## NEIGHBORS CREATE THRIVING GREENSPACE AT WILLOWBROOK REACH p.10



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## Can We Make I-35 a Better Neighbor?

-35 has been a bad neighbor to Cherrywood for more than half a century. Now it's time to make it better. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) will soon release plans to rebuild I-35 through central Austin. By now, many are weary of TxDOT's decades of on-and-off efforts to widen I-35. But now they finally have the money.

In April 2020, the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) voted to approve \$3.4 billion of the estimated \$4.9 billion project cost to expand the central segment of I-35 between US 290 East and SH 71/Ben White Boulevard, effectively launching the I-35 Capital Express Central project. Although nearly \$1 billion remains to be allocated, TxDOT has signaled that project construction will begin as early as 2025.

TxDOT recently announced a month-long Virtual Public Scoping effort to begin on Thursday, November 12, which will kick-off TxDOT's Environmental Impact Study (a federal requirement) that will greatly determine the final design.

Cherrywood residents have arrived at a critical moment in a nearly two-decadeslong advocacy for improving safety and mobility, complementing local land use and transportation plans, incorporating multimodal projects and mass transit, reducing the physical and social imprint of the highway, providing safe access for pedestrians and cyclists, and the moon-shot of removing the upper decks. On the matter of the decks, there is some basis for optimism, TxDOT has preliminarily indicated that, this time, the decks are coming down.

Previous TxDOT plans have undeniably provided reason for concern. For example, calling for the purchase of commercial properties fronting I-35 for the widening of the interstate to increase vehicle throughput would likely eliminate opportunities for the roadway to contribute to a vibrant neighborhood edge. This will very likely remain in  $T \ge D \cap T$ 's plans.

Unless it provides equal commitment to substantial qualityof - l i f e improvements, the

project risks subjecting Cherrywood and other neighborhoods along I-35 to even higher concentrations of airborne pollutants, reduced air and water quality, and an exacerbation of negative health conditions like asthma. Cherrywood residents should advocate loudly for measurable qualityof-life improvements to be at the front and center of the project.

The North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition (NCINC) represents an alliance of eleven neighborhood associations that have created a unified voice for positive change to I-35. NCINC's vision for I-35 includes removing physical and psychological barriers between neighborhoods, providing safe and welcoming passage for users of all abilities and modes of travel, and improving environmental and community health. We urge residents to become engaged with NCINC and other neighborhood advocacy groups. For more information about getting involved with NCINC, please email brwittstruck@gmail.com.



Here are a few other actions you can take:

- Participate in the Our Future 35 campaign. Watch past episodes and get more information at ourfuture 35.org.
   Engage with TxDOT and your local
- leadership.
  Make a plan to participate in TxDOT's
- Virtual Public Scoping Meeting. For more information, visit: https://www. txdot.gov/inside-txdot/get-involved/ about/hearings-meetings/austin/111220.html.



## CITY WATCH

### Cherrywood Runs on Volunteers

by Jim Walker, CNA Chair

he last several months have been undeniably stressful. One way to alleviate stress is to volunteer your time and talent in the service of others or for a cause—safely, of course! Certainly, the political season provides many such opportunities, though they may not be stress-reducing....

A quick Google search returns plenty of research on the positive mental health and "sense-of-happiness" benefits of volunteering and serving others, even if volunteering only once a month. Lucky for you, opportunities abound in Cherrywood and around Austin.

The quarantine-sparked buddy systems set up several months ago in Cherrywood and Schieffer-Willowbrook were, and still are, a means of offering to provide or to request a little assistance. While the requests for assistance remain low, there are multiple other avenues to help COVID-vulnerable people and households. Check out



It's My Park Day volunteers at Patterson Park, Fall 2019.

the COVID-19 page on cherrywood.org, and don't forget the power of simply checking in on your neighbors.

Cherrywood neighbors have a long tradition of volunteering outdoors for It's My Park Day and other green-space and natural-area projects as well as creek clean-ups. Another pair of hands of any age are always welcome! Check out the Green Spaces section of the Flea for any upcoming volunteer days. If you want to organize a clean-up, contact fopp.atx@gmail.com (or just go out and pick up some litter!).

If you're curious and available for more organizational work, consider nominating yourself to be on the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association Steering Committee (CNA SC). The November quarterly meeting (November 18) is also our annual meeting and election of SC members (there are 4–5 vacancies this year). The SC meets monthly (virtually, for now) and there are several sub-committee opportunities. To learn more, please email steering@cherrywood.org.

Looking ahead, we expect the main SC issues to include: I-35 renovations; reemergence of the City development code rewrite process; ongoing COVID/good neighbor relations; racial equity initiatives that might arise in the neighborhood; and, perennial pop-up zoning cases. The neighborhood association could also always use a few more volunteers to help with website maintenance and other communications.

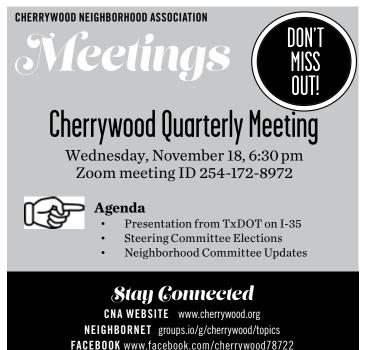
While we welcome and encourage your participation on the steering committee, neighborhood-association-related activities are not your only volunteering options. Most faith-based organizations in and around Cherrywood organize volunteer opportunities, and the Austin Justice Coalition (headquartered in Cherrywood) offers many ways to get involved in their important work.

Do you have an opportunity you want to share with your neighbors? Share it on the cherrywood@groups.io listserv.



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UBC WEBSITE upperboggycreek.com

## **GREEN SPACES**

### Celebrating Ten Years of Willowbrook Reach

#### by Staryn Wagner and Lee Clippard

et's start with the climax of the story: Willowbrook Reach has made an amazing recovery! Staryn Wagner, longtime advocate for the Reach, muses: "When I walk through the Reach now, all I think is *WOW, this place is beautiful and tranquil and alive!*"

Willowbrook Reach is a little gem nestled between Sycamore and Willowbrook Drives and bounded by Cherrywood Avenue and 38 1/2 Street. It used to look pretty rough. It was not much more than a ditch with eroded banks and mown vegetation. Sadly, Austin has a history of making its urban streams look like that. In fact, Upper Boggy Creek, which runs through the Reach, has a similar story.

In the 1990s a few concerned neighborhood residents wanted more for and more from the greenbelt. They wrestled with the City of Austin to prevent mowing down into the stream channel and they advocated for sowing wildflowers along the banks. Their efforts had a huge result: The stream banks erupted with vegetation—so much so that in the mid-2000s, when the City had funding to reshape and secure the banks to control erosion, they planned to cut down many of the beautiful willows and sycamores that had grown to shade and feed the Reach. Removing the natural vegetation would have also harmed much of the wildlife that had moved in over the years.



Willowbrook Reach in 1997.

In response to the threat, Friends and Lovers of Willowbrook Reach (FLWR) with support from the neighborhood, mobilized to oppose the project. Eventually, the City's Watershed Department (where Staryn worked then, and still does now) pivoted from an engineering solution to a restorative one. In fact, as Staryn recalls, Willowbrook marked a moment when City engineers becan to reconsider the benefits of vegetation along streambeds. Not every stream has the potential for naturalization like Willowbrook; some streams have been so reshaped that they cannot facilitate denser vegetation in order to maintain a certain conveyance of stormwater during rains

Over the past ten years, FLWR, neighborhood residents, Keep Austin Beautiful, Austin Parks Foundation, Texas Conservation Corps, and the City have planted and pruned, spread seed, maintained trails and swings, built benches, and installed bird houses. All this has been done to create a healthy ecological paradise within a bustling metropolitan area facing ever increasing population growth..



Willowbrook Reach in 2019.

Willowbrook Reach cannot be defined by any one aspect because it is so diverse and ever-changing. That's part of the beauty and mystique of this little greenspace and stream. It will never be finished, like a painting; instead it's a growing and decomposing landscape continuously shifting in shape and color as it evolves. It is a home, a mother, a forest, a floodplain, and a natural waterway; each aspect stable yet in constant transition.

Staryn observes, "When I go to Willowbrook Reach now I look for certain things, like the tunnel through the old plum trees, the owl boxes, the old American elm that is slowly growing back into

the earth, Pearce's Oak, fish in the pool below Huisache Crossing, what's flowering, what's fruiting, what's growing, and what's dying. But as we celebrate ten years of our concerted restoration effort, I find myself just breathing in the smells and feeling what it is like to be next to a stream in a riparian forest in the middle of this Austin neighborhood."



Owls (photo by S. Tepera) and "singing" ducks (photo by L. Clippard) in Willowbrook Reach.

# **KID'S CORNER**

#### CATS TAKE OVER ZOOM AND SPICE UP THEIR SPACES BY GUS SWANSON

Many Zoom calls across the neighborhood have been taken over by cats. Lucky the cat has been a key player in this movement. She has fifteen successful takeovers under her belt. She reported in a press release: "I love taking over digital meetings. Soon I will conquer physical meetings, too." Here are Lucky's steps to taking over digital meetings.

1. Rub up against your human.

2. Distract human and start affectionately rubbing the camera.

3. Look maniacally at the camera and sniff the camera, successfully filling the whole monitor with your face.

4. Gently scratch and bite human if he/ she tries to take the attention back.

Gus Swanson knows the trouble of cats on Zoom. While he was doing his math in a Maplewood Zoom class, his cat, Louis, climbed into the screen and disarmed him of his pencil and muted him. What a play!





#### **CRAFTING HAPPY BY SUSAN WELSH**

old, loves interior design and has posed for The Flea. Here's Olive's advice for spicing up your space:

quarantine. Young Olive Raåkson, just a year

Step 1: Gather your materials. You'll need blocks and colored paper. Step 2: Lay the out blocks like you are designing a temple. Step 3: Tear up the colored paper. Step 4: Toss the paper on.

Step 5: Make yourself cozy and start grooming!

I love to craft and it has got me over a lot of quarantine boredom. A LOT! One cool craft that I love to make is a WEREWOLF MASK. Did you know there was a full moon

Neighborhood cats have also taken a stab at making their personal spaces more artistic during

on Halloween night? I wore my werewolf mask! Here's how you can make one too!

#### Step 1: Pick your felt.

Step 2: Trace a mask on your felt and cut it out. Step 3: Draw and add fuzz to your outline. Step 4: Add teeth with foam and extra felt. Step 5: Once the glue has dried, take Velcro and stick it to either side and place a mask inside. Step 6: Take the mask you traced earlier, place it inside the attachment mask and Velcro it. Step 7: You are done! Wear it and make your fall walks spookier! You might even scare a coyote away if you run into one in the neighborhood (JK: The best thing to do is yell at them and make loud noises.)



#### CLAIRE KALTENBACH REVIEWS BOOKS

Do you like to read? I love to read!

As a fifth grade student at Maplewood Elementary and an avid reader, I know how hard it is to find books now. Since we can't browse the library, it's hard to tell if you will like a book. That's why I have created this book list. All of these books have been highly recommended by kids. If you buy one, you can share it after you are finished by adding it to one of the Little Free Libraries in Cherrywood, or you can just to borrow it from the public library! Did vou know that the Austin



Public Library now does curbside? Go to their website to place a hold at any local library, and then pick up your books!

#### Drama by Raina Telgemeier (Genre: Graphic Novel)

Seventh grade head of set design, Callie, has some great ideas for the school play, but how can she design such an ambitious set, when her budget is so low? Suddenly her life takes a surprising turn for the romantic. How can she handle stage drama and love drama at the same time? Drama is a great book for ages 8 and up because it is funny and dramatic, and most kids can relate to some part of it.

#### Savvy by Ingrid Law (Genre: Fiction)

Twelve-year-old Mibs is awaiting her thirteenth birthday when she will gain a supernatural power that will change her life forever, but just before her big day, her father gets caught in a tragic accident. When her birthday does roll around Mibs knows she is destined to save her father. Savvy is great for ages 5+ because it is a great family story about never giving up. Don't forget to read the sequels Scumble and Switch!

#### The Golden Compass by Phillip Pullman (Genre: Fiction)

Lyra Belaqua is content to live a normal life, but when her mysterious Uncle Asriel shows up out of nowhere, she knows something is up, little does she know that something is her destiny. The Golden Compass is great for people ages 9+ because it is suspenseful, with surprises around every corner. This book is also first in a series, followed by The Subtle Knife and The Amber Spyglass.

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

## Safe, Walkable Streets Are Especially Important During the COVID Pandemic

by Girard Kinney, AIA

treets and sidewalks are being used more now than ever as many of us are working in our homes and walking or biking in our neighborhoods for much needed outdoor recreation.

With safe, walkable streets as the focus of Cherrywood's Land Use and Transportation (LUT) Committee, we want to remind you of what we can all do to make our streets more safe and more walkable.

- Keep intersections and stop signs clear of parked cars and foliage that block visibility for drivers and bikers approaching intersections.
  - Many intersections lack appropriately placed noparking signs, but individuals can self-enforce by following a good rule of thumb: cars should not be parked closer than thirty feet from the edge of the pavement at the intersecting street.
  - Foliage should not block the visibility of traffic signs or intersecting vehicles.
  - Property owners are responsible for maintaining foliage on their properties.
- Parallel park with right wheel to curb, no closer than five feet from driveways or thirty feet from intersecting streets. It is not only against state law to park with your left wheel to the curb on any two-way street in Texas, it is also dangerous to all users of the street.
- Walk on the sidewalk where available; where there is no sidewalk or where the existing sidewalk is inaccessible, walk on the left side of the street toward oncoming traffic.
- These days, wear a mask, and/or stay six feet away from others.
- Become familiar with the Cherrywood Design Guidelines (located at Cherrywood.org) for reference when doing your own projects.
- Please share the guidelines with neighbors and anyone proposing to build or renovate in the neighborhood.
- Advocate for the implementation of Cherrywood's Sidewalk Plan (available at Cherrywood.org), including the additional protection for pedestrian crossings.
- Keep foliage trimmed at the street or sidewalk adjacent to your property and offer to help your neighbor do the same. Foliage should be trimmed to approximately eight feet and back far enough from curbs that car doors of parked vehicles can be opened out over the curb.

Your LUT Committee is working on many projects with the goal of creating safer more walkable streets; we look forward to resuming monthly meetings the second Wednesday of each month.



Pedestrians cross 32nd Street from Lafayette Avenue. Notice the cars parked correctly with their right wheels to the curb.

### Cherrywood Word Search

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#### TWENTY YEARS OF NATURE'S TREASURES



Nature's Treasures is celebrating its 20th anniversary. If you haven't visited the magical wonderland, stop by the annual Denver Trunk Show (through Nov. 22) to check out rocks, minerals, fossils, and crystals from around the world.

#### LOLA'S DONUTS



Lola's Donuts opened in October at the former location of Sugar Mama's Bakeshop on Manor Road. The store currently only is open for takeout. Satisfy your sweet tooth with Lola's gorgeous brioche doughnuts!

#### **KEEP CHERRYWOOD SHADED**



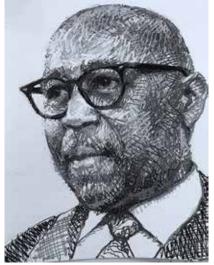
New Burr Oak at Cherrywood Green. Don't forget to water your yong trees!

Neighbors planted 34 shade and understory trees during the annual Cherrywood tree planting, organized Mike Damal bv in early October. 2020's new additions bring the total to 757 trees planted since 2010. Way to build up our urban forest!

## HAPPENINGS Thank you For voting!

The *Flea* will be at the printer on Election Day. Thank you to everyone who voted, whether you voted early in person or by mail or you visited the polls on November 3!

#### **EAST GOES VIRTUAL!**



POSCA acrylic paint pen commission by J. Balkan. Watercolor on paper, 12"x9."

The annual studio tour organized by Big Medium is happening in 2020 (Nov. 14–22), but modified for COVID. Cherrywood-based artists Jennifer Balkan, Janet Bernson, and Karen Maness will be participating. Check out www.bigmedium.org/austinstudiotour for information.

#### FAREWELL TO OPEN DOOR PRESCHOOL



After decades in the neighborhood, Open Door Preschool at Servant Church is closing. So many of Cherrywood kids have attended preschool, camp, and other activities there. We're sad to see them go. Open Door's MLK location will remain open.

#### SERVANT CHURCH MARKS TEN YEARS



Servant Church is celebrating a big anniversary: It's been 10 years since the new congregation set up in the former Asbury Methodist Church at the corner of 38 1/2 and Cherrywood. Thanks for being a good neighbor

#### **NEIGHBORHOOD ARCADE REOPENS**



Family-friendly Texas Gamer's Lounge re-opened on the I-35 frontage road and is observing COVID protocols.

#### A BOLD CRUSADE

*WIRED* magazine recently published a feature on neighbor Dana DeBeauvoir, Travis County Clerk, and her "Bold Crusade to Transform How We Vote." We are very proud of the role she has played in the race to develop new election technology!

#### **BACK TO SCHOOL!**

Maplewood Elementary welcomed students back to campus in October after starting the school year virtually. We're sending lots of good wishes to students, teachers, and staff during this challenging time!

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

## Halloween in Cherrywood, 2020 Edition

#### by Jen Loving. Photos by Susan Potter and J. Pottter-Miller

\_\_\_\_

Our family moved back home to Cherrywood in the summer of 2020. We wondered if the neighborhood would feel the same after being away for four years. Both the familiar and the new welcomed us but the flavor of the neighborhood is just as we remembered, even with so many adaptations made for COVID. With the muchloved annual Halloween parade and other annual traditions on pause, our Cherrywood neighbors-in their usual creative spirit-helped make Halloween a special and safe experience for those who opted outside. There was no door-to-door trick-or-treating, but our kids still enjoyed a day of hunting grab-and-go treat bags and collecting candy offered with a side of sanitizer on curbside on tables, clothes-pinned to rope pulleys, or hanging from branches. We admired all of the pumpkin carvings and holiday displays. And we'll never forget the treat chutes-those candy and joy launching inventions! They were so thoughtfully and memorably designed: one so cleverly powered with electric garage tools and garden equipment. Thank you, Cherrywood-it was our family's favorite Halloween yet.





I live in the neighborhood I work in the neighborhood



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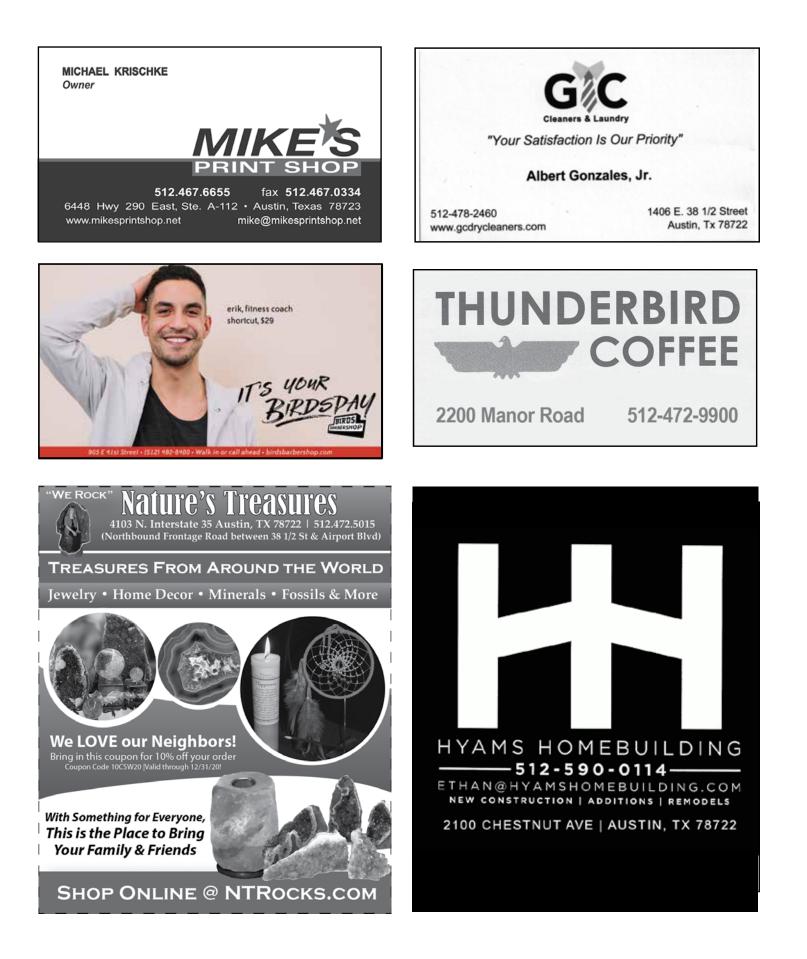




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