



The North Lamar Combined Neighborhood Planning Area

Parks and Trees Workshop, October 16, 2008

Meeting Notes

The Parks and Trees Workshop began with a presentation by Jacob Browning in which a brief review of the planning process and an overview of the previous workshop were given. The presentation then turned to a focus on parks within the NLCNPA. It was mentioned that in order to provide sufficient parkland to the NLCNPA, the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) is currently in the very early phases of land acquisition in the area.

Jacob asked the meeting attendees for various recommendations regarding amenities to be placed at the future park(s) for the NLCNPA. The following amenities were discussed:

- Doggie-duty stations with bags and receptacles
- Benches
- Drinking fountains (dual-level fountains for people and dogs/pets similar to the ones on Auditorium Shores)
- No basketball courts
- Playground equipment
- Interactive water fountain
- Picnic or Bar-B-Que tables
- Trees
- Large open spaces to allow various activities, including football and kite-flying
- Walking trails
- Parking lot(s)
- Restroom facilities
- Emergency call boxes
- Lighting
- Gazebo
- Trash cans
- No softball fields
- Security
- Landscaping, including flowers and shrubs (prickly pear and roses may help with security issues, preventing their use as a potential hideout for criminals)

Recommendations for the existing parks (Barrington Park and Brownie Park) within the NLCNPA were then asked for. These recommendations included:

Barrington Park

- Drinking fountains
- Trash clearance
- Better clarification regarding scheduled/permitted users of the park's fields
- Improvement to the park's fields

Brownie Park

- Improved access
- Better security, including lighting and patrols
- Emergency call boxes

Jacob handed the discussion over to Laura Patlove of the Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department. Ms. Patlove presented information regarding the Austin Community Trees (ACT) program; after an application and acceptance process, ACT provides neighborhoods (those having an adopted neighborhood plan) with trees to be planted on private properties so to enhance the area's tree canopy, beauty, and well-being. The program's initiatives and requirements can be found in Ms. Patlove's presentation located on the North Lamar website at: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/zoning/north_lamar.htm.

Michael Embesi, the City's arborist, then discussed the Urban Forest Management Program. Mr. Embesi's presentation focused upon the protection of trees and the preservation of the urban forest within the city limits of Austin. He also provided information regarding specific tree species and those allowed for (re)planting within the City. Additional information regarding the Urban Forest Management Program can be found here: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/trees/>. Mr. Embesi's presentation can also be found on the North Lamar website.

Questions and comments were addressed during all three presentations. These can be found below:

Comment: We should look into public-private partnerships for parkland opportunities. Gethsemane Lutheran Church allows area residents to use their outdoor facilities within reason and other opportunities should be looked into around the NLCNPA.

Regarding the Austin Community Trees (ACT) Program:

Q: We have a high percentage of rental properties within our neighborhood, and with ACT, trees are planted on owner-occupied properties. Will we be able to plant trees on rental properties where they are most needed?

A: As long as you can get the permission and the commitment to maintain the trees from the rental property's landlord, we can plant trees there.

Comment: We should look into planting more mature trees in our parks to allow kids to climb them.

Q: How are trees placed in areas with high number of rental and industrial uses such as the NLCNPA?

A: Trees are placed in these areas according to the same requirements as on owner-occupied properties.

Q: Can trees be placed in the back yard?

A: No, the trees are meant to enhance the more "public" areas of the neighborhood while being planted on private property. These areas include sidewalks, roads, and the overall neighborhood.

Regarding the Urban Forest Management Program:

Q: Does the Front Yard Parking Ordinance apply to the critical root zone protection area?

A: Yes. Parking on yards negatively impacts the critical root zones of neighborhood trees.

Q: Who takes care of tree pruning in public rights-of-way?

A: The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance of trees along public rights-of-way. Code enforcement is responsible for the maintenance of trees on private property. In both instances, call 311 to report any maintenance needs.

Q: Are there any educational materials available in Spanish regarding tree maintenance and protection?

A: The Urban Forest Management Program's website can be translated into Spanish.

Q: Our area doesn't have many internet users, especially among the minority populations. Is there any other method for education in Spanish?

A: Yes, some materials are available in Spanish, but steps are currently being taken to provide a wider range of materials to the area's Spanish-speaking population regarding urban forestry.

Q: Are only native species available through the tree-planting programs?

A: Native and other highly-adaptable (to the climate) species are available through the City-sponsored tree programs.

Comment: We should examine the balance between the amount of concrete/paved surface and the available green spaces suitable for tree plantings.

A group exercise focusing on trees was to follow the presentations but, due to a lack of time, it will be postponed until the next workshop. Please review the following questions in preparation for the exercise:

- What are the characteristics of the NLCNPA's existing urban forest?
- What areas of your neighborhood would benefit from additional tree plantings?
- What types of trees would you like to see in those areas?
- What type of educational materials would be beneficial to your community (information on how to plant trees, fertilization, maintenance, etc.)?