

Barton Hills News

July 2008

The Publication of the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association

Presidents Message

I love summer. There is something special about the weather. It's hot, it's dry, but the air is still cool. It makes for wonderful mornings and evenings. The challenge is the day when temperatures surpass 90 degrees and the ground here dries and becomes concrete. I've begun watering, but I can't water enough to break the concrete yard. I need rain. I pray for it. And, therein lies what's special. I have to learn to live with the weather as it is. My mornings are spent enjoying the cool temperatures and my evenings are spent trying to save my pants and learn to adapt to the environment. And, when I'm done, I sit out back in the cool breeze, drink a beer, and listen to a baseball game or listen to music.

The neighborhood has been very busy since the last newsletter. The Barton Hills NA gave money to one of our boy scouts for a project in the sunken gardens. New plantings should help showcase the pristine water emptying into Barton Springs. We've held another special meeting with The Terrace regarding height and placement of buildings. Still to be discussed are facade, noise, and what to do with the undeveloped portion of the property. Also, there has been concern regarding possible uses of properties on S. Lamar and adjacent to our neighborhood. The executive committee and volunteers worked to organize the annual Fourth of July Parade. Other items that have been discussed are properties not mowed along Barton Skyway and Neighborhood Watch signs that need to be replaced. We'd like to get a count of needed signs, so if you think your sign needs replacing, please email me. Finally, please maintain your properties along Barton Skyway. Your neighbors may not be asking you to mow, but they are telling me to tell you.

The guys at Barton Hills Mobil are gone. What a wonderful group. They've done fabulous work maintaining my 13 year-old Mazda. To be honest, the car belongs in a scrap yard--but it runs. And, if it needs work, I'll hunt Eddie down at D & B Auto on S. Lamar and tell him to fix it. Oh, he'll walk around it like he usually does; he'll look at me like I should have shot the thing a long time ago; but he'll take it in; and, I'll drive it out, and I'll run it till I have to shoot it. So, Eddie is at D & B Auto and Shaw is off to manage two stations, North Hills Texaco and James Ferguson Automotive, both on North Hills Drive.

It's off to new challenges for Mitchell and I. It has been a big school year for us beginning with Mitchell's first kindergarten day. Jill cried, grandma cried, and I thought that was just the silliest thing to do. But, on the third day of

school things changed. On the third day I walked Mitchell to class. I wanted to tell him bye and to have a nice day, but he automatically went into a routine. He took off his backpack and placed it on a hook, took out his water bottle and placed it on a table, and began taking his place in class. He automatically went into this routine and I felt as though I was forgotten. Mitchell was under someone else's control--then, I wanted to cry. That hurt. What happened to my baby? Things change. People change. Young people grow. Now Mitchell has finished kindergarten. We have joined the Boy Scouts of America, Pack 14, and Mitchell is a Tiger Scout. I couldn't be more proud.

It's time to think about next year's executive committee. If you or anyone you know want to participate in next year's team, please let us know. Our bylaws state that officers shall be elected for one-year terms at the last quarterly meeting of the year and shall assume office at the beginning of the next year. Also, officers shall not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same elective office. We need to have a full staff. Please join.

July's Agenda

Finally, July's agenda will be shorter than the last. As usual we will have food delivered by Rockin Tomato at 6 for 6. We will get caught up with Neighborhood Watch and prepare for National Night Out, and we may have an update on The Terrace. The rest is standard business.

As always, the pleasure is mine,
Eddie Torres
2008 BHNA President
matterhorneddie@yahoo.com

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From the Development Committee

City Council Hearing on BHNA's VMU Plan

Melissa Hawthorne and Nan Clayton attended the June 18 meeting of the Austin City Council. The Vertical Mixed Use (VMU) Opt-In, Opt-Out Plan for the BHNA section of South Lamar passed the Council on their consent agenda for the second and third readings. The neighborhood's approved plan of the lots on Lamar and Brodie Oaks are now part of the City's Planning Department records. A note or email to the present Council for their support of our VMU Plan would be appreciated as our Neighborhood Association has enjoyed the full support of the Council on this item. The exception is "The View" lot at 3600 S. Lamar. At the request of the owner, a separate zoning hearing is scheduled for Thursday, August 7, before the Council. More information will be made available prior to that meeting.

Presentation by the Terrace PUD's Developer to BHNA at July Meeting

A more detailed presentation by Rod Ahern, Developer of the Terrace PUD, will be made to the full membership of the BHNA at the July 15 regular meeting. Please make every effort to attend, as this presentation will be critical to the final product and its impact on the neighborhood and Barton Creek.

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Neighborhood Watch

As residents of Barton Hills/Horseshoe Bend we are fortunate to live in a very low crime area. However, we are not without crime completely. Home burglaries, auto burglaries, property thefts and criminal mischief are still occurring in our neighborhood on a regular basis although in small numbers. Small numbers or not, criminal activity in our neighborhood is intolerable and we must as individuals, remain alert to prevent and/or reduce the amount of criminal activity within our neighborhood. The BHNA Neighborhood Watch Program is the key to prevention. By serving as the eyes and ears of law enforcement we make criminal activity risky business for the criminal and therefore make the neighborhood a less likely area for criminals to ply their trade. Simply by being alert to unusual persons or activity on the block where you live and reporting these things to the Austin Police Department by calling 911 can make the difference. You, as a member of this neighborhood can make the difference.

As the Director of the Neighborhood Watch program for BHNA I track the reported crime in our area on a monthly basis using the automated crime statistics available from APD. I keep a running total of reported criminal activity in five specific categories which are the most prevalent of non-personal crimes (DWI, family disturbances, warrants, etc) So far this year our neighborhood has had the following criminal activity reported:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Auto Theft	0	0	1	2	1
Burglary of Vehicle	1	1	0	0	2
Burglary of Residence	0	2	0	4	2
Criminal Mischief	2	0	0	0	1
Thief	4	0	3	1	1

The numbers are relatively small unless YOU were the victim of one of these crimes. And what if one of these crimes occurred on your street or your block? The number 1 becomes too big to ignore. Your active involvement in Neighborhood Watch can have an immediate positive impact in reducing these numbers or, hopefully eliminating them altogether. We as BHNA members have the power in numbers of eyes and ears to do just that.

A neighborhood map will be available at all BHNA meetings that show the location of each of the reported crimes listed above. It is always an eye opener to see just how close to your home some of these events occurred. Don't miss it.

Some basic initial steps you can do to increase your protection and your neighbors protection against these crimes include:

- Get to know your neighbors. Watch out for one another.
- Know who is home during the day and encourage their watchfulness.
- Don't leave your garage door open. (a major source of free stuff for burglars)
- Place security devices on windows and doors (can be as simple as a hole & nail)
- Replace door lock screws with screws at least three inches long (\$2.00 protection)
- Report suspicious persons or activity by calling 911 (APD encourages this)

Additional NW tips and training are available monthly at the APD Southwest Substation. I attend each month, but please know that everyone is invited and encouraged to attend.

John Luther

Join Us

The heart and soul of any organization is the enthusiasm and creativity of its active members. The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association invites you to join. Dues are \$10 per household. Privileges include voting during the general meetings and responsible use of the Barton Hills Yahoo Groups listserve. Fill out our membership form to join.

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Greenbelt Guardian Report

It's My Park Day

We continued our "ramped up" Greenbelt Guardian activities this spring, hosting work days at both Gus Fruh and Homedale trails on April 12 as part of the citywide "It's My Park Day!" event, coordinated by the Austin Parks Foundation. This city-wide effort resulted in 1550 volunteers assembling at 45 different parks around the city to "give back" to our public parks.

At Gus Fruh, the finishing touches of the resurfacing project begun in January were completed at the trail entry. The polymer/granite mix was spread and compacted with the help of lots of youthful energy provided by students from the Travis County Juvenile Probation program and students from the Kipp College Prep School. They also used that enviable energy to gather and stockpile large boulders by our stone retaining wall project by the swimming hole. A city-led E-Corps group has since stacked the boulders into a strong retaining wall to protect the eroding creek bank and a vulnerable Sycamore tree.

In addition, masses of downed ligustrum trunks, branches, and stems from a previous work day were assembled into organized windrows, improving the trail view considerably, plus providing an erosion protection on the hillside. There are now views of rock ledges and native vegetation stands not visible before.

Many thanks to our team leaders who led the 64 volunteers in productive work, resulting in 222 volunteers hours: Stan Ostrum, Robbin Trusty, Mark Stachew, Bert Minten, and Jessica Wilson.

At the Homedale trail, we groomed the entry trail section, weed-eating the overgrown grass, and removing invasive weeds while preserving the expanding wildflower population. We also worked on improving the drainage at the entry by installing a water bar to divert storm water from the trail. Near the creek, we continued our increasingly aggressive and successful clearing of ligustrum. We had volunteers pulling

small ligustrum out of the ground with weed wrenches, volunteers "rocking and rolling" medium-sized ligustrum out of the ground, and volunteers accompanying a city-provided chainsaw operator who cut down large ligustrum while volunteers painted the stumps with round-up herbicide and spread the biomass. The prize was the revealing of a giant Live Oak tree, "free at last" from those dense, crowding neighbors.

Our "restoration plot" by the creek was cleared of more Nandina and the thorny Smilax vine, so we can better monitor the area. So far, the long dormant seedbank has been highly successful in covering the bare soil with a fresh flush of varied native species. There is a minimum of ligustrum resprouting.

We also pulled up more rolls of barbed wire fencing, a remnant from the frontier days, and collected bags of trash, mostly of the beer can variety.

We had a great group of team leaders to direct our 40 volunteers, who contributed a total of 163 hours of work: Nancy Koch, Johnny Barnett, Teresa Garcia, Kevin Deiters, Ken and Rosalie Russell, Jody Hughes, Yates Barreda, and myself.

Dirty Hands Caravan

We got a great lesson in "can do" when a call came in on April 25, requesting an organized outdoor volunteer opportunity for 150 people for May 1 - in case you hadn't counted, that allows 5 days to plan and execute! The call was from a Sean Penn representative, who was organizing a progressive youth activist biodiesel van tour from a concert in California to the Jazz Fest in New Orleans. The goal was to stop off along the way and do community service work. Too exotic a request to pass up.

With lightning speed, the Treefolks representative who received the request got the E-Corps program staff and students, the Austin Parks Foundation staff, the Austin Parks greenbelt staff, and our Greenbelt Guardians group involved in planning and executing three different work events on the Barton Creek Greenbelt: at Homedale, Gus Fruh, and Twin Falls trail. Our Greenbelt Guardian team leaders (Johnny Barnett, Yates Barreda, and myself) along with Charlie McCabe of Aus



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tin Parks Foundation worked with E-Corps staff to lead invasive species removal activities. We had 70 curious, fun-loving, productive youth from around the nation to work with for four hours. Invasives beware! 280 labor hours later, the land was less burdened with invasive vegetation and 70 young people understood better the threat that these plants pose to our ecosystems.

Upcoming Work Day

We will be working at the Homedale Trail on Saturday, July 19, from 8:00 am - noon. Wish us a cloudy day. We will be doing some more refined grading for the entry trail drainage and resurfacing project, and will continue the momentum on our invasive species removals and restoration activities. There is always lots of trash to haul out of the rock flats area.

BCP Trail Master Plan

Yates Barreda and I have been representing the Greenbelt Guardians as a stakeholder group for the creation of a Trails Master Plan on select Balcones Canyonland Preserve lands, in order to provide more public access for passive recreation while also protecting the endangered species that these lands were purchased to protect. The group meets every two weeks for several hours, to be oriented to the complexities of the land and its management, the protected species, the scientific research on species/human interface, and sustainable trail designs. The group is very capably led by city staff using a consensus decision-making process. It is exhausting and enlightening. The Master plan is due to be completed in August. We'll keep you posted.

Glee Ingram
Greenbelt Coordinator

Local Real Estate Information

With all of the news about dramatic increases in foreclosures and the bottoming out of the housing market, it's easy to become discouraged about our own home values and the future of our most important investment.

So far, Austin has managed to avoid the major catastrophes that many other markets, such as Florida, certain areas of California and even here in Texas, have struggled through. Although we have had some slowing during the past several months, the Austin and Barton Hills real estate markets are still relatively strong.

For all of Central Texas, expected home sales for February of 2008 dropped considerably compared with January 2008 and by about 10% compared with February of 2007. Many experts believe that this is a consequence of fewer entry-level loans being approved. Also keep in mind that any market will have trouble keeping up with the astronomical sales pace of 2006.

Anecdotally, I have noticed an upswing in homes going under contract here in Barton Hills over the past few weeks. While we will miss our friends who are leaving us, we all look forward to meeting new neighbors who will surely enrich our neighborhood.

For more information:

http://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Barton_Hills-Austin/6091/

<http://www.realestatejournal.com/toolkit/homevalues/>

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Statement - Jacob Vanhorn, Corresponding Secretary

I have been married to Christie Vanhorn for four years and we have two children: Caleb is 2 ½ and Hannah is 3 months old. I grew up in Southern California and moved to Texas in 1997. Texas quickly became home for me and we are excited to be in Austin after living in the DFW area for 10 years. Christie works from home as an internet market analyst, and I serve as the pastor of a new church community in South Austin (www.somaaustin.org) and the director of a new non-profit (www.loveaustin.org) that is working to restore people and communities in Austin. We love Barton Hills and look forward to serving this community.



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Barton Hills News

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24 area homes sold in the last year

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