

Austin Oaks Charrette Neighborhood Update

Save the Date: During the week of January 24-29, 2016, the owner of the Austin Oaks site and the neighborhood stakeholders surrounding the site will participate in a design charrette in a collaborative effort to create a consensus-based design for the site. Both the owner and the neighborhood representatives working on the charrette planning see this as an opportunity to use innovative collaborative design as a means of moving forward.

Austin Oaks is a 31-acre office park located at the southwest corner of Spicewood Springs Road and Mopac. The development, built between 1973 and 1985, currently includes 12 buildings and encompasses 445,322 square feet. It features many heritage trees, providing the neighborhoods with an office complex that blends in with the community.

The property was purchased in 2013 by Twelve Lakes LLC, an affiliate of Spire Realty Group. In 2014, Spire sought to rezone the property to redevelop the site as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) with approximately 1.6 million square feet of office and retail uses, and several hundred apartments. The proposal and its impacts sparked neighborhood opposition to the rezoning.

At the suggestion of neighborhood representatives, Spire agreed to engage in an alternative to conventional negotiations for the redevelopment of the property and try a design-based approach: a Design Charrette. A charrette is a multi-day design exercise that brings neighbors together with a multidisciplinary team of designers, engineers, and other specialists to produce a design for the property. During the charrette, the designers and charrette participants plan the site using a collaborative process. Throughout the process, participants provide input, ideas, and feedback to the design team. Various redevelopment scenarios are reviewed against agreed-upon objectives and measures, refining and revising as appropriate.

Neighborhood representatives and the owner have hired Doug Farr, FAIA, <http://farrside.com>, from Chicago as the design facilitator for the charrette, and the Austin firm TBG Partners <http://tbg-inc.com> has been hired as the design team. Doug Farr and the professionals at TBG are among leading urban design architects and landscape architects in the United States.

The charrette is scheduled for January 24-29, 2016 at the Austin Oaks site (3721 Executive Center Dr., Suite 264-Meredith Building). Prior to the charrette week, there will be neighborhood meetings, including two workshops that gather neighborhood input on vision and values regarding the site. After the charrette, the owner and neighborhood representatives will use the output of the charrette to collaboratively develop the zoning ordinance to be proposed to the City for the redevelopment by February 26, 2016.

More information on the charrette process may be found on the NWACA website at <http://tinyurl.com/CharretteProcess> and on the National Charrette Institute website at <http://www.charretteinstitute.org/charrette.html>

Important Dates

Community Information Meetings: *Please attend one of these meetings to learn about the process and how neighbors can contribute to the Vision and Values Workshops.*

Neighborhood representatives will be there to provide information and answer questions.

- Tuesday, December 1st 6-8 PM at St. Mathew's Episcopal Church, Room B-18, located at 8134 Mesa Drive
- Wednesday, December 2nd 11:30 AM-1:30 PM at St. Mathew's Episcopal Church, Room B-18, located at 8134 Mesa Drive

Neighborhood Vision and Values Workshops: *Please participate in one of these meetings to provide input.*

- Wednesday, December 16th 6-9 PM at St. Mathew's Episcopal Church, Huffman Hall, located at 8134 Mesa Drive
- Tuesday, January 12th 11:30 AM-1:30 PM at Austin Board of Realtors, Auditorium A, located at 4800 Spicewood Springs Road

Charrette Design Workshop: *Additional information is forthcoming about how neighbors can participate, as the workshop schedule is finalized.*

- January 24-29th at Austin Oaks Meredith Building (Building #11), Suite 264, located at 3721 Executive Center Drive

Mission Statement for the Austin Oaks Charrette: *Create a redevelopment plan for the Austin Oaks site that satisfies the values of the neighborhood stakeholders and is economically feasible.*

For more information, please contact us at aucharretteinfo@gmail.com