

December Party



When:
Sunday, Dec 18
5:00 to 7:30 pm
Where:
Woodburn House
B&B 4401 Ave. D

HPNA Agenda for Holiday/Christmas Party

- ◆ Distribution of Cookies
- ◆ Naughty, or Nice? Survey Results
- ◆ North Pole NCCD update
- ◆ Status report on Vino Vino eggnog permit application
- ◆ HPNA/HPBC Debate:
"Rudolph: Hero, or Drunkard?"

Happy Holidays!

The Hyde Park
Neighborhood
Association



Pecan Press

December, 2005 • National Register District Neighborhood • Vol. 31, No. 12

"The Meeting is the Party, and the Party is the Meeting:" Happy Holidays!

Hyde Park's annual Holiday/Christmas party will be held Sunday, December 18, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Woodburn House Bed & Breakfast, 4401 Avenue D.

November Meeting Minutes

An extraordinarily large crowd of almost 70 people attended the monthly HPNA meeting on November 7th. Held, as usual, at the Hyde Park Methodist Church, the meeting featured a continuation of the spirited and sometimes contentious discussion concerning the zoning variance request for the proposed Vino Vino wine bar at 4119 Guadalupe.

President John Kerr called the meeting to order at 7:13 PM.

Kitty Clark circulated petitions to get Herb Evans onto the ballot for Justice of the Peace Precinct 5 and Ted Orcutt of Houston onto the ballot for Congressman in District 10, which includes part of Hyde Park, in the March 2006 primary elections; and requested that association members sign to allow Herb and Ted to be on the ballot in March.

Then Austin City Council member **Brewster McCracken** presented a new initiative sponsored by the City of Austin for the **Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV)** municipal

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Neighbors are invited to share the holiday spirit with their fellow neighbors and enjoy a light supper, drinks and sweets. The new owners of the Woodburn House, Kristen and Noel De La Rosa, will be on hand to meet their new neighbors.

This year's festivities promise to surpass last year's fine party. Although fine dining will be catered by New World Deli, there is a continuing need for Christmas cookies and other deserts. If you can contribute something, please contact Deaton Bednar, 371-3762.

Children's activities will be offered on the large wrap-around front porch of the house. If you have ideas to contribute to children's activities, please contact Chris Berry at cmcb@grandecom.net. An invitation to Santa Claus has been emailed, but the North Pole server was down due to severe weather. At press time we still have not had a reply.



Shifting Gears

At our November meeting, City Councilman Brewster McCracken touted a new city energy program involving "plug-in hybrid" cars. It was easy to assent to an automobile which recharges from your wall socket, renders the equivalent of 55 cents per gallon gasoline, and actually lets you power your car with wind energy. Unfortunately, plug-in hybrids are not on the market yet. And even for proven hybrids such as Toyota's excellent Prius, you have to get on a waiting list.

But there is a low-tech way to catch the energy-efficient wave: use a standard transmission. It's called standard because for many decades, that was all, or almost all, there was. How much better mileage you get depends on many factors, but you will always save gas over an automatic (though not necessarily over the Prius's Continuously Variable Transmission).

That would be reason enough to make the small investment in learning how to master the art of shifting gears. But the reasons are manifold, beginning with the emotional. I had driven an automatic for many years when my wife and I went car shopping. She asked to test drive a car which she liked because it was red. It was a two-door and a standard, neither of which I wanted. But to humor her we took it for a spin. Whoa! Whereas previous 4-cylinder models crawled up freeway ramps, suddenly I found the car accelerating all the way. Shifting the gears, taking control of the driving again, watching the tachometer edge toward the red -- all had the effect of an IV injection of about 350cc of pharmaceutical grade testosterone. It all came surging back, the feelings of my youth: barreling around the freeways of Houston and San Antonio in a cream yellow VW bug with a sunroof, while my date's perfume and hair filled the air. Wow, what a rush.

A standard transmission allows you to really drive a car, not just steer it. Let's face it, driving an automatic is not much different than driving a golf cart. Standards are

for the real enthusiast. A few summers ago I found myself on a tour of the BMW factory in Munich. After being shown some of the hotter models, I asked the guide what percentage came with automatic transmission. "Almost none," he sniffed. He was right to be disdainful. With so much power and handling at your disposal, why waste it with an automatic? To use a metaphor from my salad days, albeit for a different circumstance, it would be like taking a shower in a raincoat.

In America, however, standards are one of your best guarantees against theft. So few people want them, why bother stealing them? Several years back the papers ran a story of a man who approached a woman as she exited her car in a mall parking lot.

Continued on following page

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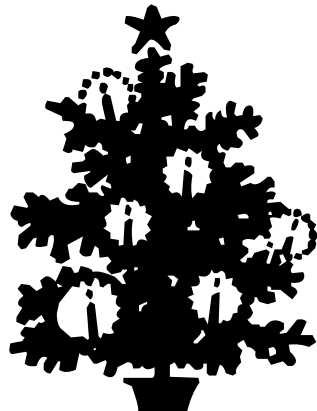
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Zoning • Dorothy Richter, 3901 Ave. G 452-5117
Austin Neighborhoods Council Rep. Volunteer needed



He put an automatic pistol to her head and demanded, "One question: standard or automatic?"

But standards go far beyond personal security to national security and national pride. Short of devastating attacks on pipelines and tankers, it is hard to imagine a scenario that would cause greater heartburn across OPEC land than the discovery that Americans were joining their European cousins in a decided preference for manual transmissions. In Europe's old medieval cities, so cramped for space, cars have to be much smaller just to fit. Automatic transmissions just aren't practical with those smaller engines, so virtually everyone drives a standard. Americans who demand an automatic transmission in their rental cars pay through the nose. The French already hold us in enough contempt without the added disgrace of us admitting we can't drive simple, ordinary car.

After my test drive I knew I had to go back to the old way. A dealer advised me that a standard transmission Camry was as rare as hen's teeth, so if I found one I better get it quick. As it turned out, the one I found was twice-owned. For another thing, it was green. Does anyone, in their heart of hearts, lust after a green car? A bad tint job meant that if one car was driving behind me at night it looked like I was being followed by 14. The headliner was so loose it rested on my head as I drove. As a final indignity, some lower life form had keyed the entire length of the passenger side. But all this paled into insignificance beside

the five smooth-shifting forward gears by my side. It remains the best car I've ever owned, and is especially admirable in the fuel consumption department, no small matter these days.

So while you're waiting for your plug-in hybrid, consider a little automotive regression. Your car will be much less likely to be taken without your consent, your country will be more secure, and you'll have to start figuring out what to do with all the extra cash. But the main thing is the emotional impact. If you're feeling a little run down, take a standard out for a test drive and watch the glories of your adolescence coming roaring back: the insouciance, the joie de vivre, the feelings of invulnerability; all of it, really, except the angst and the zits.

— John Kerr
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November Meeting Minutes...

...cont'd from page 1

initiative plan. The City, in cooperation with other cities and counties around the country, is petitioning auto manufacturers to bring their plug-in hybrid vehicle technology, which is developed but sitting on the shelf for perceived lack of demand, to market. The governmental initiative wants to present the manufacturers with enough guaranteed pre-orders to demonstrate that a plug-in hybrid vehicle is commercially viable. Austin Energy has dedicated \$1,000,000 to a pilot rebate program in this regard. Councilmember McCracken pointed out that at current prices, fuel costs for electricity generated by natural gas-fired plants this winter will cost ten cents a kilowatt hour (kWh), wind power will cost four cents per kWh, coal a penny per kWh, and nuclear a half cent per kWh. Coal-fueled electricity costs may rise sharply in the near future as stricter emission controls make it more expensive to run coal-burning generating plants. Buoyed by McCracken's presentation, a number of neighbors eagerly signed the petition that was passed around.

President John Kerr announced that he had been in informal talks with the **Austin State Hospital** regarding the parking situation for the proposed wine bar at 4119 Guadalupe, and that the hospital had expressed some interest in a proposal to allow use of some of their parking during off hours in exchange for a donation from the association to repair the hospital's boundary fence.

Continued on page 6



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9:15 a.m. Sunday School
10:30 a.m. Morning Worship

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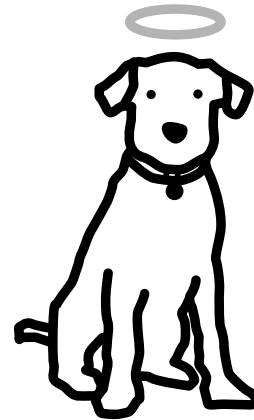
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November Meeting Minutes...

...cont'd from page 4

The pastor of the **Community Church of God** at 42nd and Avenue D announced that the church is considering whether to launch a not-for-profit coffeehouse one or two nights a week at the church property. He said the congregation envisioned it as an outreach-related ministry, operating one or two nights a week and featuring acoustic music and art exhibits. The coffeehouse is tentatively scheduled to launch in February. Questions were raised concerning whether the church property could be used for this purpose. The church has not investigated whether this would be in violation of existing zoning and land use regulations. They will investigate the question and come back to the association at a later date.

The remainder of the meeting was taken up with the zoning request for parking variance at 4119 Guadalupe for the proposed **Vino Vino wine bar**.

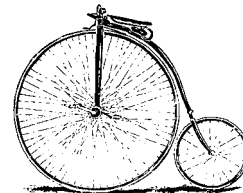
A debate broke out over who was allowed to vote on issues brought up at the meeting. While some present favored eliminating any franchise qualification, others pointed out that the by-laws clearly stated a voting member must have been a member of the association for one month before being allowed to vote. A question of interpretation on whether the required month's membership must be within twelve contiguous months prior to the meeting was not resolved.

Moved Pam Whittington, seconded V.R. Whittington,

Continued on following page

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to reconsider the previous support of the zoning variance request. The motion passed with 38 ayes and 1 nay, with the remainder abstaining.

Moved Susan Moffat, seconded Debbie Volker, that the association take no position on the variance request. Susan said the variance issue was not an issue in which the association should be embroiled, and it should be left to the City's Board of Adjustment to find the facts and act accordingly. Dorothy Richter re-stated the findings-of-fact requirements for the Board of Adjustment to grant a variance: (1) the use is reasonable for the property in question; (2) there is a hardship that is unique to this property and not general to the area; (3) the variance will not alter the character of the neighborhood; (4) the variance will not impair the use of adjoining properties. In addition, the following parking-related issues must be determined: (1) neither present nor future parking will require special traffic enforcement; (2) parking or unloading shall not impede the flow of traffic on the street; (3) the parking variance shall not create a safety hazard; and (4) the variance will run concurrent with the use, not concurrent with the site.

Dorothy gave the opinion that the association's approval or opposition should not matter to the Board of Adjustment, since the questions involved are of fact, but property owner Thad Avery countered that the Board does, nonetheless, take account of neighborhood associations' feeling in these cases. The motion to take no position failed, 22 nays to 20 ayes.

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Abilio Muñoz, M.D.

Board Certified, Family Practice

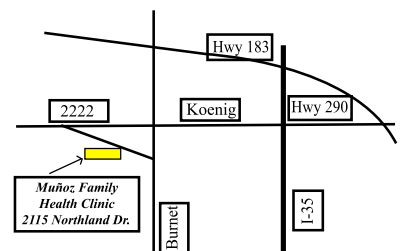
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November Meeting Minutes... ...cont'd from page 7

Then moved John Moore, seconded Nick van Bavel, to oppose the variance. Karen McGraw stated that according to the actual variance document filed with the City, Mr. Avery asked for a variance from 34 parking spaces to zero, not 24 to zero as previously stated. The motion to oppose the variance failed, 25 nays to 21 ayes.

Then moved Thad Avery, seconded by several neighbors, to support the variance. The question was raised whether the variance includes upgrading the graveled vacant lot to meet the City's current standard for parking lots. Alan Marburger pointed out that negotiations have been continuing for a long time with both the City and the State to reinstate street parking in this area, and if the association voted to support the variance, both the City and State would withdraw from negotiations and claim that no need to establish street parking exists, based on the variance being granted. Several persons called for Mr. Avery to substantiate his statement that a hardship exists. Mr. Avery's response was that the hardship is that the building has no parking at all and that this is not true of some other commercial properties in the area. Several residents of Avenue A stated their opposition to the variance, saying they will be pushed off the street where they live if the variance is granted. One Avenue A resident asserted that the application for variance filed with the City contained errors of fact. The alleged errors were not enumerated during the meeting. Nick van Bavel called the question, opposed by Wanda Penn. The vote for cloture carried, 21 ayes to 16 nays. The motion to support the variance failed on a tie vote of 22 to 22.

Karen McGraw noted that all comments to the Board of Adjustment in this case, whether positive or negative, must be submitted in writing by November 8th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

— Sam Waring
HPNA Secretary
4610 Ave. H

(Editor's Note: Our thanks to Sam for his adroit summation of the goings-on at the November meeting. The fact that all three motions related to the proposed winebar variance - to take no position, to oppose it, and to support it - failed by a close margin is an indication of the difficulties neighbors experienced in addressing this issue. Thus we would like to commend participants in the debate for their spirited and concerned citizenship, and for managing to emerge from the debate with their senses of humor, and perspective, still relatively intact...)

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Letters Dept.

HPNA To City: Bond Election Recommendations

(Note: Karen McGraw presented the letter below to the City Bond Election Advisory Committee on November 14. This committee is making recommendations to the City Council regarding a bond package that will be subject to a May 2006 election. Jim Walker is a member of the Bond Election Advisory Committee who took it upon himself to encourage neighborhoods to participate in the bond package process. After presentations first from Ney supporter Mary Ellen Borgelt and also from Karen, the Facilities Committee of the BEAC decided to reconsider an earlier decision to drop the Elisabet Ney Museum from the bond package. Encouraging news, but this isn't over yet. So, if neighbors want to comment further on this or other issues addressed below, go to the bond website where you can send whatever recommendations you may have: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/budget/beacmail.htm>.)

Jim Walker
Bond Election Advisory Committee

Dear Mr. Walker,

Thank you for meeting with the Hyde Park Planning Team on October 17 to discuss the proposed bond election. Here are our comments on the following items that pertain to Hyde Park to be listed for possible inclusion:

1) Item 4 - **Reconstruction of Fire station No. 9** - Hyde Park neighborhood of course wants to keep this fire station open and functioning well. This structure is historic and we are interested in the scope of this \$2,000,000 project. We hope the City will include the neighborhood and Historic Landmark Commission in any proposed changes to this building.

2) Item 88- **Elisabet Ney Museum** - This nationally recognized historic site has received a \$250,000 Federal "Save America's Treasures" grant. The total estimated budget for the restoration is \$1,000,000. The Ney Campaign Committee and museum have raised \$325,000 of this amount, including the federal and state grants totaling \$275,000 that need a 1:1 match. We recommend you include the full \$500,000 requested in the Parks Dept. Needs Assessment to restore this important historic site.

3) Item 77 - Repair leaks, sandblast and repaint **Shipe Pool**, \$612,500. This project is likely needed, as this pool is used at capacity for a very dense neighborhood. The amount seems high - is other work included?

Additional items that were not mentioned but are important to Hyde Park are as follows:

4) **Additional Park Facilities** are needed for the expanding population of this neighborhood. This is an action item in the HP Neighborhood Plan. The idea of closing the **4400 block of Avenue G** to expand Shipe Park was discussed in our City-sponsored Neighborhood Planning process in 1999, but City staff felt the street should remain open. The idea has come up again recently since that block has been closed for many months for City road and utility staging. With the density and focus on bicycle and pedestrian traffic, we believe closing the street should be considered. Funds are currently included for reconstruction of several blocks of Avenue G including the 4400 block. We request that consideration

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Letters Dept. cont'd -

be made of redirecting those funds to park expansion.

5) **Sidewalks** - Our top priority is both sides of Guadalupe, Speedway, Duval, 45th, 38th and West 40th. Most have been almost completed. Lacking areas are 4400 Block of Speedway (west side) and 3800 Block of Speedway (west side has been damaged by use of adjacent lot for parking).

6) Flooding from **Waller Creek** north of Speedway from Intramural Fields is still a serious issue and an action item in the neighborhood plan recommends retention ponds upstream of the neighborhood along Waller Creek.

There are items in our Neighborhood Plan that are not specifically called out in bond listings. While these are possibly budget items rather than Bond Package items, it reminds us that the Neighborhood Plans also should have a place in budget planning.

7) **Preserving historic structures**, establishing local historic districts and implementing design review accounts for several planning action items (priorities 2, 3, 4 and others) in the Hyde Park Plan.

8) **Guadalupe Corridor Planning** is Hyde Park Priority number 8. The areas of Guadalupe both north and south of Hyde Park, near UT (MLK to 29th) and the area near the Triangle (north of 45th) have been slated for improvement but no corridor planning has been done on the stretch from 29th to 45th. The blocks from 40th to

Continued on page 12

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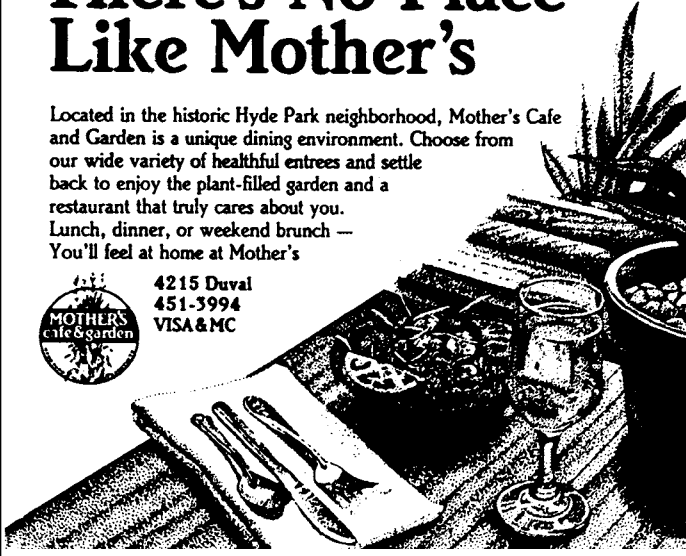
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Letters Dept. cont'd —

43rd Streets about the Hyde Park Historic District and the buildings - situated for pedestrian uses - should be protected and used for revitalization of the corridor. Businesses are now wanting to locate on Guadalupe and neighbors are wanting to see more commercial development. We need a parking and improvement plan very soon to enhance this important corridor and provide better transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and parking. Bond funds will likely be required for implementation.

We hope the Council will consider how the bond package might be created with more assistance from neighborhood organizations. These groups have identified priorities and are clearly most familiar with local conditions.

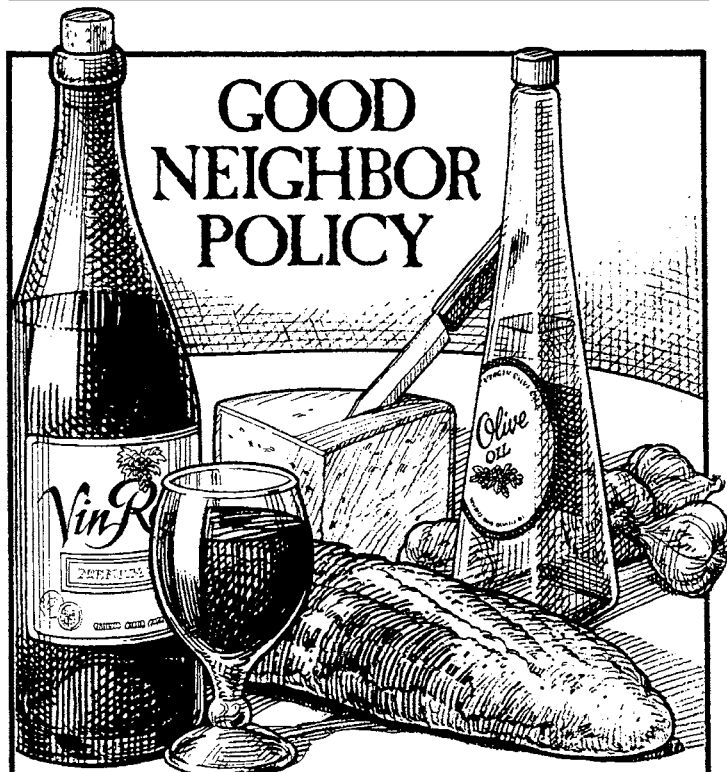
I expect to be at your meeting tonight to discuss these items further.

Thank you,

— Karen McGraw AIA
Chairman, Hyde Park
Planning Team



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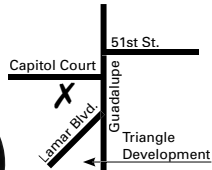
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Hyde Park Poets



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myself because touch is
one of those things that
happens before it happens:
you meet in space and
mingle and then you touch.
But when you meet in space
and the touch is still
blocked, then you have
to send yourself back to
school. It was a hard
lesson. It changed us.
I felt shackled. And
finally then I left.
And the years go by
and all those touches
that never happened
linger out there in space
like ghosts. I guess
that's what they are:
they're ghosts of touch.

— Albert Huffstickler
June 21, 2000

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Hyde Park Poets —

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May they never leave us.

May the newly sanctified find their way home to us also.

May they feed well and be pleased with these offerings.

And soon

One day

May we all be counted among them.

— *Brenda Marie Osbey*

(Note: Thanks to Martha Campbell for passing this poem on to us. Ms. Osbey is Poet Laureate of Louisiana, and stayed at Martha's Bailey-Newgren Guesthouse at 4108 Speedway when she was in town recently for a Katrina fundraiser. The poem appeared originally in Osbey's "All Saints: New and Selected Poems.")

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