

Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA)
Board of Directors Meeting 03-09-2010
3 to 5pm at the Regency Apartment's Meeting Room

Board members in attendance were Perry, JuanPablo, Al, Ted, Mark, Rick, John and Blake.

The first order of business was the approval of the minutes from the 9 February 2010 board meeting. On motion by Al and second by Mark, we unanimously did so. Ted then called for committee reports.

Planning & Zoning

Al reported to us about the ongoing situation at the **Allan House** at 1104 San Antonio. Their site plan application (SPC-2009-0070A) is still pending with the City. One of the outstanding questions is the amount of impervious coverage on the lot, how much of that is grandfathered and how much has been recently added. This determination will go to the retention requirements of water runoff on the site. Al reports also that the Allan House is seeking to renew a sound permit at the site for outdoor entertainments. This renewal is somewhat troublesome in that as best we can tell, they have only have a conditional use permit on the site to do indoor events, not outdoor events. After discussion it was decided to write a letter to the City, specifically Code Enforcement, asking that what the facility has been advertising and doing (outdoor events) be squared with what they have a conditional use permit for. JuanPablo and Ted will compose the letter and run it by the board before sending. As a courtesy, Ted will forewarn the folks at the Allan House about where we are going with this and ask for a response. It should be noted that OANA supported the Allan House's 2008 request for a parking permit variance at the site conditioned on an agreement that was subsequently negotiated but never signed by the owners of the property. I imagine we will be asking about the status of that previously negotiated agreement also.

We briefly discussed the proposed **Schlosser Development** at West 6th Street and Bowie. It was scheduled to go before the Planning Commission this evening, the 9th, and then to Council. Ted will compose a letter for the file in which we ask that the proposed increase in building height be subject to the condition that the increase will house long term residential units (see last month's minutes).

Al is also a new appointee to the board of the **Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA)**. He reports that there is a perception on that board that there is not currently enough office space downtown to accommodate the desires of the downtown residents already in place. There is concern about reverse commuting where those living downtown must drive out of the City center to get to their offices. OANA sees the situation somewhat differently and for now will continue to advocate for a greater emphasis on residential development.

Government Relations

John reports that he and Ted have a meeting set with County Commissioner Court Judge Briscoe in the near future. Presumably the meeting will touch on the County's proposed purchase of 700

Lavaca Street and how this affects the future expansion plans on the County's campus. John also reports that as a member of the **Downtown Austin Alliance** board he sits on its mobility subcommittee. That subcommittee is looking at a downtown bus transfer site, either out of doors along several downtown street blocks or at a designated square. If a downtown transportation modal is to be located at a specific location such as a square, the OANA board discussed the idea of it being located directly east of the courthouse. That block, bounded by 11th and 12th and Guadalupe and Lavaca Streets is currently 3/4 owned by the County. It is also very much within the Capitol View Corridor. In this mini-charette we envisioned underground parking (very expensive per space but doable under governmental auspices) with a two-storey atrium/hall accommodating peripheral retail shops and a green garden park space on top.

John further reports that he and Al are in mediation with other downtown stakeholders regarding the proposed **bicycle boulevard**.

NOTE: The following paragraph is from a letter dated 02-09-2010 sent to the City of Austin:

“On 9 February 2010, at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting, the Board of Directors (BoD) of the Original Austin Neighborhood Association (OANA) voted unanimously to (1) unequivocally support the concept of a Bicycle Boulevard between Cesar Chavez Street to MLK Boulevard and continuing into the west UT Campus area, and (2) respectfully recommend to the City that the route of the boulevard be Rio Grande Street rather than Nueces Street.”

Al feels we should remain committed to the positions taken in this letter and the board agreed. John pointed out that OANA's unanimous support of the positions taken in the letter were also conditioned on the following understanding contained within the letter to the City:

“In response to requests to consider Rio Grande Street as the bicycle boulevard, the City has come up with a plan to accomplish this vision without causing undo impact on traffic associated with or properties located along the street. There will be extensive uses of 12-foot traffic circles in intersections with the concurrent elimination of traffic calming devices envisioned on Nueces Street that resulted in the loss of on street parking spaces. The proposed Rio Grande Street plan would also fund a student drop off at Pease Elementary and the ACC Rio Grande campus thus creating a safe zone separating the student activity from the traffic.”

Al relates that it appears the Rio Grande Street option is on the table although there is still some lingering opposition to the whole concept of a bicycle boulevard from some affected property owners. There also seems to be an intractable position favoring Nueces Street over Rio Grande Street espoused by one group representing bicycle enthusiasts, although the comprehensiveness of that representation may be subject to question. Al and John will continue working on this in order to reach an amicable solution. We may not get everyone on board supporting the Rio Grande Street option, but we are actively trying to eliminate opposition. On a related note, Mark and JuanPablo met with some of the Regency neighbors last evening, the 8th, to discuss the proposed bicycle boulevard project. The turnout could have been better but it was a productive meeting.

Parks & Open Spaces

Mark reported on **It's My Park Day** activities at Wooldridge Park this past Saturday the 6th. He reported a good turnout of 80 or so (including our Mayor). The volunteers, coordinated by the long standing Friends Of Wooldridge Park group, mulched around the trees and began doing prep work on the gazebo in anticipation of it being repainted sometime later this spring. The OANA board went on to discuss the importance of friends groups adopting parks and how each of our neighborhood parks need such friends. NOTE: Sometimes there are multiple stakeholders concerned about an individual park and they just need to better communicate with each other.

Historic Preservation

Chairman Stowell along with Mark and Rick have been exploring the idea of establishing **Local Historic Districts (LHD)** within the neighborhood. We discussed how these minutes need to strongly emphasize that this discussion is very preliminary in that this potentially will be a very contentious subject. LHDs, by their very nature, place enforceable development restrictions on covered properties, and if it is going to go smoothly, all of the affected property owners need to be in substantial agreement. The committee will ascertain how LHDs can/need to be delineated. They are also going to ascertain how much leeway is allowed in the definition of the enforceable restrictions. Since LHDs do not provide the tax incentives that adhere to historically rezoned properties, to get a property owner to agree to be a part of a LHD may require options for adaptive reuse. The committee will report back to the board in May.

Much less controversial would be putting the neighborhood forward as a potential **National Register District (NRD)**. Under an NRD designation, even if a property is considered contributing, there is no specifically enforceable mechanism to prevent the demolition of or a substantially altering remodel to a structure. The City's **Historic Landmark Commission** has an advisory role if such actions are contemplated, but short of rezoning a property historic, their recommendations remain just that. NRDs do bring awareness to a neighborhood's historic fabric through narrative about and the documentation of the contributing structures, and there is a resulting peer pressure to help preserve that fabric. The documentation necessary for the NRD designation is extensive and requires many hours of either volunteer or compensated time. Mark tells us that through the **Texas Historic Commission** there are funds available to engage a professional historical researcher versed in architecture to begin the process of identifying contributing properties, and OANA may apply for those funds in the next grant cycle.

New Business

Ted suggests that each board member make a contribution to the OANA treasury. Supplemental documents from AI show a balance in our account of \$1,260.53.

Having run longer than the agenda allowed, we adjourned,

Blake Tollett-Secretary OANA