

## CHILLED TO THE BONE....AGAIN | P3 CapEx TIMELINE





FEB 2023 | VOLUME 29 | NUMBER 1 // NEWSLETTER OF THE CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

#### Crucial Moment for Feedback on I-35 Rebuild

by Jim Walker

(Visit www.cherrywood.org/i35capex for links to the topics mentioned.)

he major rebuild of I-35 through Austin, known as the Capital Express Central project (CapEx), has reached a milestone (see page 3 for a project timeline) with TxDOT's release of the "Preferred Alternative" and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS). The Austin Chronicle ran a feature story on Friday, Jan, 27, offering historical context and an analysis of the DEIS. CapEx construction is on track to begin in late 2025.

Now through Tuesday, March 7, the public can submit feedback on the DEIS. This is a critical moment for public input, and we urge everyone to submit comments. If you have trouble accessing the site or submitting a comment, email steering@cherrywood.org or call 512-499-0526 and we'll help you to participate.

By the time most of you read this Flea newsletter, several public meetings are likely to already have passed. Five Austin City Councilmembers will host a town hall focused on the CapEx project. CMs Fuentes (D2), Velásquez (D3), Vela (D4), R. Alter (D5), and Qadri (D9) will showcase the schematics of the preferred alternative and the DEIS; this is an important opportunity to engage city elected officials.

On Thursday, February 9, TxDOT hosts a virtual public hearing with an in-person option to "gather input on proposed improvements on I-35 from U.S. 290 East to Ben White," to request public comment on the draft environmental impact statement and to present the preferred alternative." Comments collected until Tuesday, March 7, will be included in the official public hearing record. See link above for location and login info, or call 512-499-0526.

At the Cherrywood General Meeting on Wednesday, February 15, we'll discuss the project impacts on Cherrywood and highlight the changes for which CNA is still advocating via a fifth letter drafted by the Steering Committee. See link above.

The letter draws on multiple sources and perhaps primarily on the work done by the North Central I-35 Neighborhood Coalition, of which Cherrywood is a charter member, and the advocacy of Councilmember Chito Vela. Anyone can participate in NCINC efforts and we encourage all neighbors to become involved.

There are a range of opinions across Cherrywood on the CapEx project. Few people enjoy or defend I-35 as it currently exists and functions—noise,

traffic congestion, the upper decks, safety, pollution, etc. Some kind of change seems necessary and somewhat inevitable to improve the almost-seventy-five-year-old highway. It is critical that this renovation, which will affect Austinites for generations, is future-proofed; it warrants all of our attention and thoughtfulness. Please see the May 2022 edition of the Flea for a passionate rationale for improving the project's

2222 Buttermilk Park 51ST ST 45TH ST 38TH ST DELL CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER 35 969 MLK BLVD 15TH ST 6TH ST E 12TH ST **AUSTIN** m TEXAS STATE CEMETERY CESAR CHAVEZ ST Festival Beach OLTORF ST RIVERSIDE DR 290 71

Cherrywood segment.

Some continue to question the premise and efficacy of expanding interstate highways through major urban areas, arguing that limited transportation infrastructure funds should be primarily focused on mass transit instead of single-occupant-vehicle-oriented highways. Research continues to show that widening highways does not relieve traffic congestion; in fact, many experts believe it

#### **Steering Updates**

Welcome to 2023, and the 29th year of the Flea Newsletter. The cold nights are definitely here, and those best of days when the sun is just warm enough to offset the lovely chill. I hope everyone is getting a chance to enjoy it.

We'll be in-person for our next General Meeting back at Cherrywood Center (aka Servant Church, akaa Asbury Methodist) at the corner of Cherrywood Rd. and E. 38 D St. We hope to have a speaker or two, and we'll focus on I-35 (again) — see cover article for more on that.

We had a sparse turnout for the November General Meeting at Cherrywood Coffeehouse thanks to the bracing weather. Several Steering Committee members were re-elected, and Scott Boone was our lone new member elected this cycle. If you have some time and thought to give to the neighborhood, please consider attending the Steering Committee meetings on the second Wed. of every month to get a sense of it!

The run-off election for several Austin City Council seats in early December included the mayor's seat and District 9. Precinct 104 covers about 90% of Cherrywood, and Precinct 103 covers a portion of the southern side, which is in District 1 (since the 2020 redistricting). The neighborhood sponsored a special flyer to encourage Cherrywooders to vote since run-off elections typically have very low voter turn-out city-wide.

Thanks to all who voted! Cherrywood overall run-off turnout was 30.4% (1,072 votes cast) — the 15th highest in the city, and well above the 17.6% city-wide turnout. We'll be inviting our newly elected city representatives to future neighborhood meetings.

In the mayor's race, about 25% of Cherrywooders voted for Kirk Watson and 75% for Celia Israel. Precinct 104 was the highest in support of Israel across the city.



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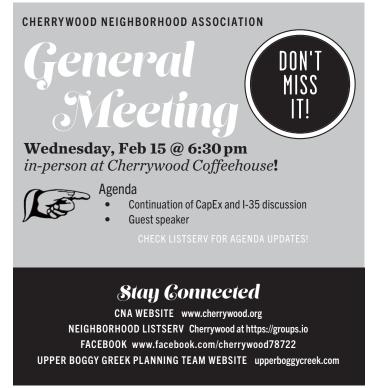
Contact us: steering@cherrywood.org

FLEA MANAGING EDITOR Jim Walker LAYOUT EDITOR Gabi Williams AD MANAGER Allen Hah Contact The FLEA: flea@cherrywood.org In District 9, about 58% voted for Zohaib, "Zo," Qadri and 42% for Linda Guerrero. Across District 9, Precinct 104 was the second highest in support of Zo and in the top five highest for Linda.

The 2022 Cherrywood Fundraiser was a great success! We had eleven neighborhood businesses participate, with contributions based on business activity on Dec. 13, 14, and 15. Funds raised were split equally between Maplewood Elementary and Campbell Elementary, with the Cherrywood Steering Committee also contributing. Please keep frequenting our area businesses and food trucks!

We hope to see you at Cherrywood Coffeehouse! As always, check out cherrywood.org for past Flea newsletters and previous communications on a range of issues. And join the Cherrywood listsery!





#### Crucial Moment Contd.

#### by Jim Walker

induces more drivers and more suburban development. Rethink 35, whose yard signs pepper Cherrywood, is a leading voice of this view

Some believe that if the renovation of I-35 is indeed inevitable, then TxDOT's preferred alternative falls critically short of the creative urban design that is appropriate and justified for a generational infrastructure project in a top ten city like Austin. There are factions within this perspective, but the longest running proponent is Reconnect Austin.

Threaded among all opinions about the physical renovation of the highway is the legacy of inequity embodied in the current I-35 that many critics want to be addressed—ideally reconciled and certainly not perpetuated—in the CapEx project designs. The CNA supports those at the forefront of calling for equity investments to be integrated into the CapEx project.

To date, the CNA position (in synch with NCINC) on the redesign skews generally toward to the Reconnect position while focusing on articulating improvements to the design of the preferred alternative in the segment between Dean Keeton and Airport Boulevards. See the last four letters from

CNA on the CapEx project.

CNA has achieved a few small wins. TxDOT modified the design to include an at-grade crossing at Wilshire Boulevard (roughly aligned with Nature's Treasures) which will be much friendlier to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. In what may be seen as a win for some but not all, TxDOT has included sound walls in the Cherrywood section. Sound walls present their own issues, benefits and challenges and we will focus future conversations on them that include impacted neighbors and the broader neighborhood once the major construction design is finalized.

CNA's flagship design proposal is dubbed the North Central Deck. While the concept has not yet been supported by TxDOT staff or City of Austin staff, and is not indicated as a possibility in the Preferred Alternative, it remains the best distillation of Cherrywood's goals and the best visualization of the neighborhood's asks.

The main tenets of the CNA position are:

— Enthusiastic support for the removal of

the upper decks

Call to minimize the highway right-of-

way expansion into Cherrywood

 Do not design/build the Cherrywood segment in a way that precludes future capping/decking between Dean Keeton and Airport

 – CNA amplifies CM Vela's calls for not precluding future capping/decking north of Airport and as close to the 290 interchange as possible

If potential "deck plazas" adjacent UT
 Austin and close to the Convention Center are being proposed, as suggested in
 TxDOT's schematics, so too should the North Central Deck be explored

 Reevaluate the demand for and siting of exit ramps in the Cherrywood section

There is still opportunity to execute creative solutions for the CapEx project. We ask all Cherrywooders to participate in the current DEIS feedback process and to remain engaged—our advocacy with both City of Austin elected officials and TxDOT staff will extend well beyond the DEIS comment period and into 2024. Please join the neighborhood listserv (see page 2) if you want more to get more timely information and insight on this issue and please join CNA at the upcoming general meeting on February 15 to continue the discussion!



TxDOT encourages feedback throughout the duration of the project. In addition to the official comment periods listed above, feedback may also be submitted via workshops, neighborhood meetings and stakeholder outreach. These events will take place throughout the process, and public comments submitted will be documented and incorporated as the project is developed.

Graphic (and front page map) of CapEx timeline from https://my35capex.com/projects/i-35-capital-express-central/

# NEIGHBORHOOD FUN ———

#### Patterson Park

#### by Jennifer Potter-Miller

Spring is usually action packed at Patterson Park and this year is no exception. We'll have an after-school meetup on Valentine's Day with treats, arts and crafts, a Mardi Gras celebration on February 21st with king cake, mask decorating and a live music set with Blowcommotion at 6:30pm! Our annual Amplify Austin ice cream party is on March 2nd with face painting and FoPP t-shirts, we will be mulching our heritage oak trees on It's My Park Day on March 4th, and last but not least, easter egg hunting madness returns to the park on April 8th!

You can support these community events during our Amplify Austin Day fundraising campaign. We were over the moon to receive donations last year from 99 friends and neighbors, four local businesses and two community organizations - thank you again Nature's Treasures, Franklin BBQ, Jade Construction, Cherrywood Coffeehouse, Cherrywood Neighborhood Association and Mueller Foundation! We'd love for you all to join our 2023 Amplify campaign March 1-2!

The Pharr Tennis Center renovation is moving along quickly. They are set to pave the new courts soon! We look forward to the completion of this PARD bond project in time for summer and we can't wait to see the new art installation it will include.

The second phase of our athletic facilities project was completed last month. There are new youth baskets and backboards at the basketball court, and new seating behind the baseball backstop (phase 1). Additionally, we replaced the last "trash coffins" with modern trash and recycling bins. The 3rd and largest part of the project is a shade structure over the basketball court, and this is in the permitting phase. Fingers crossed we will see this installed by fall. All thanks to a Neighborhood Partnering Program grant from the Public Works Department!

We hope to see you at one of our community events this spring and hope you'll join us to Amplify Patterson Park!

#### Willowbrook Reach

On January 15th, around twelve volunteers waded into and walked around Willowbrook Reach to collect trash as a part of our quarterly creek cleanups. Objects removed included a bicycle, half a suitcase, a computer monitor, and a wooden pallet. Thanks to everyone who gave their time to make the creek a lovely place to stroll, bike, and explore.

To receive creek updates and to be informed when new creek cleanups are planned, please email AdamESparks@gmail.com to join the Friends and Lovers of Willowbrook Reach (FLWR).

#### Cherrywood Green

The last time the Green was attended was last October, during the tree planting. We are in need of volunteer mowers and gardeners to maintain this special place. We also encourage everyone to pick up any trash in the park or along the creek, and to clean up/weed the plant beds facing Cherrywood Rd. at any time! If you wish to mow or to do more to help the Green, please email Mike Damal at michael.damal@ gmail.com — thanks!



Patterson Luminarias, December 2022



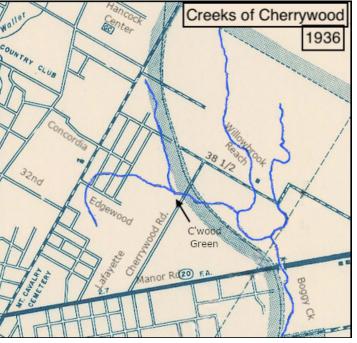
Grackle Green tree planting in March, 2021. Photo courtesey of Lindsay Olinde.

#### Grackle Green

by Lindsay Olinde

Grackle Green is throwing its hat in the ring for it's first My Park Day event, the morning of Saturday, March 4, 2023. We'll have coffee for some ages, and food and tasks for all ages. We'll get together to work on mulching, planting pollinator shrubs, sowing seeds, planting a couple more trees, picking up sticks, etc. Email gracklegreenatx@gmail.com for more information as details get ironed out. Please remember that dogs are not allowed in the fenced park area.

#### Creeks of Cherrywood, 1936



Map from the Texas State Archives.

Most of us living in Cherrywood are aware of several creeks in the neighborhood, but with all the houses and paving that's been put in, it's often hard to see that they form a single tributary system that flows into Boggy Creek, which itself eventually empties into the Colorado River east of 183, near the South Walnut Creek bike trail.

Some branches of the Boggy Creek tributary system are familiar to us, such as the creek that runs parallel to Clarkson, visible at Lafayette and 381/2 and appearing again next to the Cherrywood Green, or the wonderful local retreat that we know as Willowbrook Reach.

However, forgotten in time are the upper reaches of these streams, such as the branch that now runs under 34th St. and curls around to the south and west on this map—originating somewhere near 32nd and Dancy — or the branch that used to flow through what is now the Delwood Center parking lot.

What's evident in tracing these forgotten creeks is that Cherrywood lies in a separate watershed from Waller Creek (Waller can be seen at the top left of this map). I-35 sits on the top of a ridge that divides the two watersheds.

There are other, smaller tributaries not shown on this map, such as the often dry one between Cherrywood Rd. and Kern Ramble that can be seen at 34th across from the electrical box on Cherrywood Green.

So, as you walk, ride, or drive up and down the hills of Cherrywood, don't forget that they form the basins along which streams once — and in many cases still do — flow.

#### Freezing Fun

by Lindsay Olinde



P's (people, pets, pipes, and

plants). And if needing some lighthearted awe, I enjoyed frozen balloons with treasures during Uri. Could also do yogurt tops and other containers.

# Call for **FLEA** Content



Do you live in Cherrywood? Have you always wanted to see your work in print? Are you hilarious? Do you have thoughtful and interesting things to write about? Do you like history and current events? Do vou like nature? Are vou a photographer or artist? Do you love your neighbors?

If the answer is yes, PLEASE contact us with your ideas, writing, photos, articles, stories, and more at flea@cherrywood.org. We want you to sumbit your pieces to us! We want to publish fun and interesting things about our neighbors and neighborhood, and we need your help to do it. Thank you!

# EVENTS LISTINGS & HIGHLIGHTS -

#### Cherrywood Tree Planting Event

he 26th annual Cherrywood Fall Tree Planting was a success! We delivered 30 trees and volunteers planted 15 trees — whichthis brings our grand total to 842 trees planted in the past 26 years! This program has made a huge difference in preserving the tree canopy in our neighborhood. Almost every street has been a part of this program. With drought and development, our tree canopy is changing, but we have the power and means to preserve it. While it is not that difficult, however it does require some foresight and effort.

On Saturday, Oct. 29th, 14 volunteers planted 15 trees. It was a beautiful morning and was a fun time to connect with neighbors and learn more about trees. I am always grateful for the people who show up wanting to make a difference! We also raised \$592.09, which washas been donated to Cherrywood Green.

Austin's fall and winter is the best time for tree planting, to establish a strong root system in order to survive our hot summers. If you did not participate in the planting, I encourage you to go to a local nursery and get a tree planted for your yard. We only can only plant smaller, five gallon trees in this program, so if you wish to get a larger tree for more immediate impact, this is the time to do it!

The most popular tree planted this year was the Texas Mountain Laurel — a great understory tree that producesing beautiful purple flowers in the spring. Eighteen mountain laurels were planted/delivered. Second place was tied, with eight Live Oaks and eight Texas

During wet times, it' is not necessary to water newly planted trees;, however, during dry periods, please keep an eye out and water them once a week. Water the trees with slowly with a pencil-width stream width of water for about 15 to -30 minutes, untilso the ground around it is mushy. Then it' is important to let the soil dry out (for about a week or so) before the next watering. Even if the tree loses its leaves, be sure to water because its roots are still growing.

### Life on Lafayette

by Lindsay Olinde, in conversation with Sam Evans

I meet up with "the mayor of Lafavette [Ave.]," Sam Evans, at his usual late-afternoon post. He's on his porch-throne on the corner of E 28th, a perfect spot for his keen, observing gaze across the block. During our chat, Sam keeps true to one of his many lasting New Orleans habits: No beer before 5. He offers me a beer at a respectful 5:04 PM. Here's a condensed version of our two-hour hang:

What brought you to Austin?

A good NOLA friend moved here in 1992, and he insisted that I join him. Since David Duke (KKK) and Edwin Edwards (crook) were running for LA governor, I figured why not. I packed up my truck, drove the eight for my 28th birthday.

Why'd you stay?

Hands down, the people. Back then, Austin inspired you to do better. Saying, "You can't come here and be a jerk. You can't be that guy." I still have Austin friends that I met over 30 years ago. I feel a duty here; we have an obligation to be an active part of where we live. People see their neighbors more than they see extended family. Renters and owners alike love it here and are heartbroken when they leave. I always support the good in our neigh-

bors and never suffer those who lack compassion and empathy.

What do you love about your home?

Laura and I bought our house in 1998 and knew we would always own it. First, it's 100 years old and unique to the neighborhood, let alone in Austin. Second, and more importantly, I grew up in a 300-year-old culture, with families going back many generations. My slice of Ausin is one of the oldest in town, and it has a familial feel that reminds me of New Orleans, with that feel being made evident by simply walking the neighborhood. If you can, make it routine to walk, even if it's just around the block. What'd you see? Who'd hours from New Orleans, and arrived in time you talk to? [His wife, Laura, exits the house on cue and says she's off for an evening stroll.

What's your favorite guitar?

I've been playing for 40 years and my favorite is the one I make myself, the Cardinal East. The wood is local and the hardware is made in the neighborhood. Made to my specs.

What beers do you like on the porch in mid-

Gotta be Live Oak Big Bark; (512) IPA,



fantastic; and Austin Pearlsnap, pilsner per-

One of your go-to recipes?

White beans and rice.

Between waving every few minutes to neighbors passing on foot and car, Sam holds court. He's known for his good company, with quick-witted banter, occasionally accurate gossip, and tales of food, music, and not being a jerk. As we talk, I'm struck by memories of kings in Mardi Gras parades and the community-building inherent to front-porch culture.

## Maplewood Elementary Updates

3808 Maplewood Avenue

512-414-4402

https://maplewood.austinschools.org/

- Online registration is open for PK-5th grade https://www.austinisd.org/enroll
- Maplewood is open to transfers!
- Maplewood Spring Fling and Stampede: Saturday, March 25 9:00-11:00 a.m.
- Maplewood GreenPeace Team Community Movie Screening

Deep in the Heart of Texas, Thursday, March 9 @ sundown (~6:30 p.m.)

— Would you like to tour Maplewood? Join us on Fridays

Feb. 10 and March 3 @ 9:00 a.m. please RSVP to cherille.stevens-wright@austinisd.org



## Holiday Fundrasier Summary

The Third Annual Cherrywood Holiday Fundraiser was a success! Eleven neighborhood businesses participated by donating a portion of proceeds from Dec. 13, 14, 15 - Cherrywooders were encouraged to frequent these businesses even more than we usually do to help the cause! Donations were split evenly between the Maplewood Elementary PTA (Go Mustangs!) and the Campbell Elementary PTA (Go Dragons!). Thanks to your participation, and the generosity of these small, local neighborhood businesses, we raised over \$1,000 for each school! If you'd like to help with planning the 2023 end-of-year fundraiser, email steering@cherrywood.org.

## Participating Businesses

Haymaker Love Supreme Este Bird Bird Biscuit Mi Madres Thunderbird Coffee **Moontower Cider Cherrywood Coffeehouse Butterfly Bar @ Vortex** Schoolhouse Pub Nature's Treasures

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We hope you'll join us for our Family Friendly Easter service on April 9 at 10:30 am.

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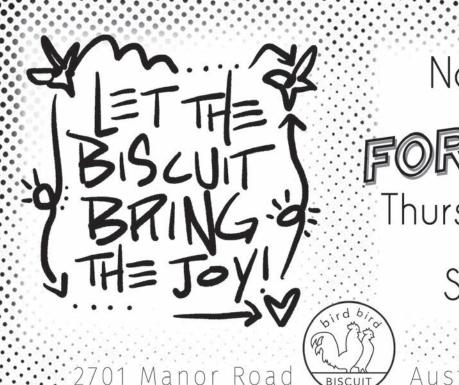
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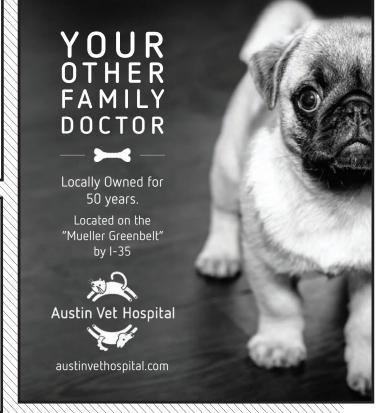
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