

President's Report February 2008

by Bill Bednar

As I write, January is coming to a close, and it's housekeeping time in NUNA. The Executive Committee is mulling over the idea of a membership dues increase, but no concrete recommendation has yet emerged. The Nominating Committee is at work on a recommended slate of officers for presentation at the February meeting-officer elections are in April. A truck whacked a stone post up at 32nd & Guadalupe again, and Aldridge Place is chatting on the List Serve to get busy and fix it. Mary Ingle finally talked the cell phone company into ponying up the money they promised for Sparky Park. Mark Feist & Roger Binkley are nagging away at the City about bridges, curbs, and other Hemphill Park items. Jonathan Langley has a new Aldridge Place web site up and running. There's so much good energy in NUNA right now! Thanks to all of you who are out there plugging away to make NUNA a better place to live.

One Idea that is gaining a lot of traction is to move forward with designation of NUNA as a Historic District. At the February meeting, we will have a presentation by Jacqui Schraad (Heritage Society of Austin), Steve Sadowsky, the City's Historic Preservation Office, and perhaps John Donisi with Drenner & Golden. This will be a great opportunity to find out what we need to do.

The new Historic District Ordinance enacted June 22, 2006, permits designation of a historic district on petition of the owners of at least 60% of the land if at least 51% of the buildings are contributing structures. A "contributing structure" is one that contributes to the historic character of the area, was built during the district's significant period, and retains its appearance from that time. An altered building may be considered a contributing structure if the alterations are minor and the structure retains its historic appearance and contributes to the overall visual and historic integrity of the district. The application must include an inventory of the buildings and an expert evaluation of whether each qualifies as a "contributing structure," and must include occupancy and ownership histories of 25% or more of the contributing structures.

The tax advantages are complicated. Basically, an owner who improves a contributing structure and jumps through the hoops can get a seven-year tax abatement on the value of the improvements. For the neighborhood, an even more important advantage is the more restrictive demolition and removal requirements applicable to contributing structures.

NOTICE: Next Neighborhood Meeting

Monday, February 4, 2008
7 pm

First English Lutheran Church at
30th and Whitis Streets

Agenda:
Historic District Presentation -
Jacqui Schraad & Steve Sadowsky

Austin Independent Business Alliance- Cathy
Reed

Nomination of Officers for 2008-2009

Approve inclusion of NUNA in front yard
parking ordinance

Committee Reports

The application promises to be a lot of hard work, and there are many ideas of how to go about it. Roger Borgelt has agreed to head a subcommittee for the development of a plan and working group to seek historic district status for the neighborhoods that make up NUNA. If you are interested in participating, please contact Roger at borgelt@pottsreilly.com.

Our next general membership meeting is Monday, February 4, 2008, at 7:00 PM at the First English Lutheran Church. In addition to the historic district program, we will have a short talk by Cathy Reed from the Austin Independent Business Alliance on the new Guadalupe Independent Business District. Then we will have officer reports, the nominating committee report, and election of officers for next year. There will be an action item to get NUNA included in the ordinance against front-yard parking. This prohibition was already in the neighborhood plan, but for some bureaucratic reason the membership has to approve it again. See Mary Ingle's article this issue for a full run-down.

Come on, NUNAs! Get off the sidelines and back in the game! Great doings are afoot, and we need every one of you! See you at the meeting.

Bill Bednar, 476-1135 or 587-3504 cell

Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) Revisited
By Mary Ingle

In June 2007, at the request of the City without any help the City staff, NUNA and the rest of the Neighborhood Planning area (CANPAC, the official planning team for the whole area) which includes Eastwoods, Hancock, Heritage, NUNA, Shoal Crest Caswell Heights, and UAP (University Area Partners) submitted the mandated application for VMU (**Vertical Mixed Use**). Vertical Mixed Use is applied to commercial zoning (CS) only; it must have a commercial and residential component on the ground floor and subsequent floors, respectively. **Vertical Mixed Use does NOT affect height or height limits** imposed on a neighborhood/area. VMU was based on the UNO overlay in the West Campus area, except it seems to be a watered down version of this overlay. In a sense, our planning area, CANPAC, was ahead of the “curve” here. VMU is something which not all areas of the City had, so this concept/zoning tool was intended to be applied widespread. The VMU ordinance was conceived by Council Member Brewster McCracken.

The determining factor for VMU was the location of properties primarily along major, transportation corridors. 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 of a neighborhood. VMU combines two uses on a property- retail or office usually on the ground floor and a residential component on the other floors. 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. In NUNA, Guadalupe Street was the only major transportation corridor (determined by bus routes).

The NUNA Planning Team, which is separate from the officially recognized planning team for our area, CANPAC, carefully reviewed the maps and properties foisted on us by the City for VMU consideration. Then, the CANPAC Planning Team held many subcommittee meetings and submitted a completed application for the whole planning area to the City by the mandatory, designated deadline in June 2007.

Fortunately, NUNA has an NCCD (Neighborhood Conservation Combining District) which is a **zoning ordinance that has more flexible tools for redevelopment** and is more compatible to this older (unofficially historic) area of town. The other benefit of the NCCD, in the particular case concerning VMU, is that the zoning tools in an NCCD (which are more detailed than an regular neighborhood plan) **trump any VMU**. NUNA’s NCCD will protect the careful planning we did during the neighborhood planning process in 2004. **Nonetheless, we were required by the City to submit a VMU application.**

The question arose within our planning area (CANPAC) and also with Hyde Park, our adjoining neighbor, which also has an NCCD, how does one determine fairly what might constitute VMU? The NUNA Planning Team along with the Heritage Neighborhood, our neighbor across Guadalupe, figured out that no property which abuts a residential use (single family or multifamily)

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would be considered from VMU. Also, NUNA decided that none of the bonuses such as a reduction in parking requirements, etc. would be granted to any property which we would designate for VMU. We were also advised by ANC and the City that we must opt in some properties in our application, otherwise we would be punished and forced to have properties considered for VMU. With that kind of threat looming over our planning team’s shoulder, we very carefully included some properties for VMU status in our application.

NUNA already had on the ground (already built) some VMU projects. For example, the “controversial” Villas of Guadalupe have a commercial component- Blockbuster Video on the ground floor, and then have a residential component on the other floors. The Venue at 2815 Guadalupe has a similar makeup with commercial uses on the bottom floor and residential suites/condos above. The best part about the Venue is the **underground parking** arrangement which includes a parking spot per bed- more parking than the City requirement!

NUNA was requested by the City to file an application to opt in or out properties primarily along Guadalupe Street for VMU status which could also grant additional dimensional standards, reduction in parking requirements, and additional ground floor uses in office districts. NUNA opted in properties from 27th to the north side of 30th Street along the east side of Guadalupe since these properties for the most part were built as “VMU” - a commercial use on the ground floor and a residential component on the upper floors, but we did not opt for the additional bonuses such as reduction in parking requirements, etc. for any properties. Our application will be considered in a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission February 12 along with the other neighborhoods in CANPAC (Eastwoods, Hancock, Heritage, NUNA, Shoal Crest, Caswell Heights, and UAP-University Area Partners). There will be no staff recommendation for this application.

In accordance with Hyde Park, another NCCD, we decided that we would prefer to consider individual, commercial project proposals on a case by case basis. In short, NUNA has given nothing away to the City in our application for VMU; we would like first to evaluate each project to see if it is compliant and compatible with our NCCD regulations.



Sparky Park Update

By Douglas Plummer

Just when you thought that nothing would ever happen at the former North Austin substation at 3701 Grooms, the future home of Sparky Park, something is about to burst forth...an art wall! A contract is in the process of being signed by the artist, Berthold Haas, with the Art in Public Places (AIPP) office. Work will begin soon on this wall, probably in March or April. In order

to facilitate and enhance the art project, the artist would like to collect objects from the “children” (adults are also welcome to donate objects) in the neighborhood. These objects need to be collected before the construction starts because they are needed for the formal drawings which will be submitted to the AIPP Board. Some suggestions for collectibles are:

- petrified wood
- tiles- whole or broken
- pottery or ceramics- whole or broken
- fossils, seashells
- garden statuary (Mexican artifacts would be welcome)
- marbles, slag glass, anything with charm!
- textured stone, anything interesting
- machine metal- gears, old rusty tools, cast concrete objects
- door knobs
- objects from the past- Fiesta ware, old tools
- colored glass bottles
- ceramic or glass insulators

We will be collecting items February 23 and February 24. If you need to have an item picked up, you may make arrangements with our volunteers: Rick Iverson 451-1011, Douglas Plummer 789-6466, or Mary Ingle 320-8449. If you would like to make arrangements with the volunteers to drop things off earlier, please call one of the volunteers. You may also bring your collectibles to the old substation building on Grooms Street, Saturday, February 24, from 9 am to noon. Happy hunting and collecting!

Important phone numbers and e-mail:

NUNA has a new district representative from APD, Officer Armando (A.J.) Rodriguez. Officer Rodriguez may be reached at 974-4527 or armando.rodriguez@ci.austin.tx.us

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P R O P E R T I E S

NPT Update:

Front Yard Parking Prohibition Application Needs a Vote from NUNA

By Mary Ingle

At the next neighborhood meeting on February 4, Monday, the neighborhood will have the opportunity to vote on whether or not NUNA should be included in the citywide ordinance prohibiting front yard parking. A front yard is defined as the space between the front property line and the front of the house. A motor vehicle may only be parked on a paved surface such as a driveway or designated "paved" parking spot instead on the grass in front of a house. The other neighborhoods in the CANPAC (Heritage, Eastwoods, Hancock, Shoal Crest, Caswell Heights) area submitted their applications in 2002 when the front yard parking ordinance was introduced. Our neighbor, Hyde Park also submitted their application supporting the ban. Somehow, NUNA was left out of this process even though the neighborhood had previously voted in favor of the ban. We are now being asked by the City to file an application according to proper procedure with notification and a vote (again!) by the neighborhood before February 28, 2008. Since all of the surrounding neighborhoods have adopted this ordinance, it would greatly simplify the enforcement of the front yard parking ban to have NUNA included in this mix. Please come to the meeting on February 4 to vote on this.

The NUNA Planning Team (NPT) meets the second Wednesday of every month to discuss issues of zoning, permits, and other related matters. Neighbors who are embarking on construction projects or redevelopment of their property in NUNA should present their plans to the NPT, particularly if they have any questions about the regulations in the NCCD ordinance which govern our neighborhood. If you are interested in being on the agenda at one of our meetings, please contact the Chair, Mary Ingle at 320-8449. These meetings are open to anyone in the neighborhood; if you are interested in attending one of our meetings please make arrangements with the Chair. We encourage neighborhood participation! Remember that the more focused eyes and ears we have on the street, the better chance we have of surviving (intact) as a neighborhood. Get involved today!



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JOIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION TODAY

Join today! February is the time to renew or establish your membership with NUNA for a year. 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. Join today! Please send your dues to Charles Hibbetts, 110 W 33rd Street, Austin, 78705.

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