

Neighborhood News

Est. 1972

October 2023

srccatx.org



Photo courtesy of Theresa Corsentino

Plant Native

For Wildlife and for You!

As we revel in days devoid of triple-digit heat—and scan the scorched remains of many local lawns—it's a good time to be reminded to plant native!

Thanks to many of our neighbors, and the care they've put into planting native over the years, the South River City Citizens (SRCC) community isn't entirely scorched. But we could think bigger. What if these carefully tended individual native plant ecosystems were the start of an intentional, thriving, neighborhood wildlife corridor?

Native plants have adapted to the harsh heat of our summers. While they may char and blanch a bit, they're more likely to survive extreme weather than non-natives, which often seduce the uninitiated into planting them only to wither and crisp in the sun-scald of mid-afternoon. Planting non-natives robs us of money (because we'll have to replace them), time (in hours spent watering and tending), and—at scale—the health of our aquifers and wildlife.

Wildlife corridors have existed since the dawn of time, but the idea of homeowners taking a role in transforming their private property into a natural habitat, a “Homegrown

National Park,” is gaining traction. Why not take rising temperatures into account when planting for next season? In doing so, we help ourselves and our local hummingbirds, hawks, bees, butterflies, owls, frogs, and foxes. These species rely for survival on native plants, trees, and the explosive variety of wildflowers that brighten otherwise dull and depressing sidewalks and street medians. Natives retain their foliage and provide shade; they continue to flower and bear fruit. Non-natives are merely ornamental, for the short while before they burn or freeze. They do nothing to support local ecosystems and can even destroy them. *(continued)*

Neighborhood News

Many SRCC homes are already lovingly overrun with plants that nurture our wildlife and dazzle passersby with extraordinary beauty; each season is an evolving show. If more residents join in transforming monochrome lawns into lush native landscapes, our community can—yard by yard—integrate the habitats feeding into Blunn, and East and West Bouldin Creeks. By giving our flora and fauna the chance to survive and thrive, we improve the quality of our soil, property, community, and our overall sense of wellbeing. Why drive hours to see the Golden-Cheeked Warbler when you can cultivate a preserve from your front porch? The thrill of witnessing wildlife in your yard is hard to beat.

Will you join your yard to ours? To start, inventory what already grows in your yard, which species are native, introduced, or invasive? [pro tip: try out the PlantNet mobile app]. Next, plan what to keep and what to remove; consider a freshwater bubbler or fountain; leave leaf litter and large decorative rocks in gardens to create pupate-friendly habitats; replace swaths of lawn with narrower paths between native gardens. Begin with a few native plantings: local Goldenrod, Flame Acanthus, Autumn Sage, and White Mistflower are gorgeous, heat-tolerant pollinator magnets; Mexican plum Texas Persimmon, Bubba Desert Willow, American Beauty Berry, and Mexican Buckeye are great small-to mid-sized trees; Texas Sage (for sun) and Turk's Cap (for shade) are blooming bushes; Texas Wisteria and Crossvine can cover trellises; mix Texas Frog Fruit and Horse herb for ground cover. The effort is minimal, and the impact can be stunning. Support the natural world, and it will support you!

To learn more and/or create your own "Homegrown National Park," check out Douglas W. Tallamy's website or book, *Nature's Best Hope*. If you want to get involved, share resources, or just make friends in the neighborhood, reach out to us at atxbiocorridor@gmail.com.

Happy Fall Planting in the cooler days ahead, neighbors!

*Theresa Corsentino & Rachel Sibley
Neighbors on E. Live Oak Street
On behalf of the ATX BioCorridor Crew 620*

President's Message

Welcome to South River City Citizens. Our organization provides valuable input to City leaders based on community support. Over the past year, we focused on mobility, including Austin's light rail "Project Connect," the IH-35 reconfiguration through our neighborhood, and a parking transit management district in Travis Heights and South Congress. We also handled a number of land use, school, historic preservation, and environmental issues.

This year, we will dedicate time and resources to our neighborhood's growing land use and development issues, including the South Central Waterfront project, changes to Austin's Land Development Code, and preserving Travis Heights' historic character while allowing smart development. We will also dedicate time and resources to our parks, which provide plenty of opportunities for our citizens to interact with the natural surroundings our neighborhood offers.

As we look to the future, our neighborhood public schools will help lead us to new heights through academic achievement and athletic success. This starts in the classroom and on the fields of play, some of which the district plans to upgrade. In addition, SRCC representatives will join the campus architectural team for Travis Early College High School's \$160 million upgrades. Our Public Safety group will address safety concerns and crime that impact our community. And finally, we plan to increase membership through strong connections with our neighbors and technical upgrades to our website and social media accounts.

SRCC has organized committees for each of these areas, and we welcome new members to get involved. See the back page of this newsletter for contact information for our officers and for each Committee Chair. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and welcome your participation. Please help us maintain and improve our great community.

SRCC: See the Future. Shape the Future.

*Noah Balch, President
South River City Citizens Association*

Neighborhood News



Photo courtesy of Betty Weed

Zilker Park Saved. What Now?

After months of growing concern and controversy over a plan to remake Zilker Park—a plan that included multiple parking garages and a large amphitheater on the Great Lawn—Mayor Kirk Watson announced on Aug. 7 that the city would be shelving that plan.

After the announcement, the city's Parks and Recreation Board dissolved the Zilker Vision Group. Board Chair Pedro Villalobos said a new working group would "evaluate what Zilker Park looks like, taking into consideration what proponents, opponents (and) rewilding people wanted to see ..."

Zilker Park was spared because residents throughout the city flooded City Council with communications, letting them know how appalled they were at the thought of spending hundreds of millions of dollars to transform our beloved Zilker Park into what many feared would be a permanent music venue.

Those who organized the opposition to that vision had proposed a gentler, nature-centered vision, with the park repaired and improved to allow for a great, natural park to continue to exist in the center of town. This would be a park to benefit all Austinites.

The Rewild Zilker plan (which SRCC supports) proposes a community perspective for a new vision plan process. They state: "The community has now asserted a clear vision of Zilker Park as an irreplaceable space in the central city needed for physical and mental health, recreation, reconnection with nature, climate

mitigation, and water protection. By using this clear vision to guide us, we can plan more confidently for Zilker Park and beyond." They further state that while there is a need for improvements to Zilker Park, there is also a need for equitable investments across all of Austin's parks.

For Zilker they list the following needs, which are in line with the City's Climate Equity Plan:

- Streambank restoration and erosion mitigation;
- Tree preservation;
- Overall regeneration of the park's natural features and rewilding significant areas to help rebuild soil, increase biodiversity, provide greater shade, and mitigate the effects of heat and drought;
- Equitable access to the park from all areas of the city;
- Greater emphasis on the cultural history of the park with more inclusive art and programming;
- Better wheelchair access and support for those physically challenged;
- Bathrooms;
- Nature trails;
- Pedestrian and Bike pathway improvements;
- Bike Racks;
- Improved existing playground;
- Green parking solutions with planned supplementation for peak-use days, including internal and external shuttles, protected drop-off points, park-and-ride options, more frequent bus routes, etc.; and
- Increased Park Ranger presence and public safety.

As a new vision plan emerges, all residents should keep informed and let city leaders know what the appropriate priorities should be.

*Betty Weed, Chair
Communications Committee*

SRCC Meeting Schedule

Executive Committee October 3, 2023 @ 7 pm

General Membership October 17, 2023 @ 7 pm

General Membership November 21, 2023 @ 7 pm

Executive Committee December 5, 2023 @ 7 pm

General Membership December 19, 2023 @ 7 pm

Parking & Zoning

SRCC Parking Update

Parking reform has been a topic the last few years and we are close to achieving that reform with the establishment of a Parking and Transportation Management District (PTMD) for the South Congress area.

Paid parking. Under the PTMD reform, each space on South Congress will become a pay-by-the-hour spot. Visitors will pay hourly to park using an app or by app-generated text message. No physical coin meters will be placed in the neighborhood, but modern kiosks to pay by card will be sparsely placed along South Congress. Other street segments will be shared among permit-holding local employees and paying visitors. Within the neighborhood streets of the pay zone, pay to park will be 8am to 6pm, M-Sat and 1 pm to 6pm on Sunday. After 6pm, all street parking within the pay zone will be permit-holders only.

Permit parking. Within the neighborhood, the street spaces currently segregated for a subset of residents will be shared among all residents with a permit, their permitted guests, and visitors. Permit-holders are exempt from the hourly fees. Areas within the neighborhood outside of the pay zone will continue with the unregulated parking currently in effect.

Implementation. The initial pay zone overlaps greatly with the current Residential Parking Permit (RPP) map area. Residents' permits will be managed digitally and permitted-cars managed by license plate entry into an app. Sign changing began in September with crews working from north to south. During the rollout of the new pay zones and rules, we expect confusion so only warnings will be given during the rollout.

Revenue uses. The profit generated by the visitor parking around South Congress will be split 51/49 with the city. The 51% neighborhood share will be split among the SRCC, Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association and the South Congress Merchant Association and must fund mobility projects. Sidewalks are the first priority for many and will be the first projects funded by our future PTMD money.

Data collection issues. While the PTMD was approved earlier this spring, the rollout has been delayed due to city staff changes and the drawn-out discussion of operational guidelines among the city staff and local stakeholders of the PTMD organizing committee. We expected that operational parking statistics like occupancy and

availability would be included in the required reports rather than just fiscal performance. Without those occupancy statistics, it would be very difficult to measure success for this parking reform.

However, it appears the city prefers to withhold the parking statistics from public review and is pushing aside the idea of operating the PTMD with data driven choices. If that occurs, and it may without neighborhood opposition, then our PTMD may operate inefficiently and success would be hard to measure.

*Mark Thompson, Chair
Mobility Committee*

News from Planning & Zoning

The State enacted a parkland dedication bill (HB 1526) during the 88th Legislative Session. Austin had used zoning changes requested by developers as an opportunity to implement a parkland dedication policy that required developers to dedicate land for city parks and to pay fees to help sustain the parks. The new law will likely change that. According to the Austin Parks Foundation, "changes to the parkland dedication policy will have a critical impact on Austin's parks and green spaces. Without Parkland Dedication funds, the City will have to find other sources of funding to secure the financial resources to maintain and improve its nearly 400 parks. Additionally, lower fees and smaller parkland requirements from developers will put the increased financial burden of maintaining our park system on taxpayers, as the park system will rely more heavily on bonds and increased taxes to fill the funding gap. The law also requires that cities pay developers for any land dedicated over a set fee cap." See Impact of HB 1526, apf@austinparks.org

The City of Austin has also limited several requirements for developers:

- No parking requirements for businesses;
- Change in notification of zoning requests. The new requirement will now be to notify neighbors within 50 ft of proposed zoning change as opposed to those within 500 ft of the new zoning applications, thus decreasing the potential for large number of protests

SRCC's Planning and Zoning Committee has been working on the following cases:

(continued)

Our Community

406-428 Alpine: Case # C14-2023-0081

This property is just east of Penn Field. Applicant is requesting to add a height "V" variance to the current zoning which would allow the developer to build mixed use (such as commercial, residential, retail and office space.) We do not have actual plans or renderings, so it is impossible to know the final design or proposed height. The main objection to this change is that this lot contains headwaters for Blunn Creek that are essential for the waterway's health. There are also some magnificent oak and other species of trees that help maintain the ecological balance in the area. Having walked the lot recently with the guidance of Jeff Kessel, an engineer familiar with this property, we found alternative ways to develop the property that would be less destructive. This property is just south of the SACHEM development which we supported because those applicants agreed to some simple solutions to our concerns e.g., increasing the 50 ft set back from the creek which incidentally flows from the Alpine location. We will meet with the Alpine developer's representative soon.

151 South 1st St.: Case #C-814-06-0106.03

Hyatt West

This project (a direct result of the city's eliminating required parking for commercial properties) is basically the parking lot adjacent to the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Lady Bird Lake. Developer is requesting a PUD which does away with several current zoning restrictions for height and setbacks from the street as well. Rendering of the proposed "TOWER" depicted in several blogs and digital news outlets in Austin do not state its proposed height. This property is right off the water behind the hotel. Our main concern at this point is the damage to the lake from construction, etc.

The last two "builds" in this area were the glass building on Barton Springs Rd. and The Catherine apt/condo building. They are 14 and 19 stories, which is in the neighborhood of 150 to 200 feet tall. When you think about some of these new proposals, think about structures that will be more than twice as tall as those. For example, the Firestone building proposed on South Congress is estimated to be over 400 feet tall, which would translate to a building of 40 or more stories. We will have more to report on that project as it progresses.

Anita Tschurr, Chair
Planning & Zoning Committee

Fall 2023 Travis Heights Art Trail

November 4th - 5th

This year we celebrate the 21st year of this historic Travis Heights Art Trail. Please join us on November 4th and 5th to enjoy this interactive weekend event! You can walk throughout the beautiful Travis Heights neighborhood and appreciate a variety of arts & crafts from more than 35 Austin artists. In addition, the following nonprofit organizations will showcase their wares, as well: Art from the Streets, Down Home Ranch, Marbridge House, and Adventures Academy.

This Art Trail, one of the oldest neighborhood shows in Austin, is the only grassroots show that is entirely run and managed by the artists themselves. This city event showcases some of the city's best professional artists as they make themselves 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 by providing them with commercial and educational benefits; (2) inviting visitors to view the art of local artists and have the opportunity to interact with the artists themselves; and (3) by enhancing the income of the artists and 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 Cultural Events Division of the Economic Development Dept. Look for the signs and banners and join us on November 4 and 5 from 11 am-5 pm.

For more information about the Artists and Sponsors plus to locate a map, go to <https://travisheightsarttrail.org/> or Charlotte Bell at info@travisheightsarttrail.org

Charlotte Bell

Our Community

Opinion: City Council Moves to Gut Neighborhood Quality of Life

On July 20th, the Austin City Council approved a resolution from Council Member Leslie Pool to dramatically change the type of development that can take place in every single-family lot in our neighborhood as well as the city. This drastic change will likely be voted on by Christmas and will essentially replace our current Land Development Code (LDC) as follows:

- All single family lots will be 2,500 sq. ft. or smaller, meaning lots larger than 2,500 sq. ft. (the majority of residential lots) will be considered to be more than one lot.
- A 2,500 sq. ft. single-family lot can have as many as three housing units. Larger lots could have twice that.
- The proposal also changes regulations on setbacks, height, impervious cover, and floor-to-area ratio (FAR). This is to make it easier to fit multiple housing units on a 2,500 sq. ft. lot.

The proposal also guts citizen participation. This type of massive development could be done without a developer going to Council and without the neighbors having any say whatsoever. Council has not even said that a homeowner would need to be notified of a large redevelopment right next door.

How is that possible? Under the proposal, the ability to do everything described above would be granted to property owners “by right.” An owner would not have to petition for a zoning change. Residential zoning as we know it will cease to exist in our neighborhood as well as in most of Austin. Neighborhood leaders throughout the city are astonished and horrified.

Where it stands now: Council has directed the City Manager to propose amendments to the LDC to be brought back to Council. This is not yet law. Anyone who is concerned about these changes needs to contact City Council and the Mayor (<https://www.austintexas.gov/email/all-council-members>).

Ask basic questions, such as:

- How do we guard against investors and developers acquiring homes, tearing them down and building new units, which are even less affordable?

- How will increased impervious cover impact flooding?
- At a time when City Council set a goal of having 50% of the city covered by tree canopy, what guarantee do we have that our trees—especially our heritage trees—will be protected?
- How will the City notify people affected by this change? This is a change that will dramatically transform our neighborhoods, our neighborhood streets and our quality of life.

This simple resolution is likely to change Austin’s entire residential LDC, overriding all neighborhood master development plans that the city and neighbors have agreed upon. It will accelerate the displacement of low- and middle-income residents.

Only two Council Members (CM) voted against the resolution. CM Mackenzie Kelly observed as follows:

“One of my foremost worries is that this item could allow developers to acquire properties and then subdivide them. Such a scenario could lead to increased property taxes, potentially displacing hardworking, everyday individuals we seek to assist.”

CM Alison Alter stated:

“Without any preservation requirement, this will incentivize the demolition of existing homes to build newer, bigger, more expensive structures and send more homes to the landfill. These factors working in combination with one another, have the real potential to lead to predictable negative consequences. I believe this resolution is much more drastic and goes much further than anything our staff brought to council for a vote during the codenext or land development code rewrite process.”

Details of exactly how the proposals in the resolution will be implemented have not yet been fleshed out. Residents who value their neighborhoods must speak out; they must ask questions and let Council and the Mayor know how they feel.

*Betty Weed, Chair
Communications Committee*

Our Community

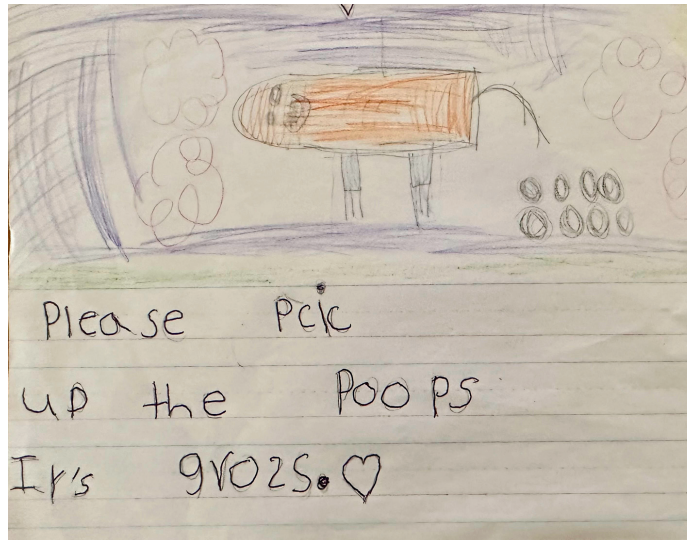
Latest on Norwood House

Every house in Travis Heights has a story. They vary from being quite conventional to others like the Norwood House, which currently sits behind a fence, on a hill just west of the off-leash dog park at Riverside and IH 35. Ollie Norwood built the modest, 1,800 sq. ft. craftsman style house in 1922 and embellished it with a pool and beautiful gardens. The Norwood Estate was acquired by Joe Small, who operated Western Publications and used the House as its primary headquarters. In the early 60s, Johnny Cash visited Mr. Small and was so inspired by what he saw and read that he produced "Johnny Cash Sings the Ballads of the True West." The True West piece cited below provides additional details about what happened to the House. It describes a dream to breathe new life into that old house purchased by the Austin Parks Department in 1985. It notes the latest volunteer efforts by the Norwood Park Foundation to have it operational by 2016. Those big dreams crashed on the rocks of bureaucracy, but the advocates persisted and finally got all the permits approved and three million dollars dedicated to its new life. However, the pandemic shut things down; when it passed, project costs skyrocketed and the few active volunteers ran out of steam.

In September, we learned that since no one had stepped in to work on the project, the Parks Department quietly shifted the dedicated money to another park. Those of us who have worked in the past to transform the Norwood House to a beautiful and useful public park amenity do not want to give up. We are looking for new volunteers to join us to save the historic house: it is shovel-ready, but will require funding since the dedicated funds were stripped. We intend to work to get the three million dollars returned, but more funding will also be required to get the house to its projected grandeur. See the norwoodhouse.org for the plans that have been developed. If you are not already involved in some SRCC committee, please join us to do something very special for our neighborhood and for the entire city.

truewestmagazine.com/article/savingapieceoftruewest

*Wolf Sittler, former chair
Norwood House Project*



Drawing by First Grader at Travis Heights Elementary

Child's Modest Request

In my prior life as a teacher at Travis Heights Elementary, I enjoyed the funny way children would share their opinions. Last year I worked with a group of first graders who expressed disgust at the way some folks were using the small fenced-in area near Big Stacy Pool as a dog park. That area is part of the school property and was enclosed for the safety of our youngest students. Some of the children have stepped in dog poop, and it was not fun to clean up for them or their teachers.

I find Stacey Park a refuge to the rapid urbanization of our neighborhood. I have been fortunate enough to use that park as an educational arena for science lessons at a time when Austin was smaller and a little slower. As we grow into a more urban area and live closer together, let us continue to be polite and take a little extra time to pick up after our dogs, especially in parts of the park intended for our smallest citizens!

*Mary Friedman, Chair
Membership Committee*

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

Anita Tschurr (*Chair*)
planning-zoning@srccatx.org

Historic Preservation

Susan Armstrong Fisher (*Chair*)
skasusan@gmail.com
Angela Reed
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*)
communications@srccatx.org

Ruth Casarez (*Newsletter Editor*)

newsletter@srccatx.org

Meghan Fernandes (*Newsletter Designer*)

newsletter@srccatx.org

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

Need representative

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

Mary Friedman
mary.friedman@icloud.com

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

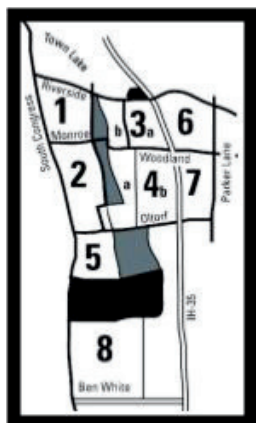
membership@srccatx.org

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