

Barton Hills News

BARTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



Why Is AISD Asking for a \$1 Billion Bond?

The Goal: 21st Learning Spaces without a Tax Rate Increase

by Cherylann O. Campbell (Barton Hills Neighbor, AISD District 5 FABPAC Appointee & Tri-Chair) & Mark Grayson (AISD District 3 FABPAC Appointee)

Our public school district faces many challenges, from aging buildings needing repair, to schools so crowded that students are in decades-old portable buildings and are eating lunch starting at 10:30 am in very busy cafeterias. For two years, our Facility and Bond Planning & Advisory Committee (FABPAC) analyzed demographic and facility data, studied district-wide issues, and held many community engagement meetings.



We started with over \$4 billion in needs. It was a daunting task but we were able to cull the list to recommend bond projects to the Board of Trustees, focusing on “worst first” conditions, as well as efforts that create 21st learning environments for all students.

There are many reasons why these problems weren’t addressed sooner. Previous administrations didn’t have a well-organized, community-driven, strategic master plan for all school facilities. Some prior bonds narrowly lost because of this lack of a plan, lack of trust in past district officials, and the perception that the community hadn’t been properly consulted.

Over the past 15 years, the State of Texas’ “recapture/Robin Hood” system of school funding has taken nearly \$2 billion of local property tax dollars away from AISD. (Next year alone, the state will take more than \$500 million due to archaic school finance formulas that adversely affect Austin). Deferred maintenance which burdened our facility systems was left to a “band-aid” approach over the years because replacement funding was not available.



NEXT MEETING

October 24, 2017

• 6-9pm •

Please join us at
St. Mark’s Church
(corner of Barton Skyway
& Barton Hills Drive)

Featured Presentation:
Charles Crow, Austin Public Health Department, speaking about responsible pest control methods

Dinner & Social Hour:
6pm
\$8

Neighborhood Meeting:
7-9pm

VOTE NOV 7
EARLY VOTING
OCT 23-NOV 3

During early voting and on Election Day, voters may cast their ballots at any vote center in Travis County where there are “Vote Here” signs poster. For a list of polling locations and more voting information, please see the Travis County Clerk website, www.traviscountyclerk.org.

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Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published quarterly and supported by advertisers. It's distributed to homes in the Barton Hills neighborhood of Austin, Texas. For more about membership and neighborhood affairs, contact the appropriate person below.

2017 Executive Committee

President

David Poisson
president@bartonhills.org

Vice President

Scott Hoopman
vicepresident@bartonhills.org

Treasurer

Stan Ostrum
treasurer@bartonhills.org

Secretary (Recording)

Russ Riley
secretary@bartonhills.org

Community Partnership Coordinator *Position Open*

Corresponding Secretary

Kierra Francis
newsletter@bartonhills.org

Newsletter Design

Caroline Bhargava
newsletter@bartonhills.org

Austin Neighborhoods Council Representatives

Position Open

Committee Chairs

Committee on Area Development

Peter Hess
phess@mail.utexas.edu

Greenbelt Guardians

Glee Ingram
gleeful@earthlink.net

Neighborhood Watch

Position Open

Emergency Preparedness

Susan Donaldson
skdon@mindspring.com

Neighborhood Outreach

Position Open

Barton Hills Community Park

Roy Smithers
rorsmith@yahoo.com

www.bartonhills.org

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President's Message

By David Poisson, BHNA President

Greetings Barton Hills Neighbors!

It's hard to believe this year is going by so fast. We are into fall now and Thanksgiving and the winter holiday season will be upon us very soon. I had a great summer, although it went by fast. I turned the big 5-0 mid-August, which when I think back to my 18th birthday, I thought being that age was not possible. I'd have to say the highlight of my summer was going to St. John in the US Virgin Islands for seven days and Tortola in the British Virgin Islands for three days. There was lots of sun and fun and tons of snorkeling, which I love to do. I say this with a heavy heart though as within a matter of two weeks Hurricane Irma pretty much wiped out St. John and Tortola (and St. Thomas USVI) and 10 days before that my other favorite local beach destination, Port Aransas on the Texas coast, was pretty much flattened by Hurricane Harvey. It's hard for me to see all the news reports and not really be able to do anything about it. Yes I know, donate money to a worthy cause, but I'm the type of person that wants to be there helping with the clean up to restore these places that provide so much joy in my life.

Likewise I am now looking at the last few months of my two year run as the BHNA President, since I am stepping down after my two year term limit. I think back to October of 2015 when I volunteered to be president and I was really nervous about taking on the position and thinking "*what I am getting myself into?*" Although I had been on the executive committee as recording secretary and treasurer the 5 years before, I had a good idea of what I was facing, but now I was running the show. Unlike my predecessors who had lots of experience and contacts working with the city and county, I had none. Being a person that likes being prepared when stepping up to do a formidable task, this was a little disconcerting to me. Another thing that sort of crept in was the thought of leading the quarterly meetings. I generally am comfortable speaking publicly, but now I was the main person with all eyes on me, so I was a little nervous those first two meetings. I know I tried (and I do try) to keep the mood light at the meetings, have some fun, provide some informative presentations, and maybe garner a laugh or two generally at my expense.

I want to thank all my executive committee members over the past two years and the neighborhood committees I have worked with, all of whose contributions make this neighborhood such a great place to live. Two executive members who were of great help to me were Stan Ostrum and Kierra Francis. Stan was sort of my sounding board when I was having the unexpected dropped in my lap (such as the special event permitted parking), and needed someone to call up and give my initial thoughts to as far as plotting a course to address the issue at hand. The other big challenge was getting the newsletter back on track and Kierra was instrumental doing so, especially when she brought on Caroline Bhargava to do the layout design. Last but not least, our previous president Melissa Hawthorne was extremely helpful and had lots of insight for me when I was having to work with the city and parks department.

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bartonhills.org



David has been very active within the Barton Hills neighborhood, currently serving his second term as Neighborhood Association President, and serving on the executive committee for the past 7 years. This dedication to community is the type of service you can expect working with David on any real estate transaction.

Be in the know

with the last 3 months statistics of homes sold in the Barton Hills Neighborhood

	3rd Quarter 2017	3rd Quarter 2016	Percent Change
Homes Sold	18	12	50.00%
Avg. List Price	\$749,744	\$810,967	-7.50%
Avg. Sold Price	\$729,261	\$789,458	-7.60%
Avg. Square Ft.	1,949	2,254	-13.50%
Avg. List Price - SqFt	\$384.48	\$364.55	5.50%
Avg. Sold Price - SqFt	\$374.13	\$356.41	5.00%
Avg. Days On Market	40	38	5.30%

Search Criteria: Sold Properties from 7/1/17 to 9/30/17 - Barton Hills

***** 5% Listing Fee for Barton Hills Homes *****

For the most current market information in the neighborhood call me today at 512-707-9143

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The past almost 8 years I have been on the BHNA, being in contact with lots of people, I think it is safe for me to say that we have a very happy neighborhood in general. Everyone gets along for the most part, we love our particular street, we love our school, we all value our little corner of Austin, and we want to protect it and preserve it, especially since we are so lucky to have Barton Creek and Zilker Park at our disposal.

I appreciate everyone that has either stopped to talk to me, or written me over the last two years, with their praise or suggestions. Believe me I try to make everyone happy, although that isn't possible, but at least you know I did everything in my power and ability to make it as good as it could be. I'll still be around, likely the Austin Neighborhood Council rep next year and I will be happy to continue organizing our great 4th of July parade.

What I did discover, and actually I really knew this all along, was that we have a neighborhood full of incredible people who are incredible resources. I was able to reach out to anyone, at any point, and ask for help with whatever I was facing neighborhood-related when I needed some advice or direction. My executive committee both years was great as I wanted the decisions made to be a collective effort, not just one person, and I reached out to them making sure everyone was on board with whatever input was required with the item at hand.

Thank you Barton Hills !!!
David

**Neighborhood
Crime Statistics
7/1/2017 - 9/27/2017**

2 assaults
2 auto thefts
3 criminal mischief
1 criminal trespass
3 family disturbance
2 theft
1 theft of bicycle
1 theft of trailer

Our Coyote Neighbors *by Caroline Bhargava*

As part of our last neighborhood association meeting in July, BHNA President David Poisson scheduled a presentation by Adrienne Clark, Wildlife Animal Protection Officer from the Austin Animal Center. Adrienne spoke to neighbors about wildlife interactions and how to protect your property from coyotes. A self-professed wildlife and nature lover, she stressed the need to reinforce the coyote's natural wariness of humans. Here are some of her recommendations:

1. **REMOVE INVITATIONS.** Make your home less tempting. Don't give coyotes an easy meal. If you are having trouble with coyotes on your property or if you want to make sure you steer clear of coyote interactions, keep trash bins in the garage, clean BBQ grills, and pick up fallen tree/bush fruit. Cover compost piles and clean up spilled bird seed from feeders. If that isn't working, you can install motion-activated lights and sprinklers. Sprinkling chili pepper outside where the animals are accessing your property can be an effective natural deterrent. If you have a fenced yards with dogs, Adrienne recommends a coyote-proof fence that is at least 8' tall and made of material coyotes cannot climb, or a 6' tall fence with a protective device on top like a coyote roller. DIY alternatives include adding PVC piping or chicken wire to the top of the fence. See *image at right*.



2. **HAZING:** Coyotes are very smart and will test their boundaries to see how much they can get away with on your property. Without hazing, coyotes will learn that they don't have to fear people. So you have to be big, loud, and assertive, even if it feels ridiculous. Some surprisingly effective examples Adrienne demonstrated were: opening and closing an umbrella towards the animal, blowing an air horn, shaking a coffee can full of pennies, and spraying the animal with a water hose or a super soaker blaster filled with vinegar. And remember to switch it up. Coyotes get habituated to certain stimuli but can be taught to avoid your property. **Be persistent, not consistent.**



Coyote breeding season is January through March and they may be more defensive and territorial during this time. Especially down in the greenbelt, coyotes may challenge off-leash dogs that come close to coyote pups. Understand that the coyotes are defending their home, not randomly attacking. If you see a coyote while on the greenbelt or at night on the street, and it seems to be overly bold or aggressive, make eye contact, make loud noises (clap, bang something, whistle) and make yourself seem larger (raise your arms, use a jacket). Leave the animal alone if it is just walking by or off in the distance, and if it seems sick or injured please call 311.

Her recommendations to keep your pets safe: bring pet food inside, use elevated feeders, and consider building a cat enclosure for your cat to safely enjoy the outdoors. Please keep your dogs on a leash in the greenbelt.

Adrienne is available to perform a wildlife audit on your property if you are seeing evidence of animal activity, and she wants to know about any animal-on-animal conflict. She can also answer any questions over email or phone about specific wildlife. You can contact Adrienne at adrienne.clark@austintexas.gov or 512-978-0500.

Finally, a big THANKYOU to David for scheduling these educational, pertinent, and community-building presentations at our BHNA meetings! At the upcoming meeting on October 24th, we will hear about responsible pesticide usage from the city environmental health department.



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Getting Your Grub & Drink on in Dripping Springs *by David Poisson*

We are lucky in Barton Hills that we have so many great places to visit within the state of Texas, most within a 200 mile drive. Another great thing occurring right outside our city limits is a proliferation of great food and adult beverage producers, which I'm talking along the lines of beer, wine, spirits, and cider. You can take a short drive out towards Dripping Springs, all of 25 miles away at the most, and find very fine craft foods, restaurants, and beverages to satisfy a whole range of palates and likings.

First off I would have to recommend perhaps having a designated driver or get a group of people together and charter a small tour bus – the more the merrier right! I love the craft beer explosion that has happened in Austin, as well as our state, and I have amassed a list of close to 90 breweries that I have visited over the last 2-3 years. I also recommend trying a flight of beverages, whatever place you are at. This will give you 4 to 5 samples, usually 4 ounces, and it is a great way to get a taste of the all the beverages.

Head west out on 290 and once you pass Oak Hill and ACC in a couple miles the fun begins on Fitzhugh Road. On Fitzhugh you will find three breweries, two distilleries, a winery, cidery and two restaurants. Jester King will be the first stop. Very complex beers here, not your usual fare so come with an open mind. Also on the grounds is Stanley's Farmhouse Pizza. They make decent pizza to soak up the beer and offer a good selection of local craft beers that are a bit tamer than Jester King. The next stop down the road you will find Argus Cidery, Last Stand Brewing Company and Revolution Spirits. Argus makes a real unique cider, where they don't add sugar at the end, which you find with the commercial brands. The cider comes off more like a wine. Continue your southwestern journey on Fitzhugh and a few miles later you can get your wine on at Solaro Estate Winery. A little further down the road is the Treat Oak, a distillery and brewery that has a wide selection of craft spirits and the Ghost Hill Restaurant, which serves a bar type fare.

If you stay on Fitzhugh Rd, going west past Highway 12, you can stop at the Texas Hill Country Olive Company where they make gourmet olive oil. Hang a left a Bell Springs Road and stop at the Bell Springs Winery and then not far down from them is the San Luis Spirits distillery where they make Dripping Springs Vodka and Gin.

Since you are basically in Dripping Springs at this point let's stop and eat some grub. If you want something simple but really good grab a super fresh sandwich on homemade bread or a delicious pastry at Thyme & Dough. If you care for a finer meal with a casual setting, Creek Road Café or Homespun are great choices. If you feel like doing some country dancing, Mercer Street Hall has great local and regional live acts playing daily.

We are close to completing this gluttonous trip. If you take Hwy 12 a little south of Dripping Springs you can go to the Twisted X Brewing Company, where they offer very friendly beers for all beer drinkers. If not, take Hwy 290 back towards Austin and you will first encounter one of my favorite pizza places, Pieous, where they make a great Neapolitan style pizza, fresh salads and smoked pastrami. Not far down the road is Deep Eddy Vodka, where they serve up a wide range of cocktails featuring their various vodka flavors. Last but not least, about 2-3 miles down the road is the Suds Monkey Brewing Company, a relative newcomer to the Central Texas craft beer scene.

Ok, I hope you survived. I certainly don't recommend attempting to go to all these places in one outing. Regardless of whatever beverages you choose you will definitely wet your whistle and get to explore the back roads of the scenic Hill Country. If you would like further recommendations for any of the breweries around Austin or Central Texas don't hesitate to contact me as I can give you a good idea of what to expect.

Prost!!!

AISD \$1 Billion Bond *continued from front page*

Despite these challenges, AISD's Board of Trustees, the Administration, and our community-based FABPAC volunteers are trying to do it RIGHT this time. Here's some of the homework done before asking for a bond:

- Coming up with a proposal was not left solely to AISD staff. Instead, our Board-appointed, citizen-led FABPAC called the shots throughout. Since 2015, each of us represented a district Trustee and its constituents (you!), learned and focused on district-wide concerns, and pushed back on district processes so we could assure high levels of effectiveness.
- All 130+ of AISD's campuses were examined thoroughly by professional engineers and educational architects to identify all issues, not just the easy-to-spot ones. School communities then validated and/or corrected the data to assure it was accurate and well understood.
- The FABPAC spent time with each school community, learning more by listening. In more than 500 meetings large and small, we heard from more than 5,000 citizens.

The result was a 25-year Facilities Master Plan, approved by the Board of Trustees on April 3, 2017. It is a road map for all AISD facilities' future. The focus is on investment - modernizing schools and right-sizing them for projected future enrollment, instead of making temporary fixes that become outdated. Our long term vision is to have all children learning in modern, safe, warm and dry buildings. New learning environments will have better lighting, air and sound quality. Technology enhancements and modern educational space design will prepare students for future workforce needs, including collaboration, communication skills, and project/team-based learning.

Perhaps most importantly, AISD has carefully managed its debt, by paying some back early, building up a credit rating that is the envy of our region, and refinancing at favorable terms. That last point is a key reason why AISD can borrow this much money without needing to raise the tax rate. While taxes can still go up as a function of property value increases, the district will take concrete measures so that the tax rate remains unchanged (\$0.113 per one hundred dollars assessed valuation of real and personal property). Finally, by state law, because bonds pay for capital projects, as AISD pays money back, it can keep local property tax dollars to do so without the State of Texas taking large portions.

It is important that we get this bond passed to not only address current critical conditions in our immediate facilities, but also so we can continue to implement the strategic plan that ultimately fully modernizes all schools. Said another way, we need this bond to pass so we eventually get to fully modernize Barton Hills Elementary School, O. Henry Middle School, and other schools in our area. We need to need to keep the big picture in mind and assure the needs of all Austin's students can be met.

For more in-depth detail on particular schools, as well as district-wide plans for technology, buses, furniture, and security, check out www.austinfuture.com. Click on "View 2017 Bond Projects by School and Facility." You can give feedback at future@austinsisd.org or call 512-414-9595.

Cherylann Campbell will attend the October 24h BHNA meeting to address questions for our community.

BOND AMOUNTS BENEFITTING BARTON HILLS RESIDENTS

Barton Hills Elementary School	\$349,000
O. Henry Middle School	\$3.1M
Small Middle School	\$1.2M
Kealing Magnet Middle School	\$3.7M
Ann Richards School for Women Leaders	\$70M
Austin High School (new addition & systems)	\$30.2M
Liberal Arts & Sciences High School (relocated)	\$10.3M
McCallum High School (fine arts programs)	\$8.5M
House Park & Field	\$6M
Burger Center	\$1.7M
Rosedale School for medically/physically/mentally challenged students (relocated, fully modernized)	\$40M

See School Bond FAQs on next page

AISD Bond FAQs

What will the tax rate impact be for individual taxpayers?

Austin ISD does not anticipate an increase in the tax rate for our taxpayers. Taxes would increase as function of property value increases and other changes to county, city or other entities; however, the AISD rates will remain the same. This is based on assumptions used by district staff, which include anticipated increases in taxable assessed values, staggered issuances of bonds, and prevailing interest rates, as well as the district's conservative fiscal management practices, which are explained in more detail in the following questions.

Note: For taxpayers who are 65 years of age or older, it is important to know there will not be an increase in your taxes because taxes are frozen on homes of those 65 years of age and older who have filed the homestead tax ceiling paperwork with Travis County. The homestead tax ceiling is a limit on the amount of school taxes you must pay on your residence. When you qualify your home for an Over-65 Homestead Exemption, the school taxes on that home will not increase as long as the exemption is in place. The tax ceiling freezes your school taxes at the amount you pay in the year that you qualify for the exemption. Learn more about the exemption on Travis County's website. Learn more about the exemption on Travis County's website (<https://tax-office.traviscountytexas.gov/seniors>).

What if the bond fails?

Since the district is still paying off existing debt with the current debt service levy, the tax rate is not expected to decrease for several years or until approximately 2021. If the bond is not approved, the district would not be able to fund the proposed projects. School buildings will continue to age, and some schools would become more overcrowded while the costs for repair and construction would increase. The district would only be able to pay for emergency repairs with remaining 2013 bond contingency funds, which would likely be depleted after a year. After that, the district would have to use its operating budget to address emergency needs. Since the district has a shortfall in its operating budget, it would be unable to cover the costly repairs for aging facilities. As such, if the bond doesn't pass, schools would still need to be considered for consolidation and/or closure, and students would attend existing schools. Further, the implementation of the 25-year FMP developed by FABPAC would be substantially delayed.

continued on page 10



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AISD FAQs *continued*

How is it possible to issue bonds without a tax rate increase?

AISD can request additional bond authorization without a projected increase in tax rates based on assumptions used by district staff, which include anticipated increases in taxable assessed values, staggered issuances of bonds, and prevailing interest rates, as well as conservative financial management by the AISD Board of Trustees. This is a result of paying off existing debts, refinancing for better rates and rapid tax base growth. Based on the retirement of debt and the projected tax base growth, the district expects to have sufficient capacity to issue additional bonds without increasing the current tax rate.

In addition, the principal amount of outstanding debt will decline by nearly 60 percent over the next 10 years. The financing plan is to sell these new bonds over the next five years in a way that takes advantage of those declining payments and therefore doesn't increase the tax rate.

The district uses several market assumptions to forecast the effects of taking on more debt. While these assumptions could change, the district intends to manage its debt so that the tax rate doesn't increase, barring any significant declines in the market. For example, the administration conservatively estimated that the Interest and Sinking (I&S) tax rate to implement the 2013 Bond Program would increase by more than 3 cents. However, as a result of several factors—an increase in property values, paying off and refinancing existing debt, and lower interest rates than anticipated—the tax rate was reduced by approximately 5 cents between the 2014 and 2017 fiscal years.

How has the district managed its financial resources in the past?

All items promised in previous bonds have been delivered and/or are in progress. AISD's use of conservative fiscal management practices and allocation of resources has producing the following results:

- The lowest overall property tax rates in the Austin area for school districts in FY2017
- AAA debt rating from Moody's Investors Service, AA+ from Standard & Poor's, and AA+ from Fitch Ratings, which are amongst the highest ratings a Texas public school can earn from these agencies. This has resulted in millions of dollars of savings due to lower interest rates for the district's bond program and Austin taxpayers.
- 2016 School FIRST (Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas) rating of Superior Achievement for the 14th consecutive year
- The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts recognized AISD with a Transparency in Traditional Finances award. Recipients provide clear and meaningful financial information not only by posting financial documents, but also through summaries, visualizations, downloadable data and other relevant information
- The district has received the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 13 years in a row and the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for six years in a row. Austin ISD's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report has been judged each year by an impartial panel to meet high financial reporting standards. The certificate of achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental financial reporting and accounting. Its attainment represents a significant achievement by government and its management.
- The district has received the Association of School Business Officials International Meritorious Budget Award for excellence in the preparation and issuance of its school system budget for the seventh year in a row; and the Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fifth year in a row (pending sixth-year certification).
- Top-ranked school district in the nation for total amount of renewable energy purchased for the second year in a row.

Upcoming Events



- October 23-Nov 3:** Early Voting
- October 25:** Last Straw Fest at UMLAUF
- October 26-Nov 2:** Austin Film Festival (downtown)
- October 27-Nov 5:** Austin Beer Week (downtown)
- October 28:** Dia de los Muertos Festival (4th St.)
- November 3-12:** Wurstfest (New Braunfels)
- November 4-5:** Texas Book Festival (State Capitol & grounds)
- November 7:** Election Day
- November 11-12, 18-19:** East Austin Studio Tour
- November 15-Dec 3:** A Christmas Affair (Palmer)
- November 24-Dec 24:** Blue Genie Art Bazaar (Marchesa Hall)

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Once you're a BHNA member, you can join the Barton Hills listserv.
Visit groups.yahoo.com/group/barton_hills/ for more information about how to sign up.

2017 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Fill out this form to join or renew your membership in the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association. Annual dues are \$10 per household, payable when you join (for a new membership) or every January (for renewal).

Your Name: _____

Other 18+ members of your household: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please send this form along with your annual dues to:

Barton Hills Neighborhood Association P.O. Box 41206 Austin, TX 78704

Make checks payable to BHNA. You can pay dues online through PayPal at <http://bartonhills.org/about/membership/>.
(PayPal service fee of \$1 will be added to your total.)