Barton Hills News

BARTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Heart of Our 'Hood: Why Barton Hills Community Park Matters by Cherylann O. Campbell

Imagine the lot at 2108 Barton Hills Drive without a school and park, but with condos, housing, a private school, a business, or worse, with tall fencing around a deserted school building. Those are scenarios that may have resulted from closing Barton Hills Elementary School in 2011 when a school district task force proposed that very thing. Fortunately, neighbors, parents, and community businesses rallied to save our neighborhood school and ultimately influenced the way the district approaches facility planning.



Barton Hills Community Park mural



NEXT MEETING

OCTOBER 23, 2018

• 6-9pm •

Please join us at **St. Mark's Church**

(Corner of Barton Hills Dr. & Barton Skyway)

Dinner 6pm Torchy's Tacos \$10

Neighborhood Meeting 7-9pm

But that wasn't enough. We couldn't just stop. The school and park mattered more than before.



A side benefit of all that energy and activism is the Barton Hills Community Park Master Plan that we have today (see image at left). After the school closing debacle was behind us, many of us stayed engaged and brainstormed ways to make that school space feel like the center of our neighborhood, whether neighbors had kids at the school or not. What we learned shaped the master plan.

We heard that some people didn't use the playground because equipment wasn't safe or up-to-date. We heard that people were frustrated that we didn't have better parkland and sports fields in the neighborhood, instead of relying on nearby (but overused) Zilker and Butler parks. We heard that some people felt the park only belonged to the school district and not everyone. We also heard it was proving

difficult to hold large events like field days or the 4th of July gatherings due to erosion and space issues. The Friends of Barton Hills Park was established, and we took those concerns seriously. The initial "Friends" decided we would channel our energies from fighting to working collaboratively with the city, school district, and community at-large to improve the green space for the school and make it the "heart of our 'hood."

In December 2012, the park's master plan was eventually approved by the City of Austin's Parks Board and coordinated with AISD (at that time there were two distinct pieces of property which are now joint deeded). This was only after we conducted many focus groups and surveys and thanks to the volunteerism of neighbors with skills in city permitting, fundraising, landscape architectural design, negotiations, project management, and park construction. We wanted to get it right for the future.



New paved path

Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is published quarterly and supported by sponsorships. 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.

2018 Executive Committee

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Position Open

Emergency Preparedness

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Position Open

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Newsletter printed on 100% recycled paper.

President's Message by Mark Gentle, BHNA President

Dear Neighbors,

Your attendance at the upcoming membership meeting of the BHNA (October 23rd) is very important because we discuss our current business and future plans and vote on the membership of the Executive Committee. Many of our current EC members will be up for re-election, with the positions of President and Recording Secretary open. Please plan to attend this meeting!

While I do not plan to serve as the BHNA President next year, I do plan to continue to represent the Association on matters relating to Zilker Park, including the Barton Springs Bathhouse Rehabilitation Project stakeholder group and the recently created Zilker Park Working Group. These projects are just two of many important initiatives that require the Association's participation.

The Barton Springs Bathhouse Rehabilitation project is intended to preserve the historic features of the bathhouse while updating the building's functional infrastructure. The Barton Springs Conservancy organization is co-funding this project with the City of Austin. Please check out the Conservancy's website (https://bartonspringsconservancy.org/projects/) to read up on the history of the project. One key to the success (and concern that I have) relating to this project is whether the performance of the construction can be achieved without disruption of the pool and the park during the process.

The Zilker Park Working Group arose out of the messed-up and "indefinitely postponed" plan to "pave" a portion of the park near Mo-Pac that is a covered landfill. This Working Group presents an opportunity for the community to weigh in on short term solutions to the parking problems in and around the park and the longer-term master planning for Zilker Park.

The issues at Zilker Park are numerous and will require coordinated dialogue among those interested in offering realistic solutions. For example, there is some difficult irony that the water run-off from the Botanical Gardens and Nature Center goes directly across the landfill area of Zilker Park. It is also difficult to fathom that those folks wishing to enjoy the natural areas and park amenities are also willing and are encouraged by the City to park their cars on the park's "Polo Fields." But when the daily attendance at just the Barton Springs Pool during summer weekends can spike to over 12,000 people, something's gotta give. Everyone has to be flexible and resourceful.

It has become clear that it will not be feasible for me to both serve as President and adequately participate in these two projects for the Association. I think the current Executive Committee and the active members who work on the July 4th parade, the school park projects, the newsletter and the Greenbelt Guardians have done an outstanding job this year. I only wish we could have more people like them to support the neighborhood and regularly attend the quarterly meetings. Behind the scenes, there is a lot of great work being accomplished through the Association and we need your support and energy to continue this work.

Thank you, Mark Gentle

Heart of Our Hood, continued from front cover

So far, we've implemented the gorgeous retaining wall mural, new and updated playground equipment for all ages, slope grading with limestone block seating, infrastructure to improve some irrigation and drainage issues, better access with stairs and stone pathways, care of the beautiful old oak trees, and enlarged track and play fields. While outside the project funding, the new bike lanes on Barton Hills Drive and sidewalks, which now surround the whole school, also contribute to a safer and more scenic environment.



Mural/retaining wall

But we are not done, and we need your help.



Improved drainage also protects trees

While we have received over \$365,000 from Parks Foundation and other grants, Park Dedication fees (from the Broken Spoke apartments and the old Golden Corral site), individual/PTA/BHNA donations and fundraising events (not including the unrelated, but well timed, \$11,000 dedicated to BHNA from the Zilker Park-based Rolling Stones concert), it is not quite enough to finish the park's master plan. We still need to raise funds for planting gardens around the stairs, as well as the rain garden that is planned on the slope below the school's music room. We also hope to replace the chain link fencing, explore more fitness options, and continue to address erosion/slope issues in order to connect the higher and lower areas so the park can become more integrated.

If you would like to make a donation, some of which will be matched by the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association, go to our BH Community Park account online at: https://www.austinparks.org/sfaform/support-barton-hills-community-park/ or you can send a check to the Austin Parks Foundation, 1023 Springdale Rd. #4B, Austin, TX 78721. Write Barton Hills Community Park in the memo line.

Due to the love, sweat equity, and private dollars that have been invested during the last 7+ years, not to mention the taxes we pay to the city and school district that now jointly own and maintain the property, this beautiful and fun space truly belongs to all of us! I don't want to imagine a day the school and park are not there. I want to see the Barton Hills Park used to its fullest and have more people engaged in its success. Aside from necessary school day restrictions (7a-4pm), you can enjoy this space as the heart of our neighborhood. Take a walk around the 1/4 mile+ track, climb and swing on the play equipment, have a picnic under the large oak trees, enjoy the morning light on the mural with images that highlight what's best in our 'hood, and perhaps soon watch your kids play sports on the enlarged fields. Avoid the traffic, stay close to home, enjoy the outdoors, and all with easy parking!



Limestone benches help with slope retention and erosion control

Special thanks to Roy Smithers, Melissa Hawthorne, Melanie Gantt and Stefan Pharis who have been with us from the beginning and who continue to dedicate their time and talents. Won't YOU be a part of finishing the park vision?

To keep with master plan progress, LIKE our Facebook page, Barton Hills Community Park @BartonHillsPark

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Greenbelt Guardians Fall Update by Stan Ostrum

Despite Mother Nature's best efforts to stop us, 25 hardcore volunteers put in a total of 64 hours of labor at Homedale on Saturday Sept 29th, National Public Lands Day. We were removing invasive nandina and ligustrum plants down along the creek, and the rain came on strong as soon as we started working. We were soon all soaked to the bone, but it was





warm out and no one really seemed to mind. We worked hard for a couple of hours and got a lot done, but finally gave up sometime after 11:00 when it was still raining and starting to get too muddy. Of course, as soon as we quit and packed up our tools, the rain stopped for the rest of the day!

November 3rd is our next workday, the Austin Parks Foundation's fall It's My Park Day. We'll be working at the Gus Fruh entrance from 8:00am until noon. The plan is to resurface the entire switchback entry trail with decomposed granite and StaLok binder. It's a big job and we'll need all the help we can get! Mostly we need lots of folks to help us move a small mountain of material down the trail, and then spread and pack it. We'll also have a few other tasks available (invasives removal, trash pickup, etc.) for those who can't do trail repair, but our focus will be on getting the trail work done. Experienced shovelers, rakers, packers, and wheelbarrow drivers preferred, but we're willing to train! Breakfast tacos will be provided! Registration will be starting soon on APF's GivePulse website. We'll send out a reminder with the link, or you can go to www.greenbeltguardians.org for the latest information on upcoming events.

We're looking forward to getting out and working again (and hoping for dry weather as we can't do this project in the rain). Please plan to join us if you can!







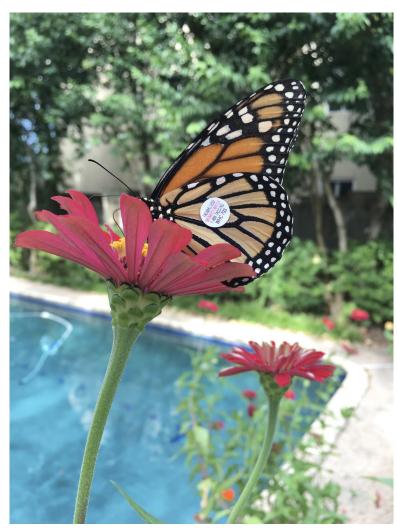
Zinnias Attract Butterflies, Hummingbirds and Friends by Sandy Wilson

My husband, Randy, and I moved into our new home in Barton Hills in 1983. Our lot had a nice canopy of Live Oaks with basically rocks and caliche underneath. Therefore, we chose to landscape with a mixture of St. Augustine grass, shade-loving plants and ground cover. Fast forward to a few years ago to a Barton Hills Garden Club meeting at which I heard a fascinating presentation about growing zinnias from seed. It caused me to recall favorite childhood memories of growing up in North Austin in a home surrounded by a beautiful garden.

My parents were dedicated gardeners who grew zinnias with enormous colorful blooms (with help from the cows) on my grandparent's farm in Taylor, Texas. On many a visit we would fill heavy duty plastic bags with perfectly aged manure collected from the edges of the cow-pen which was next to the old two story red wooden barn. Motivated by these memories, along with a healthy shot of German farming DNA, I thought it was time to find a spot in our garden and try my hand at raising zinnias. We selected the only sunny location and dug a bed, I5' long, I' wide and I' deep. One of the gardening lessons I have learned from experience is to start small with experimental projects with the thought that you can always increase the size. After excavation, the hole was filled with "Hill Country Garden Soil" from the The Natural Gardener. My first planting from seed was June 2015 with two rows using "Northern Lights Blend," "Peppermint Stick," and "Solar Flare Blend" packaged by Botanical Interests. Follow the directions on the package as to spacing and depth of planting. Zinnias planted too close together are susceptible to powdery mildew on the leaves. I have had great success using organic plant food such as "Big Bloom" made by Foxfarm. I use a soaker hose to water in the morning so if the leaves get wet they have time to dry off before nightfall. It is best to keep the soil moist but not soggy which is a balancing act when temperatures exceed mid 90's.

My parents also taught me that hard work always has its rewards. This is certainly true of our zinnia garden which has well exceeded all expectations. It provides a constant source of brightly colored fresh flowers for our home as well as gifts to friends and family. Frequent visitors include hummingbirds, butterflies and goldfinches feeding on the nectar, petals and seeds. One of my favorite memories happened in September 2016 when I encountered a special guest. It was a beautiful monarch butterfly wearing a tiny wing tag which I was able to photograph, enlarge and read (see photo at right). I reported the specific number and discovered that she was released at Zilker Botanical Gardens earlier that morning. I hope she made it to her winter destination in Mexico, well fortified with vitamin Z.

I end my zinnia season in October by cutting the blooms, pulling up the stalks and preparing the bed for the fall planting of lettuce seeds which will be a daily source of tasty fresh salads all winter and spring.



Monarch butterfly tagged by Zilker Botanical Gardens, photo courtesy of author

bartonhills.org

Eat Like the Ancients at Local Farmers Markets By Caroline Bhargava

We all know the benefits of buying our food at area farmers markets. Seasonal produce and locally raised meat and eggs are safer, fresher, taste better, and are more nutritious. They also offer a greater variety than the refrigerated products sourced from factory farms we buy at large grocery stores. Farmers markets not only rebuild local food economies by making farming profitable for local growers and raisers, they can act as a community-sustaining event and space for neighbors to gather. Farmers markets give us modern humans an opportunity to reconnect to the land and reconnect to one another.

Indigenous Americans came together in similar ways over a thousand years ago on the fertile soil of the banks of the Mississippi River. The Cahokian settlement (see image at right), near modern day St. Louis, Missouri, was the economic and cultural hub of civilization north of Mexico. Cahokia was a huge and sophisticated city, the largest in North America until Philadelphia in the 1800's. Cahokia's marketplace was legendary and drew traders from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes. Locally grown produce and game, salt, copper, and even seashells were transported along the Mississippi and traded among regional tribes.



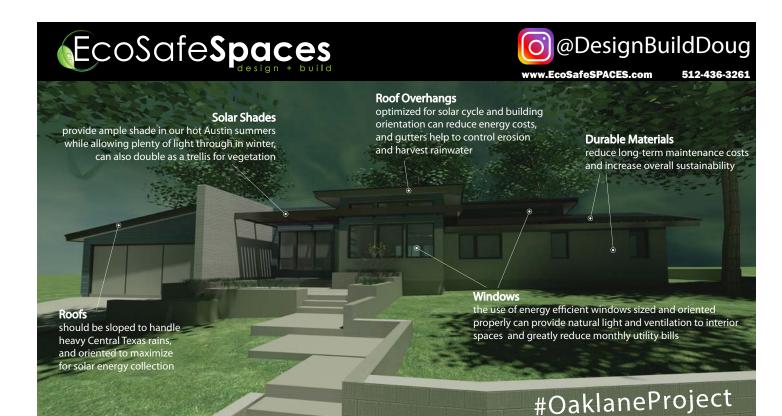
SFC downtown farmers market, photo from Yelp



Cahokia marketplace mural by Michael Hampshire

With the arrival of Europeans, who brought with them their own market traditions, farmers markets thrived in our earliest cities. Market Streets can still be found in Philadelphia, San Francisco, and New Orleans. Here in Austin, the first farmers market is rumored to have taken place in 1987 in the parking lot of the original Whole Foods. These days we have multiple options located a short drive from Barton Hills (see map below), with most open on Saturdays. Our urban farms, Boggy Creek and Eden East, offer tours and volunteer opportunities in addition to the markets. If you haven't already, make some time to visit one of our local farmers markets and do your part to support area farmers and continue a legacy that has existed since ancient times.





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Our AISD Tax Dollars at Work By Cherylann O. Campbell, Barton Hills neighbor and AISD FABPAC District 5 Representative & Tri-Chair

It's amazing how much can happen in just one year! Last fall I was busy educating you on the \$IB bond election for the Austin Independent School District. More than two years of intensive analysis, planning and work went into the bond, which





#AISDFuture Creating 21st century learning spaces for all students



is designed to replace, improve, renovate and equip facilities for approximately 83,000 students and 12,000 employees. Every school benefits. After it passed with an overwhelming 72% vote (13% turnout), the district and volunteer committees quickly got back to work. While I am still on the Facility & Bond Planning Advisory Committee (FABPAC) and focused on continued facility planning, others are now focused on making sure the bond dollars are spent in the most efficient manner and the public knows what is happening.

As of the submission of this article, 12 of the 17 large-scale modernization projects are already underway including architectural firm selection, campus design teams, groundbreakings and community engagement. Examples include replacement elementary schools for Govalle (east), Menchaca (south central), and Brown (north central), as well as major additions/renovations at Doss/Murchison (northwest) and Bowie (southwest). The Citizen Bond Oversight Committee (which also consists of community volunteers, including a Barton Hills neighbor) is responsible for overseeing all bond projects and how the district spends our tax dollars.

Our Central Austin (AISD District 5) schools will start to see more work this fall and through next summer. In September, master planning for Austin High School will begin with a team made up of district construction staff, the principal, teachers, parents and community members. They will focus on the whole campus design, but the priority will be on the exterior grounds so that construction can begin as early as next summer on a new track and field area.

Continued on next page



AISD Tax Dollars, continued

Then, work will continue to implement the \$23M addition from the Bond to create better spaces for academics, life skills and athletics. Additional community fundraising, like support from the local running clubs, may augment bond monies.

Next year, similar campus-wide master planning efforts will begin for O. Henry Middle School, as will critical facility improvements (e.g. electrical, plumbing, safety/security, roofing, HVAC) at the elementary schools that feed into Austin High School. In May 2018, Barton Hills Elementary got a new air conditioning system & chiller as part of prior bond monies so they will not likely see more improvements from the 2017 Bond until 2020/2021.

Finally, in addition to campus master planning this fall, FABPAC will work with staff to develop district wide master plans for Fine Arts, Athletics and Career Technical areas.

Check out <u>www.AISDFuture.com</u> for project schedules, specific campus plans ("Find Your School"), campus design team notes and more. You can also sign up to get regular email updates.



School's Out. Jump! is in.

October	8
November	19 & 20
December	21
January	2, 3, 4 & 21
February	18
March	ireak)

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Amendments to the BHNA Bylaws by Stan Ostrum, BHNA Vice President

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association is governed by a set of bylaws that were originally written in 1979 when the association was formed and incorporated. They've been amended and updated several times over the years – most recently in 1995, 2001, and 2004. Some things have changed since then, and our bylaws are due for another update.

The BHNA executive committee has reviewed and discussed the bylaws, and we've identified a list of 16 proposed changes. Most of these changes are relatively small and reflect things that either need to be cleaned up, modernized, or updated to align with the evolution of the organization and how we currently operate. A few of them are more substantial, and I'll discuss those below.

Copies of both our current bylaws from 2004 and the updated bylaws that we're proposing can be found on our website at https://bartonhills.org/about/bylaws/. The updated version includes numbered comments that show where each change has been made and a brief description. Please review these changes and provide any feedback that you may have to the BHNA executive committee by Oct. 17th at officers@bartonhills.org. We'll then finalize the proposed version, post it on both our website and the BHNA listserv for final review, and present it to our membership for approval at our fall general meeting on Oct 23rd.

As I mentioned above, many of the proposed changes are relatively minor such as adding clarification about our organization type and updating Robert. E. Lee Rd. to Azie Morton Rd. in our boundary description. We've also reallocated the duties of some of the officers to better balance the workload, clarified some existing duties, and added a few new ones, all of which reflect the way we presently are operating.

The biggest change we're proposing is to change the unit of membership in the association from households to individuals. The current bylaws define a member as anyone age 18 and over in a dues-paying household, and we rely on whoever submits the annual membership form to list their spouse, roommates, adult kids, and other relatives or individuals who live in the household and qualify for membership. The problem is that people get in a hurry and don't always fill out the form completely (or at all). In the meantime, people marry, divorce, move in or out, graduate, pass on, etc. and we can never really be sure how many members we actually have, which makes things like determining quorums for meetings almost impossible.

To remedy that, we're proposing that every individual who wishes to be a voting member of the association sign up for their own membership. The folks who would be the most affected by this change are the couples where both individuals are active members of the association - their total household dues would double. While we certainly want to encourage membership and participation rather than discourage it, we feel that if we don't increase annual dues (they've been \$10 since at least 2004), most people would be agreeable to the idea of paying dues for each member.

Speaking of dues, one of the other changes we're proposing is to allow the executive committee to set annual dues, subject to membership approval. Currently, annual dues are specified in the bylaws and require an amendment to change.

The final change of any real significance is a proposal to bump up our limit on consecutive terms served in a particular office from two to three. It's difficult to find good people who are willing to serve, so the idea here is to let an officer stay in a position a little longer if they want to.

Again, please go to our website at https://bartonhills.org/about/bylaws/, review the changes we're suggesting, and let us know what you think, good or bad, by Oct 17th at officers@bartonhills.org.

Thanks in advance for your feedback and thanks for supporting the BHNA!

Upcoming Events

10/27/18 - 10/28/18 Texas Book Festival Texas State Capitol Building

The Texas Book Festival has evolved into one of the premier literary events in the country and hosts about 250 authors each year. More than 40,000 book lovers of all ages attend the Festival annually, enjoying readings, panel discussions, book signings, cooking demonstrations, live music, local food, YA authors, children's activities and exhibiting vendors from across the state.

www.texasbookfestival.org





Texas Book Festival 2017, photo from texasbookfestival.org



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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.

2018 MEMBERSHIP FORM

ZUIO MEMBERSHIF 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.)