

Montopolis Neighborhood Plan Contact Team (MNPCT)

December 6, 2011

Mr. Stephen Rye  
Neighborhood Planning & Zoning Department  
P O Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767

RE: Case Number: NPA-2010-0005.03-McElhenney Tract- Change FLUM from Single family to Commercial land use.  
Zoning Case: C14-2010-0138-McElhenney Tract- rezoning from CS-NP, GR-CO-NP, & SF-2-NP to CS-NP (general commercial services-neighborhood plan).

Dear Mr. Rye,

The Montopolis Neighborhood Plan Contact Team (MNPCT) held two meeting regarding the final approval of the FLUM and rezoning for the above McElhenney Tract. At the November 7th meeting, the MNPCT members and other neighborhood members heard and reviewed the presentation by the City of Austin and representatives of the McElhenney Tact and voted 13 to 1 in support of the Flum and rezoning change.

The Montopolis Neighborhood Contact Team met December 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss the 31 acres that will be donated by the McElhenney family to the City of Austin Parks Department. The approval of the above zoning case above initiates the donation of 31 acres that are adjacent to the above property. We want to make sure that the 31 acres be classified as a natural preserve. These 31 acres have natural forest, wetlands and is home to wildlife. The MNPCT is also requesting that an archaeological study of the 5.8 acres that is adjacent to the Burdett Prairie Cemetery be conducted. The MNPCT wants to be equal partners in any development and/or reports that will take place in the 31 acres of land that the McElhenney Family is donating to the City of Austin.

Sincerely,

*Susana Almanza*

Susana Almanza

Vice Chair- Montopolis Neighborhood PlanContact Team

1406 Vargas Road

Austin, TX 78741

512/472-9921

Cc: MNPCT

Subject: Backup Material for Zoning Case NPA-2010-0005.03 – McElhenney Tract

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

This is a letter in support of Zoning Case NPA-2010-0005.03 – McElhenney Tract. Please find attached three draft documents to be included as backup material:

- 1) Natural Surface Trails Request, MTTANaturalSurface.docx
- 2) On-Street Route Review Request, MTTAOnStreet.docx
- 3) Main Spine Trail Proposal, MTTASpineTrail.docx

The Montopolis Tributary Trail Association has been working with the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program to prepare these draft proposals.

The Natural Surface Trails Request is a draft proposal for a natural surface trail that will mostly be located on newly acquired City property in the 100-year floodplain. This floodplain is part of the McElhenney tract that is being donated to the City and will be managed by the Watershed Protection Department.

These trail proposals are being attached to this zoning case because the approval of the zoning request will trigger the McElhenney family's significant land donation to the City of Austin. We want the public record to reflect that at the time of the land transfer to the City there is already a vision for how best to use this Watershed Protection land in the community interest. This 100-year floodplain should be officially declared as a nature preserve limited to natural surface trails for public access with no other types development.

This is a quote from the Natural Surface Trails Request:

"Most of the land within the floodplain is forested with many mature native trees including stands of Cedar Elm, Cottonwood, Live Oak, and Willow. The largest measured Live Oak is 44 inches diameter at breast height. The riparian zone is rich in other plant life. Observed wildlife include deer, rabbits, opossum, hawks, herons, red headed woodpeckers, horny toad lizards, snakes, toads, and even a blue gilled catfish. Underground dens, tracks, and trails indicate the likelihood of other animal species not observed such as raccoons or skunks. The Montopolis Greenbelt's importance as a sanctuary for urban wildlife increases as development encroaches green space in southeast Austin. MTTA recommends a more complete plant and animal study of the area."

In addition to support from the National Park Service, these trail proposals have attracted interest from American YouthWorks, Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, and Texas Parks and Wildlife, as well as from City staff in PARD, Watershed Protection, and Public Works.

We have organized more than 8 community service days that account for more than 2,250 person-hours of volunteer time engaged in trash and tire cleanup and invasive species removal. The next workday is set for January 16, 2012 as part of the MLK National Day of Service.

One chief concern we share is that the 100-year floodplain is downstream from the E. Riverside Corridor where it is anticipated there will be significant development over the course of the next 30 years. By calling for this newly acquired City property to be a nature preserve, we wish to prevent this area from being a potential site to construct a regional storm water retention facility that will destroy its natural function as a waterway and its environmental and aesthetic features, much like the proposed "improvements" happening around Shoal Creek right now due to development there.

We request that this memo and its three attachments be included as documents of public record attached to the transfer of title to the City so that it both supplements the Environmental Assessment as well as demonstrates pre-existing community engagement that speaks to the value of this land.

As part of the land transfer we ask that the Council officially declare it to be a nature preserve and in so doing limit any development and eliminate any possible threat that this property could be used as a site for structural controls to mitigate upstream development. All storm water structural controls should be required onsite upstream. This should be codified as part of the land transfer.

In addition to its environmental qualities, this land has a rich history and cultural significance for the Montopolis community and Austin as a whole. The Burdett Prairie Cemetery Association is responsible for a cemetery at the corner of Felix and Valdez part of which is also adjacent to the Montopolis Practice Fields. There is a gravestone that was placed there in 1910.

The cemetery carries the name of the family that settled this area as a slave plantation in the 1850s. Buried in the cemetery are descendants of slaves that Jesse Burdett brought with him when his family moved onto this land to start a cotton plantation. Today, descendants of the slave owner and slaves are members of Burdett Prairie Cemetery Association.

Our group has met with the association and worked with them jointly on cleanups. We all share a view that this land is culturally and historically significant and its cultural heritage should be preserved for future generations to come.

This entire undeveloped area that we are now calling the Montopolis Greenbelt – from the Burdett Prairie Cemetery to where the Montopolis Tributary passes under Highway 183 – is one that should continue to be studied and understood from a cultural, historical, and environmental perspective.

As a result of our efforts, graduate students from Texas State University have conducted water quality tests in the old stock pond on this property. During a community service day co-sponsored by the Alliance of Hazardous Material Professionals soil samples were collected and tested at various points in the watershed. Currently a UT geography student has volunteered to map and estimate the quantity and density of *Ligustrum* to help prepare a plan for invasive species removal. Members of our group have started to research the history of this area and as a result are interested in producing a video-recorded oral history. In addition, through the cemetery association an Austin Community College survey class has done some useful work in relation to the historical cemetery boundaries and graves.

As these studies have been initiated while the property in question was in the McElhenney family, they can continue – and even more can be done – when the property transfers to the City. We don't foresee a decrease in the community's interest in and commitment to this land when it becomes City property.

More exhaustive studies, such as a detailed cultural assessment, do not need to be completed prior to a zoning change and therefore prior to the land being donated to the City. The work of a cultural assessment can begin and continue after it becomes City property.

Our group is dedicated to working with PARD on any plans for the newly acquired PARD land.

Finally, the zoning change has the full support of the Montopolis Neighborhood Plan Contact Team. At its meeting on November 7, 2012 the MNPCT voted unanimously to support the zoning.

Sincerely,

Pam Thompson and Stefan Wray, Co-Founders, Montopolis Tributary Trail Association  
(aka Montopolis Greenbelt Association, [www.montopolisgreenbelt.org](http://www.montopolisgreenbelt.org)) Written Nov. 6, 2011

## **Montopolis Tributary Trails Association Natural Surface Trail Request**

### **I. Purpose**

This proposal describes one of three trail sections in the total Montopolis Tributary Trails Network. The focus of this proposal is the natural surface section of trail, the description of which is outlined below. The citizen organization in support of this project is the Montopolis Tributary Trails Association and its goal is to see this trail proposal accepted by the City of Austin as the property owner. This proposal will primarily outline basic information about the Montopolis neighborhood, followed by a history and actions to date of the Montopolis Tributary Trails Association as the trail network sponsor. It will summarize the proposed natural surface trail, its ideal purposes, and conclude by describing what is needed from the City of Austin.

### **II. The Montopolis Tributary Trail Network**

The Montopolis Tributary Trail Network (MTTN) will serve people living in Montopolis along and near the trail corridors. Montopolis residents currently have access to just a few short neighborhood trails: one in Montopolis Park on Montopolis Dr. and one in Civitan Park on Vargas Rd. in addition to 2.3 miles in Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park slightly farther away. In total, these trails currently amount to approximately 2.7 miles for pedestrians and bike riders. The desire of the following nature trail proposal is to incorporate the MTTN of trails and bikeways into the Montopolis neighborhood for the purposes of both recreation and transportation. The MTTN will link neighborhood destinations as well as provide access to other present and proposed arterial bikeway and trail systems in order to connect residents to additional parts of the Austin metropolitan area. The proposed MTTN will add significant trail mileage, for both residents of the older parts of Montopolis and the recently built, and future planned, single family and multifamily housing developments. Additionally, it will increase access for all Austin residents who enjoy hike and bike trails in other parts of the city. The MTTN consists of three different segments. The main spine trail which will connect E. Riverside Dr. to the Montopolis neighborhood and the proposed natural surface trail both traverse City of Austin Watershed Protection Department and Austin Parks and Recreation Department property with an overlying Austin Energy highline easement. The third segment, on-street bikeway routes, connect the Montopolis Greenbelt to Roy G Guerrero Colorado River Park.

The overall goal of this proposal, the natural surface trail section, is to provide the Montopolis neighborhood access to trail in open green space, allowing for a range of recreational activities from hiking to bird watching. The following describes the specifics of the citizen group recommendations for this natural surface trail section.

### **III. The Montopolis Tributary Trails Association**

The Montopolis Tributary Trails Association (MTTA) formed in February 2010 as a group of neighbors and friends who work together to create hike, bike, and nature trails and to cleanup creeks and land in the Montopolis Greenbelt. At present they have raised a total of \$24,000 through various grants from the Austin Park Foundation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and from the Hazardous Waste Professionals Association. This is coupled with a significant number of hours spent on volunteer work. This includes more than 8 workdays cleaning up sections of the greenbelt with a combined total of more than 2,250 person-hours of volunteer time. MTTA is dedicated to advocating for and supporting the work to establish the proposed MTTN: the on-street portion, the natural surfaced trail, and the main spine trail.

MTTA, in regards to this natural surface trail proposal, is interested in supporting its construction and will have a high degree of interaction with the maintenance and safety enforcement on the trail itself. As a voluntary citizen group that resides within the Montopolis neighborhood, they are the direct benefactors of this trail and are dedicated to its sustainability. Activity on behalf of the natural surface trail will include trail maintenance days such as cleanups and repairs. Underbrush and overgrowth management will be an aspect of the long term invasive species management plan and will provide MTTA with opportunities to monitor how the community is treating their space. These activities will be augmented by regular patrols of the property to ensure the safety of the trail and trail users.

### **IV. Proposed Trail and Associated Issues**

This proposal describes the natural surface section that will eventually be one section of the total MTTN (see map: Figure 1.). Below is map of the proposed natural surface trail (see map: Figure 2.) that the MTTA developed in conjunction with neighborhood residents and trail enthusiasts with the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA), City of Austin staff, and American YouthWorks.

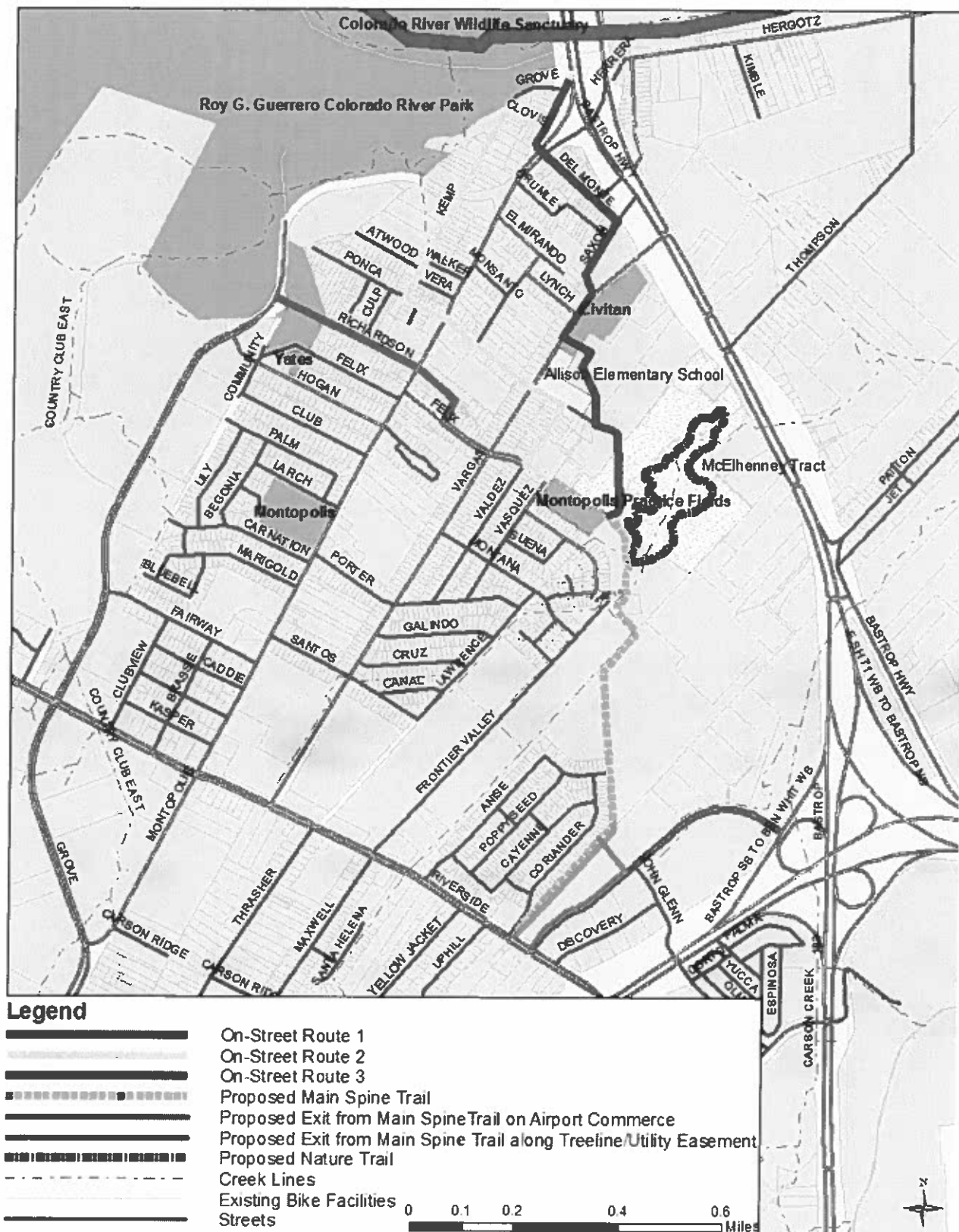


Figure 1. This map depicts the combination of all three MTTN sections: this proposed natural surface trail, the three on-street route alternatives, and the main spine trail.

On April 30, 2011, a group of 29 people gathered at the Montopolis Practice Fields, located at 901 Vasquez Street. Facilitated by the NPS-RTCA program, volunteers were divided into three groups to examine the three major sections of the MTTN: the on-street section, the natural surface trail, and the main spine trail from E. Riverside Drive. The natural surface trail group consisted of NPS-RTCA staff, American YouthWorks staff, City Watershed Protection staff, and Montopolis neighborhood residents, who walked the property with GPS units and took notes on possible routes for the desired natural surface trail.

The Montopolis Greenbelt property sits on the northeast side of the Montopolis neighborhood (see Figure 2.). A portion of property owned by the McElhenney family was donated to the City of Austin in October of 2011 with ownership approval given by the city council in early December 2011. Approximately 20 acres was donated to the Watershed Protection Department property and roughly 4 acres to City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. The natural surface trail is being proposed for the newly acquired Watershed Protection property in the 100-year flood plain. The Austin Energy easement access and use will require official review for the natural surface trail approval. Efforts have been made by NPS-RTCA and MTTA to contact Austin Energy directly who have committed to inspecting the official proposed trail layout once it has been confirmed by MTTA and the appropriate City of Austin departments.

Inside its boundaries is the confluence of three upstream tributaries that have their headwaters south of E. Riverside Drive. The wet weather creek in the floodplain forms a braided path with water in several channels. It serves to slowdown and filter water on its route downstream to the main branch of Carson Creek (0.5 miles) and the Colorado River (2 miles). An old stock pond, dry in this drought, indicates the historic agriculture use of this area. Most of the land within the floodplain is forested with many mature native trees including stands of Cedar Elm, Cottonwood, Live Oak, and Willow. The largest measured Live Oak is 44 inches diameter at breast height. The riparian zone is rich in other plant life. Observed wildlife include deer, rabbits, opossum, hawks, herons, red headed woodpeckers, horny toad lizards, snakes, toads, and even a blue gilled catfish. Underground dens, tracks, and trails indicate the likelihood of other animal species not observed such as raccoons or skunks. The Montopolis Greenbelt's importance as a sanctuary for urban wildlife increases as development encroaches green space in southeast Austin. MTTA recommends a more complete plant and animal study of the area.

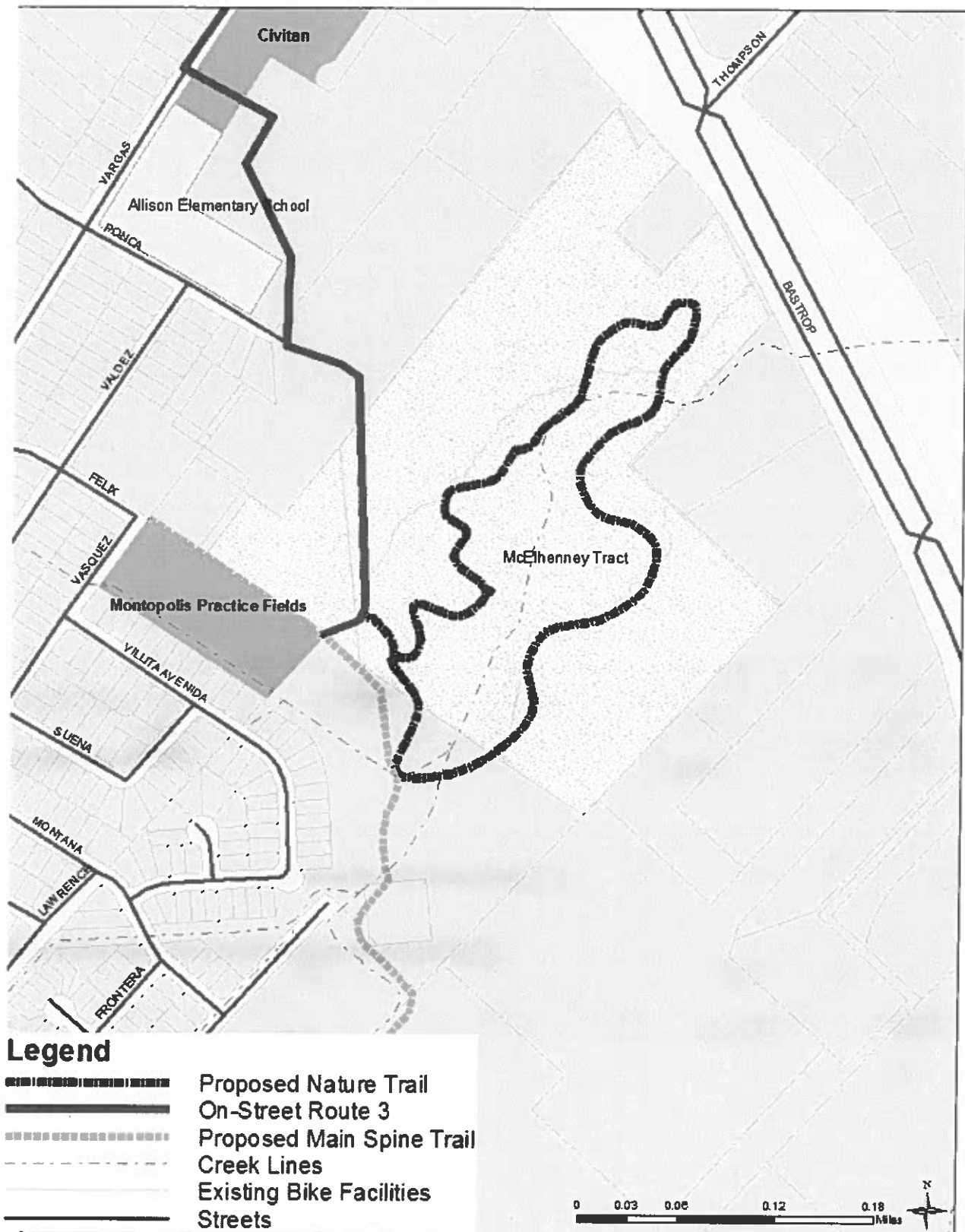


Figure 2. This map provides a close up perspective of the proposed natural surface trail inside the MTTN.



There is an abundance of undesirable invasive species on the property and currently MTTA is seeking approval from the Watershed Protection Department to establish a removal and restoration plan for the property as a whole. Any efforts to clear the property of the species will be coordinated with the trail layout and design. Any large patches of vegetation removal in sight of the trail will be conducted in conjunction with a revegetation plan so the scenic and shade impacts on the trail to not dissuade trail use. The invasive species present on the property are large areas of Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) and smaller areas of Chinaberry.

Trash and waste management issues exist on the property and are a focus area for MTTA. There is a location on the property that consistently accumulates waste of all kinds, both from illegal dumping and from wind or water runoff that comes in upstream from area roadways and from the neighborhood streets. Currently, the sources of this trash are being identified by both MTTA and the Watershed Department with the intent of developing solutions at the source. Steps are being taken to keep illegal use of the property down such as “no trespassing” signs and fences to block or limit free access.

Finally, it is the desire of MTTA to see that this natural surface trail achieve official trail status with the City of Austin urban trails plan/Austin Parks and Recreation trail plans. MTTA will follow the best practices in trail design guidelines outlined in approved national trail standards set forth by such groups as the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) or American YouthWorks. The expertise and advice of the City of Austin staff will be sought after and utilized by MTTA. If necessary, after trail approval from the City, the plans will be sent for review and approval by the appropriate boards and commissions as well.

## **V. Goals of the Natural Surface Trail**

As growth in Austin continues to amplify, the Montopolis neighborhood will be further surrounded by development. The MTTN will serve as a buffer between properties used for single family and multifamily residences and properties zoned for commercial and industrial park. This property functions as open space habitat and watershed protection within the city limits of Austin and could serve a dual purpose with smart and effective recreation planning.

The first goal of the proposed natural surface trail section is to encourage Montopolis neighborhood residents to be more active and healthy outside. With another safe and accessible

trail inside the Montopolis neighborhood, residents and their families would have the opportunity to be more proactive about disease prevention.

Additionally, this proposed natural surface trail will provide a location to support and sustain prolonged citizen involvement in the MTTN. Basketball courts, baseball fields, open fields, and playgrounds are just a few of the features that are enjoyed currently by families in the Montopolis neighborhood. The natural surface trail will be connected to the Montopolis Practice Fields. At present, these fields lie in a state of decline with a parking lot that is incorrectly surfaced and fields in disrepair with illegal dumping a common occurrence. Increased and safe connectivity to these greenspace areas for recreation will encourage usage, cleanup, and development of other community activities such as community gardens and outdoor youth programs.

Long-term goals in the foreseeable future are the potential for this trail section to connect Montopolis neighborhood residents with access to and from US Highway 183. When the US Highway 183 toll way is constructed, the associated pedestrian and bike path that will parallel this major traffic artery will likely increase as well be a desired bike/pedestrian transportation linkage. Commuters electing to use alternative modes of transportation such as bicycles would likely seek the most direct route to their ultimate destinations, where a link off US Highway 183 would quickly get the trail user to major points in the Montopolis neighborhood. From US Highway 183, a trail user could link to Allison Elementary school, the Montopolis Practice Fields, community library, and through connects to other parts of the MTTN, eventually to Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park, Austin Community College (ACC) Riverside Campus, and even downtown Austin.

## **VI. Implementation Strategies**

### **A. Partnerships**

MTTA has successfully partnered with multiple agencies thus far to accumulate resources and to further the MTTN goals. Past and current partnerships include NPS-RTCA, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, and the Hazardous Waste Professionals Association. MTTA is currently working on building its capacity as an organization to form and develop further partnerships to assist in the achievement of their goals.

Additionally, MTTA will follow the best practices in trail design guidelines and when on parkland, would seek the expertise and advice of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. MTTA is willing to advocate for approval of any plans that need to be reviewed by the boards and commissions. It is the foremost goal of MTTA that the Montopolis Tributary Trails Network meets all user needs and that all safety issues have been addressed.

## **B. Combination of Roles**

MTTA is the unincorporated nonprofit, citizen group advocating for the development and maintenance of the MTTN. To develop this natural surface trail section, MTTA is willing to offer \$23,273 obtained by the Austin Parks Foundation from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Recreation Trail Program (includes match) on MTTA's behalf.

MTTA plans on spending a portion of their money on enhancing their organizational capacity through marketing for more organization members pulled from residents within the Montopolis neighborhood to maintain the trails and greenspace. The proposed natural surface trail will not require City of Austin upkeep. MTTA proposes to participate in the roles of volunteer support for trail design and implementation, as well as maintenance and cleanups. Additionally, MTTA will seek this trail's inclusion in the Montopolis Neighborhood Plan as well as approval from all appropriate Montopolis neighborhood associations, support groups such as family or health groups, and bike advocates. This will include, but is not limited to, Montopolis neighborhood representatives in attendance at relevant City of Austin board and council meetings, volunteer clean up days, as well as further fundraising for other portions of the MTTN.

## **VII. Summary**

In conclusion, this natural surface trail proposal seeks to achieve official recognition in the urban trail plan and/or Parks and Recreation Department trail plans by the City of Austin. The proposing citizen organization, the Montopolis Tributary Trail Association exists to provide the support in volunteer hours towards trail coordination through the approval and permitting process with the City of Austin, trail design and construction, and through maintenance and cleanup days. In total, the Montopolis Tributary Trail Network consists of three different sections of trail, the on-street section, the natural surface trail section, and the main connection trail to E. Riverside Dr. The contents of this proposal have focused on the natural surface trail

section. MTTA would like official trail plan and/or urban trail designation given to this trail section of the MTTN so that it aligns with the same designations being sought after for the MTTN in its entirety. Finally, MTTA as they continue to grow their capacity will remain flexible to the needs of the City of Austin through this approval process and provide any additional information and support upon request.

## **VIII. Appendix**

### **A. Appendix A: MTTA contact information**

Stefan Wray  
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(512) 983-5852  
stefan@iconmedia.org

## **Montopolis Tributary Trails Association Main Spine Trail Proposal**

### **I. Purpose**

This proposal describes one of three trail sections in the total Montopolis Tributary Trails Network. The focus of this proposal is the main spine trail section, which is outlined below. The citizen organization in support of this project is the Montopolis Tributary Trails Association and its goal is to see this route accepted by the City of Austin as a part of its overall bikeway and trail network plans. This proposal will primarily outline the basic information about the Montopolis neighborhood, followed by a history and actions to date of the Montopolis Tributary Trails Association as the trail network advocate. It will summarize the main spine trail route, its ideal purposes, and conclude by describing what is needed from the City of Austin.

### **II. The Montopolis Tributary Trail Network**

The Montopolis Tributary Trail Network (MTTN) will serve people living in Montopolis along and near the trail corridors. Montopolis residents currently have access to just a few short neighborhood trails: one in Montopolis Park on Montopolis Dr. and one in Civitan Park on Vargas Rd in addition to 2.3 miles in Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park slightly farther away. The desire of the following main spine trail proposal is to incorporate the MTTN of trails and bikeways into the Montopolis neighborhood for the purpose of both recreation and transportation. The MTTN will link neighborhood destinations as well as provide access to other present artery trail systems in order to connect residents to additional parts of the Austin metropolitan area. The proposed MTTN will add significant trail mileage for both residents of the older parts of Montopolis and the recently built, and future planned, single family and multifamily housing developments. Additionally, it will increase access for all Austin residents who enjoy hike and bike trails to new trails and another part of the city. The MTTN consists of three different segments; the proposed main spine trail which will connect E. Riverside Drive to the Montopolis neighborhood, the natural surface trail located on City of Austin Watershed Department and Austin Parks and Recreation Department property, and the on-street bikeway routes.

The future goal of this proposed main spine trail section is to ultimately connect the Montopolis neighborhood to the proposed Riverside transit stop, to provide bike access to the airport to the east, and across the Colorado River to reach downtown Austin to the north. The

following describes the specifics of the main spine trail, citizen-developed hike and bikeway suggestions.

### **III. Benefits of the Connections and Routes**

As growth in Austin continues to amplify, the Montopolis neighborhood will be further surrounded by development. The MTTN will serve as a buffer between properties developed for single family and multifamily residences and properties used for commercial and industrial park purposes. It will add access to the Riverside Meadows neighborhood that currently has points of entry and exit for foot, bicycle, and car traffic only on E. Riverside Drive.

The first goal of this designated main spine pedestrian and bike route will be to link residents with their jobs and schools. Inside of the Montopolis neighborhood is Allison Elementary School, a school within the Austin Independent School District (AISD). Allison Elementary is located in the heart of the Montopolis neighborhood and has a student population of approximately 534 students with 65 faculty and staff. This school provides multiple important services to the community, including Extend-A-Care afterschool programming. Additionally, the Austin Community College (ACC) Riverside Campus lies along the proposed bike routes close to Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park. The proposed bike and pedestrian routes that are a part of the MTTN will provide safe, easy, and healthy transportation alternatives within the neighborhood to Allison Elementary, to local, small businesses, and to the larger scale network of trails associated with downtown Austin as well. The MTTN will provide connectivity, especially bicycle transportation to the trail system in the Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park and to the eastern terminus of the Lance Armstrong Bikeway via the Montopolis Bridge and US Highway 183 that will eventually be closed to car traffic.

The second goal of this proposed main spine trail is to provide a link to the MTTN connections to Civitan Park, Montopolis Park, and Montopolis Practice Fields for recreation. This proposed route identifies the citizens' opinion of the safest path to these locations for families who are traveling to take advantage of what these facilities have to offer. Basketball courts, baseball fields, open fields, and playgrounds are just a few of the features that are enjoyed currently by families in the Montopolis neighborhood. At present, the Montopolis baseball fields lie in a state of decline with a parking lot whose surface is deteriorating with illegal dumping a somewhat common occurrence. Increased and safe connectivity to these recreations areas will encourage the returned usage, cleanup and development of other community activities such as

community gardens, outdoor youth programs, while bringing additional consumers to area businesses.

#### **IV. Montopolis Tributary Trails Association**

The Montopolis Tributary Trails Association (MTTA) formed in February 2010 as a group of neighbors and friends who work together to create hike, bike, and nature trails and to clean up creeks and land in the MTTN. At present they have raised a total of \$24, 000 through various grants from the Austin Park Foundation, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and from the Hazardous Waste Professionals Association. This is coupled with a significant number of hours spent on volunteer work. This includes more than 8 workdays cleaning up sections of the greenbelt with a combined total of more than 2,250 person-hours of volunteer time. MTTA is dedicated to fulfilling the work ahead to establish the MTTN: the on-street portion, the natural surfaced trail, and the main spine trail. MTTA, in regards to this main spine trail proposal, is not proposing to lead the development effort once the City determines a route and funding mechanism. MTTA will offer to provide voluntary trail cleanups and general citizen patrols for any issues that could arise.

#### **V. Proposed Main Spine Trail Route and Associated Issues**

This proposal describes the main spine trail (see map: Figure 1.) that will eventually be one section of the total MTTN. Below is the proposed route that the MTTA developed in conjunction with neighborhood residents and trail enthusiasts with the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Conservation Assistance Program (NPS-RTCA), City of Austin staff, and American Youth Works. On April 30, 2011, a group of 29 people gathered at the Montopolis Practice Fields, located at 901 Vasquez Street. Facilitated by the NPS-RTCA program, volunteers were divided into three groups to examine the three major sections of the MTTN: the on-street section, the natural surface trail, and the main spine trail from E. Riverside Drive. The main spine trail group walked the following route and developed bikeway design alternatives and questions based on their desired outcomes. It is the desire of MTTA to see that this main spine trail be added to the City's official bike plan and scheduled for design and construction through the City's funding mechanisms.

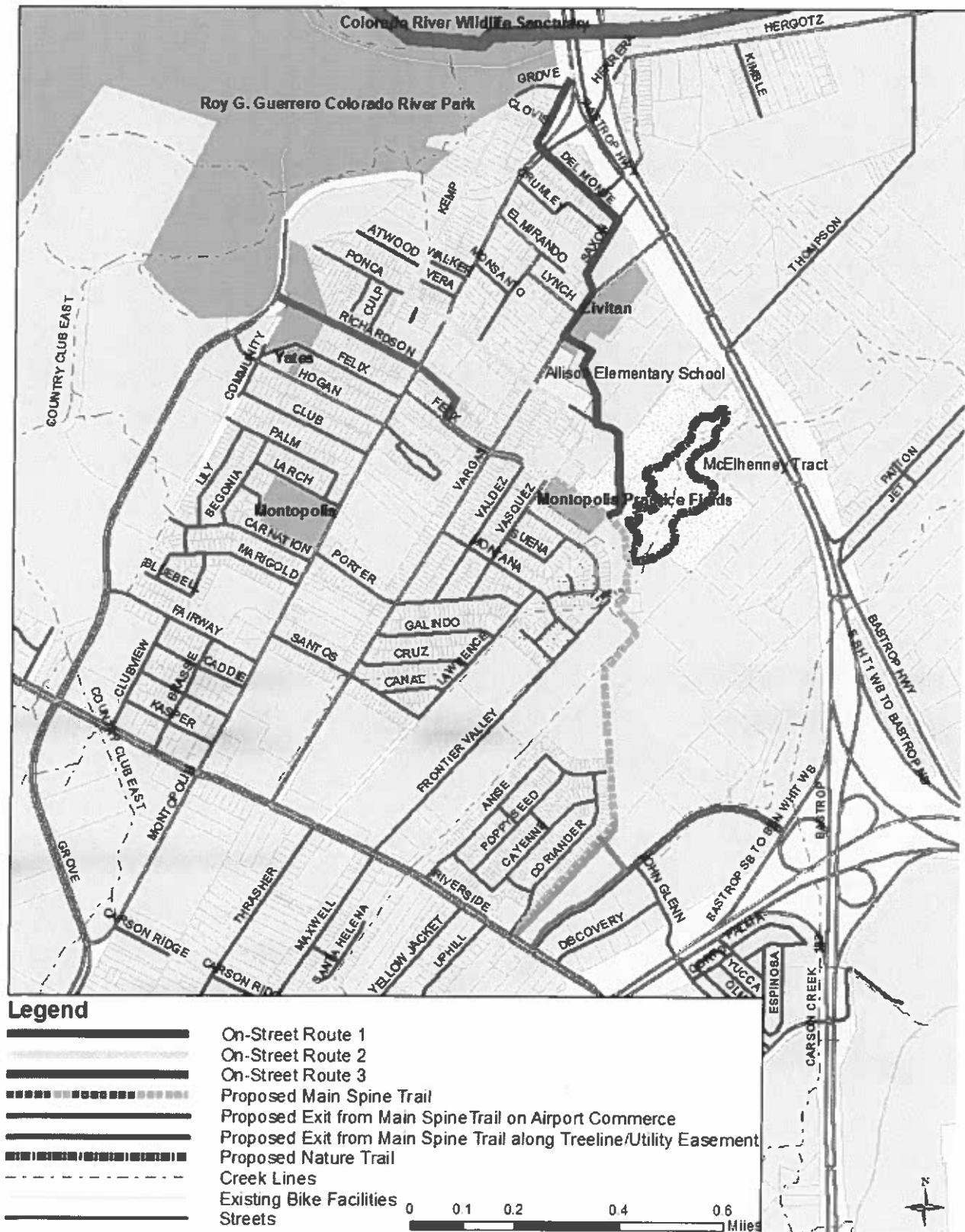


Figure 1. This map depicts the combination of all three MTTN sections: this proposed main spine trail, the natural surface trail, and the three different on-street route alternatives.



The main spine trail has three alternative routes, **Route 1**, **Route 2**, and **Route 3**, that were developed by Montopolis residents, and it is their desire to see a route implemented in steps with a place-holder/phased trail. A phased trail implementation design means the initial trail put into place will be marked with semi-permanent materials, such as gravel, crushed granite, or mulch. The final intention of the trail plan will mean that a permanent trail material will be later constructed in its place. All three possible routes run from E. Riverside Dr. to the Simmons Vedder property to the Montopolis Practice Fields. Each route will require some form of landowner permission, acquisition or easement for trail use from Simmons Vedder. The route alternatives with their associated issues are described below.

**Route 1** (see map: Figure 2.) departs from current bus stop 350 on E. Riverside Dr. and stays close to the Riverside Meadows neighborhood fence line to the Simmons Vedder property. The property that runs from E. Riverside Dr. is owned by Southeast Austin Associates: Bennett Realty Group. The suggestion is to use the pipeline or power line right of way (ROW) over the Simmons Vedder property (see Appendix B for more details). Use of this pipeline ROW may be subject to a city ordinance that requires a 50' setback from residential land use. The HOA does own the street corner at E. Riverside Dr. and Coriander and this could possibly be considered to locate the trail from E. Riverside Dr. There is currently a row of poor quality trees along this described trail corridor section that could be kept for the shade or cut down and replaced with more desirable species. A steep slope from E. Riverside Dr. will need to be negotiated through engineering design to reach the remainder of the trail corridor, which is at a lower elevation, and then relatively flat.

**Route 2** (see map: Figure 2.) follows along the power line easement through the Simmons Vedder property and avoids the Riverside Meadows HOA property. This route connects to bus stop 350 on E. Riverside Dr. **Route 2**, is less intrusive of the residents, follows along a commercial parking lot, but is less scenic. The same need for an engineering design to negotiate the steep slope from E. Riverside Dr. occurs in **Route 2**.

Issues associated with both **Route 1** and **Route 2** are related to the need to acquire certain easements and to setback the trail from residential land use. MTTA and the City of Austin will need to determine whether this main spine trail would be designed as an active or passive trail and how this designation would require a 50' residential land use buffer or whether it could be waived. It needs to be determined if the HOA property outside the fence line is designated as a

fire lane and if that lane can also be used as a trail corridor. It still needs to be determined whether or not the HOA would like open access or a locked gate to this main spine trail. Lastly, whether **Route 1** or **Route 2** is chosen, MTTA would desire a cut through trail or spur that will connect the spine trail to Airport Commerce Dr. and the near vicinity of hotels where guests could use the trail.

**Route 3** (see map: Figure 2.) uses Airport Commerce Rd. for the trail corridor. Presently there is sidewalk on the west side of the road which could be widened to a 10' hike and bike pedestrian trail. If biking on-street, all northbound bicycles would be required to cross the median and this would require a curb cut to allow them to proceed. The owners of this property are SFSV Hill Airport Commerce LP (see Appendix B for more details). This main spine trail route alternative is the closest connection to the proposed Light Rail Transit (LRT) stop on E. Riverside Dr.

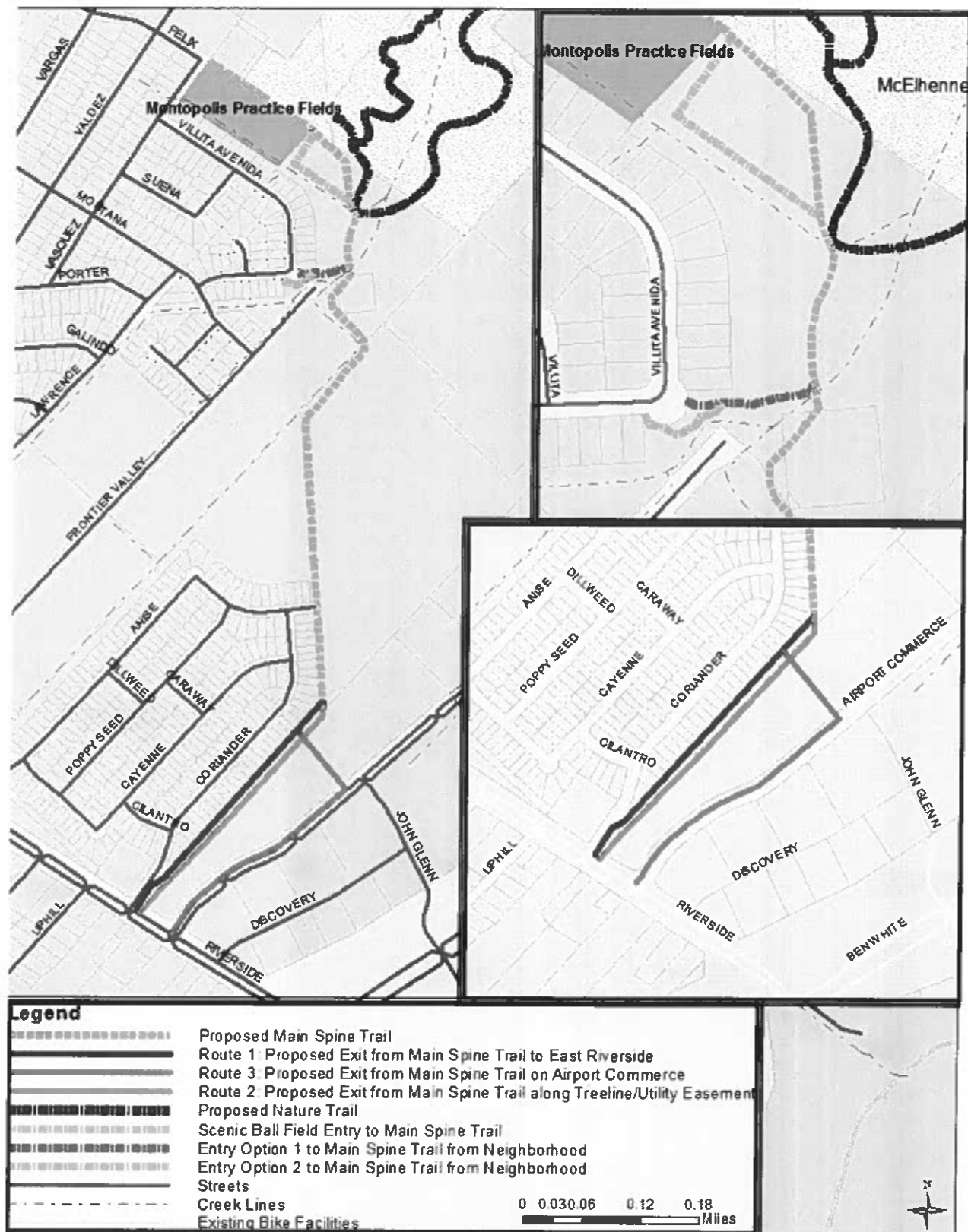


Figure 2. The main spine trail is given on the left hand side of this map, with two detailed pullouts on the right hand side that depict the alternate routes suggested.

All of the potential spine trail options, **Route 1**, **Route 2**, and **Route 3**, will need to travel along and/or cross Austin Energy utility ROW as well as use City owned land held by both Watershed Protection and Parks and Recreation. An issue associated with all 3 Routes is the clarification of ROW use for the cut through trail that runs underneath fiber-optic lines with the landowners, SFSV Hill Airport Commerce LP. Coordination and approval by these departments is a recognized task with which MTTA can assist or leave to the lead City department, likely Neighborhood Connectivity.

There are multiple alternative connections to the Montopolis Practice Fields and to Villita Avenida from the proposed main spine trail. Some alternatives are more direct and some are more scenic. MTTA expects the city to select the most appropriate route.

Spur trail routes are also desired by MTTA. In addition to the main spine arriving at the Montopolis Practice Fields and connecting to Vargas Street, MTTA would like to see a spur to Villita Avenida along a Watershed Protection access road and a spur over to US Highway 183 when the toll way authority completes the anticipated bike/ped side path after toll way development with scheduled completion in 2015.

Finally, a future vision held by MTTA is that the selected main spine trail route assists MTTN trail users with connecting from E. Riverside Dr. to Austin Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) LRT stop. This could mean the trail head would benefit from car parking for trail users. MTTA recognizes that City of Austin employee, Junie Plummer is one of the correct individuals to contact regarding the land easements and right of use. The MTTN placeholder trail concept is officially incorporated into the Montopolis neighborhood plan and MTTA is eager to begin work on the implementation of this trail process after a thorough review by Austin Energy and the use of their ROW property. A phased trail implementation design means the initial trail put into place will be marked with semi-permanent materials, such as gravel, crushed granite, or mulch. The final intention of the trail plan will mean that a permanent trail material will be later constructed in its place.

## **VI. Implementation Strategies**

### **A. Partnerships**

MTTA has successfully partnered with multiple agencies thus far to accumulate resources and to understand the depth of the MTTN goal. Past and current partnerships include NPS-RTCA, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, various

City departments, and the Hazardous Waste Professionals Association. MTTA is currently working on building their capacity as an organization in order to form and develop further partnerships to assist in the achievement of their goals. Additionally, MTTA will follow the best practices in trail design guidelines and when on parkland, would seek the expertise and advice of the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. MTTA is willing to advocate for approval of any plans that need to be reviewed by the boards and commissions. It is the foremost goal of MTTA that the Montopolis Tributary Trails Network meets all user needs and that all safety issues have been addressed.

### **B. Combination of Roles**

MTTA is the unincorporated nonprofit, citizen group sponsoring the development and maintenance of the MTTN. Currently, MTTA plans on spending a portion of their money on enhancing their organizational capacity through marketing for more organization members pulled from residents within the Montopolis neighborhood.

The proposed main spine trail, if developed to American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards by the City, would fall primarily to the City of Austin for its construction and general upkeep with MTTA proposing to conduct voluntary cleanups and general patrolling of all off-street sections of the MTTN as a whole. MTTA is interested in helping plant trees and improving the landscaping along the proposed main spine trail, especially as it traverses open meadow.

MTTA has already contacted Simmons Vedder to gauge the company's willingness to provide a trail easement. The response indicated a conditional "yes" but permanent easement terms would be better negotiated by the City.

Finally, MTTA will seek approval from all appropriate Montopolis neighborhood associations and support groups such as bike advocates in order to promote all portions of the MTTN. This will include, but is not limited to, having Montopolis neighborhood representatives in attendance at relevant City of Austin public meetings, conducting volunteer clean up days, as well as further fundraising for other portions of the MTTN.

## **VII. Summary**

In conclusion, this main spine hike and bike trail proposal seeks to achieve official inclusion in the City of Austin bike plan and/or urban trail plan for one or more of the routes. The proposing citizen organization, the Montopolis Tributary Trail Association, exists to provide

the support in volunteer hours towards trail coordination through the approval and permitting process with the City of Austin, trail design and general trail cleanup days. In total, the Montopolis Tributary Trail Network consists of three different sections of trail, the on-street section, the natural surface trail section, and this proposed main spine trail that connects to E. Riverside Dr. The contents of this proposal have focused on the main spine trail section and MTTA's desire for the City to become the developer of a hard surfaced transportation trail. Finally, MTTA, as they continue to grow their capacity will remain flexible to the needs of the City of Austin through this approval process and provide any additional information and support upon request.

### **VIII. Appendix**

#### **A. Appendix A: MTTA contact information Appendix**

Stefan Wray  
6911 Villita Avenida  
Austin, TX 78741  
(512) 983-5852  
stefan@iconmedia.org

#### **B. Travis County Central Appraisal District Information**

<b>Property Location on MTTN</b>	<b>Property Owners</b>	<b>Travis County CAD Property Number</b>	<b>Travis County CAD Ref ID 2 Number</b>
Main Spine Trail Routes 1, 2, and 3	SFSV Hill Airport Commerce II LLC (Simmons Vedder)	773243	03082001030000
Main Spine Trail Route 1	Southeast Austin Associates: Bennett Realty Group	806072	03121806060000
Main Spine Trail Route 3	SFSV Hill Airport Commerce LP	483297	03102001030000

Nov 7, 2010

We the Montoplis Neighborhood  
Contact Team met with a  
quorum & voted 13-1 to pass  
the plan amendment for  
Case NPA - 2010 - 0005.03 to  
change the FLUM from SF  
to Commercial & zoning from SF~~2MP~~  
to CSMP C14-2010-0138.

Thank you,

Jack J. Monroe  
Pam Thompson  
Mona Malmyatka  
Monica S. Allen