

Dawson Neighborhood News

Newsletter of the Dawson Neighborhood Association
and Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team
www.dawsonneighborhoodassociation.org

July/August 2024

Thirty Years of the Dawson Neighborhood Association

— Julie Woods, DNA President

Residents in our neighborhood founded the Dawson Neighborhood Association in the summer of 1994, because, among other concerns, runoff from the construction on Ben White Boulevard was causing East Bouldin Creek to flood. The neighborhood association sought to persuade the city to build retention ponds on Alpine, which were built and continue to serve as an important flood mitigation feature of our neighborhood. The DNA has continued to meet regularly and share important information, not only about the creek (with regularly scheduled cleanup activities) but also about city policies affecting the neighborhood.

In 1997, the city chose the DNA for a pilot program for a new planning process that was being tested in Dawson and two East Austin neighborhoods, the Chestnut and the East Cesar Chavez neighborhoods. This program resulted in neighborhood plans for all three neighborhoods; Dawson's neighborhood plan was accepted by the city in August of 1998, the first in the city. Neighborhood plans in the city of Austin can be viewed here:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/page/neighborhood-plans-and-resources>

The Dawson neighborhood plan is relatively short compared to others. A team of neighbors walked every street in the neighborhood and spoke to residents and business owners, with a special effort to reach out to renters and apartment dwellers. The resulting plan includes suggestions to improve pedestrian safety, to improve the quiet, friendly and family-oriented atmosphere in the neighborhood and to reduce crime, especially burglaries and prostitution. The plan included the goal of keeping commercial development on S 1st Street and S Congress Avenue. The neighborhood association continued to meet regularly and worked together to create the contact team, which operates under city guidelines to share information and make decisions about proposed development in the neighborhood. Contact teams across the city formerly met quarterly with city staff for training sessions but these ended before the COVID epidemic ended many of these sorts of meetings. Training materials continue to be available on the city website, with the most recent dated 2018. Whether the city intends to continue to work with plan contact teams remains unclear.

Starting in 2009, the city asked neighborhoods to hold meetings to discuss our ideas for the future of the city. Dawson neighbors met and engaged with a "Meeting in a Box," which was a collection of maps and other materials that we marked up in great detail; much of our focus was on the same concerns as in the neighborhood plan: improving pedestrian safety, preserving the pleasant nature of the neighborhood and reducing crime. We discussed our hopes to see substandard housing improved while preserving its affordability. The information that Austinites collectively created was turned into a document in 2012 and called Imagine Austin. You can read more

Thanks to Our Sponsor



Dawson Elementary serves children ages 3 to 12 years.

Please contact Dawson's office at 512-698-9151, to set up a time for a tour.

Dawson Neighborhood List Serve: Groups.io

<https://groups.io/g/dawsonneighborhoodassociation>

Find Us On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/DawsonNeighborhoodAssociation>

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Next Meeting

Monday, August 12, 6:30
Twin Oaks Library, S. 5th and
Mary

Agenda

Neighborhood Association

1. Approval of April and June minutes
2. Intro and greetings with Austin Public Library staff
3. Remembering Peter Davis
4. Gillis Park pool update

Plan Contact Team

1. Approve June 2023 DNPCT meeting notes
2. Proposed Amendment to Land Code
3. Gillis Pool Open now.
4. Old Crow Bar in reconstruction
5. Neighborhood going on
6. City not contacting DNPCT about zoning changes

about it here: <https://www.austintexas.gov/departments/imagine-austin>

Obviously, there have been a lot of changes since then and we're being asked again to weigh in, with a final draft expected to be adopted in Fall of 2026.

<https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/pio/document.cfm?id=43337>

Here is the direct link to the survey:

<https://speakupaustin.org/imagineaustin#tab-52294>

Since our founding, the DNA has sought to bring neighbors together to work on issues that affect all residents. We have watched a confusing series of efforts by the city to update the zoning code, with mixed (at best) results. We'll discuss those efforts in subsequent meetings and newsletters.

We meet on the 2nd Monday of February, April, June, August, October, and December.

In Memoriam: Peter Davis

We are sad to be commemorating the passing of our friend, Peter Davis. Born in Birmingham, UK, he married Sandy McMillan in 1995 and moved to Austin in 2003. An artist and architect, he and his wife were hardworking neighborhood organizers in Dawson for many years. They bought a house in our neighborhood at the intersection of Oltorf and Euclid with the plan of flipping it, but fell in love with the neighborhood and stayed until 2021, when they moved to New Orleans to be near Sandy's family.

One of Peter's most unusual and imaginative projects involved a longtime snapping turtle living in the creek, nicknamed The Old Man. Neighbors help rescue this enormous turtle from time to time when he goes roaming in the street and on one occasion, when he got too big to fit in the storm drain he got stuck, which required a tricky effort to get him unstuck and back in the creek. Peter somehow persuaded the city of Austin to build a turtle ramp next to the bridge at El Paso near Wilson Street. So, thanks to Peter, The Old Man and other wildlife residents of the creek can return home safely.

Peter will be buried in England. We all will hold Sandy and Peter's family in our thoughts and prayers.



Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Association June 10, 2024

6:30 at Cosmic Coffee...after a big rain

Julie Woods, President, called the meeting to order.

Printed minutes were too wet to read.

1. Update on H.O.M.E initiative after phase 2 approval by City Council was provided. The final amendments were still pending.
2. Update on South Central Waterfront Development was provided.
3. Several people, including Amy, attended to discuss potential upgrades to Gillis Park which was adopted by DNA several years ago. Julie Woods made a motion to make a Gillis Park committee and the motion was passed unanimously.
4. Brittany from Waymo, autonomous ride-hailing, informed the group that they were mapping the Dawson Neighborhood and other Central Austin neighborhoods for driverless rides to be available in late 2024.
5. Abandoned buildings on Congress were discussed, e.g., dance studio, El Gallo.
6. Julia shared that she had called 311 to have fallen trees at the end of Lessin Ln removed.

Meeting adjourned

Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, June 10,, 2024

Martin Harris, Chair, Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, called meeting to order.

1. Gillis Pool Discussion about opening, bathroom and DNA follow-up to plans to add to upkeep of adopted park: benches, toilets, splash pad, fields as mentioned in groups.io recently. Crow Bar property may not come back as Crow Bar, per Crow Bar Facebook. But work is being done on structure.
2. City Planning sent Demos notices were sent for St. Edwards University, 3001 S Congress, Hill's Cafe, and the Stonebriar Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
3. Rumor says HEB will still open some time late this year heard before Thanksgiving.
4. Two new businesses at Pickle Rd complex, with AOK therapeutic took the place of Crux Climbing and Permitted work in progress at old Infinite Monkey Winery Site
5. Music at Cosmic on Wednesday 6-8, and Columbia Coffee has several scheduled days a week.
6. Homeless/transient problems on the south side: Cars/property, an assault, pond area is out of control with weeds and random weed control and spillway has overgrowth.
7. Tiny toy sculptures to be found in south area, small plastic toy sculptures seen about 20; a nice little geo hunt.
8. Wood ducks back to Alpine Pond, its upkeep and duckweed someone is cutting edge of bird along Alpine and east side walk

Meeting adjourned