

Parker and Howard's Nursery Development

by Stefan Pharis

A proposed apartment complex at the Howard's Nursery and Parker Beauty tract was met with opposition from some area residents who were concerned about the development's impact on the neighborhood.

Beginning this past July, Endeavor development initiated discussions with our neighborhood to develop roughly 260 apartments with approx. 5,000 SF of retail at the Howard's and Parker sites. The proposed mixed use plan was slated to be developed under the newly adopted Vertical Mixed Use ordinance. At the heart of the development plan presented to our neighborhood was a request by the developer to waive compatibility. Compatibility is a zoning tool that is intended to mitigate the impact of high intensity land uses in order to buffer single family land uses.

A group of residents opposed to the project created a website, adopting the name "I Love North Loop." The group attracted members primarily living within close proximity to the development. Opposition to the project primarily regarded safety, traffic, green space and appropriateness of the development.

By a razor thin margin on October 1, our neighborhood voted to oppose supporting the proposed variance as presented by Endeavor. Endeavor formally dropped pursuing the variance request October 26.

It's not a new story -- developer makes plans, neighborhood opposition (infighting) results over plans, developer drops plans - but it is one that has been a very hot topic in this neighborhood over the past 3 months.

Much has been written, spoken, screamed and whispered about the positives and negatives of the proposed development, so there is no need to repeat them here. The simplest fact is that the sites are going to be developed, and soon.

What can be done to affect change on the Howard's / Parker sites?

- Attend neighborhood meetings regularly or talk to someone who does. Not surprisingly, communication among neighbors is the single largest impediment towards creating a healthy, vibrant neighborhood.
- Continue to work with developers. Our neighborhood must continue to engage good developers and work

(continued on Page 8)



NEIGHBORHOOD HOLIDAY POTLUCK DINNER

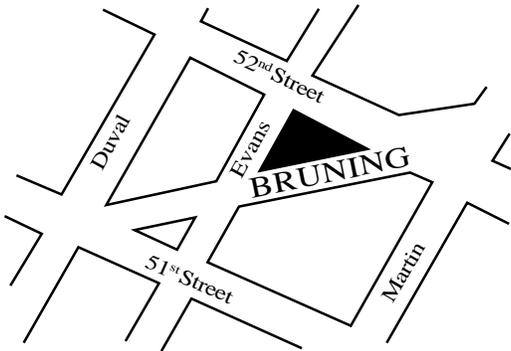
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Bruning Green

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Creating a Sustainable Green Space

by Cindy Black

Now that the Austin Parks Foundation and City of Austin grants have been depleted, it is up to us, the Northfield neighbors, to ensure the existence of Bruning Green. This has not been an easy task, by any means. This year we were hit by a late summer Bermuda grass invasion in the butterfly bed, and only by extreme efforts (of our local guerilla gardener, Beka Clark-Smith) was the butterfly bed resurrected before National Night Out. This led me to develop the idea that Bruning Green maintenance should be, above all things, sustainable.

Sustainability is achieved by setting expectations for Bruning Green that match our supply of volunteers and gardening material. For next year, I hope to limit the amount of weeding with our latest fall planting of dense growing, Texas natives in the butterfly bed. The theory is that a denser growth of plants will help shade out that Bermuda grass. By limiting the intensity of weeding, I hope to create tasks that are more achievable by volunteers of all ages.

Second, to build a sustainable model, we need to utilize what city sources are available to help with basic maintenance. The Community Court mows per our request, and since mowing the Green is such a large task for a single volunteer, this has been a great asset. This means that we must set up the Green in a way that the mowers have a clear indication of what and where to mow. We also use the city's mulch pick up to remove all weed material from the Green. Currently they pick up from our house, but it would be great if they could eventually pick up directly from the Green.

Finally, I've found it very sustainable to rely on neighbor donations for all our plant and gardening material, rather than seeking out city funding. While not everyone can commit to a few hours under the sun, it is just as helpful to make donations to Bruning Green.

There is one item that is working against my sustainable model, however: THE PATH. As most of you know, we installed a decomposed granite path, which was laid over a doubled-up weed barrier and firmly compacted, back in 2004. Since then, the Bermuda grass has completely covered our work. It is not, in my opinion, reasonable to expect volunteers to weed the path by hand, as it is such a large area, and the grass comes right back. But I've been watching in despair as pedestrians choose to walk in Bruning Avenue alongside the traffic instead of along our grassy path. We either need more money, or labor donations, to establish a path that is impenetrable by the grass growth.

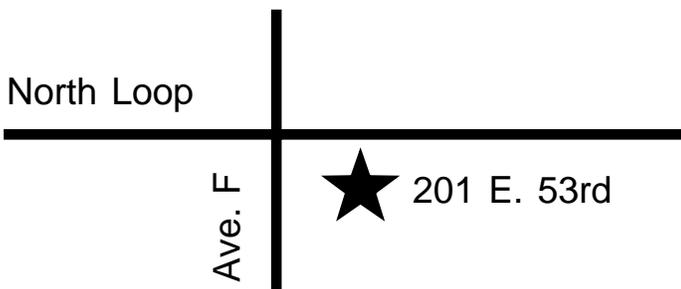
The trees, the native plants, the donated gardening material, the volunteer labor, and (ironically) the grassy green: all these are sustainable items. For next year, let's figure out what to do about making that path accessible, and beautiful, once again.

Finally, I'd like to thank all those who helped build Bruning Green this year:

Volunteers: Kate Amerson, Theresa Anderson, Kirsten Bartel, Donna Boyter, Brian Broussard, Beka Clark-Smith, Jonas Chartock, Karen Cleary, Michael & Evan Kersey, Annie Ervin, Tracy (from Hyde Park), Nancy, Nick Hentschel, Emily King, Greg Madsen, Luke Maher, Ashley & Vanessa Montague, Monty Newton, Lindsay Schell, Jan Seward, Sebastian Wren, Lisa Wright, St. Edward's philanthropy group, ACC Phi Theta Kappa, National Charity League, U.T. Acacia Fraternity, Skyview Baptist mission group, and Keep Austin Beautiful

Donations: Jack Howison, Jan Seward, Pam & Louis Redden, Mary Patrick, Kirsten Bartel & Greg Madsen, Cristina Helmrichs, Jenn & Paul Kramer, Abigail & Luke Maher, Monty Newton, Jenny, Lindsay Schell, Bobby Sledge, Roland Saldanha, Sebastian Wren, & Lisa Wright

NORTH LOOP CAR WASH



Creating a Neighborhood Watch

by Michelle Page

From May 2006 to Nov. 7, 2007, there were 68 residential burglaries in the Northfield neighborhood. In several cases, the perpetrator(s) kicked in the front door on a weekday afternoon, often on Wednesday or Thursday.

To address this problem, the NNA, in cooperation with the Austin Police Department, is working to establish a Neighborhood Watch program. Jody Horton, Scott Johnson, and Michelle Page are currently acting as Co-Coordinator for the Northfield Neighborhood Watch to help get the Watch started.

Neighborhood Watch programs depend on general participation from the neighborhood, as well as volunteers known as "Block Captains." (THANKS to everyone who volunteered so far!) The Coordinators will post a list of Block Captains on the NNADL email discussion forum within the next few weeks. For more information on the Neighborhood Watch program, or to volunteer as a Block Captain, please email Jody Horton at jodyhorton@mac.com or call Scott Johnson at 389-2250.

Block Captains should be designated every 10 houses or so, and they should be directly involved with their immediate neighbors. The block captain's responsibilities may include:

- Acting as liaison between block residents and the Coordinator;
- Establishing a "telephone chain" by compiling and distributing a current list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of block participants;
- Visiting and inviting new residents to join Neighborhood Watch; notifying them of meetings and training sessions;
- Establishing the "Operation Identification" program, a nationwide program in which personal property is marked legibly with a unique identifying number to permit positive identification if valuables are lost or stolen.

- Contacting each neighbor occasionally to discuss possible crime problems, needs for assistance, and suggestions for program improvement.

Law enforcement professionals report dramatic decreases in burglary and related offenses in communities with active Watch programs. Statistics show impressive results when residents do their part. Neighborhood Watch is the most successful anti-crime initiative in the country – homeowner's insurance that works.

In addition to participating in our Neighborhood Watch program, here are a few things any resident can do to deter burglaries and make our neighborhood a safer place to live:

- Install deadbolt locks in your home. They make it harder for a door to be kicked in. The best option is a deadbolt with a heavy-duty strike plate. If possible, use long screws to secure the plate to a beam or structural support of the wall, not just to the door frame. APD also suggested the Kick Guard brand metal plate for the door frame. Professional installation may be required. Cothron's Safe and Lock (472-7844, www.cothrons.com) may sell Kick Guards or similar hardware.
- If you arrive home and there is evidence of a burglary, don't

(continued on Page 5)



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Thank you Beka!

When Beka Clark-Smith took over the publication of the Northfield Newsletter over 2 years ago, it was a 2-page flyer that cost the Neighborhood Association more than it could afford to print. Beka worked like a woman on a mission to get business-owners more involved in the neighborhood, and she grew the advertising and substance of the newsletter to the level you enjoy today. She researched and shared stories about the history of the neighborhood, shared stories about people, pets, developments, and activities, and created a newsletter that this neighborhood can be very proud of. Beka resigned as Newsletter Editor this summer because of problems with her health and livelihood, but we couldn't let her go without saying a most sincere and warm, "THANK YOU!" Beka, you have done so much, and this neighborhood is in your debt.

Sincerely,

Cindy Black *Molly West* *Mary Patrick*
B. Bessner *John* *Pat Goff* *Don Seaward*
Kristin Baskel *Amie Ann* *SEBASTIAN WREN*



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Contact Sebastian Wren at

swren@sebastianwren.com

Neighborhood Watch (continued from Page 3)

go inside; the burglar may still be there. Leave and call the police at 911. Call 311 to report other suspicious activities.

- Install outside lighting such as motion detector lights.
- Place security decals on your windows.

APD also offers a free service called the Home Security Survey. An APD officer will come to your home, assess your security status, and make recommendations. Call Officer Rodriguez at 974-5340 to schedule a survey. A home security survey may entitle you to a discount on your homeowner's insurance.

For More Information:

Austin Police Department
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/police/>

APD Crime Data
<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/police/crimeinformation.htm>

Neighborhood Watch booklet
http://asnic.utexas.edu/~bennett/___cwd/NW~Manual.pdf

National Neighborhood Watch Institute
<http://www.nnwi.org>

Criminal Suspect Alert

APD Community Liaison Officers A.J. Rodriguez and Ricardo Vargas attended the Nov. 5, 2007, NNA meeting to discuss the Neighborhood Watch program with our neighbors.

At that meeting, the officers asked that residents be on the lookout for two possible suspects in the recent Northfield-area burglaries. A vehicle was seen leaving the scene of two burglaries in late October. Two young men, one described as Hispanic and the other African-American, were seen in a newer model white Ford F150 pickup truck with 4-wheel drive features and oversized tires. If you see a vehicle fitting that description in Northfield, please report it by calling 911.

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SBDP


Rainwater Collection

by Monty Newton

“What is that big green tank-thing?” Is one of the first things neighbors ask about our yard. They spotted the 1,100 gallon tank which is part of the rainwater collection system I installed in 1998. Our house at 307 Franklin was one of five residential systems showcased on the City of Austin Conservation Division Rainwater Harvesting Tour that year. I had been interested in collecting rainwater for some time, but didn’t consider it seriously until the City offered rebates up to \$500 on the cost of the system.

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/watercon/rwrebates.htm>

We have two tanks: a 550 gallon tank in the back yard and the big green one on the east side. Gutters direct rainwater into pipes which spill into the tanks. Each tank can connect to a garden hose at the bottom for gravity powered watering, however I also have a small submersible pump to power a water sprinkler. The large tank is at a higher elevation so I pump from the smaller one; the tanks are connected through

an underground pipe so that the small one is refilled from the large one. We use the water to keep a small patch of grass alive, along with the xeriscape perennials and vegetable gardens.

It’s true that our neighborhood isn’t an endless carpet of manicured water-hogging San Augustine grass, but for any of us who blanches at the water bill during the summer, a rainwater collection system can reduce dependence on City water. (Be forewarned however, the true cost savings of rainwater harvesting is minimal – to really reduce water use, get serious about water saving measures such as xeriscaping, low flush toilets and low flow shower heads. All of these combined can add up). Gardens really respond to non-chlorinated rainwater. And having the rain tanks helps redirect water from parts of the yard that get too much during a heavy rain event. For those who like the math – a one thousand square foot roof area will ‘produce’ 600 gallons of rain in a one inch rainfall event. And to answer a few typical questions – No, we don’t drink this water (it drains off a typical composition asphalt rooftop), mosquitoes can be controlled with the mosquito dunks, and you do need gutters. It isn’t easy to determine how much money it has saved me –

(continued on Page 9)

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You Need a Cat

by Lotte Vehko

Be the envy of your friends and neighbors when you bring home one or both of these genuine, locally-grown North Loop Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) kittens. Two females, born June 1st, all shots, spayed, and healthy. They have wonderful temperaments and they are very social, so they

would prefer to be adopted together or in a home with other cats. These are indoor-only cats in need of a loving family. Your adoption of one or both of these kittens supports the TNR work of myself and other volunteers in the neighborhood working to reduce the Northfield stray and feral cat population.

Check out <http://nltnr.blogspot.com> or contact Lotte @ 458-9791 or minerva@io.com.



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Officer Kevin Bartles to Speak to NNA in January

by Sebastian Wren

The unacceptable levels of crime in our neighborhood comes as news to no one — we have all seen the evidence of vandalism and we have heard about the recent rash of home invasions and burglaries. At the NNA meeting on January 7, Detective Kevin Bartles from the Austin Police Department will come to talk to neighbors about working with the APD to prevent crime and to help catch criminals after crimes have been committed. Detective Bartles will be sharing information with neighbors about setting up video and camera surveillance systems, and cooperating with APD on stakeouts and investigations. This meeting should be especially interesting to business owners who have been victims of vandalism. Please plan to attend the NNA meeting on January 7 at 7:00 at the Dayspring Chapel on the corner of 55th and Ave. G.

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Development of the Howards and Parker Sites

(continued from Page 1)

with them, even if their plans don't always succeed.

- Establish a consistent and clear vision. This gives the developer / neighborhood a milestone by which the success or failure of a proposal can be measured. We have a neighborhood plan that articulates a vision for development along the Koenig Corridor. We must take that vision further.

We have an opportunity, right now, to galvanize as a neighborhood and recognize the many common interests we share towards making our little slice of Austin a better place to live.

See you at the next neighborhood meeting!



"I was seldom able to see an opportunity until it had ceased to be one."

~ Mark Twain's Autobiography

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Rainwater Collection

(continued from Page 6)

since I installed it at the time that I got serious about reducing water use. I can say that my water usage averages about 30% less than it did before I initiated the water saving measures. Rainwater collection is just one of the water conservation methods that contributed to this.

I was able to install the system myself using only basic skills,

but contractors have sprung up in the area. I have noticed however, that they are all focused on large collection systems (20,000 gallons and up) for home sites totally dependent upon rainwater. This has led me to conclude that there is a market for a contractor that focuses on small urban systems like mine. Feel free to stop by and let me show you the system. Our number is 458-4903.

Monty and Nell Newton, Henry and Elizabeth
307 Franklin

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You depend on this newsletter and the neighborhood association to keep you informed about things that are happening in your neighborhood. And the Northfield Neighborhood Association depends upon the generous support of the businesses that advertise in this newsletter.

If you appreciate having a vital and active neighborhood association with an informative website, an active e-mail discussion forum, and this newsletter, then show your appreciation by supporting the businesses that support the NNA.

Tell them “I saw your ad in the newsletter.” And then, please, give them your business.

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- ...about plans to build condos at the corner of Guadalupe and 55th Street?
- ...about plans to build condos at the corner of Guadalupe and Nelray?
- ...about the development happening at Guadalupe and Franklin?
- ...about the proposed mixed-use development at the corner of Lamar and North Loop?
- ...about the plans to develop the property on 51st Street south of the cemetery?
- ...about the recent burglaries that have happened all around our neighborhood?
- ...about the proposal to sell alcohol across the street from Ridgetop Elementary?
- ...about the wine-tasting party that was held at Bruning Green?
- ...about the drive-shaft that was stolen from the truck at 55th and Avenue F?

Do you know about what is happening in your own neighborhood? People who subscribe to the Northfield Neighborhood Association Discussion List know about these things, and a whole lot more. The NNADL is the best tool we have to keep our neighbors informed about what is happening in our neighborhood.

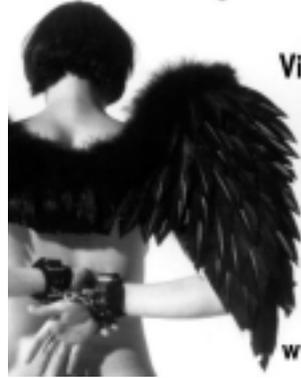
Joining is free and easy. Just go to the Northfield Neighborhood Association website (www.NorthfieldNA.org) and click on the "Discussion List" link. Fill out the simple form, and you're done.

Things are happening in your neighborhood that will affect your life. Don't you think you should make some effort to stay informed?

www.NorthfieldNA.org

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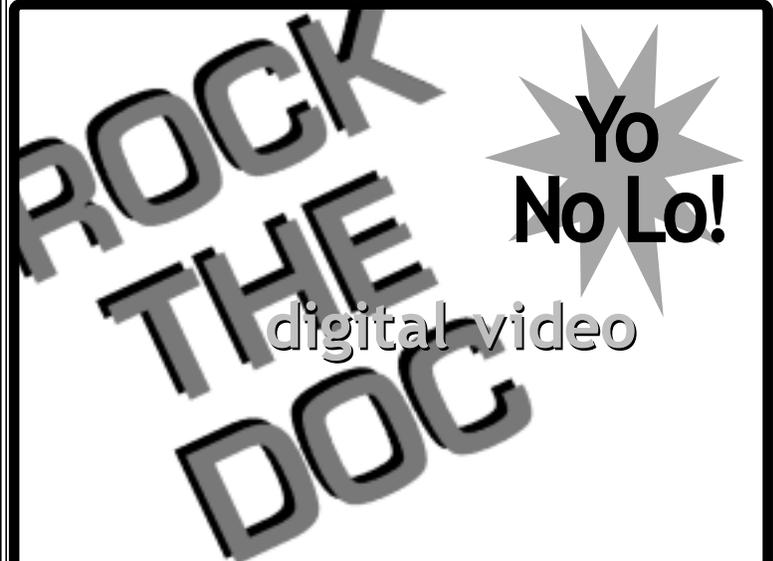
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National Night Out

The National Night Out gathering this year was an enormous success. Between 60 and 70 neighbors came out with their children and families to meet their neighbors and enjoy good food and good conversation. The local police, fire, and EMS showed up and chatted with neighbors, and shared information about neighborhood safety.

On behalf of the Northfield Neighborhood Association, I would like to personally thank the NNA members who worked so hard to organize the event, and I'd like to thank the businesses and organizations that made National Night Out such a great success. Many thanks also to Mangia Pizza for giving us a deep discount on some wonderful pies and to the Dayspring Fellowship for giving us the space to plan and organize this event. And all of the volunteers with the NNA, the Fire Department, the Police, and EMS

Most Sincerely,

Sebastian Wren
President, Northfield Neighborhood Association



Good Neighbor Pet and Lawn Services

Hey neighbors. My name is Justin. I live in our awesome neighborhood, and I want to offer my services to you all this holiday season.

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Lawn Maintenance

Let me help you take care of your yard. I can help with mowing, weeding, pruning, raking, or whatever you need.

Landscaping

Let me help you landscape your yard. I can help design something for you or just do the work that you do not have the time or energy to do yourself.

Christmas Lights

Let me help you light up your yard this holiday season.

Justin: 512-426-5999 or crm@austin.rr.com



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PRESIDENT'S MEMO

by Sebastian Wren

Back in March of this year, I was lamenting to my fellow officers in the NNA that nobody seems to care about the Neighborhood Association. Very few people were coming to our meetings, very few people were volunteering for any activities. Just getting people to volunteer to deliver the newsletter three times a year was a bit like pulling teeth.

Every month, the same few tireless, civic-minded people would come to the meetings, volunteer to deliver the newsletter, volunteer to mow the grass and weed the gardens at Bruning Green, volunteer to organize events like National Night Out, and just generally volunteer to keep the candle burning for our neighbors. Keeping a neighborhood association active and vital takes a lot of work — hours of volunteer time donated by a very few people. And some of these people have been doing this quietly, thanklessly for years.

Then we had some controversy in the neighborhood, and things suddenly changed. A new mixed-use development was proposed at Koenig and Ave. F which would have brought shops and offices and apartments and traffic and things that would affect the surrounding neighborhood in a fairly substantial way. We had meetings in July to talk about it, we talked about it at the National Night Out in August, we had more meetings in September and October. Suddenly there was a lot of interest in the Neighborhood Association.

It's hard not to be a little bitter about some of the things that transpired during those months. As is the case with any controversy, things are said that can never be un-said, and the marks from those comments will last a long time. People who had worked so hard for so long were criticized for not

doing more. Feelings were hurt, people were insulted -- they were minor cuts in the grand scheme of things, but they will still take a while to heal.

But ultimately, what I hope has come out of this is a better sense of community and more active volunteerism. At the NNA meeting in November — after the controversy was over — more than 60 neighbors were in attendance. People have started stepping up, volunteering to begin a neighborhood watch, offering to help organize functions and activities. People who have never been active before are attending and asking, “What can I do to help?”

Maybe this won't last very long. Maybe it will be like it was 5 years ago when neighbors were upset and agitated about a proposed half-way-house at 5117 N. Lamar. People were more active for a while after that, but gradually, the numbers dwindled back to the same hard-working people who always give generously of their time for the benefit of their neighbors. Maybe 6 months from now, it will be the same as it was 6 months ago.

I hope not. I hope that people realize that a lot of people volunteering and helping can keep this organization vital and active. The next time a developer wants to negotiate with the neighborhood, I hope we have an army of volunteers ready to go out and deliver flyers door-to-door, organize meetings, and keep people informed. The next time we need people to deliver newsletters or weed the public green spaces or organize National Night Out, I hope we have dozens of people willing to share the load.

Because if it keeps falling back on the shoulders of the same, small, tired group of volunteers who have always carried the burden, I fear there may not be a next time.

NORTHFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

MEETING DATES

The NNA meets on the First Monday of each month (except holidays) at 7:00 p.m. at the the Dayspring Chapel, Corner of Ave. G & 55th

~Monday DEC 4 (HOLIDAY POTLUCK)

~Monday JAN 7 (GRAFITTI & CRIME)

~Monday FEB 4

~Monday MAR 3

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President: Sebastian Wren

Vice-President: Monty Newton

Treasurer: Joe Carcione

Co-Secretaries: Annie Ervin and Jan Seward

Co-Web Masters: Jen Duthie and Patrik Goetz

Keeper of the Green: Cindy Black

Newsletter Distribution: Brenda Benner

Newsletter Editor: (Currently Vacant)

WEBSITE

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