

President's Report June 2007

by Bill Bednar

There will be two programs of interest and some NPT concerns for consideration at our June meeting.

On the program will be Laura Patlove to bring us more specific information on the city's Heat Island resolution, that is, what the city is doing to address the fact that the interior of the city is regularly 2 to 9 degrees warmer than the surrounding countryside. This effect, which is more pronounced in the summer, comes about primarily from decreased vegetation and increased impervious cover in urban areas. Included will be how to get a free tree to plant!

Also on the program will be a representative from the Responsible Growth for Northcross (RG4N.org), who will brief us on the status of the Northcross neighborhood's efforts to defeat the planned development of a Wal-Mart super center on the former mall property there. This is a situation not unlike the one faced by NUNA several years ago with the Triangle development, but with even more serious potential consequences for the quality of life in that part of Austin. We will be given the opportunity to pass a resolution in support of RG4N, if that's what we want to do.

On the NPT front, there will be a report from Mary Ingle on the City's proposed Vertically Mixed Use ordinance, which is intended to encourage affordable housing along core transit corridors (e.g., Guadalupe Street and West 38th) in exchange for relaxation of code requirements that will allow greater development and more dwelling units. We have a June 4 deadline to request that the city opt-out properties along Guadalupe and along W. 38th. NUNA can always opt-in properties to this program in the future. Previously, our NPT had recommended that all the qualifying properties in NUNA be opted out. After another meeting to discuss this in more detail with an enlarged map, we decided to opt in some properties on Guadalupe Street from 27th to 30th Streets. This decision was based on what abuts the particular properties. The rationale which guided our decision was that we would like to protect, as much as we can, the single family properties which are adjacent to some proposed VMU properties. It seems very sensible to me, and in NUNA's best interest, to make the rest of these decisions on a case-by-case basis at the neighborhood level rather than acquiescing in blanket authority that would essentially leave the city and developers to work out those decisions on their own. However, I'm told the issue is fraught with city council politicking. More from Mary Ingle at the meeting.

Next Neighborhood Meeting

Monday, June 4th, 2007

7 pm

First English Lutheran Church
3001 Whitis St.

Agenda:

- Presentation by Laura Patlove
"Free Trees"
- Presentation about Walmart at Northcross
Mall by Mary Jean Matus
- Discussion of VMU/ vote on NPT
recommendation for the City
- NUNA goals for 2007-2008
- Committee Reports

JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION TODAY

It is never too late to renew or establish your membership with NUNA. We need your support in the form of a check for \$10 per individual or \$20 per family. This money helps pay for the newsletter, for the annual usage fees of the church and AGE building, and for other memberships and expenses our organization encounters. We also have an overdue debt to a neighbor from 2004 for \$1300. Please help NUNA pay back this neighbor. (Also, you must be a current member in order to vote at the next meeting).

Please send your dues to:

Charles Hibbetts
110 W 33rd Street
Austin, 78705.

Finally, a BIG thanks to Mark Feist and all the other volunteers who made It's My Park Day such a huge success in April. Just look at Hemphill Park!

I will look forward to seeing you on June 4!!

Bill Bednar
476-1135
587-3504 cell



NPT Update - VMU

By Mary Ingle

Previously, in the last issue of the NUNA newsletter, it was reported that the NUNA Planning Team (NPT) had begun to discuss the complex topic of VMU (vertical mixed use) which is an overlay ordinance, recently adopted by the City Council. VMU is based on the UNO overlay which would apply to new development in West Campus. The City Staff has directed neighborhoods and neighborhood planning areas such as CANPAC (NUNA is a member of CANPAC) to review and evaluate carefully materials from public presentations and maps from a City web site concerning Core Transportation Corridors and other information: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/planning/verticalmixeduse.htm>

VMU is a fine concept which would help eliminate urban sprawl and make neighborhoods more “user friendly” with amenities such as restaurants and shops within walking distance. VMU combines two uses on a property- retail or office usually on the ground floor and a residential component on the other floors. With this increase in “density bonus,” there are other benefits for VMU such as a percentage of affordable housing units, a reduction in parking requirements, setbacks, FAR and site area requirements.

At this time, VMU would **only** apply to **commercial properties** on 2 streets considered Core Transportation Corridors within NUNA: Guadalupe and 38th at Speedway. **VMU = CS** zoning; all other properties zoned multi family (MF), single family (SF), etc. would not qualify for VMU. VMU does not affect the height of a building; that means all the commercial properties in our Guadalupe, Transition, and Speedway districts in our NCCD would not receive any extra height, except that which is given on the height map in the NCCD. Since this is the Opt Out period for VMU, this will be the first and last time to **opt out**. A commercial property may, in the future, **opt in**, but it may not opt out. Confused? (You are not alone!) Another salient point is that the **NCCD ordinance would supersede any VMU changes to a property.**

One question I would like to address is how would VMU impact our neighborhood negatively. Since we live near “ground zero”- UT, we have particular issues which need to be addressed such as parking requirements. It will be wonderful not to worry about parking; it would be wonderful if most people chose other forms of transportation such as mass transit, segways, bicycling, or walking. Until the alternative transportation utopia is established, it is inevitable that NUNA will be concerned with issues such as parking for awhile, or until there is movement away from the “car culture” in this area. Since NUNA has a carefully crafted NCCD ordinance as of August 2004, development for commercial properties is spelled out clearly without any parking reductions, FAR (Floor Area Ratio), and Site Area Requirements. Additionally, since we live so close to the largest University in the country, which does not provide adequate parking even for its staff, not to mention its student population, adequate parking restrictions and regulations are necessary for all of us to live in harmony, side by side within this neighborhood and in the surrounding

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neighborhoods.

The City’s VMU Opt Out application requires that each neighborhood vote on VMU and document the process of notification such as a neighborhood meeting, newsletter, etc. The NUNA Planning Team has drafted a recommendation for the neighborhood to adopt at the next meeting on June 4, the deadline for the VMU Opt Out application. **The NPT’s recommendation for NUNA is to opt out of the VMU overlay for the properties on Guadalupe from 30th to 38th Streets and the four properties on 38th from Guadalupe to Speedway at this time. The NPT recommends that the parking reduction on any opt in property would be denied. The NPT would like to review VMU in the future on a case-by-case basis.** This does not mean that the NPT is opposed to all VMU projects, but we would like first to evaluate each project to see if it is compliant with our NCCD.

The City has given CANPAC (Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Area Committee) the authority to submit the application for VMU Opt Out option for the whole planning area of 7 neighborhoods around the University of Texas. Since CANPAC includes NUNA, CANPAC needs our individual neighborhood association vote before the packet may be turned in. The application deadline is the same day as our next neighborhood meeting (June 4). This means that midnight oil will be burned by the CANPAC group to finish the application in a timely manner! The NPT would like the support of the neighborhood on their recommendation for the VMU Opt In and Opt Out option at this time.



Miscellaneous Environmental Tips

By Mary Lehmann

Bothered by so much runoff from your gutters and driveway into the storm sewer? Borrow a good idea from Kansas City: the Rain Garden. With proper planting you can greatly increase the absorption of rain into your soil. Go to <<http://www.grownative.org>>www.grownative.org and to <<http://www.rainkc.com>>www.rainkc.com. You select drought tolerant plants that can stand temporary saturation. The Wildflower Center should be able to guide you to good native plants of Texas.

To help the endangered monarch butterfly we are urged to plant milkweed in our yards. There are a number of native species, and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center can tell you which they are and where to buy. The monarch butterfly caterpillar feeds only on milkweed. After emerging from the pupa, the butterfly migrates northward over enormous distances. Let's give it a great welcome in Austin, with milkweeds in everybody's yard where it can rest and lay its eggs. For more information: www.livemonarch.org or 877-722-8624 and www.monarchwatch.org or 1-800-780-9986. You can send away for the caterpillar after you have your milkweed growing and watch it transform into the butterfly. A great present for the children!

For information on trading in your gas-powered mower for an electric one, and which stores offer up to 20 percent off and when, call Scott Johnson at (512) 389-2250 or go to www.cmpbs.org/electriclawnmower.



GOODBYE GOODBYE

We are losing 2 people in the neighborhood, who are relocating to Boston, MA, Will Donovan and Anne Beamish. Anne has been a Professor of Architecture at UT while Will has contributed heavily to the bimonthly publication of this newsletter and to the management of the NUNA web site. We will miss their neighborhood contributions and their smiling faces. Hold up a glass to make a cheer to Will and Anne- best wishes in Boston!

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Adams / Hemphill Park Update

By Mark W. Feist

I want to thank all those who attended It's My Park Day last month. It was a huge success. Trash was picked up all the way to the fire station; the creek was cleared of over growth. Even sidewalks were uncovered, and the erosion fence was removed on the north end. Fun was had by all. 32 people participated, and we hope to have more next year!

I would like to explain about park improvement funding. The parks which are getting funded through the Austin Parks Foundation (APF) are those which have organized neighborhoods, have matching funding, and are willing to provide some volunteer labor. The director of the foundation told me that this funding should be available to us every year through revenue generated from the Austin City Limits Festival. The projects can be no smaller than \$5000; so having a well thought out plan as to what improvements we would like to see in the park is a first priority. Neighborhoods which organize around their particular park are the ones that are obtaining funding.

As chair of the Adams/Hemphill Park committee, I would like to call a meeting soon to have a general discussion of the improvements that we, as a neighborhood, would like to see. **The meeting date is May 22, Tuesday, at the First English Lutheran Church, 7 pm.** This is a chance for you to express your ideas as to what you want our park to be. Before you come to the meeting think about improvements that are needed for all aspects of the park, especially including the Adams portion, south of 30th. Please contact me if you would like to attend this meeting or if you have any ideas for the development and renovation of this park project:

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