



Jean Mather

December 2, 1925-January 9, 2025

Jean Mather, co-founder of our neighborhood association, South River City Citizens (SRCC), died in January of this year. Newer residents may not realize how much Jean contributed to shaping environmental protection in Austin. She believed in the value of citizen participation and collaborated tirelessly with city officials on behalf of Austin and our area.

Jean and her husband, Bob, moved to Austin in 1958 and chose a vintage 1913 frame house on Alameda. Bob was a professor of architecture at UT Austin. Jean had degrees in political science and landscape architecture. To our advantage, they brought their expertise and their values to work for a better neighborhood and city.

Jean was a leader in showing how citizen engagement can make municipal government more transparent, responsive, and effective. Her focus was preserving the environment; protecting trees, creeks, watersheds; implementing appropriate land-use; and maintaining quality of life in neighborhoods. For the SRCC areas east and west of IH35, she was instrumental protecting creeks and greenbelts. Jean had an impact on neighborhood organizations beyond SRCC, including Austin Neighborhood Council, Save Austin Neighborhoods and Environment (SANE), Save Austin Neighborhoods East, United South Austin, West Austin Neighborhood Group, and East Riverside-Oltorf Combined Neighborhood Plan (EROC NP).

Austin Creek Ordinance: When she learned of plans to "channelize" a creek through our neighborhood, trenching to install a pipe, and cutting off nearby trees from their water source, Jean spoke up. The city said an ordinance was needed to protect the creek-so Jean participated in drafting one.

Blunn Creek Nature Preserve: Jean, South River City Citizens, and Brother Daniel Lynch, a former biology professor at St. Ed's university, banded together to protect Blunn Creek from condominium construction that would have polluted the land. They persuaded the city to buy the land and turn it into a preserve.

Riverside Drive: When the city had an expansion plan to widen Riverside into six lanes from Pleasant Valley to Congress through Zilker Park to Mo-Pac, Jean worked to reduce it to a four-lane boulevard with landscaped medians and no extension to Mo-Pac.

Fairview Park: This 1880s historic area of SRCC was threatened by redevelopment. Jean spent hours convincing the City Council to adopt a new zoning concept: an overlay "Neighborhood Conservation Combining District". It was adopted by City Council and applied to Fairview Park.

In 1990, at the age of 65, Jean gave up practicing landscape architecture to devote more time to serving on city boards and commissions. She was appointed to the Planning Commission, serving 1971-1977, then again from 1993-1999, and then on the Zoning and Platting Commission from 2001-2002. She also worked on the Downtown Commission (1998-2002) and the Historic Landmark Commission (2002-2008). In other words, volunteering her time for the good of the city became a way of life for her.

Jean was known for her remarkable endurance in countless meetings. She was respected and generous in mentoring others. She was a low-profile, effective leader because she had a knack of asking a question at the right time to make people think a different way. Jean never seemed ruffled. She maintained her sense of humor and built life-long friendships along the way. We will miss Jean and remember her many contributions.

Carol Martin