

Neighborhood News

Est. 1972

May 2023

srccatx.org



A Live Oak tree flourishes in front of a home on Newning Avenue in Travis Heights. Photo by Brenda Ladd.

We Cherish Our Trees

The Neighborhood Fight Against Oak Wilt

Our neighborhood has shown it can take on challenging projects* to improve our community, but none has been as difficult and impressive as the multiple battles with oak wilt.

Oak wilt, a lethal fungal disease, has been in Texas for decades. By the 1970s, millions of oaks in Texas were lost to oak wilt, including

several on the St. Edward's campus.

Over the last 35 years, neighbors have worked with one another multiple times to raise money and collaborate with the city to stop outbreaks—even as oak wilt wrought havoc in other parts of the city and Texas. Our neighborhood's fight against oak wilt began in the 1980s.

1986. Travis Heights neighbors saw a number of trees near their homes dying of an unknown disease, later identified by arborists as the

dreaded oak wilt. Nadia Rice, then co-president of SRCC, told the Statesman that the residents "are upset because many of their live oaks have been there for hundreds of years and they know that if they lose a tree like that there's no way they'll replace it in their lifetimes." By 1987, more than 200 trees were lost in an 8-block area near Mary, Lockhart, and Brackenridge Streets.

To raise money for tree removal and trenching, the neighborhood put on the first Live Oak Festival in the *(continued)*

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fall of 1987. The Festival featured music, politicians, comedians, and a tour of historic homes with folks going from house to house aboard a Cap Metro Dillo. Trenching and removal of diseased trees successfully contained the outbreak but festivals continued in 1988 and 1989 to maintain awareness.

1996. In the mid 90s, another outbreak erupted near the corner of Hillside and Academy. Again, the neighborhood pulled together to raise money. Neighbors worked with the city and the forest service to trench almost a half mile of streets and yards. That trench helped protect a large part of the Fairview Park area.

2004. More diseased trees were found further south of the 1996 trench in an area stretching to Newning and Park Lane. Through an innovative collaboration between SRCC and the city, a utility project (gas line update) was combined with the work of the arborists to a make better, deeper trench. Even so, it was expensive. Residents and businesses raised over \$100,000 for that project.

2009. Oak Wilt jumped the line along Park Lane. SRCC and local residents took action again and raised money to extend the trench further along Newning and across several homeowners' yards to Drake Avenue.

Our repeated efforts have paid off. Our neighborhood has been clear of oak wilt for almost 14 years. However, we must remain vigilant. With so many trees suffering untreated wounds in the ice storms of recent years, we are still vulnerable. A new threat is literally on our horizon: oak wilt has broken out in the Bouldin Creek neighborhood, near Christopher Street and Bouldin Avenue. We must be ready to act again.

For a thorough explanation of Oak Wilt and how to help prevent its spread, see TexasOakWilt.org.

-- Betty Weed, Chair, Communications

* As indicated in our anniversary edition, we are including this article as another example of projects SRCC has undertaken throughout the years.

Farewell

Hello neighbors!

If we are not already acquainted, welcome to the neighborhood. To those of you I know, thank you for helping me as SRCC President during the past year. It is a position that I took to honor the founders, officers, and volunteers that comprise the South River City Citizens group for the last half century. All of you have made my work more meaningful. The future of this historic neighborhood relies on our ability to continue planning and managing for change.

Please join SRCC and get involved. Your participation in our community matters. Active members have enhanced the quality of life in this part of town. Let us continue with that same sense of purpose.

-- Wendy Price Todd, Outgoing President, SRCC

SRCC Elections

An SRCC general membership meeting was held via Zoom on Tuesday evening, April 18, 2023. The meeting, for which there was a great turn out, included a full agenda and the election of new SRCC officers. There was also a special presentation related to the city's Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) policy plan and its impact on SRCC neighborhoods

1. ETOD. A link to the presentation can be found in the minutes of the meeting, available at the SRCC website:

srccatx.org/category/agendasandminutes

2. Election. Following the presentation and discussion of other SRCC business, Dan Fredine, the nominations committee chair, presented the following slate:

President: Noah Balch

Vice President: Vacant

Co-Vice President: Vacant

Treasurer: Will Andrews

Secretary: Chris Frishman-Phillips

Membership Secretary: Mary Friedman

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Austin Neighborhoods Council Rep.: Betty Weed

South Central Waterfront Advisory Board Rep: Sherri Ancipink

Area Coordinator - Area 1: Chris Frishman-Phillips

Area Coordinator - Area 2: Russell Fraser

Area Coordinator - Area 3a: Jo Webber

Area Coordinator - Area 3b: Brooks Kasson

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 4a: Sam Martin

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 4a: Carol Martin

Area Coordinator - Area 4b: Sarah Campbell

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 5: Neal Nuwash

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 5: Jon David Swann

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 6: Rachel McClure

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 6: Laura Gass Weaver

Area Coordinator - Area 7: Vacant

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 8: Kim Lanzillotti

Area Co-Coordinator - Area 8: Vicky Moerbe

Dan noted there were still several vacant positions. When the floor was opened for any further nominations, **Taylor Coppock** volunteered to fill the **Area 7 Coordinator** position. **Ken Burnett** agreed to fill the **Co-Vice President** position. There were no other nominations, and the augmented slate was put to a vote. Members approved the slate overwhelmingly.

Newly-elected president Noah Balch thanked all of the officers who served during the past year, giving special recognition to out-going president Wendy Todd for her leadership and substantive contributions. Other members echoed these kudos to Wendy, and also recognized outgoing secretary and nominations chairperson Dan Fredine for his excellent work.

Noah thanked everyone for attending the April meeting and reminded folks there will be an EC meeting on May 2 and a general membership meeting on May 16. He invited members to get involved as there are many ways to serve in the South River City Citizens neighborhood organization.

-- Ruth Casarez, Newsletter Editor

Historic Preservation Update

Since the beginning of the year, five properties within the Travis Heights-Fairview Park Historic District have been on the Historic Landmark Commission's (HLC) agenda for demolition and/or new construction. Following is a summary of the outcomes after the HLC considered the applications.

1. Property at 409 E. Monroe was scheduled as a demolition application. SRCC's Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) formally opposed the demolition at the January meeting along with twenty-five neighbors, who commented on the application, in writing or in person. The response persuaded the owner and developer to remove the demolition application and instead applied for new construction of an addition to the existing home.
2. Three properties [1315 Newning, 1317 Newning, and 512 E. Monroe] were postponed at the request of the applicants. The HPC is watching developments on each at the scheduled HLC meetings.
3. Property at 1804 Brackenridge was scheduled as a demolition application at the March HLC meeting. Despite in-person and written opposition, the application was approved. The owner and applicant were not interested in neighborhood and City feedback and declined to alter their plans. HLC has limited tools to deny an application over the applicant's opposition beyond 180 days.

The Historic Preservation Committee works to preserve the historic structures in SRCC's neighborhoods. We meet monthly and discuss ideas and goals as alternatives to demolitions and new construction. But we need help! Please consider joining us if you are interested in maintaining and furthering SRCC's historic character.

-- Susan Armstrong Fisher,
Chair, Historic Preservation

Parking & Zoning

SRCC Parking Update

Parking hassles within the SRCC neighborhoods have been managed using the Residential Parking Program (RPP) system for many years. Despite its good intentions, RPP simply moved the problem around the neighborhood, jamming up certain streets, and leaving others nearly empty. The inequality among neighbors spurred the push for parking reform. In March, the City Council created a Parking Transportation Management District (PTMD) to manage parking and other transportation issues within the South Congress area. Several PTMDs [Downtown, Mueller, East Austin, Hike and Bike trail near Austin High School] already exist.

Paid parking will be instituted along South Congress and adjacent streets that handle the spillover parking. Most of the paid-parking spaces along residential streets are ones currently segregated as RPP only. Residents will be able to purchase a permit (at a cost similar to that of the RPP) which will enable them to park without paying. Their guests may park using a guest hang tag. Tourists and other non-residents will pay hourly from 8AM to 5PM, after which the neighborhood curb spaces revert to residents and guests only. In the evening, non-residents and tourists will be required to park along Congress or in parking garages. Employee-permitted parking spaces will be dispersed to non-residential curb spaces in the neighborhood.

The paid-parking area will be marked with regular street signs. Most people will pay using the Park ATX App, but there will be some free-standing kiosks along South Congress. A portion of the revenue generated will be returned to the neighborhood to fund mobility projects, e.g., sidewalks and traffic calming structures. Enforcement of parking rules will improve within the PTMD, as the revenue will pay for full-time parking officers to circulate in the area.

A PTMD will also manage and designate certain curb spaces for deliveries, ride-share drop off, and pick-up areas, replacing the current “anything goes” method. Lastly, the PTMD will

allow greater flexibility to make needed changes to the paid parking areas as traffic conditions warrant. The PTMD will be operational sometime in April, although the first few weeks will see lax enforcement to give Austinites a chance to adapt.

For more information on the PTMD, please visit austintexas.gov/SouthCongressParking

-- Mark Thompson, Chair, Mobility

Upcoming Zoning Changes

SRCC's Planning and Zoning Committee (P&Z) has several zoning cases that will be discussed and voted on during the next several General Membership meetings.

1. Case C14-2022-0155 relating to Penn Field located at 3601 S. Congress (12.5 acres) seeks to rezone one parcel that is different from the rest. Zoning for the larger tract (CS-MU-V-NP) allows up to 90 feet height - because the site is located on a VMU2 corridor - and 95% impervious cover, as long as the applicants meet the affordable units and other requirements of VMU2. The smaller piece is zoned industrial (LI-CO-NP), allowing 60 feet in height and 80% impervious cover. Applicants want to rezone the smaller tract to be the same as the larger one. Our future land use map (FLUM) has the site slated for Mixed Use, so a FLUM amendment would not be necessary.

The application states the owners want to build a mix of office and multi-family housing, but the project agent has said that building plans are on hold. Owners are focusing on getting the whole site under the same zoning. P&Z is working with the applicants on several issues including historic value, ingress/egress, and existing street flooding.

2. Case C814-2023-0027 relates to the Firestone store and retail strip (.8 acre) located at 311-315 S. Congress. The site is currently zoned CS-1-V-NP which allows up to 60 feet in height, 95% impervious cover, and mixed use. Applicants propose PUD zoning with ground floor commercial, residential units above and 400 feet
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Parking & Zoning

in height. PUD zoning allows the applicant to set building standards, as long as the standards meet or exceed the City Code. The site is located within the South Central Waterfront Vision Plan District. The Plan does not envision this location at 400 feet, but neither did it envision the additional heights that were granted by City Council to the Statesman and Snoopy PUDs, also within the District. Compared to those PUDs, the 311-315 S. Congress project offers more community benefits. A FLUM amendment is not required.

A significant proposed public benefit is a "hydration station" on the north side of the proposed building. P&Z is working with the applicants to expand and enhance this idea by creating an indoor-outdoor gathering place with food, beverage, and seating for use by trail users, tenants, and the general public.

3. Cases C14-2023-0025 & NPA-2023-0022.01 relate to the site located at 821 Woodward Street (15.8 acre), adjacent to Home Depot, which is the SACHEM chemical plant. Plans involve removal of the chemical plant, cleanup of the site, and redevelopment for combined residential and commercial uses. There are two parcels, both with light industrial zoning (LI-NP and LI-PDA-NP). The applicants applied to rezone both parcels to GR-V-CO-NP. GR allows 60 feet in height and 90% impervious cover. They want to exceed the height limit and anticipate meeting the affordable housing goals of VMU2. A FLUM amendment (NPA case) is necessary since the site is shown on the map for industrial use. The CO will eliminate 10 otherwise allowable uses under GR.

P&Z is working with the applicants to set back further than required from Blunn Creek, which crosses the northwest corner of the property, to create an open space amenity.

A Site Plan to Watch

The nursing home on the northeast corner of S. Congress and E. Live Oak, plus two properties to the immediate north, altogether totaling 2.8 acres, has been purchased for redevelopment.

The site is Mixed Use on the FLUM, so an amendment is not required. Current zoning (CS-MU-V-NP) will allow up to 90 feet in height - because the site is located on a VMU2 corridor - and 95% impervious cover, as long as the applicants meet the affordable units and other requirements of VMU2. Applicants foresee 18,000 square feet of restaurant/retail space on street level, seven stories (85 feet) of residential units (approximately 300) for sale or rent, and five townhomes to be accessed via Nickerson Street, which will not be extended to E. Live Oak. The applicants want some of the projected parkland dedication fee (approximately one million dollars) to go toward improvements to the Triangle Park on the southeast corner of the intersection.

A Lawsuit to Watch

The same group that successfully sued the City of Austin to stop CodeNext has sued the City again for doing the same things it was trying to do with CodeNext. The lawsuit takes particular aim at four major ordinances passed by the last City Council to ameliorate the housing shortage. If these ordinances are found to be unlawful, the cases described above are likely to be affected. In the meantime, it is possible not much action will be taken to move the projects along.

-- Sarah Campbell, Chair, Parking & Zoning

Saturday Mornings

We were delighted to welcome about 20 helpers at Blunn Creek Nature Preserve on March 4, as another step towards "continuing on" with the restoration of the Preserve. Slowly but surely, with lots of wonderful volunteers, the invasive plants are being pulled out, natives are being introduced, trails are being improved, litter is being cleaned up, and the whole place is getting better and better. Great stuff!

Please check it out for yourself on the first Saturday of each month. Come and enjoy your park!

-- David Todd, Chair, Parks and Environment

Our Community



Bread for All Food Pantry

The Travis Heights area has a busy food pantry to serve food-insecure families and singles. The Bread for All Food Pantry (BFA), located in the Faith Presbyterian Church community center at 1314 W. Oltorf, operates ONLY ON MONDAY evenings from 5-6:30 pm. Sponsored by Austin City Lutherans, the pantry is also supported by number of SRCC volunteers--Gail Armstrong, Teri Huebling, Ellen Johnson, Janice Lowry, Donna Morrow, Neal Nuwash, and Betty Weed. These dedicated folks and other SRCC neighbors have been particularly generous with donations of food, money, and time.

Inflation has had a definite impact on the food pantry. Rising food prices have increased the weekly count of applicants from about 50 to 90-125 per week. The average number of new families who come for help has doubled during the past two years, so the need is clearly expanding. To meet the demand, BFA buys fresh produce, frozen meat, bread, cereal, milk, eggs and canned goods from the Central Texas Food Bank (CTFB). Volunteers meet each Monday morning to prepare food bags that are distributed in the evening. In packing the food bags, they are required to meet strict regulations set by the US Department of Agriculture, which include not breaking up large packages, such as a 25-pound bag of rice into smaller packages. The "best used" date on packages or cans must also be checked. Volunteers pack bags based on the number of family members who apply. A large family may receive various one-pound

packages of dry beans, pasta or rice, and canned goods (multiple cans of vegetables, including corn, chili beans, green beans, carrots, peaches, pears and soups) while a single person would get smaller amounts. The CTFB does not carry other shelf-stable items, e.g., hygiene supplies, baby diapers, and dry pet food; those are usually donated by church food drives and individuals. We in the SRCC area are pleased to help support this project to help our fellow citizens from many areas of Austin who are struggling in these difficult times.

If you are interested in working with the BFA, please visit breadforall-atx.org or if you wish to drop off food donations or empty grocery bags, please contact us, and we will take your donations to the BFA when we go there on Mondays at 11am.

-- Betty Weed & Donna Morrow

Norwood House

The Norwood House sits behind a fence, next to the dog park at Riverside and IH 35. It has been owned by the Parks and Recreation Department since about 1985, when the late Claudette Lowe arranged for its purchase by the city. The house, once a fine example of Craftsman style architecture, still stands because SRCC and other community members worked to save it. The latest efforts were by the Norwood Park Foundation (NPF), which did an amazing job getting the structure on a new foundation, stripping it to the studs, and guiding it through the design and permitting process so that it is now shovel-ready.

The NPF has brought the House to this point, but it now seeks a new "guardian" to help the final stages of its restoration. It waits for a new project manager to help finish its refurbishing and completion so that it may become an attractive, accessible facility available to the Austin community for a variety of functions, similar to how residents use the Zilker Club House.

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Our Community

As Austin grows, the need for more park facilities does as well. The Norwood House is well-positioned to meet that need. It currently has \$2.9 million in public funding dedicated to its reconstruction. And while more will be needed to rebuild it to its prior grandeur and to provide parking, sidewalks, and other required infrastructure, it will become a crown jewel in central Austin.

Of course, nothing of this scope happens by itself. Over the years multiple community members have devoted thousands of hours to preserving this property and converting it into a usable park facility. What is needed now is fresh eyes and

inspiration to transform it into what it can be. All the elements are in place. If you have the time to take on this challenge, or know someone who can, now is the time to step up.

As the SRCC community sees more historic houses bulldozed and replaced by contemporary structures, there remains a strong interest in maintaining the diversity of architectural styles that make this community special. The 100-year-old Norwood House is one of those historical structures worth preserving. Please help us get this project completed!

-- Wolf Sittler, NorwoodParkFoundation.org



Top: Norwood House as it stands today. Photo by Charlotte Bell. Bottom: Norwood House circa 1922. Photo courtesy of the Austin History Center.

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

Chris Frishman-Phillips
512-826-9686

Area 2

Russell Fraser 512-771-9736
Volunteer needed

Area 3a

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

Area 3b

Brooks Kassan
512-444-8100

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

Taylor Coppock 512-680-2590

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*)
mobility@srcc.org

Public Safety

Tom Groce (*Chair*)
tgroce71@gmail.com

Parks & Environment

David Todd (*Chair*) 512-416-0400

Schools

Gretchen Otto (*Chair*) 512-227-1507

Communications

Betty Weed (*Chair*)
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Ruth Casarez (*Newsletter Editor*)
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Meghan Fernandes (*Newsletter Designer*)

Representatives

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

Noah Balch
president@srccatx.org

Vice President

Vacant
vicepresident@srccatx.org

Co-Vice President

Kenneth Burnett
covicepresident@srccatx.org

Secretary

Chris Frishman-Phillips
secretary@srccatx.org

Treasurer

Will Andrews
treasurer@srccatx.org

Membership Secretary

Mary Friedman
membership@srccatx.org

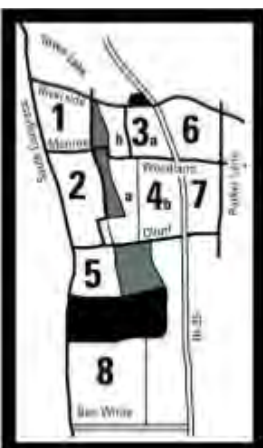
Membership

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