

## Mayor Will Wynn Featured Guest Speaker at next NUNA Meeting



The next NUNA neighborhood meeting will be Monday, February 6 at the First English Lutheran Church, 30th and Whitis Streets, at 7 pm. We have the pleasure of having Mayor Wynn as our speaker. Mayor Wynn has had many challenges to address during his tenure as mayor; for example, his prompt response and organized efforts to help the evacuees of Hurricane Katrina. Please come meet the

Mayor and find out about your City of Austin and his vision for this community. This is a great opportunity to discuss your concerns with an elected City Official.

## Support Your Neighborhood with Dues

Dues are due! It is time to renew your NUNA 2006 membership. Even though we have finished the Neighborhood Plan and our NCCD, we still need your support to protect the 'hood. Join NUNA today for \$10 per person or \$15 per household. We are only as strong as our membership!

## Does Our New Neighborhood Plan Protect Us?

by Mary Gay Maxwell

NUNA has a new Neighborhood Plan and that means that everything has been solved, right? Wrong. Unfortunately, we only have the beginnings of a new plan. What the new plan assists us in is **preserving the single family character** of the neighborhood we have by outlining a number of ways our properties can be built, redeveloped, or improved. **BUT** we have to be alert to what is happening around us or it can be eroded from within. All of our neighbors who care about protecting and preserving our 'hood need to get involved in observing what and how the housing is being used here. So here are a few examples of what is happening in our neighborhood that could destroy it because of the **incompatibility of projects** within a viable neighborhood.

The most glaring problem is the purchase by investors of single-family houses for conversion into 6 bedroom / 6 bath "super single-family" houses. Some of the investors doing this even live outside Texas. But several local developers are also doing this, and not only in NUNA but in other

### NUNA Meeting


Monday, February 6, 2006, 7 p.m.  
First English Lutheran Church  
3001 Whitis

#### Agenda

- Presentation by Mayor Wynn
- Approval of a Meeting Schedule
- Bylaws Update
- NPT Report
- CANPAC Report
- Sparky Park Update
- Nominating Committee Report

neighborhoods as well. These "**super single-family**" dwellings are then leased to 6 students, often males who are in small fraternities. Many times, these houses have been used as fraternity houses. First of all, it is a **violation of the City's land development code** to use this type of housing as fraternity houses. Second, using single-family housing for 6 unrelated "adults" is **incompatible with family neighborhoods**. This could easily lead to "neighbor flight" from our precious neighborhoods, and eventually the degradation of our area into another "west campus," where there is now very little owner-occupied housing.

Another problem is the continuing "plague" of super duplexes in our area. According to the ordinance passed during our planning process relating to super duplexes, **no more than 6 unrelated adults can reside on a single site**. That means that a maximum of 3 persons can live in each unit of a duplex. There has been confusion about this, but the latest version is what is stated above. Any of us living near a super duplex can call the city and complain if there are more than 6 people living on the site. A single "site" means the "entire property."

Both the "super single-family" and "super duplex" uses have potential for weakening our neighborhoods in a way that they could be lost. A number of people in NUNA's organization are involved in working on these issues. If you know of single family houses being rented out to large groups of students, or a situation where more than 6 people are living on the site of a duplex, please contact one of the following: Mary Gay Maxwell (marygay@io.com), Mary Ingle (rusticusmus2000@yahoo.com), or Scott Morris (smorris@nuna-austin.org). 

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## Sparky Park Update

by Mary Ingle

Many meetings have transpired since our last Sparky Park update. In December, NUNA worked with Austin Energy and the Parks Department to reach an agreement with two cell phone companies, T-Mobile and Sprint, who have agreed to share a pre-existing pole (the one closest to Grooms Street). The top of the pole will be configured to have flush mounts, which should be less conspicuous and more attractive. Additionally, Sprint has agreed to a four-year lease with the same terms and amounts as T-Mobile; that totals approximately \$200,000 of "seed money" for establishing this modest park and remodeling the substation building. The monies will reside with Austin Energy. Because Sprint joined the negotiations late in the day, they have also agreed to relocate their equipment boxes next to T-Mobile's and to build an attractive brick wall around all the equipment, including the boxes previously installed by Grande Communications. Sprint also made a point of saying that the brick for the wall would match the brick of the substation building, if possible. Such sensitivity to details and aesthetics is greatly appreciated by NUNA.

Also in December, NUNA hosted its final, final charrette for Sparky Park with architects Simon Atkinson and Robin Abrams. The goal of this last charrette was to finalize the specific design of the park in the previous plan (D), and to define the roles and activities for a passive, tranquil space in this 24,000 square-foot lot. The resulting plan was then given to the Parks Department for review, and presented to the Lands and Facilities Subcommittee of the Parks Board on December 20. The park plan features a "front yard" facing Grooms Street, with additional trees, gentle paths, and seating in an area peppered with wildflowers. A serpentine metal sculpture provides seating and invites you to follow



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its path from the front of the building into a central arena behind the building and beyond. The “backyard” is then divided into two distinct spaces delineated by four-foot berms. The first semicircular arena provides seating facing the back of the substation building, where performances, art installations, or a seasonal market could take place. A second semicircular arena, mirroring the first, lies in the back half of the lot; also delineated by four-foot berms, it focuses on an inner space or “lawn” where you might play, picnic, or sit quietly under a trellis admiring nature. All the vegetation for the park is planned to be indigenous and low maintenance, with variations in shape and color. A sketch of Simon Atkinson's final plan will be posted for viewing at the next neighborhood meeting on February 6.

The present grounds of the North Austin Substation on Grooms Street are hardly recognizable! All the transformers have been removed, and now the grass is growing. If you squint your eyes, you can imagine trees, berms, and other landscaping, perhaps even a location for temporary art sponsored by the City's program of Art in Public Places. In addition to the transformation of the grounds, the substation building has been remediated by Austin Energy crews. The remediation included removal of asbestos, lead paint, and other toxic substances. The building is now ready for remodeling. Soil sampling and testing has been done through Austin Energy, and a report has been made available to NUNA with the results of the testing. Austin Energy has also agreed to supply 72 inches of trees, which means that 24 trees with 3 inch bases could be planted on the site.

Work is also currently underway with the City's Historic Preservation Officer, Steve Sadowsky, to designate the substation building as historic. Substation buildings seem to be relics of the past since they are no longer built. The Grooms building, which preliminary research indicates was built in the 1930s, is the only substation surviving in Austin. A request for historic designation will be submitted to the Historic Landmark Commission, if all goes according to plan and research, at the end of February. 

## North University Neighborhood Planning Team Report: Density of Area Confirmed

by Scott Morris

During the fall of 2002, NUNA residents along with a group of 7 neighborhood associations around the university began participating in the city's neighborhood planning process. Members of the city's planning staff repeated one theme in these workshops: the city was very interested in increasing density in the combined plan area. At that time, no specific data were available on how dense the area already was, and how dense it needed to become.

The numbers are in, and it confirms what we already knew. North University is by far one of the most densely populated areas of the city. The City of Austin report titled “Comparative Neighborhoods Data Program: Housing Stock Expansion, Population Growth and Density,” ranks the North University Neighborhood Planning Area (NPA) 3rd out of a total 63 planning areas based on gross population density. Below are some of the findings from that report, with data shown for adjacent Hyde Park as well as for our plan partners in the Hancock NPA (Hancock, Eastwoods) and West University NPA (WUNA, UAP, Heritage, Shoalcrest).

Boundaries of the planning areas are:

### Hancock NPA

North: 45th St., South: Dean Keaton, East: IH-35, West: Duval St.

### Hyde Park NPA

North: 51st St., South: 38th St., East: Duval to 45th to Red River to 51st, West: Guadalupe St.

### North University NPA

North: 38th St., South: 27th St., East: Duval to San Jacinto to 27th St., West: Guadalupe St.

### West University NPA

North: 38th St., South: MLK Blvd., East: University Ave. to 21st to Guadalupe St., West: Lamar Blvd.

	Hancock	Hyde Park	<b>N. University</b>	W. University
<b>Total 2005 Population</b>	5168	6330	<b>4754</b>	12691
<b>Gross Population Density per Acre</b>	9.54	13.04	<b>20.24</b>	26.85
Rank	19	6	<b>3</b>	1
<b>Total Single Family Units 2005</b>	1,108	1,560	<b>455</b>	525
<b>Total Duplex-Tri &amp; Fourplex Units 2005</b>	352	454	<b>380</b>	511
<b>Total Multi- family Units 2005</b>	1,141	1,604	<b>1,803</b>	4,947
<b>Total Housing Units 2005</b>	5,288	7,262	<b>5,199</b>	11,551
<b>Absolute Population Growth 2000 to 2005</b>	148	287	<b>328</b>	1,097
Rank	38	30	<b>28</b>	8
<b>Percent Population Growth 2000 to 2005</b>	2.9%	4.7%	<b>7.4%</b>	9.5%

The full report can be found at:

[http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/downloads/NPA\\_Comparative\\_Data.pdf](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/downloads/NPA_Comparative_Data.pdf).


## Ad Hoc Committee Formed to Review Neighborhood Planning

by Scott Morris


Members from North University, West University, and Shoalcrest representing Central Austin Neighborhoods Planning Committee (CANPAC) attended a workshop on January 21st to discuss the format of planning teams citywide and the challenges facing them. Information on experiences in development enforcement and plan implementation was shared and comparisons were drawn between areas. The event was facilitated by the Austin Neighborhoods Council, attended by over 100 planning team members, and about 40 graduate students from the UT-Austin School of Architecture's Community and Regional Planning.

High on the list of common issues was the failure of the city staff to enforce development code, the need for cease and desist, as well as, removal orders for illegal construction, inadequate development review of site plans and building plans, and the circumvention of the plan amendment process by the recharacterizing of plan amendments as variances or ordinance changes. Despite these failures, the participants thought that there was a positive side to the planning process which was that every group thought it brought neighborhoods together thereby increasing the neighborhoods' effectiveness.

Most planning teams in our part of the city had plans much older than ours, yet reported little or no progress in plan implementation on either a private or public development level. We in NUNA feel relatively fortunate that many Neighborhood Plan projects are currently underway here. Most of these projects are being built under the plan's provisions or were the direct result of negotiations undertaken during the planning process. In the public project realm, the plan was used in the past few months repeatedly and convincingly to remind city officials that the conversion of the Grooms Substation into a pocket park was not optional, but is a matter that was settled in the plan.

The North University Neighborhood Planning Team meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in the AGE Building located at 3710 Cedar St. Meetings are open and public, and all are welcome to attend. Membership is open to all NUNA residents with an interest in the topic of land use. Please contact Scott Morris at [smorris@nuna-austin.org](mailto:smorris@nuna-austin.org) or 371-7961 if you would like to join. The NUNA NCCD and a link to a city-maintained web site for the Central Austin Combined Neighborhood Plan can be found on NUNA's web site: [nuna-austin.org](http://nuna-austin.org). 

## Did the City of Austin Miss Your Scheduled Large Brush Pick Up?

Several NUNA residents who received notices from the City that their large brush and limb pickup that was scheduled to begin the week of January 16 have reported that this did not seem to occur on their streets. If you still have large brush waiting for pick up on the curb, please call Solid Waste Services at 494-9400. Press "option 1" for English, and then "option 5" for Solid Waste. Or visit [www.austinrecycles.com](http://www.austinrecycles.com) for more information. 

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The NUNA Bylaws draft is currently available for review on the NUNA website at [nuna-austin.org](http://nuna-austin.org).