

Barton Hills News

BARTON HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



What's the big deal about the Barton Springs Recharge Zone?

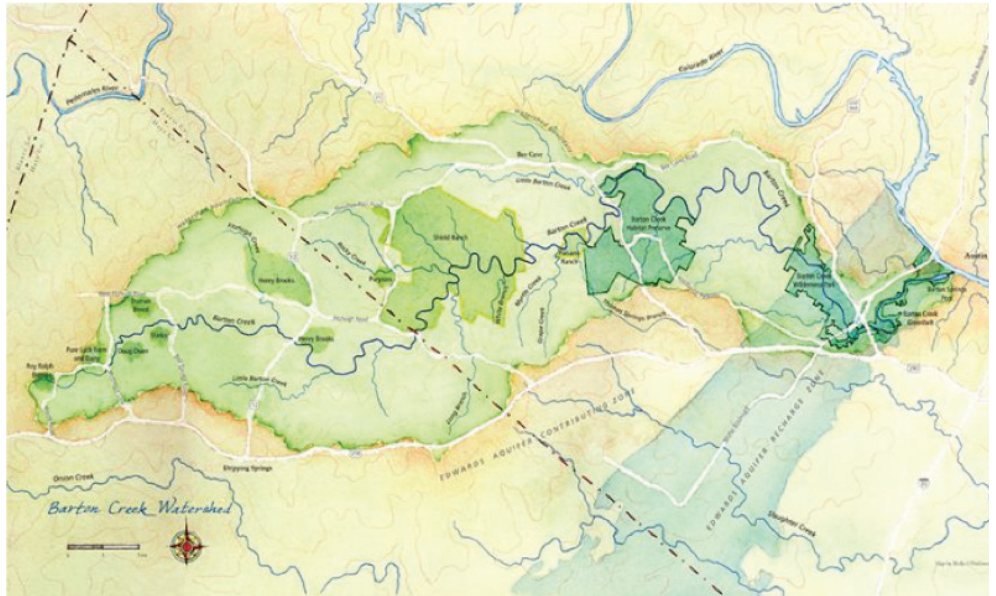
This piece of history is brought to you from the Google

As we all could use a cool dip in Barton Springs Pool, perhaps it is a time of reflection for the area in general that contributes recharge to the Edwards Aquifer and feeds Barton Springs. In addition to being one of the most popular attractions in Central Texas, Barton Springs is home to two endangered species — the Barton Springs Salamander and the Austin Blind Salamander. The Edwards Aquifer also provides the sole source of drinking water for 60,000 people on wells in this area.



Barton Springs is one of the main reasons Austin is here in the first place. Thousands of people - spanning races, classes, and political persuasions - swim here every year. It draws visitors from around the world and believe it or not, at times folks have actually been turned away because of pollution. For at least 45 years, thousands of citizens have been engaged in a struggle to preserve its once-clear waters. The salamander is just one avenue through which people are trying to preserve the springs for this and future generations.

In the recharge zone, there is very little soil to filter out pollutants before water enters the aquifer. Water moves rapidly underground, re-emerging at Barton Springs within days or even hours. This means the water quality of the aquifer and Barton Springs is directly tied to development impacts and surface water pollution in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone, much of which is outside the City of Austin's jurisdiction. The environmental sensitivity of the aquifer and Barton Springs has made water quality a critical focus in the Barton Springs Recharge Zone for decades, culminating in voter approval of the Save Our Springs Initiative (SOS) in 1992. Put very simply, the health of the salamander is an indication of the health of the springs. Not only do salamanders serve this function for the springs, but many believe the springs themselves are Austin's "canary in the coal mine".



NEXT MEETING

October 22, 2019
• 6 - 9 pm •

Please join us at

St. Mark's Church
(Corner of Barton Hills Dr. & Barton Skyway)

Dinner
\$10

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING
• 7 - 9 pm •

*Barton Springs in the early 1920s.
Swimming caps required by fashion.
Austin History Center PICA 11606*

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.

2019 Executive Committee

President

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Stan Ostrum
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Treasurer

Position Open

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Committee on Area Development

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Newsletter printed on 100% recycled paper.

President's Message *by Mark Gentle, BHNA President*

Greetings Neighbors:

The wave of 1969 nostalgia continues full on as I write this message. I can relate for sure, being 16 years old at the time. The music, the moon shot, long hair and an orange Karmann Ghia.

It's understandable and sometimes amusing to try and turn back the clock and imagine alternative outcomes, so thank you Quentin Tarantino. If we did a *Once Upon a Time in Austin* movie, it could easily start with the Barton Hills Neighborhood and the Zilker Park Posse. The short history is that this group, led by women from this neighborhood, took matters into their own hands when the city was recklessly allowing unfettered development in the 1970's. They are largely responsible for creating the Barton Creek Greenbelt that we all treasure today.

In honor of those courageous individuals, I will be recommending to the Executive Committee and the Association membership that we take a portion of our available funds to research and document the historic contribution these individuals made to our neighborhood and the future residents of Austin. I envision an electronic document, including photos and biographies of these individuals along with a story about their record of accomplishments. This document would be made available to all current and future residents of Barton Hills, with an emphasis on the new arrivals so that they have a sense of the history of what makes this place so special.

Shifting gears, the upcoming October meeting promises to be enlightening as we have invited Ann Kitchen and Fred Lewis to participate in a panel discussion of what I call the "Code After Next" meaning the upcoming rewrite of the Land Development Code. I anticipate they will each bring with them subject matter experts to share their insights into this latest vision for Austin and the likely impact on our neighborhood.

I hope to see you at the October meeting. Until then, Happy Trails!

Mark Gentle, President

CodeNEXT on Steroids? *by Peter Hess*

In August 2018 the CodeNEXT process, which aimed to rewrite our Land Development Code (LDC) and to redo our zoning in Austin, was halted without yielding tangible results. What many of us anticipated at the time appears to come true: city planners have been working on a reboot of the process behind closed doors. There is no written proposal yet so we only can speculate what will be part of the code rewrite. The draft of the new LDC is supposed to be released by October 12 – which means that it will be out by the time we have our next BHNA membership meeting on October 22. The code rewrite will have the potential to completely transform the inner city – of which we now are part. For this reason alone, it will be critical for everybody to attend this meeting.

There are rumors that the new effort is driven by the Strategic Mobility Plan rather than by the Imagine Austin Plan.

<http://austintexas.gov/asmp>

In other words it looks like the new code that is in the works is driven by transit issues, not by affordability. As areas like ours that are close to all forms of transportation we are the focus. Apparently Cap Metro will be asking the Feds for a lot of money to build two high capacity transit lines in Central Austin. Having a new Land Development Code in place that provides for increased density would increase the chances of getting federal funding.

continued on back page

Barton Hills Neighborhood Association Officer Elections

by Stan Ostrum and Melissa Hawthorne

Elections for the Barton Hills Neighborhood Association's Executive Committee are held every year at the October membership meeting. Here is a list of the positions and a brief description of the duties for each:

The **President** presides over the quarterly BHNA membership meetings and works with the rest of the Executive Committee to set the agenda. There is usually also an Executive Committee meeting a few weeks before the quarterly meeting so that everyone involved in the subcommittees all get their needs met, visions forward, and a general sense of camaraderie as we are all part of a team. The President also participates in the broader community such as coordinating with PARD on events and improvements (this could also be done by a delegate), writing a President's message for the quarterly newsletter, and making sure that the newsletter goes out on time. Best of all, you get to have a great parade every year and carry the new Picnic in the Park tradition forward. The important thing is to remember is that it's a volunteer position and to ask for help or delegate. If you have your heart in the right place, folks will know it, and most will be very supportive.

The **Vice President** fills in for the president when they are absent and maintains the Association's membership records. The busiest time of the year for the VP is in January and February when memberships are renewed. New memberships and renewals keep coming in all year long, but it isn't much work to keep up with the rest of the year. The Vice President usually welcomes folks at the BHNA meetings, checks membership status, and is the administrator and moderator of the BHNA listserv.

The **Treasurer** makes deposits, pays bills, and manages the Association's checking and PayPal accounts. Most of the financial activities - receiving of checks and making deposits - takes place during the first quarter (January - March) when members renew their annual memberships and pay dues. The treasurer prepares and presents a quarterly financial report at each membership meeting and is also responsible for filing the Association's annual IRS report.

The **Recording Secretary** keeps an accurate record of all business that the Association

conducts. This consists primarily of taking detailed notes at all regularly scheduled and special called meetings of both the Association and the Executive Committee. The recording secretary is also responsible for the accumulation and maintenance of the central permanent file of these records.

The **Corresponding Secretary**, (also known as the Newsletter Editor), works with the Newsletter Graphic Designer to produce the quarterly newsletter. The Editor collects the articles and artwork for the newsletter and coordinates getting it printed and delivered, while the Graphic Designer does the layout and makes it all look good.

The **Community Partnerships Coordinator** works with businesses and individuals in our community to secure sponsors that help support the work of the Association (such as publishing the newsletter and putting on the 4th of July parade).

The **ANC Representative** attends meetings of the Austin Neighborhood Council and on a regular basis, either through the quarterly newsletter or at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Association, or both, report any significant activities or action taken by the Council.

Those are the seven elected positions that comprise the BHNA Executive Committee, but there are other volunteer positions that do a lot of work for the Association too including our webmaster, the newsletter graphic designer, and the chairs of all our subcommittees.

This year, several Executive Committee positions are open for nominations and election. We are also looking for a **Newsletter Graphic Designer** and a **Membership Outreach Subcommittee Chair**, the wonderful person that helps bring us the Spring Fling, Picnic in the Park, and July 4th Parade.

There are a few busy times during the year when it's important to be focused and get a lot of stuff done, but other than that the schedule is really pretty straightforward and the workload is manageable. The positions are all very rewarding, and volunteering is a great way to get more involved in the community and meet more of your neighbors. Please consider stepping up and helping out this year, you'll be glad that you did!



THIS IS OUR LAND

The Push to Privatize Austin Parks-Who Decides?

by Mark Gentle, President, BHNA

Way back in the year 2000 when I was active in the Association and later served as Vice-President, the then City Manager insisted that I have her direct cell-phone number so that if we had a parade problem or an issue we needed to bring forward, she could be our point of contact. Back then, the Director of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) made sure our Association was invited to any meeting that involved an event, project or budget item that might affect our neighborhood.

Fast forward to present. If you want to have a say in the operations of Austin parks, you should form a Conservancy or a Foundation, or promote a big event. Then propose to take some of the financial burden of park operations off of PARD's balance sheet. Then you will be assured an audience with City staff including the City Manager. What about a 40-year old neighborhood association that represents many long-time park users and advocates? Unless we are in seamless agreement with the new PARD "partners," get ready for push-back on the big issues. These "partners" are involved in park projects as well as ordinary operations and are certainly willing to use their resources and relationships with City officials to oppose neighborhood associations and anyone else who disagrees with or even questions their processes, policies or proposals.

Bottom line, PARD is now outward facing, investing money and executive time looking for money-making "partnership" opportunities, and accordingly, making plans to spend less of its resources looking inward, that is, meeting the needs of the user groups. But who and what are pushing these privatization efforts and what business model are they going to follow? Who will decide the outcome? What can we do to have our voices heard? The answers to these and other basic questions really matter because it's the future of Austin parks that's up for grabs

Exhibit A in the case of privatization of parks is the recently released draft "Long Range Plan" developed by PARD. While the conclusions are somewhat buried by consultant-speak for the first 42 pages, the undeniable conclusion of the public surveys summarized in the report is that **Austin residents want natural areas, nature trails and outdoor experiences in unstructured areas, not event space.**

A very interesting finding in the report is that the parks in and around Barton Hills neighborhood are the most frequently visited in the City. This includes our Barton Hills Neighborhood Park at the elementary school, Zilker Park and the Barton Creek Greenbelt which was by far the most visited greenbelt. Protecting these assets was the core purpose of our Association when it was established in 1979.

And while the PARD Long Range Plan ("LRP") discusses community engagement, this report makes clear that the future of park operations and fulfillment of the vision of Austin residents will be dependent on private funding. Here is a quote from the report's "Implementation Plan," a rather dire warning to the community:

With the adoption of Senate Bill 2 in June, 2019 lowering the cap on the amount of property tax revenue for cities and counties from 8% to 3.5%, new, sustainable funding sources are essential to implementing the LRP for PARD.

The report then goes on to list the types of funding PARD is seeking:

Corporate Sponsorships, Partnerships, Foundations/Gifts, Private Donations

Private fundraising that can augment public funding of parks is a great concept, the model can work, and many caring people get directly and indirectly involved in Foundation and Conservancy work. Many of our neighborhood activities are based around having strong relationships with PARD and related Foundations. But adequate public funding of parks will remain the foundation of a successful, high-quality system for Austin.

The challenge for our City government is to properly manage the "public-private" relationships so that Austin residents remain at the center of the decision making of strategic and operational priorities and that the "partners" do not have undue influence or control of parkland. Examples of the problem:

- During the final stages of the Zilker Park Working Group's deliberations about the Austin Parks Foundation's plan to "pave" 7.5 acres of Zilker Park for parking a key PARD official who leads many of the long range planning processes told the group that funding for any plan other than the plan offered by the Austin Parks Foundation would have to be funded directly from PARD's operating budget and therefore could not realistically happen. This statement is incredibly revealing of the mindset of PARD leadership. First, the statement is total nonsense because that is not how the budgeting of capital improvement projects works at the city. Second, it shows just how subservient PARD becomes to the interests of key "partners" who can 'show them the money' on a specific project. When City staff believe that their department's financial future depends on the ability of private "partners" to fund park projects, the baseline dynamics of democratic accountability are placed at risk. Third, it reflects how our local government is willing to take sides and try to use a strained financial argument as a wedge to gain control over the outcome of a

Council-created public debate over critical issues of parkland use and access;

- The proposed professional soccer stadium and event venue at Butler Shores took overwhelming, grass-roots opposition to stop; this was a project and a location that got the green light from PARD, by the way it included a new PARD headquarters in the proposed stadium at that lakeside location;
- PARD recently signed a contract with the Zilker Botanical Gardens Conservancy to operate the Gardens that gives the Conservancy over \$1 million in fee waivers for their use of meeting space and free entry for its members. Soon after that contract was signed, the Conservancy proposed, and the Council approved, a substantial increase in the entry fees at the Gardens from \$2 to \$6 for adults and a doubling of the fee for children. All this after the City paid \$95,000 in direct funding to help establish the Conservancy.

The drumbeat toward privatization continues as I write this article. The Trail Foundation (“TTF”) and PARD just concluded a week long gathering to create momentum toward TTF’s assumption of the operations and maintenance of the Butler Hike and Bike Trail and the parkland that goes with it.

In the memo that TTF sent to the Mayor and Council announcing the event that included a panel of consultants, TTF said... “we are considering the option of expanding our current partnership to allow TTF to absorb more of the operations and maintenance of this beloved space.” Since when does a Foundation tell the Mayor and Council they are considering taking over the Hike and Bike Trail?

The invitation to this event and TTF pitch to the Parks Board was that this consultant review was intended to be a **feasibility** analysis of the expansion of the existing relationship. However, the opening line from the lead consultant’s presentation was “**Our job is to grow this partnership faster.**”

Faster? Who decided that? That was absolutely not the message from some of the other consultants on the panel who clearly stated that TTF needs to have a strategic plan, a vision plan, do a pilot project of taking over a single building and show results first, and must move its communications from donor centric to community centric. Great feedback, who is listening? The jury is definitely out on this venture. Perhaps it will become a model of success.

On June 25th of this year, the Parks Board voted to create a “working group” designed to find new sources of private funding for PARD. Some questions: who, what, when, where, how?

Under the guise of a “safety study,” The Trail Foundation is preparing a plan to light up the Butler Hike and Bike Trail, a notion that has been a developer’s dream since the 1980s, and something that has met with grass-roots opposition all the while. Is there a new public

survey of Austin residents that supports the idea of lighting up the trail? We want safety, yes, but not a Riverwalk. We want a hike and bike trail.

To sum up, it looks like the City of Austin has officially stomped on the accelerator toward privatization of its parks. But who is driving?

The ultimate question then is who has final say over the structure of the “public-private partnerships” including the scope of responsibilities and money-making opportunities granted to private parties in connection with parks. If PARD is the only entity negotiating the arrangements, I can promise you that the gears are going to grind because they currently have no reliable structural model to follow.

There are legal protections that apply to Austin’s parkland. We still have elected officials and staff who have responsibility and accountability. So, before more parkland is, as a practical matter, handed over to private Boards of Directors, lets engage in whatever responsible actions are necessary to assure our neighborhood has a seat at the table.

Our Association is forming a special “Long Range Park Planning” subcommittee to find meaningful ways to participate in these deliberations including the upcoming Zilker Park Master Plan process and proposed privatization of the Butler Hike and Bike Trail. I will lead this subcommittee and will report to the Association on related developments as warranted.



St. Mark's Neighborhood Block Party!

Sunday, Nov. 10

St. Mark's is throwing a party for you! This year, we're celebrating 60 years of being on the corner of Barton Hills Dr. and Barton Skyway, and we could think of no better way to mark the occasion than by throwing a giant neighborhood block party for you--our Barton Hills brothers and sisters. Come join us on November 10th from 12:30 – 3:30 for barbecue, a petting zoo, bounce houses, a biergarten, and more. There will be fun and games for all ages and even a special live music performance featuring our very own local celebrities:

The Barton Hills Elementary Choir.
And the best part--Admission is free!

Greenbelt Guardian Update

by Stan Ostrum

The Greenbelt Guardians have been on summer break and haven't had a workday since the last newsletter, so there isn't much new to report. We're planning our fall volunteer workdays - Saturday Sept. 28th at Gus Fruh for National Public Lands Day and Saturday Nov. 2nd at Homedale for It's My Park Day - Fall. We're also working with the City of Austin Parks & Rec and Watershed Protection departments to schedule another round of invasive removal on the greenbelt this fall with a crew from the Texas Conservation Corps. This work is funded by contributions we receive through the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's (TCEQ) Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) program.

A SEP is an environmentally beneficial project that is approved by the TCEQ. When someone gets fined by the TCEQ, they can choose to offset a portion of the fine by agreeing to perform a SEP themselves or by contributing to a pre-approved SEP that is performed by a 3rd party. The Austin Parks Foundation (APF)



helped us get set up as a 3rd party, pre-approved SEP in 2016 and to date we've directed over \$63,000 to invasive plant removal on the greenbelt between Zilker Park and Gus Fruh. There's still plenty of work to do, but we've made a lot of progress in clearing out the dense stands of ligustrum and nandina that had taken over large sections of the greenbelt, choking out most of the native understory. With over \$38,000 still in our account (including a \$11,500 contribution in May), we hope to make a lot more headway in this ongoing battle.

Yes! Fall is coming!! by Cyndy Perkins, Barton Hills Garden Club

Central Texans are REALLY READY for Fall! In addition to enjoying the cooler weather with family and friends those of us with gardens are wondering if there are some tips to enable us to enjoy our gardens even more as those cooler temperatures head our way.

We called on Colleen Dieter of Red Wheelbarrow Landscape Consulting for some timely answers to common questions. Colleen has done presentations to the Barton Hills Garden Club and worked with area garden enthusiasts to enhance their own gardens.

ENQUIRING GARDENING MINDS WANT TO KNOW:

Is there anything we should be planting this Fall that does well in cooler weather?

Fall is a perfect time for planting native perennials like gregg mistflower and fall asters, which can grow in full sun or shade. It's also the best time to plant seeds for bluebonnets. Get pansies and violas going for a splash of color that will last all winter.

Are there plants that need to be pruned during the Fall season? Please give us a few pruning tips

Light pruning in the fall may be needed if your plants are growing into walkways and driveways. I don't recommend heavy pruning in fall, because pruning encourages new growth and that new growth is at risk of cold damage in winter. Since most plants are at their largest size in fall, it's a good time to consider transplanting plants that are too big for their space rather than pruning a plant that is too big over and over again. Fall's also the best time to fill empty spaces in your yard for the



same reason. That way you know for sure you won't be crowding plants.

Will butterflies still be in our area in the Fall?

Yes this is the time when butterflies are most active in our area. Monarch butterflies migrating from northern climates will pass through Austin on their way to Mexico, and they will be hungry. Fuel their journey with nectar sources like the fall asters and gregg mistflowers I mentioned earlier.

What tips could you share for those of us with vegetable gardens?

Fall is the best time for vegetable gardening in Austin because of the wide variety of things we can grow and typically the weather is really great. Check your seed packets and plant labels for crops that mature in 80 days or less. That way you can be sure to get a harvest before colder weather hits.

Fall will be here soon-- invite friends over to enjoy your yard or garden and the wonderful cooler weather --they will thank you!

CodeNEXT on Steroids? *con't. from pg 2*

Overall, the code rewrite will seek higher density, just like CodeNEXT, particularly in central Austin neighborhoods. In May, the City Council specifically instructed staff to extend the housing density that was prescribed in the defunct CodeNext project. So CodeNEXT is not dead after all. The new zoning plan should yield 135,000 housing units in Austin in the next 10 years, 75% of which should be within half a mile of a transit corridor, such as South Lamar and Barton Springs Road.

The code rewrite therefore will revive transition zones near major transportation corridors, like South Lamar, that were included in CodeNEXT. In Barton Hills, the transition zone probably will reach at least to Rae Dell, and perhaps beyond that. It will include more than half of the Zilker neighborhood. Furthermore, it appears that the upzoning in the transition zones will be much more radical than in CodeNEXT. Click here to learn more.

<https://communitynotcommodity.com/do-you-live-in-a-transition-zone/>

Here are some of the rumored features of the new transition zoning:

- Compatibility will not apply in transition areas
- Buildings can be higher—35 to 45 feet high, and even higher if affordable units are included
- Setbacks will likely not apply.
- Impervious cover will be increased to 50-60%, and perhaps more close to arterials (current maximum is 45%)
- Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) will increase from 40% to up to 80% for transition zones
- Reductions in parking requirements

There are a number of additional issues to consider, like what happens to the SOS ordinance? Lots in our neighborhood are fairly large (about a quarter acre) exactly because we are in the Barton Creek Recharge Zone. More density over the watershed leads to more runoff and a general degradation of Barton Creek and Barton Springs. So we need to preserve the SOS ordinance in the new code.

Consider watching the documentary “Zoned Out.” Here is their description of the documentary: “Austin, Texas is about to launch a profound and potentially historic experiment in reshaping a city by zoning. Watch the independent investigative short documentary that explores the economic and political forces driving the process.” You can watch the entire 30-minute film by following this link.

www.zonedoutfilm.com/watch-the-film.html

The New Land Development Code – Code Next 4.0

The October BHNA membership meeting, October 22nd starting 7 PM at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church at 2128 Barton Hills Drive, will be devoted to the latest rewrite of the Land Development Code and how the new code will impact our neighborhood. We plan to have a panel discussion that will include our D5 Council Member Ann Kitchen and Fred Lewis, President of Community Not Commodity. They will be joined by subject matter experts to focus on responding to our questions about the latest draft of the new zoning. This is a truly unique opportunity for us to understand this critically important proposed action by our local government and the likely impact on our neighborhood.

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

- 1 National Night Out
- 4 - 6 ACL Festival
- 11 - 12 Boo at the Zoo
- 11 - 13 ACL Festival
- 12 German Texan Heritage Society Oktoberfest
- 18 - 19 Boo at the Zoo
- 22 Barton Hills Neighborhood Association Meeting
- 24 - 31 Austin Film Festival
- 25 - 26 Boo at the Zoo

NOVEMBER

- 1 - 3 Formula 1 Race
- 2 - 3 Austin Celtic Festival
- 2 - 3 Travis Heights Art Trail
- 8 - 10 Waller Creek Light Show
- 16 - 17 East Austin Studio Tour
- 23 - 24 East Austin Studio Tour

DECEMBER

- 3 Giving Tuesday
- 7 Holiday Sing Along and Downtown Stroll
- 10 - 23 Trail of Lights
- 13 - 24 Armadillo Christmas Bazaar
- 14 Clean Ladybird Lake
- 14 - 15 Cherrywood Art Fair

Barton Hills Neighborhood Association
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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.

2019 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.)