Planning in Austin: The Lillie Legacy
Richard Ransom Lillie
21 October 1930 - 22 June 2020
Born: Merrill, Wisconsin
Military: US Navy, 1950-54
College: University of Texas, 1955-58
Georgia Tech, 1961-63
In Memoriam

It was on a hot August afternoon in Austin in 1961 when I first met Dick Lillie. As a recent UT graduate, I was checking out job possibilities in city hall. And as it turned out, Dick was leaving for graduate school and his position as a research analyst in the planning department was open. I was hired and Dick spent the next several weeks teaching me the basics of his job.

Dick returned to Austin to continue his career in 1965 and when he finally decided to leave almost two decades later, I was again honored to assume his job responsibilities. And he was again there to ensure my smooth transition.

While I have often said that I twice replaced Dick, that is actually not true because Dick Lillie was not replaceable! In both 1961 and 1984, all I did was continue his work.

Over the past 60 years I have been associated with many many planners and, without hesitancy, I can say that none matched Dick’s caring, competency and character.

Dick personified the perfect professional planner. Period!

Jim Duncan, FAICP
Homecoming

Planning Coordinator
8 May 1965

Planning Job Goes To Richard Lillie

Richard Ramussen (Dick) Lillie, 24, has been named to the planning director of the City of Waco, said Mayor John M. Roberts today.

Lillie, who has been a planning coordinator for the City of Austin, said he would be happy to accept the position.

"I have been considering the options available," he said. "I am looking for a position that will allow me to use my knowledge and experience in planning and development."
“We are not concerned about whether growth, but we want to know when, where and how.”

Dick Lillie

“Neighborhood planning ... allows ... a planning system tailored to ... individual areas.”

Dick Lillie

“(Residents want) elimination of public and private policies which encourage growth.”

Dick Lillie

“If it wasn't for Dick Lillie, the whole thing (Goals Program) would have folded by now.”

Dan Love, Mayor Pro Tem
“All my vital signs were vital. When you are anxious about an occurrence or event and you have been working on it hard and you haven’t eaten just right sometimes this happens.”

Dick Lillie
**Housing**

“There is a segment of almost any community that doesn’t have access to the advantages the majority enjoy.”

Dick Lillie

22 May 1973

**Preservation**

“It would be tragic to lose all of our older buildings.”

Dick Lillie

23 May 1973
“The views are rapidly disappearing.”
Dick Lillie
9 May 1965

“Aesthetics
We have no voice in architectural design. There is really a need for (better) aesthetic design.”
Dick Lillie
16 Aug 1973

New view in Capitol battle seeks to draw shield zone

Planning Chief Sees Need For Aesthetic Guidelines
“Despite a history of floods, there wasn’t a city ordinance addressing creeks until 1974; no rules for building on flood plains until 1975, no requirements for runoff until 1976.”

— American-Statesman

26 May 1981
Watersheds

The Memorial Day flood occurred only three weeks after Dick warned that the City should be spending more on enforcing watershed development.

1 May 1981

Preservation funds cut for Williamson Creek

By PEGGY VLEREBOE

American Statesman Staff

An ordinance to protect the environmentally sensitive Williamson Creek watershed was in effect ditched Thursday when the City Council refused to appropriate money to implement it.

“We put ourselves and the staff in an interesting position” by passing an ordinance but not enforcing it, Mayor Carole McClellan said after she and Ron Malone were on the losing side of a 3-2 vote.

“Let’s either take the ordinance off the books or fund it,” McClellan said.

Planning Director Dick Lillie said he would “inform developers that we will not be reviewing or monitoring” developments in the watershed.

David Bodenman, chairman of a council-appointed panel that wrote the ordinance, was shocked that the council did not approve money for employees and equipment to enforce it.

“If they really want to enforce the ordinance they could reorder their priorities,” Bodenman said.

Council members Betty Himmelblau and Lee Cooke objected to where the money would come from. The proposal was to take $1,572,812 from the general fund ending balance. The money would have paid for enforcement through Sept. 30, the end of this fiscal year.

Councilman John Trevino joined Himmelblau and Cooke in voting against using the ending balance. Councilman Richard Goodman had left the meeting, and there’s one vacancy on the council.

The financing request could be considered again by the council any time.

Trevino said he would agree to including enforcement money in the budget for the next fiscal year. Waiting until fall would be a little late, said Bodenman, who wasn’t at the meeting.

The Williamson Creek watershed is south and west of the city and includes rapidly growing areas. Water that drains from it eventually flows into Barton Springs.

Environment

“A problem is getting us out of cars.”

Dick Lillie

18 Oct 1972

Environmental Group Formed

The period for development of Austin’s Environmental Master plan is to be 10 years. Councilman accepted the challenge months, said Lillie, with the help of the Austin Environmental study. for Lillie, the economic

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Utilities

“If the bond issue doesn't pass, there will be no more permits.”

Dick Lillie

21 Nov 1976

Utility Districts

“Eighteen months ago, we had no process for the review of municipal utility districts. Now, we’ve got the best in the state.”

Dick Lillie

10 Jul 1983
Annexation

“The (183 Corridor) is bursting at the seams to develop.”

Dick Lillie

17 Oct 1978

Interim Zoning

“(Eliminating) interim zoning is a massive procedural task, but one I asked the city council to fund on an area-by-area basis.”

Dick Lillie

25 Jun 1982

Austin doubled in area during Lillie Years
Zoning

“The ordinance should cut down on speculative zoning and speculative buying of property.”

Dick Lillie

7 Feb 1971

“Cluster housing in planned unit developments can minimize the negative impact of growth.”

Dick Lillie

25 Jul 1980

City okays stricter zoning law

By BRUCE HIGHT
American Statesman Staff

The City Council adopted without objection Thursday a new ordinance aimed at preventing Burnett Road-like strip development along the city’s thoroughfares. The new city law, which prohibits the construction of strip development like that on Burnett Road, will have to have at least 10 feet of buffering, and light industry must have 50 feet. The size and placement of commercial signs are limited. For example, each business is restricted to one freestanding sign. Other restrictions involve the use of billboards and require that signs on buildings be no higher than the roofline. Driveways off designated roads must be at least 200 feet apart. If traffic is heavy enough, right-turn lanes are required. Councilman Ron Mullen predicted the ordinance would prevent the developers from adding another single driveway or provide she thought it “will prevent the Biaccess to a side road.” Road-type development.”

Dick Lillie, planning director, said the major provisions of the new driveway restrictions would prevent too
“Even if we had two million people, if the right decisions were made, Austin’s quality of life could be maintained”

Dick Lillie

“We need a larger planning staff. We get so bogged down in routine processing that we don’t have the time for important issues.”

Dick Lillie
Accolades

“... instrumental in ... Barton Creek Plan.”

“... most competent planning director in the Southwest.”

“... backbone of the Austin Tomorrow program.”

Environmental Council

Ecologists Land City Planner

New City Planning Director Richard Lillie got a vote of confidence from local conservationists in the latest issue of the Austin Environmental Council’s newsletter.

The bulletin says Lillie has “demonstrated tremendous ability in the orderly, fair and nondestructive development of the city.”

It mentions Lillie as “instrumental in the development of the Barton Creek Plan,” a program for development of the Barton Creek area as a preserved natural resource of Austin.

Lillie, who has earned a masters degree in city planning from Georgia Institute of Technology, moved up from assistant city planner after Director Hoyle Osborne stepped out of the post to go into private consultant work last month.

Austin Association of Homebuilders

Growth of AustinAAHB Meet Topic

Austin’s past, present and since graduation. He assumed future growth will be his duties as Director of the subject under discussion when Austin Planning Department Dick Lillie, City Planning more than a year ago Austin Director, addresses members of subcontractors consider him to be the Austin Association of Home, the most competent and Builders Wednesday at 6:30 professional city planning p.m. in the Country Club of director in the Southwest.

The information to be covered

Growing in making the announcement will include changes which have L. A. Felder, AAHB president, taken place in Austin’s history, called attention to the fact that and how these changes have the meeting had been moved affected the city’s growth back over one day from its original. Growth estimates for the next schedule.

The evening’s social hour will affect growth patterns, will be sponsored by Longhorn identified.

Concrete Co. Lillie will also give a brief

Lillie received a BBA degree outline on how individuals can from UT in 1959, a MCP degree become involved in the planning from Georgia Tech in 1961 and process and decision making has been in city planning work that affect our city.

Austin Junior Bar Association

Lillie Wins Bar Award

City Planning Director Dick Lillie is the 1974 recipient of the Liberty Bell award, given by the Austin Junior Bar Association for outstanding service to the community.

Lillie was lapped for the honor for his work in the Austin Tomorrow Program.

“He has been the backbone of the Austin Tomorrow Program. Lillie has given generously of his time and his energies to ensure the development of the city’s Master Plan which reflects the wishes of Austin’s citizenry.” Paul Davis, secretary-treasurer of the junior bar said, in presenting the award.

Under Lillie’s direction the city planning department was responsible for administering the Austin Tomorrow Program, an effort that ultimately involved some 3,500 individual citizens during the three phases of the program.
City Council

“(Lillie) is a capable confident fellow. ... I never heard of anyone on the council dissatisfied with him, though a lot of the more conservative people felt he was too liberal. He did have his share of beards and Volkswagens working for him.”

Mayor Roy Butler

“The most unique thing about Dick Lillie is that he has survived in Austin through some very innovative planning efforts. He's a very diplomatic person, very talented in the art of negotiation. He has the ability to get along with everyone.”

Sally Shipman, Councilmember
“Decent is the adjective most frequently used to describe Lillie, a low-key administrator whose choir boy reputation is an accurate one: he really does sing in the church choir.”
“This office has never been controversial in my opinion. We have always taken the objective role. We never play favorites. We try to inform everyone who comes through the door what the rules are, if they want to play by them.”

Dick Lillie

Retiring “referee” lauded for fairness in city planning game

“I sincerely regret your decision to leave the city... I appreciate your many contributions over the past twenty-two years.”

Jorge Carrasco, City Manager
“What I have to offer is what most classes don’t have – that which comes out of real life, the approach of how it really happens.”

Dick Lillie
Dick and APA

Reception in Seattle

Limo in San Francisco

Award in Austin

Fellows in DC
SHORT TALES ON LONGHORNS

More than any other University singing group, the A Cappella Choir, under the direction of Dr. Archie Jones and famous across the United States, must decide upon its members at the earliest possible date.

Auditions were held last week and these Austin students are now members of the choir: Peggy Gregory, Jo Ann Hale, Sissy Johnson, Janelle Josephi, Julia Kniker, Lillie Hugh Sanders, Patch Shaw, G. H. Wheeler and Pat Williams.

First Methodist Choir To Sing

The sanctuary choir of First Methodist Church combines with orchestra of 21 pieces Sunday at 7:30 p.m. to present "The Christmas Story."

Soloists will be Norma Newton, Ross Hise and Jack Cantrell. Passages of Scripture will be narrated by Jim Farir and Sigrid Berg, Joyce Brewer, Arch Tilles and Roland Cole will join the soloists in the trio numbers.

The public is invited to attend this service. First Methodist Church is located at 12th and Lavaca Streets. Marvin Soward, minister of music for the church, will conduct the choir and orchestra.
The Lillie Legacy: 1965-1984

- Austin Tomorrow
- Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance
- Growth Policy
- Watershed Ordinances
- Capitol View Ordinance
- Loop 360 Ordinance
- Historic Preservation Ordinance
- Annexations
- Municipal Utility Districts