



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lee Leffingwell  
Members of the City Council

FROM: Dee Dee Quinnelly, Planning & Development Review Department, 974-2976

DATE: April 17, 2012

RE: St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan  
Case Nos. NP-2011-0029, C14-2011-0115, and C14-2011-0116

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### **Description of Backup Information**

Attached you will find backup information for the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan (SJCHCNP), including:

#### *Standard backup materials:*

- The St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan, NP-2011-0029
- Draft ordinances for Case #s: NP-2011-0029, C14-2011-0115, and C14-2011-0116 (to be submitted as *late backup*)
- List of public meetings conducted during the SJCHCNP planning process
- The St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan Outreach Data
- Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Department's Affordability Impact Statement
- Future Land Use Map
- Backup for Case # C14-2011-0115, the St. John Neighborhood Plan Combining District Rezonings
- Backup for Case # C14-2011-0116, the Coronado Hills Neighborhood Plan Combining District Rezonings
- Public comments received on the plan, to date
- Petitions received for Tract #108 and Tract #113

### **Prior City Council Action**

- On **April 5, 2012**, City Council made the following motions:
  - Case #NP-2011-0029: To close the public hearing and adopt the first reading of the ordinance NP-2011-0029 for Tracts #108, #113, and #114.
    - i. Tract #108 (7-0 vote) to change the land use designation on the future land use map (FLUM) to Office land use.

- ii. Tract #113 (6-1 vote; Council Member Tovo voted nay) to change the land use designation on the future land use map (FLUM) to Mixed Use land use.
  - iii. Tract #114 (7-0 vote) to change the land use designation on the future land use map (FLUM) to High-density single family land use.
- o Case # C14-2011-0116: To close the public hearing and adopt the first reading of the ordinance C14-2011-0116 for Tracts #108, #113, and #114.
  - i. Tract #108 (7-0 vote) motion to close the public hearing and adopt on first reading general office-neighborhood plan (GO-NP) combining district zoning for E 7424 US Hwy 290.
  - ii. Tract #113 (6-1 vote; Council Member Tovo voted nay) motion to close the public hearing and adopt on first reading community commercial-mixed use-neighborhood plan (GR-MU-NP) combining district zoning and general commercial services-mixed use-neighborhood plan (CS-MU-NP) combining district zoning for E 7142.5 US HWY 290.
  - iii. Tract #114 (7-0 vote) motion to close the public hearing and adopt on first reading townhouse and condominium residence-neighborhood plan (SF-6-NP) combining district zoning for E 7100 US HWY 290.
- On **March 1, 2012**, City Council approved, on first reading, Case #s NP-2011-0029, C14-2011-0115, and C14-2011-0116, *with the exception of Tracts #108, 113, and 114, which were postponed until April 5, 2012.*
- On **February 9, 2012**, City Council postponed the public hearing for Case #s NP-2011-0029, C14-2011-0115, and C14-2011-0116, at the request of City Staff, until March 1, 2012.

### **Planning Commission Recommendation**

On January 24, 2012, Planning Commission's action was to recommend the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan to City Council for approval.

### **Issues**

Tract #108 (22.21 acres) 7424 Highway 290 East - A valid petition of 100% has been filed by the property owners in opposition to anything other than CS-MU-CO-NP zoning. Correspondence between the neighborhood and the property owners is included as part of this backup.

Tract #113 (2.13 acres) 7142.5 Highway 290 East – A petition of 9.04% has been filed by the Old Town Homeowners Association in opposition to anything other than SF-6-NP zoning. Correspondence from the neighborhood and the property owner is included as part of this backup.

### **SJHCNPA Planning Process**

The St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan was initiated by Council resolution (#20061214-014) in December 2006. The kickoff meeting was held on February 28, 2009. Following the kickoff meeting, Planning and Development Review Department (PDRD) neighborhood planning staff worked with community members to conduct 30 public meetings over 30 months. These meetings addressed a wide range of community planning topics including: community life (neighborhood schools, history, community beautification, code compliance and crime prevention and public safety); parks, trees and the environment; transportation; land use and zoning. Typically the meetings, also referred to as “SJCH neighborhood planning workshops” provided an educational component (including presentations by guest subject matter experts) as well as group exercises designed to engage all participants. The information (i.e. community input) gathered at these workshops is the foundation for the goals, objectives and recommendations in the SJHCNPA plan. The Future Land Use Map and recommended rezonings in SJHCNPA are also products of community workshops. At the September 15, 2011, Final Open House, staff presented the final draft of the neighborhood plan, a draft Future Land Use Map (FLUM), and the zoning recommendations that had been formulated as part of the two and one-half year planning process in the SJHCNPA. Below is a timeline of important dates in the planning process:

- **February 28, 2009:** Kick-off Meeting
- **March 2009 to April 2010:** Topic Meetings (e.g., community life, parks, trees, transportation and infrastructure, neighborhood character issues, etc.)
- **June 5, 2010:** Mid-Process Open House
  - Presentation of draft plan chapters
- **July 2010 to August 2011:** Land Use and Zoning Workshops
- **September 15, 2011:** Final Open House
  - Presentation of final draft plan, FLUM, and zoning recommendations

### **Plan Summary**

#### ***Community Life***

The Community Life goals, objectives and recommendations articulate a vision for enhancing the qualities that directly effect everyday life in SJHCNPA. When discussing community life with the SJHCNPA participants, several themes began to quickly emerge: neighborhood schools, community beautification, code compliance, and crime prevention/public safety. Special attention to these subject areas helps shape the community’s approach to envisioning a better standard of living in SJHCNPA.

### ***Parks, Trees and the Environment***

The Parks, Trees and Environment chapter articulates the natural environment and recreational needs and desires of the St. John/Coronado Hills community. Emergent themes from the workshops include:

- Increasing parkland in Coronado Hills community
- Adding more amenities in the existing parks
- Encouraging creation of community gardens
- Protecting and enhancing the ecological assets of the community (creeks, watersheds, trees, etc.)

This chapter details specific objectives, recommendations and resources designed to help the community successfully address and achieve each of the above mentioned topics of interest.

### ***Transportation***

The Transportation chapter articulates a vision for enhancing the infrastructure and systems that directly effect traveling in and around SJCHCNPA. To this end, the chapter provides a comprehensive approach to maintaining and/or improving the conditions of traveling - whether in a car, riding a bus, walking, pedaling a bicycle or operating some form of motorized transport - in the SJCHCNPA community.

Through stakeholder discussions focused on various modes of transport (walking, biking, taking the bus, driving a car, etc.) several themes emerged. Residents articulated their priority to ensure safety for all modes of transportation and striking a balance between all modes. Residents also expressed concerns to proactively address areas or specific locations in their community where a combination of transportation issues challenges efficient and safe travel. Such areas include, but are not limited to the Cameron Road corridor and Blessing Avenue. Other dominant themes in transportation discussions included improved connectivity and accessibility in the current transportation network.

### ***Land Use***

The Land Use chapter articulates the SJCHCNPA stakeholders' vision for how the development and/or preservation of land in their community can enhance the overall quality of life in SJCHCNPA. Specifically, this chapter focuses on how land is preserved, developed or re-developed in the future. The vision is illustrated in the SJCHCNPA Future Land Use Map (FLUM, Map 6, page 84 of the plan document). The zoning tract maps are included as part of this backup; they are key to implementing the SJCHCNPA future land use vision. Emergent themes in the land use discussion include:

- Residential Cores
- Community Hubs
- Land Use and Transportation Connections
- Affordable Housing
- Infill Options Summary

## **Survey Results**

The Planning & Development Review Department surveyed the SJCHCNPA stakeholders at the end of the planning process. The survey intends to assess stakeholders' satisfaction with the plan and their agreement with its recommendations. Below are the results of responses to the question, "Please rate your level of support for the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan" (out of 19 total responses):

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response Count</b>	<b>Response Percentage</b>
Fully Supportive / Yo lo apoyo completamente	8	42.1%
Generally Supportive / Yo lo apoyo en general	10	52.6%
Generally Unsupportive / Yo no lo apoyo en general	0	0.0%
No support / No tengo apoyo	1	5.3%
Unfamiliar with the Plan / No soy familiar con el plan	0	0.0%
Totals	19	100.0%



**The St. John/Coronado Hills  
Combined Neighborhood Planning  
Area**

**Neighborhood Plan**

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# **The St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Plan**

## **An Amendment to the City of Austin's Comprehensive Plan**

### **The Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan**

Chapter 5  
Section 5-32  
Exhibit A  
Amendment 32





**CITY COUNCIL**

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Greg Guernsey, Director

Disclaimers:

By adopting the plan, the City Council demonstrates the City's commitment to the implementation of the plan. However, every recommendation listed in this plan will require separate and specific implementation. Adoption of the plan does not begin the implementation of any item. Approval of the plan does not legally obligate the City to implement any particular recommendation. The implementation will require specific actions by the neighborhood, the City and by other agencies. The Neighborhood Plan will be supported and implemented by:

- City Boards, Commissions and Staff
- City Departmental Budgets
- Capital Improvement Projects
- Other Agencies and Organizations
- Direct Neighborhood Action

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The maps in this plan have been produced by the City of Austin Planning & Development Review Department for the sole purpose of aiding neighborhood planning decisions and are not warranted for any other use. No warranty is made by the City regarding their accuracy or completeness.

### ***Special Acknowledgements***

The Planning and Development Review Planning staff is especially grateful to individuals and institutions that graciously provided invaluable meeting space to conduct the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area meetings during the planning process, especially: Joel De La Garza, Administrator of J.J. Pickle Elementary School; Michael Abramov (Managing Librarian) and Paola Ferate-Soto (former Managing Librarian) of St. John Branch Library; and, Merv Griffin, Program Supervisor, with the Virginia Brown Recreation Center.

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## **PLAN SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Plan Summary gives readers background information on neighborhood planning in the City of Austin and in the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SJCHCNPA). Locator maps (Maps 1 and 2) identify the SJCHCNPA in greater detail and with respect to other areas in the City of Austin. The main goals and priorities of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan are listed in this chapter. Additional information on neighborhood planning in the city can be found in the *Planning Area Context* chapter and on the City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning web site.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN THE CITY OF AUSTIN**

The City of Austin's Neighborhood Planning program follows from decades of citizen initiatives to plan development in the City. These initiatives intended to establish planning that guides the form, location and characteristics of development in order to preserve the quality of life and character of existing neighborhoods.

In 1979, the City Council adopted a complete comprehensive plan, the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan (ATCP), whose goals and objectives were based on public input (Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan, p. 3-5). A policy objective in the ATCP states: "Develop and implement specific, detailed plans tailored to the needs of each neighborhood." In 1995-96, Austin's Citizens' Planning Committee issued reports recommending neighborhood planning to identify community needs and guide future development in specific areas of the city ("From Chaos to Common Ground", Citizens' Planning Committee Report, p. 12). In 1996, Austin's City Council created the Neighborhood Planning program to broadly achieve citizen goals outlined in the aforementioned reports and initiatives. Once adopted, the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan will become an amendment to the Austin Tomorrow Comprehensive Plan.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING IN ST. JOHN AND CORONADO HILLS**

In 1999, during the Creating the Livable Communities Workshop, Austin neighborhood representatives expressed a desire for the city to undertake neighborhood plans at a faster pace. Based on neighborhood input, the boundaries of 50 neighborhood planning areas within the Urban Core were developed. In 2006, Council approved an ordinance that selected the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area as one of the neighborhoods slated to develop a plan.

The neighborhood planning process was initiated in the SJCHCNPA for several reasons. First, the St. John and Coronado Hills neighborhoods are part of the Urban Core, the dense central area of the City, which City Council has previously designated as a priority planning area (Maps 1 and 2). Second, Planning and Development Review (PDRD) staff use several factors to choose the next urban

core neighborhood to plan. These include: the amount of vacant and developable land, commercial zoning, arterial roadways, development pressures and the prevalence of crime and code enforcement issues. Planning staff also considered whether area stakeholders, particularly neighborhood associations, were interested in participating in the neighborhood planning process. Since the SJHCNPA met several of the criteria, the neighborhood planning process was initiated in February 2009.

The content of this plan, including its **goals, objectives, and recommendations** were developed through a public planning process consisting of meetings, workshops, field work, surveys, and public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council. This process is described in more detail in the following chapter. People who participated in the plan are referred to in this document as 'stakeholders.' Stakeholders include community business owners, renters, residents, property owners, and various organizations and institutions.

Throughout the planning process, PDRD staff coordinated planning activities with other City of Austin departments and outside agencies or organizations to solicit their input regarding the plan's goals, objectives and recommendations. Representatives from these groups participated in community workshops, reviewed plan content and developed working relationships with the SJHCNPA stakeholders. The following groups were vital to the development of the SJHCNPA Neighborhood Plan:

- Austin Independent School District
- Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- City of Austin (the following departments):
  - Police
  - Code Compliance
  - Neighborhood Housing and Community Development
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Planning and Development Review
  - Public Works
  - Transportation
  - Watershed Protection
- Keep Austin Beautiful
- Sustainable Food Center
- Texas Department of Transportation

The specific role and contributions of each organization and agency are detailed in subsequent plan chapters.



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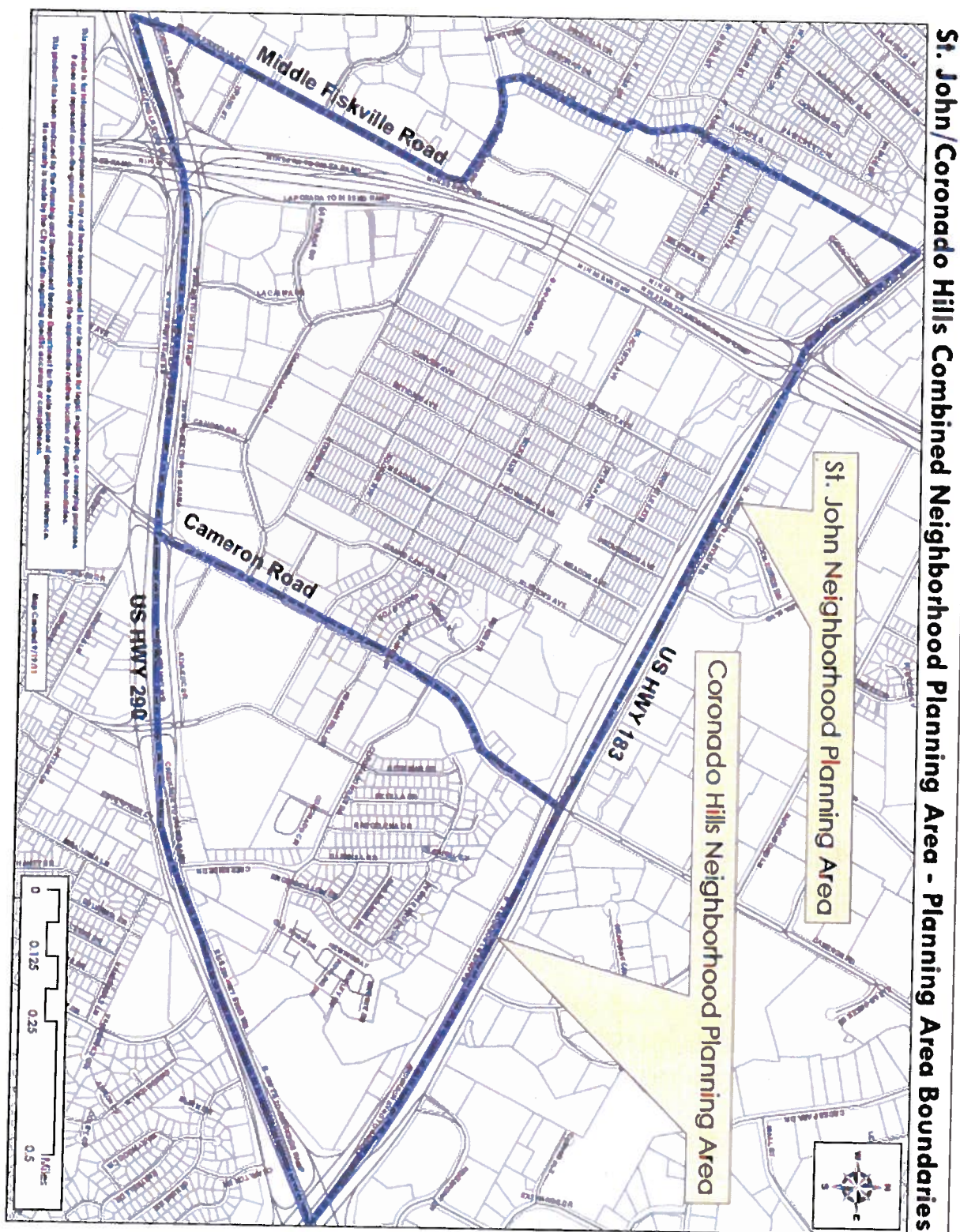
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Map Created 9/19/11

Legend  
SJCHNPA

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

DRAFT 04/12/12



Map 2. St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area – Planning Area Boundaries

## CHAPTER STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan should be thought of as a working document designed to assist residents in improving and/or maintaining the quality of life in their community. Each chapter in this plan addresses a major issue area:

**Community Life; Parks, Trees and Environment; Transportation; and Land Use.** The plan chapters include objectives and recommendations that support the goals in the *Vision Statement* (page 6).

The objectives are labeled and written in italics. Recommendations, which offer specific means for how the objective can be achieved are numbered beneath each objective. Plan recommendations were prioritized by those stakeholders who participated in the SJCHCNPA final open house. This input is reflected in the plan's *Priority Action Items* (page 7).

Implementation notes in each plan section offer suggestions for how the recommendations could be implemented. Additionally, the introduction section of each chapter describes to whom the objectives and recommendations in the chapter are directed. The SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan Contact Teams will be the main organizations responsible for coordinating with applicable City of Austin agencies, neighborhood associations, and other groups to prioritize and implement the recommendations included in this plan (see *Next Steps* chapter for more information). Finally, each chapter includes shaded call out boxes to offer additional resources or information to help address specific issues.

## PLANNING FRAMEWORK – AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO QUALITY OF LIFE

During the initial stages of the SJCHCNPA neighborhood planning process stakeholder comments and concerns clearly reflected an opportunity to frame their community plan around an overarching quality of life theme. To support the stakeholders' desires to bolster the quality of life in SJCHCNPA, staff planners took special care to ensure various planning topic discussions were framed around improving or maintaining everyday life in SJCHCNPA. A simple graphic (Figure 1) was developed by staff to illustrate the big picture of the neighborhood plan components and to ensure quality of life was at the forefront of all planning discussions.

Since the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan is long-range and comprehensive in its scope, residents were encouraged to think past the present day and express their ideas for the future. Likewise, residents were aware that the planning process requires attention to balancing varied interests and entails compromise. Ultimately it is hoped that this document supports the direction of all those involved in the neighborhood planning process.





**Figure 1. A Holistic View of Quality of Life**

### **VISION STATEMENT**

A neighborhood plan vision statement reflects the shared interests or wishes of neighborhood planning stakeholders. The foundation for the community vision is the key themes that emerged from the SJHCNPA planning process. Building upon this foundation, the neighborhood plan goals serve as broad guides important to realizing the SJHCNPA's vision for the future. The first steps deemed necessary to achieving the vision are indicated in the neighborhood plan's Priority Action Items (p.7).

The SJHCNPA stakeholders envision:

- An improved quality of life in the community.
- Transportation options that allow residents to move easily and efficiently throughout the community.
- Services and amenities that accommodate the diverse needs of SJCH residents.
- Land use patterns that respect existing neighborhood character.
- Environmental amenities, such as parks and tree canopy, which enhance the beauty of the community and provide recreational opportunities.

- Opportunities for physical recreation through additional parkland and an improved pedestrian and bicycle environment.

### **PRIORITY ACTION ITEMS (IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE)**

THE SYMBOLS IN BOLD TEXT CORRESPOND TO THE PLAN CHAPTER AND RECOMMENDATION NUMBER. FOR EXAMPLE, **C84**, RELATES TO **C**OMMUNITY LIFE, RECOMMENDATION NO. **84**.

1. **C84**: Focus on crime prevention in the following SJCHCNPA locations.  
84N. Vacant property at US HWY 290 and US HWY 183
2. **T167**: Investigate the feasibility of a pedestrian/bicycle facility overpass at US HWY 183 (specifically US HWY 183 at Bennett Avenue and Blessing Avenue).
3. **L178**: Preserve the single family land use and zoning in the established core Single Family neighborhoods in the SJCHCNPA.
4. **C84**: Focus on crime prevention in the following SJCHCNPA locations.  
84A. St. Johns Avenue from IH 35 to Cameron Road
5. **T168**: Investigate the option for focused study and planning for Creekside Drive and Coronado Hills Drive points of intersection.
6. **C57**: Explore opportunities to enhance areas identified as top priority with native plantings, trees and/or other green features:  
57G. Frontage of US HWY 290
7. **C57**: Explore opportunities to enhance areas identified as top priority with native plantings, trees and/or other green features:  
57D. St. Johns Avenue
8. **C35**: Encourage community members to volunteer as mentors or tutors.
9. **C81**: Clarify responsibilities of a Code Compliance officer and an Austin Police Department officer.
10. **P120**: Provide small parks or open spaces for recreational purposes along Little Walnut Creek (in Coronado Hills).
11. **T162**: Increase the accessibility from Blessing Avenue to the bus stops on Grand Canyon Drive.

## PLAN AREA CONTEXT

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes various aspects of the St. John/Coronado Hills combined neighborhood planning area (SJCHCNPA), including a history of each neighborhood planning area (NPA), a statistical profile of recent demographic trends, and a narrative of the area's geography and natural features.

An additional section is included to present St. John NPA and Coronado Hills NPA community assets. *Community Assets* information was collected throughout the planning process via an asset mapping exercise. An awareness of community assets and values framed many workshop discussions and overall decision making. It is hoped that this working map (Appendix A) will continue to be utilized by the communities to help strengthen and enhance those places and features so important to the SJCHCNPA sense of place.

### HISTORY

#### St. John Neighborhood

The St. John community has a rich history. Of great benefit to the SJCHCNPA planning process was the active participation of long-time resident and neighborhood historian, Ms. E. M. Taylor. Her involvement was significant as she contributed her knowledge to early discussions about assets and values in St. John. Her ability to share the neighborhood's past provided a preservation perspective important to planning for the future of the community.

In addition to Ms. Taylor's active voice in the process, other St. John neighborhood leaders collaborated with Ms. Taylor to write a complete history of this unique community (Appendix B). Furthermore, due to the importance of history in this planning area, specific recommendations to preserve and enhance this asset are provided in the *Community Life: History* section of this plan. Based on the neighborhood history report, the following summary provides a snapshot into the community's vibrant past.

The history of the St. John neighborhood dates back to 1894. At that time, under the leadership of Dr. L. L. Campbell, the St. John Regular Baptist association purchased 303 acres in north Austin. Part of this purchase included the land that is known as the St. John neighborhood.

While the land remained sparsely populated for years, the origins of the St. John community date back to the 1930s. With the pressures of the great depression and families in need, Reverend A.K Black, the moderator of the St. John Regular Baptist Association, began subdividing the land in St. John into plots. Some of the seniors in the neighborhood today (2011) are part of the families who purchased the plots back in the 1930s.

The St. John Regular Baptist Association experienced consistent financial pressures and in 1957 they sold all of the 303 acres, except for the St. John neighborhood. Since the community was outside of the city service boundaries, they struggled to access city services, goods and essential items for everyday living. While part of the neighborhood was annexed into the city in 1951, the extension of city services to the area was slow.

The greatest change to community dynamics came in the 1970s and 1980s. The rural fabric of the community was shifting to a more urban character with the introduction of apartments and subdivisions. Despite urbanization happening on the fringes, the St. John community still remained one with unpaved streets. The addition of much needed infrastructure did not take place until 1976.

With such infrastructure improvements and additions, many original residents found the tax increases heavy and chose to re-locate to other parts of the city. This time period is historically significant as the new services and infrastructure did much to improve the living conditions in the community, but, as reported, the social fabric of the close-knit community was challenged.

As St. John was adapting to rapid change, another pivotal event placed pressure on the community. In the 1990s, the St. John Community Center, run by Ms. Virginia Brown and others, burned to the ground. The devastation of such loss was felt throughout the community. A new community center was built in 2001 in an attempt to provide services similar to those the former center provided.

In addition to accessing city services, crime and poverty have been additional issues the community has faced since the 1980s. Community efforts, such as annual Unity Walks, active participation in Neighborhood Night Out events, the St. John Community Alliance and the development of the For the City Center demonstrate the level of dedication community leaders have to improving the quality of life in St. John. This capacity is an important asset to reaching the goals laid forth in the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan.

#### Coronado Hills Neighborhood

In contrast to the St. John neighborhood, the Coronado Hills community is much younger with development taking place post World War II. Specifically, the lands began to be subdivided and developed for the purposes of residential housing in the late 1960s. Another significant development took place in 1965, the opening of Austin Independent School District's John H. Reagan High School. The following information details the residential development of the community as well as a history of Reagan High School.

- Residential Development

Nash Phillips and Clyde Copus worked as partners in the Nash Phillips/Copus Builders Incorporated, founded in 1945. At one time, this company was among

the nation's biggest private homebuilders. As such, they built more than 50,000 homes in neighborhoods such as Allandale, Windsor Hills and Coronado Hills.<sup>1</sup>

The land that now constitutes the Coronado Hills subdivision was platted and divided in the late 1960s. It appears that the development of the subdivision took place in three sections or phases dating from 1968 to 1972. The residential development typifies architecture custom to post World War II suburbanization. Specifically, residential development during this time period reflects a unified appearance where homebuilders took responsibility for developing multiple tracts versus individual architects working on single tracts.

In the late 70s and early 80s two new housing types were introduced in the Coronado Hills NPA, condominiums (Old Town) and retirement housing (St. George's Court). During this same time frame, new apartment complexes were being developed in St. John. With such efficient highway access (US HWY 183, US HWY 290 and IH 35) to downtown Austin, the University of Texas and other urban destinations the SJCHCNPA was beginning to position itself as an attractive community in which to live.

- Reagan High School

A significant feature in the Coronado Hills NPA is Reagan High School. Named after John Henninger Reagan, a 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. Senator from Texas, the high school opened its doors in 1965. Reagan High School excelled in sports, specifically, football. For two decades the high school was a football dynasty in the state of Texas, winning a national championship in 1970. Also noteworthy are distinguished Reagan alumni, such as Texas House of Representatives Member, Dawnna Dukes. While the high school's distinctive past is not forgotten, recent challenges have put Reagan in a highly vulnerable position. Objectives and recommendations designed to support the SJCHCNPA neighborhood schools are located in the *Community Life: Neighborhood Schools* section of this plan.

Whether in the face of development pressures, potential neighborhood school closings or crime and public safety threats, both St. John and Coronado Hills NPAs have faced challenges to every day life in their neighborhoods. Addressing and/or overcoming these challenges has in turn created the foundation and community capacity necessary to proactively face change and prevail.

## **SJCHCNPA STATISTICAL PROFILE**

The SJCHCNPA consists of two individual neighborhood planning areas: St. John and Coronado Hills. The following statistical profile includes population and demographic-related data for each neighborhood. These data demonstrate trends among the individual NPAs and illustrate comparisons between the SJCHCNPA and the greater City of Austin.

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<sup>1</sup> Novak, Shonda. "Legendary home builder Nash Phillips dies." 8 Feb. 2011.



The SJCHCNPA has experienced two fundamental changes in its population over the past decade (2000 – 2010) - population decline and an increasing diversity. In this plan, population decline is explained through population change data, detailed population age cohort data and information related to housing tenure.

Likewise, population diversity is illustrated through age, population shares, persons per households, median family income and educational attainment information. The intent of the following analysis is to identify demographic and socio-economic facts important to planning the future of the SJCHCNPA community.

### **A POPULATION IN DECLINE**

Between 2000 and 2010, population declined in St. John and Coronado Hills NPAs (Table 1). Specifically, the planning area population shrank by 2.4% while the City of Austin grew by 20.4%. When comparing whole numbers, the neighborhoods lost relatively the same number of people, St. John: 124 and Coronado Hills: 189.

**Table 1. SJCHCNPA Population, 2000 - 2010**

	St. John NPA	Coronado Hills NPA	SJCHCNPA	City of Austin
<b>2000 Population</b>	9,472	3,735	13,207	656,562
<b>2010 Population</b>	9,348	3,546	12,894	790,390
<b>2000-2010 Population Change</b>	-124	-189	-313	133,828
<b>Percent Change</b>	-1.3%	-5.1%	-2.4%	20.4%

Source: US Census Bureau

To gain perspective on what may have impacted the population decline in SJCHCNPA, the following information is provided:

- Age cohort population data, 2000 – 2010
- Housing units by tenure data, 2000 – 2010

This particular data was selected for its ability to provide details necessary to better understand who left the planning area and to illustrate whether or not their decision to leave was related to housing stock. Meaning, did the number of housing units provided in the community drastically change between 2000 and 2010?

### **Characteristics of the Population – Age**

Recognizing that population declined in the SJCHCNPA begs the question, "Who left?" In order to gain deeper understanding, the following population by age, 2000 – 2010 data is presented. The data reveals what age groups not only declined in number, but also those that increased. Each of these findings is relevant to the story of the community's character.

**Table 2. SJCHCNPA Change in Population by Age, 2000 – 2010**

Age Cohort	Total, 2000			Total, 2010			2000 - 2010, % Change
	SJNPA	CHNPA	SJCHCNPA	SJNPA	CHNPA	SJCHCNPA	SJCHCNPA
under 5	908	371	1,279	1,025	478	1,503	17.5%
5 to 9	711	248	959	830	298	1,128	17.6%
10 to 14	526	179	705	571	154	725	2.8%
15 to 24	2,710	786	3,496	1,815	549	2,364	-32.4%
25 to 34	2,222	907	3,129	2,152	777	2,929	-6.4%
35 to 44	1,041	471	1,512	1,214	458	1,672	10.6%
45 to 54	562	337	899	873	315	1,188	32.1%
55 to 64	247	188	435	478	257	735	69.0%
65 and over	545	248	793	390	260	650	-18.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,472</b>	<b>3,735</b>	<b>13,207</b>	<b>9,348</b>	<b>3,546</b>	<b>12,894</b>	<b>-2.4%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

According to Table 2, above, population decline is most significant in the 15 to 24 age cohort and the 65 and over cohort. Assumptions can be made regarding characteristics of these two cohorts, which may help clarify why they declined in number in a decade's time.

65 and over cohort: During the 2000 to 2010 time frame the 65 and over cohort declined by 18%. Part of this decrease may be explained by the closure of a nursing home in the St. John neighborhood (located at the corner of St. Johns Avenue and Duval Street). With relatively few retirement, assisted living or nursing home facilities in the planning area, it is assumed that a certain percentage of this demographic sought housing needs in other parts of the City of Austin. In contrast to the 18% decline in this age group, the community grew by 69% in the 55 to 64 cohort. This significant growth points to an increasing need for "aging in place" and assisted living housing options in the planning area.

15 to 24 cohort: Younger adults in these age groups are a highly mobile population. A contributing factor to this mobility is generally related to pursuing further education (i.e. graduating from high school and attending college) or moving away from home for the first time to pursue individual interests.

#### Characteristics of Housing - Tenure

A decline in a community's population can often point to the possible loss of housing units in the neighborhood. The following information presents data related to housing units by tenure in the SJCHCNPA, 2000 – 2010.

**Table 3. SJCHCNPA Housing Units by Tenure, 2000 – 2010**

	<b>St. John NPA</b>	<b>Coronado Hills NPA</b>	<b>SJCHCNPA</b>	<b>City of Austin</b>
<b>Total Housing Units, 2000</b>	3,369	1,430	4,799	276,842
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	93	52	145	11,193
<b>Occupied Housing Units, 2000</b>	3,276	1,378	4,654	265,649
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	2,865	936	3,801	146,547
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	411	442	853	119,102
<b>Percentage Renter-Occupied, 2000</b>			<b>81.7%</b>	<b>55.2%</b>
<b>Total Housing Units, 2010</b>	3,775	1,390	5,165	354,241
<b>Vacant Housing Units</b>	436	107	543	29,349
<b>Occupied Housing Units, 2010</b>	3,339	1,283	4,622	324,892
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	2,957	895	3,852	146,666
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	382	388	770	178,226
<b>Percentage Renter-Occupied, 2010</b>			<b>83.3%</b>	<b>45.1%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

While the total number of housing units in both St. John and Coronado Hills NPAs did not change drastically between 2000 and 2010, the number of vacant units increased significantly. In this ten-year time frame, the St. John NPA vacant unit count increased by 343 units; in Coronado Hills NPA 55 units became vacant. Table 3, above, also demonstrates another important finding which is the high percentage of rental housing in SJCHCNPA (83.3%).

With such a high percentage of renter-occupied housing, turnover rates are to be expected. However, the changes in vacant units between 2000 and 2010 are exceptional, specifically in St. John NPA. This helps support the decline in population finding and also points to considerations worthy of addressing in the SJCHCNPA planning process, primarily, strategies to incorporate new housing and home ownership opportunities into the planning area. Objectives and recommendations related to increasing home ownership opportunities are provided in the *Land Use* chapter of the plan.

#### Assumptions about Population Decline

The census data regarding population, age cohorts and housing units by tenure helps support several assumptions for why the planning area may have lost population between 2000 and 2010:

- During this time period additional college housing options were provided in the urban core. For example, the UNO (west campus) district adjacent to the University of Texas campus increased significantly in density providing new housing options for UT students. It is assumed that students

may have left SJCHCNPA to seek new housing options closer to the college campus.

- Several telephone calls were made to apartment managers in the SJCHCNPA to ask specifically if they had witnessed a decrease in the number of college students renting units. While the information is anecdotal, results do show that students have left and those college-age renters that remain are in complexes located in close proximity to public transportation providing routes to area college campuses.
- With relatively few retirement and/or assisted living options in the community, it can be assumed that older adults may be seeking housing options outside of the SJCHCNPA. While the land use decision making process cannot specify particular housing types, the decision to add Mixed Use land use can help provide development rights suitable to designing and building an aging in place community.
- A final assumption in the case of SJCH population decline is the possibility of undercounting in the 2010 census. This assumption is based on a challenging environment, both economically and socio-politically. Such factors, while important, are outside the purview of the neighborhood planning process. It is also worthwhile to mention that community dialogue during the planning process did not reveal pointed concerns regarding population loss in the community.

#### **A DIVERSE POPULATION IN SJCHCNPA**

Background research on the SJCHCNPA and early conversations with stakeholders revealed an important characteristic of the SJCH population, its diversity. As previously mentioned, for the purposes of this plan, population diversity refers to age, ethnicity, income levels and educational attainment. Provided in this section are data tables to illustrate the SJCHCNPA population makeup revealing its diversity.

Based on Table 2, age data illustrates that overall the SJCHCNPA is a relatively young community. A large percent of the population (41%) is between the ages of 15 to 34. As well, 20.4% of the population is under nine years of age. The 55 and over age group represents 11% of the population, adding an older demographic to the community's mix.

A look at persons per household data (Table 4) in comparison with age population data (Table 5) illustrates the community's position as a family friendly neighborhood. It does not appear that this trend has changed between 2000 and 2010 as the persons per household data reveals relatively static conditions.

**Table 4. SJCHCNPA Persons per Household, 2000 and 2010**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>St. John NPA</b>	2.8	2.8
<b>Coronado Hills NPA</b>	2.7	2.8

Source: US Census Bureau

The SJCHCNPA continues to represent a shifting share in population. Persons of Hispanic origin make up the majority of the population and steadily increased between 2000 and 2010. At 70% of the population, the growth in this particular ethnicity supports the SJCHCNPA community's position as a popular "immigrant gateway" community.

**Table 5. SJCHNPA Share of Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2000 and 2010**

	<b>SJCHCNPA (2000)</b>	<b>SJCHCNPA (2010)</b>
<b>White</b>	18.3%	14.3%
<b>Black</b>	15.6%	13.4%
<b>Hispanic</b>	62.4%	70.0%
<b>Asian</b>	2.4%	1.0%
<b>Other*</b>	1.4%	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: US Census Bureau

\*includes American Indian & Some Other (Census Bureau terms)

When comparing this data to the history of SJCHCNPA it is evident that original residents of the community have moved out of the planning area and have been replaced by a more diverse group of people and families. Planning objectives and recommendations relating to the social implications of increased ethnic diversity are discussed in the *Community Life* chapter.

The final data sets presented in Table 6 and 7 are income levels and educational attainment for St. John and Coronado Hills residents. The presence of a large lower income population in the planning area may be due to the large stock of older housing, which is affordable. As property values and real estate sales prices have increased in the SJCHCNPA in the last few years, the 2020 U.S. Census may show a decline in the number of low-income residents moving into the SJCHCNPA.

**Table 6. SJCHCNPA Median Family Income, 2005 – 2009**

	2009 MFI
St. John	\$27,102
Coronado Hills	\$32,708
City of Austin	\$63,431

Source: US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate

**Table 7. SJCHCNPA Educational Attainment in Percent, 2005 – 2009**

Persons 25 years old and over	St. John	Coronado Hills	SJCH	City of Austin
No schooling completed	4.0%	0.6%	2.9%	1.5%
Less than 9th Grade	28.7%	10.4%	22.7%	7.0%
9th - 12th Grade, no diploma	15.5%	15.6%	15.5%	7.2%
High School Graduate, GED, or alternative	21.8%	28.0%	23.9%	17.1%
Some College, no degree	10.6%	18.2%	13.1%	18.6%
Associate's Degree	5.8%	1.8%	4.5%	5.1%
Bachelor's Degree	9.7%	16.7%	12.0%	27.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	4.0%	8.7%	5.5%	15.9%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-year Estimate

## GEOGRAPHY AND SETTING

The SJCHCNPA is located in central northeast Austin. The planning area is bounded by Anderson Lane on the north; US HWY 290 on the southeast; and Middle Fiskville Road to E. Huntland Drive to Twin Crest Drive to E. Croslin Street and generally along the lot line to N US HWY 183 on the west (see "Planning Area Boundaries" map, page 6). The total acreage of the SJCHCNPA is 1,116 acres, with 763.1 acres belonging to St. John NPA and 352.8 belonging to Coronado Hills NPA. This 1.75 square mile planning area consists primarily of single-family neighborhoods with commercial areas located along the major roadways and highways.

Much of the St. John subdivision, built between 1930s and 1940s, was designed in a grid street pattern with bungalow style homes. While the character and integrity of the historical housing typology has remained relatively intact, the commercial services once located within the St. John NPA (i.e. corner stores or small scale markets) have disappeared. Such services are currently located along the IH-35 frontage road or along major commercial corridors, such as Cameron Road.

The Cameron Road corridor bisects the two neighborhood planning areas. To the west of the corridor is the St. John NPA and to the east is the Coronado Hills NPA. The segment of Cameron Road in the SJCH planning area extends from US HWY 183 (to the north) to US HWY 290 (to the south). Cameron Road contains primarily commercial properties that typify a suburban style development pattern, buildings have large set backs with parking lots filling the space in

between the building and the corridor. The design standards of Cameron Road are further expressed in the Land Use chapter of this plan.

Residential development accounts for a significant portion of the total acreage in the Coronado Hills NPA. In contrast to the St. John NPA, the majority of the residential use in Coronado Hills NPA is multi-family housing. Specifically, of the total 352.8 acres of land in Coronado Hills NPA, 52.2 acres are dedicated to single-family housing while 72.9 acres are developed multi-family. This high concentration of multi-family housing units is addressed in the Land Use chapter of the SJCHCNPA.

In Coronado Hills NPA the single-family residential housing typologies are characteristic of early 1970s development. The streets are designed in a curvilinear pattern more typical of suburban subdivisions. This curvilinear pattern differs from the grid-like typology of the St. John neighborhood. These street patterns and housing typologies create an important distinction between the two communities, a traditional neighborhood (St. John NPA) and a post World War II subdivision (Coronado Hills NPA).

#### **SURROUNDINGS**

U.S. Highway 183, U.S. Highway 290 and IH-35 immediately surround the SJCHCNPA. Stakeholders have expressed that efforts should be made to ensure these boundaries do not serve as a barrier between neighborhoods. To the extent feasible, efforts should be made to connect neighborhoods through transit, bike lanes, greenbelts, etc. in spite of major physical barriers. Recommendations in the Transportation and Land Use chapters address this issue.

Five City of Austin neighborhood planning areas, each with an adopted neighborhood plan, border the SJCHCNPA. To the southeast is the University Hills/Windsor Park CNPA, southwest is North Loop, due north is the Heritage Hills/Windsor Hills CNPA, northwest is the North Lamar CNPA, and due west is Brentwood/Highland CNPA. These surrounding, adopted neighborhood plans were consulted and presented where practicable in the SJCHCNPA community planning discussions.

Other significant features surrounding the SJCHCNPA:

- The Mueller Community – located at IH-35 and 51<sup>st</sup>, this mixed-use urban center containing large retail stores, employment centers (The Dell Children's Center and University of Texas research facilities), smaller retail, and a variety of housing types.
- The Capital Metro Rail stops at Highland Mall and North Lamar.

#### **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

The SJCHCNPA is an established urban area; limited quantities of land are available for additional development or for preservation as open space. As such, large amounts of impervious cover (i.e. concrete parking lots, roads and

other non-porous building materials) exist in the planning area. Any additional development or changes to impervious cover amounts in the planning area could affect infrastructure needs and may affect drainage and water quality of area creeks.

There are two major creeks in the SJCHCNPA. Of particular interest is Buttermilk Branch Creek, as the entire length of the creek is contained within the SJCHCNPA boundaries. Located at the northern section of the planning area, Buttermilk Creek runs from its start at intersection of US HWY 183/IH 35 frontage road and terminates at Little Walnut Creek, near the US HWY 183/US HWY 290 intersection. SJCHCNPA stakeholders identified Buttermilk Branch Creek as a primary asset to the community and protecting and improving the quality of the creek was at the forefront of many community discussions.

A short segment of Little Walnut Creek meanders through the planning area. Located near the intersection of US HWY 183/US HWY 290, Little Walnut Creek runs south through the northeast portion of the SJCHCNPA and in the Coronado Hills NPA also runs alongside commercial and multi-family properties. Buttermilk Branch Creek runs through the single-family homes in the St. John neighborhood and in Coronado Hills it runs behind mostly commercial and multi-family residential properties.

During the SJCHCNPA planning process, stakeholders and planners considered how the planning area's creeks affect and are affected by development. Recommendations in the Parks, Trees, and Environment chapter address these considerations. Multi-family and commercial redevelopment projects require property owners to build water quality and storm water detention facilities to help address some of the negative environmental consequences of dense development.

## **COMMUNITY ASSETS**

At the beginning of the SJCHCNPA neighborhood planning process, neighborhood planning staff introduced the concept of the SJCHCNPA asset mapping exercise. The intent of asset mapping was to provide SJCHCNPA stakeholders the opportunity to focus on identifying those features (including key places and people) most important or of greatest value to them. It was explained that the map would be a work in progress and brought back at key points in the process to provide as many stakeholders as possible the opportunity to provide input.

With the idea that the SJCHCNPA community will continue to work on their asset identification exercise, a working map is provided in Appendix A. Several assets identified through the planning process are mapped as a starting point or guide. Other assets mentioned at community workshops are provided below in a bulleted list. While the list is not by any means comprehensive or in any priority order, it does reflect input given by SJCHCNPA workshop participants.



- St. John Park
- Nelson Field
- Reagan High School
- University of Texas Bus Routes
- Webb Middle School
- U.S. Post Office
- Bennett Street (a good neighborhood street)
- College Height Church
- Vacant land @ McKie (lots of potential)
- Clifton Career Center
- Old Town (the integrity of the community and the quiet streets, residents would like to keep this in tact.)
- St. John Community Center (multi-use facility)
- Buttermilk Green Belt
- Trail opportunity at US HWY 183 and Buttermilk Creek near the intersection of Bennett and US HWY 183 frontage
- History of the St. John Neighborhood
- Black's Memorial Missionary Baptist Church

## PLANNING PROCESS

### INTRODUCTION

The neighborhood planning process in the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SJCHCNPA) followed the steps of the City of Austin's neighborhood planning process, as outlined in Figure 2. Modifications to the process occurred in certain instances and were agreed upon by the SJCHCNPA stakeholders. For example, based on SJCHCNPA stakeholder input, the topic of housing (primarily affordable housing) was added to the Neighborhood Character element of the planning process.

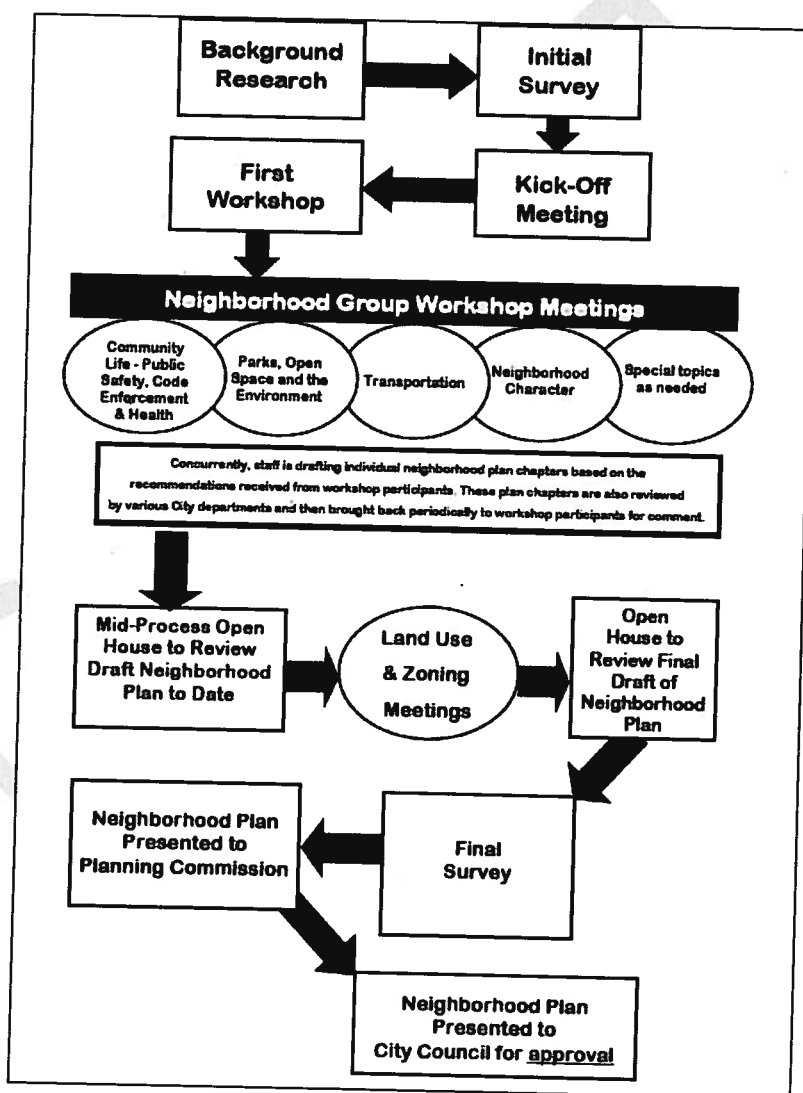


Figure 2. How to Develop a Neighborhood Plan

Background research and field work began in preparation of the SJCHCNPA planning process during the winter of 2008 and concluded with two "meet and

greet" opportunities in January and February 2009. The public planning process for the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan officially began with a Kickoff workshop held at J.J. Pickle Elementary School on February 28, 2009. A detailed meeting summary for the entire planning process can be found in Appendix C.

Neighborhood planning staff and community stakeholders made a concerted effort before and during the planning process to encourage the participation of a diverse group of stakeholders, including homeowners, renters, and business and property owners. To further explain staff outreach efforts, a section entitled *Outreach and Participation* is presented, below. Additionally, *Decision Making* is given special attention in a dedicated section since the consensus decision making model utilized shaped many outcomes of community discussions and dialogues.

The primary objectives of the neighborhood planning process are to:

- Involve as many stakeholders, and as diverse a group of stakeholders (e.g., homeowners, renters, property owners, business people etc.) as possible in the planning process.
- Encourage equal participation by stakeholders from all parts of the planning area at neighborhood meetings and community workshops.
- Establish and maintain communication with City departments and other agencies when planning community workshops, drafting recommendations, and designing implementation strategies.
- Establish consensus among neighborhood plan stakeholders on plan objectives and recommendations.
- Create goals, objectives, and recommendations that, when implemented, will improve the overall quality of life for residents.

## **OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION**

For the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan, the staff planning team utilized a two-pronged approach to outreach. First, standard outreach methods were employed. Second, tailored methods were designed to reach targeted areas or populations of particular interest and/or concern to the SJCHCNPA stakeholders. A chart that details both standard and special outreach methods utilized in the planning process is provided as Appendix D.



SJCHCNPA stakeholders at a workshop.

Standard outreach methods administered throughout the SJCHCNPA planning process included, but were not limited to:

- For the planning process Kickoff, Mid-process Open House and Final Open House, large-scale mailers were conducted. Approximately 7,500 pieces were mailed to utility account holders and property owners (on file with Travis Central Appraisal District – TCAD) in the planning area.
- Informational flyers regarding monthly workshops and meetings were mailed to residents signed up on the SJCH interest list. The interest list is a collection of all those who took an interest in the SJCHCNPA planning process and provided their contact information via an online form or at a community workshop so that they could receive meeting notices.
- Meeting flyers, reminders and agendas were e-mailed frequently to the SJCHCNPA interest list.
- Flyers were posted in public places such as the recreation center, schools, libraries and health clinics.
- Meeting flyers were e-mailed on a monthly basis to leaders of neighborhood associations and homeowner associations. Beyond informing these leaders, the neighborhood groups assisted with disseminating information to their respective communities.

In response to SJCHCNPA stakeholder input received early on in the planning process, tailored outreach methods were designed to reach out to both youth and older adult populations. For example, staff visited the Virginia Brown Recreation Center's Senior Lunch program and engaged older adults in the planning process via information sharing and discussions.



Stakeholders look over draft recommendations at a SJCHCNPA workshop.

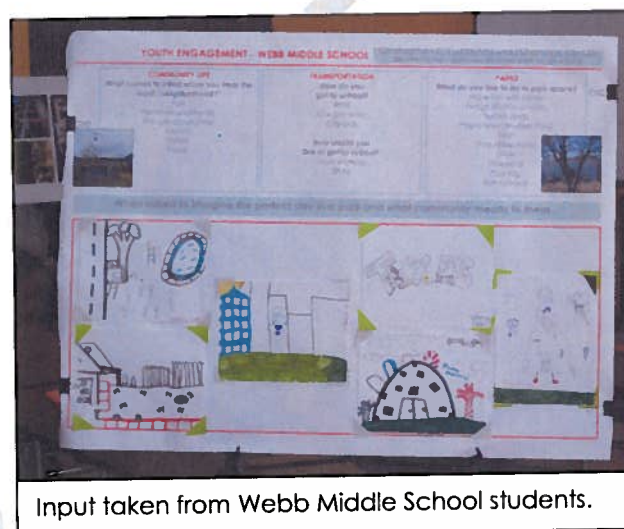
An additional example of tailored outreach focused on the SJCHCNPA youth population. Two workshops were designed to engage the students at Reagan High School and Webb Middle School. An example of the input collected at



Webb Middle School is shown in the following photo. Meeting with the students directly was beneficial to gather their thoughts and input and to provide them with a forum to express their desires for the future of the SJCHCNPA community.

Due to the high number of Spanish speaking residents in the SJCHCNPA community, special effort was made to translate materials and provide live translation at the SJCHCNPA monthly community workshops. Additional efforts were made to engage the Spanish speaking population by visiting the Pickle Parent Coffees and neighborhood churches with Spanish speaking congregations.

Generally, SJCHCNPA neighborhood planning workshop days, times, and locations were chosen to accommodate stakeholders' schedules. Locations were also vetted through the community leaders and typically held at locations accessible to both the St. John and Coronado Hills communities. Workshops were held at the Virginia Brown Recreation Center, J.J. Pickle Elementary School or the Austin Fire Fighters Association, Local, 975.



Input taken from Webb Middle School students.

Despite these outreach efforts, participation in the neighborhood planning process was limited. It is the desire of both planning staff and SJCHCNPA stakeholders that over time and during the implementation of the plan that more community members will engage in SJCHCNPA neighborhood affairs.

### **DECISION MAKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROCESS**

Throughout the SJCHCNPA neighborhood planning process, neighborhood stakeholders were asked and expected to make group decisions on a variety of planning issues and topics. To ensure decisions were equitable and made in a transparent fashion, a group consensus-based decision making model was utilized. This model of decision making also has the advantage of establishing community support and buy-in for decisions as they are made. When the group needed to make a decision at a workshop, those participants present were asked if they could support and live with the suggested outcomes. On the rare occasion when large group consensus could not be reached, the group voted on items to break the deadlock; majority vote determined the final outcome.

The consensus-based decision making approach was explained at the introduction section of community workshops where relevant. SJCHCNPA

stakeholders were also informed that recommendations from the community workshops would inform the content of their community plan and would be presented to Planning Commission and City Council at plan adoption. This information was provided to create awareness that City Council has the final say in making decisions on the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan.

### **COORDINATION WITH OTHER CITY OF AUSTIN DEPARTMENTS AND OUTSIDE AGENCIES**

Implementation of many of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan recommendations falls under the purview of other City of Austin departments (such as Parks & Recreation, Public Works, etc.) as well as outside agencies such as Capital Metro. Neighborhood planning staff invited these representatives to attend SJCHCNPA community workshops where appropriate. Participating in these workshops allowed representatives to speak directly with SJCHCNPA stakeholders and initiate connections important to relationship building in the neighborhood planning process.

Outside representatives and City Staff also worked individually with neighborhood planning staff to review draft plan recommendations. They offered comments and ideas for the content and wording of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan recommendations to ensure the language clearly describes stakeholders' desired projects and improvements. Their comments also helped support the practicality and feasibility of integrating SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan recommendations into the departments' work programs. The input and support of these agency representatives is reflected in this plan document. Upon completion, a draft of the plan was presented to the City's "Single Point of Contact" (SPOC) committee, whose members consist of representatives from various city departments. The committee members also offered valuable insight on the general content and recommendations in the plan.

It is the goal of PDRD staff that this substantial review will facilitate the successful implementation of plan recommendations, given adequate funding and continued community support.

## COMMUNITY LIFE

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following information strives to outline a comprehensive approach to maintaining and/or improving the quality of life in the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SJCHCNPA). The information is reflective of the St. John/Coronado Hill's stakeholder input, that is, their ideas, thoughts, and comments, as related to the topic of Community Life.

### **PURPOSE**

The Community Life goals, objectives and recommendations articulate a vision for enhancing the qualities that directly effect everyday life in SJCHCNPA. When discussing community life with the SJCHCNPA participants, several themes began to quickly emerge: neighborhood schools, community beautification, code compliance, and crime prevention/public safety. Special attention to these subject areas helps shape the community's approach to envisioning a better standard of living in SJCHCNPA.

Since the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan is long-range and comprehensive in its scope, residents were encouraged to think past the present day and express their ideas for the future. Likewise, residents were aware that the planning process requires attention to balancing varied interests and entails compromise. Ultimately it is hoped that this document supports the direction of all those involved in the neighborhood planning process.

### **WHAT INFORMS THIS CHAPTER?**

To support the development of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan, community workshops were held about once a month to discuss topics and issues relevant to everyday life in SJCHCNPA. The organized neighborhood planning workshops typically provided an educational component (including presentations by guest subject matter experts) as well as group exercises designed to engage all participants in further expressing their vision for the future of their community. The input gathered at these workshops constitutes this plan chapter. The following list provides a detailed outline of the specific workshops held, the content discussed at the workshop and the guest subject matter experts that shared their ideas and thoughts with the SJCHCNPA stakeholders.

- **Schools and Community Enhancements/Beautification (June 23, 2009)**

Participants discussed neighborhood schools and the community's relationship with AISD. Community enhancements and beautification were discussed and a mapping exercise with Keep Austin Beautiful gave participants and opportunity to identify desired community enhancements.

**Guest speakers:** Claudia Kramer-Santamaria, Supervisor of Parent Programs for the Austin Independent School District, (512-414-3196)

[Claudia.santamaria@austinisd.org](mailto:Claudia.santamaria@austinisd.org); Joe Silva, Assistant Director of Planning



Services (512-414-3632) [jgsilva@austinisd.org](mailto:jgsilva@austinisd.org) and Alanna Reed, Events Manager, Keep Austin Beautiful (512-391-0622).

- **Code Enforcement Workshop (July 15, 2009)**

The City of Austin's Code Compliance Department led a presentation and discussion session tailored to the SJCHCNPA community. Participants discussed ideas to develop educational materials regarding code compliance for the community as well as solutions for enhancing the community.

**Guest speaker:** Lyle Adair, former Environmental Compliance Associate, City of Austin, Code Compliance, (512.974.9246) [lyle.adair@austintexas.gov](mailto:lyle.adair@austintexas.gov)



- **Crime and Public Safety Workshop (August 5, 2009)**

Officer Diaz of Austin Police Department (APD) presented and discussed the APD structure and responsibilities. Mario Renteria gave a presentation and led a discussion on Crime Prevention and Public Safety. The interactive mapping activity included participants identifying and discussing areas where they feel safe and unsafe and matching solutions to address safety issues in these areas.

**Guest speakers:** Officer Diaz, Senior Police Officer Austin Police Department, (512-974-5918) [Santiago.diaz@austintexas.gov](mailto:Santiago.diaz@austintexas.gov); Mario Renteria, Community Liaison Austin Police Department (512-974-4735) [Mario.renteria@austintexas.gov](mailto:Mario.renteria@austintexas.gov)



- **Brainstorming Community Life, Code Enforcement and Public Safety Workshop (September 17, 2009)**

Participants worked to write draft goals, objectives and recommendations for the Community Life chapter of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan.

### **HOW THE CHAPTER IS ORGANIZED**

This chapter is organized by subject area to ensure adequate attention is given to each element and to facilitate ease of reading and implementing stated objectives and recommendations. Where necessary, call out boxes are provided to further detail or describe a point of interest or significance. The Community Life chapter sections are as follows:

- Goal
- Community Life (General)
- Schools
- History
- Community Beautification
- Code Compliance
- Crime Prevention and Public Safety

### **COMMUNITY LIFE GOAL**

- **Promote a community of involved citizens that strives to achieve a safe, healthy, well-maintained and livable neighborhood for all.**



## **COMMUNITY LIFE (GENERAL)**

Community is a cornerstone of life in SJCHCNPA. As an all-encompassing element, the community life section is comprehensive in nature and aims to address broader issues and opportunities affecting the quality of life in SJCHCNPA. The following objectives and recommendations are designed to encourage the community to take a lead role in improving and sustaining the qualities and characteristics deemed important to defining and shaping everyday life in SJCHCNPA.



Residents show community pride in St. John NPA.

**Implementation Note:** Implementation of recommendations in this section will be carried out by the neighborhood plan contact teams, neighborhood associations in the area, residents, and other community groups.

### ***Objective C.1: Strengthen community identity by boosting civic pride, sense of community and community involvement.***

**Recommendation 1:** Organize more community events throughout the year (i.e. neighborhood cleanups, block parties, National Night Out, seasonal events, Unity walk, and SJCHCNPA fun runs).

**Recommendation 2:** Complete the community asset mapping exercise that was initiated during the neighborhood planning process.

**Recommendation 3:** Increase awareness of community assets by promoting them in the community (for example, highlight an asset a month in neighborhood association newsletters).

**Recommendation 4:** Hold a community "celebration day" designed to respect the past, recognize the present and embrace the future.

**Recommendation 5:** Organize community athletic activities (i.e. soccer; also to emphasize youth involvement in these activities.)

**Recommendation 6:** Identify block leaders who welcome new neighbors, serve as a communication link to neighborhood associations, plan block activities and rally the block to participate in community events.

### ***Objective C.2: Acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the area and foster greater communication among area stakeholders.***

**Recommendation 7:** Explore ways to increase communication between English speaking and non-English speaking stakeholders.

**Recommendation 8:** In an effort to increase communication, offer cultural/language classes for free at both local and regional venues.

**Recommendation 9:** Organize community events (throughout the year) designed to celebrate community diversity.

**Recommendation 10:** SJCHCNPA stakeholders should investigate opportunities to open lines of communication with non-English speaking residents through education and community engagement.

**Objective C.3: Strengthen the neighborhood's capacity to improve community life.**

**Recommendation 11:** Develop a list of all organizations currently established and working in SJCHCNPA to address community issues (consider building upon the resource matrix developed during the neighborhood planning process).

**Recommendation 12:** Encourage coordination and collaboration between St. John & Coronado Hill's neighborhood associations and other organizations/groups in the area (including the Villas and Old Town).

**Recommendation 13:** Create a community task force designed to address issues of mutual interest and concern.

**Recommendation 14:** Identify community resources already in place to facilitate neighborhood initiatives and increase awareness (for example, neighborhood newsletters, neighborhood association meetings, etc.)

**Recommendation 15:** Develop community listservs to increase communication between neighbors.

**Recommendation 16:** Place neighborhood association newsletters on-line to increase the sharing of information between neighbors.

## SCHOOLS

Located in the planning area, J.J. Pickle Elementary, Webb Middle and Reagan High are identified as the SJCHCNPA neighborhood schools. Through the neighborhood planning process, the SJCHCNPA participants expressed concerns with neighborhood schools and prioritized them as an important asset to their community. As such, a portion of a community life workshop was



J.J. Pickle Elementary School, in the St. John NPA.

dedicated to the topic of neighborhood schools, providing the SJCHCNPA residents an opportunity to address their concerns and discuss possible solutions with representatives from AISD. Data related to academic standings, capacity and annual enrollment is provided as Appendix E.

**Implementation Note:** Neighborhood schools fall under the jurisdiction of the Austin Independent School District (AISD). As such, the City of Austin does not have authority to implement the following recommendations. Keeping jurisdictional realities in mind, the recommendations are designed to encourage the community to take a leadership role in organizing and empowering themselves to reach their stated objectives.

**Objective C.4: Promote better communication to strengthen relations between the schools and the community.**

**Recommendation 17:**

Continue to engage AISD in community discussions, where practicable, to further develop community connections.

**Recommendation 18:**

Encourage social interactions between the neighborhood schools and the community (for example, community dinners; Friday morning coffees; etc.)

**Recommendation 19:** Collaborate with neighborhood schools to hold a forum in which parents, students, community members, and school faculty can discuss ways to improve relationships between students of different cultures and ethnicities.

**Recommendation 20:** Investigate opportunities to establish working relationships between school faculty, students and residents/neighbors through community beautification projects (for example, plantings at Nelson Field and Adopt-a-Stream at Buttermilk Creek behind Pickle Elementary).

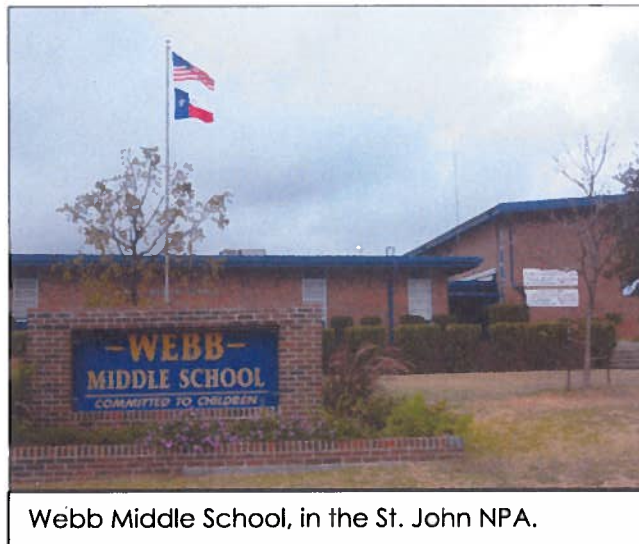
**Recommendation 21:** Maximize the opportunities available to engage with AISD through the Campus Advisory Councils (CAC). Benefit from the CAC's requirement to include a community member on the council that does not have a child in the schools.

**Recommendation 22:** Continue to engage and collaborate with AISD's Parent Services to address concerns such as safety and/or other community issues:

- Parent Support Specialists – act as liaisons between community and the school.
- Parent Support Coordinators – coordinators work at the District level to connect the local campuses and AISD district services/supports.

**Recommendation 23:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with the AISD Superintendent to enhance/improve communication (for example, as a guest speaker at neighborhood meeting).

**Recommendation 24:** Involve school principals, Campus Advisory Council (CAC) members, Parent Support Specialists and Parent Support Coordinators in neighborhood association meetings and community activities. Consider holding



Webb Middle School, in the St. John NPA.



some neighborhood association meetings at school campuses to increase participation from parents and faculty members.

**Recommendation 25:** Organize events with AISD (to be held throughout the year), such as a neighborhood barbeque cook-off.

**Objective C.5: Strengthen the image of the neighborhood schools and foster positive identity formation.**

**Recommendation 26:**

Determine the neighborhood schools' positive qualities and work to promote these qualities community wide.

**Recommendation 27:** Explore opportunities for residents/neighbors to partner with Partners in Hope – the organization that serves the Webb Middle School Family Resource Center.

**Recommendation 28:** Continue to support and strengthen the St. John Community School Alliance as its primary goal is to

foster positive community engagement and partnerships between the community and neighborhood schools.

**Recommendation 29:** Continue to support and strengthen the Webb Middle School Family Resource Center and promote it as a successful model for other neighborhood schools to implement.

**Recommendation 30:** Hold events in the community to build school pride and school spirit (community dinners, neighborhood walks, etc.).

**Recommendation 31:** Support efforts such as the "5<sup>th</sup> Grade promotional" to motivate youth to prioritize their education.

**Recommendation 32:** Facilitate positive social interactions between community members and the schools (for example, build on the "seniors visit classrooms for a day" concept).

**Recommendation 33:** Develop a history of the community (including community involvement efforts) and teach this history in the neighborhood schools.

**Recommendation 34:** Support the Oral History project being organized by the St. John Library to engage Pickle students in continuing the history of the community.

**Recommendation 35:** Encourage community members to volunteer as mentors or tutors.

**Recommendation 36:** Request that school principals invite all neighbors to participate in school activities such as Back-to-School Night or Neighborhood Walks.



Reagan High School, in the Coronado Hills NPA.

## **Austin Independent School District (AISD) Neighborhood Schools Community Resources and Programs**

### **Neighborhood Schools & Administrators (2011-12 school year)**

J.J. Pickle Elementary School – Administrator, Joel De La Garza

Webb Middle School – Administrator, Reynaldo Garcia

Reagan High School – Administrator, Anabel Garza

### **Campus Advisory Council (CAC)**

According to the AISD CAC web page

(<http://www.austin.isd.tenet.edu/inside/cac/index.phtml?lang=es>), the CAC is a council comprised of parents, students, business and community representatives, teachers, principals, and other campus staff. The mission of CACs is to promote excellence in education for all students through broad-based representation. CACs provide valuable input to principals, who ultimately have decision-making responsibility for their campuses.

The formation of CACs is required by state law (Texas Education Code, §11.251). Specific functions of CACs include providing review and comment on: Campus Educational Program, Campus Performance, Campus Improvement Plan, Campus Staff Development Plan, Campus-Level Waiver Requests to the State and the Campus Budget. For more information about membership, CAC meeting and membership criteria and the CAC bylaws, visit the CAC web page – additional resources section. (<http://www.austin.isd.tenet.edu/inside/cac/resources.phtml>)

**AISD Parent Support Office** (the following information has been extracted from the AISD website:

[http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent\\_involvement/](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent_involvement/)

The Austin Independent School District's Parent Support Office (formerly the Family Resource Center) works to develop opportunities for parents and families to become more involved in the education of their children. They focus on a wide range of initiatives designed to connect parents and communities with schools. Some of their efforts include, developing training and support to Parent Support Specialists, providing workshops to parents and families and supporting the development of effective PTAs (see web page for specific outline of the Parent Support office work program).

**Parent Support Specialists** – *act as liaisons between the school and the community*

According to the AISD web page

([http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent\\_involvement/specialists.phtml](http://www.austinisd.org/academics/parentsinfo/parent_involvement/specialists.phtml)), Parent Support Specialists serve as parents' and families' connections to their children's schools. They work to provide parent workshops, leadership development and referrals to area resources for our school families.

**Parent Support Coordinators** – work to connect the schools/campuses to district level resources

Develop and maintain links between schools (for example, a Reagan and the elementary schools and middle schools that feed into Reagan); within schools district-wide; and with schools and District/community resources.

**St. John Community Alliance** (the following information has been extracted from the St. John Community Alliance web site: <http://www.sjcsa.org/>)

St. John Community-School Alliance, a liaison between the four-school vertical team (Brown ES, Pickle ES, Webb MS and Reagan HS) and community collaborators is working to provide additional services at those schools. This alliance includes key school contacts, after-school providers, health & social service

**Recommendation 37:** Continue to support and strengthen the neighborhood schools, Pickle, Webb and Reagan in an effort to realize marked improvement in each school.

**Recommendation 38:** Explore the possibility of a scholarship fund for students in schools (Kindergarten – 12<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Recommendation 39:** Encourage students to volunteer in the community.

**Recommendation 40:** Determine the feasibility of improved student performance through strengthened Parent Teacher Associations.

## **HISTORY**

SJCHCNPA's rich history emerged as an important element of the SJCHCNPA community life discussion (for a detailed of the St. John Neighborhood, see Appendix B). Interest in this topic supports an approach to broaden the community's understanding of its colorful past as it looks forward to shape the future. As such, the following objectives and recommendations articulate the community's desire to protect and promote the area's historical assets.

**Implementation Note:** Implementation of recommendations in this section will be carried out by the neighborhood plan contact teams, neighborhood associations in the area, residents, and other community groups.

**Objective C.6: Increase awareness and instill a sense of pride among SJCHCNPA community members by documenting and celebrating the community's history.**

**Recommendation 41:** Conduct a comprehensive historical survey to identify significant figures, landmarks and structures.

- Churches, older homes, first settlers, movers and shakers, Atkinson Road/Lane, Old windmill at Buttermilk Park, former site of St. Johns Elementary School

**Recommendation 42:** Investigate the feasibility of University of Texas partnership to conduct the comprehensive historical survey:

- UT library school; UT history department

**Recommendation 43:** Investigate the opportunities available for all members of the community to work on projects specific to historical documentation

- Map making
- Scrapbooks
- Oral histories

**Recommendation 44:** Hold a historical tour of SJCHCNPA. (SJCHCNPA may want to look to the Tejano Healthy Walking Trail as a prototype. This trail was recently developed to celebrate the history and tell the story of the historic East Cesar Chavez neighborhood.)

**Recommendation 45:** Investigate the feasibility of developing interpretive signage to effectively communicate the significance of art installations at the St. John Community Center, including the following:

- Highlight the shadow box displays (including area behind the gym)
- Address markers found on school grounds
- Install pictures illustrating the community's "past to present"

**Recommendation 46:** Promote the oral history project organized by the St. John Library.

**Recommendation 47:** Feature history articles in the neighborhood newsletters.



**Recommendation 48:** Find a permanent/fixed location or source for SJCHCNPA historical information (documents, photos, DVDs, etc.):

- Investigate options to store info at the Austin History Center, Bob Bullock, St. John Library.
- Provide on-line access to the historical information.

**Recommendation 49:** Start a May-Day celebration centered on the history of the SJCHCNPA community.

**Recommendation 50:** Promote the historical St. John bowl permanently stored at the AK Black health center.

## **COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION**

When visioning for the future, SJCHCNPA participants expressed their desire to live, work and play in a clean and well-maintained community. In order to determine approaches designed to enhance the aesthetics (the visual environment and physical appearance) of the SJCHCNPA community, the participants engaged in a discussion and mapping activity focused on identification of community beautification opportunities. Specifically, community members learned about the diverse resources provided by Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB), a non-profit organization dedicated toward helping communities in Austin achieve their community beautification and environmental goals.

Of particular importance to note is that the physical appearance and well-being of private properties (i.e. commercial and residential structures) are under the purview of the Code Compliance Department of Austin Resource Recovery. As such, the issues and concerns specifically related to private properties are included in the section dedicated to Code Compliance.

**Implementation Note:** Implementation of recommendations in this section will be carried out by the neighborhood plan contact teams, neighborhood associations in the area, residents, and other community groups in collaboration and assistance provided by Keep Austin Beautiful (KAB) organization.

**Objective C.7: Promote a comprehensive, coordinated approach to improving the community's appearance.**

**Recommendation 51:** Identify all community and city organizations available to support community beautification (for example, Keep Austin Beautiful, Code Compliance, etc.).

**Recommendation 52:** Investigate the feasibility for the community to form a 'Green Team' to plan and conduct community clean-ups and green-ups throughout the community to enhance and beautify the planning area.

**Recommendation 53:** Utilize the information gathered through the planning process to take action and address priority beautification needs.

**Recommendation 54:** Continue to assess community beautification needs and update priority list to ensure issues are being addressed.

**Recommendation 55:** Educate community on the importance and benefits of community beautification and opportunities to get involved.

**Objective C.8: Enhance and improve the physical appearance of streets/ corridors and creeks/parks**

**Recommendation 56:** Conduct ongoing neighborhood clean-ups with special attention given to the following areas identified as top priority issue areas:

**56A.** Buttermilk Creek

**56B.** East St. Johns Avenue

**56C.** Grand Canyon Drive

**Recommendation 57:** Explore opportunities to enhance areas identified as top priority with native plantings, trees and/or other green features:

**57A.** Buttermilk Creek

**57B.** Nelson Field

**57C.** St. John Park

**57D.** St. Johns Avenue

**57E.** Atkinson Road

**57F.** Frontage of IH 35

**57G.** Frontage of US HWY 290

**57H.** Frontage of US HWY 183

**57I.** Berkman Drive

**57J.** Creekside Drive

**57K.** Coronado Hills Drive

**Recommendation 58:** Explore opportunities to make existing streets more welcoming by creating gateways at the following locations:

**58A.** E St. John/Cameron Road intersection

**58B.** E St. John/IH 35 Frontage

**58C.** Intersection of Cameron Road and US HWY 290 underpass

**58D.** Intersection of Cameron/McKie Drive

**58E.** Intersection of Cameron Road and Berkman Drive

**58F.** Intersection of Cameron Road and US HWY 183; E Anderson Service road

**Recommendation 59:** Establish contact with the Graffiti Abatement program.

- Call 311 for graffiti removal; invite spokesperson to present at a neighborhood association meeting.

**Recommendation 60:** Organize periodic cleanups of all the creeks, drainage areas, and highly visible right-of-ways in the planning area, working with:

- City of Austin Watershed Protection
- City of Austin Code Compliance Department
- Keep Austin Beautiful (ex. KAB's tool lending program)

**Recommendation 61:** Contact the City of Austin Street and Bridge Division of the Department of Public Works in order to clean-up and properly maintain/repair existing sidewalks.

**Recommendation 62:** Call 311 to initiate communication with Public Works Department to install better street signage (for example, legible street signs.)

## **CODE COMPLIANCE**

At neighborhood planning process workshops, community members identified the topic of code compliance as an integral part of attaining a better standard of living in SJCHCNPA. The Code Compliance Department of Austin Resource Recovery is the primary body charged with attaining compliance with City



codes regarding land use regulations, and maintenance of structures and premises. Their primary goal is to achieve a better quality of life for Austin residents. The following objectives and recommendations were formulated at the code compliance workshop where the North Area Code Compliance Officer presented information pro-actively mitigating code violations in the SJCHCNPA.

**Implementation Note:** Broadly speaking, implementation of the recommendations in this section will be carried out by the Code Compliance Department of Austin Resource Recovery, neighborhood plan contact teams, neighborhood associations in the area, residents, and other community groups.

***Objective C.9: Improve the appearance of private properties within St. John and Coronado Hills.***

**Recommendation 63:** Encourage basic up-keep of both residential and commercial properties.

- Neighborhood residents to define what "basic up-keep" means

**Recommendation 64:** Promote proper maintenance of front yards on residential properties.

- Yard of the month
- Garden Club

**Recommendation 65:** Encourage residential and commercial property owners to improve the condition of their buildings.

**Recommendation 66:** Develop an approach to help members of the community requiring assistance to maintain their residential property and/or yard.

**Recommendation 67:** Remove graffiti from existing buildings.

**Recommendation 68:** Organize periodic neighborhood-wide clean-ups in collaboration with City of Austin Code Compliance Department. (Ex. Partnerships and Empowerment Projects – P.E.P)

**Recommendation 69:** Educate residents on the proper way to rid bulk trash and hazardous waste.

***Objective C.10: Pro-actively address code issues in the community by supporting progressive programs and educating residents regarding different types of code violations.***

**Recommendation 70:** Address existing code compliance issues in SJCHCNPA.

**PLANNING AREA-WIDE CONCERNS:**

- 70A.** Mitigate front yard parking issues that are prevalent planning area-wide.
- 70B.** Enforce occupancy requirements detailed in the code regarding maximum number of families residing in a residential structure.

**SPECIFIC LOCATIONS OF CONCERN:**

- 70C.** Blessing Avenue from Booker Avenue to Wilks Avenue – *Poorly maintained properties.*
- 70D.** Apartment complexes in the area – *Poorly maintained properties and rubbish.*
- 70E.** East side of Cameron Road and just across the street from Wild Wood Apartments – *Housing is in poor condition.*

**70F.** Area bounded by St. Johns Avenue, Delmar Avenue, IH 35 and Twin Crest Drive – *Poorly maintained properties, vehicle issues, junk and rubbish.*

**70G.** East side of Cameron Road and along Reagan Hill Drive – *unauthorized activities such as flea markets and food vendors.*

**Recommendation 71:** Strengthen the community's knowledge regarding code issues by developing and distributing a code resource guide in the community (see call-out box).

**Recommendation 72:** Support the development and implementation of the Rental Registration Program to reduce code violations at apartment complexes and rental housing in the area.

**Recommendation 73:** Encourage neighborhood associations to enforce rules via form letters to address code violations in the area.

**Recommendation 74:** Community members can explore the possibility of creating a complaint list for residents to track code violations in their neighborhoods.

**Recommendation 75:** Identify areas of the City of Austin Code that the community believes are too weak to address the issues at hand and coordinate with Code Compliance Department to strengthen the Code.

**Recommendation 76:** Continue to engage Code Compliance Officers at the neighborhood association meetings.

**Recommendation 77:** Explore the possibility of developing an on-line (could also be over the phone) tool where community members can type in their zip code and/or address and see what code violations have been reported in the vicinity.

**Objective C.11: Build a stronger communication network within SJCHCNPA and with the City of Austin Code Compliance Department.**

**Recommendation 78:** Organize block parties to create a presence on the street and get to know your neighbors.

**Recommendation 79:** Create a welcoming committee to welcome new residents to the neighborhood.

**Recommendation 80:** Work with City of Austin to explore possibility of Code Compliance pro-actively patrolling the neighborhood.

**Recommendation 81:** Clarify responsibilities of a Code Compliance officer and an Austin Police Department officer.

**Recommendation 82:** Explore the possibility of a process where Code Compliance can follow-up on chronic code violations.

**Recommendation 83:** Build on the positive momentum of the Code Compliance initiative, Partnerships and Empowerment Project (P.E.P.), to clean-up portions of St. John neighborhood.

## What is a Code Resource Guide?

A code resource guide is an educational guide that contains information on common code violations, detailed information needed when calling 311 and a worksheet to help track the reported violations. It also provides information regarding the process that takes place after a complaint has been filed with the Code Compliance Division of the City of Austin.

At the Code Compliance workshop, St. John/Coronado Hills residents participated in a brainstorming exercise about developing a code resource guide for their community. The following notes are just a few thoughts captured at the workshop.

### Types of information participants would like to see in their code resource guide:

- Property negligence
- Junk cars
- Improving homes in poor condition
- Citizens on patrol program
- Overcrowded dwellings
- Absentee landlord

### Identified first steps to creating the SJCH code resource guide:

- Advertise meetings regarding the development of a resource guide in the neighborhood association newsletters.
- Encourage residents to attend neighborhood association meetings in order to collect questions and information pertinent to the resource guide.

During the Neighborhood Planning process, some of the residents volunteered their time to develop the SJCH code resource guide. Once completed, this resource guide will be available at the Virginia Brown Recreation Center library and other key locations within the neighborhood. It will also be advertised and promoted in the neighborhood association newsletters.

## CRIME PREVENTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

At the forefront of promoting a safe community is abating crime. While it was determined that the current crime hot spots in the SJCHCNPA community are somewhat "moving targets," the issues or types of crimes are relatively consistent. This being the case, the goal of mitigating crime focused on highlighting the types of crimes pervasive in the SJCHCNPA community, developing solutions to deter such crimes and increasing overall awareness of personal safety. Crime data statistics (2000 – 2010) are provided for the St. John NPA and the Coronado Hills NPA as Appendix F.

The Austin Police Department's (APD) North East District Officer and an APD community liaison collaborated with the community to provide information regarding current crime trends and crime prevention strategies. The outcome of the crime prevention and public safety workshop discussion and mapping exercise are detailed in the following text.

**Implementation Note:** Implementation of recommendations in this section offer possibilities for collaboration between key community groups (neighborhood plan contact teams, neighborhood associations in the area, etc.) and APD in order to address community's concerns in a pro-active manner.

**Objective C.12: Maintain a safe environment by improving neighbors' capacity to prevent crime.**

**Recommendation 84:** Focus on crime prevention in the following SJHCNPA locations.

- 84A. St. John's Avenue from IH 35 to Cameron Road
- 84B. Cameron Road at Coronado Hills Drive
- 84C. Grand Canyon Dr from Atkinson Road to Fairbanks
- 84D. Blessing at Booker
- 84E. Bethune Avenue from St. John's Avenue to Delmar Avenue
- 84F. Bethune Avenue at Atkinson Road
- 84G. Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt (behind JJ Pickle Elementary School)
- 84H. McKee Drive
- 84I. Blessing Avenue from Wheatley Avenue to US HWY 183
- 84J. Area bounded by St. Johns Avenue, Delmar Avenue, IH 35 and Twin Crest Drive
- 84K. Frontage road to US HWY 183 – East Anderson Lane from Carver and Blessing
- 84L. IH 35 and St. John's Avenue (Burger King)
- 84M. Creekside Drive
- 84N. Vacant property at US HWY 290 and US HWY 183

**Recommendation 85:** Organize a neighborhood watch group.

**Recommendation 86:** Organize Citizens on Patrol group, properly trained through the APD's training program, to patrol their neighborhood streets.

**Recommendation 87:** Citizen on Patrol group should identify areas of concern and report criminal activity to APD.

**Recommendation 88:** Work with APD to create a crime prevention program that would provide security cameras around the neighborhood.

**Recommendation 89:** Incorporate design elements in the built environment to deter crime (ex. more lighting).

**Recommendation 90:** Increase collaboration between APD and AISD police.

**Recommendation 91:** Invite Community Liaison and District Representative from APD to present crime prevention information at neighborhood association meetings.

**Recommendation 92:** Educate community on crime prevention strategies by including information in neighborhood association newsletters, etc.

**Recommendation 93:** Practice personal safety tips provided by APD and listed in the blue information box entitled, "Personal Safety Tips."

**Objective C.13: Build and maintain a strong communication network within SJHCNPA and with the APD.**

### Personal Safety Tips

(Presented at the crime and public safety workshop)

- Be aware of what is happening around you.
- You have to see danger to avoid it.
- Trust your instincts – if something feels wrong to you, then it is wrong.
- Don't be too trusting. It is easy to get complacent (most people are friendly) but be careful. A little paranoia can be a good thing.
- Listen – If you hear someone approaching you from behind, look around.

**Recommendation 94:** Organize a National Night Out throughout the neighborhood streets.

**Recommendation 95:** Work with the APD liaison to increase patrols in the neighborhood (including more patrol presence, especially at the St. John branch library).

**Recommendation 96:** Distribute the APD Resource Guide to increase community awareness of available crime prevention resources.

**Recommendation 97:** Improve outreach efforts to better inform non-English speaking community members about neighborhood crime activity:

- Email list-serves
- Newsletters
- Community Web sites
- Flyers in the community (SJ Community Center, neighborhood churches, apartment complexes, health center, etc.)

**Recommendation 98:** Ensure all community members have current APD District Representative contact information (phone number & email address).

**Recommendation 99:** Continue to include APD District Reps in neighborhood association meetings to educate residents on current crime activities.

**Recommendation 100:** Contact the Auto Theft division of APD to coordinate and host and auto-theft registration day.

**Recommendation 101:** Attend APD Commander Forums.

**Objective C.14: Incorporate design elements in the built environment to deter crime.**

**Recommendation 102:** Investigate the feasibility of applying Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

**Objective C.15: Reduce the incidence of speeding throughout the community.**

**Recommendation 103:** Report to APD on an ongoing basis corridors or streets where speeding is prevalent.

**Recommendation 104:** Request radar speed-display electronic signage or speed cameras from the APD.

**Recommendation 105:** Explore opportunities to make yard signs designed to encourage slower speeds in the neighborhood (ensure these signs are not posted in designated Right-of-Way).



## What is Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)?

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an urban planning tool used to design a safe community. The designs incorporate the built environment and land use characteristics to deter criminal activities and behaviors while providing the ability to have "eyes on the street."

CPTED consists of four principles to help reduce the incidence of crime in an area. These principles are:

- 1) Territoriality:** defining the ownership of a particular space (e.g., public vs. private space). Territorial control prevents the use of a space by unauthorized users.
- 2) Access Control:** denial of access to specific crime targets by minimizing uncontrolled movement within a specific area.
- 3) Natural Surveillance:** the ability to easily observe all users of a defined space, including potential criminals.
- 4) Maintenance and Management:** effective upkeep of those items that support the intended purpose and use of specific spaces (e.g., lighting, landscaping).

The adoption of these principles does not necessarily guarantee a reduction in criminal activity; however, CPTED has been successful in many communities, including Phoenix, Arizona; Sarasota, Florida; and, Toronto.

For more information regarding CPTED, consult these websites:

- [http://www.cptedsecurity.com/cpted\\_design\\_guidelines.htm](http://www.cptedsecurity.com/cpted_design_guidelines.htm)
- <http://www.cpted-watch.com>

## **PARKS, TREES, AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following information strives to outline a comprehensive approach to maintaining and/or improving the natural environment in the St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area (SJHCNPA). The information is reflective of the St. John/Coronado Hill's stakeholder input, that is, their ideas, thoughts, and comments, as related to the topic of Parks, Trees, and Environment.

### **PURPOSE**

The Parks, Trees and Environment chapter articulates the natural environment and recreational needs and desires of the St. John/Coronado Hills community. Emergent themes from the workshops include:

- Increasing parkland in Coronado Hills community
- Adding more amenities in the existing parks
- Encouraging creation of community gardens
- Protecting and enhancing the ecological assets of the community (creeks, watersheds, trees, etc.)

This chapter details specific objectives, recommendations and resources designed to help the community successfully address and achieve each of the above mentioned topics of interest.

Since the SJHCNPA Neighborhood Plan is long-range and comprehensive in its scope, residents were encouraged to think past the present day and express their ideas for the future. Likewise, residents were aware that the planning process requires attention to balancing varied interests and entails compromise. Ultimately it is hoped that this document supports the direction of all those involved in the neighborhood planning process.

### **WHAT INFORMS THIS CHAPTER?**

During the development of SJHCNPA Neighborhood Plan, three workshops were held concentrating on the natural environment of the community. Each workshop provided community members with an educational component to better understand a particular subject: parks, community gardens, trees, creeks/watersheds. To do so, subject matter experts from various City departments made presentations to the community and engaged participants in activities to define the relationship between topic areas and the community's quality of life goals. The input gathered at the workshops was synthesized and developed into formal recommendations for this chapter. The following list provides a detailed outline of specific workshops held, the content discussed at the workshop and guest subject matter experts that shared their knowledge with SJHCNPA stakeholders.

- **Parks & Community Gardens (October 20, 2009)**  
Participants learned about the City's Parks and Recreation Department's (PAR) parkland acquisition process and PAR's various funding mechanisms. They also

learned about the different entities involved in encouraging the creation of community gardens in Austin. Meeting participants engaged in a mapping activity to identify potential locations for future community gardens, parks and other recreational amenities in the community.

**Guest Speakers:** Ricardo Soliz, Division manager, City of Austin, Parks and Recreation Department. Sari Alborno, Program Director, Sustainable Food Center.

- **Trees & the Environment (November 17, 2009)**

Participants learned about the benefits of urban forests and existing tree ordinances to protect mature trees in Austin. They also gained better understanding of their watersheds and creek system. Meeting participants engaged in a mapping activity to identify locations for tree plantings within SJCHCNPA.

**Guest Speakers:** Michael Embesi, City Arborist, City of Austin, Planning & Development Review Department. Jean Drew, Program Coordinator, City of Austin, Watershed Protection Department.

- **Brainstorming Parks, Trees, & Environment Goals, Objectives and Recommendations (December 15, 2009)**

Participants reviewed input collected from various topic area workshops and made additions and/or clarifications to the draft objectives and recommendations.

#### **HOW THE CHAPTER IS ORGANIZED**

This chapter is organized by different topic areas such as parks, community gardens, trees, and watershed/creeks. Blue call out boxes provide more details regarding a specific program or offer solutions to a particular issue. Some of the recommendations include a 'staff note' to capture any concerns that residents had regarding a particular recommendation or to describe the implementation strategy for that recommendation. The Parks, Trees and Environment chapter sections are as follows:

- Goal
- Parks and Open Space
- Community Gardens
- Trees
- Watersheds, Creeks, and Environmental Concerns

#### **PARKS, TREES, AND ENVIRONMENT GOAL**

- **Increase and enhance recreational opportunities in the SJCHCNPA by acquiring new parkland, adding amenities to existing parks, creating community gardens, planting trees and protecting the ecological assets of the community.**

**Implementation Note:** Implementation of recommendations in this chapter requires collaboration between neighborhood plan contact teams (and other neighborhood groups/organizations) and different City departments. The primary implementation body for parks and open space recommendations is PARD.



Implementation of these recommendations depends on sufficient funding as well as balancing all recreational needs in the City of Austin.

The recommendations pertaining to community gardens require collaboration between community groups, Sustainable Food Center and Parks & Recreation Department. The majority of the tree recommendations focus on education and awareness to be carried out by SJCHCNPA neighborhood groups. By providing helpful contact information for various non-profit organizations and City of Austin department programs, this plan empowers willing community members to take charge of planting more trees in SJCHCNPA.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

At the parks and open space workshops, community members expressed the need for more park space and amenities to attract and positively engage all residents of the area. PARD acknowledges the need for additional parks in the SJCHCNPA based on their analysis. Therefore, the following section concentrates first on identifying amenities needed in existing parks in order to increase park usage and then focuses on identifying potential locations and amenities desired in new parks if and when funding is available.

The objectives and recommendations are based on the ideas, thoughts and solutions captured at the various workshops held in SJCHCNPA.

### **EXISTING PARKS**

#### **St. John Park**

St. John Park is located at the end of Wilks Avenue off of Bennett Avenue. The park was dedicated in 1964 and has a fill-and-draw swimming pool that closed in 2010 due to budgetary and health constraints. While the closure of the pool does eliminate a source of recreational activity in the community, the City does plan to compensate this loss by installing interactive splash pads within the SJCHCNPA. Residents present at the parks workshop were in support of PARD's plans to install splash pads in the area. Overall, St. John Park is under-utilized due to a lack of amenities and infrastructure to support outdoor activities.



St. John Park.

The location of the St. John Park is adjacent to a former Home Depot site. In 2009, the City purchased the former Home Depot with intentions to redevelop the site into a Municipal Court and an Austin Police Department substation. At several parks and transportation meetings, SJCHCNPA residents expressed concerns regarding the interface between St. John Park and the redevelopment

plans of the adjacent site. Stakeholders' concerns were addressed at a meeting where David Symthe-Macaulay, Project Manager with the Public Works Department, gave an update on the project and how the public can be involved in the redevelopment process of the site.

**Objective P.1: Improve and enhance St. John Park facilities to increase park usage.**

**Recommendation 106:** Provide a walking trail through St. John Park that can connect to other trails within the neighborhood.

**Recommendation 107:** Provide covered picnic benches and/or gazebos at St. John Park to provide shelter.

**Recommendation 108:** Install proper signage identifying St. John Park as a public space. **Note:** This recommendation has been implemented! PARD staff installed a sign the summer of 2010.

**Recommendation 109:** Plant trees at St. John Park to provide shade during the summer months. **Note:** See Adopt-A-Park program call-out box to help with maintenance and utilize TreeFolks program to acquire more trees.

**Recommendation 110:** Install more trash cans as more people start to use the St. John Park space.

**Recommendation 111:** Provide a fenced area for dogs to be off-leash at St. John Park.

**Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt**

Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt is approximately 18.7 acres in size and located along Buttermilk creek from Blessing Avenue to Bennett Avenue. Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center, St. John library and Pickle Elementary School are also located along this greenbelt. A part of the greenbelt is a shared facility during the day, as it is heavily utilized by the students of Pickle Elementary School and it is open to the public after school hours.



Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt.

The City of Austin acquired this parkland in 1981. As of year 2010, its facilities include a softball field, basketball court, a playground, picnic tables, BBQ pits and a picnic pavilion. The location of the greenbelt, its facilities and amenities truly make the greenbelt an excellent gathering place for the community.

**Objective P.2: Improve and enhance Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt facilities.**

**Recommendation 112:** Provide a volleyball court at Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt for both youth and adults in the community.

**Recommendation 113:** Install an interactive splash pad at Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt so it is centrally located between St. John and Coronado Hills. **Note:** This project is currently in the discussion phase.

**Recommendation 114:** Install more lighting as needed at the back of Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center to increase safety of Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt during evening hours.

**Recommendation 115:** Provide proper signage to make people aware of the hours when the Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt is in use by AISD students and when it is open to public. **Note:** Park supervisor will work with AISD regarding the sign due to the park being a shared facility.

**Recommendation 116:** Install more trash cans at Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt.

**Recommendation 117:** Provide proper maintenance of grass and landscaping at Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt. **Note:** See Adopt-A-Park program call-out box to learn about how community volunteers can play a pivotal role in beautifying the neighborhood parks.

**Recommendation 118:** Increase youth programs and after-school programs at the Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center to positively engage the youth.

**Recommendation 119:** Increase the use of the Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center exercise classes and update the exercise room.

#### **PARKLAND ACQUISITION – FUTURE PARKS**

A goal of PARD is that all residents live within a half mile of public green space. In order to achieve this goal, PARD uses a gap analysis tool to identify high priority areas within the City of Austin where the most residents have the least access to parks and recreational facilities. PARD can purchase a property in one of the high priority areas and create a new park when sufficient funds are available either through parkland dedication fees or bond packages. PARD staff analyzes the property based on various criteria, including but not limited to:

- Is the property developable as a park and support facilities such as restrooms, recreation center, ball fields?

### **Adopt-A-Park**

Adopt-A-Park is an Austin Parks Foundation program in response to diminishing city funds and increasing demand for amenities in existing parks. The City of Austin alone is not able to provide high level of maintenance and amenities in each and every park in the city because of a limited budget. Adopt-A-Park provides the community members an opportunity to help close this gap through a partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department. Austin Parks Foundation would help community volunteers create realistic goals for the parks in their community, connect them to necessary resources and also facilitate communication with Parks Department as needed.

A partnership would enable community volunteers to apply for grants with the Austin Parks Foundation to further beautify the park by addition of amenities such as picnic benches, playground equipment, BBQ pits, trash cans, trails, planters, swings, trees, etc. For a complete list of projects funded in neighborhood parks around the city, visit:

<http://www.austinparks.org/npa.html>

At the parks, trees and the environment workshops, community members expressed their desire for more amenities in the St. John Park and Buttermilk Greenbelt such as picnic benches, trash cans, play equipment, walking trail, trees, etc.



- Is the park easily accessible through a residential street?
- Is the property near publicly owned property or a school?
- Will the new park connect to nearby greenbelts and other parks?
- Does the proposed park location have significant natural features that need preservation and/or enhancement?
- Is there adequate parking available and access to public transportation system?

Both St. John Park and Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt are located in the St. John NPA. As of 2010, Coronado Hills NPA is identified as a high priority area for parkland by the gap analysis. Below is a list of amenities that community members identified at the October workshop if a new park were to be created in the future (depending on sufficient funds).

**Objective P.3: Create new parks within the planning area that will offer recreational opportunities to residents living furthest away from existing parks.**

**Recommendation 120:** Provide small parks or open spaces for recreational purposes along Little Walnut creek (in Coronado Hills).

**Recommendation 121:** Provide a small neighborhood park in Coronado Hills.

**Objective P. 4: Incorporate the following recreational facilities/amenities within a new park if and when funding is available for new parkland.**

**Recommendation 122:** Provide playscapes or playground equipment for younger children within the age range of 3-5 years old in a new park.

**Recommendation 123:** Create public gathering places/plazas that provide a balanced representation of the area's culture (Example: Capital Metro's Plaza Saltillo in east Austin).

**Recommendation 124:** Provide a multi-purpose field in a new park that serves a greater range of the community (i.e. Basketball court, ball park and/or soccer field).

**Recommendation 125:** In a new park, install covered picnic benches for people to use, especially during summer months.

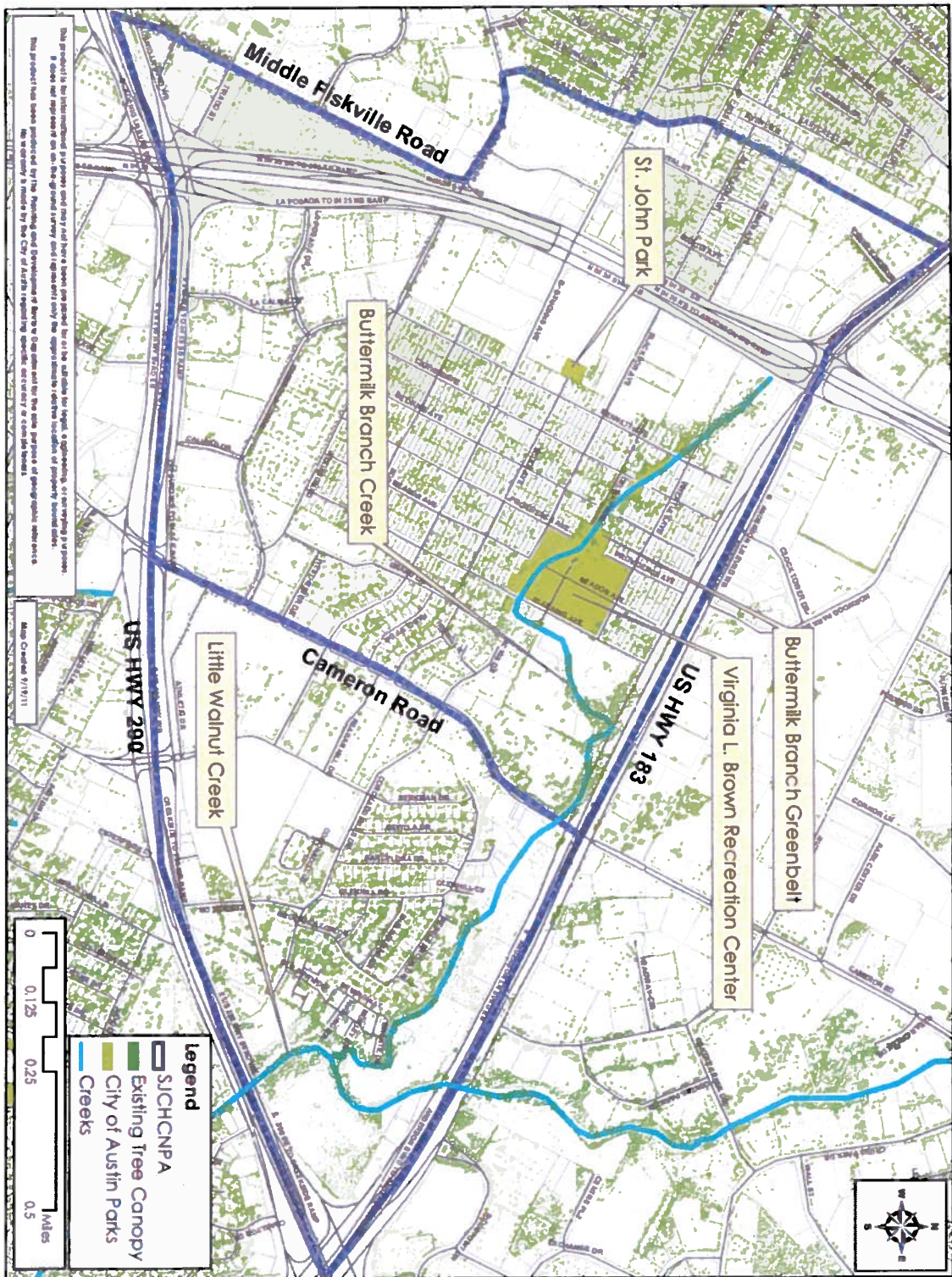
**Recommendation 126:** In a new park, plant trees for shade and respite from harsh summer sun.

## **COMMUNITY GARDENS**

At the parks workshops, community members expressed a strong desire for community gardens within the planning area. Community gardens are small to large areas of land that a group of community members garden and tend to. Community gardens provide many benefits ranging from growing nutritious food to beautifying the neighborhood. It also serves as a catalyst for community development by increasing social interactions and bringing together residents of all age-groups.

The Sustainable Food Center (SFC) is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to creating opportunities for people to make healthier food choices and

**St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area - Tree Canopy, Parks, Creeks**



**Map 3. St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area – Tree Canopy, Parks, Creeks**

participate in creating a vibrant food system in Austin. PARD works with SFC to help organized community groups identify potential locations for community gardens in their neighborhood. To get started, please read the call-out box titled 'How to start a Community Garden.'

As of 2010, a small community garden exists on the Reagan High School grounds that a small group of community members and high school students maintain. At the workshop community members showed support to expand the community garden and identify more areas within the planning area for potential community gardens. They also expressed interest in exploring educational opportunities that would increase and promote healthy lifestyle choices among area residents.

The following objectives and recommendations were captured at the parks and community gardens workshop and reflect stakeholder thoughts and ideas.

**Objective P.5: Increase educational opportunities and resources to promote healthy lifestyle choices for all residents.**

**Recommendation 127:** Encourage residents to take advantage of La Cocina Alegre (The Happy Kitchen) cooking classes that teach residents how to cook healthy meals utilizing fresh and locally grown produce.

**Recommendation 128:** Utilize the St. John library as a resource to disseminate information to educate people on existing community gardens in Austin, lessons learned and to build community gardening contacts.

**Recommendation 129:** Raise awareness and encourage residents to volunteer and help maintain the community garden at Reagan High School.

**Objective P.6: Coordinate with Sustainable Food Center to research the following potential locations for community gardens within the planning area.**

**Recommendation 130:** The following is a list of potential locations for community gardens (not in any priority order):

**130A.** St. John Park located at 889 Wilks Avenue.

**130B.** Buttermilk Greenbelt (Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center).

**130C.** Public properties in SJCHCNPA where community gardens can be located (to be identified by the community in collaboration with PARD).

**130D.** Undeveloped land on the EMS station property on Coronado Hills Drive.

**130E.** Research ways of putting community gardens on private properties if possible.



## How to Start a Community Garden

1. Gather at least 5 neighbors willing to work together in creating a garden.
2. Contact Sustainable Food Center (SFC) to express an interest. A SFC member will contact PARD staff to determine a suitable site for a community garden.  
([www.sustainablefoodcenter.org](http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org))
3. Attend a 'How to start a community garden' workshop hosted by SFC.
4. Begin necessary paperwork provided by Sustainable Food Center.
5. Contact area organizations that offer education and resources to local residents on sustainable and organic gardening.
6. Inspire other residents, especially youth to help with the community garden!

## TREES

Trees serve as an invaluable asset to a community. There are many benefits to planting trees around one's home and to planting trees along a street to act as a buffer for pedestrians (shielding one from noise and automobile traffic). The presence of trees generally makes any area more desirable and more aesthetically pleasing.

The following recommendations were collected at the Trees and the Environment Workshop. Michael Embesi, City Arborist with the City of Austin participated in the workshop to provide SJHCNPA participants with information on city ordinances in place to protect the tree canopy in Austin. SJHCNPA stakeholders expressed a strong desire to increase the tree canopy cover within the planning area as well as protect existing mature trees that are in the area. At the workshop, participants engaged in a mapping activity to identify potential locations for tree plantings within SJHCNPA (Map 4, page 51).

The objectives and recommendations in this section offer possibilities to collaborate with various organizations in order to address the lack of trees in the planning area.

### **Objective P.7: Increase the tree canopy in the SJHCNPA.**

**Recommendation 131:** Plant trees in the following identified priority areas:

- 131A.** St. John Ave between Twin Crest and Berkman Drive
- 131B.** Reagan High School campus / Nelson Field (install landscape islands)
- 131C.** Buttermilk Branch Greenbelt (Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center)
- 131D.** Coronado Hills Drive east of Cameron Road
- 131E.** Little Walnut Creek east of Cameron Road
- 131F.** East side of Cameron Road between US HWY 183 and the Cameron Oaks Plaza

**Recommendation 132:** Contact the Urban Forestry Program of the Parks and Recreation Department to request trees plantings in City of Austin parks, greenbelts or in City of Austin right-of-way.

**Recommendation 133:** Partner with the Austin Parks Foundation to participate in the Adopt-A-Park program which could assist in having trees planted in City of Austin parks.

**Recommendation 134:** Contact the Austin Parks Foundation to apply for grant assistance opportunities for planting trees in parks.

**Recommendation 135:** Contact and utilize the non-profit organization TreeFolks, Inc. (<http://www.treefolks.org/home.asp>) to participate in the free tree enhancement program, NeighborWoods, in order to acquire and plant trees in residential areas (front yard and side yard right-of-way).

**Recommendation 136:** Submit an application for the City of Austin Urban Forest Grant Program to use available funding for enhancement of the urban forest through projects associated with tree planting, education, public service announcements, award programs, disease control, inventory, and other related efforts.

**Recommendation 137:** If eligible, submit an application to the Austin Community Trees Program (ACT) so more native trees can be planted on private property.

***Objective P.8: Protect the existing tree canopy in the SJCHCNPA.***

**Recommendation 138:** Encourage the preservation of existing, mature trees in SJCHCNPA, especially those along Little Walnut Creek, east of Cameron Road.

**Recommendation 139:** Encourage residents to stay engaged on pending subdivision, zoning, and development applications.

***Objective P.9: Maintain the existing tree canopy by providing tree education to all stakeholders in the community.***

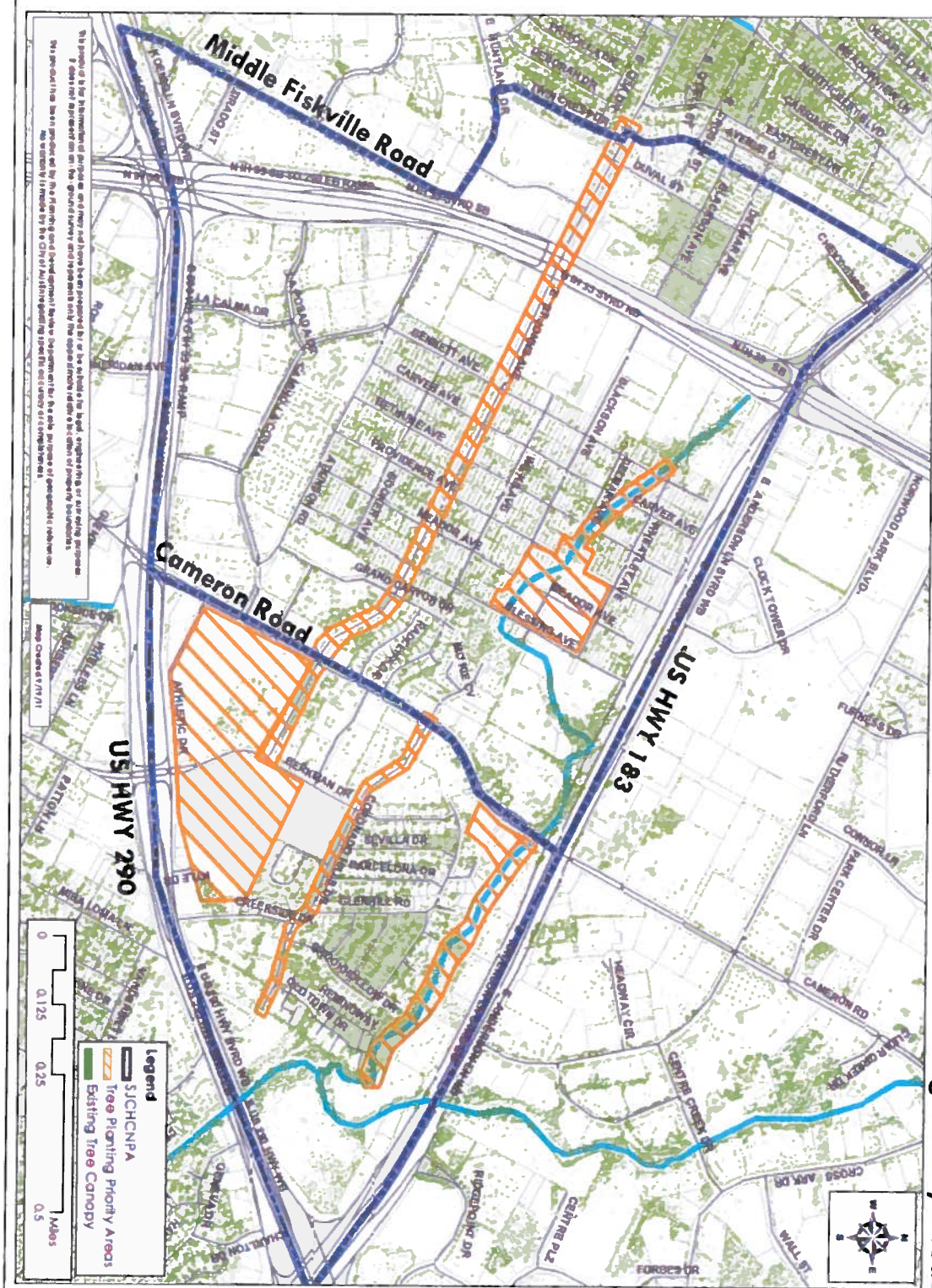
**Recommendation 140:** Attend an Adopt-A-Park seminar for more information on adopting a park and other services provided by the Austin Parks Foundation. (See Adopt-A-Park call-out box)

**Recommendation 141:** Coordinate a "free tree" education presentation by the Austin Community Tree Program (ACT) for more information and education of this tree planting program.

**Recommendation 142:** Organize efforts to quantify the value of trees. **Note:** As our understanding increases about the important contributions our urban forests make to our cities and communities in filtering pollutants, sequestering carbon, absorbing storm water run-off, reducing energy costs, and overall increasing property values and improving quality of life, we recognize the need to quantify our trees and assess their economic value. Because the economic benefits of our urban forest are often discounted or ignored in development decisions, it is vital that we be able to evaluate benefits in order to move trees to the fore of



# St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area - Tree Planting Priority Areas



Map 4. St. John/Coronado Hills Combined Neighborhood Planning Area – Tree Planting Priority Areas

the planning process. The Great Austin Tree Survey is an innovative campaign whereby volunteers are trained to map and record tree observations in their neighborhoods, school grounds, private homes, and businesses. The intent of the campaign is to empower the public to become involved as citizen scientists, furthering knowledge of the diversity of species, structure, health, and functions of trees in their communities. The data you collect will be verified, mapped, and shared citywide with other citizens, urban forest managers, and stakeholders (<http://www.treeroundup.org/>)

**Recommendation 143:** Coordinate a free Speaker's Bureau presentation by the non-profit organization TreeFolks, Inc. in order to receive tree education.

**Recommendation 144:** Utilize and encourage the use of the Native and Adapted Landscape Plants guidebook in order to select native species to the area in order to increase the survival rate.

### **WATERSHEDS, CREEKS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

When discussing the natural environment with the SJCHCNPA participants, protecting natural and ecological assets emerged as a dominant theme. In order to adequately address protection concerns, this section of the plan first provides the background and context necessary to understand the details of two key ecological assets, watersheds and creeks as well as the potential environmental impacts on such assets. Secondly, the plan addresses the SJCHCNPA participants' broad environmental concerns by describing the programs, policies and initiatives currently in place to support the community's environmental goal.

**Implementation Note:** It is important to note that this section of the SJCHCNPA Neighborhood Plan differs from other plan sections in that the text provided is more informational versus strategic. This approach is a reflection of the discussions that took place at the Watershed, Creeks and Environment workshops in SJCHCNPA. Participants were mostly interested in learning more about what the City is doing to protect the ecological assets in SJCHCNPA versus expressing immediate issues or concerns that require a focused, specific action.

When presented with information regarding sustainability and opportunities to promote "green lifestyles" in SJCHCNPA, the community expressed that the concepts are interesting, but not a key priority for the community at this time. For this reason, focused or specific discussions on the topic sustainability were not conducted during the SJCH planning process. However, sustainability principles were mentioned and integrated into specific planning topics where practicable.

### **BACKGROUND**

The ecological fabric of SJCHCNPA includes assets such as watersheds and creeks. While these assets play an important role in the quality of life in SJCHCNPA, they are also important as their overall health and condition indicate broader environmental conditions in the City of Austin. For this reason, the City consistently monitors and evaluates watersheds and creeks to ensure high standards of environmental integrity.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND RELATED IMPACTS**

To best understand how to effectively protect the environment in SJCHCNPA it is important to understand potential impacts to ecological assets. The following list, while not comprehensive, is provided to identify potential stresses on environmental quality as identified in the SJCHCNPA:

- Physical development and urbanization (characterized by roadways, parking lots and rooftops) directly and indirectly impact the environment:
  - Degradation of urban creeks
  - Habitat degradation due to loss of riparian vegetation and natural character
  - Creek biology degraded – lack of base flow
  - Increase in pollutant loads – nutrients, sediments and bacteria
- Activities on personal properties (front yards): parking, automotive maintenance and repair and landscape maintenance with harmful chemicals directly impact environmental quality.

While it is clear that the community does not have complete control over all of the impacts placed on the environment, it is important to establish an awareness of potential impacts. With increased awareness comes the opportunity for the SJCHCNPA community to advocate, if desired, for protection and mitigation processes designed to maintain high environmental standards.

The following information provides a comprehensive overview of the ecological assets in SJCHCNPA and the environmental protection programs, policies and initiatives currently in place to protect such assets. Also provided is a list of opportunities available for the community to get involved and take a lead role in positively impacting the environment in which they live.

### **Watersheds**

SJCHCNPA is situated within the boundaries of several urban watersheds. Watersheds are defined as areas of land that drain to a particular creek, lake or aquifer. The SJCHCNPA community lies within the following urban watersheds:

- Buttermilk Branch
- Tannehill
- Little Walnut
- Fort Branch

In developed or urban watersheds, characteristics of an urban environment (roadways, parking lots and rooftops) cover much of the land. Rainwater that previously infiltrated to the groundwater quickly runs off these hard surfaces. Base flow in the creeks is reduced while the chances of flooding and stream bank erosion are increased.



## What does the City have in place to protect watersheds?

Watershed Protection Master Plan – Watershed Protection Department  
*Lives, Property, the Environment*

### **Three missions**

- Flooding - (public safety)
- Erosion - (property protection)
- Water Quality degradation – (environment)

### **Flooding**

Storm drain needs are the highest in urban watersheds (lack of storm drains, undersized, deteriorated, and clogged).

### **Erosion**

Stream Restoration Program

- Objective: to create a stable stream system that decreases property loss from erosion and increases the beneficial uses of our waterways.
- Program services: stream stability assessment (understanding the problem), planning (prioritizing problems and projects), solution development (in-house design or consultant services), implementation (in-house design construction or capital projects) and technical assistance (sharing expertise and experience).

Creek Flood Hazard Reduction program

Flood Awareness

- Flood Safety Awareness Week
- Notifications of FEMA Map Revisions

### **Creeks**

The SJCHCNPA community is unique in that it contains the entire length of Buttermilk Creek. Additionally, a portion of Little Walnut Creek also runs through the SJCHCNPA community. Tannehill and Fort Branch creeks begin just south of the SJCHCNPA community.

### **Watershed Protection**

In an effort to protect the SJCHCNPA urban watershed system, the City of Austin's Watershed Department prioritizes the implementation of both the Watershed Protection Master Plan and compliance with the watershed regulations of the Land Development Code. Additional information about these regulatory requirements is included in the section on Future Problem Prevention.

## **What does the City have in place to protect water quality?**

### **Water Quality Education Programs**

- Storm drain marking
- Earth camp
- Grown Green
- Green Neighbor
- Scoop the Poop

### **Water Quality Modeling and Monitoring**

### **Drainageway and Infrastructure Maintenance Program**

### **Creek Assessments**

### **Pollution Prevention**

- Spill and Pollution Complaint response (974-2550) - 24- hour environmental pollution hotline where residents can report pollution problems.
- Shade Tree Mechanic - A program designed to help home mechanics enjoy their hobby, conserve money or while at the same time, complying with City regulations (call 974-2550).
- Discharge permitting program

### **Watershed Maintenance Programs**

- Vegetation control
- Pond maintenance
- Waterway maintenance
- Stormwater infrastructure maintenance

### **Capital Project Planning**