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Bryker Woods
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Newsletter of the BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association

Fall 2002 Vol. 20

President's message

You may have heard about or participated in, the "Envision Central Texas Project" (ECT) which brought together people from 5 counties to envision where we might settle the estimated million or more residents anticipated in the next 20 years. Citizens, business and government representatives are all participating in the ECT. Although some question the region's ability to sustain another million people, there is no doubt growth will continue and will impact our economy, our infrastructure, our resources and the quality of life in our neighborhoods. The outcome of the "Envision Central Texas Project" will impact (possibly dramatically) the BrykerWoods neighborhood, namely from the highway changes associated with MoPac. Austin City Council Member Will Wynn --a West Austin resident and key ECT participant-- will share his visions for the Central Texas Region/Central Austin Area at our annual meeting. This is an opportunity for the community to speak with a policy maker and neighbor.

At a BrykerWood's neighborhood level, the City of Austin is creating an official City Plan from a patchwork of "planning areas". BrykerWoods is within the "Windsor Road Planning Area" which is bounded by 35th/38th Streets, Lamar Blvd, Enfield Road and Mopac Blvd. Our neighborhood needs a clear consensus of what our neighborhood's character is, since BrykerWoods is grouped with Pemberton Heights, Old Enfield and the medical facilities (in around the Seton complex), school and homes just East of Shoal Creek. After Council Member Wynn's presentation, we will have an informal workshop to "Envision BrykerWoods" as a component of a the "Windsor Road Planning Area", as well as the Central Austin and Central Texas Region.

Interested in becoming a BWNA member?

Membership to the BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association (BWNA) is \$10.00 per year, \$5.00 for retirees. Membership forms can be found at <http://www.brykerwoods.org> or by calling Edward Tasch (478-1337).

Slate of Officers and Board

At the upcoming Annual Meeting (see details below) we will be electing new Neighborhood Association Officers and Board members. The nominating committee has compiled the following slate. Please come and help elect your representatives!

President: Joyce Basciano (454-0207)
Vice President: Edward Tasch (478-1337)
Secretary: Jimmy McWilliams (458-4333)
Treasurer: David Boenisch (453-0304)

Members at Large:

Jerry Balaka (453-1072), Greg Chico (482-8755), Michael Curry (453-7512), Joan Hyde (708-8405), Barbara Kelly (380-9922), Scott Page (478-7870), Irene Pickhardt (451-6820), Randy Schrecengost (472-7952), Tom Shefelman (477-9176), Margaret Tenney (236-8356), Bill Woods (454-9180) & Donald Zappone (477-4395).

Annual Meeting of the BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association

**Saturday - November 16th
9:30 to 11:30 a.m.
BrykerWoods Elementary School**

Agenda

Election of Officers
Neighborhood News, Updates & Issues
Presentation* by Council Member Will Wynn
"Envision Bryker Woods 2005 and Beyond" Workshop

*Guest Speaker:

Council Member Will Wynn sharing his visions for the Central Texas Region. Please come share your visions with him.

☆ The editor would like to thank Jerry Balaka, Joyce Basciano, Irene Pickhardt and Bill Woods for their contributions to this edition of the BrykerWoods Newsletter.

MoPac Update

The MoPac Neighborhood Associations Coalition (MONAC) successfully fought off TxDOT's (Texas Department of Transportation) efforts to widen and expand MoPac! With so many neighborhood associations (14) wanting to assure the quality of life in our part of Austin, and insisting on having citizen input into the improvement of MoPac, TxDOT turned its asphalt trucks around and drove off, claiming they no longer had funds available. This retreat by TxDOT goes to show that democracy is still at work at the local neighborhood level. It also shows just how contemptuous TxDOT is of citizens and the environment. If they can't pave it, TxDOT wants nothing to do with it. MONAC continues to monitor the situation and when TxDOT raises its ugly head again looking toward MoPac, we'll be waiting!

But the battle is not over for those of us who live along the MoPac corridor, since expansion of MoPac both North and South will pose serious traffic problems in the inner city. This situation is being watch closely.

At a recent meeting, representatives from the 14 neighborhoods sat down and discussed the issues which face each neighborhood. As a result, MONAC will be pushing strongly for some kind of rail commuter service down the MoPac corridor, calming of traffic in our neighborhoods, especially cut-through traffic, safety for school children who walk or bike to our neighborhood schools, noise and vibration from the train, and other concerns voiced by neighbors.

MONAC is a strong, grass-roots organization made up of representatives and volunteers from the 14 neighborhoods which border MoPac. We are proud that BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association has been a member of MONAC since it's beginning over 12 years ago. Learn more about MONAC and future development associated with MoPac at <http://www.brykerwoods.org>.



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Neighborhood Notes & Issues

Neighborhood Green Spaces A cleanup effort has been underway to improve BrykerWood's green spaces. These areas are also called traffic islands. Such islands can be found within the neighborhood along 30th, 32nd and 34th Streets (west of Jefferson) and the Northwood interchange with MoPac. Recently large shrubs were removed at 34th and Jefferson, making it easier for drivers to see pedestrians. And, easier for drivers make a left hand turn onto Jefferson. Overgrown rock gardens were removed so that the city can cut the entire island without damaging their equipment. Tall weeds were becoming places for rats, and they were feeding off the litter from the bus stop. Dead trees were removed from the islands at 34th at Beverly and 30th and Bryker. A new Monterey Oak was planted at 34th and Beverly. We are looking for your ideas on other improvements. Some have suggested a drinking fountain and bus shelter roof at 34th and Jefferson. The neighborhood association would like to find a neighborhood resident to care for a possible new tree at 30th and Bryker. If you have ideas, would like to help sponsor a green space, or care for a new tree please contact Joyce Basciano (454-0207) with the neighborhood association.

Front yard parking Just a reminder to everyone that parking a vehicle in your yard is against a recent Austin City ordinance. While no one wishes to make an issue of this, if you park a vehicle in your yard (not in a driveway or on the street), you are in violation of the ordinance.

Neighborhood Note & Issues (continued)

Building Permits Some renovations and additions require a Building Permit and may even require an official “variance”, especially if the renovation or addition takes up additional space. The zoning code states that you may not use more than 45% of the pervious cover of your lot. The BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association Board of Directors takes special concern when dealing with these sensitive issues.

Shoal Creek Greenbelt as a “Microreserve”

It’s hard for a neighborhood like BrykerWoods to set aside enough land to preserve dwindling species of plants and animals we hear about in the news. But we can set aside a few chemical-free acres to preserve the miniature wilderness that thrives at the ground level along the banks of Shoal Creek. Famed biologist and Pulitzer Prize winning author Dr. Edward O. Wilson has a new book out called “The Future of Life” that makes the case for preserving small plots of land and the small creatures, the microfauna, and tiny plants, the “microflora” that live there. Many of these species are surprisingly unstudied and under appreciated.

(*Shoal Creek “microreserve” continued*) Preserving tracts as small as a few acres in developed areas, the naturalist Edward O. Wilson says, is essential to support the ancient miniature wilderness that thrives at ground level. In the New York Times September 24, 2002 article Dr. Wilson is quoted, “Untrammelled nature exists in the dirt and rotting vegetation beneath our shoes...the wilderness of ordinary vision may have vanished...but another, even more ancient wilderness lives on.”

Scientists have not studied most of these species. For example, Dr. Wilson has just published a book describing all 625 known species of ants and he knows that there is still a lot of work to do just to understand the scientific genus Pheidole, the ants. We understand so little about the world we live in. City parks may hold small wonders according to Wilson: “Many of the species you find here (in city parks) are new to science. The basic biology of most of these things is poorly known or not known at all.”

So what are we talking about preserving? We are talking about a few acres, handfuls of humus created when leaves and other organic matter break down, and about creatures like spiderlings, and earthworms. How can we start? The land should remain uncultivated, avoiding the use of added chemicals, like fertilizers or pesticides. It’s not so much what we have to do to create a preserve, our task is more simple: Let it be. Let’s become part of a network of miniature bioreserves by allowing portion of our open space to remain wild. Let’s create a Shoal Creek Greenbelt Microreserve!

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Gallery at Shoal Creek

Old West Austin Historic District Update

Nomination Progress: Our Old West Austin Nomination first draft will be presented to the Texas Historic Commission (THC) before Thanksgiving. We hoped to be on the THC Board Agenda for their January meeting, but opted to wait and take advantage of warmer weather in May (Preservation Month) for the THC Board members to "drive" our district. This gives neighbors plenty of time to plant their spring/summer gardens to display for the tour. Also noteworthy, the Heritage Society of Austin will be hosting the 2003 Homes Tour in Pemberton on Mother's Day weekend in May. We have hired, Adrienne Campbell, a Preservation Student at UT to assist us in the labor intense project of logging in each "contributing" or "non-contributing" home or garage in the GIS mapping software at the City of Austin. A GIS map of our district is part of the requirement to complete National Register Nomination submission. Learn more about the Old West Austin Historic District at <http://www.owahd.org>!

The OWAHD Web Site was recently updated to include a selection of photographs of featured homes and architecture in the district. It's fun to see the development pattern and evolution of design. There is also a link to see a list of all the National Register homes, sites, and districts sorted by county & state.

Lost your OWAHD Brochure? You can get one on-line at <http://www.owahd.org>. The brochure contains important information you should know about living and remodeling in a National Register Historic District. New homeowner or not sure of your home's Historic status? Phone Laurie Virkstis at 482-0699 or Candace Volz at 477-2488 for more details.

BrykerWoods.org Website

BrykerWoods has its very own website! At the website learn of the latest news and neighborhood issues. More detailed information on MoPac, neighborhood "cut through" traffic and the Old West Austin Historic District initiative may be found at the website. Historical information accompanied with maps & photographs of BrykerWoods may also be found at the website! The website features a neighborhood discussion group or "forum" made available to promote communication of neighborhood issues between BrykerWoods residents. Membership forms to the BrykerWoods Neighborhood Association may be found at the website too. So create a browser bookmark today at www.brykerwoods.org for the latest neighborhood news and listings of relevant neighborhood and city hyperlinks!

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