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CNA QUARTERLY  
MEETING

AUGUST 2021 | VOLUME 27 | NUMBER 3 // NEWSLETTER OF THE CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

## Major Transportation Changes Coming to Cherrywood

by Jim Walker

Even as the pandemic continues to unfold on a daily basis, several major transportation projects continue to progress that will impact the neighborhood for decades to come. There are many opportunities to learn more and get involved.

### Interstate 35 Renovations

As shared in the last several issues of *The Flea* (available online), the TxDOT Capital Express project to completely renovate interstate 35 through Austin is a massive undertaking and will have multiple direct impacts on Cherrywood.

During previous phases of public engagement, the CNA encouraged all individuals to submit their own comments, and the association also submitted formal letters (available online). CNA's primary feedback has been focused on improved land-use and minimal roadway encroachment into the right-of-way, increased multi-modal transportation facilities, and enhanced east-west connections across the interstate.

We have also reinforced calls for equity and diverse representation in the planning process in collaboration with other neighborhoods that are all part of the North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition.

The latest round of drawings from TxDOT should be publicly available around the time *The Flea* hits your doorstep. These drawings may clarify to what degree the CapEx project will try to expand the right-of-way which is most likely to happen on the north-bound, east side of the freeway, which is also the mile-long western boundary of the CNA.



The present condition of I-35 and 32nd Street. Photo courtesy TxDOT.

But whether the interstate right-of-way expands or not, the CapEx project will absolutely change how the frontage road between Airport and MLK Boulevards looks and functions. Your voice is important in this discussion. TxDOT's next public comment period will begin on Tuesday, August 10. The comment period will last thirty days and begin with an in-person Open House from 4-8pm at the Davage-Durden Student Union at Huston-Tillotson University. Check the listserv for more updates.

In the interest of shaping these changes, CNA is hosting an open house on Wednesday, September 8 at 6:30 pm. State Senator Sarah Eckhardt is confirmed to

attend and offer opening remarks. Representatives from TxDOT and several advocacy groups such as Reconnect Austin will also be invited to share their perspectives.

The goal of the CNA CapEx Open House is to share information about TxDOT's plans and to gather feedback on what principles of engagement and design we should advocate for going forward.

### Project Connect

Launched by passage of the Capital Metro rail plan back in November 2020, Project Connect is bringing fixed guideway rail to the urban core of Austin and also expanding bus services.

For CNA, the closest rail station will remain the MLK station a short walk/bike ride to the south. An independent organization, the Austin Transit Partnership (ATP) was created to guide the Project Connect investment with transparency and accountability. They are beginning rail station planning and all are invited to attend.

More directly impacting CNA will be the new MetroRapid Expo Line, which will run on Manor Road with a stop planned at the intersection with Cherrywood Road. This

stop corresponds to the Lafayette Station on the Project Connect Initial Investment Map ([capmetro.org/project-connect/system-plan/metrorapid](https://capmetro.org/project-connect/system-plan/metrorapid)). Construction may have actually begun on this station by the time you get this issue of *The Flea*.



Proposed redesign of I-35 and 32nd Street. Illustration by TxDOT.

**Cherrywood I-35/Frontage Road Open House**  
**Wednesday, September 8, 6:30 pm**  
**Watch [cherrywood.groups.io](https://cherrywood.groups.io) for more details!**

## Looking Out For All Neighbors

Living in the Cherrywood neighborhood is special. We enjoy a proximity to all the bustle and amenities of the urban core of Austin and also a bit of privacy that can catch you by quiet surprise. The last several years have offered many opportunities for us to engage with each other in ways familiar and also unexpected. We continue to find ways to stay connected and we continue to try to rise to the moments of big challenges.

As the pandemic climbs back in Stage 4 cautions, we are all reminded of the importance of interpersonal contact. We're encouraged seeing neighbors keeping respectful distance while catching up about the heat and odd summer rains, and tugging on their masks heading into local businesses. The pandemic is surely weighing on everyone, but in community we'll still find some laughter to help us get through.

And we still have many ways to stay in touch. Last year we started a new neighborhood listserv at [cherrywood.groups.io](http://cherrywood.groups.io) that is our primary communication tool in between the quarterly *Flea* Newsletters. We try to cross-post on NextDoor as well. We also have a Facebook page and even an Instagram channel.

We'll continue to amplify issues across all channels in hopes that you, dear Cherrywooder, can find your comfort zone to ask any questions, seek a recommendation, find a meeting, or just share a revelation you had while walking one morning. We welcome your contributions.

One of our main topics at the general meeting this August will be ongoing efforts to shape how the renovation of an interstate freeway impacts our neighborhood frontage road (more on this in the cover article). Our other topic relates to homelessness and rising to a moment as Cherrywooders.

In May we initiated a conversation around the sudden possibility of a "sanctioned encampment" at Patterson Park. There were strong perspectives across the spectrum. Just as suddenly, Patterson Park was removed from the list.

As reported in earlier *Flea* newsletters, the Days Inn on the frontage road near 32 Street and adjacent the Escuelita del Alma child care was used as a Protective Lodge from April 2020 to June 2021 for unhoused individuals at risk of COVID. In July 2021, the Austin City Council decided to enter an extended lease for the Days Inn to convert it into a "bridge shelter," a slightly different type of transitional housing (see the July 9 *Austin*

*Chronicle* for a great summary). Most recently, the city has shifted back to using the Days Inn for unhoused individuals at risk of COVID-19 and focused on addressing to safety and security concerns raised by the director and parents of Escuelita.

At the CNA General Meeting on August 18, we'll continue conversations with City of Austin Homeless Strategy Office staff about concerns but also about creative ideas and opportunities for Cherrywooders to help the city help our unhoused neighbors.

In the interest of trying to get a step or two ahead of issues like this, and perhaps because this is an important moment to at least try to be bigger than we have been, we're early in brainstorming with the Austin Justice Coalition (headquartered in Cherrywood) on their collaboration with ECHO on possibilities to increase rental opportunities and also how we might be a proactive part of the nascent City of Austin Community Land Trust.

If you are interested in participating in these early conversations about how issues of affordability and homelessness manifest in Cherrywood and the many ways through which we might contribute to solutions to them, please email [chair@cherrywood.org](mailto:chair@cherrywood.org).



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CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Quarterly Meeting

DON'T MISS IT!

Wednesday, August 18, 6:30 pm

Join us on Zoom: meeting ID 254-172-8972



Agenda

- Affordable and supportive housing
- Update on TxDOT CapEx Central public scoping process
- Open Forum

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UPPER BOGGY GREEK PLANNING TEAM WEBSITE [upperboggycreek.com](http://upperboggycreek.com)

# CITY WATCH

## Cherrywood Bikeways Project

By now we guess everyone has noticed the new lane striping, speed humps, and the flexible white “popsicle stick” bike lane protectors which constitute Phase I of the Cherrywood Bikeways Project spearheaded by Austin Transportation Department.

Phase 2, scheduled for later this year, will focus on safer crossings and shared-use paths, signals, and sidewalk connections under I-35 from Wilshire Boulevard (at Nature’s Treasures) to Hancock Center.

In collaboration with Austin Water, Phase 3 will begin in 2022 with the installation of rain gardens and additional traffic controls. The rain gardens will be at the new “pinch point” on Cherrywood Road, where it crosses the creek near East 40th Street, and at the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and Schieffer Avenue. Phase 3 will also permanently close the direct connection between Schieffer and Wilshire, but drivers will still be able to access Wilshire from Cherrywood Road.



## Intersection Improvements at Manor/Cherrywood

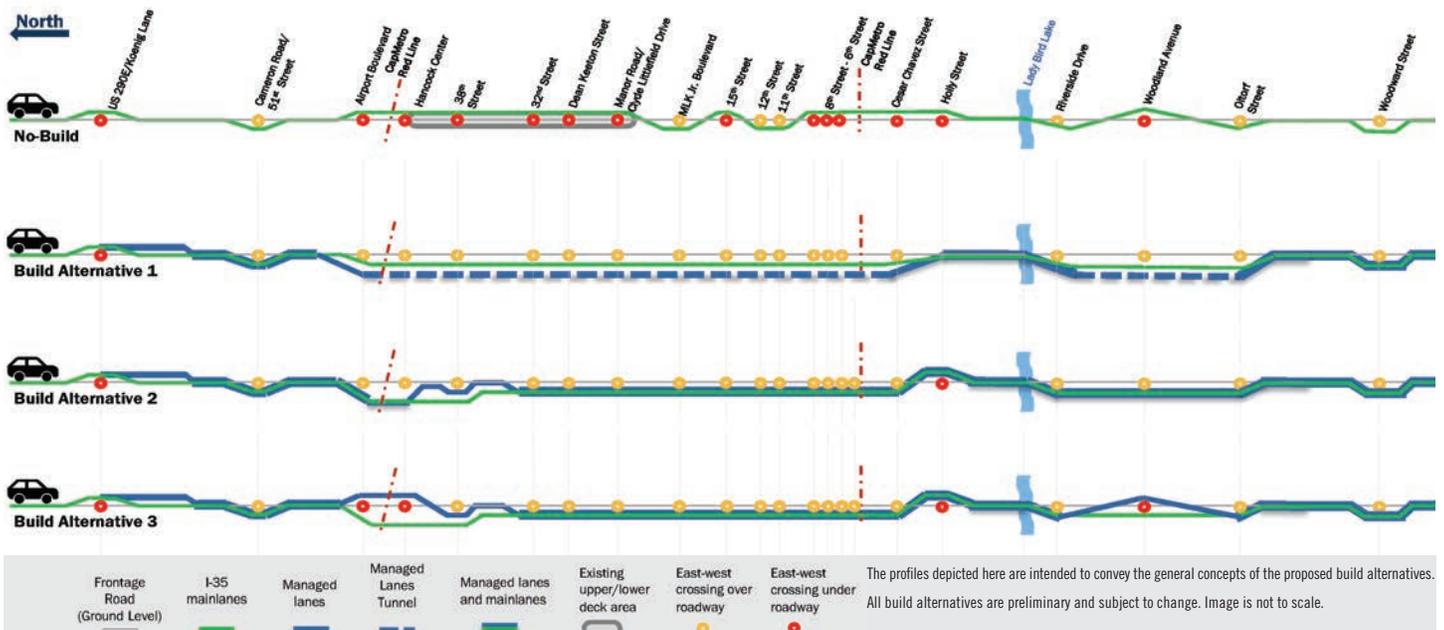
Without public engagement, the City of Austin and Capital Metro have jointly designed improvements to the intersection of Manor and Cherrywood, with construction likely already underway as you read this. The goals of the work are “to increase multimodal mobility and safety by installing new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and upgrading existing facilities,” which includes a raised crosswalk, shared use pedestrian/bicycle paths and upgraded signal phasing.

The project also features new CapMetro stops designed for future MetroRapid service and existing bus routes. Accommodating the new stops requires closing some existing driveway access for businesses such as El Chilito, Gene Johnson Automotive, and the former Home Steam site.

The lack of engagement and opportunity for input is frustrating. Representatives of Cherrywood, Blackland, and Holy Cross Neighborhood Associations have met several times with representatives from the City and Capital Metro to express dissatisfaction with the lack of communication and to discuss opportunities to minimize potential negative impacts to existing and future land use around the intersection.

## I-35 Design Alternatives

Are you confused about the proposed “design alternatives” presented at recent TxDOT CapEx Open Houses, like the illustration below of the side-view looking east as presented in Scoping Period 2? You’re not alone! Attend the upcoming Cherrywood I-35/Frontage Road Open House (September 8) to learn how to read the proposed plans and to share your feedback on how I-35 and the frontage road should be redesigned!



## Willowbrook Reach Cleaned Up

On June 13, a sunny Sunday morning, around twenty volunteers gathered to socialize over coffee and breakfast tacos at a neighbor's residence on Cherrywood Road before heading to Willowbrook Reach for a creek clean-up. The group, which included many regulars and several new faces, hauled twenty Hefty bags of trash out of the creek. Don't worry if you missed the fun; another cleanup is planned for the fall! Thank you, Adam Sparks, for organizing the effort and hosting your neighbors!



Left: Willowbrook Reach at Crestwood and Airport, where the creek begins, before (top) and after (bottom) the clean-up.

Above: Neighbors pose with the spoils of their labor. All photos courtesy Adam Sparks.

## Patterson Park: Art-In-Public-Places at Pharr Tennis Center

In conjunction with the City of Austin's Art in Public Places program, local artists Rakhee Jain Desai and Melissa Knight will create a permanent public artwork at the renovated Pharr Tennis Center and would like neighborhood input.

Stop by the Patterson Park Pavilion on Sunday, August 29, from 5-6:30 pm, to meet the artists and discuss the art. Your input will help inform the final design!



The Pharr Tennis Center will feature a new artwork by artists Rakhee Jain Desai and Melissa Knight. You can meet the artists at the Patterson Park Pavilion (4200 Brookview Road) on August 29.

## Legislative Update

by Sean Griffin

In the recently concluded 87th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature, 6,927 bills were filed, but only 1,073 were passed and sent to the Governor, who then vetoed 21 bills. Several bills affecting residential neighborhoods and the City of Austin will become effective September 1. Here are a few noteworthy pieces of legislation impacting our area.

Senate Bill 30, mentioned in the last edition of *The Flea*, made it through the legislative process as predicted, passing unanimously in both the House and the Senate. Although the final bill was a bit more complicated than the introduced version, it did create an expedited process for property owners to remove unconstitutional racial discrimination covenants from their deeds. A standardized format can be used to file a motion with the local district court. Once the court rules, the order is sent to the county clerk to remove the offensive provision in the deed.

No filing fees may be assessed for these motions and orders. If you're interested in removing such a provision from your own deed, look for sample forms to be posted to district court websites sometime this fall, or ask your friendly neighborhood attorney for assistance.

Senate Bill 113 seeks to increase the availability of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income families by clarifying property tax implications for community land trusts. These nonprofit trusts purchase land and build homes, selling the homes to families and retaining ownership of the land itself. This allows the trust to limit the resale price of the home and ensure it is always used for affordable housing, however it creates confusion in the appraisal process that makes it more difficult and costly for these trusts to operate, reducing their impact. The bill requires a specific method of appraisal and aligns rules with other rent-restricted properties so that these trusts can operate more efficiently and provide more housing opportunities.

Most drivers and pedestrians know that a vehicle should yield to those using a crosswalk. While currently a driver who causes the death of a pedestrian in a crosswalk vehicle accident may be charged criminally, there is no correlating offense for causing serious bodily injury. With the passage of Senate Bill 1055, however, beginning September 1 a new state felony for such cases will close that legal gap and provide more protections for pedestrians. Please drive and walk safely through the neighborhood!

Three bills squarely targeted at Austin also passed and will impact how the city can address preservation, homelessness, and safety issues. Senate Bill 1585 could make it a bit more difficult for a city to designate an historic structure or establish an historic district. Currently, to designate an historic property against the objections of the property owner, a municipality must

secure a three-fourths supermajority vote at either the planning commission, zoning and platting commission, or historic landmark commission.

Filed in response to allegations that municipalities with all three commissions, like Austin, "shop the vote" to secure the designation at the most favorable commission at the time, SB 1585 requires a city to designate one commission as responsible for historic property designations. It also extends the current historic structure designation requirements, including the need for a supermajority vote at the council and commission levels, to the creation of historic districts so that any property owner within the proposed district can object and force a vote on the designation. If a vote to designate fails, this would remove the property from the district, thereby decreasing the size and impact of such a district.

Another bill, House Bill 1925 creates a statewide Class C misdemeanor offense for camping in an unauthorized public place. Before issuing a citation to someone found to be in violation of this law, peace officers are required to make a reasonable effort to connect the person with appropriate services and advise the person of alternative places to lawfully camp. Local governments that adopt a policy that prohibits or discourages enforcement of this camping ban cannot receive state grant funds.

The bill also prohibits a local government from designating a property to be used for authorized camping without the approval of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Such a sanctioned campsite may not be located in a public park.

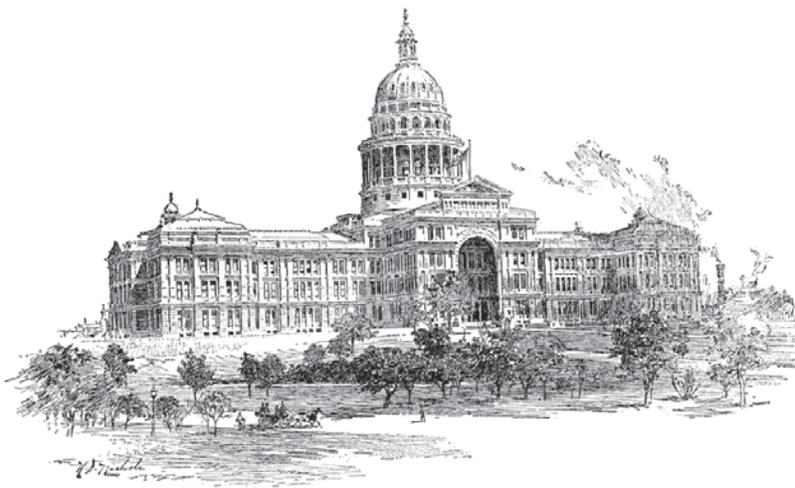
A third bill, House Bill 1900, takes aim at cities that reduce spending on police budgets. The Governor's Office will declare a city with a population of more than

250,000 to be a "defunding municipality" if the city reduces their appropriation to a police department in any given year.

A city that receives this designation must hold an election in each area the city has annexed in the last 30 years, allowing the area to vote to separate themselves from the city. The city would have its tax rate automatically reduced by an amount necessary to account for the decrease in the police budget.

Even more, the city's share of sales tax would be reduced by the amount of money the state spends to provide its own law enforcement services, and that money would instead be diverted to the Department of Public Safety. Lastly, a municipally owned utility, like Austin Energy, would be prohibited from increasing rates or fees.

With one special legislative session already convened this summer, and others expected to follow, we may see even more legislation impacting our city and neighborhood enacted before the legislature reconvenes for the next regular session in January 2023.



## Visit Bobo's Snack Bar

**B**obo's Snack Bar owners Bethany Andrée and Karl Gilkey are long-time Cherrywood residents. Their latest venture, located at 3850 Airport Boulevard, opened mid-pandemic. That didn't stop the *Austin Chronicle* from recognizing the new spot in its First Plates 2021 review!

The *Chronicle* notes that Bethany and Karl "honor Austin's weirdness and wonder at the long-awaited younger sister of the dearly missed Snack Bar. Bobo's arrived in style with a wide selection of snacks and beverages all from Central Texas purveyors, including many vegan and vegetarian options. As a 'community tasting room,' it's the perfect place to kick back and stay awhile."

In response to the Stage 4 community risk for COVID, Bethany and Karl have closed the indoor dining room, but you can still enjoy Bobo's on the patio.

**The snack bar's sainted feline namesake, Bobo, beckons guests and ensures a wonderful experience no matter where you sit. See you there!**



## Este Garden Celebrates One Year

by Sharon Lynch

**J**ust over a year ago, farmers Anamaria Gutierrez and Lea Scott, both with lineages in Urban Roots, and a group of volunteers opened the first garden beds in the large space on the corner of 22nd Street and Coletto. By August 2020, the garden had produced more than 900 pounds of herbs and vegetables for the acclaimed restaurant Suerte and local community food banks.

This is not the first time this space has been a garden. Eastside Cafe, a pioneer in farm-to-table cuisine, maintained a garden for decades on the site now occupied by Este Garden. The new garden's name is a tribute to the former cafe. Although the Eastside garden had been largely unused for the past few years, the soil was still very rich and responded quickly to being worked again.

Elaine Martin, the owner of Eastside Cafe, long-searched for a sympatico buyer for her restaurant. She finally found him: Sam Hellman-Maas, award-winning restaurateur and owner of Suerte. Following an extensive remodel, the restaurant will open in early 2022 as Este. It will continue the tradition of farm-to-table cuisine but with a twist: Mexican-inspired seafood menu developed by the renowned Executive Chef of Suerte, Fermín Nuñez.

While you must wait to savor the flavors and atmosphere of the Este dining room, you do not have to wait to enjoy Este Garden. Long-time residents of the Cherrywood Neighborhood may remember the garden at Eastside Cafe as a destination and so it will be with Este. Anamaria and Lea's vision for the space is not just a food garden but also an urban green-space and oasis.



Hives Honey, are harvesting nectar alongside other pollinators. Gardening techniques such as *hugelkultur* and three-sisters planting are on display.

**Stop by Este Garden, sit a spell, listen to the birdsong and watch butterflies and bees flit from flower to flower. It's good for the soul.**

All Cherrywood neighbors are invited to visit and enjoy the garden now. Amid the beds where vegetables and herbs are growing you will find benches for resting and reflecting. Wildflowers are growing and the rose bushes rescued from the construction site are blooming. Many species of birds call Este Garden home. Cherrywood residents and Purple Martin landlords Alex Moreland and Kevin O'Reilly have renovated the Purple Martin housing at the garden. Dozens of Purple Martin families have moved in and have recently laid their first eggs. Honey bees, provided by Two



# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

## Cherrywood Annual Fourth of July Parade

The neighborhood celebrated Independence Day in style!



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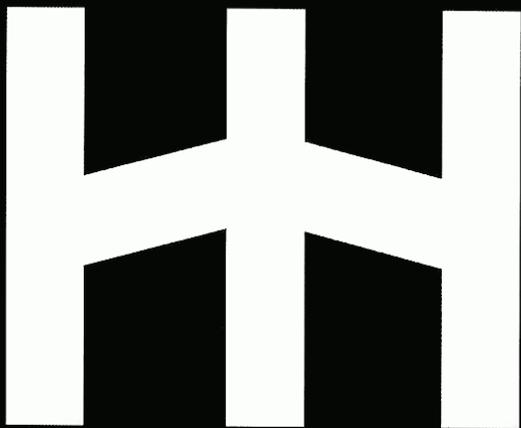
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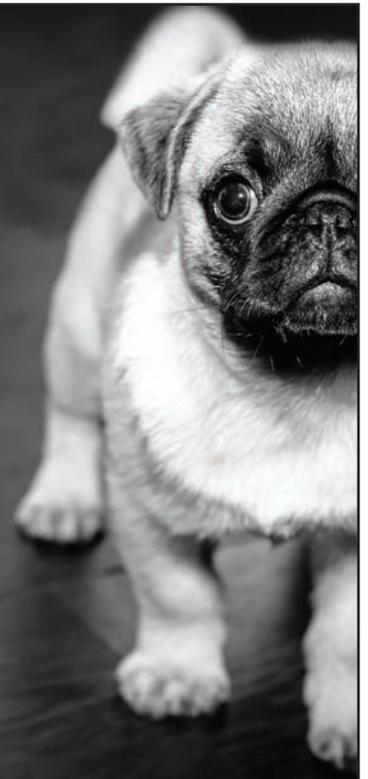
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