



The Owana Owl

Watching over Old West Austin since 1983

Old West Austin Neighborhood Association: Town Lake to Enfield and Lamar to Mopac

Canine Social Club hosts fundraiser on June 10

Old West Austin neighbors and friends are invited to attend a reception and silent auction hosted by the West Austin Park Canine Social Club (CSC) on Friday, June 10th at The Josephine House to raise funds for the improvement program at the off-leash area at West Austin Park.

The CSC is working with the Austin Parks Department to alleviate soil erosion and existing drainage problems in the off-leash area. The CSC estimates the program will cost between \$20,000 and \$25,000 to implement and has identified a fundraising goal of \$10,000 for the June 10th silent auction.

Key elements of the program include grading and terracing the area; installing curved retaining walls, plantings, and an ADA path-accessible area; and reconstructing the walkway.

The CSC has already raised over \$2,000 to construct an information kiosk in the off-leash area and is soliciting donations of materials and labor to offset improvement program costs.

The Josephine House is located on the corner of Maurfrais and West Lynn Streets, next door to Jeffrey's. The reception and silent auction will run from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. To donate an item for the silent auction, please contact Nancy Toelle at nmt10@sbcglobal.net or (512) 494-8658. Donations to the CSC are tax-deductible and receipts can be provided for tax purposes.

Texas Trivia...

Can you name the five temporary capitals of Texas in 1836 before Sam Houston moved the capital to Houston in 1837 and then Austin in 1839? See the inside back cover for the answer.

The Zoning Report

Submitted May 14, 2005

CAMPO predicts that the population of Travis, Williamson, & Hayes Counties in 25 years (2030) will be 2.75 million. Like it or not Austin and the surrounding areas will grow and change. Austin will be a large city and our neighborhood will change with it. We will be denser with more people.

So the question is not if we will grow and change, but rather HOW. A look at the number and scope of the zoning and land use issues below (which really represent only the major ones), reinforce what we have all felt - that the pace of change in our neighborhood is intense. How we respond to these changes will affect not just the way our neighborhood looks and feels in the future, but the city as a whole.

The city government's desire to increase the tax rolls as much and as quickly as possible, combined with the budget-crises induced downsizing of city staff and the typical development pressures to act quickly, have resulted in a stampede of spot-zoned development. There are forces in the city and county trying to add a little planning into the mix (eg. Downtown Neighborhood Plan), but the pace of change is such that by the time plans are completed, there won't be much left to plan!

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ZONING REPORT, CONTINUED...

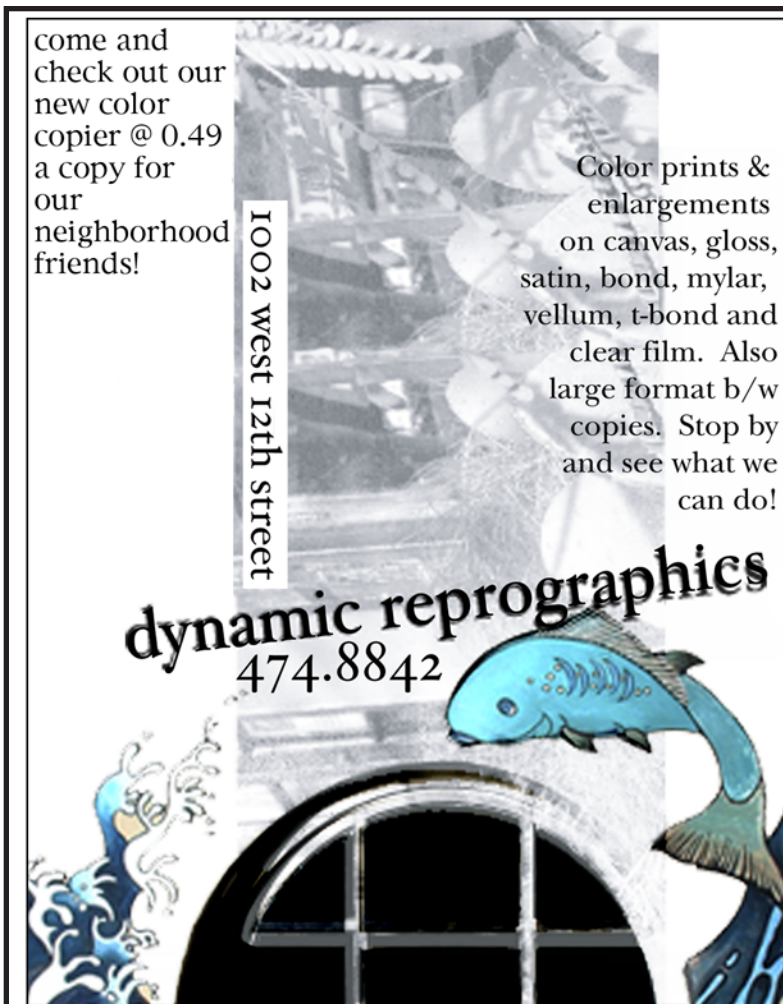
Closer to home, we are seeing a large number of historic homes demolished (or about to be) that the city determines do not meet enough criteria for Historic Landmark designation. We are trying to plan and prepare via our almost-complete National Register Historic District effort and via our soon-to-be Local Historic Districts. That is, if we have any contributing historic properties left by the time LHD's protections are in place. This is why we have asked city council for a moratorium on demolition permits for contributing historic properties.

Meanwhile we are faced with a decision that requires serious thought:

Are there historic properties in appropriate areas of our neighborhood that we value enough to keep by supporting rezoning from residential (typically MF4) to Neighborhood Office – Historic? We faced this at 609 West Lynn and we face it again at 611 West Lynn (see below). This decision illustrates the dilemmas that occur when basic OWANA precepts conflict. In this case the precepts are:

1. Keep the neighborhood core residential

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2. Keep historic buildings
3. Follow the wishes of neighbors most closely affected.

In an effort to resolve this dilemma for myself and to help OWANA's collective decision, I discussed the issues and the case of 611 West Lynn with a number of knowledgeable people whose opinions I respect. Mark Stine was heavily involved with the gestation of the Neighborhood Plan. They, Jim Cousar, and David Smith have fought the neighborhood wars for a long time and are known for their advocacy of residential and densification.

Each of them agreed that 611 West Lynn warranted Neighborhood Office zoning to save it and that its location would warrant it. In addition Dave Sullivan opined that in general there are properties where the desire for residential and the desire for historic conflict and that the neighborhood must decide each one individually. All agreed that the area of our neighborhood where a historic property lies would be a major factor in determining the appropriateness of NO – H zoning.

"I hope that we can discuss this issue and come to a consensus on 611 West Lynn. With our Neighborhood Plan Team in the works, we have an opportunity to think about this issue and how it might relate to changes to the NP before we need to implement them.

Please volunteer some of your time to the Zoning Committee. Call Steve at 477-4660."

1. 609 West Lynn Historic Zoning vs. demolition permit: The City Council voted 5 – 2 to deny historic zoning for the old Queen Anne style house at 609 West Lynn St., despite our having found buyers willing and able to preserve the structure as they had requested. Only Jackie Goodman and Raul Alvarez voted to save the house. Shortly thereafter the house was demolished and the land cleared except for a few trees. This is a tremendous loss to our neighborhood, the city, and the state. Please see Richard Queen's touching article elsewhere in this OWL for a personal perspective on this loss.

2. 611 West Lynn Historic Zoning: Due to late breaking developments this house also faces the prospect of being sold and demolished for apartments or condos like 609, perhaps even for a large project covering both properties. Neighbors are in

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General Membership Meeting

Tuesday, June 7, 6:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Mathews School Cafeteria - West Lynn @ 9th

Agenda

Registration and Social Gathering from 6:30 PM - 7:00 PM.

I. Call to Order 7:00 PM

II. Approval of Minutes 7:05 PM

III. Town Lake Trail Foundation - 7:10-7:20 PM

Dan Garrison. Update on the Town Lake Trail Project.

IV. Police Downtown Area Command (DTAC) Presentation 7:20-7:30 PM.

Discussion of recent neighborhood issues and police programs.

V. OWA Neighborhood Plan Contact Team Report

L. Morrison, S. Stewart, M. Bruch 7:30-7:40PM.

Bring OWANA members up to date on the status of the Contact Team. Possible consideration of Team By-Laws.

VI. WEAA Meeting Report 7:40-7:50 PM - L. Morrison

VII. Austin Neighborhoods Council Report 7:50-8 PM

Linda MacNeilage

VIII. Special Committee Reports 8:05-8:55 PM

A. Zoning & Land Use Committee - S. Colburn, et al

1. NE Corner of 6th & Lamar; 2. 611 West Lynn; 3. 609 Harthan; 4. 1706 - 1708 West 6th; 5. 905 Shelley; 6. Other Zoning Cases; 7. Consideration of OWANA position regarding Office Zoning to save Historic Structures in OWA

Note: Only Zoning changes and updates are discussed

B. Membership & Fund-raising Committee - S. Stewart

1. 2006 OWANA Calendar Project; 2. Fund-raising status, efforts and events.; 3. Membership status and events.

C. Public Safety & Transportation - R. McCown

1. West 9th Street Sidewalk; 2. Police Chief's Forum; 3. DTAC Police Commander's Forum; 4. Pending Sewer Line Replacement Project; 5. Neighborhood Safety Issues 6. Neighborhood Traffic Issues

D. Historic Preservation Committee - R. Merriam, et al

1. Status of the West Line NHRD application; 2. Other Historic Preservation Issues

E. Canine Social Club Event 8:55-9:05 PM - M. Moore

IX. Administrative/Organizational Issues 9:10-9:25 PM

A. Status of the OWANA Application for IRS Section 501C3

B. Treasurers Report - Jean Stevens

C. Update on OWANA Web Site - Laura Morrison, Red Wassenich

D. Election to fill two vacancies on the Steering Committee

XII. Other Business and Announcements 9:25-9:30 PM

XIII. Adjourn 9:30 PM



Note: Votes may be taken on any scheduled agenda items.

ZONING REPORT, CONTINUED...

discussions with the Dildy/Labay family in attempts to save it as historic. In a special meeting the Steering Committee, with favorable input from Mark Stine, David Smith, & Jim Cousar, voted to support a zoning change to NO-CO-H-MU (where the CO would be similar to the CO on the Fox property across the street and where the development of the back half of the lot would be MF3 or less) that Brian Pape requested prior to making an offer to purchase the property to save it. The SC further recommends that the general membership support a similar amendment to the Neighborhood Plan. We shall discuss and vote on this at the meeting. This situation is a difficult one that we should all keep an eye on; we may need help here with little notice.

3. 1201 and 1203 Baylor Rezoning Applications:

At the March 2005 OWANA General Membership meeting, the membership voted to oppose the rezoning of these 2 properties from residential (MF-4) to limited office (LO) which was applied for in February. These rezonings would violate the policy that precludes changes to a more permissive zoning within the residential core of our neighborhood, as stated in the OWA Neighborhood Plan, and thus would also require an amendment to the plan.

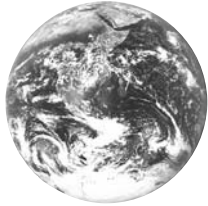
4. 404 Baylor St. Parking Variance: A variance was approved by the Board of Adjustment in February that allows a decrease in the minimum parking requirement from 18 off-street parking spaces to 13 off-street noncompliant parking spaces and maintains the existing setbacks and impervious cover.

The OWANA Steering Committee voted to not oppose this variance at its February 7 meeting, as it appeared this variance would not bring any detrimental effects to our neighborhood, does not appear to be in conflict with the OWA Neighborhood Plan, and allows reasonable use of a site configuration that has existed for over 50 years. Subsequent to the variance approval, a request for reconsideration was made to the Board by the owner of Tips Iron and Steel. The Zoning Committee spoke with the owner to understand the concerns, and conveyed information to the Steering Committee. After consideration, the Steering Committee decided to continue its support of the variance. The Board declined to reconsider its decision.

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ZONING REPORT, CONTINUED...

5. 609 Harthan St. City-initiated Application for Historic Zoning in Response to Demolition Permit:

The Historic Landmark Commission initiated historic zoning in response to its review of a demolition permit for this property and sent the zoning case to the Planning Commission for review without a recommendation. Subsequently the Planning Commission voted 5 – 2 in favor of Historic Zoning despite city staff recommending against it.

This historic house is on a street with 10 historic properties (and no non-historic ones). This beautiful historic enclave is high on the list to become the city's first Local Historic District. The loss of this contributing property to our national historic district would significantly diminish the integrity and impact of a Harthan Street local historic district, particularly as the owner says she intends to replace it with a "modern" structure. It next goes to City Council for a final vote on May 26th. Please attend and lend your support.

6. Hartland Plaza "West" Ground Floor Uses: The approved PUD site plan for the property just to the west of the current Hartland Plaza building includes a multistory garage with retail uses on the ground floor.

Construction of this phase of the project will begin in the near future. The developer is interested in broadening the allowable uses on the ground floor beyond retail to include pedestrian-oriented and other uses. Members of the Zoning Committee met recently with the developer's representative to discuss limitations on these uses as well as height limits. We will continue discussions.

7. 504 Oakland – Rezone from SF3 to NO-H: Richard Miscoe met with Steering Committee and Zoning Committee members to discuss buying and restoring

a historic house (currently zoned single family (SF3) on Oakland between 5th & 6th St. to use as his office. He wants Neighborhood Office (NO) zoning and is willing to do historic zoning. Discussions with Mark Stine and Jim Cousar about this particular small area (which is outside the neighborhood residential core) lead us to believe that OWANA, the neighborhood (within the context of the broader Neighborhood Plan), and the City all believed that neighborhood office zoning was not inappropriate here, particularly if it meant saving historic structures.

8. 905 Shelly - Carport Variance pulled: The owner of 905 Shelly has pulled the request for a variance for the carport and it is now in the hands of Zoning Enforcement.

9. 1815 Waterston - City-initiated Application for Historic Zoning in Response to Demolition Permit:

This old and contributing Clarksville house has been purchased for demolition & development. While historic zoning is not recommended by City staff it was reviewed and passed by the Historic Landmark Commission. The Planning Commission heard this case on May 10th and postponed a decision until they next meet on May 24th in hopes that the owner/developer would work with CCDC to move the house to another site in Clarksville.

10. West Ave. at 6th St.: Recently the Steering Committee and then Zoning Committee members met with developers representatives about a possible new

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>>

Attention Old West Austin business owners.

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project east of our neighborhood on the northwest corner of West Avenue and 6th St (along Shoal Creek). While not in our neighborhood, they asked for and we gave them feedback about the project, including concerns about a potentially historic building on the current site, design guidelines, height, etc. While they are scheduled to go before Zoning & Platting Commission on Tuesday, May 17th, they will not ask for a change to CBD zoning as originally planned and will review their plans based upon our input.

11. Zoning Rollback Completed: The City Council approved zoning rollback to single family (SF3) from multi family (MF4) to the last group of eligible neighborhood property owners that had elected this downzoning. Single family zoning gives them a greater reach of compatibility standards to keep new commercial developments appropriate in size and scale with our neighborhood and it is appropriate for these properties.

12. W. 5th St. Near Mopac Mixed -Use Development: Gables Residential representatives presented information to the OWANA General Membership at the March meeting about their plans for a development at the Mueller tract on W. 5th St. where The Mean Eyed Cat, Pok-E-Joes, etc. are currently located. Plans call for retail on the first floor and 3 stories of apartments above. An application was submitted to the City later in March to change the zoning to allow for this development. A broadly based stakeholder group met with the City to address solutions to the traffic problems foreseen with development in this area. It appears that all stakeholders are supportive of adding a traffic light on 5th St. at Campbell or West Lynn, although the City staff were not prepared at the meeting to fully discuss this option. Further meetings are planned.

13. 6th & Lamar (Old Whole Foods at Northeast Corner) Request for More Intense Zoning: At the March General Membership, representatives from the Schlosser Development Corporation presented plans for this corner that would require a PUD zoning designation. The General Membership voted to oppose the PUD zoning but for the Zoning Committee to continue to explore options for agreement with the developer. None have been found at this point. The zoning case was scheduled to be heard by the Zoning and Platting Commission and then postponed based on city staff and/or the developer requests several times. Currently it is scheduled for a ZAP hearing on June 21. We expect to meet with Schlosser Development again before then.

14. 1106 W. 6th St Encinal #301 Status: No action

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has been taken by the Bank/owner on the City recommendation that this unpermitted structure come down. Checking on the status, the Zoning Committee has learned that the recent replacement for the City's Building Official, who left her post in March, was not aware of the details of the situation. At the new Building Official's suggestion, we have gone back to the City staff handling this case (and who originally handled the case), who will bring this situation forward for more discussion and who said he is aware that continued deterioration is occurring. It is now 37 months since neighbors first brought this problem to the City's attention.

15. 1208 W. 9th St., Shelley Park Flats Variances: OWANA Zoning Committee members received a letter from the City Attorney stating that the development complied with City code and thus a certificate of occupancy could be issued. The letter did not provide any basis for this decision, despite the fact that the City had identified a requirement for two variances (number of stories and setback) and had not yet determined whether a variance for excessive height is required. At a meeting with the Director of Watershed Protection and Development Review we learned that the

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- Artworks** > 1214 West 6th, Suite 105 > 472-1550
- Avalon Hair Salon** > 1012A West 6th > 474-2585
- Austin Java** > 1206 Parkway > 476-1829
- Bella Home** > 1221 West 6th > 474-1157
- Book People** > 603 North Lamar > 472-5050
- Brava House Bed & Breakfast** > 1108 Blanco > 478-5034
- By George** > 524 North Lamar > 472-5951
- Cafe Caprice** > 900 West 10th > 477-5576
- Cippolina Italian Bistro** > 1213 West Lynn > 477-5211
- Dynamic Reprographics** > 1002 West 12th > 474-8842
- El Interior** > 1009 West Lynn > 474-8680
- f8 Fine Art Gallery** > 1137 West 6th > 480-0242
- Jeffrey's Restaurant** > 1204 West Lynn > 477-5584
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- Land Rover Austin** > 1515 West 5th > 236-0000
- Landers Studio** > 404-B Baylor > 472-9663
- Lotus Asian Art** > 1201-B West 6th > 474-1700
- Mean Eyed Cat** > 1621 West 5th > 636-6188
- Nau's Enfield Drug** > 1115 West Lynn > 476-1221
- Olde English Imports** > 1310 West 5th > 478-5001
- Prime Lending** > 1717 West 6th, Suite 420 > 478-1200
- Red Door Art School** > 1607 West 6th > 469-2999
- Robert Leeper Landscapes** > 1501D W 9th > 542-0070
- Rounders Pizzeria** > 1203 West 6th > 477-0404
- Seattle's Best Coffee** > 500 North Lamar > 481-0296
- Sledd Nursery** > 1211 West Lynn > 478-9977
- Steven Griffith** > 1206 West 6th > 474-7784
- St. Francis Episcopal Church** > 1408 West 9th > 499-3961
- Sweetish Hill Bakery** > 1120 West 6th > 472-1347
- Thundercloud Subs** > 903 West 12th > 322-0154
- Westside Group/6th St. Apts.** > 1616 West 6th > 499-8013
- Whole Earth Provision** > 1014 North Lamar > 476-1414
- Wink Restaurant** > 1014 North Lamar > 482-8868
- Work*Shop** > 1211 West 6th > 473-2787
- Zanzibar** > 1009 West 6th > 472-9234
- Z Tejas** > 1110 West 6th > 478-5355

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ZONING REPORT, CONTINUED...

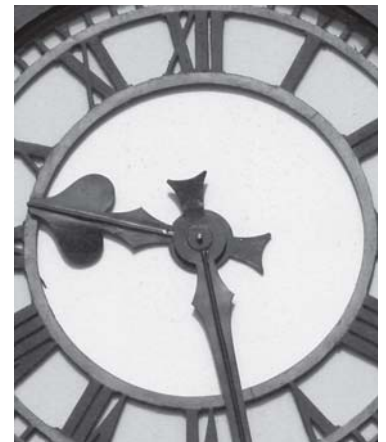
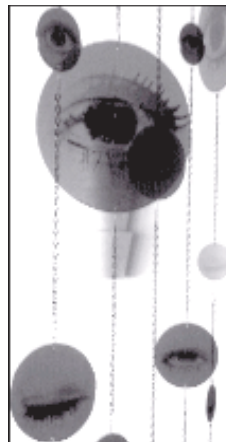
City Attorney's opinion was based upon language in the Land Development Code with regard to its use of the word "or", and upon a memo written by the City's previous Building Official after she had left City employment. The Director committed to requesting that the City Attorney provide a written basis for his opinion, which, at this point after 12 days, we are still awaiting. It is the opinion of our committee members that the memo does not, in any way, suggest compliance with either of the topics it covers (setback and height). We have raised concerns to Assistant City Manager Laura Huffman, requesting a meeting with her but again, after more than a week, we are still awaiting a response. A follow up letter has been sent to the Asst. City Manager, co-signed by the OWANA Steering Committee, requesting responsiveness. The OWANA Steering Committee supported continued exploration of avenues we may follow to raise objection to what appears to be a very inappropriate process and a dangerous precedent.

REST STOP. GUESS THE MYSTERY SPOT BELOW.
.... OKAY, THERE'S MORE ON ZONING! >>>

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Last issue

Only one person guessed the Mystery Spot last issue. Where was it? Inside Wink Restaurant at their new wine bar! Go see for yourself. Better luck this time. Know this spot shown in the picture above? Again, it's publicly accessible and within our neighborhood boundaries. Email me at chris.schorre@gmail.com. First correct answer wins.

This issue????



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At the Sept. 26, '02 City Council meeting, the current owner of 1706, who acquired the property after the adoption of the NP, requested rezoning in accordance with the Plan. Based on owners' representation that they would comply with the NP's limits, Council directed staff to initiate rezoning after being assured by the owners that they were aware of and would comply with the NP's limits. After 2-1/2 years, staff has recommended approval of the rezoning without adhering to the specific limits of the NP instead of going back to Council for reconsideration and further instructions.

ZONING REPORT, CONTINUED >>>

16. 1214 W. 9th St.: Neighbors may soon notice a new house being built at this address where the previous structure was recently demolished. The approved building plans for the project show a single family residence with a height of 57 feet.

Concern from nearby neighbors over this height led to discussions with City staff who explained that this height was appropriately approved on the MF-4 zoned lot because until recently, the Land Development Code contained a glitch that first exempted single-family development on MF zone lots from the compatibility standards but then did not require that the single-family development comply with single-family development regulations (e.g. a 35 foot height limit). Thus the MF regulations reigned unrestricted by compatibility standards and a 60 foot height was legal. Added to this was the fact that the substandard lot size here would have limited its development to some degree, but the OWA Neighborhood Plan includes small lot amnesty which made that limit inapplicable.

The Code has now been amended so that single-family development on multifamily zoned lots must comply with SF development regulations. We should examine this part of the Neighborhood Plan to determine if an amendment is appropriate.

17. 1706-08 W. 6th Street: Rezoning to Neighborhood Office: In a case that may set an adverse precedent for the Neighborhood Plan, City staff proposed rezoning two single-family residences on the north side of W. 6th Street to neighborhood office. The previous owner had filed a zoning request in 1998, which was denied by City Council. The rationale for the denial of both that 1998 case and an earlier case involving 1804 West 6th formed the basis for the specific language in the Neighborhood Plan for properties located on the north side of W. 6th Street.

The NP provisions are designed to accomplish a primary goal of the NP's Land Use Policies – preservation of the residential core of the neighborhood by protecting against erosion from the edges. The provisions for the north 6th Street area are designed to control the conversion of residential properties to commercial use by establishing a defined barrier between commercial and residential properties and establish trip limitations. The Plan specifically prohibits alley access, which would impact nearby residences.

Staff recommends that the rezoning include access through the existing narrow alley and a privately-owned driveway in clear violation of the NP, which prohibits business access through the alley and requires access through a street with minimum width of 36 feet.

Although properties at either end of the 1700 Block of West 6th are zoned commercial, each rezoning required direct access off of either Augusta or Patterson, both of which had to be widened when the earlier zonings were approved. The approval of the alley for business access could serve as a precedent for the 1800 block of West 6th, and then around the curve and up Theresa, which have similar alley access issues and commercial zoning pressures. City staff appears to be force fitting a rezoning to solve a problem of property owner's own creation to the detriment of the neighborhood.

Planning Commission heard the case on April 26, '05 and continued it until May 24. On May 11th, the Neighborhood Planning Subcommittee considered the case and voted to recommend the approval of the rezoning to neighborhood office without compliance with the NP provisions prohibiting alley access and trip limitations, based on a determination that the rezoning does not require an amendment to the NP. This has significant ramifications for the rest of our neighborhood.

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Finally, the proposed rezoning ignores the fact that in the past 5-10 years there has been tremendous investment and growth in the owner-occupied residential properties along Francis, Patterson, and Theresa. Just because the owners were never interested in 1706 as a residence does not mean others are not.

18. 1603 -1609 Enfield Relocation Permits: Permits have been applied to remove several structures on Enfield to make way for an apartment development. The city web site says they're approved. However they may be still under review by City Historic Preservation Officer Steve Sadowsky.

*Edited by Steve Colburn, Chair
OWANA Zoning & Land Use Committee
Cell: 844-1483*

Upcoming Steering Committee meetings

Residents are encouraged to attend Steering Committee meetings which take place almost every month. The meetings are held at the Clarksville Community Center. Changes will be posted at www.owana.org.

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The Sad Demise of 609 West Lynn

Written by Richard Queen, OWANA resident

"That's an example of wanton destruction right there," I said to my son Jack when we happened to drive by 609 West Lynn just as the bulldozer began its unfortunate business. "Dad! What are they doing?" he asked. "Tearing it down. We can be late for your doctor's appointment. We should watch this." I said. "What's 'wanton' mean?" he asked curiously. "You're about to see for yourself."

We joined Paige Frederick Pape, who was taking pictures. She and her husband Brian had offered to buy the 1893 Queen Anne style house to save it. I could see Steve Colburn's house two doors down. He had spent many hours in the last weeks laboring to find buyers and negotiating with the new owner, hoping to prevent what seemed to most of us at that point a fait accompli. In the end, all but two on the City Council voted against making it a historic house, so my eleven-year-old son witnessed his first demolition.

The destruction of 609 West Lynn is, perhaps, the most egregious recent example of a frightening trend in our neighborhood. On the one hand, we still have plenty of modest homes which would nevertheless sell for high prices. Many can be restored and make wonderful homes, but they sit in a highly desirable neighborhood close to downtown, and the prices they command often bring buyers who want to build larger homes. A greater threat exists if a house sits on an oversized MF lot. Then, it is prey to investors who want to max allowable building space and make as much money as they can by building apartments or condominiums.

The 609 house was not a modest home. Sitting on over a half acre with mature oaks and a rear alley entrance, its seriously deteriorated condition made it a prime candidate for destruction, but its age and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >>>

architectural distinction also qualified it for historic designation. Let us be clear. There is no house that cannot be restored; it's just a matter of how much money one is willing to spend. But it is practically impossible to replace these homes with structures made from the



same materials. Either the materials no longer exist or, more likely, they are prohibitively expensive, particularly when an owner has already paid a premium price for the lot. Restoring this house might have cost as much as \$800,000, but once finished it would have commanded the attention of anyone entering our neighborhood onto West Lynn. As a property contributing to the historic status our neighborhood will soon receive, it would have set the proper tone near one of the principal entrances to our neighborhood.

Houses may achieve historic designation for reasons other than architecture. 609 had also been home to two notable figures in early 20th C. Austin, Mr. Timothy A. Brown and his wife Mary R. Brown. Mr. Brown served as principal of Pease School for 41 years. He was the sort of principal who watched over children at recess and walked them across the street after school. He followed his students' lives long after they had left Pease. He stayed at Pease so long that some of his students were grandchildren of his first students. His wife was known as "the mother of Kirby Hall," a dormitory for young women that opened in 1924. She chaired the building committee for over twenty years and traveled around the state soliciting funds.

The house came on the market last year as a package deal along with 611 West Lynn, which has not yet been torn down, but the owners were unable to sell it for the well over \$1 million they were asking. They were then offered separately, but the new sign in front of 609 disappeared after only a few days, and months later, OWANA learned that a demolition permit had been pulled with the City by its owner. More than 450 people had signed a petition to save the house, and OWANA moved to have it designated historic. The City's Historic Preservation office acted quickly and determined that it should be saved, arguing its case before the Planning Commission and then the City Council. But after the Historic Commission voted the house historic, it was sold, and it seemed clear to everyone in OWANA that it would be destroyed to make way for some kind of large development. Since

Not an OWANA member?

Join for a mere \$20/year!

(Cheaper than one DAY of property taxes in Old West Austin! Yes, its true...)

OWANA membership is open to all residents age 18 and older. Up to 2 adults may join per household and have full voting privileges. To join, please send this form and check for **\$20** (includes up to 2 people in the same household) to:

OWANA, P.O. Box 2724, Austin, TX 78768-2724

Member #1 _____

Email _____@_____

Member #2 _____

Email _____@_____

Address _____ Austin, TX 78703

Telephone _____

I'm interested in getting involved with OWANA.

Please accept my donation of \$_____ to help fund OWANA's effort to establish neighborhood branding entry signs. Please mail check to address above. Thank you!

New memberships begin 30 days after receipt of payment. Members lapsed for less than 1 year may rejoin with no waiting period.

the new owner opposed historic designation and, as is now plain, wanted to get rid of it for development, the negotiations became somewhat acrimonious.

The City Council heard the matter several times. It seemed that the last hope lay in finding someone willing to buy the house to save it. This, at least, is what the City Council charged representatives of OWANA to do. Steve Colburn, head of the zoning committee, worked tirelessly to find people who were willing to restore the property, and OWANA paid an engineer to offer a competing estimate of what it would cost to stabilize the house, which the new owner's engineer had deemed not merely uninhabitable but dangerous and far too expensive to restore. Several potential buyers came forward, and Brian Pape stood before the council with an offer in hand that, as best he could determine given the new owner's recalcitrance, would give the latter a generous profit on a brief investment. But despite the fact that OWANA had answered the Council's charge, the vote went against the neighborhood organization. Only Council members Raul Alvarez and Jackie Goodman voted in favor of historic des

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ignation. The rest seemed to follow Betty Dunkerly's lead. She argued that since it would cost \$800,000 or more to restore the house, it was not a candidate for historic designation. OWANA's position was that Dunkerly's contention was in error and irrelevant. Buyers stood before the City Council prepared to purchase the house and seek historic designation. They might spend \$500,000.00. Or \$800,000.00. Or \$100,000.00. Regardless, they would save the house and improve it.

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Within a few days of the vote, a bulldozer reduced the house to a pile of rubble. I do not think the new owner attempted to salvage a thing. None of the solid core doors. None of the longleaf pine. None of the oak. None of the moldings. None of the period hardware.

Some would argue that the new owner was under no obligation to work with the neighborhood to preserve the house. He bought it, and property rights are sacrosanct in America. The idea is that no one has the authority to tell anyone what to do with his or her house. In fact, this is not true. We are bound by all sorts of regulations that obligate us in a variety of ways to do things that are in the interest of the larger

community and the environment. We cannot cut down mature trees because, among other things, they contribute to our urban forest. We cannot completely cover our lots with structures and pavement because we will adversely affect drainage on our streets and parking lots. We have front, side, and rear setbacks and City easements. We have zoning regulations we must follow. OWANA's position is simply that we are extending these existing obligations to include preserving structures that contribute to the unique character of our neighborhood. And most local governments, including Austin, already have codes and ordinances that provide for this. If we allow someone to build, say, an ugly box apartment building where a stately old house once stood, we all suffer because, to name but one effect, we all have to look at the discordant structure for the rest of its life. And I'm not even mentioning the increased traffic and congestion such greater density will bring. But most important is the loss of the historic fabric of Austin's past – Austin's soul as it were – that keeps us different from cities like Houston and Dallas.

The day after the razing, my son and I returned to look at the sun setting over an angry pile of rubble that just the day before had been a house someone could have restored and lived in. I pointed out a huge old eight by eight beam sticking out of the mass of broken, splintered wood and twisted pipe. "You could take that beam alone and mill some beautiful wood from it," I said.

A few days later, I saw a jar sitting next to my son's bed. It contained a piece of wood, and on the jar he'd taped a label that read, "A shard of wood from 609 West Lynn. (The cool house.)" One memory he and I will share is watching the bulldozer make its final assault. Half the house had resisted the attack from several angles, and now we could only hear the roar of the machine, which had circled behind the house. We watched the old house bend and twist and contort like a figure in a cartoon before, finally, it collapsed.

THE END



How West Lynn Street Got Its Name

Special thanks go to longtime resident Kay Hart for forwarding this article. It was written by her mother-in-law (and former curator of the Austin History Center) Katherine Hart. It is an exact reprint of an article that first appeared in the Austin American Statesman on September 27, 1969. You get extra bonus points if you remember reading the original article!

Among the fringe benefits of writing about the olden days in Travis County are the comments and stories which these articles bring forth from interested citizens. Even the corrections and criticisms are welcomed, for a researcher is also human and liable to be carried away by enthusiasm, or alas! even error. The real payoff though is when over the vegetable counter in the grocery store, a friend, from an old time family, tells a story from his or her experience, such as this one told by one of the daughters of the late Judge James H. Robertson.

Judge Robertson was district attorney of Travis County in the 1880s, a district judge, a distinguished member of the Legislature and a law partner of Gov. Hogg. According to his daughter, Judge Robertson, while his handsome red Victorian home was being built on a hill above West Sixth Street, took his family to Fort Davis to spend the summer. When the family returned to Austin at the end of the summer, the house was not yet finished so the family lived for two months at the Millett Mansion, next door to the famed Millet Opera House, on East Ninth. While exploring, as children will, the young daughter and one of her brothers discovered a little window in the Millet Mansion through which they could look down directly at the stage of the Opera House. Each night they stayed glued to the window, spellbound by the absorbing dramas, until they were called for bedtime.

From this early exposure, the little girl became an enthusiastic theater fan. After the family moved into the completed home, the father often took his daughter to town to see the plays at the Millett Opera House. Tickets were, she remembers, 10, 20 and 30 cents. Her favorite was East Lynne. To this day, she can see the harrowing scene at the end, the heroine who had sinned but repented, lying prone on a couch, expiring the lingering death and a beautiful white dress. One day, in the new home, Judge Robertson told his family that since he had donated land to the city for a street on the boundary of his property, he had been asked to name the street. Did the Children have any suggestions? Up spoke the stage-struck daughter: "West Lynn." And so it is today!

Concerned about overflowing dumpsters, illegal dumping, tall weeds?

Linda Klaus, City staff with the Solid Waste Division, is responsible for code compliance relating to trash and solid waste issues in our area. Her particular specialty is enforcement of code relating to proper dumpster management. She is also concerned about illegal dumping and the proper maintenance of open space so that weed height is controlled. If you have a concern about problems in your area you can contact her at 974-9029 and she will be happy to assist you.

Many thanks to Kay Hart for contributing a story about the rail cars that used to run down present day 6th Street for the February 2005 issue. Absent-minded Owl editors inadvertently forgot to give her credit for the story. Thanks Kay!

Texas Trivia...answered

Five sites served as capital of Texas in 1836. Washington-on-the-Brazos, Harrisburg, Galveston, Velasco and Columbia. The capital moved to Houston in 1837 and Austin in 1839.

Ask a Neighbor to Join OWANA

As a resident of our fine neighborhood, we urge you to ask your neighbors to join the Old West Austin Neighborhood Association. Membership, at only \$20 per year, builds bridges to connect you with your community. Membership delivers direct mailings of the "Owl" to your front door with up-to-date neighborhood news and information, general meeting announcements, zoning issues, and news of neighborhood activities, plus valuable coupons from neighborhood businesses. Membership supports neighborhood initiatives to increase public awareness. Please encourage your neighbors to join!

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Your 2005 OWANA Steering Committee members

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Paul Seals, Vice Chair.....PSeals@akingpump.com

Jean Stevens, Treasurer.....SJZone@sbcglobal.net

Richard Queen, Secretary.....RAQueen@austin.rr.com

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Owl Editor: Chris Schorre Have something you'd like to see in the next Owl? Give me a call at **731-1520** or email **chris.schorre@gmail.com**. We're always looking for new material, photos, etc! Muchas gracias to everyone who contributed to this issue of the Owl.

Interested in advertising in the Owl? Contact **chris.schorre@gmail.com**. Ad deadline: August 10

OWANA Steering Committee Openings

At the June 7 OWANA General Membership Meeting, two new steering committee members will be elected by attending members. Open nominations will be accepted at the general meeting. OWANA members can nominate themselves or another member. The term is one year, with a three-consecutive-years term limit.

Neighbors wishing to join or renew their membership in OWANA will have that opportunity at the General Membership Meeting on June 7.



Old West Austin Neighborhood Association
 Post Office Box 2724
 Austin, Texas 78768-2724
 www.owana.org

Don't miss the next general membership meeting!

TUESDAY, JUNE 7
6:30 - 9:30PM

Mathews School Cafeteria
 9th & West Lynn
 (Use SE entrance)

Inside this issue of the Owl:

- > A bounty of zoning updates
- > It's official: West Line is born
- > Another one bites the dust...
- > Upcoming Canine Social Club event
- > How West Lynn St. got its name
- > Plus coupons from area businesses...