

HAPPY
NEW YEAR

BARTON HILLS

NEWS

Barton Hills Neighborhood Association | Winter 2025

BHNA January Meeting

Tuesday • Jan 20 • 6-9 PM

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Fellowship Hall

Corner of Barton Skyway & Barton Hills Drive

All are welcome!

6 PM Gathering, Refreshments, Raffle

7 PM Meeting Begins



YOUR NEIGHBORS— LOOK OUT FOR & GET TO KNOW

by Sarah Faust & Lori Najvar
Rock Message by Paul Schliesing

- Borrow a cup of sugar, milk, or vodka
- Spot a lost or loose pet
- Bring food to a sick or injured neighbor (& new babies!)
- Learn of your neighbors' water shut-off valve (in case of a severe winter storm)
- Is it recycling week?
- Does an elder or a person with a disability need assistance?
- Notify your neighbors if someone will be staying at your home or feeding your pets.

“Halloween is a great opportunity to meet your neighbors while handing out candy in front of your home. We moved to Barton Hills in October, and I got to meet many folks through trick-or-treating. Then in December, I met more neighbors by dropping off holiday cookies at their door. We didn't know them—we wrote our address on a note. So many people then delivered treats back to us, it was such a surprise! We don't get to do this every year, but when we do, it's so much fun.” — Sarah Faust

- Join in at the 4th of July Parade fun and design a float together with another family or neighbor
- Plan a hike on the greenbelt
- Support the youth & adult fund-raisers

Join us at BHNA Meetings

Jan 20 ■ April 21 ■ July 21 ■ Oct 20

FROM 2025 BHNA PRESIDENT

Holiday and Year-End Greetings to my BHNA friends and neighbors. We are about to conclude another fast and furious episode in the history of our association, and as the out-going president, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the other members of the executive committee. Their talents and dedication are what make this association work year after year and will, hopefully, inspire fresh talent to join us in leading this steadfast organization.

Also, thanks to everyone who continues to support the association with their memberships and participation in meetings and activities (like showing up for July 4th parade in the rain!). You are an awesome neighborhood and I look forward to seeing more of you all next year! — Pat Whiteside

Welcome the new 2026 officers who will be starting their new roles Jan 1.

Barton Hills News

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Association newsletter is a community effort. 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.

2026 Executive Committee

President
Barbara LaFollette
president@bartonhills.org

Vice President
Pat Whiteside
vicepresident@bartonhills.org

Treasurer
Sylvia Crowder
treasurer@bartonhills.org

Secretary (Recording)
Diane Singleton
secretary@bartonhills.org

Community Partnership
& Outreach Coordinator
(vacant)
community@bartonhills.org

Corresponding Secretary
Lori Najvar

Austin Neighborhoods
Council Representative
Worthy LaFollette
ancrep@bartonhills.org

Committee Chairs

Melissa Hawthorne
melissa.hawthorne@gmail.com

Emergency Preparedness
Robin McKeever
rmckeever@sbcglobal.net

Barton Hills Community Park
Roy Smithers
rormsmith@yahoo.com

Oak Wilt Prevention
Jorjanna Price
jprice67@austin.rr.com

Newsletter Editor & Design
Lori Najvar
newsletter@bartonhills.org

Webmaster
Glenn Chase
webmaster@bartonhills.org

www.bartonhills.org

BHNA Local Activities...more to come!

BARTON SPRINGS POOL

Free of charge until spring 2026 — Open every day (except Thursday)

Hours: Swim at your own risk 5–8 AM & Eve 6–10 PM

Guarded swim 8 AM–6 PM

DECEMBER HOMELESS CLOTHES DRIVE

BHNA neighborhood donated winter outerwear and was a great success! Many thanks to neighbors that contributed! The next Austin Atheists Helping the Homeless handout is Jan. 4, 2026. For more of your winter clothing donations, a big trashcan) will be out on the curb) Dec. 29, at 2120 Rabb Road. —Ginny

BHNA is grateful for St. Mark's Episcopal Church Fellowship Hall for our BHNA community meeting place. THANK YOU!



Photos from 2025 parade & gathering.



BHNA PARADE • SAT, JULY 4TH

Volunteers are needed to assist with the parade planning. We need as many neighbors as possible to do one task to make our cherished parade a success. ***It's fun y'all!***

Join or Renew Your Membership

Dues are \$10 per person/per calendar year. You can pay online with PayPal or a credit card, or with cash or a check at one of our meetings. You can also drop a check in the mail. For more information:

BARTONHILLS.ORG/ABOUT/MEMBERSHIP

EMAIL LIST: We have an email listserv and online group for members of the association. For more information on how to subscribe go to: [GROUPS.IO/G/BARTONHILLS](https://groups.io/g/BARTONHILLS)

Austin Open Day Garden Tour



The Garden Conservancy, a national nonprofit dedicated to “preserving, sharing, and celebrating America’s gardens and diverse gardening traditions for the education and inspiration of the public,” featured the garden of longtime Barton Hills residents Jo Clifton and Roger Duncan on its 2025 Travis County to see the colorful “Pollinators’ Paradise,” on November 8.

The garden has an interesting backstory: in 2022, when the house next door went on the market, Jo and Roger decided to buy it, tear it down, and turn it into a habitat for wildlife. They hired Delta Dawn Gardens to design and maintain it, and Seedlings Gardening to install the hardscape. Planted in 2023, it covers one-third of an acre and includes a pocket prairie, a woodland garden, and terraced beds. During the tour, 300+ visitors came to enjoy the space, which is intended to be a refuge from the city’s hustle and bustle and a haven for birds, bees, and butterflies. Attendees got to see over 100 native plant species and talk to the owners and designers. As the youngest garden on this year’s tour, it showed visitors what a newly-established garden can look like. While the trees are still very small, the garden is dominated by sun-loving perennials and grasses; it was also a stunning example of the beauty of native plants.

Winter Garden/Yard Tips & Prep

As we enter a likely “La Niña” pattern this winter in Austin, warm temperatures and continued drought are expected. Plants need less water during the cool season, but they still need some help to live during this period of below-average rainfall. If we don’t get rain for a two-week period, water established trees and perennials. Wildflowers like bluebonnets are actively growing and would appreciate a deep watering once a week if there’s no rain.

When night temperatures get into the 30s, it’s a good time to bring tender tropical plants (bougainvilleas, citrus, succulents, & hibiscus) indoors. Covering plant roots with Plankets can help in the event of a deep freeze (below 28°), but is generally unnecessary for native plants. The best thing you can do to protect your plants from freezes is to deeply water them before a cold snap hits, because moist soil acts as an insulator. Watch the weather and remember that the actual temperatures affect plants, not the wind chill index or the “feels like temperature.”

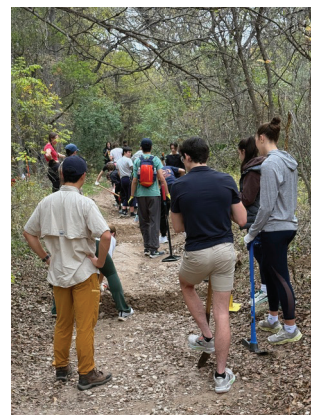
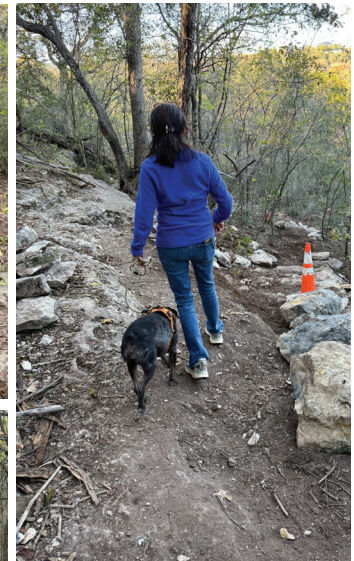
—Leah Churner

ACTIVITIES

Homedale & Spyglass Trail Work by Austin Parks Foundation

Barton Creek Greenbuilt restoration of Homedale & Spyglass trails are getting a new look.

You can volunteer for once-a-month park maintenance @ [Austin Parks Foundation](https://austinparksfoundation.org).



(above) Remember the narrow path down the Homedale entrance trail to the flats? It’s a highway now!
(left) Spyglass trail area had 30+ volunteers as part of the Saturday, December Volunteer Park day

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK • April 19-25

An opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to tackle society’s greatest challenges, to build stronger communities and be a force that transforms the world.

Emergency Preparedness

by Robin McKeever

WarnCentralTexas.org: Everyone who lives in, visits, or passes through any part of Barton Hills should sign up here for emergency alerts. The technologies for mass alerts are better than ever and emergency responders are collaborating more effective and targeted responses. If you haven't made the time to sign up yet... **BEST TO DO IT NOW!** Don't get caught unaware by a fast-moving wildfire or a fast-developing, dangerous storm.

Neighborhood Preparedness Guide:

Published in May 2025 by Austin Emergency Management, it contains emergency contacts and info sources, preparedness guides and tips for any disaster, plus checklists and what to pack in your Go Bags to help you and your loved ones get through a disaster and pick up the pieces in the aftermath. Austin Gov [Guide Presentation.pdf](http://GuidePresentation.pdf)

Wildfire Evacuation Plan: Late-breaking news in December...The Barton Hills Firewise Community is in the City's queue for the development of a special Customized Evacuation Plan for Barton Hills and Zilker Neighborhoods in 2026. No details yet, but updates will be noted in this newsletter, on the list serve, and at the quarterly meetings.

Please share this important information with your caretakers, family, guests, leasees, vacation rental!

What we need from BHNA Members: As our customized plan develops, we will appreciate any feedback you have to the updates, including questions and concerns about evacuations. Several members have responded to help set our priorities and provide feedback to the City's team, including hopefully reviewing the plan before it's finalized. Thank you to Joe Gieselman, Jeff Pine, and Brandon Rose, and also to Barb LaFollette! It would be good to have someone from the high risk areas: Barton Hills Dr & Coves; Homedale & Glencliff; BHD and Azie Morton; others? *Please let me know if you can help with this...it shouldn't require a lot of time.*

Crime Stoppers & Witnesses, City Emergency Numbers

Volunteers to Patrol /Keep the Neighborhood Safe

The Barton Hills Neighborhood Watch (BHNW) has 34 volunteers—all patrolling to keep BHN safe. They coordinate with APD district BH representative Officer Kevin Garvey 512-974-8675. Each patroller selects the time/day of the week and the circuit to follow every time that he/she goes around. The idea is to randomly cover the neighborhood.

FOR MORE INFO: Clay Samford BHNW Coordinator, clsamford@gmail.com, Rodolfo Carrera, BHNW support rodolfo@valleyresearch.com

When to call 911?

911 is strictly for life-threatening emergencies (fires, crimes in progress, serious injuries) to dispatch Police, Fire, or EMS. 311 is the city's 24/7 non-emergency hub for reporting city issues, like downed trees, broken waterlines, potholes, broken streetlights, or missed trash.

Only call 911 for immediate danger!

Get to know your delivery folks. They may notice unusual activity on their route.

Austin Police Department advises residents to never leave your valuables in your car.
Always lock your vehicle!

austintexas.gov/department/ireportaustincom instead of calling 311

Get Ready for Grind—South Lamar Construction

We are part of the 48,000 vehicles that daily use the 3-mile South Lamar corridor between Lady Bird Lake and US 290 W / Ben White. And that number is forecasted to increase 1.7% per year, or 23% by 2025 according to the City's traffic studies. But don't expect much added capacity for autos from the \$45 million dollar improvements funded by the 2016 Austin Mobility Bond. The City "desires to convert this corridor from its current auto-centric focus to a truly multimodal transportation roadway that provides world-class pedestrian, bicycle, and transit roadways to reduce auto dependency. This will result in automobile trips converting to other modes". This summer the City will begin its 6-year, phased construction of the South Lamar Blvd. project starting with the segment between Bluebonnet Road and US 290 W / Ben White. The project includes traffic signal upgrades, new signalized intersections, new pedestrian crosswalks, bike lanes, rain gardens, raised medians, drainage, storm sewer, water and wastewater improvements. Expect lane closures, detours, temporary bus stop changes, business disruption....and more traffic diverting to alternative routes like Barton Skyway and Barton Hills Drive. The City will be invited to an upcoming meeting of the BHNA for a briefing on the project. Until then you can find more information about the project at austintexas.gov/southlamar and speakupaustin.org/SouthLamar.

ACTIVITIES



THE BARTON HILLS CHOIR

Directed by Gavin Tabone, The Barton Hills Choir is practicing again.

October 2025 AISD BHNA Meeting Recap

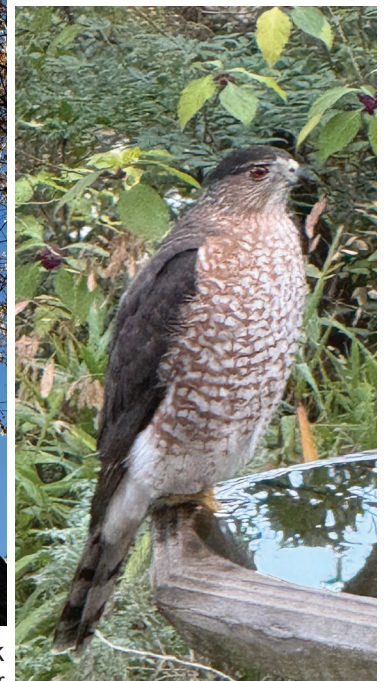
A large THANK YOU to those residents who successfully lobbied for the school

BHNA quarterly Oct. 28 meeting, guest speaker Lynn Boswell of Austin ISD Trustee, Dist. 5, addressed concerns of AISD's proposed school closures, consolidations and boundary changes which will be voted on at the Nov. 20 AISD Board meeting. Factors have forced the Board to go this route including declining enrollment, stagnant state funding and an inefficient use of resources, resulting in a \$110 million budget deficit. The district lost almost 3,000 students (between 2024-25 school years alone) fewer students means a loss of state funding. Charter schools have attracted 16,000 students draining funds from the district. While district expenses for energy, staffing and other costs have risen, state funding has not kept pace with inflation. The combination of declining enrollment and static state funding has left many schools under capacity, forcing the district to spread its resources too thin. The planned school closures will allow the Board to spend its funds on kids rather than buildings. The district has implemented cost-saving measures to reduce the deficit. These included a hiring freeze, restructuring the central office, saving \$9 million, cutting programs for an additional \$14 million savings and selling properties. A bright note, the district has chosen to not cut librarians, nurses or teacher planning periods to save money. The final approved budget for the 2025-26 school year has a deficit of \$19,7 million which the district intends to cover with its fund balance.



**04
ART TOUR
FALL 2025**

Barton Hills artists Larry Akers, Jane Robin Atelier, Sam Angoori (below), Valérie Chaussonnet (above), Beitna Swana, Jane Robin Atelier, Hallie Rae Ward and others not noted here



Sycamore Tree & Cooper's Hawk
—Lori Najvar



2026 PARADE July 4th Celebration

is one of our neighborhood's favorite traditions, enjoyed by young and old alike.

With the help and generosity of our community members this tradition will continue.

We need volunteers to help set up, clean up, collect cookies and watermelons, judge costumes, and sing the national anthem . . . just to name a few. We also need folks to donate cookies and watermelons. Anyone who is interested in helping out, including businesses and individuals who would like to sponsor our festivities, Contact: community@bartonhills.org.

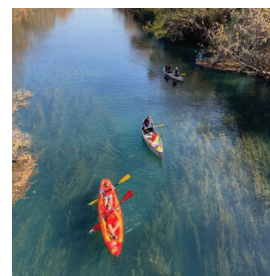
Families are encouraged to participate in the costume, pet, and bike & wagon decorating contest. Thanks and we'll see y'all on on the Fourth!

Do you know a local business or individuals who'd like to be a sponsor of our parade?

The Barton Hills 4th of July Celebration is one of our neighborhood's favorite traditions, enjoyed by young and old alike. With the help and generosity of our community members, this tradition will continue. We need volunteers to help set up, clean up, collect cookies and watermelons, judge costumes, and sing the national anthem . . . just to name a few. We also need folks to donate cookies and watermelons. Anyone who is interested in helping out, including businesses and individuals who would like to sponsor our festivities, community@bartonhills.org

ZILKER BOAT RENTALS HOPES to Stay Afloat With New Legacy Title

by Amy Smith, Austin Chronicle Nov 21, 2025



An Austin family that has operated a boat rental business on Barton Creek for more than half a century may be in line to receive a new "legacy concession" designation – a special status designed to protect long-standing local businesses in city parks.

But even with that possibility on the horizon, the owners of Zilker Park Boat Rentals say they won't celebrate until the city grants them a new multi-year contract agreement spelling out the special designation.

When the proposal reached City Council on Nov. 6, it was packaged with a broader set of revisions to the city's concession rules. The family had hoped the designation would go forward as a stand-alone item, rather than folded into a slate of policy changes that critics say would expand the authority of the parks department director and bolster the role of nonprofit partners that manage Zilker Park and the Butler Hike & Bike Trail.

As such, the legacy designation was overshadowed by the revisions that critics said pushes decision-making into the back room. "What this is supposed to be is something good for an iconic small business, Hispanic-owned, that's been in Zilker Park literally since the Sixties," community activist Robin Rather told the Council. "What it's become is a convoluted policy statement that does nothing but advantage very affluent nonprofits ..."

The family of founders Howard Barnett and Dorothy Lopez Barnett (of Barton Hills)x say their relationship with the city soured about five years ago during debates over the controversial Zilker Park Vision Plan, which was ultimately scrapped to temper fierce battles between community members.

One idea of the plan had called for the Barnetts' concession to relocate from Barton Creek to the hike and bike trail, placing it under the oversight of the Trail Conservancy, a nonprofit partner of the parks dept. The family resisted and spoke out at public meetings. "I instantly became persona non grata," Laura Massengale, a family co-owner, recalled of that period.

Since then, the city has only granted the boating concession 12-month extensions on their contract, while other concessionaires have been granted lengthier contracts.

A parks department spokesperson agreed that the vision plan process contributed to the delay in the business securing a long-term contract, and cited other factors, including the city's exploration of new ways to select concessionaires, and environmental challenges, such as erosion along Barton Creek caused by past flooding.

Massengale told the Council of the hardship of trying to plan under a string of short-term extensions. "Try running a business one year at a time for six years," she said. Her parents launched the operation in 1969 – the park's first boating concession – with just nine canoes. The business, tucked downstream from Barton Springs Pool, stands as one of the last visible traces of "old Austin" in Zilker Park.

A parks department spokesperson said the city is now drafting a new agreement for the boating concession. Once complete, it will go to City Council for authorization, clearing the way for the parks department to enter final contract negotiations – and potentially designate the city's first official legacy concessionaire at Zilker Park.

A complete version of this article appeared in the Austin Chronicle Nov. 21, 2025



ARMADILLOS—The Symbol, The Critter, The Speed Bump!

With decades of Austin, Texas Armadillo references as fairs, songs, clubs, artwork Examples:. Armadillo World Headquarters, Armadillo Christmas Bazaar, and song “Home with the Armadillo”.

Now referenced as the “ nine-banded armadillo,” noted for nine bands of movable skin that run across its midsection. Barton Skyway has settled with the “6 line armadillo speed bumps” instead of the rows of plastic sticks. The low-profile speed bumps are designed to resemble an armadillo, and remind drivers to slow down, Along with squirrels, these real armored critters dig holes as they forage (primarily at night) for insects like beetles, ants, and termites in the soil and under logs.

Shelter and Daily Life

Burrows: They dig extensive burrows for shelter. A single armadillo can have multiple burrows.

Diurnal vs. nocturnal: They are typically nocturnal, but in cooler climates or during winter, they may be active during the day to take advantage of the sun’s warmth. They are also more active at night near human-populated areas to avoid contact.

Sleeping: Armadillos spend a significant portion of their day sleeping.

Social and Reproductive Activity

Social structure: Armadillos are solitary animals that live and forage alone, coming together only for breeding.

Reproduction: The nine-banded armadillo has a unique reproduction cycle where a fertilized egg splits into four identical quadruplets.

Parenting: The young are cared for by the mother and become independent after about six to twelve months.

Testimonies from our Barton Hills Neighbors

“I like to think that having armadillos is a bit of a trade-off! They make holes around my plants ‘cause they’re eating the grubs that eat my plant roots! ...and my dog loves to chase them out of the flower beds when I let her out at first light!”
—Genny Duncan

Back in the day.... —Larry Akers

Back in the 70’s Larry Akers taught in Dripping Springs middle /high school. Before Christmas the 7th-12th grade kids had an armadillo festival. They held an armadillo beauty contest, which involved bonnets, ribbons, and perfume.

The event Larry liked best was the armadillo race, the interesting part of which was how they got them to compete for speed. Armadillos are shy, and they don’t see well. They will try to hide wherever they can. If they can’t find cover, they will dig a hole. They are also

opportunists. So the kids drew a big circle on the ground, maybe forty feet in diameter, and every few feet around the perimeter they dug a little hole about the size of a cup. Then they took the dillos to the center of the circle and set them all loose at the same time. The dillos all went looking for cover, and when they got to any sign of a hole, they would start digging it out for a place to hide. The first one that got to one of the little holes and started digging was declared the winner.