



Note from the Editor

Hello Neighbors,

I thought Texas summers were supposed to be sleepy? While the streets do feel quieter with fewer students, there still has been plenty going on around here, and I'm not even talking about the epic filibuster and ensuing chaos that happened a mere two miles from here over at the State Capitol. I'm talking about the talented Sally Miller riding her unicycle down Hemphill Park and other exuberant fun at the annual Fourth of July parade, generously organized by Carole LeClair (see page 2). There was another movie night at Sparky Park where the Exchange Artists group screened their original production of *The Man Who Planted Trees* (for more on their daring and playful theater projects, see: exchangeartists.org.) And then neighborhood trailblazer Mary Ingle as usual has been keeping her thumb on the pulse of what is happening with the City of Austin and its rewriting of the Land Development Code, which will likely have implications for all of us, so please don't yawn every time you hear the acronym LDC (see page 4). There was the passage in June of the still inchoate pilot rental registration program down at City Hall, which is less likely to impact single family rentals in our 'hood, but we won't know the full scoop until Council hammers out the details (see page 10).

All this activity may make your stomach grumble, so thank goodness for *The Dish* columnist Beth Goulart Monson, NUNA food seductress. In this newsletter, she gives us the scoop on DJ Crepes and the local smoothie pusher, JuiceLand-- two food outfits that have opened their doors within the courtyard of the Spider House. (I, for one, am grateful deep in my vegetable-hungry soul for JuiceLand--who knew that I could become a junkie for smoothies with ginger and kale in them? And the Subliminator is like a milkshake that's good for you.) And guess what? A new neighbor of ours, Elizabeth Jones, wants to help us get organized. In our "The People in Your Neighborhood" column this month, this funny and obsessive professional arranger and alphabetizer gives us tips on how to make our soon-approaching back to school season a little more orderly. And finally...we have a plan. Actually, we've had a NUNA plan since 2004 when many of our hardworking neighbors made it happen. I catch up with Mary Gay Maxwell about how the NUNA neighborhood plan came to be and why it matters. Read on. Oh, and to test your neighborhood knowledge, see Dick Holland's trivia question below. No Willcotts allowed to answer!

Yours truly,
Clayton Maxwell

TRIVIA QUESTION:

by Dick Holland

What were the first and second locations of Texas French Bread?
(No Willcotts can enter!).

Last newsletter's question:

Which UT President lived in the compound at 34th and Guadalupe,
now owned by Nancy and Rick Iverson?

Winner: Carol Journey with this answer:

Harry Yandell Benedict, the 10th president of UT, from 1927 until
his death in 1937.



Photo of the Month

Fourth of July--more fun than
a firecracker!

by Carole LeClair

NEXT NUNA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

First English Lutheran Church
Monday, August 5, 2013
6:30 p.m.

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order**
Approve Minutes
- II. Guests:**
- III. Reports**
Treasurer - Jan Moyle
ANC report- Mary Ingle or Clayton Maxwell
Quadrant Leaders' Reports-
Dick Holland, Mary Ingle, Rick Iverson and Laurie Marchant
- IV. Items for Action:**
Discuss and Vote on NUNA website
- V. Old Business:**
Update on Sparky Park
Update on Hemphill park, trees, and water
Update on NUNA parking
Update on stealth dorm discussions
- VI. New Business:**
Discussion on June 18 Sparky Park movie night – “The Man Who Planted Trees”

Discussion on reviving the “Welcome to the Neighborhood” letter to newcomers
- VII. Adjourn**

Fourth of July Recap

By Carole LeClair

The morning was particularly cool and pleasant this last week making our 4th of July celebration all the more enjoyable. We've had this going around 10 years or so and it just never stops being a great day to meet neighbors old and new.



Photo by Carole LeClair



Photo by Carole LeClair

While our parade may have lacked a fire engine this year, the neighborhood came through with not one, but three parade cars. Michael and Ginny Riley brought their 1962 Lincoln Continental complete with suicide doors, Kim and Steve Brackin showed up in a 1964 Morgan which we are told has been in the family since Kim was a child, and Jan Bates (my Houston sister) drove a red convertible complete with beauty queens waving regally in the back seat.

I'm not sure about our attendance this year but that's kind of the point. This is a small and chummy neighborhood and our little party is just an expression of that. Folks show up, some

bring a watermelon, others bring drinks and everyone has a marvelous time.

I had a chance to visit with several attendees and tried to seek out the ones I didn't know to find out why they came out to the parade. I met a lovely bevy of UT students who come every year to march around the block. I met quite a few parents who live outside the NUNA bounds but come each year with their small kids and love that it is a simple affair that really allows for socializing while keeping the little ones thoroughly entertained, whether it be with face painting, flag painting, bobbing for apples, paddling in the pool or, for those brave enough, a trip down the water slide. There was also a young kid who just happened by on his bike but couldn't leave until the end. He seemed to enjoy chatting, eating watermelon and was fascinated by the public party aspect--that yes, everyone is welcome.

“Our boys dug the vintage cars in the parade this year,” said Patrick Willis, “and we appreciated that so many folks came out on a beautiful Austin afternoon to enjoy each other's company. One of the myriad reasons to love the neighborhood!”

As many of you know, I get the ball rolling each year, but it is a fact that everyone shows up and pitches in to make it the party that it is. For my extended family, the NUNA 4th of July parade has become our de facto family reunion. This year, we had 14 visitors from out of town--luckily, not all of them staying at our house!

I'd like to thank the Rileys, the Brackins and my big sister Jan for bringing our parade cars, Patrick and Julie Willis for drinks and watermelon, Laurie Marchant and Rowena Dasch for watermelon, and the many neighbors who contributed toward the cost of the water slide. What a super way for us to celebrate this fantastic country of ours. We are so lucky to be here, and more importantly, to be here together.

Unapproved Minutes NUNA General Membership Meeting

June 3, 2013, 6:30 p.m.

By Eileen Gil

Handed out Treasurer's Report. Revenue Collected in 2013 Dues: \$2185 . Ads: \$4650

Kim McKnight from City of Austin gave a presentation about the Sparky Park Community Initiated Improvement Project . Park is a pocket park with an original art wall by Berthold Haas.

Next phase of developing the park : Tom Hatch is the architect . On Saturday April 27th and Saturday May 11th there were meetings about what the next steps are going to be to go to Design Development phase. \$\$ comes from cell tower revenue and

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Bill Bednar, Julie Willis

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Newsletter Ads

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Newsletter Editorial

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there is a cell tower in the park.

Because this is a City of Austin Landmark, the prelim plans were submitted to a committee that said that it has great merit.

Tom Hatch speaks: Christina Obregon has done most of the work on the project. Grooms Addition Conservancy has a response to the proposal.

Doug moves to motion for up/down vote on the plans of the Sparky Park proposal. Clayton seconds. Motion in favor. in favor 13, with 2 against. Many abstained.

Reports: Motion for Clayton Maxwell to be new ANC rep. Yay vote.

Request from Hancock N'hood association to approval an occupancy proposal to limit number of non-related adults in new construction duplexes.

Roger Borge motions to change language on Draft of Resolution for Stealth Dorms. Carol seconded. Yay vote.

Dick Holland (quadrant leader) talked about vandalism on Moore and Walling.

Ideas for speakers and programs at our general meetings: Roger suggested the new 10-1 City Council. Or perhaps one on New Urbanism and density. If you have ideas, email: nunaustin@gmail.com

The Big Snore

AKA: How the Land Development Code Rewrite Process Can Impact You, Dear NUNA Resident!

By Mary Ingle

Many NUNA residents participated in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (IACP) process. In case you are unaware, one of the consequences of the new Comprehensive Plan, which was approved by the City Council last year, is the revision of the Land Development Code (LDC) which is currently taking place with a designated committee and with an outside consultant team named Opticos. One of the members of this LDC Rewrite Committee and long time, neighborhood-friendly activist from Zilker Neighborhood, Jeff Jack, had asked Austin Neighborhoods Council (ANC) members for input concerning the Land Development Code from Neighborhoods a few months ago; since then, no one has responded to that request. The information that Mr. Jack is trying to gather concerns what has worked well within the LDC and what has not worked. Many ordinances may be at risk of disappearing in the rewriting process of the LDC.

NUNA is fortunate to have a new representative on Austin Neighborhood's Council (ANC), Clayton Maxwell who may help collect any concerns from our neighborhood concerning the LDC. NUNA has always been a serious neighborhood about "zoning and use" infractions; surely there are neighbors out there

Join the Discussion!

Listserves are a great way to become more connected with your community. **The North University Yahoo Group** is a hands-on, public communications resource, helping neighbors inform, communicate, and build a stronger community. The list is inclusive, open to anyone who lives in the North University Neighborhood and to people who have a material interest here, such as operators of a business, non-profit, or civic process. One can subscribe by sending E-mail to: **nuna-residents-subscribe@yahoogroups.com** or by visiting the Yahoo! Groups site at: **groups.yahoo.com/group/nuna-residents**



@crimeatx is a crime watch Twitter feed that promotes crime prevention and public safety awareness in our area. It was established by the Central Austin CDC in January 2012 to help inform and prepare the returning student community in the immediate aftermath of the NYE attacks and murder of Esme Barrera. To sign up or learn more, visit twitter.com/crimeatx and tweet with the hashtag **#NORTHUNIVERSITY**.



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who have worked with the code over the years and have your own particular pet peeves? Your ANC representative needs to hear from you! Additionally, there will be an opportunity to participate in a workshop co-sponsored by the City of Austin (COA) through the Neighborhood Advisor's office and with ANC concerning the Land Development Code- LDC 101. The date has not been set; stay tuned.

A Disclaimer:

At this point, the author of this article now realizes that a disclaimer may be in order-the author has already used too many acronyms - NUNA, IACP, LDC, ANC, COA. In fact, the author might even get carried away by using even more mind-numbing acronyms such as- NCCD, NP, MF (multi-family), SF (single-family), etcetera. So before the reader's interest fades away into a large yawn, please indulge the author a bit longer. The Land Development Code affects all of the property owners and residents in our neighborhoods; it provides the guidelines for redevelopment, preservation, and potentially that quotidian expectation of normalcy, especially concerning the "Compatibility Standards." Regardless of its lack of scintillation and universal appeal, it will affect everyone who lives in NUNA and in Austin. Unfortunately this topic is a dry as dust, and it may need some relevant, historical

neighborhood-context.

To illustrate the serious nature of NUNA's roll in this, some examples are in order. In years past when Regan Gammon was president of NUNA, the Compatibility Standards Ordinance was actually drafted by NUNA resident and VP at that time, Bob Kaler, at the behest of former City Council Members, Sally Shipman and Smoot Carl-Mitchell. Compatibility standards involve appropriate setbacks of properties regardless of zoning. Since there are many apartment buildings (MF zoning) next to single family (SF zoning) houses in NUNA, these setbacks are especially important. It is one of the "tools" that can save the character of older neighborhoods, and to date, it is one of the strongest ordinances on the books- it originated in NUNA!

It is also possible that the new code may do away with all overlay ordinances; this would be particularly tragic since NUNA has an NCCD (Neighborhood Conservation Combing District) Ordinance which is an overlay ordinance guiding the future of redevelopment and preservation of this neighborhood. In 2004, NUNA raised over \$44,000 to fund the drafting of the NCCD by architect and Hyde Park resident, Karen McGraw. Countless volunteer hours involving many NUNA volunteers: Rick Iverson, Mary Gay Maxwell, Jerry Roemisch, Rusty Jackson, Colleen Daly,

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Pamela Bell, Scott Morris, Carol Journeay, Bob Kaler, Mary Ingle, Marianne Mulrey, Scott Barnes, Linda Roark, Carol Butler- to name a few neighbors- were spent working on the NCCD and the Neighborhood Plan. If overlays like NUNA's NCCD and ordinances such as the Compatibility Standards Ordinance are released from the new Land Development Code, all of our collective NUNA efforts will be erased. Get involved. Contact your NUNA President, Michael Riley, and ANC representative- Clayton Maxwell- about your concerns! We need to hear from you in NUNA.

The Dish

By Beth Goulart Monson

Our kitchen remodel is done. The French blue we picked for the cabinets ended up looking pretty good, and having a dishwasher is even greater than I imagined it would be. I'm baking to cure what ails me again (Procrastinating? Bake a cake. Depressed? Bake cookies. Kids bored? Bake anything.), and again we can boil water for pasta, spin greens dry for salad, and heat a pan to searing hot for my husband's signature steak.

This doesn't mean we're not eating out anymore. Au contraire, eating out is back to being a fun, occasional indulgence – just as it should be.

One recent Saturday found our family traveling by foot, stroller, and tricycle down Hemphill Park to scout out the new food

trailers around the southwest corner of the neighborhood. It being a holiday weekend, Greek Original Gyros and Love Balls were closed (But you're intrigued now, aren't you?), but signs for juice and crêpes lured us toward Spider House.

We started at JuiceLand. This juice joint, a native of Barton Springs Road, has taken over the first floor of the yellow building on the alley behind Spider House, and has take-out windows on both the alley side and in Spider House's backyard. Now this is real juice – the kind made by loading entire fruits and vegetables into a blender strong enough to power a yacht across Ladybird Lake and pushing “pulverize”.

On the juicer's recommendation, we ordered a Cold Shower, comprised of cucumber, mint, parsley, watermelon, lime, and salt (\$5.95-\$9.95, depending on size). There's something so sonorous about all of those ingredients. They sound pretty. Don't be fooled. When they're all vooved together, they make a drink that looks like water you've rinsed a watercolor brush in after using every color in the palette. It's a good thing looks aren't everything. The flavor was straight-up healthy. Nothing sweet or indulgent about it, yet we slurped the whole thing down and felt very wholesome about it, indeed.

We also picked a cucumber mint agua fresca (\$3.95 for a large), our experience at Chango's having taught us that aguas frescas are sweet fruity things. Not so at JuiceLand. Here, the drink was

thicker, though not so thick as the Cold Shower. As for color, it was deeply green. And flavor? Well, it tasted exactly like cucumbers and mint. It's a refreshing mix.

You may note that I'm not calling either drink “great.” And yet, I'm plotting to get back to JuiceLand. I'm even considering motivating myself to work out with a juice reward. Maybe a Rosie Cheek (watermelon, lemon, raspberry, rosewater) next time. Or, if that run doesn't go so well, perhaps a little something from the cocktail menu – a strawberry martini (strawberry-infused Ketel One + strawberry purée), perhaps?

For a light lunch, we headed to Spider House's unequalled patio. We'd seen the signs for DJ Crepes, but didn't know exactly what that meant. It turns out there's a kiosk in the biergarten from which a fellow spins crêpes to order (except that when we visited there was some problem with the kiosk set-up, so the crêpes came from within the main kitchen). From a list of a half-dozen each savory and sweet crêpes, we chose two. The Capri (\$6.40) advertised a filling of mozzarella, green peppers, mushrooms, and “gardens salad”. That last ingredient, it turns out, is code for “ranch dressing” – a big surprise, but not an unpleasant one. The Cannes (\$7.80) was the more traditional choice, with mozzarella, a generous helping of prosciutto, basil, and tomato. I look forward to returning to sample the sweet menu, the offerings on which appear to consist basically of either Nutella or white chocolate paired with various fruits.

I was raised in college towns, and I learned to flag down a bartender and order a Shirley Temple just the way I liked it (extra cherries) when I was five. This may be why I have no qualms about taking young kids just about anywhere, especially in this neighborhood. Plus, the educational opportunities at such hubs of learning abound. While we waited for our crêpes at Spider House, our oldest, who's just learning to read, sounded out the big sign advertising the business above JuiceLand. “T-t-t-TA-TOO! Mama, that says ‘tattoo!’ What does ‘tattoo’ mean, Mama?”

Do you love a JuiceLand juice I missed? Have a favorite food trailer? Need to rave or complain about some other dish around the neighborhood? Email me at nunadish@gmail.com.

Bon appetit.

We've Got a Plan

Interview about the NUNA Neighborhood Plan with Mary Gay Maxwell

By Clayton Maxwell

If these streets could talk, oh, the stories they'd tell. Being a relative newcomer* to the neighborhood, I know that there

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are many NUNA stories I probably ought to know, but don't (I admit I didn't attend a NUNA meeting until I was gently nudged into it last Fall). For example, I only recently learned more about we have an actual legally binding plan for our neighborhood. It's a Neighborhood Combining and Conservation District plan and is part of the Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee's larger 7-neighborhood plan. What does that even mean? Who wrote it? Why does it matter? Well, the streets don't talk, but my neighbors do, so long-time NUNA resident Mary Gay Maxwell came over one afternoon to tell me the story of how our plan came to be, and why it actually was a very intensive and collaborative project that still matters quite a lot (Spoiler alert: certain neighbors surveyed each of the lots in NUNA themselves—now that's a labor of love, one that would require very comfortable walking shoes).

*(omitting my years here in college, which are pretty hazy, anyway)

Clayton Maxwell: Mary Gay, can you please give me the nutshell version of the story of our neighborhood plan?

Mary Gay Maxwell: It started really because in the fall of 2001, an agent for the developers of the Villas on Guadalupe approached NUNA about that project. At that point, their plan looked awful. I decided that I was going to organize opposition to it. I was joined by a number of other people, and well, we got very organized. At that time, the developer's plan was to build their parking garage looming over Adams Park. So we fought re-

ally hard and did all kinds of things that were required; we got a valid petition of the neighbors around the Villas track, etc. While they did eventually hide the parking garage behind the apartment units, we mostly lost that fight. But because of our efforts with the Villas, City Council threw us a bone and put us next in the list for neighborhood planning with City of Austin Neighborhood Planning staff.

CM: So there the City of Austin staff was working with neighborhoods on their plans?

MGM: Yes, it was a staff run program. It would have been four more years before they'd have even gotten to us, if they hadn't bumped us up the list. But we could see the writing on the walls from the Villas experience that we had no protection in the neighborhood, so Council helped us out by prioritizing us. So the effort we put into fighting the Villas paid off, at least in that way. We started the official planning process with the City in the summer of 2002.

CM: Who was involved in the creation of the plan?

MGM: Well, first, it wasn't just NUNA doing the plan alone, it was 7 neighborhoods all working on this at once, that is how CANPAC, the Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee, came to be. These are the seven neighborhoods closest to the University, more or less, and many of us were upset about what had happened with the Villas, so we all came together

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informally to talk about what we wanted out of the neighborhood planning process, and that became CANPAC.

CM: So you guys were collaborating informally before you started working with the City on the plan?

MGM: Yes, partly out of fear. We thought that the staff was coming in with an agenda for major density and we wanted to clarify our own goals beforehand. But, CANPAC is in favor of density. We live in one of the very densest areas, but we wanted to work with the city for appropriate density that would be in line with one of the main goals of our plan: to keep the character of our neighborhoods. The plan, with all of its technicalities and minute details, is all designed to support that overall goal.

CM: What are the 7 neighborhoods?

MGM: Hancock, Eastwoods, North University, Heritage, Shoalcrest, University Area Partners, and West University. Yes, so these seven neighborhoods all got together, and that was one of the things we all wanted: to retain character. But that's what the developers wanted anyway, so we were really all on the same page. We just needed to figure out how to keep that goal and allow for more density; so, together we looked for solutions, planning for where there could be more density...Now, all the other neighborhoods in the group chose the template plan that the city was using that was pretty rigid. We chose the Neighborhood Combining and Conservation District (NCCD) because it is more flexible, and

it fits a neighborhood like ours better because the other one is cookie cutter; we have some wiggle room, which we need because of a lot of non-complying structures in the neighborhood. Hyde Park and a section of Travis Heights are also NCCD. City staff does not like NCCDs, but they have to honor them.

CM: Why don't they like them?

MGM: They don't like them because they are complicated. With staff turn over it's hard to keep people informed as to what NCCDs are. But it is a legal document, so they have to follow it or they get in trouble.

CM: So how did you guys formulate this plan?

MGM: Well, in Summer 2002 we met at my house, I remember it well, and we started working with staff in the fall. A lot happened after that...for example, Rick Iverson, Mary Ingle, Pam Bell, and a few others surveyed all of the lots in NUNA.

CM: By yourselves?

MGM: Well, yes, pretty much. The city didn't do it. It was up to us. It was good. By surveying all the tracts in the neighborhood we identified properties that needed to have their zoning cleaned up. There were a number of changes that had to happen to bring it into some kind of order. We didn't always have happy owners, but most of the time we did. But often it was rental properties that had to be zoned MF that had to be cleaned up. We went

through a really long process, but our neighborhood plan was different and we had to have professional help.

CM: Who did you get to help?

MGM: We hired Karen McGraw, an architect who had done the Hyde Park neighborhood plan, also an NCCD. We raised over \$40,000 from neighbor donations through letters and at several events. There was one event that was truly outstanding, a great dinner party at Chris Dial's house co-hosted by Reagan Gammon. So we could hire Karen to do all the technical work to write our plan.

CM: How many neighbors were involved in the plan?

MGM: MANY of the neighbors participated in this process, and it was not done at all behind closed doors. It was a very transparent collaboration with many neighbors. We had several meetings at different people's homes where we invited people to come and talk about what was being done. Many hours were put into this and it was very democratic. Each of the 7 neighborhoods was doing this at the same time, but we had Karen to help us--but we were also meeting with CANPAC as we went along.

CM: Can you explain to me the University Neighborhood Overlay (UNO) that came out of this?

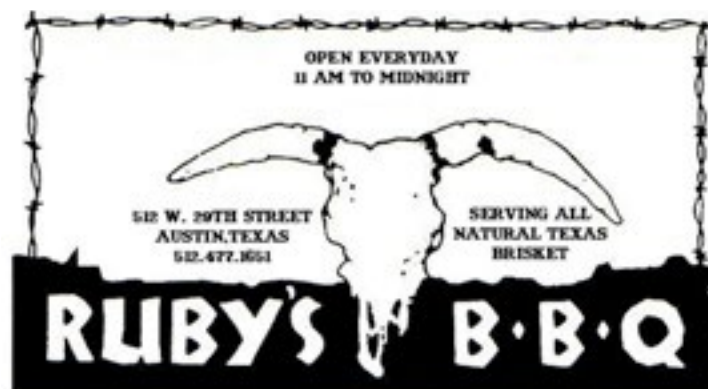
MGM: We worked with the city and with the University to create the University Neighborhood Overlay so that West Campus could build above typical height restrictions. The overlay to the basic zoning allows for all of those new high rises. Now they have close to 8000 more beds in west campus and it is significantly denser

CM: So you worked with developers in West Campus?

MGM: Yes. I was the coordinator of CANPAC, but I also had a co-coordinator, Mike McGinnis. He owns many properties in the area and is a partner in a number of them with Rick Hardin of Hardin House. Rick has been a real leader in West Campus, trying to create a better environment there. Mike McGinnis came in to help us with the overall plan, even the NUNA plan because he owns property in NUNA. We had a very compatible group and we didn't do any NIMBY stuff-- we all worked together to improve the area to provide the best results for all of our neighborhoods. We had a great relationship with the City staff, too. One of the reasons why is that we were willing to work with them, not fight. We all saw the value of having a plan to protect us and to plan for increased density. There were really no scuffles.

CM: And when was the plan finally finished?

MGM: After about two years of solid work, Council approved it during the summer of 2004, and now it is a legally binding docu-



ment. And I don't think people realize what protection it offers us, that it is an important safeguard in keeping this neighborhood viable and in the character that we love. We have all chosen to live in this part of town, but we are discovering that we either choose to get really informed so we can protect what we love here, or, if we are asleep, we risk losing what we have gained. A lot of people put countless hours and energy into this plan so that we could keep our community in tact.

To learn more about the neighborhood plan, you can see the general combined neighborhood plan here:

<ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/npzd/Austingo/ca-combined-np.pdf>

To see the specifics of our NCCD (this is the NUNA-specific plan that has all of our rules on setbacks, impervious cover, height restrictions and other very useful data) you can wait until we get a link up on the NUNA website (site needs a little refreshing) or, feel free to contact Mary Gay Maxwell. She can help you get a copy of the plan.

Update on the Rental Registration Pilot Program

From Kathie Tovo's office

The Council passed two rental registration resolutions on June 6. The resolution, in part, sponsored by CM Tovo directs the City Manager to develop a one-year pilot registration program for



any residential rental property in the areas of NACA, "Restore Rundberg", EROC, CANPAC, Hyde Park, Northfield and North Loop. This program should require a registration for multifamily rental properties and identify conditions under which registration for single family or duplex rental properties would be required.

CM Spelman's sponsored resolution, in part, directs the City Manager to create a repeat offenders program so that after the second health and safety citation within one year of a given rental property, the property would be required to register with the city and will be subject to appropriate fees for registration that will cover the cost of the program, as well as any inspections that the Director of Code Compliance deems necessary to ensure compliance with health and safety codes.

The City Manager is further directed to work with stakeholders and present an ordinance to Council within 90 days. Staff is currently working on preparing an ordinance and getting input from the stakeholder process. The ordinance, when it returns to Council in roughly 90 days from the June 6 date, will be more specific in what properties would be impacted.

The People in our Neighborhood: Elizabeth Jones, Professional Organizer

This month we meet new NUNA neighbor, Elizabeth Jones, an organizer with a big sense of humor. She moved to Austin



from Pasadena, CA, last year. Some of her favorite things about NUNA are the soulmates she and her Shih Tzu have found at West End Dog Grooming, the strawberry ice cream at Amy's, and all the beautiful homes in the area. In what follows, she gives NUNA a professional's insight into how to wage a war against clutter, disorder, and other common ailments of people who have too much stuff.

Seven Innovative Ideas that Will Change the Way You organize Your Home and Life

by Elizabeth Jones

I'm a professional organizer and humor writer. Which means I'm OCD and can laugh about it. For years, I was in the closet (literally and figuratively)...secretly arranging and re-arranging my Sharpie collection, making sure my clothes hangers were both attractive (as in, hot pink) and evenly spaced, arranging the contents of my family's pantry alphabetically, and then, by food group, and going around the house as if I were playing one long game of Memory, grouping like items with like items. But what made me a nightmare to live with as a child (ok, until I was 39) makes me a dream professional organizer.

Maybe you don't live in a world where everything must be simultaneously aligned, alphabetized, and arranged. Maybe everything in your home isn't so visually stunning that it makes you weep silently in one corner of your craft room after the rest of your family has left for school and work. But, if I've done my job well, you will cry tears of joy over some area of your home. Here are seven ideas for making

your home tissue-worthy.

1. Don't Worry: If you aren't organized at home, it usually means you are wickedly talented in some other area of your life.

Case in point. I have the lushest, most beautiful yard on my block. Do I know a thing about landscaping? Uhhh...no. Not even close. I've killed every houseplant that dared enter my life. But I know who to hire. I hire the best in the business, and the people who treat my yard like they would their own.

The same goes for my own clients. They are CEO's (in the home or corporate world), entrepreneurs, innovators, leaders, and creative geniuses. But when it comes to organizing their own homes and lives, they either don't know where to start or cannot visualize the stunning space that exists beneath all the clutter.

Michelangelo once said "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free." No matter where you live, there is a professional organizer who can help you carve out the masterpiece just waiting to be unveiled.

2. One Box at a Time.

The biggest mistake clients make when attempting to organize is a) trying to tackle everything at once and b) zig-zagging through the process (going from room to room, area to area, without fin-

ishing the space they started).

STOP. Work on one box (or area) at a time. Only one.

If this means you have to rent an off-site storage unit for a month or two, do it. If it means renting an on-site storage container that comes to you (like a Pod), do it. Maybe it means taking everything from one room (the room you're trying to organize) and temporarily off-loading it into a room you're not currently using. Whatever it takes, do it. But don't try to handle anything beyond one box at a time. You're going to look like Barbie just out of a microwave if you try to take on everything at once.

3. The good news: organizing is a science. The bad news: organizing is a science.

In her book *Organizing From the Inside Out*, Julie Morgenstern describes the most perfect way to tackle clutter I've ever read. She calls it "SPACE." - Sort, Purge, Assign a {logical and permanent} home, Containerize, and Equalize

Too often, I see clients run to The Container Store to load up on beautiful containers without having gone through the essential steps of sorting, purging, and assigning a space beforehand.

Organizing is a science. What a tremendous relief. Because it means that, whether you're cleaning out your handbag or 5,000



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square feet of home, you're going to get the same end result: a gorgeous space where everything has a perfect place. But it's also a science that has to be followed in exact sequence. Every. Single. Time. Which means you can't run to The Container Store until you've completed steps #1, 2, and 3. I can almost hear you (Mom) saying "But, Elizabeth, there's a sale." Or "Elizabeth, everything's so pretty and shiny" with eyes glazed over.

I promise you, going to The Container Store will be exponentially more rewarding once you've done the first three steps. The entire staff will stop and stare when you walk through the doors because you'll be the most enlightened customer they've ever seen. Strangers and little children will want to touch the hem of your garment, half shielding their eyes from the angelic light surrounding your shopping cart. You'll be like "Back off, people! I just did Steps 1-3 first."

4. Lurve the things you love.

I'm a professional organizer. Of course, I'm going to want you to purge some items. Ideally, you want your home to be no more than 75% full AT ALL TIMES. You've all heard the rule "one thing in, one thing out?" I'm more like "one thing in, three things out."

But it doesn't mean you throw out everything. It means you give dignity to the things you have. And it means you showcase the things you love. I had a client once whose mother had passed away. This client had been very close to her mom, and in the course of organizing her own closet, we came across her mother's favorite dress. It was a beautiful blue silk and, although her mother's perfume had long

since dissipated, you could still imagine her in it. In her happiest, most confident moments – surrounded by her family and friends.

Yet, here was this beautiful memory buried beneath a sea of clothes that didn't fit or flatter her daughter anymore. So, we sorted and purged our way through 60% of the old clothes, belts, handbags, and shoes. And then we had the dress professionally dry cleaned and framed. Now, her mother's blue dress is beautifully framed and hanging in a closet that is both highly functional and visually stunning. And every time my client gets dressed in the

morning, she can look at that dress and think of her mom.

Whether you have a sentimental item from a family member who has passed away, a mint condition collection you've had since you were a kid, or a treasure that brings you joy every time you look at it, there is a perfect way to showcase it. During the purging stage, get rid of everything that you don't use or love. But your most sacred and sentimental things should be treated like they're on exhibit at The Louvre in Paris. Louvre the things you love.

5. It's just like a game of memory.

I wasn't a competitive child. Put me in a timed event or team sport and I'd go limp like a rag doll. But put me in a game of musical chairs and I'll die fighting for the last chair. On more than one occasion, my mother had to be called. And Memory was one of my favorite games. I was good at it. With laser focus, I would sear each flipped card into my memory until my next turn. And when I matched a bunny head to another bunny head, I'd leap up in the presence of my nemeses and gloat with unceremonious pleasure. As you can imagine, I was everyone's favorite.

I'm all grown up now. And try not to gloat in public. But I still love the game of Memory. And organizing is just that...one big game of Memory.

As you start to think about organizing, remember that like goes with like. Repeat that to yourself. Like goes with like. As you go through the stages of sorting, purging, assigning a space, containerizing, and equalizing (i.e. maintaining), look for the thing

that looks like the other thing. At first, it will be general, rather than specific. You'll see a piece of paper and think "hmmm...that goes with the mountain of paper over here." Or you'll see a pack of women's razors that's been sitting in the laundry room since a shopping trip four months ago and think "hmmm...these look familiar. I think they go in the bathroom." Eventually, you will refine your ninja matching skills until everything in the house is grouped together in some cohesive way. Even the random thing-a-ma-jigs have a place (with the other random thing-a-ma-jigs).

The point is, it can be a game. An unbelievably fun one once you get started. And you have my permission to gloat in front of all your family and friends once you've won.

6. Even if no one else sees it, you see it.

Your home is where you escape from the rest of the world. It should be the happiest place you go at the end of every day. I am convinced {and cannot be persuaded otherwise} that every inch of your home should delight you in some way. That means the garage, and the laundry room, the attic to the basement. Every. Single. Space. Even {yes, I'm gonna say it} the refrigerator and the pantry. It doesn't matter if any one else ever sees it. You see it. And the more something inspires you and reflects who you are at the core of your being, the more natural it's going to be for you to keep it that way.

Now, this doesn't mean you should run home and try to conquer everything all at once. No...it means you start with one space at a time. Maybe it takes a year. Maybe two. But eventually every space in your home should be functional, excess-free, and visually stimulating.

7. Take a break every two hours. And then go get a pedicure!

It's mentally exhausting to make decisions for more than two hours at a time. Take a break, go do something – anything – else. And come back to the project (at a time you have scheduled) when you're fresh and rested. I know that whenever I've worked all day on sorting files or paperwork, I feel like Indiana Jones on an archeological dig. So I'm always sure to book a spa service on the days I know I'll be organizing antiques, books, or paper. Go to a movie. Grab your most fun friend for lunch. Whatever...just get outta there. And bask in the glow of a job well done.

Elizabeth owns NEST & Transformation, a boutique residential organizing firm. She sorts, purges, and containerizes her way through the homes of clients in Texas, California, and New York. She writes about the humorous side of organizing. You can follow her work on www.nestandtransformation.com and www.thelipschtick.com. She can also be reached directly at 626-394-3194 or Jonesje127@gmail.com.



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