

Clayton Stromberger, *American-Statesman*, 2007Mar11

You might not be able to name the neighborhood, but you've probably seen the structures before: two-story, squarish and stuccoed, some featuring porches, others balconies with New Orleans-style wrought-iron railings.

Some are plain and well-worn, others are refurbished and glow in pastels. There is something sweet and old-fashioned about their shape, like a bunch of little Monopoly houses.

For Austinites of a certain generation, just driving past these duplexes can take one back to a salad-days Saturday night. There you are again, dancing upstairs, sliding giddily with pals across a wood floor. Ah, youth!

They are so iconic that they inspired an unofficial new name for the northern tip of the Cherrywood neighborhood: Duplex Nation.

"Almost everybody I know who has lived in Austin over the past 30 years has known someone who has lived in these duplexes," says Katie Johnsonius, a pioneer in converting one into a single-family home in the 1990s.

Duplex Nation, officially Delwood III, sits on old farm and dairy land just north of Maplewood Elementary and just east of Delwood Shopping Center (now home to Fiesta).

There are almost 100 duplexes and houses in the development. Many are still rental properties. In some, the owners live in one half and rent the other. Only a handful of owners, like Johnsonius, have knocked out interior concrete walls to make unusual, beautiful homes.

The area has been a haven for artists, grad students and young couples. Austinite Mark Walker lived there in the "Slacker" heyday of the early 1990s and has fond memories: "I remember one summer day when, after a long dry spell, it finally started raining, and people were coming out of their houses and dancing in the streets. It was that kind of place."

About Duplex Nation . . .

Location: Bounded by Interstate 35, East 38½ Street,
and Airport Boulevard.

Schools: Maplewood Elementary, Kealing Junior High,
McCallum High School

Amenities: A bohemian haven off the beaten path
and close to the University of Texas.



The market: In January, sales of single-family homes in the real-estate zone that includes Duplex Nation were down about 21 percent from a year ago. The median price was \$190,500, up more than 35 percent from a year ago. On average, it takes 28 days to sell a home, according to the Austin Board of Realtors.

In January 2007 Duplex Nation was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places