



OCTOBER COMMUNITY MEETING

October 14, 2013
8637 Spicewood Springs Rd.
7:00-8:30 PM

The meeting began with introductions and a brief review of how NWAC was formed and its purpose as a non-partisan group to educate and inform citizens about issues important to the area.

Ed English then reviewed the status of the ICRC (Independent Citizens Redistricting Committee), and the process being used to draw districts. NWAC's mapping subcommittee prepared a map with assistance from a third-party expert in mapping tools and will be doing an invited guest presentation to the ICRC on October 23. The draft ICRC map¹ and the NWAC map submission² were reviewed. NWAC reaffirmed that it is focused only on districts 6 and 10 (those impacting the west of mopac, north of 2222 area). Districts 1, 2, 3, and 4 are the required opportunity districts, based substantively on the work done by Austinites for Geographic Representation (AGR)³. Discussion was held on precinct lines, the river, and the importance of cooperatively working with other areas of the city. Early November is target date for the next ICRC draft map with a following two week period for public comment at two public hearings. All NWAC participants are invited to the ICRC hearings to state their opinions about the maps.

Jason Meeker discussed a recent gathering of some central Austin residents discussing the ICRC maps of districts 7 and 9. There will be a special called meeting on Oct. 16 of the membership of the Austin Neighborhoods Council to discuss redistricting as an information only (no voting) meeting to which the public is invited.

Ed English responded to a question about annexation and the impact on maps to say that future annexation has no impact on the current initial map process. Future annexations will be assigned to an existing district by the ICRC prior to elections. The redistricting process starts all over again after the next census (2020) is completed.

Jimmy Flannigan provided information about NWAC's four core issue areas, transportation, water/wildfires, affordability, and public safety from the public meetings and forums he attended the past month. Of note:

Transportation

- Capital Metro Red Line is already running near max capacity during rush hour times. The \$11.3mil grant received from US. Dept. of Transportation will increase capacity by 15% and reduce commute times by 5-10 minutes⁴.
- I-35 mobility studies conducted by Texas A&M and Texas DOT evaluated many alternatives for improving the interstate, with no more than a 5% impact on congestion. Real improvements to congestion require multi-modal solutions and a shift in usage behaviors. Regardless, alternative routes and the rest of the transit system will need to be upgraded before I-35 can be shut down for upgrades.

Our Mission: To support leaders in Northwest Austin and address the needs of our communities through collaboration, communication, and education.

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¹ ICRC maps: <http://www.austinredistricting.org/maps/preliminary-commission-maps/>

² Maps submitted to the ICRC: <http://www.austinredistricting.org/maps/maps-submitted-by-the-public/>

³ AGR minority opportunity districts: <http://trustaustin.org/agrs-4-proposed-4-minority-districts/>

⁴ <http://www.capmetro.org/news-item.aspx?id=2636>

- Jimmy attended the Austin Chamber “State of Transportation” luncheon, where it was obvious that partisan gridlock was preventing clear funding solutions even though both sides admit that funding is needed. A state constitutional amendment to be on the ballot in November 2014 adds \$800mil to transit funding from existing oil/gas taxes when TxDOT asked for billions for upgrading and improving aging road infrastructure. The state is currently de-paving roads in an effort to reduce maintenance costs.
- Regionally, Project Connect⁵ continues to move forward with corridor planning, specifically the “Central Corridor” and conversations about the City of Austin urban rail plan. Detailed data on the central area⁶ was released in order to inform a “sub-corridor” selection.
- Group discussion covered the challenges of dealing with so many transit agencies, comparisons to other city’s transit funding, and the need for NWAC and residents of Northwest to figure out what urban rail options may be supported in a future bond election.

Water/Wildfires

- A state constitutional amendment will be on the ballot November 5th, 2013 to move \$2bn from the state’s “Rainy Day Fund” to a water infrastructure fund providing low-cost financing to water projects across the state.
- Group discussion touched on the challenges facing Austin, water lost through aging infrastructure, problems with Waste Treatment Plant 4, and the “purple pipe” system being underutilized due to financial constraints

Affordability

- A city bond amendment authorizing \$65mil in affordable housing bonds will be on the November 5th, 2013 ballot. The bonds are similar to the 2006 bonds used as grants to private entities (non-profits) building or repairing affordable units. The property tax impact is \$8.75/year for the median home in Austin. This represents an existing amount currently being paid, so there will be no additional tax impact.
- In 2006, the \$55mil bond package resulted in \$392mil in construction with an estimated total economic impact of \$865mil over 10 years. 3417 new affordable units were created and 648 units were repaired to livable conditions.⁷
- A 2009 study estimated that almost 40,000 affordable rental units were needed for those making less than \$20,000/year.⁸ AISD estimates that they serve thousands of homeless students each year.⁹ Affordability is defined as rent in excess of 30% of monthly income¹⁰
- One of the criteria for affordable housing is their placement in areas that provide “opportunity”. Opportunity is a defined metric intended to show access to jobs, education, transportation, etc.¹¹. Maps of the city covering areas of opportunity show Northwest having high opportunity with some areas of Williamson County

⁵ <http://www.connectcentraltexas.com/vision.php>

⁶ <http://www.connectcentraltexas.com/connect/sites/default/files/Map%20Book%20v4%2010-10-13.pdf>

⁷ http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Reports_and_Publications/Presentations/2013_Council_Presentation_Affordable_Housing_April_25.pdf pg 16

⁸ http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Housing/Reports_and_Publications/Presentations/2013_Council_Presentation_Affordable_Housing_April_25.pdf pg 12

⁹ <http://housingworksAustin.org/faq.php>

¹⁰ <http://housingworksAustin.org/docs/Housing-Ladder.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.opportunitymatterscentex.org/>

falling in their score from 2007¹². Most affordable housing is currently found in low-opportunity areas.

Public Safety

- The specter of 24-hour patrols on certain trails appeared again this month, after it had been removed from the city staff budget by council. An ordinance to terminate this program is on the City Council consent agenda for October 17th.

The next NWAC meeting is scheduled for November 18, 7:30pm, Spicewood Springs Library.

In Attendance (as listed in sign-in sheets where legible)

Jimmy Flannigan
Mary Ingle
Joyce Basciano
Mario Cantu
Chip Miller
Jim Buchanan
Paul Hermesmeier
Jason Meeker
Barbara McKnight
Paul Rhea
Linda Carey
John Bucy
Molly Bucy
Mike McGiffin
Susan Reed
Phil Denney
Matt Stillwell
Karin Crump
David Kingg
Chuck Pace
Kathy Carvell
Gopal Guthikonda
Brigid Shea
William Hughes

¹² <http://www.greendoors.org/programs/docs/Geography-of-Opportunity-Austin-2013.pdf>