

# Dawson Neighborhood News

Newsletter of the Dawson Neighborhood Association  
and Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team  
[www.dawsonneighborhoodassociation.org](http://www.dawsonneighborhoodassociation.org)

Sept/Oct 2022

## New Vertical Mixed Use Ordinance Released

— Julie Woods, DNA President

As many of you already know, the Austin city council voted on a revised ordinance for vertical mixed use property zoning at the June 9, 2022 meeting. The city handled the process for voting and enacting the ordinance in an unusual manner: council did not share specifics of the ordinance with those in attendance at the meeting but rather viewed them on paper passed around by members on the dais; city staffers undertook the task of writing the exact language of the ordinance AFTER the vote; when citizens contacted city staff to inquire about the details of the ordinance the only response was to wait for the final version. The final version was not released until August.

The resulting ordinance is confusing but not as bad as many feared. For those of us in Dawson who are close to transportation corridors, an important concern was whether tall buildings could be built that would loom over our homes. Vertical mixed use properties generally feature housing on upper floors and commercial or retail uses on the ground floor. VMU buildings are exempt from many of the requirements of minimum parking provided; also, VMU properties are required to provide some affordable housing, though those specific details are controversial. The new ordinance does increase the required number of affordable units.

Previous laws required a commercial or multifamily structure to be 200 feet away from a single family property before it could be 50 feet tall. That part of the ordinance was retained for non VMU properties but VMU properties only have to be 100 feet away from a single family property and can be 50 to 90 feet tall. The ordinance specifically addresses properties along the light rail lines: VMU height restrictions also apply to VMU buildings on light rail lines unless they meet the highest affordability requirements.

For VMU buildings that apply for affordability waivers to the height and parking limits, applicable neighborhood associations or plan contact teams may choose to either opt out of the affordability requirements or may ask to make the income requirements lower (meaning affordable units would be limited to families with lower incomes than the revised ordinance's 80% of Austin-Round Rock median income). The City initiates opt-in/opt-out process. For Dawson that would mean contacting the Plan Contact Team.

The ordinance establishes three affordability requirements: VMU1 requires 10% of units to be affordable. VMU2 requires 12% to be affordable and enables waivers of height limits (if not in a light rail corridor). For VMU buildings next to light rail, the affordability requirement is 15% of units for people at 60% of median family income or 12% of units for people at 50% of median family income.

The affordability language also addresses many historical complaints about affordable housing, including disallowing separate entrances for affordable units and requiring equal access to facilities and grounds.

## Thanks to Our Sponsor



Dawson Elementary serves children ages 3 to 12 years.

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

## New Dawson Neighborhood List Serve: Groups.io

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

## Find Us On Facebook

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

## Editor:

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## Next Meeting

Monday, October 10, 6:30  
Cosmic Coffee, 121 Pickle Rd.

## Agenda

### Neighborhood Association

1. Approval of minutes
2. Rules for Vertical Mixed Use developments
3. Gillis Park plans
4. Yard signs
5. Selection of officers

### Plan Contact Team

1. Approval of minutes
2. Plan team officers
3. It's My Park Day plans
4. Bergstrom Trail feedback

## St. Edwards Fireworks

On **Friday, October 28**, St. Edward's University will kick off our Homecoming celebration with a fireworks display. Fireworks will begin at **8pm** and will conclude within 10 minutes. Please mark your calendars and plan for the fireworks.



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

## Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Association August 8, 2022

virtual meeting via Zoom-

Julie Woods, President, called the meeting to order.

1. Minutes approved.
2. We received no response to DNA letters protesting Hustler Hollywood on Congress.
3. We discussed delivering printed newsletters versus posting yard signs to notify neighbors of meetings and newsletters. Diane and Rebecca volunteered to research yard signs.
4. A City Council meeting on June 10 proposed changes to setbacks, height maximums, and compatibility standards for developments adjacent to residential properties, but the proposal remains unclear.
5. Preservation Austin seeks equity in city preservation projects.
6. We will mulch Gillis Park trees in November.
7. Rain to River seeks to motivate the COA to pay attention to local creeks.

Meeting adjourned.

## Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, August 8, 2022

Meeting called to order by Marty Harris

1. Meeting Notes from June Approved.
2. Mentioned IMPD is November 5. Motioned to move forward.
3. Mentioned that October is meeting we ask for members to volunteer to be on Board.
4. Mention was made of businesses that have lately closed and those the recently opened.

Meeting adjourned.

## Keeping Sidewalks Clear of Obstructions

While the Dawson neighborhood doesn't have as many sidewalks as we'd like, where there are sidewalks it's important to keep them clear of obstructions, including trees and bushes, cars, scooters, rental bikes, and anything else that makes the sidewalk impassible.

As the Austin Public Works Department reminded us in a recent post to Next Door, property owners are responsible for their private trees and all other vegetation in the public right-of-way next to their property.

Overgrown vegetation is a safety hazard and limits the use of sidewalks, trails, streets and alleys. It further threatens public safety when vegetation blocks the view of traffic signs, signals, vehicles, or cyclists.

Trimming vegetation and caring for your trees are effective ways residents can enhance neighborhood safety.

Prune your trees and trim or remove any vegetation that obstructs or grows into sidewalks, streets or alleys.

Use the following quick guidelines to help keep the right-of-way clear:

- Sidewalks: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of and at least 8 feet above sidewalk.
- Streets/Alleys: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the curblines (edge of street

or alley) and at least 14 feet above street or alley.

- Multi-use Trails: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of and at least 10 feet above multi-use trails.
- Grass and Weeds: Maintain grass and weeds at a maximum height of 12 inches throughout property to the edge of the street or alley.
- Corners: Maintain vegetation at a maximum of 2 feet above ground within a 10 foot setback from the curblines (edge of street) and 40 feet along the curblines from the street intersection.
- Fire Hydrants: Remove trees or plants within 5 feet of fire hydrants.

The City is responsible for clearing vegetation growing in public right of ways.

In addition to keeping vegetation from blocking sidewalks, it is also illegal to park a vehicle so that it blocks the sidewalk. Parking on sidewalks is prohibited by Texas state code Sec. 545.301. The City of Austin imposes a \$40.00 fine for parking on a sidewalk.

As always, contact 311 to report issues with blocked sidewalks or obstructions in the public right of way, such as downed tree limbs.

You can find more information about keeping rights of way clear at the Public Works Department web site: <http://www.austintexas.gov/cleartherow>