

President's Report August 2008

by Bill Bednar

There are many NUNA successes to mention since my last report, yet many needs going unmet. On the plus side, the Seminary's acquisition of the Phi Delta property at 3100 Duval is moving forward under the criteria approved by the membership in June. A satisfactory plan has been approved by the NPT for the Kirby Hall parking lot, and a recommendation will be coming forward for membership approval in August. (PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND ON AUGUST 5 IN HEMP HILL PARK!!!) The NPT and an angel neighbor staved off a blitzkrieg in early July at 408 West 32nd, where a new owner sought to convert a lovely single family home into student rentals. I'm pleased and thankful to report that the owner was persuaded to resell to a neighbor, who will in turn sell it only as a single-family residence.

This last success, though, is tempered by the sobering reality that NUNA as a whole is constantly under pressure from investor landlords trying to get away with exceeding the occupancy limits in houses and duplexes rented to students. This is sometimes called "house stuffing" or "stealth dorms," and summer is the season for it as the new University year starts up. It is unfair to the students, who pay exorbitant rates for too little space, and to neighbors, who have to deal with increased traffic, parking overflow, and noise. It is against the law, because city ordinances limit the number of unrelated adults who may occupy a house or duplex. (These rules are posted in the "Documents" section of the NUNA List Serve at Yahoo.)

Your NPT is doing its best to keep up with the remodeling permits that often foretell stuffing a rental property. For example, we just caught in the last stages a permit for adding a "study" to a duplex over at 400 East 33rd Street, which looks suspiciously like another, and illegal, bedroom. (A "study" with a bathroom??) It is important to find these remodels at the permit stage, because that is where NUNA can exert the most effective pressure. After the work is complete and students are in, the city has been reluctant to enforce the occupancy limits, possibly because the brunt falls on the students who would have to move, rather than the owner landlord who violated the law. There are enforcement mechanisms we can invoke, but there aren't enough people on the NPT to keep track of all of it. NUNA needs your help.

What we need is a group of volunteers, an "occupancy task force" that would work with the NPT to identify problem permits early and work to defeat them or at least get safeguards, such as writing the occupancy limits

NOTICE: Next Neighborhood Meeting

National Neighborhood Night Out

Tuesday, August 5, 2008
Hemp Hill Park, 7 pm,

SEE YOU AT THE BENCH!!
Meet and Greet your Neighbors

Action Item:
Approve Kirby Hall Parking Lot Project

into the lease, that will help curb the stealth dorms. The idea would be for NUNA to point out the obvious potential for violations and insist on proof that the occupancy limits are in the landlord's lease as a condition to approval of the permit. Where we already have stuffing and can prove it, NUNA could get Code Enforcement involved when leases are about to expire-to prevent further stuffing when the next school year rolls around. That would be the stick.

The carrot might be a NUNA -certified landlord program. The idea is to publicize NUNA as a quiet alternative throughout the University community. We would put a link to NUNA on student housing web sites that would open to a "welcome students" page at the NUNA site. That site would promote NUN as a quiet neighborhood for serious scholars and gently warn that loud and late parties are not tolerated. There would be a list of NUNA certified landlords who have anti-noise/nuisance clauses in their leases and are committed to providing a peaceful living environment. Volunteers would design the welcome page, mount it on the NUNA site, develop certification criteria, and get landlords signed up. The pitch would be-put the clauses in your leases and commit to noise and trash abatement and the occupancy limits, which is good for your business and your property, and we will give you "NUNA certified" status and free listing on our welcome students page.

Finally, another plea for help with the newsletter. We urgently need an editor. As noted in the headline, this is likely to be the last issue until we get one. Come on, NUNAns, it's your turn to help!

NPT Update

By Mary Ingle

The NUNA Planning Team (NPT) met in July with a full agenda. We have been discussing some of these items for a very long time. The first item was the proposed parking lot for Kirby Hall School at 400 W 29th Street. Previously, Kirby Hall had been working out details of landscaping and satisfying the immediate neighbor to the north. The parking lot will have a 4 foot retaining wall (for screening of headlights and as a barrier in case a car floats towards the neighbor's property inadvertently). Outside the retaining wall there will be landscaping of native Texas Trees and shrub; for example, the beautiful Texas red bud tree. The NPT voted to support this project contingent upon agreement with the headmistress of Kirby Hall, Beverly Rase, regarding some requests by the neighbor concerning using the parking lot after-hours for his tenants. Carl McClendon representing Mrs. Rase was confident that this could be arranged. Kirby Hall wants a letter of support from the neighborhood association. This will require a vote from the membership at the next neighborhood meeting, August 5, Tuesday- **Neighborhood Night Out** in Hemphill Park.

We also discussed the swift actions and strategy involved with the 408 W 32nd Street property in Aldridge Place which was seriously in danger of becoming a slumlord's delight and a student rental with inappropriate numbers/occupancy. Members of the NPT were instrumental in solving this dilemma and saving this property from ruin along with other NUNA residents. Violations were submitted to City Departments-Code Enforcement and Permitting, letters were written to the owner and the leasing agent, and ultimately another buyer was found. All of this was a proactive effort to save a house from ruining the street of a residential neighborhood. Similar actions may be used for other properties in our neighborhood which might become vulnerable or have permitting violations and code enforcement issues. In order to make this strategy work, we will need watchful and vigilant residents.

An interesting situation developed concerning 510 W 29 Street, The Art Authority. Not long ago (end of May?) a banner advertising a full bar appeared on the outside of the property. This property does not have the zoning for a full bar, neither did it possess a CS1 liquor license from TABC. In addition, the NCCD does not allow a "cocktail lounge" use in this district (one would also need a commercial CS zoning and this property has GR., general retail.). The property was reported to code enforcement, ADP, and the TABC for violations. It was shut down immediately.

We are still waiting for the official news about the property closing for Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest at 3100 Duval. The Seminary put a contract on this property with the help of the NPR; they plan to build married student housing for the Seminary, which they desperately need.

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The NPT usually meets the second Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm (if there is business to discuss!). These meetings are open to NUNA residents. We encourage and need participation in neighborhood issues. If you would like to attend our meetings, please call Mary Ingle, 320-8449.



A Special Thanks To A Great Neighbor

Our neighborhood association would like to extend a very special thank you to **Pallas Art Web Design** who most graciously offered to let us use their server for our NUNA website, www.nuna-austin.org.

LAST ISSUE OF THE NUNA NEWSLETTER??

A question has arisen about continuing the paper version of the NUN newsletter or doing something different with a "virtual" newsletter on line. If we want a paper newsletter, we need many more volunteers since the work to put together and deliver the newsletter is great. Our current editor, Gnome de Plume, has resigned; we will need another newsletter editor, no matter what we decide- paper or an online newsletter.

This seems a good time to ask ourselves whether we want to continue the NUNA Newsletter in paper form or change to an on-line format. Being on-line, either as a link from the NUN web site or perhaps as a separate List Serve, would reduce costs and simplify distribution, but would have the disadvantage of missing those of us that do not yet have internet access. The paper copy allows the people who deliver the newsletter to residents have first hand knowledge of what is happening to our streets and properties; it also helps us keep an "eye on things" - our internal street fabric. No doubt there are other pros and cons. Let us know what you think about this. Call at Bill Bednar 476-1135, wbednar@bednarlaw.com.

Many thanks to Mary Ingle, Will Donovan, and Jan Moyle for their able and faithful service in putting out the NUNA Newsletter. For many years, Mary has edited, handled advertising, printed, distributed and supervised, Will Donovan has formatted (even though he moved to Boston over a year ago!), and Jan has counted, sorted, and distributed. Special thanks go to Mary Ingle, who has not only done all that stuff, but also has ghostwritten most

of the articles (!) Now the time has come for some new blood. Mary Ingle has resigned, citing her need to focus on growing NPT and CANPAC concerns, and we need a new newsletter editor.

The new editor would be in charge of gathering articles from officers and committee heads, writing an occasional article, inserting meeting notices and the like, inserting ads and handling ad revenue, and providing the format person final copy. As an aside, it is time for someone here in town to take over formatting. Will Donovan generously agreed to help us for a while after he moved to Boston, but we are past the point of imposing on him. So another editorial task will be to find a local formatter. If the decision is to continue with paper, Scott Morris has agreed to take over printing and distribution, which would share the load.

So please, any of you out there with a lot (or even a little!) publishing experience, WE NEED YOU! E-mail me at wbednar@bednarlaw.com, or call at 476-1135.



NUNA is online at:
www.nuna-austin.org

Important phone numbers and e-mail:

NUNA's APD district representative is **Officer Armando (A.J.) Rodriguez**. Officer Rodriguez may be reached at **974-4527** or armando.rodriguez@ci.austin.tx.us

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Animal Control	472-7387
Austin Police Dept. Rep.	974-4490 or 974-5340
City of Austin, main switchboard	499-2000
Dead Animal Collection	499-2111
Dumping (Creek/Storm Drain Concerns)	499-2550
Electric Trouble Reports	322-9100
Garbage/Recycling Collection	499-2111
Graffiti Hotline	974-1028
Pothole Complaints	440-8444
Street Light Repairs	505-7617
Street Sign (Trouble)	457-4850
To complain about noise	911
Zoning Changes/Review	499-6370
Zoning Violations	974-6576

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.

Please send your dues to:

Jan Moyle
Treasurer for NUNA
200 West 32nd Street
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