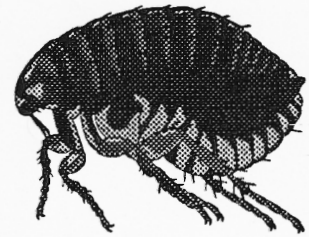


The Flea



The Newsletter of the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association
Vol. 3, No. 2

January 1998

Dear Neighbor,

A little over two years ago, the Cherrywood Neighborhood Association (CNA) came back to life after a long dormant period. Residents came together to draft new bylaws, elect officers, and create a communication network anchored by *The Flea*.

Today, all of this organizational groundwork is paying off. Under the broad umbrella of the CNA, which now includes a Spirit-Action Committee and a Policy Committee, people are planting trees, vaccinating feral cats, cleaning up litter, sprucing up parks, compiling a neighborhood history, and addressing future zoning and land-use issues. Around 40 people now regularly attend CNA meetings, and up to 100 appear when major votes are scheduled.

Because its residents care, Cherrywood is solidifying its identity as a vital central city neighborhood. Do you have an idea to improve the neighborhood? Write about it for *The Flea*, contact a CNA officer, or bring it up at a meeting. Others out there are probably willing to help.

Welcome, Schieffer Neighborhood!

by Buzz Avery

Members of the Schieffer Neighborhood Association [see sidebar] have been receiving *The Flea* for about two years, occasionally attended CNA meetings, and expressed interest in having a more active association. Like Cherrywood residents, they believe that regular communication among neighbors is the best way to preserve and enhance their neighborhood. Many residents have asked if the SNA and the CNA could form a united association.

While the SNA does have a contact person on record with the City of Austin, it does not have bylaws, hold meetings or elections, or produce a newsletter. My requests to the SNA contact person to discuss neighborhood unification have yielded few results.

At its October meeting, the CNA voted to give the SNA a chance to join forces with the

CNA. All of the homes in the SNA will receive a copy of this newsletter inviting residents to register their sentiments. If a strong majority indicates the desire to join, the CNA's bylaws will be amended and the City of Austin will be notified of the changes. Of course, many in the SNA may have no preference and wish to remain silent. To be fair, the wishes of those who do have a preference will decide the issue.

The CNA is growing stronger and healthier each year. It is well-respected by the City government where it enjoys significant political and administrative influence. We invite our friends and neighbors in Schieffer to hop on board.

The Schieffer Neighborhood Association (SNA) borders the CNA to the northeast and is bounded by 38 ½ Street, Cherrywood Road, Wilshire Blvd., and Airport Blvd. If you live in this area, come to the CNA's January 28th meeting. If you cannot attend, call Buzz Avery at 476-1889 to ask any questions and register your opinion.

Cherrywood Neighborhood Association

President Buzz Avery 476-1889
 Secretary Jim Walker 499-0526
 Treasurer Stephen Kreger 477-4216
 SAC Chair Sharon Edmonson 473-2337

The Flea



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Send your letters to the Editor to
 3706 Clarkson Avenue, Austin, TX 78722,
 fax them to 474-2895, or e-mail them to
 70741.1410@compuserve.com.

From the minutes of the October 29 meeting

General announcements

- * Jim Walker was appointed Sergeant-at-Arms. It will be his duty is to keep meetings on schedule.
- * The CNA web page is up and running. Log on at <http://link.lanic.utexas.edu/asnic/bennett/cwood/cnastart.html>.
- * The CNA e-mail list has been relatively inactive lately, but it is still going. E-mail Jim Walker at jwalk@mail.utexas.edu to get signed on.
- * We need more volunteers to help distribute *The Flea*. If you can spare just a little time, please call Mike McClendon at 482-0016.
- * The CNA is staying actively involved in the preliminary planning stages of Mueller Airport redevelopment. Jim Walker, Girard Kinney, and Gordon Bennett are keeping close tabs on the whole process. Contact one of them for more information.

Health Department presentation.

Mark Parsons from the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services

Department, Environmental Division spoke on maintaining a clean and safe neighborhood. He made several useful points.

1) An active neighborhood association is crucial to pressuring residents to keep their properties clean. The main residence-related problems tend to be random litter, overgrown weeds, and junked vehicles.

2) The City usually gets involved only if weeds 18" or taller, appliances, furniture, junked cars, or objectionable material (e.g., bags of household garbage) are in the public view. The Health Department's primary concern is the harborage of rodents, fleas, or mosquitos. The City also gets involved in cleaning up sewage leaks on private property.

[Because the City receives many calls and cannot investigate all of them, Sharon Edmonson has offered to be the CNA's contact person to the City regarding such matters. CNA residents who want to file a complaint can first contact Sharon at 473-2337. Parsons is available to answer questions at 469-2015].

3) The City gives property owners 10 days to correct violations. If they do not clean their property in that time, the City then files a class-C misdemeanor against them.

4) While the City maintains creeks like Boggy Creek, smaller tributaries are typically private property and are the responsibility of the owner to maintain. The City's drainage utility will only remove debris which is obstructing the flow of a creek.

Child care at Meetings

Child care at the last meeting never materialized, because the volunteers didn't show up. The CNA could pay for child care, but this brings up liability issues. The Spirit Action Committee will tackle the issue.

Traffic light at 38½ and Lafayette

Drivers turning onto 38½ Street from Lafayette must confront a dangerous blind corner. Indeed, this intersection has a history of tragic accidents and is moreover in the middle of a school zone whose posted sign is invisible to eastbound traffic until the last minute. A few years ago, residents lobbied for a stoplight, but 38½ Street didn't have the requisite minimum traffic volume at the time to merit one.

A motion was passed unanimously to write a formal letter to the City and AISD demanding to know why nothing has been done about this intersection.

Non-profit status for the CNA

The Spirit Action Committee has discussed non-profit status for the CNA. Becoming a tax exempt organization would enable the CNA to do more with its existing resources and with local private businesses. The process takes time (6-12 months) and money (up to \$600). A motion was passed to continue to research the costs and benefits.

Advertising rates in *The Flea*

The Flea currently prints eight business card-size ads per issue. A motion was made to raise rates from \$25 to \$30 each, but was withdrawn after some objection and discussion. For the time being *The Flea* will continue to run eight \$25 ads in each issue

—Jim Walker, Secretary



Elections slated for January meeting

According to the bylaws of the CNA, "election of officers shall be the first item of business each calendar year." Well, guess what? It's that time of year again.

All three incumbents have volunteered to run again for their respective positions. This group comprises Buzz Avery (President), Stephen Kreger (Treasurer), and Jim Walker (Secretary). Although no one else has of yet declared an interest in running for these posts, it is not too late for potential candidates. As the bylaws say, "nominations, if seconded, may originate from the floor at the election meeting."

So if you dream at night of leading our vaunted neighborhood association, come to the January 28 meeting with a couple of nominators, a short speech, and a compelling vision for the future of the CNA.

Twenty new trees to blossom this spring

The first annual Cherrywood Neighborhood Tree Planting took place on January 10 and added twenty new trees to our beautiful but aging urban forest.

The trees were donated free of charge by the city's Neighborwoods program which targets "tree-hungry" yards. Each recipient of a new tree signed "adoption papers" promising to water it until it is established.

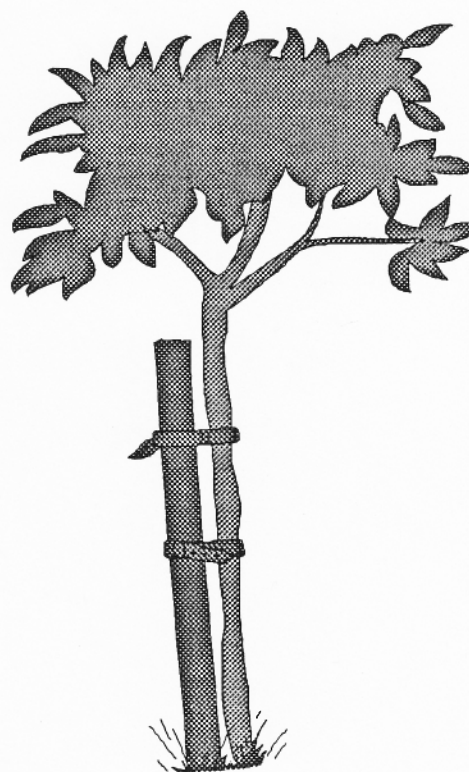
Neighborhood volunteers did the planting of native or drought-tolerant species including Bur Oaks, Crepe Myrtles, Mexican Plums, Red Oaks, and Chinese Pistaches.

If you missed out this year or still need more trees in your yard, don't despair. This will become an annual event, so look for the announcement of next year's even larger planting in *The Flea* this summer.

Remember, a canopy of foliage around your house not only beautifies the neighborhood and reduces summertime cooling costs, it adds up to 15% to the value of your home when it comes time to rent or sell.

Special thanks to tree-planting volunteers Sally Alt, Steve Barney, and Kyra Caspary.

—Mike Damal



Neighborhood Buzz

by Buzz Avery

Abandoned Cars

It is against the law to abandon or store a vehicle on a public street. As I walk around the neighborhood, I notice the same vehicles parked in the same locations for weeks at a time. My experiences in calling the abandoned vehicle hotline (280-5121) have taught me the proper procedure for reporting these vehicles. Apparently, the hotline gets so many calls that some knowledge is needed to convince authorities.

If you see a vehicle you are suspicious about, check to see if its registration or inspection have expired. Also check to see if its obviously disabled. Dust on the windshield or gutter-litter around the wheels should give you some idea how long it's been immobile.

Once convinced it's just sitting there, note the vehicle make, style, color, number of passenger doors, approximate age, and location. For location you'll need a number and street. Regardless of how you may want to describe the location, you must report the approximate numbered address where it's located.

Policy Committee Reports

The Policy Committee continues to have infrequent, irregular meetings. The meetings this quarter, however, have begun to yield some degree of consensus about the major challenge facing the neighborhood and the CNA: increased density. Meeting participants have been generally split on the issue. Some see the CNA following higher-density, compact-city goals, while others want to preserve the status quo.

Everyone realizes, however, that the demand for properties in Cherrywood is growing. People agree that if this demand comes from potential permanent residents, everything's fine, but if demand is driven by investors merely seeking rental properties,

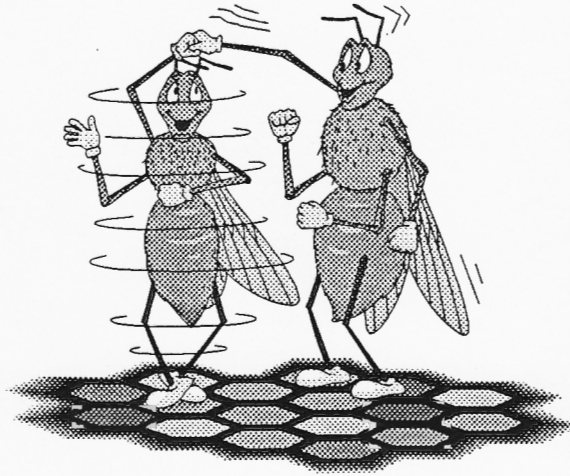
Cherrywood could become an area with a disproportionate number of temporary residents. Owner-occupants are the anchor of the neighborhood; maintaining at least 50% owner occupancy is a general goal.

Existing land-use restrictions seem to be sufficient to protect lots that are under 7000 sq. ft. from further development, but SF-3 zoned lots larger than 7000 square feet have become attractive as investment properties, since they can be duplexed. Duplexes seem to be the major potential problem for Cherrywood.

Of course, an alternative for investors would be to buy single houses on smaller lots and rent them out. However, housing prices have increased so much that the necessary rents to justify such investment are becoming prohibitive. Only a few small, poorly maintained units can still be bought at a relatively low price. These few that remain are likely to be bought, improved, and resold as residences in the near future.

For homes on lots that meet all requirements for duplexing, the committee is leaning toward changing existing duplex requirements. Current law requires a legal duplex to be a single structure, even if only a covered sidewalk connects the two living units. Many committee members want the CNA to adopt a policy allowing detached duplexes. Connecting living units can force tree removal, increase impervious cover, add to the threat of fire spreading, and reduce privacy between units. No decisions have been made and no recommendations from the Policy Committee are ready for a CNA vote. Look for something this spring.

In order to keep things as good as they are and help them to get even better, Cherrywood must become a more and more attractive area. A multitude of factors affect this: trash in streets, number of trees, appearance of homes, speed of cars, quality of area schools and parks, proximity to desired stores, restaurants, jobs, downtown, and



transportation. I believe this area has achieved about half its potential. Investments and prices will continue to increase as people "discover" the neighborhood. Diligence and an active neighborhood association will continually be required to preserve the qualities residents currently value.

Neighborhood Security

About once every three days, a crime occurs in Cherrywood. This is average for an area of our size. Most crimes are misdemeanors, but many involve stolen vehicles or property from homes. Luckily, it's relatively easy to reduce these unfortunate events.

I volunteered to go through two days of training with Cops on Patrol (COP). The first day was spent in class, the second riding with a patrolman during the night shift. Most of the problems that were discussed involved more crime-ridden areas of the city. Cherrywood is considered a quiet, secure neighborhood with little crime. Most crimes in our area affect UT students who have not adopted strategies to prevent or deter thefts. Noisy parties are also a frequent nuisance in all neighborhoods surrounding UT.

The main thing I learned is how to properly use 911. When 911 operators receive a call, they determine the priority of the call and notify the officers patrolling the area. On busy nights, it may take two hours for officers to respond to a low priority call, like a noisy party.

However, if you call 911 before or during a criminal activity, it gets the highest priority, and an officer will usually arrive in five minutes or less. Of course, ongoing crimes are

seldom seen since criminals survive on concealment.

Since you can't read a criminal's mind, it is best to report any suspicious activity or person in the neighborhood. Examples include strangers knocking on a neighbor's door then going to the back, a person walking down the street with a pillowcase full of something (burglars commonly use them), strange cars repeatedly driving back and forth on neighborhood streets, gangs with backpacks, etc. Anything that seems out of place or suspicious, if only for a second, is worth reporting.

Cops love to catch bad guys and hate paperwork. Unfortunately, we don't help them. We report crimes after the fact, giving them nothing but time-consuming reports to complete. If we all were to make more calls to report suspicious activity, crime would drop in Cherrywood. As criminals get busted before crimes occur, the likelihood of future crimes diminishes.

Make that call.

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Spirit Action Committee Update

- by Sharon Edmondson

Cat-in-the-Hood Club

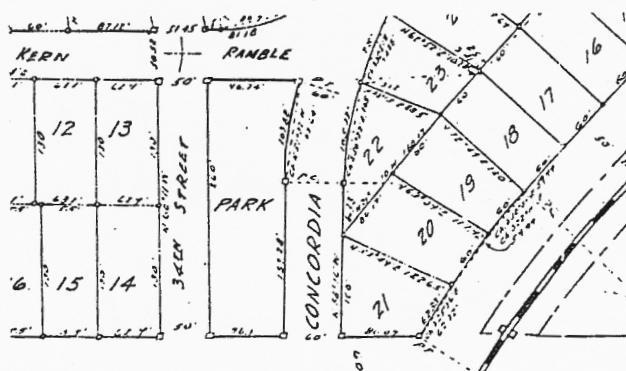
The recently formed Cat-in-the-Hood Club has turned its good intentions into actions and begun to deal with Cherrywood's feral cat problem. Two club-sponsored feral cats, "Jasmine" and "Abu", have now been spayed and vaccinated. Progress has been somewhat hampered by the unintentional trapping of possums. The possums have been released unnamed and unneutered. Efforts will continue.

Cherrywood Scrapbook

Thank you to those who responded to my call for historical information for a Cherrywood Scrapbook. I have received much interesting factual material and memorabilia. I now need volunteers to compile the information into a narrative. It would be an excellent project for students this semester or for anyone wanting to learn more about the history of our neighborhood.

A Rediscovered Park

Nearly sixty years ago, D.C. Reed submitted a plat for a proposed subdivision to the City of Austin. Mr. Reed's "Upland Addition" was officially recorded on July 15, 1940. The original plat dedicated "...for public use, all streets and parks shown thereon." As demonstrated by the map printed below, the land bounded by Cherrywood, 34th Street, Kern Ramble, and Concordia (never finished) is and always has been a dedicated park named Reed Park.



REED PARK, 1940

Some people would like to leave the park a "natural" area to protect wildlife and discourage use by gangs or the homeless; others want a more recognizable city park.

Persons interested in this issue or other issues mentioned here should attend the February 25 and March 25 SAC meetings. All meetings are held in the Maplewood Elementary art room from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Boggy Creek Clean-Up

Thanks to SAC and CNA President Buzz Avery, the city's Drainage Utility/Stormwater Management Division removed excessive vegetation along the Boggy Creek tributary running east of Reed Park to Vineland Drive. An Easter Seals crew performed the work under the close supervision of neighborhood residents Barbara Mink and John Newland.

Coming Soon

The next issue of *The Flea* will report on progress cleaning up the vacant property along Clarkson east of Cherrywood Road.

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Keeping gangs out of Cherrywood

As Buzz Avery learned as a citizen on patrol [see the Neighborhood Buzz, pp. 4-5], the Austin Police Department considers Cherrywood a safe and secure neighborhood. It is that way because residents here are proactive about crime. One area where citizen involvement is absolutely crucial is in gang prevention.

Criminal street gangs are fast becoming one of the most serious crime problems in Texas. Between 1994 and 1996, more than 5,000 gang-related crimes took place in Austin. Gang recruits are becoming younger and younger, and most will end up career criminals. Some members are the fourth generation in their family to belong to a gang.

Gangs thrive on intimidation and notoriety. They often find violence necessary to maintain individual and gang status. Members seek confrontations with rivals and don't care if innocent bystanders are hurt or killed in the process. Gangs engage in drug-dealing, extortion, robbery, and automobile theft for monetary gain.

Gang members use graffiti to mark their "turf" or territory and to advertise their power. Once a neighborhood has allowed itself to be overtaken by graffiti, it means that gangs have moved in and are fighting for territorial dominance. Studies show that the most effective way to combat graffiti is to remove it *quickly*. When graffiti is allowed to remain, gang members interpret it as a sign of low neighborhood pride and assume that they

can take control of the neighborhood. To find out more about the citywide effort to remove graffiti and how you can help, call the Graffiti Hotline at 473-4125.

Actually fighting crime and confronting gang members is best left to law enforcement. APD has recently formed a Gang Suppression Unit to combat street-gang activity. The Unit has published a free handbook with information on gangs and how they function. To get your copy, call the Gang Suppression Unit at 406-0060 or download it from its Web site at www.austingangbusters.org/.

Ultimately, neighborhood residents must overcome their fear of gangs in order to keep them out. People should keep an eye out for graffiti and see that it is removed as soon as possible; they should quickly report any and all potential gang activity to the police; they should maintain their properties in good condition. By showing gangs through our actions that we care about Cherrywood, we can keep them out and make our streets safer.

—Bennett Donovan, with information provided by the City of Austin and APD

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Agenda for Jan. 28th meeting Maplewood School

- 6:30* Greetings and refreshments
- 6:40 Begin meeting with introductions
- 6:45 Acknowledgments, announcements, and amendments or additions to Agenda
- 6:55 Review of previous meeting
- 7:00 Report from Sprit Committee
- 7:15 Report from Policy Committee
- 7:30 Discussion and action items
 - Election of officers
 - Consideration to change time and place of regular meetings
 - Discussion of "Cherrywood" drainage easement
- 8:55 Set date and place for next meeting
- 9:00 Adjourn

*Times are approximate. Please keep comments brief so all wishing to speak can be heard.

PTA news you can use

The Maplewood Elementary Halloween Haunt was more successful than ever. The festival made several thousand dollars, significantly more than the year before. Thanks to all the neighborhood residents who participated.

In other news, Girl Scout cookies go on sale January 17 through February 19. Several local troops will be selling them in front of Blockbuster Video on the weekends. Don't miss out on this year's batch of thin mints!

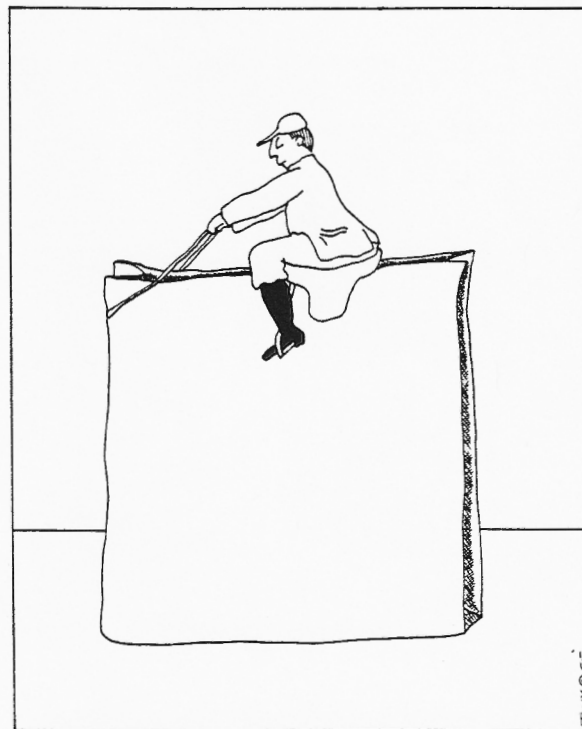
—Andi Miller, Maplewood PTA President

Alyce Schwab becomes first flea-anthropist

As Steve Barney planted trees in Alyce Schwab's yard on Robinson Avenue [see article, page 3], she thanked the neighborhood association by donating \$20 to *The Flea*.

Since publishing costs have risen recently, the money will help us break even without raising advertising rates.

Thanks, Alyce! You've become *The Flea's* first major philanthropist.



Paper bag rider

Are you pricing yourself out of the Market?

Some people think:

- "Let's start high and see how it goes; I'm in no hurry"
- The price can always come down

What usually happens:

- The property sits for some time
- Prospective buyers notice the home has been on the market for a while
- Experienced real estate agents and savvy buyers will shun it
- When the price starts to come down, buyers become leery
- People don't want something if others seem not to want it

In addition, an overpriced property makes it:

- Difficult for sales people to become excited
- Difficult to get good buyers to view property
- Difficult to get buyers to make an offer
- Difficult to get successful financing

And you have:

- gotten off to a slow start
- wasted advertisements
- caused financing to fall through if an offer does come along
- made fewer showings
- caused your agency agreement to have a much greater chance of expiring without a sale
- taken longer than average time to make a sale

National Association of REALTOR®s studies show that the seller gets less in proceeds the longer the home sits on the market.

Please Note: If your property is currently listed for sale by a licensed agent or broker, this publication is not a solicitation.

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