

## Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Underway

By Jean Mather, Planning & Zoning Co-chair

Instead of having a citizen base like the 1970's Austin Tomorrow Plan or the 1989 AustinPlan, this time the Council hired a consultant to create *Imagine Austin* and a thirty-four member Citizen Advisory Task Force (CATF) has been picked by Council to represent all of us.

CATF meets monthly to receive staff briefings on different elements of the planning process at One Texas Center, no microphones, no minutes and no TV coverage! However, City staff has held an innovative variety of public sessions to gain citizen participation. The first two meetings focused on the problems Austin is now facing. Individuals walked from panel to panel, left dots and notes to indicate their concerns. Next came the "Meeting in a Box" series, conducted by volunteers under City guidelines, in small groups in homes, libraries, restaurants, etc. Subsequent sessions were conducted in many neighborhoods throughout the City. Participants were grouped around tables, each with a large map of the metropolitan area. Groups negotiated to "create" a plan by choosing symbols to stick on the map indicating preferred densities, land use, transportation choices, etc.

These public input efforts have most recently culminated in five different future development scenarios for the Austin metropolitan area. Once again, sessions were held all over the City in September and October, and citizens were asked to vote for their preferred scenario. Please go to [www.ImagineAustin.net](http://www.ImagineAustin.net) to view the latest developments and to keep abreast of future activities. (continued p 3)

## Norwood House Update

By Sarah Campbell, SRCC President & Wolf Sittler, Chair Norwood Posse

Thirty months after some SRCC members volunteered to form the Norwood Posse and to do something about the run-down Norwood House, located at Riverside and IH 35, the adventure has a new twist. This summer, a new Assistant Director, Kelly Snook, came to PARD (the City's Parks and Recreation Department) to head up, among other responsibilities, the Planning, Design & Construction Division. Kelly spared no time in forming a direction for the Norwood property, reversing PARD's 25-year long "policy" of deterioration by neglect.

Ms. Snook determined that the Norwood House and property are a hot political button -- the *Posse can probably credit itself with raising the property to this level*. She also determined that PARD needed a Feasibility Study by outside professionals who had no vested interest in the property, to evaluate various options for the entire property (not just the House), to assist PARD in making a recommendation to City Council about exactly what to do with the property. The options for the House were loosely described to the Posse as demolition, complete restoration, and some sort of re-purposing that might use part of the House structure.

It is unfortunate that the Posse had to contact PARD about this new direction, as apparently no one told Ms. Snook about the Posse or about all the work the Posse had already done. Since learning about the Posse, however, members have had several meetings with PARD, the last one including the principals of CasaBella, the architectural firm being considered for the Feasibility Study. Posse members have shared their research and findings, which are considerable.

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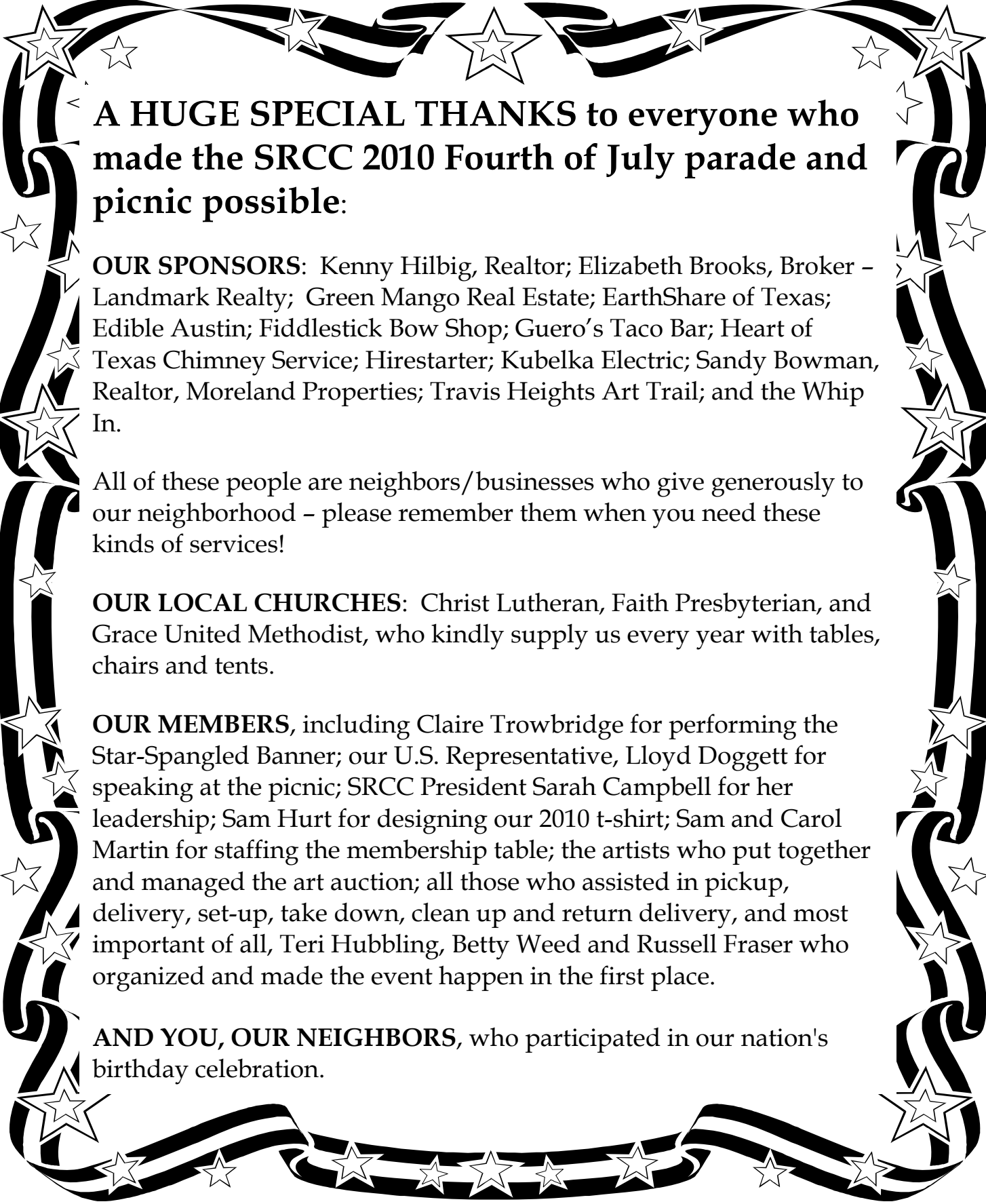
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### 2010 Officers & Committee Listings



**A HUGE SPECIAL THANKS to everyone who made the SRCC 2010 Fourth of July parade and picnic possible:**

**OUR SPONSORS:** Kenny Hilbig, Realtor; Elizabeth Brooks, Broker – Landmark Realty; Green Mango Real Estate; EarthShare of Texas; Edible Austin; Fiddlestick Bow Shop; Guero's Taco Bar; Heart of Texas Chimney Service; Hirestarter; Kubelka Electric; Sandy Bowman, Realtor, Moreland Properties; Travis Heights Art Trail; and the Whip In.

All of these people are neighbors/businesses who give generously to our neighborhood – please remember them when you need these kinds of services!

**OUR LOCAL CHURCHES:** Christ Lutheran, Faith Presbyterian, and Grace United Methodist, who kindly supply us every year with tables, chairs and tents.

**OUR MEMBERS,** including Claire Trowbridge for performing the Star-Spangled Banner; our U.S. Representative, Lloyd Doggett for speaking at the picnic; SRCC President Sarah Campbell for her leadership; Sam Hurt for designing our 2010 t-shirt; Sam and Carol Martin for staffing the membership table; the artists who put together and managed the art auction; all those who assisted in pickup, delivery, set-up, take down, clean up and return delivery, and most important of all, Teri Hubbling, Betty Weed and Russell Fraser who organized and made the event happen in the first place.

**AND YOU, OUR NEIGHBORS,** who participated in our nation's birthday celebration.

## Imagine Austin Continued . . .

Even with the heroic efforts by staff, individual participation has been low. The problems connected with doing a plan are many. To involve ordinary people with busy lives in a planning process, even when it concerns their own neighborhood, is difficult. After all it took three years for SRCC residents to create a plan and develop a consensus, committee meeting by committee meeting; EROC went through the same experience. We had to learn what our options were within the zoning regulations and decide what we wanted to preserve and/or change. We had maps that showed each house, church and commercial enterprise.

For *Imagine Austin* we are shown four land use colors and major transportation lines and one to five activity (growth) centers. With so little detail at that scale, more questions are generated than the proposals can possibly answer. Detail and transparency in the scenarios are lacking as is an all important understanding as to how the City will control development outside the City limits. Will we expand the City limits to Capitol of Texas Highway on the west and 130 on the east?.

Staff has assured us that adopted neighborhood plans will be preserved. The Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC), in a rare move, passed a Resolution to stop this comprehensive planning process until a number of issues/questions has been addressed and resolved—starting with analyzing all of the adopted neighborhood plans to see how much future planning is already in place. SRCC, along with other members of ANC, has been asked to pass a similar resolution. The Executive Committee decided on October 18<sup>th</sup> to prepare a statement expressing SRCC's concern about the potentially huge impacts *Imagine Austin* could have on us, based on the information available . . . and even more so, not available!

In Scenario D, which is closest to the Austin Tomorrow Plan, light rail snakes along Riverside Drive from IH35 to Congress Avenue. Where will the right-of-way come from? If we could see more, we could ask more and make better decisions. And when oh when will we ever see a summation of all those sticky notes? ~~~

## Norwood House Continued . . .

The Posse has been assured they will be able to review and comment on the contract between the City and the consultants, and that Posse members will be involved as the Study progresses.

At this point, Posse members are awaiting their opportunity to look at the contract. The City's characteristic slow progress makes some members very nervous. Some worry this consultant expenditure of \$80,000 is just a way for PARD to recommend "objectively" that the House and remains of the once elegant grounds be demolished. Others are confident that the opposite is the case, and that a solid case for restoration will float to the top of the consultants' recommendations and findings. With such a recommendation, PARD can confidently go to Council to request funding to put the recommendations in place. Demolition might come out as the cheapest option, but not a politically acceptable one since City Council members have all given their verbal support for the project to Posse members when they met with them. IF, however, the Posse sees the Study heading in this direction, its members will be vigilant in getting the word out to you.

For more information, check out our website: [www.restorenorwood.org](http://www.restorenorwood.org). ~~~

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## Committee Reports & Neighborhood Announcements

### SRCC Neighborhood Watch Program Update

By Marc Davis, SRCC Vice President and Public Safety Committee Chair

**A**lthough we had relatively crime-free summer, the fall is upon us, and auto and home burglaries are on the rise. Many of these crimes could be thwarted if we all banded together with our neighbors, kept a close eye on things in our immediate area, and called 911 when we witnessed a suspicious vehicle or individual that seemed out of the ordinary.

Of the 18 block captains that originally volunteered to start watch areas in their sections of the SRCC neighborhood, we are happy to report that almost half have had a kick-off meeting and are actively participating in the program. We are hoping that more will do the same now that the weather has cooled down. If you are interested in participating in our Neighborhood Watch program or would be willing to become a block captain and start a watch area yourself, please feel free to join our Yahoo! Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SouthRiverAustinSecurity/>



Once you've joined the group, details about how to participate will be sent to you and you will be put in touch with your nearest block captain if you are already in an existing watch area. And, as the individual watch areas launch and the coverage of the SRCC neighborhoods increase, we will be conducting additional training sessions to teach tactical neighborhood watch techniques. Look for future announcements this fall. For more information contact [Marc.Davis@gmail.com](mailto:Marc.Davis@gmail.com) or 512-656-2841. 🌊

## YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE: GET INVOLVED IN YOUR VOLUNTARY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

SRCC elects officers every March during our Annual Potluck Dinner. If you have an interest in serving SRCC, if you've ever even considered it, whether in an elected position or more casually, then please contact one of your four Officers listed on the back page, upper right corner. We can discuss with you the various volunteer efforts needed that would best fit your skills or what you might want to do.

The four Officers as well as the Area Coordinators are elected by a quorum of the membership present, per our SRCC Bylaws (go to <http://www.srccaustin.com/>), while the Committee Members and Representatives are not. During my presidency, elections for new Committee Chairs and Representatives have been held to ensure broad support within SRCC.

**Political Aspirations.** It's amazing how many neighborhood volunteers citywide quickly progress to some higher elected local political office. These aspirations are fine qualifications for being an SRCC officer -- as long as your devotion is to SRCC while in an SRCC office.

**Immediate Opening.** Our newsletter editor, Helen Dey Valdez, has announced that she must resign to better mind her paying job! I know there are lots of residents in SRCC who are capable of taking over our newsletter publication job. We publish 3-5 times a year, 2 for sure: (1) in June, before (and to announce) the 4th of July Parade and Picnic, and (2) in February, before the annual elections. It is a volunteer position, like all others in SRCC. If you are interested, please contact either Helen at 634-3740 or Carol Martin, Chair of the Ad Hoc Communications Committee at 441-5222 to learn more about the duties and time requirements of the job. The next newsletter will come due in February and Helen will be glad to help anyone interested in the position get started.

Thank you for an excellent job, Helen!

Sincerely,

Sarah Campbell, President, SRCC

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## Join Us for the Travis Heights Art Trail Dec 4th & 5th, 11AM to 5PM

*By Margaret Adie*

Come and enjoy your local artists as they open up their homes and studios to the public again this December. There are 41 artists this year in 22 locations! It is going to be a great show, and we love showing off our beautiful neighborhood and the great talent that is here! Watch for our brochure and map as well as signs and balloons marking the locations. We look forward to seeing you all!

And a BIG THANKS to so many wonderful businesses that have supported us this year!

For more information and an Arts Trail Map go to:

[www.travisheightsart.com](http://www.travisheightsart.com).



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# Planning & Zoning Variance Process Passes Oct 4, 2010

The following document is designed to help all SRCC members understand the variance process, and when the occasion arises, expedite all suitable zoning variance requests in a consistent and orderly manner.

## SOUTH RIVER CITY CITIZENS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (SRCC) VARIANCE REVIEW POLICY & PROCESS APPROVED 10/4/2010

### A. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

1. APPLICANT (one seeking OR considering a variance) contacts the SRCC Zoning & Planning Committee (ZPC) co-chairs, Jean Mather 444-4153 or Teresa Griffin 444-6914, to discuss the variance request. As needed, ZPC may schedule a meeting with APPLICANT, possibly on site, and may invite potentially impacted neighbors to expedite understanding of variance request. APPLICANT must bring to the meeting, copies of relevant information, including, as appropriate, variance application, relevant calculations, site plan, photos of APPLICANT'S property and photos of adjacent property.
2. ZPC will provide APPLICANT with a copy of this Variance Review Policy & Process with the attached City of Austin Land Development Code Variance Requirements (LDC 25-2-471 through 25-2-474) prior to this meeting.
3. ZPC advises APPLICANT of its recommendation to be taken to the neighborhood organization, if a formal variance application moves forward.

### B. NEIGHBORHOOD RECOMMENDATION

1. If APPLICANT decides to move forward with a formal variance application, APPLICANT should inform ZPC. The City will send SRCC a notification of the application, the case number, and the date of the appropriate City Board or Commission hearing. If time allows, SRCC will put the case on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled monthly General Membership meeting (1<sup>st</sup> Monday). If there is not a regular SRCC meeting prior to the APPLICANT'S scheduled Board or Commission hearing, the ZPC and President may take several actions:
  - a. Schedule the case for the next scheduled SRCC Executive Committee meeting (every 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday)
  - b. Request the SRCC Executive Committee to review and vote on the case via email
  - c. Request a postponement of the hearing date by the reviewing Board or Commission until after SRCC's next regular meeting.
2. If the variance application is to be considered at SRCC's regular monthly membership meeting, it will have a place on the agenda, which is posted on the [SouthRiverAustin@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SouthRiverAustin@yahoogroups.com) list serve approximately one week prior to the meeting date.
3. Procedural review at the SRCC meeting will be as follows:
  - a. ZPC makes succinct presentation of the variance request and findings (3 minutes max.)
  - b. APPLICANT may add comments (3 minutes max.)
  - c. ZPC makes a motion. Followed by a second to the motion, ZPC guides discussion and Q&A. (3 minutes max.)
  - d. ZPC restates the motion with amendments, as appropriate.
  - e. SRCC leads the vote of eligible members.

### C. NOTIFICATION

1. ZPC prepares draft letter to appropriate Board or Commission reporting SRCC's vote on the variance request, and sends to SRCC President.
2. President sends final letter to appropriate Board or Commission with copies to the Executive Committee and ZPC co-chairs.
3. ZPC makes arrangements to have SRCC attendees at the Board or Commission hearing, as deemed necessary.

SRCC's policy is to follow the City's regulations for reviewing variance requests, as found in the City of Austin Land Development Code, Section 25-2-471 through 25-2-474 as shown below:

## **"SUBCHAPTER C. USE AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.**

### **ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.**

#### **§ 25-2-471 INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES.**

The Planning Commission may, by resolution, adopt guidelines for the interpretation by the building official of yard and setback requirements in instances where geometric shape, dimensions, or topography make the literal interpretation of the requirements impractical.

*Source: Section 13-2-613; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 031211-11.*

#### **§ 25-2-472 BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VARIANCE AUTHORITY.**

The Board of Adjustment shall hear and decide a request for a variance from a requirement of this chapter, except as otherwise provided by the Code.

*Source: Section 13-2-833 (1); Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 031211-11.*

#### **§ 25-2-473 VARIANCE REQUIREMENTS.**

- (A) A variance from the requirements of this chapter may be granted under this division if, because of special circumstances of a property, the strict application of this chapter deprives the property owner of privileges that are enjoyed by another person who owns property in the area that has the same zoning designation as the property for which the variance is requested.
- (B) A variance to a regulation may not grant special privileges that are inconsistent with the limitations on other properties in the area or on the district in which the property is located.

*Source: Section 13-2-830; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 031211-11.*

#### **§ 25-2-474 REQUIRED FINDINGS.**

- (A) *The Board of Adjustment may grant a variance from a requirement if it determines that:*
  - (1) *the requirement does not allow for a reasonable use of property;*
  - (2) *the hardship for which the variance is requested is unique to the property and is not generally characteristic of the area in which the property is located; and*
  - (3) *development under the variance does not:*
    - (a) *alter the character of the area adjacent to the property;*
    - (b) *impair the use of adjacent property that is developed in compliance with the City requirements; or*
    - (c) *impair the purposes of the regulations of the zoning district in which the property is located.*
- (B) *The Board may grant a variance from a loading facility or off-street parking if, in addition to the findings required by Subsection (A), the Board determines that:*
  - (1) *current or anticipated traffic volume generated by the use of the property or a nearby property does not reasonably require strict compliance with and enforcement of the requirement from which a variance is requested;*
  - (2) *development under the variance does not result in parking or loading on public streets that interferes with the free flow of traffic on the streets; and*
  - (3) *development under the variance does not create a safety hazard or any other condition that is inconsistent with the objectives of the Code.*
- (C) *A variance granted under Subsection (B) applies only to the use for which the variance was granted and does not run with the land on which the use is located.*

*Source: Section 13-2-834; Ord. 990225-70; Ord. 031211-11."*



# South Congress Improvement Project (SCIP)

## A City of Austin Capital Improvement Project

*By Sarah Campbell, SRCC President*

The City's main street leading to our state capital (and coincidentally the western border for SRCC), South Congress Avenue, has seen a lot of changes and structural improvements over the past eight years. While it seems that the wheels of city government turn slow, progress has been steady and produced a much more pedestrian-friendly environment for what is now a thriving commercial district.

### A Brief History

- 1998 - \$4 million funded by '98 Bond Election
- 2000 - Put on hold pending Light Rail referendum
- 2002 - City partnered with Texas School for Deaf to build retaining wall and streetscape improvements along School frontage, including additional public parking
- 2003 - Lighting study completed, included location of all underground utilities; merchants rejected lighting plan
- 2004 - Potential project list generated for Feasibility Study
- 2005 - Feasibility Study begun
- 2006 - S Congress re-stripped for better mobility
- 2007 - Feasibility Study completed

### 2007- Present

A series of community meetings were held, followed by design and construction of improvements. Examples include:

- (A) Pedestrian crossing improvement trials, several locations
- (B) Improved sidewalk along Guero's courtyard
- (C) Retaining wall and sidewalk north of Homeslice Pizza, in front of two historic homes, to replace dangerous and worn footpath
- (D) Improved side street crossings with bulb-outs at James and Elizabeth Streets

### Pending Activity

In 2010 the City surveyed businesses and residents on either side of S. Congress to learn about parking and traffic opinions. Some of the results were (A) 65.5% in favor of parking on one side only of narrow side streets, (B) 61.8% said Residential Parking Permits would help, (C) 65.7% in favor of back-in angle parking.

### 2010 Potential Future Improvements

The City is holding community meetings on its plans for spending the remaining funds between Academy Drive and Leland Avenue, to include:

- (A) New traffic signals at James and Gibson Streets
- (B) Crosswalks at every intersection
- (C) Bulb-outs for safer crossings at lights
- (D) Back-in angle parking for a net gain of 100 additional spaces
- (E) Improved bike lanes, and (F) reduced number of bus stops

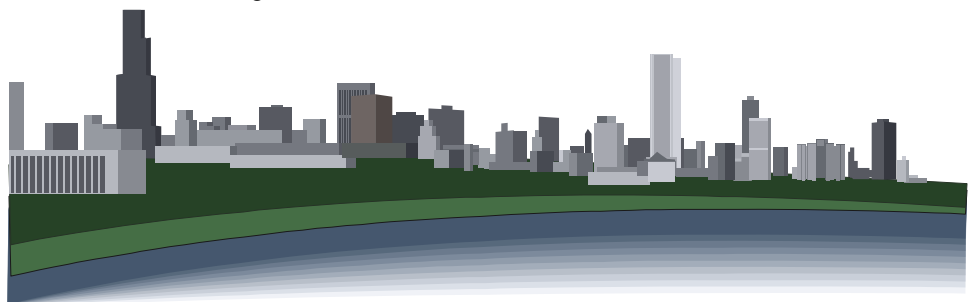
There are other smaller improvements as well. We encourage SRCC residents to participate in the ongoing public input sessions held by the City for prioritizing expenditure of the remaining SCIP funds.

For more information contact:

[Leah.Fillion@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:Leah.Fillion@ci.austin.tx.us)

(transportation aspects) and

[Erica.Leak@ci.austin.tx.us](mailto:Erica.Leak@ci.austin.tx.us) (on the planning & design aspects).



# 2010 - 2011 SRCC Officers & Executive Committee Members

We thank all our officers, area coordinators, committees and area representatives for their dedication to our community!

## AREA COORDINATORS

Area 1	Claudette Lowe	447-1514
Area 1	Helen Dey Valdez	634-3740
Area 2	Kenny Schulz	448-3290
Area 2	Jack Hostetter	214 435-9811
Area 3a	Teri Hubbeling	447-8852
Area 3a	Brian Talenti	992-0136
Area 3b	Brooks Kasson	444-8100
Area 3b	Kenny Hilbig	751-4306
Area 4a	Sam Martin	441-5222
Area 4a	Eric Andruscavage	707-1340
Area 4b	Kris Asthalter	443-4963
Area 4b	Cynthia Biggers	472-1772
Area 5	Neal Nuwash	462-9093
Area 5	Elloa Mathews	442-6986
Area 6	Dawn Cizmar	443-4231
Area 7	Fred Krebs	447-6442
Area 7	Rachel McClure	326-5572
Area 8	Maria Martinez	443-9784
Area 8	Kim Lanzillotti	658-8565

**SRCC Meetings** - We normally meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of every month at 7:15 PM at the Grace United Methodist Church, 205 E. Monroe. Check the website for details. If you want to be part of the SRCC listserv send an email to: [SouthRiverAustin-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SouthRiverAustin-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

**Membership Renewals** - You can renew your membership or join SRCC by sending your dues to P O Box 40632, Austin TX 78704. Treasurer Bob Drew will deposit all checks and will forward all membership information on to Carol Martin, who will update the membership database.

## South River City Citizens Membership Form

Membership Levels, Per Year Or Multiple Years  
 ----- Single \$20 # Years ----- \$ -----  
 ----- Family \$35 # Years ----- \$ -----  
 Additional donation to SRCC General Fund \$ ----- (Big Bubba/Bubette)

Date of dues payment: -----

Name(s) -----

Address: -----

Phone(s): -----

Email(s): -----

Send check made payable to SRCC, along with completed form to:

SRCC

Attention: Treasurer

P.O. Box 40632

Austin, TX 78704

**Dues and Contributions are not tax deductible.**

## SRCC Officers

### President:

Sarah Campbell 512/462-2261

### Vice-President:

Marc Davis 512/656-2841

### Treasurer:

Bob Drew 512/913-7485

### Secretary:

Garret Nick 512/326-7676

## SRCC COMMITTEES & REPRESENTATIVES

### Standing Committees

Parks, Schools & Environment	David Todd (Parks)	416-0400
	Sherri Ancipink (Sch)	707-2627
	Marty Christman (Env)	912-0724
Planning & Zoning	Jean Mather	444.4153
	Teresa Griffin	444-6914
Transportation & Public Safety	Marc Davis	656-2841
Membership	Carol Martin	441-5222

### Ad Hoc Committees

Norwood House	Wolf Sittler	632-9189
TH-FP Historic Dist	Michele Webre	422-1262
Communications	Carol Martin	441-5222
Newsletter	Helen Dey Valdez	326-4320
Financial	Sam Martin	441-5222

### Representatives

Austin Neighborhoods Council	Wolf Sittler	632-9189
St. Edward's	Elloa Mathews	442-6986
South Central Coalition	OPEN	
Save Town Lake	Dennis Cudd	917.568.3147
TH Arts Trail	Margaret Adie	440-8579
Travis Park Apt/ Austin Interfaith	Terry Franz	447-8786

