

## President's Report August 2006

by Bill Bednar

During June and July NUNA opposed two developments that threaten the integrity of the neighborhood. The first is a fraternity house planned for 3100 and 3102 Duval, which is expressly forbidden by the NCCD ordinance. We have so notified the fraternity and the City staff. At our request the Historical Landmark Commission is investigating whether the two bungalows now on the site would qualify for designation. The second project is two large duplexes planned for 306 and 308 West 34th, which would require a variance in lot width. The neighborhood plan contemplates two-family residences in this area (house/garage apartment), which can be built without a variance. After meeting with the developer, the NPT concluded that the duplexes would be out of character with the area, and NUNA will oppose the variance. These matters are ongoing. Thanks to Mary Gay Maxwell, Mary Ingle, Rick Iverson, and June Hawley for spearheading this effort.

Meanwhile, we need volunteers to help with other NUNA initiatives. **Here are specific opportunities for you to get involved!!**

**Traffic Committee.** Jason Dean and Darian McWhirter will be leading an effort starting in September to study traffic in NUNA, identify needs, and get a plan in place for improvements. We need to find out everything there is to know about the process for adding stop signs, speed humps, sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, etc., and do an assessment in the NCCD of our needs for these sorts of things. The committee will report its findings to the Executive Committee in November or December with recommendations for specific projects. Then we work the system and nag the City until we get what we want. High on the list are likely to be a safe pedestrian crossing between Hemphill and Adams Parks and sidewalks and speed bumps at strategic locations, but the scope of this project will be comprehensive.

**Peace and Quiet.** The idea here is to publicize NUNA as a quiet alternative throughout the University community. We would like to put a link to NUNA on student housing web sites that would open to a "welcome students" page at the NUNA site, which would promote NUNA as a quiet neighborhood for serious scholars and gently warn that loud and late parties are not tolerated. There would be a list of NUNA-certified landlords who have anti-noise/nuisance clauses in their leases and are committed to providing

**Tuesday, August 1st  
in Hemphill Park**

### **NATIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD NIGHT OUT**

On Tuesday, August 1, NUNA will have a short, informal gathering in Hemphill Park by the park bench. There may be some cold treats and the presence of a fire engine.

Come join the fun. All NUNA residents are invited to gather, chat, and meet each other. Kids and dogs are welcome, too!

a peaceful living environment. NUNA's web master, Will Donovan, is willing to do the technical aspects, but we need volunteers to design the welcome page, develop certification criteria, and get landlords signed up. The pitch would be to put the clauses in your leases and commit to noise abatement, which is good for your business and your property, and we will give you "NUNA certified" status and free listing on our welcome students page. Thanks to Ben Leff for the idea to certify landlords!

**Historical District.** On June 22, the city council amended the historical district ordinance to allow neighborhoods to apply for status as historic area combining districts. At least 60% of the property owners must sign the petition, and at least 51% of the principal structures must be "contributing structures." Although there can be tax advantages for the owners, the main advantage from the neighborhood's point of view would be the more restrictive demolition and removal requirements that apply to contributing structures. This will be a major project if NUNA decides to do it. It would involve forming a group to canvass the neighborhood to assess support, raise money, hire an expert, inventory the NCCD, circulate a petition, and file an application.

**Hemphill Park.** We need to get cracking on Hemphill Park. Maintenance, landscaping, stonework, sprinkler system, path lighting, benches, playscape, the list of possibilities is lengthy. A committee of 8 to 10, or more, could prioritize improvements, organize fundraisers, and get busy on projects.

If any of this strikes a chord in you, call Bill Bednar at 476-1135 or 587-3504 (cell).



## NUNA Planning Team Report

by Scott Barnes

Following the May resignation of Scott Morris as Chairman of the NUNA Planning Team, the Co-Chair, Scott Barnes, automatically assumed responsibility as temporary Chairman. However, Mr. Barnes regrets that he will be unable to serve past July, since he is relocating to the Historic District of Old Georgetown. It will be up to the Executive Committee of NUNA to appoint an interim Chairman until the next regular planning team elections are held in April 2007. Mr. Barnes has enjoyed working with his neighbors these past several years, and will be following the progress NUNA makes as it begins its own quest to become part of a local historic district within the City of Austin.

Unfortunately, this may not be a particularly easy process, since NUNA continues to be threatened with the loss of its old bungalows which make up the unique fabric of our central city neighborhood. Efforts are now underway to attempt to save the Craftsman era bungalow at 3100 Duval Street, which had been the longtime home of a notable UT chemistry professor. A similar bungalow at 3102 Duval was already granted a relocation permit earlier in June by the Historic Landmark Commission. Please see the article by Mary Gay Maxwell elsewhere in this newsletter on attempts to preserve the residential character and historic integrity of lower Duval Street.

Another endangered residence is at 308 West 34th Street. This 1917 era bungalow was the longtime home of an immigrant Swedish couple, and it reflects the working class neighborhood that existed north of Aldridge Place in the early 20th Century. Although its use was converted to a duplex several years ago, it still retains its architectural bungalow style, and most of its original building features remain intact.

It is important to realize that with every loss of a structure which contributes to a local historic district, our chances of becoming an officially recognized historic district are diminished. The City of Austin just recently passed an ordinance to allow for the creation of such local districts, and they require that over 50% of buildings within this area be historically contributing.

NUNA already has lost a large number of our original housing stock as a result of the large scale apartment building boom that occurred throughout the 1960's until the early 1980's, so we are coming perilously close to having less than half of our structures being historically contributing. At the same time, NUNA realizes that not every old house is deserving of landmark status, and not every old building can be saved.

The proposed redevelopment of both 306 and 308 West 34th Street calls for wholesale demolition of the current structures, and the construction of two large duplexes on each lot. However, since the lots are less than the 50 foot lot width required by both the City and the NCCD in order erect new duplexes, the developers will be appearing

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before the Board of Adjustment on August 14 at City Hall. Property owners within 300 feet of these addresses should be receiving notifications of this public hearing in the mail. The planning team supports two family use on these lots, which would allow a detached garage apartment behind a single family house. This is in keeping with existing housing patterns along 34th Street, and follows the NCCD without any need for a variance request.



## Short Course in NUNA'S NCCD to be Offered

Mary Gay Maxwell, former Co-President of NUNA, is willing to work with anyone who is interested in learning more about the elements of the neighborhood plan we finished in August of 2004. It is quite complex, but we who love this neighborhood, need to get very familiar with the elements of the plan in order to protect our neighborhood. Unfortunately, just because we got a new neighborhood plan two years ago, we are not as protected as we thought we would be. We need to continually observe the changes that could go on around us, and we need to consult the plan anytime it appears that a new structure is to be developed nearby. It is also vital that we be very cognizant of any attempts to remove the housing stock in our neighborhood. It could result in our losing the opportunity to become a Local Historic District. These are just a few of the things that would be covered in a tutorial on the Plan.

Seem complicated? Well, yes it is! That's why we need more people to be active in the neighborhood. It is too complicated for a small group of us to manage. The "times they are a changin'" around here. We can't be a sleepy, quiet neighborhood anymore! The University of Texas AND the City of Austin are growing too much too fast for us to sleep through it.

If you want to do something to help us keep our plan working for us, please contact Mary Gay at 472-5958.



## An announcement from Texas State Health Services

We want to advise our neighbors of the acquisition of an emergency alert system at the Austin State Hospital (ASH) and to ensure everyone living near our campus of the periodic testing we will be conducting. The warning system is made up of an emergency siren that is mounted on a 40 foot pole in the center of our campus. We can program the siren to sound up to whatever timeframe we enter into the system. The system will be used only in case of weather emergencies such as a tornado warning when the ASH campus is in immediate weather danger or because of some other high alert disaster situation such as an attack- chemical or biohazard, or a similar catastrophic event. Our security staff will be conducting a few routine testing procedures to ensure that the system is working properly. Once the system has been tested and activated, we will not be conducting routine scheduled testing, but will periodically test the system briefly to ensure that it is still operational. We are not sure how far the sound will carry off of our immediate campus. Please ignore the sounding of the siren unless it is occurring over more that a few minutes or is repeatedly sounding over a period of time. If repeated sounding is occurring, you may want to turn on your television or radio to get updated information. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Carl Schock, Superintendent at 419-2100 or email at [carl.schock@dshs.state.tx.us](mailto:carl.schock@dshs.state.tx.us)



Some fun for everyone at the best and the biggest 4th of July Parade and fair organized by Carol Le Clair.



## Fraternity Seeking To Build In Prohibited Area Of Nuna

by Mary Gay Maxwell

News Flash! The new Neighborhood Plan for NUNA, known as the "NCCD," is being tested currently by a fraternity seeking to build a new house in one of the districts of NUNA where fraternities are NOT permitted.


A bit of explanation about this issue can be helpful to all of us who are trying to keep our neighborhood a basically single-family neighborhood. The word "neighborhood" is also key here. We are trying to protect our "neighborhood," meaning a family oriented and family-friendly area of town where we can gather and enjoy our homes.

Yes, we live near the University of Texas. We always have! We are happy to have students living in our neighborhood. However, at this point in the changing environment around the University, given that there are many very tall buildings under construction in the west campus area, fraternities are under stress to do something different about their housing and gathering needs. This creates a problem for us in our NUNA area, and it requires that we NOT

allow ANY fraternity houses or any housing that might be headquarters for a fraternity (super duplexes, larger units other than apartment complexes, condos, etc.) to get established here.

What is required by us as a neighborhood is to be vigilant, to report anything that might appear to be the residence of a fraternity, and to join us in opposing the construction of the proposed fraternity house. The potential location of the new fraternity house is at 3100 Duval extending west to Benelva Street, and encompassing several properties in that block, although we are not sure how many are included.

If this fraternity, Phi Delta Theta, is allowed to build at the location above, it will set a precedent that other fraternities will use to locate in our neighborhood in places where that is not allowed. It could be disastrous to our neighborhood and our homes if this happens. There is one place in NUNA where fraternities could potentially locate their houses: the block east of The Villas, north of the Phi Gamma Delta house on 27th Street to 29th Street on Whitis. That area will be redeveloped in the future, and it could be used in that way if a fraternity had the money to purchase property there. This area is an appropriate location in NUNA for fraternities.

If any of you are acquainted with any members of the above mentioned fraternity, it would be greatly appreciated if you would mention to them that we have a plan that was approved by the Austin City Council and is being implemented by the City of Austin that prohibits the category called "group residential" in the "residential districts" of NUNA. Anyone who has questions can contact Bill Bednar, the President of the North University Neighborhood Association. 



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