

Neighborhood News

Est. 1972

March 2024

srccatx.org

Annual SRCC Election: Cast Your Vote on April 16th

Once again, we will meet to cast votes for the South River City Citizens (SRCC) Executive Committee (EC), comprised of Officers, Area Coordinators and Co-Coordinators, Standing Committee Chairs and Co-Chairs, and the Representative to Austin Neighborhood Council. This is the team that we as a neighborhood elect to represent us at City of Austin Council meetings and board and commission hearings. They will govern the association and work conscientiously on our behalf for the next year.

We formed an ad hoc nominations

committee, which followed Robert's Rules of Order in seeking qualified candidates for office, confirming their willingness to serve, and then report its findings and recommendations to the general membership. We are happy to report that most current EC members are willing to continue in their positions. However, anyone wishing to run for any position is urged to contact any member of the nominations committee: Ruth Casarez, Sarah Campbell, Neal Nuwash or Marylin Orton prior to the April 16th meeting. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

ELECTION NOTE: The deadline to become a new member and vote at the April 16th General Membership meeting is March 15th. Please contact the membership secretary to find out the status of your membership. If your membership has not lapsed more than two years, you can pay your dues at the meeting in person and vote. Of course, we encourage your membership in the neighborhood association at any time!

See slate of nominees on next page.

Members of the SRCC convened at the General Membership Meeting at Good Shepherd on the Hill Church on February 20, 2024.

Photo: Anita Tschurr



Neighborhood News

SRCC Elections

Following is the slate of nominees:

Officers

President: Noah Balch

Vice-President: Robin Sanders

Co-Vice-President: Ken Burnett

Secretary: Chris Phillips-Frushman

Treasurer: Will Andrews

Membership Secretary: Mary Friedman

Standing Committees

Planning & Zoning: Anita Tschurr, Chair

Historic Preservation: Susan Armstrong-Fisher, Chair; Clif Ladd, Co-chair

Finance: Sam Martin, Chair

Mobility: Mark Thompson, Chair

Public Safety: Tom Groce, Chair

Parks & Environment: David Todd, Chair; Jeff Kessel, Co-chair

Schools: Gretchen Otto, Chair

Communications: Betty Weed, Chair

Area Coordinators

Area 1: Chris Phillips-Frushman

Area 2: Russell Fraser and Theresa Corsentino

Area 3a: Jo Webber and Sara Newsom

Area 3b: Brooks Kassan

Area 4a: Sam Martin and Carol Martin

Area 4b: Sarah Campbell

Area 5: Neal Nuwash And David Swann

Area 6: Taylor Coppock And Laura Gass Weaver

Area 7: Melissa Pepper And Russell Hubbard

Area 8: Kim Lanzillotti And Vicky Moerbe

Representatives

Austin Neighborhood Council: Betty Weed

East Riverside (EROC): Gayle Goff

Greater South River City NPCT (GSRC): Elloa Mathews

St. Edwards: Elloa Mathews

Travis Heights Art Trail: Charlotte Bell

South Central Waterfront: Ford Smith

Travis Park Apts/Austin Interfaith: Neal Nuwash and Anita Tschurr

South Central Affordable CDC: Mary Friedman

Nominations Committee

Bylaws Revision

It has been six years since SRCC updated its bylaws, and it is time to review them. An ad hoc committee has been formed, chaired by Gretchen Otto, chair Schools Committee, and includes Chris Phillips-Frushman, SRCC Secretary, Dan Fredine, former SRCC Secretary, Carol Martin, Area 4a co-coordinator and former SRCC VP, and Noah Balch, current SRCC President.

The committee is reviewing the bylaws and will make recommendations to SRCC membership for revisions. In general, bylaws guide how an organization is structured; how it runs its meetings and how it ensures fair participation. During the Covid outbreak, SRCC adapted to minimize personal contacts which could jeopardize members' health. Meetings via Zoom were held and many members grew to enjoy the virtual meetings. We want our bylaws to reflect our current practice of conducting in-person and virtual meetings. Another idea being considered is to establish a Standing Nominations Committee that will ensure leadership positions are timely filled so that SRCC has continuity in performing its mission.

Per Robert's Rules of Order, an organization must follow notification requirements to ensure that members are aware of proposed bylaws revisions and have ample opportunity to respond. The ad hoc committee will be making progress reports at meetings over the next several months, with a goal of having the proposed revisions ready to be voted on this fall.

If you have questions or comments related to the bylaws, please contact us.

Bylaws Committee

HOME Initiative

What HOME Initiative?

What is it and what do you think of it? The Housing Options for Middle-Income Empowerment (HOME) initiative is really a big deal for our neighborhoods. According to its supporters, HOME will increase affordable housing in Austin by changing much of Austin's Land Development Code (LDC) to allow more density.

While many would agree the city's LDC needs an update, the rate at which these changes are being voted into law means little or no study or analysis has occurred on the city's ability to meet the increased demand for (1) utilities (sewage, gas, electric, and water); (2) effects of increased impervious cover and crowded roadways, and (3) city services (such as trash pickup, police, EMS, and fire). Additionally, the city has not addressed the property tax implications of greater housing density on city lots.

In July 2023, the city council split the Home initiative into two phases, HOME 1 and HOME 2. On December 7, 2023, council passed HOME 1, which changes the LDC by:

- allowing two or three dwelling units on a 5750 sq. ft. lot;
- placing restrictions on Short-Term Rental use on two-dwelling units but appear not to address three-dwelling units;
- allowing any number of unrelated adults to occupy a single dwelling.

The changes to the LCD as revised can be found at <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=421611>.

HOME 2, which will likely be voted on later this spring, is still being drafted. We anticipate HOME 2 will:

- reduce the minimum lot size on single-family zoned lots;
- develop criteria for the use of RVs as dwellings on a single-family lot;
- try to create "innovative" drainage and utility solutions (presumably to deal with greater water run-off from increased impervious cover);

- allow for more types of housing in single-family neighborhoods;
- "adjust" regulations for setbacks, height restrictions, impervious cover, and floor-to-area ratio (FAR) as they relate to new construction.

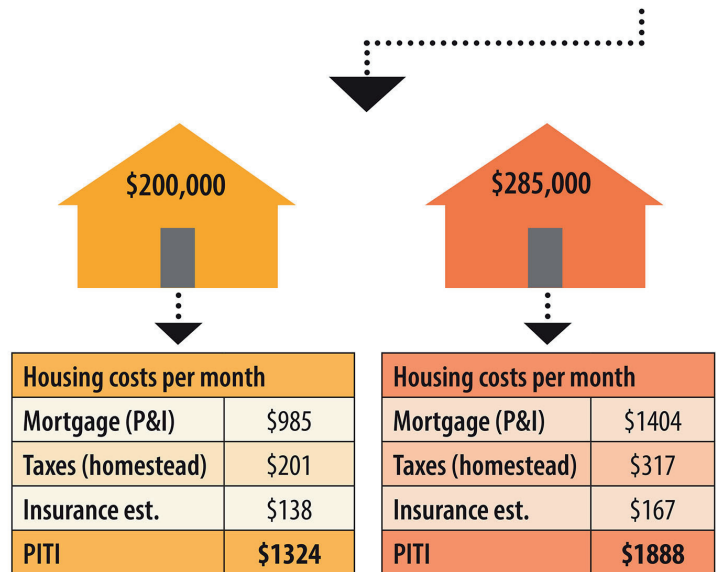
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What is affordable housing in Austin?

Median 2023 sales price in the City of Austin \$500,000
Median 2023 sales price in SRCC \$1.1 M

Average earnings	Gross	Net	Monthly	30%*
Individual	\$85,600	\$67,452	\$5621	\$1686.30
Family	\$122,300	\$92,865	\$7738	\$2321.63

* Recommended % income for housing costs



Assumptions:
6.25%
30-year fixed
Average credit
20% down

Additional expenses:
Utilities
Groceries
Transportation
Healthcare

Graphic prepared by J. Thurman with data provided by Robin Sanders & Anita Tschurr

HOME Initiative

The adopted and possible future changes leave us with many questions:

- **Affordability:** The city's paramount reason for expediting changes to Austin's LDC is to provide affordable housing, or more affordable housing for middle-income residents. But HOME cannot prevent developers from prioritizing profits over affordability. On the other hand, with proper guardrails, HOME could allow property owners to build additional smaller units which could lower the overall cost of home ownership. At the end of the day, Austin is trying to find creative ways to lower home prices and provide more opportunities for its residents to purchase a home. However, the city needs to conduct further studies and concretely define affordability before marching forward.

To that end, we created the attached illustration to show how difficult it is to purchase a home in Austin, let alone within SRCC's boundaries. As our illustration shows, the average Austin wage earner could only afford to buy a home in our city if the current average price of \$500,000 were cut in half. Given the escalating prices of land and construction, this hardly seems achievable without enacting guidelines or incentives for property owners.

All of this leads back to SRCC, where the city is virtually powerless to lower average home prices. Although our SRCC area contains some affordable housing communities supported by subsidies, the average home price in Travis Heights exceeds \$1 million. Even through subdividing or small home construction, it is virtually impossible to lower home prices to an "affordable" range. As such, many in our community oppose the HOME initiative as currently structured. They believe it will increase density and further stress city services while raising property taxes. Accordingly, SRCC supports a more comprehensive HOME 2 plan that addresses affordability, incentives, and the negative and positive effects of the LDC revisions before the City Council's next vote.

- **Property Taxes:** Greater housing density translates to rising appraised values. The HOME initiative can be expected to greatly (and rapidly) increase the value of land. Whether you plan to sell or stay in your home, you will pay much more in taxes. What will the city do to ensure current residents are not taxed out of their homes?
- **Infrastructure:** How does the city council propose to increase utility capacity to accommodate the additional use by hundreds or thousands of new residences in the central city in areas where utilities, roads, and emergency services are already overtaxed? BEFORE the LDC is changed, city council should follow its Planning Commission recommendation that ". . . all relevant departments assess the impacts of additional units in single family neighborhoods and the infrastructure required."
- **Flooding:** How will the increase in impervious cover affect flooding risks? How is it not reckless to pass this proposal before evaluating its impact on infrastructure and flooding?
- **ADUs/2-3 Additional Dwellings:** To increase density, supporters of HOME encourage building Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) that can be rented out or sold as a way for home owners to afford to stay in their homes. ADUs are already allowed in our neighborhood. Per HOME, a home owner would be able to add two more such dwelling units. Whether home owners would want to do that, the truth is that it is prohibitively expensive to build any addition to a property. If the city wants to encourage that type of construction, would the city provide low- or no-interest loans to home owners, fee waivers, and building consulting to encourage that construction? Would the appraisal district provide tax relief by including ADUs in the homestead exemption? Would the city make selling these additional units easier and less costly by eliminating the need to create a condominium regime on the lot?

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Neighborhood News

- **Parking:** Last year city council increased the demand for street parking by eliminating the requirement that developers provide on-site parking. Our neighborhood has long been plagued by blocked driveways, illegally parked vehicles and impassible streets. How will the city deal with these issues that will be exacerbated by new residential developments?
- **Tree Canopy:** Our city laws currently provide protection for our trees. How can we ensure the city will continue to adequately protect our tree canopy from being taken out by developers? How is the city's recently expressed desire to increase the tree canopy not inconsistent with increased building density?

We ask that the city carefully look at all the potential and probable negative impacts of these proposals before enacting them. We further call on the council to have open meetings with neighborhood residents to provide a detailed explanation of its plans and receive and consider feedback about how its plans would affect us and our neighbors. Only after that type of collaborative process would we consider supporting the HOME initiatives.

Planning & Zoning Committee

Neighborhood Watch Project

The goal of the Neighborhood Watch Project is to get all 8 areas of SRCC covered by patrols. Neighbors can sign up to walk, bicycle or drive their routes for periods of 30 minutes to an hour. Views vary on what type of patrol is most effective, for example, is there benefit to patrolling the area around your street so you may recognize something or someone out of place or does familiarity not matter? The important thing is to have all areas patrolled, particularly at times and places where the most criminal activity occurs. However, we recognize that many volunteers are not able to patrol late into the night. Nevertheless, neighbors should also be encouraged to keep an eye out while taking a stroll or walking the dog in the evening.

But everyone should know that when patrolling, it is not our job to stop crimes or apprehend criminals. Our goal is to provide a deterrence by our roving presence and Neighborhood Watch signs, and to alert the police to any observed suspicious or unusual activity.

In the meantime, everyone is encouraged to be vigilant, whether at home or on patrol. There are certain common criminal activities happening in our neighborhoods, e.g., car break-ins, home burglaries, package thefts, etc. Just as when on actual neighborhood watch patrol, we need to be vigilant at all times about what is going on in our surroundings, look, listen and watch, and report anything or anyone that seems suspicious or out of place. The Austin Police Department representatives have emphasized that we should not hesitate to call 911, even if it turns out to be nothing. In addition, it is equally important to make it difficult for criminals to operate in our neighborhood: lock your doors, windows, and vehicles, and do not leave valuables in vehicles or where they can easily be seen. Turn your porch and other outside lights on, particularly in dark or secluded areas, keep bushes and shrubbery trimmed around windows and doors close to the house, and install security systems and security lights, if possible. For information on how to further safeguard your home, please see the Vacation, Burglary Prevention Checklists and other safety tips provided by APD, which are posted on the SRCC website.

If you have any questions or comments about the Neighborhood Watch Project or would like to participate in the patrols, please call or email me. We need more volunteers to keep all SRCC areas safe.

Tom Groce
Chair, Public Safety

Our Community

Neighborhood Park Update



Heritage Oaks Park. Photo: David Todd

In Area 7, at 2100 Parker Lane, we have our newest park, Heritage Oaks Park, acquired after years of starts and stops from 2003 to 2012. The park showcases the gorgeous centuries-old oaks and a pond that has been identified as a wetland “critical environmental feature.” However, over the past 2 years, the number of camps in the park has grown. Those encampments have led to increased crime, e.g., indecent exposure, drug sales and use, theft, burglaries, trespassing, break-ins and harassment almost daily. The neighbors are engaging with APD, Parks and Recreation Department, HEAL, and the Austin Parks Foundation to remedy the situation but it is a very difficult task and is ongoing.

Neighbors are also working to upgrade and enhance the park (more tables and benches, playscape) and install additional lighting. In addition to navigating the city process for humanely removing the camps, they are working to modify the corner of Windoak and Matagorda with a fence along Matagorda to prohibit foot traffic, making the park safer.

In Harpers Branch, Area 3a, Justin Haynes, Al Amado, Charlotte Bell, the Hilbert family and others have been working with Edward Pung at Keep Austin Beautiful to organize, map, and produce detailed plans to reduce erosion and invasive plant problems in that beautiful riparian area between Kenwood and Reagan Terrace. In Blunn Creek Greenbelt, between Annie and the elementary school, Gillian Hodler at Tree Folks, along with Keep Austin Beautiful, and the City's Water Protection

Department, recently pulled together about 80 volunteers to plant 1,300 saplings along Blunn Creek. That area has lost some mature trees due to age, drought, and extreme bouts of heat and cold. The group planted a variety of canopy and understory trees, including sycamores, cypress, willow, pecan, as well as beautyberry, buckthorn, mulberry, and dogwood.

At Big Stacy Pool, Jeff Kessel is working with folks from Parks and Recreation to develop design ideas for improving the parking lot and entrance to the historic WPA pool, intending to beautify the area, deal with erosion problems, and cope with parking issues. Nearby, Anita Tschurr and other neighbors have been clearing the Blunn Creek pedestrian bridge's culvert of jammed limbs and trash, keeping our lovely stream flowing after floods.



Photo: Max Woodfin

In Blunn Creek Nature Preserve, Max Woodfin, Jerry Levenson and other friends have regularly volunteered to collect trash, maintain trails, tend to graffiti, plant natives, and control invasive plants. The Preserve has been chosen as a site for some innovative, highly- controlled burn-pile work to manage fire risk and promote biodiversity. This latest effort has been coordinated by Patrick Chaiken and Matt McCaw with Austin Parks and Recreation.

And finally, along East Live Oak, Theresa Corsentino, Isabel Affinito and others are working to create a wildlife corridor with like-minded neighbors. Nearby, Adam Epstein has steadily worked to clean up, mulch, replant, and re-sign areas in the small triangular park at the southeastern intersection of East Live Oak and Congress, while also assisting local unhoused neighbors found there by providing them helpful resources.

If any of these projects appeal to you, please contact David Todd at dtodd@wt.org if you would like to get in touch with any of the project sponsors.

David Todd, Gayle Goff, and Margaret Gibson

Our Community



Travis Park Apartments

SRCC has been advised that renovation work will be scheduled at the Travis Park Apartments in the upcoming year. The apartment complex was built in 1970 and has generally been well maintained. However, the apartments and grounds need to be updated. All units will be renovated, energy efficiency measures will be taken (possibly including solar), and handicap accessibility will be improved. Travis Park Preservation L.L.C. expects the renovations will take about 18 months from start to finish. No new dwelling units will be added, and at this point in the planning it expects no-to-minimal increase to impervious cover.

The housing development provides low-income housing and is covered by a Section 8 contract with HUD. The large majority of the residents earn less than 30% of area median income. Per HUD regulations, the residents pay 30% of their income towards rent and HUD pays the difference to meet the total rent indicated in the lease. A significant percentage of the current residents are Afghani refugees, many of whom were translators for the US military and were forced to emigrate to the United States. During and after the renovation, the property will remain 100% affordable, and the Section 8 contract will be extended. No residents will be displaced. If all goes as planned, the developer expects to finalize the financing this summer, and work would begin in the fall.

The property pays approximately \$500K in taxes, and presently benefits from 50% CHDO (Community Housing Development Organization) exemption.

*Anita Tschurr, Chair
Planning & Zoning Committee*

Parking Update

A Parking and Transportation Management District (PTMD) was created last year for the parking-jammed street segments near South Congress Avenue. Paid parking began last fall along South Congress proper and was to be followed with new parking signage within the neighborhood. The signage along Congress, however, has been delayed due to misprinting but also by coordinated malice involving fake QR codes and manipulated google search results. The signs are reworked and ready, and installation will begin after SXSW.

In the meantime, drivers accustomed to free parking along South Congress have migrated into the neighborhood, resulting in a gauntlet of cars bottlenecking more areas than ever. Along these affected streets, the slow-moving reform seems to have made parking matters worse. The delay in sign deployment has turned a predictably rough transition period from weeks long to months long. Academy Drive and adjacent streets have seen the greatest influx of new parkers.

Look for improvement once city crews begin switching out signs to paid parking after SXSW. Enforcement begins after a two-week grace period. You may register your car's license plate or obtain guest hangtags now using the city's Residential Parking Program (RPP) system. Please contact me if you have questions or difficulty obtaining permits. Our SRCC secretary is compiling a list of traffic problems and safety concerns, so please email Chris at secretary@srccatx.org to add your observations or concerns.

*Mark Thompson, Chair
Mobility 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 Phillips-Frishman
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
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

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

Ford Smith

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

Co-Vice President Kenneth Burnett

covicepresident@srccatx.org

Secretary Chris Phillips-Frishman

secretary@srccatx.org

Treasurer Will Andrews

treasurer@srccatx.org

Membership Secretary Mary Friedman

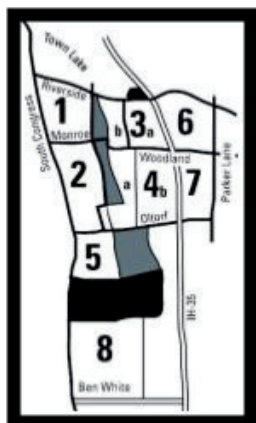
membership@srccatx.org

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