

Community Committee on Neighborhoods and Schools Summary of Meeting June 12, 2007
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Member Attendance:

Andy Anderson	Present
Sally Brackett	Present
Terry Clark	Present
Christiane Woodley Erwin	Present
Chiquita Watt Eugene	<i>Absent</i>
Lourdes (Lulu) Flores	<i>Absent</i>
Linda Gibeaut	Present
Rev. Sterling Lands	<i>Absent</i>
José Marrero	Present
Rachael Proctor May	Present
Susan Moffat	Present
Leroy Nellis	Present
Yolanda Pedraza	Present
Rev. Ivie Rich	<i>Absent</i>
Paul Saldaña	Present
Alfredo Santos	Present
Kathie Tovo	Present
Jim Walker	<i>Absent</i>

Others in Attendance:

Lorraine Atherton
 Lorie Barzano
 Nan Clayton
 DeCandice Crosure
 Joey Crumley, AISD Planning & Community Relations
 Heather Dalrymple, AISD Planning & Community Relations
 Dr. Janis Guerrero, AISD Planning & Community Relations
 Mike Meier
 Ryan Robinson, City Demographer
 Joe Silva, AISD Facilities
 Gardner Sumner

Proceedings:

- The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. in Conference Room A-230 of the AISD Carruth Administration Center.
- There were no citizen communications.
- Joe Silva from AISD Office of Facilities explained methods to determine school capacity and presented demographic information on growth in the district.
- Discussion points included:

- ☞ Defining key terms regarding capacity
 - *Permanent Classrooms* are classrooms that are part of the school building.
 - *Portables* are outside, temporary, moveable rooms. Portables are not included when calculating school capacity.
 - *Ed Specs* are standards for core facility use, which encompasses the library, gym and cafeteria. Core capacity varies among schools due to different ed specs in use at the time of construction.
 - *Special Use Areas* are areas such as art and music rooms. These are included as part of the building design under the current ed specs.
 - *Capacity* refers to the number of students a campus is designed to hold if every classroom is used for classroom space. Capacity differs from utilization because classroom space may be used for other purposes.
- ☞ The formulas to determine capacity at the elementary, middle, and high school levels are generally straightforward calculations that do not vary much among districts. Because older students change classes during the day, the formula to determine capacity at the middle and high school levels differs from the elementary formula as it has been adjusted to reflect that all classrooms will not be used every period. Because of this adjustment and the need to provide space for special use areas, AISD's capacity determination differs slightly from TEA's. The calculation TEA uses assumes that every classroom is used every period of the day and no classroom space is used for other purposes. AISD's formulas for capacity calculation are guidelines and do not represent board approved policy.
- ☞ Computer labs fall under discretionary space for special use areas. This discretionary use can become an equity issue if one school has enough space to allow for labs when another school does not. Later this summer, AISD will determine what are appropriate discretionary uses of space.
- ☞ During the 2006-2007 school year, fourteen schools were at greater than 114% capacity and of those, six were at greater than 125% capacity. This overcrowding did not translate into larger class sizes but meant that more portable classrooms had to be used. When relieving overcrowded schools, the first course of action is to try to adjust school boundaries. If neighboring schools are underutilized, it is a more efficient use of resources to move students to those schools rather than construct new facilities. The 2004 bond program allowed for building classroom additions in some schools based on attendance projections and building three new schools to open in the fall. The efforts to address overcrowding resulted in reducing the number of schools at greater than 125% capacity from six schools to three.
- ☞ Along with overcrowded schools, those that are being underutilized need attention as they represent an inefficient use of resources. Currently, a handful of schools are at less than 50% capacity. The question is what to do with schools that do not have enough students to support them. This issue is being seen more frequently in mature neighborhoods that are not attracting families with school-age children. Those schools might be used to relieve overcrowded schools or they may need to be closed. The board and community would have to discuss any plan to close a particular school.

- ☞ This committee's purpose is to develop a model process for parent and stakeholder engagement that can be used for any kind of facilities change instead of focusing on changes to any one campus or expanding any educational program.
- ☞ The school capacity discussion has not addressed transfer policy or represented a coordination of efforts with the city of Austin's neighborhood planning process.
- ☞ The maps used in the presentation do not depict how many students at a school are transfer students. They show enrollment levels but do not reflect how many of the students attending live in the enrollment area. Some overcrowded schools have been frozen to transfer requests.
- ☞ Current enrollment patterns conform to district projections made five years ago.
- ☞ A number of factors have influenced district enrollment patterns. The current lack of affordable housing has resulted in apartment complexes that previously rented to students and people without children now being populated by families. New subdivision development and an increase in the immigrant population have brought in many new families. The impact on schools from housing changes in the city core, such as the new development at Mueller, remains to be seen as it is unknown how many families with school-age children will locate there.
- ☞ Whether a relationship exists between school capacity and student performance has not been studied. Currently, school performance is not considered when making boundary adjustments to relieve overcrowding.
- Committee members requested copies of the capacity maps used in the presentation and asked that they be made available on the website.
- As a number of guests were present, committee members reviewed guidelines for citizens communications and visitor protocols. They did introductions and requested that nametags be made available for future meetings.
- City of Austin demographer Ryan Robinson presented information on demographic trends for the city of Austin.
- Discussion points included:
 - ☞ Austin is experiencing its fourth population boom in as many decades. During the past recession, despite a slowdown in domestic migration, population growth continued because of immigration from Latin America and Southeast Asia.
 - ☞ Even if inaccurate in the short-term, population projections tend to become more accurate when looking at the long-term picture.
 - ☞ The job creation rate is about 4%. The jobs created are high tech and service sector.
 - ☞ Although Central Texas residents see Austin as becoming less affordable, housing prices are well below the national median, which makes it an attractive location to people from more expensive markets. One effect of sprawl is to increase the desirability of the urban core.
 - ☞ Austin is experiencing continued ethnic, cultural, social and employment diversification. It has become a majority-minority city. It is one of only a few large cities that still elect council members to at-large positions.
 - ☞ Austin is becoming a more divided city along socio-economic rather than racial lines. This division can be seen by looking at location of Section 8 households, which have become concentrated in the eastern section of the city.

- ☞ Different ethnic groups are experiencing different population trends. The African-American population, which used to be concentrated in East Austin, has become more dispersed while the Latino population has continued to become more concentrated.
- ☞ Seven different school districts come into or intersect the City of Austin. This results in a complex relationship between the city and the school districts.
- ☞ The district is gentrifying across the board, which puts pressure on families as housing becomes less affordable. Because of economic pressure, families are moving into apartments that never used to have school-age children. This puts pressure on schools in neighborhoods that, because of a lack of new housing construction, might not have expected to see growth in student populations.
- ☞ The absolute number of families in Austin is slowly increasing but the share as compared to all households is decreasing. Austin is a destination for families but it is becoming more difficult to afford.
- ☞ East Austin residents are facing intense property tax pressure and low-income renters and senior citizens are being displaced.
- ☞ Clarified that it is difficult to determine what the district should bear responsibility for addressing when it comes to resolution of longstanding social issues.
- ☞ Some neighborhoods are looking at population capacity ceilings before deciding whether to add more new housing. Overall, Austin will continue to grow over a period of decades and it has the carrying capacity to do so. Water supplies will eventually become an issue but not for 30 to 40 years. The city will not become as big as Dallas or Houston but will become a powerhouse as the region develops.
- Committee members requested copies of the maps used in the demographic presentation. Much of the information is available on the web at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/census/>.
- The next meeting is June 26, 2007. This meeting will focus on a presentation of state and federal accountability systems. Committee members will also begin discussing planning for gathering community input. The August meetings will focus on more demographic information and discuss the neighborhood planning process.
- Committee members requested information on the percentage attendance capacity for schools and demographic information on specific schools that are in Spanish language dominant locations.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.