have experienced throughout the years in future SRCC newsletters. Come join us!

--Ruth Casarez & Carol Martin

Note: Special thanks go to Alexa Buxkemper, Elloa Mathews, Carol Martin, and Betty Weed who contributed valuable research, personal memories, photos, and drafting ideas, all of which led to this anniversary article.

Our Community



2022 Travis Heights Art Trail

This year we celebrate the 20th year of this historic Travis Heights Art Trail. Please join us on **November 5th and 6th** to enjoy this two-day interactive art event! You can walk throughout the beautiful Travis Heights neighborhood and appreciate a variety of arts & crafts from 35 plus Austin artists. In addition, the following nonprofit organizations will showcase their artwork: Art from the Streets, Down Home Ranch, Marbridge House, and Adventures Academy.

This Art Trail, the only grassroots show entirely run and managed by the artists themselves, is one of the oldest neighborhood shows in Austin. This annual event showcases some of the city's best professional artists who are available to talk with visitors about their work and experiences. The fall Art Trail has become a wonderful tradition and contributes to art and artists by: (1) helping to create a stronger community of fine artists and craftspeople in the Austin area providing them with commercial and educational benefits; (2) giving the public access to discuss art with local artists; and (3) contributing financially to the local South Congress businesses through increased tourism.

The Travis-Heights Art Trail is supported by SRCC and the City of Austin. Look for the signs and banners and join us on November 5 and 6 from 11 am–5 pm.

For more information about the Artists and Sponsors, plus to find a trail map, go to travisheightsarttrail.org or Charlotte Bell at info@travisheightsarttrail.org

--Charlotte Bell

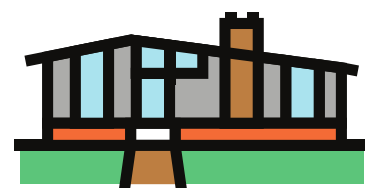
Sherwood Oaks

SRCC Area 5 –Sherwood Oaks—is a distinctly mid-century subdivision. It was built in the 1960s to accommodate Bergstrom Airforce GIs returning from the Korean War. Almost all of the houses were about 1000 square feet, 3-bedroom, 1-bath with carport that appealed to young families. To buy their homes, most of the airmen used VA loans that complied with the recently enacted Fair Housing Act which resulted in Sherwood Oaks quickly becoming an integrated neighborhood. The residents found the area very desirable as it was not far from Bergstrom AF Base where families could get their medical care and buy their groceries. Many also worked at the nearby IRS campus, the postal service, city and state offices, and the University of Texas.

The Sherwood Oaks community became a cohesive group and it set about to confront some problems that faced the neighborhood, such as proposed unacceptable development in adjacent areas and lack of appropriate zoning for their family-oriented neighborhood. SRCC members who lived north of Oltorf encountered similar problems and soon recognized they shared common interests with Sherwood Oaks residents and invited them to join the association. Working together as part of a stronger group, Sherwood Oaks residents finally succeeded in getting Single Family 2 zoning from the city in the late 70s.

Area 5 residents have a rich history of working hard to make Sherwood Oaks a friendly, quiet neighborhood filled with natural beauty and diversity. To read much more about how Sherwood Oaks came to be and how it has flourished throughout the years, please see [Sherwood Oaks Neighborhood: 1960 and Beyond](http://srccatx.org/sherwood-oaks-1960s) at srccatx.org/sherwood-oaks-1960s.

Note: the above article is an abbreviated version of [Sherwood Oaks Neighborhood: 1960 and Beyond](#) written by Elloa Mathews, David Swann and Neal Nuwash.



Our Community

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Statesman PUD Update

In April 2022, Austin City Council approved on the first of three readings a substantial amendment to a legacy Planned Unit Development (PUD) for 305 South Congress, 19 acres of the 97 acre South Central Waterfront District (SCW).

The proposal calls for six towers with heights from 285'-525', over 3 million square feet of commercial office, residential, hotel, retail and restaurant and parking for 3,000 vehicles below grade. The project has nearly tenfold more height and square footage than the existing Statesman facility, but it does not deliver the expected community benefits for parkland, affordable housing, and access. SRCC and the Greater South River City Neighborhood Planning Contact Team opposed this application filed by the Cox family and Endeavor Real Estate in June 2019.

The opposition to this PUD is two-fold: first, that an equitable Regulating Plan that dictates the contribution of each parcel has not yet been adopted for the entirety of the SCW; and second, that a financial tool to incentivize the goals of the 2016 South Central Waterfront Vision Framework Plan has not been funded. While these important prerequisites remain unmet, the applicant is taking all additional entitlements and requiring the city to subsidize the infrastructure, including affordable housing, parkland, and roadways.

Representatives from SRCC and other interested citizen groups have participated as stakeholders and officers in all planning and implementation efforts, yet recently our voices have been ignored. Public advocates remain committed to the overriding goal set out in the 1985 Town Lake Corridor Study "to provide a more harmonious interaction and transition between urban development and the parkland and shoreline." At this point, that objective is at serious risk of being lost.

For more information on this issue, please visit: austintexas.gov/page/south-central-waterfront

--Contributed by SRCC Representatives to South Central Waterfront Advisory Board: Sherri Ancipink (current), Tom Groce (2019-2021), Wendy Todd (2017-2019)

Bond Proposal Includes \$252 Million for Fully Modernized New Travis High School

The Austin Independent School District has proposed a significant bond issue, which is on the November 8, 2022 ballot. As required by state law, the proposal will appear as the following three propositions

- Prop A: \$2,316,025,000 to fund projects, e.g., school modernizations, security improvements and critical facility renovations throughout the district
- Prop B: \$75,541,000 to fund technology upgrades, e.g., student and teacher devices, infrastructure improvements, and other technology upgrades
- Prop C: \$47,434,000 to fund improvements to Nelson Field, Burger Athletic Complex, Delco Activity Center and Noack Sports Complex

Among AISD's bond priorities are to (1) provide safety and security to all schools in the district, (2) repair aging equipment, e.g., HVAC, plumbing, roofing which result in increased annual expenditures if left as is, and (3) replace or modernize 25 campuses that are inadequate for student needs and very expensive to maintain.

If passed, the bond, would greatly benefit the three schools in SRCC's area. Travis High School would be the biggest beneficiary as it would be completely rebuilt behind the current campus. Lively Middle School would receive electrical, heating and a/c improvements, as well as upgrades and improvements to its kitchen (\$4.2 million). Travis Heights Elementary would receive \$3.5 million in electrical improvements and roofing repairs. Both would also get mental health/wellness areas and outdoor learning spaces or playgrounds.

AISD indicates the bond proposal would not increase their property tax rate because it plans to reduce the maintenance and operations portion of the school tax rate by 6.5 cents this year due to rising property values, and thus, the bond proposal would not affect the tax rate for this school year. Further, property owners are expected to see an additional estimated 3-cent reduction in the school tax rate next year for a total reduction of 9.5 cents per \$100 in taxable value over the next two years.

--Gretchen Otto

Our Community

Blunn Creek Nature Preserve: A Neighborhood Triumph

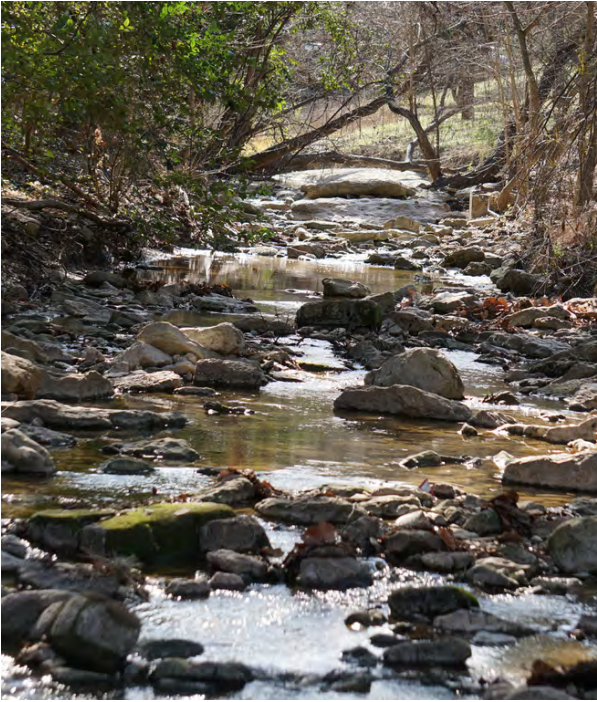


Photo courtesy of Mary Janecek-Friedman

"This park is a hidden gem." "What a lovely place to go for a hike!" "This is a little piece of heaven in the urban jungle." These are all recent Google reviews of the Blunn Creek Nature Preserve, located in our neighborhood between Oltorf St. and St. Edwards Dr.

As it is in today's Austin, forty years ago this wilderness area was a favorite of environmental and nature groups. They would point out that it was one of the last remaining wilderness areas within the city, containing twenty-three species of trees, twenty-five species of shrubs and flowers, as well as over sixty types of birds, not to mention fauna including foxes, rabbits, and armadillos.

What is most remarkable, though, is, had SRCC not fought like heck for the city to buy the tract, this wilderness would have been paved over. In the 1970s the city targeted South Austin for growth and development, and this 38½ acre oasis of trails, cliffs, and a spring-fed stream became a target for intense development. The owner sought to build 464 condominiums and numerous offices. This would have meant cutting down ancient oak trees and paving over the area with buildings, parking lots, and streets. Compounding the situation, the development would have forced the city to widen Oltorf and cut St.

Edwards Drive through to Congress, making it a connector to the interstate.

SRCC and others had asked the city repeatedly in the 70s to buy the land, but their requests were denied. A parks bond in 1981 that would have included funds to buy the tract was narrowly defeated, 49% to 51%.

Some residents were disheartened, but in 1982 others rallied, and along with allies in the city continued the fight. Another vote was set for September of that year. Gene and Ernestine Ray, along with other neighbors formed the Blunn Creek Wilderness Committee. They got to work. "It was a madhouse all summer," said Ernestine Ray. She used her artistic talents to create flyers and signs. She and others coordinated phone pools, calling hundreds of voters. The neighbors led tours of the park, wrote letters to the editor, and on election day drove voters to their precincts. The proposition won 72% to 28%. Today, thanks to generations of neighborhood volunteers and many others, the park remains a wilderness treasure.

--Betty Weed

Nature Calls



Photo courtesy of Mary Janecek-Friedman

Come one, come all, and meet us at Blunn Creek Nature Preserve, 900 St. Edwards Dr. entrance. Since 2005, volunteers have worked in the Preserve pulling out invasive plants, planting native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees, picking up trash, improving trails, and simply spending more time outdoors with new friends. We continue to meet regularly on the first Saturday of the month as well as on special occasions. So please come join us; we guarantee you will enjoy yourself and feel quite energized afterward! Visit blunncreekpartnership.org or contact David Todd at dtodd@wt.org for more information.

--David Todd

200 Academy Drive

We are lucky to live in a neighborhood rich in history both architecturally and culturally. History, of course, is filled with positive and negative memories, depending on our outlook. Fairview Park dates to the 1800s with historic homes, bungalows, and newly constructed homes. It is adjacent to commercial development that reaches into the neighborhood from S. Congress which was the old San Antonio Highway.

In 1951, 200 Academy was home to the Terrace Motor Hotel, a large tract with frontage on S. Congress and Academy Dr. In the 70s Willie Nelson bought part of the property and began running a music venue there. Over the years there were various forms of Willie's "club," and all of them ended with conflicts with area residents relating to traffic, parking, noise, late night disturbance and drunken patrons.

In 1986 Fairview Park neighbors created the first Neighborhood Conservation Combining District (NCCD). The governing document restricted the property at 200 Academy to Office and Multifamily uses only. But in 2019, a new owner decided that bringing back a large music venue (which no longer had street access to S. Congress) was an appropriate use. He argued a music venue there was "historical". He proposed uses as before plus a 17,500sqf music venue.

This new use was in conflict with the NCCD and with the adopted SRCC Neighborhood Plan; it required filing a change to the plan and a zoning change. Neighbors worked hard for over 2 years with the city staff, the applicant, council member Tovo to modify the music venue request. SRCC did not fight the proposed mixed uses but argued the music venue did not hold historic significance and most importantly was NOT appropriate next to single family residences, since its only street access was through Academy Drive. Hotels Saint Cecelia and Magdalena agreed. We asked the music venue be reduced to a size similar to the Continental Club.

In June 2022, a compromise of 10,000sqf of music venue along with the other uses was approved by the city council. We appreciate the hard work council member Tovo and her staff provided to get this reduction even if we wanted more.

This experience has shown sentimentality around our music legends and love of live music can overwhelm the interests of older inner-city neighborhoods. History tells us the original use of 200 Academy was a hotel/convention center; the later club use was never a good fit near single family homes. That history should have been used to inform, not preserve. As SRCC residents who have lived near downtown from recent to many years back, we look to our history from a residential neighborhood perspective and wish to preserve that, not to be phased into the downtown milieu.

--Laura Toups

KaBoom!

Have you ever noticed the little sign at the Stacy Park playscape that reads: "This playground was made possible by the efforts of the Home Depot, this community, and KaBOOM!?"

Twenty years ago this October, Home Depot approached SRCC and asked if we wanted to partner with the national nonprofit KaBoom! to upgrade the park. KaBoom! works to build kid-designed playspaces by pairing community groups with corporate sponsors to build safe and attractive playgrounds.

The playground equipment in place in 2002, designed for two-to five-year olds with no special needs, served a limited number of park visitors. The new equipment we installed was designed for two-to twelve-year olds and included features making it accessible for all children.

As part of the project, SRCC was responsible for raising \$20k for the playground. Fellow neighbors Jennie Burger, Cathy Crane and countless others put in scores of hours and passion to hit the goal. With the Stacy Park turtle as our mascot, we raised funds by holding raffles, garage sales, selling T-shirts, and even selling water on South Congress on First Thursdays.

Neighborhood musicians Jon Dee Graham, Michael Hall, Nathan Hamilton, Michael Fracasso, and others supported our effort by performing concerts in the park. They attracted friends and fans from outside the neighborhood, which sparked a spirit of giving that generated donations to help put us over the top.

One of the signature features of a KaBoom! project is a massive "build" day. Volunteers braved wet and sloppy conditions to install new playground equipment, tables, benches and landscaping. Home Depot provided more than 100 volunteers, while SRCC supplied an additional 50.

When I walk through the park today and see children 20 years younger than my own playing on the same equipment, I get a warm feeling in my heart. I made life-time friends at Little Stacy; sometimes, I just met families for one day but all the while, I raised my kids there. It will always be a special place to me and I suspect to all the other volunteers who made it happen. It is so rewarding to see the next generation enjoy the KaBoom! improvements and also heartening to see updated changes taking hold as well.

SRCC plans to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this project at a later date. We hope you will join us then.

--Sherri Woolley Ancipink

South River City Citizens Meetings

3rd Tuesdays of most months starting at 7:00 p.m.

See srccatx.org for details about how to attend.

We thank all of our officers, area coordinators, committees, and representatives for their dedication to our community! Contact your area coordinators for SRCC questions, volunteer opportunities, or to help out at a meeting.

Area Coordinators

Area 1

Volunteers needed

Area 2

Russell Fraser 512-771-9736
Volunteer needed

Area 3a

Jo Webber 512-441-3117
Sara Newsom 512-444-8292

Area 3b

Jason Molin, jason.molin@gmail.com
Volunteer needed

Area 4a

Sam Martin 512-470-1494
Carol Martin Csmartin4@icloud.com

Area 4b

Sarah Campbell 512-638-9255
secampbell1949@gmail.com
Volunteer needed

Area 5

Neal Nuwash 512-462-9093
David Swann 512-447-6094

Area 6

Rachel McClure 512-326-5572
Laura Gass Weaver
gassweaver@sbcglobal.net

Area 7

Volunteers needed

Area 8

Kim Lanzillotti 512-658-8565
Vicky Moerbe 512-442-5678

Standing Committees

Planning & Zoning

Sarah Campbell (Chair)
planning-zoning@srccatx.org

Historic Preservation

Paula Kothmann (Chair) 512-470-2405
paula.kothmann@gmail.com
Susan Armstrong Fisher (Co-Chair)
skasusan@gmail.com
Angela Reed (Co-Chair) reed.as@gmail.com

Finance

Sam Martin (Chair) 512-470-1494
financecommittee@srccatx.org

Mobility

Mark Thompson (Chair)
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Public Safety

Tom Groce (Chair)
tgroce71@gmail.com

Parks & Environment

David Todd (Chair) 512-416-0400

Schools

Gretchen Otto (Chair) 512-227-1507

Communications

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Ruth Casarez (Newsletter Editor)
newsletter@srccatx.org
Meghan Fernandes (Newsletter Designer)

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Austin Neighborhood Council

Betty Weed ancrep@srccatx.org

East Riverside (EROC)

Toni House 512-447-8090

Greater South River City NPCT (GSRC)

South Central Coalition
Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986

South Central Waterfront

Sherri Wooley Ancipink
sherri@ancipink.com

St. Edwards

Elloa Mathews 512-442-6986

Travis Heights Art Trail

Charlotte Bell 512-447-2150

Travis Park Apt/Austin Interfaith

Terry Franz 512-447-8786

South Central Affordable CDC

Gretchen Otto 512-227-1507

SRCC Officers

President Wendy Todd

president@srccatx.org

Vice President Noah Balch

vicepresident@srccatx.org

Co-Vice President Kenneth Burnett

covicepresident@srccatx.org

Secretary Dan Fredine

secretary@srccatx.org

Treasurer Will Andrews

treasurer@srccatx.org

Membership Secretary Mary Friedman

membership@srccatx.org

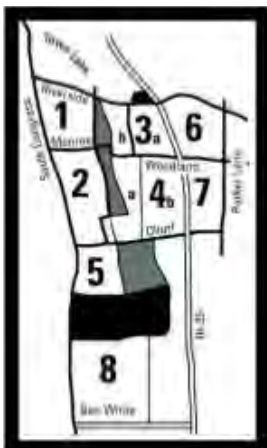
Membership

Become a member and be eligible to vote! Join or renew online at srccatx.org. To pay via PayPal, go to srccatx.org/membership-dues/ or send a check made payable to SRCC, along with this completed form to:

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

Family memberships: provide names of each family member (adults residing at the same address). When paying via PayPal, include the names of family members in the Instructions to Merchant or Shipping Details areas.

Dues are not tax-deductible. If dues lapse, renew before a meeting and be eligible to vote. New members can vote after 28 days.



Membership Levels

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

Membership Fees Due: \$ _____

Additional Donation
to SRCC General Fund: \$ _____

TOTAL: \$ _____

Date: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

SRCC Area (see map): _____ Phone(s): _____

Email(s): _____

Number of years (circle one): 1 2 3

Membership (circle one): Individual Family