
St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan
Tuesday, March 31, 2009 – Pickle Elementary School
First Workshop

Overview: We began with introductions and review of ground rules that were developed during the Kick-Off meeting. Dee Dee Quinnelly presented information about 'What is a Neighborhood Plan?' to illustrate the format and content of the plan document. Copies of University Hills/Windsor Park and Brentwood Highland adopted plan documents were circulated in the audience. Results of the initial survey were also presented to the meeting participants.

After a brief question and answer session, meeting attendees participated in a large group discussion to further clarify community issues that were identified during the kick-off meeting and on the initial survey. Participants also had an opportunity to match key players (city departments, local organizations, etc) to different topic areas.

Below are notes taken during the two Q&A sessions and during the large group discussion.

First Question and Answer session:

Q: Where is the funding going to come from to implement this plan?

A: Every two years community members will have the opportunity to pick top 10 priority items from the neighborhood plan and submit them to the implementation planner with NPZD. The implementation planner works with key departments to determine if they will be included in the Capital Improvement Budget for that year.

Q: How will this plan affect my property taxes?

A: Property taxes are not controlled by the City of Austin departments. Travis County Appraisal District (TCAD) assesses property values. Neighborhood planning staff will contact TCAD to get more information and invite them to one of our topic area meetings.

Q: How can community members volunteer to help with this planning process?

A: Community members can volunteer to be on the coordination team that coordinates with other organizations in the community and the City to identify meeting locations and dates.

Key Findings Question and Answer session:

Q: How many people took the initial survey?

A: The total number of respondents is 115.

Q: What about people who did not take the survey, can they still take it?

A: The survey deadline was March 13. The survey is just one tool to give us an idea of important issues in this community. As we have more meetings through-out this process, people will have more opportunities to identify issues that may have been missed in the initial survey or kick-off meeting. For example: At this meeting we are going to have a large group activity where you can look at the list of what we have heard you say so far, and tell us issues that you want added to that list.

Q: How was the survey distributed? Door-to-door? Stuffed in back-packs for parents?

A: We mailed a letter to all 7,500 residents of these planning areas notifying them about the survey and the kick-off meeting.

St. John neighborhood association also distributed flyers that contained information about the survey door-to-door along with their neighborhood association newsletter. We also had hard copy surveys available at the library for people to take and submit at the library. We posted posters at Regan High School, Webb Middle School and Pickle Elementary School that contained information about the survey and the kick-off meeting.

Surveys were not stuffed in students back-packs because of limited budget. We did, however, send flyers in student's back-packs notifying parents of the NP process, meeting dates, and staff contact information. We will be sure to put the survey link on these flyers in the future.

Q: Will findings of the survey change?

A: The survey is just one tool to gauge community's interest and issues. These findings help create a framework for meetings but community members will have opportunity to give input through-out the 12-18 month process. If the survey findings missed an issue that is of importance to community members, there will be opportunities at appropriate meetings to discuss these issues.

Large Group Activity “What have we missed?” Notes:

Neighborhood Design

Entities involved: Keep Austin Beautiful, Neighborhood Planning & Zoning Department, and AustinOne organization.

Q: Define McMansions.

A: A house with a larger footprint and height that is out-of-scale with the existing housing development around it.

Parks and Environment:

Entities involved: Parks and Recreation Department, Austin Energy, Watershed Protection & Development Review Department, Sustainable Food Center, Keep Austin Beautiful, Austin Parks Foundation, Tree Folks, Austin Community Trees, Texas A&M Agricultural Extension office, Community members with an interest in trees and gardening.

- Community gardens would be a nice addition to the neighborhood.
- Cutting down trees along US 183 is like eliminating the natural noise barrier. Explore ways to preserve existing trees and plant new ones.
- Collaborate with Parks & Rec. department to make it easy for community members to access meeting rooms at Virginia Brown Center.
- As more commercial development comes in the neighborhood, could there be a possibility of constructing retaining ponds?

Transportation

Entities involved: Public Works department (Safe Routes to School Program), Texas Department of Transportation, Capital Metro.

- Speed bumps/cushions are needed (especially on Bennett Avenue).
- A lot of the existing street signage is missing.
- Need better and safer routes to schools in the area.
- Change the St. Johns street sign to read St. John.
- ADA (American Disability Act) standards compliant sidewalks are needed in Coronado Hills.

Land Use, Zoning, and Housing

Entities involved: Neighborhood Planning and Zoning, Watershed Protection & Development Review Department, Neighborhood Housing &

Community Development Department, Travis County Tax Appraisal District, Habitat for Humanity, People Trust, and Department of Housing & Community Affairs.

- Two houses on one lot are an issue.
- Renters should be encouraged to up-keep the aesthetics of their homes.

Q: How closely does the City work with the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA)?

A: The City of Austin and TDHCA have different service boundaries for almost all of our programs. Their directors meet regularly to talk about affordable housing issues of mutual interest. They collaborate and give feedback on the impacts on affordable housing for legislative items. TDHCA has 3 programs that can be spent in the City:

1) Tax Credits - The City and the state do not collaborate on tax credit applications because the state must use their ranking system for affordable housing projects. It is important that TDHCA remain neutral regarding these applications. The City Council has the authority to make recommendations regarding competing tax credit applications inside the City limits.

2) Neighborhood Stabilization Program - This was the first stimulus money released by the Obama administration. The City and TDHCA worked closely together to design this program.

3) State Housing Trust Funds - Affordable housing developers in the City are eligible to apply for state Housing Trust Funds.

Community Life/ Public Safety

Entities involved: Code Enforcement, Austin Police Department, Health and Human Services, Austin Branch Library (St. John), Sustainable Food Center, Keep Austin Beautiful, Austin Independent School District, Citizens on Patrol, Austin Humane Society, Animal Trustees of Austin, and Animal Control.

- Explore Adopt-a-Station program.
- District representatives are located in this neighborhood. The DR's should be invited to a topic area meeting focusing on crime and public safety.
- Officer Lopez gives an update at the St. John neighborhood association meeting every month. Community members residing in St.

John can also attend the neighborhood association meeting to hear what update officer Lopez may have to give to the residents.

- Need more patrolling of the neighborhood. Explore programs besides the neighborhood watch program where community members can also patrol the neighborhood streets.
 - Youth center is needed in the community.
 - How many group homes are in our neighborhood? Information on how they affect a neighborhood is needed.
 - Basic up-keep of entire properties not just front yards is needed.
 - More code enforcement officers are needed. Community should push this issue along to City Council.
 - Animals in the neighborhood need to be controlled.
 - Recent code enforcement initiative to clean-up a portion of St. Johns neighborhood was very successful.
 - When violations take place, community members do not always know whether to call 3-1-1 or Austin Police Department.
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The meeting concluded with announcement of the next workshop dedicated to Celebrating History and Diversity with Visioning Exercise. Also, staff informed community members about the Parks and Recreation Long Range Plan for Land, Facilities and Programs (LRP) draft document that is available for download till April 31, 2009. The document may be found at: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/longrangeplan.htm>

Parks and Recreation Department will be holding several public meetings to explain how input was gathered for the LRP, how input was implemented into the LRP, display where input is located within the LRP and conclude with 3 minute citizen communication. Meeting close to St. John/Coronado Hills area will be held at:

Location: **Dobie Middle School Cafeteria**

Where: **1200 E. Rundberg Lane, 78753**

When: **Wednesday, April 22, 2009**

Time: **6:30 P.M – 8:30 P.M**