As I was driving home the other day, I noticed that our neighborhood had a manicured look to it, even though we’ve had numerous days of almost 100 degree temperatures. All the grass was green, lots of people were at the pool, folks were walking their dogs, and it made me happy to live in such a beautiful subdivision.

It takes a lot of work by our residents to keep a community beautiful. They do it because they take immense pride in where they live.

In our Annual Meeting in March, we laid out objectives for this year—objectives that we hope will maintain that beauty and sustain the pride and care that our residents take for years to come. Some of these are simple: the repair of sidewalks in the common areas, the trimming of trees along Morton Road. Others require a greater investment, such as the update of our tennis court surface and security systems, which we plan for the fall.

Directors of the HOA Board have also worked tirelessly to strengthen our communications network. Our goal is to connect with all of our neighbors—by having a block captain for every section of the neighborhood, and by gathering contact information for our community’s email account. This involvement continues to bring a strong sense of community to our neighborhood and makes it one of the most coveted communities in the area.

Lastly, waste collection companies have had to increase recycling rates among their clients. Some great information has been included in this newsletter that details why recycling companies have to increase their fees. We are also working on long term goals and relationships to secure the future of our waste collection services and costs.

We live in a great neighborhood. I would like to personally thank all that each and every resident does to maintain the attractiveness of our great community. Please reach out to the Homeowners Association Board of Directors if you have any questions or issues at barkersridgehoa@gmail.com.

Patrick Hughes, Barkers Ridge HOA President

Why China is Changing Our Recycling
by Judith McGlaughlin

Well before there was talk of a trade war between the U.S. and China, NPR reported that China had imposed stiff standards on the flow of one of American top exports to their country. The imposition of these standards effectively closed the door to these export volumes and sent a shock wave throughout the industry. Exporters and trade officials admonished China’s heavy-handed tactics and painted a grim picture for Ameri-
Why China is Changing Our Recycling (2/3)

I listened to the story in disbelief. The export was recycled waste, and the American producer was you and me. Indeed, since 2007, trash has emerged as one of America’s top exports to China — including everything from scrap metal and mixed paper to mixed rigid plastics and a whole lot more. Industry analysts put the value of exports at over $15 billion per year.

For me, and for more than 100 million Americans, recycling is a way of life — something that we have embraced with enthusiasm and a sense of common purpose. And let’s face it, it’s pretty easy — we just have to put certain items in a bin picked up at curbside. We save a landfill; our trash provider gets a valuable raw material: everyone wins.

How We Got Here

It sounds weird, but the export of recycled waste made a lot of sense. China had been sending so many consumer goods to the United States that all those shipping containers were coming back empty. So, U.S. companies began stuffing the return-trip containers with recycled cardboard boxes, waste paper and other scrap. China could, in turn, harvest the raw materials. Another win-win proposition.

The biggest winners were U.S. recycling programs. Those trash exports to China became indispensable for municipal recycling. In 2016, approximately 41% of paper recovered in North America was exported with about a quarter of recyclable paper exported to Chinese mills. Similarly, over 20% of post-consumer bottles and 33% of non-bottle rigid plastics from the U.S. were exported in 2015. China consumed over 50% of the world’s recycled paper and plastic in 2016.

But now that arrangement is in danger. In February of this year, China launched “Operation Green Fence” — a policy to prohibit the import of unwashed post-consumer plastics and other “contaminated” waste shipments. And that’s led to a serious crackdown of U.S. trash imports.

In the U.S., that crackdown means that the market for low-end grades of post-consumer plastics and other forms of recycled waste has declined sharply. This not only means lower prices throughout the industry — but there’s just no where for this “low end” waste to go.

A Deeper Dive

Over a year ago, China set new standards for what waste it was willing to take. While Americans embraced recycling, the waste streams were becoming increasingly contaminated. In a notice to the World Trade Organization, Chinese officials explained that “large amounts of dirty, or even hazardous, wastes are mixed in the solid waste that can be used as raw materials. This polluted China’s environment seriously.”

Waste experts in the U.S. agree that contamination is a big problem. Even people who think they are doing a good job may be adding to the problem. While it is true that contamination can occur from the residue from the contents of recycled waste, it’s the materials that are not recyclable that are mixed in with the high-quality recycled materials that is driving contamination. The number one problem is plastic bags. They are not to be recycled curbside. Yes, we tend to “package” our recyclables in plastic bags - which causes problems. Plastic bags wrap around the equipment and cause serious issues (to see this problem in graphic detail, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch? Continued on page 3.
v=qoBSW75-AqM). Lithium batteries, dirty diapers, food – all contribute to the contamination that China has banned and drives processing costs higher here at home. For a look at the issues that cause the most harm, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZN4iwzVQ.

How the Plunge in Prices Recycling Costs

The magnitude of the problem alone means that it will affect just about everyone in the “value chain” – that is, the organizations and processes that convert raw materials into a commercial product. In this case, we are the largest producers of the raw materials that start this chain. By far, the largest cost in the entire process is curbside collection by the waste hauler, including a significant investment in fixed assets (trucks cost between $250,000 and $500,000), labor and fuel.

The waste hauler takes residential recyclables to a materials recovery facility (MRF aka recycling center) where it gets sorted. From a MRF, the sorted material will generally go to a manufacturer, but sometimes will require secondary processing. The MRF sends material to multiple different buyers, depending on the material. Contamination (about 25% of what comes in) ends up at the landfill. The value of all the material together is called the blended value.

In general, the hauler will pay the MRF a processing fee and then share revenues from the sale of the sorted materials. In many cases, the processing fee is deducted from the revenues and then the net revenue is split. Last year, the revenues were pretty good — the blended value was over $100/ton even when accounting for contaminated material that just goes straight to the landfill. This year, it has dropped to less than $40/ton. When processing costs are in excess of $40/ton, most haulers now have to pay for the MRF to take our recycled waste. If these conditions persist, it is very likely that waste haulers will pass at least some of these costs to their suppliers.

What This Means for Recycling in the Future …

Now, that China has shut its doors, the amount of material is too much to be absorbed by the American market and must either find another home or be landfilled.

But, it is very important to distinguish between the contaminated waste that China is turning away – and the “high quality” waste that remains in demand – both here in the U.S. and in international markets. Aluminum recycling remains the most valuable part of the recycling container. And, most #1 & #2 plastic containers are actually handled in the U.S. – an amount that has been growing faster than other recycled waste streams. “Green” waste, or yard clippings, while not part of the recycling bin, makes up a significant percentage of the total waste stream. As Jim Gardner points out in this issue of the Ridge Runner, finding a way to divert it is saving a significant amount of landfill space across the country.

So, for the bulk of our recycled, prices will be low for a while – probably another 2-3 years. The challenge is that there is an oversupply waste in U.S. markets today – while waste volumes continue to grow almost exponentially. But as new outlets for markets develop, creating more demand, and prices will go back up.

… For You and Me

The future path for curbside providers of recycled waste – you and me – is simple. Make sure we recycle those materials that are recyclable (http://www.texaspridedisposal.com/recycling.html) – and follow the guidelines for rinsing the residue from bottles, cans, and jars. Recycling the right materials correctly will help minimize the negative impacts of current market conditions. It won’t solve the larger problems immediately, but it will mean that what you think you are recycling does not end up in the landfill.

Why China is Changing Our Recycling (3/3)
## What to Recycle ...

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<tr>
<th>Paper Products</th>
<th>Plastics (please rinse)</th>
<th>Metal (please rinse)</th>
<th>Glass (please rinse)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Plastics #1-#7</td>
<td>Soda, Juice, &amp; Beer Cans</td>
<td>Beer Bottles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>Milk &amp; Juice Bottles</td>
<td>Canned Food Cans</td>
<td>Wine Bottles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catalogs</td>
<td>Soda &amp; Water Bottles</td>
<td>Pet Food Cans</td>
<td>Soda Bottles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junk Mail</td>
<td>Shampoo &amp; Soap Bottles</td>
<td>Aluminum Foil</td>
<td>Jars</td>
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<td>Envelopes</td>
<td>Bleach &amp; Detergent Containers</td>
<td>Pie Trays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greeting Cards</td>
<td>Household Cleaner Containers</td>
<td>Metal Jar Lids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrapping Paper</td>
<td>Plastic Flower Pots</td>
<td>Gutters (less than 5’ long)</td>
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<tr>
<td>File Folders</td>
<td>Yogurt cups</td>
<td>Empty Aerosol Cans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer Paper</td>
<td>Cups, Plates, &amp; Dinnerware</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction Paper</td>
<td>Prescription Pill Containers</td>
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<td>Grocery Bags</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soda &amp; Beer Boxes</td>
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<td>Shoe Boxes</td>
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<td>Clean Pizza Boxes</td>
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<td>Cardboard Boxes</td>
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<td>Waxboard Containers (Juice Boxes)</td>
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<td>Egg Cartons</td>
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<td>Paper Towel Rolls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone Books</td>
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</table>

## ... And What Not Recycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Styrofoam</th>
<th>Soiled Pizza Boxes</th>
<th>Coat Hangers</th>
<th>Paint &amp; Solvent Containers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td>Mirrors</td>
<td>Light Bulbs</td>
<td>Paper Towels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics</td>
<td>Wet &amp; Soiled Paper</td>
<td>Facial &amp; Toilet Tissue</td>
<td>Microwave Dinner Trays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thin Plastics (bags, etc.)</td>
<td>Pots &amp; Pans</td>
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How Do I Get My Garbage Picked Up in Barkers Ridge?
By Marcia Thomas

Attention New Residents of Barkers Ridge: Texas Pride Disposal is the waste collection provider currently servicing Barkers Ridge. If you are a homeowner, you should have received a Welcome Letter from Crest Management stating the name of the trash provider. If you are a renter, your landlord should have explained how to obtain all utility services including waste collection services. In Barkers Ridge, each resident pays their own quarterly waste collection bill individually since it is NOT included in the monthly MUD 238/Gulf Utility water bill and it is NOT included in the Barkers Ridge Annual HOA Dues. Each resident needs to set up their own account with Texas Pride Disposal and pay their invoices in order to obtain these services.

Texas Pride Disposal accepts payment by credit or debit card, check or money order, or over the phone. Texas Pride also has an online payment option. Please refer to their website for all of the details. Trash is picked up on Wednesday and Saturday. Recycle bins are emptied on Saturday.

Please keep in mind that the Barkers Ridge HOA Deed Restrictions require residents to shield the trash cans from public view on Non Trash Pickup Days.

Texas Pride—Service Commitment With & By Barkers Ridge
By Judith McGlaughlin

Texas Pride Disposal became Barkers Ridge’s waste collection and recycling provider just about a year ago, when we signed a three-year contract with the company.

There are terms in the agreement that outline the responsibilities for waste collection for each side—both Texas Pride Disposal and our residents. Here is a brief summary—

✦ How Much Waste Will Texas Pride pick up?
   Residential refuse must be either in personal containers not to exceed ninety-six (96) gallons or bags not exceeding forty (40) pounds. Tree, shrub, and brush trimmings must be piled neatly curbside in individual piles not exceeding three (3) feet in length by three (3) feet in width by three (3) feet in height, and branches may not exceed six (6) inches in diameter

✦ Are there limitations on the types of waste that will be collected?
   As part of normal collection, Texas Pride Disposal does not pick up dirt, rocks, bricks, concrete, or any materials or items deemed hazardous materials or waste generated by a private contractor. Bulky waste (refrigerators and freezers must be drained of Freon and have a bill to validate such service was performed) will be picked up either scheduled day and must also be located at the curb.

✦ Are requirements on how the trash is picked up?
   Yes, all permanent trash containers, after being emptied by Texas Pride Disposal, will be returned within five (5) feet of their point of origin in the same condition in which they were taken, normal wear and tear expected.
   Texas Pride Disposal shall clean up any spillage that occurs during the collection process; provided, however that if gasoline, motor oil, cooking oil, paint, or any other liquid items in a garbage container are not seen by
Texas Pride—Service Commitments With & By Barkers Ridge

Texas Pride Disposal personnel resulting in spillage that causes a stain, Texas Pride Disposal shall not be responsible.

How do I dispose of the items that are not picked up?

For special collection other than normal amounts of residential refuse, yard trimmings, or bulk items (a "Special Collection"), if notified in advance Texas Pride Disposal will meet with the resident prior to collection day to negotiate a price. If a resident does not notify Texas Pride Disposal of such a Special Collection before their scheduled day, then Texas Pride Disposal will leave a notice for the resident to contact Texas Pride Disposal during normal office hours before their next scheduled pick up day.

Payment for any Special Collection is the sole responsibility of the individual resident requesting Special Collection and is not an obligation of the Customer. If notified in advance, Texas Pride Disposal will arrange for garage door or valet service for residents needing special assistance with collection of residential refuse. Any such requests for garage door or valet service should be made directly by the individual resident requesting the service to Texas Pride Disposal.

When does Texas Pride operate?

Collection of refuse will not start before 7:00 a.m. or continue after 7:00 p.m. on the same day. Exceptions would be due to unusual circumstances.

If the scheduled collection day falls on any of the following holidays, the normal services will be resumed the following scheduled collection day. Holidays are: New Year’s Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

What if my trash is not picked up?

All complaints should be made to Texas Pride Disposal. If a residence is missed due to Texas Pride Disposal’s negligence, Texas Pride Disposal will pick up said residence within twenty-four (24) hours of such notice.

Have your account information, showing the date you last paid for Texas Pride’s services on hand. If you forgot to pay your last bill, it is likely that service to your home was suspended for non-payment.

Street Lights—by Diane Garcia

One of the easiest ways to protect our homes and properties is with light. Thieves don’t want to be seen and tend to target dark areas. An easy way to provide light is with our streetlights.

This week I was walking my dogs early in the morning and noticed the streetlight on my corner was out. I took a picture with the camera on my phone (you can also write it down) of the number on the light pole.

Then I went to the barkersridge.org website. Halfway down the page is a link to streetlights. You click on that and fill out the form that pops up. You will need the pole number you obtained above and the approximate address of the light. Send that in and you get an email back saying they were working on it. Two days later I had light again on the corner and it really makes a difference.

I did a quick drive through Barkers Ridge this morning and noticed many streetlights out. So take a walk after dark this evening or just poke your head out your front door. If a light near you is out you will need to wait until it is light out to get the number (they are on the poles about 5 feet up but tough to read in the dark) and then fill out the form. You will be helping with security for yourself and your neighbors!
How to Reduce Waste Disposal Costs—One Man’s View
By Jim Gardner

As part of the project team assessing how we may reduce neighborhood waste disposal costs, here is my opinion and recommendation for one possible component of a comprehensive solution. Though not scientific (like weather forecasts and global warming) my opinion is based on years of personal experience, observations, and common logic.

Definitions

COMPOSTING – This is the practice of putting organic food waste in a special container vs. down the garbage disposal or the trash can. Within the special container, one has to periodically add water and tumble to assist in the decomposition process. Microorganisms do the work over time. The completely decomposed material can then be spread into the flowerbeds, garden, or yard as fertilizer. Whether composting is done or not has little to no effect to the landfill or waste pickup volume.

MULCHING – This is simply mowing one’s yard without collecting the cuttings into bags for waste disposal pickup. Most any lawn mower has this ability by removing the bag and closing off the discharge chute. A specific blade may help and is available anywhere mower blades are sold. Though simply discharging the cuttings is technically an option as it would avoid the bagging, it is not recommended because our grass grows so tall and fast that the dried clippings would look unsightly. Mulching keeps the clippings contained inside the mower deck enough to cut them into tiny pieces which fall beneath the grass onto the ground. The finely chopped grass quickly blends onto the soil and provides nutrients. It benefits the health of the grass as well as eliminates landfill waste volume. Incidentally, mulching requires less labor and expense because you don't have to stop and dump the mower bag into plastic bags.

Paid lawn services could either convert to mulching or carry the bags elsewhere.

One Man’s Experience

For over (35) years of mowing my suburban lots, I have never bagged the clippings and have always mulched. Specifically, this is applicable to the (13) years we have lived at our current address in Barker’s Ridge. Besides routine watering and fertilizing twice per year, I do nothing else and my lawn looks as good as anyone’s. My biggest obstacle to perfect grass is the shading of four huge Live Oak trees. All of our surrounding neighbors bag their clippings and some have professional lawn services. There is no measurable advantage between their lawn look or condition vs. mine. So why do so many people bag their clippings? I submit that my lawn is better, healthier, because it continually gets fed organic nutrients. The neighbors all put out several black plastic bags full of clippings weekly, for which we all ultimately pay to be hauled to the landfill. Once in the landfill, the plastic bags sit for umpteen years if they ever completely decompose. What a waste. I estimate these bags to be about 20% to 30% of the volume of waste hauled. If eliminated, it would certainly reduce the cost of waste disposal.

My Recommendation

Invoke an HOA requirement prohibiting bagged grass clippings for waste disposal pickup. Not only for the environmental impact, but to directly reduce the amount of waste to be hauled which would reduce the disposal costs to all residents.
Neighborhood Watch Update
By Judith McGlaughlin

We receive monthly updates from the Constable’s Office, showing the number and type of calls made by Barkers Ridge residents seeking help and intervention from both our dedicated constable and constables on patrol in the hours in which our deputy is not on duty. We use these statistics to look at any trends – up or down – in our neighborhood watch program.

In the first six months of 2018, the number of calls made by Barkers Ridge residents was up (447 vs. 367) but in line with 2016 results. While the numbers were up, the distribution of calls into the major categories we use to analyze activity was fairly constant. The number of calls related to community service (“meet the citizen”, information calls) still makes up the largest majority of calls (45%), while calls related to prevention (vacation watches, calls on suspicious persons or vehicles) remained constant at 31%. Criminal incidents – or an action that constitutes an offense that is punishable by law – still makes up only 5% of constable calls. There were 22 such offenses in the first six months of 2018, including three home burglaries, 4 incidents of criminal mischief, 4 assaults, and 4 incidents where a firearm was discharged. However, our contract deputy reports that of the four assaults, three were between family members and one, between a set of former friends. Although considered criminal, the assaults have been physical altercations between known parties, not random acts.

The discharge of firearms occurred between 10:40 pm and 1:00 am. The responding deputies did not find anything supporting weapons being fired; no casings, no damage, and no repeat calls – and may well have been the sound of vehicles backfiring and or fireworks, rather than actual weapons. Nevertheless, we urge that you call the constables if you hear or see anything suspicious: this is our greatest deterrent against criminal activity in the community.

On June 28, we hosted our first (in a long time) Annual Meeting of Block Captains. The event was well attended by the block captains who have served for many years – and by the nine new block captains that recently joined since the Annual Meeting in March. To all of our block captains – now serving 49 of the 60 blocks in Barkers Ridge, thank you for your leadership and contribution to our community.

Resident Survey Planned
By Judith McGlaughlin

Some years ago, the HOA Board conducted a survey of our residents, to assess the overall level of satisfaction with the services (landscaping, pool management, waste collection) provided through your annual dues or through the contracts we executed. The results helped us to focus on the things that were important to our community, and allowed us to listen to the views of the entire population (or at least those that agreed to complete the survey).

We’re planning to resume this tool in the next few weeks, hopefully moving from a “paper” survey to one that can be conducted online. We are hoping that all homeowners will participate—this is not like the election of HOA board members where one home gets one vote. We’d like to hear from you all.
Sidewalk Repairs—Whose Job is It Anyway?
By Jerald Garcia

The policy of all Harris County precincts (we live in Precinct 3) regarding sidewalks is as follows:\(^1\): Sidewalks “are built by the homeowners when they construct a house and driveway. The County does not require sidewalks in front of houses and does not build or maintain them. Sidewalks are considered the responsibility of the homeowner. An exception to that rule is when a storm sewer under a sidewalk fails and causes the sidewalk to break, and then we would repair the storm sewer and sidewalk. If the damage is due to a sanitary sewer line the MUD district is the responsible party.”

As you read this quotation, it becomes clear that the responsibility for maintenance of the sidewalk is that of the homeowner. So, if the sidewalk in front of your home is uneven (trip hazard), tilted (falling hazard), cracked or other, it is your responsibility as the property owner to correct such issues. Such repairs/replacement work is not the responsibility of Harris County or Barkers Ridge HOA (the only exception is that the HOA is responsible for repair/replacement of sidewalks in the common areas of the subdivision.) Furthermore, the Barkers Ridge deed restrictions require sidewalks and as such the homeowner must have them and must maintain the sidewalk on their property. Removal of sidewalks is not an option; it would be a deed restriction violation.

If you have additional questions, please contact Crest Management or bring your questions to the next HOA board meeting.

To find out if your sidewalk damage is caused by a sinkhole you may fill out an online form for Harris County Precinct 3. \(\text{http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/servicerequestform/default.aspx?pct3}\).

The HOA board recently hired a concrete leveling company to repair the sidewalks in the common area at the pool. We are working with the county to assess other areas to see whose responsibility it is to repair those areas.

Ultimately, be a good neighbor. Even though homeowners insurance will cover a claim filed by someone who trips on your sidewalk, none of us needs the expense of litigation.

How to Get Your Curbs Repaired
By Marcia Thomas

Curb repair is one of the service request types on the drop down menu list of services. “Concrete Roads, Inlets, Drains, Curbs” is the exact name of the one that I saw on the list.

\(\text{http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/servicerequestform/default.aspx?pct3}\).

I have had excellent response from this website for downed official Harris County Precinct 3 traffic signs and the removal of illegal bandit signs posted at the intersection of Morton Road and Greenhouse Road.

My request for the removal of the signs was completed the very next day! I was most impressed.
Barkers Ridge Real Estate Update
Barkers Ridge Prices Continue to Rise
By d. Diane Sanders

The following is an excerpt from my column from the Spring issue of the “Ridge Runner”:

“With spring comes the beginning of the real estate selling season. This year, I expect it to be a FRENZY!! Many of the buyers who flooded rented for 6 months to a year. Those leases are up or coming to an end. They are out looking and buying. Our inventory is being outpaced by demand – it is low, low. If you are considering selling your home, this may be a great opportunity for you. Be prepared to also pay top dollar in many parts of Houston for your next home. And, interest rates have gone up. I am seeing 4.65% in many cases. They can move a bit from day-to-day.”

That is EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED, starting in about April. I wish I had the same crystal ball for the stock market! What is happening now? Only one LARGER home is in Pending at this writing at $75per sq. ft. (it is not in great condition and is not typical of the larger homes that have sold this year), and the smaller/mid-sized homes are in the $90-$100 range. Remember, as we have discussed for years – larger homes typically sell for less per sq. ft. than smaller homes. It is sort of the ‘quantity discount’ like we see at HEB or Randall’s: The gigantic bag of cereal sells for significantly less than the little box of cereal. Same principal. And, there seems to be a slowing of the LARGER home sales in Barkers Ridge in July – they seem to be languishing in the ACTIVE category, and sellers are reducing prices. 3 weeks is too soon to see a trend, and these homes moved very well in the Spring and through early summer. This is likely seasonal as larger homes are often attractive to families with children; school will be starting soon. Many families try to get into their new homes a bit before school starts to get settled and registered.

The average days on market has inched up on the “Active” homes vs the “Pending” and “Sold” homes lately. That often indicates a bit of easing – not to sound an alarm – the market often fluctuates especially toward the end of summer. It is still a very good and optimistic market. I study trends and have been in the business so long that I have been through most ups and downs. From what I am reading, the economists with much more knowledge than ‘yours truly’ are making whispers of a cooling off in real estate in 2020. We will see. Houston continues to grow so rapidly, only time will tell. And, the business growth including the hospitals and related medical field will likely continue to fuel our sales. With so much industry nearby, there may not be a reason to commute downtown soon! Call me if I can help.

Barkers Ridge Statistics January 1, 2018– July 23, 2018
(Total/F = Foreclosures)

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<td>Sold</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of Foreclosure Sold</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>$67</td>
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Barkers Ridge Swim Team…Home of the Marlins!

By James Matthews

Your Barkers Ridge Swim Team (BRST) had a fantastic 2018 season and held the Sportsmanship award for the third consecutive year and fifth time in the last six years. In all, we had 115 of our youth join the club and learn to fly in the water this season, with lots of new first-time swimmers! Our swimmers swam their hearts out but we came up short one win from placing third in our division. BRST had an outstanding seven of our swimmers place in the top four of our division to make it to the leagues All Star Meet. That in itself is a great accomplishment and we are very proud of these youth for working hard and achieving success.

BRST was first formed in 1992, by two Barkers Ridge parents Denise Allen and Linda Hendrickson. It’s hard to believe that 26 years later we are still going as strong as ever. Thank you, Barkers Ridge residents, for continuing this great neighborhood tradition!

BRST provides our youth with a community-based, family-oriented recreational, yet competitive swim team experience, to further educate children and parents in competitive swimming, by providing a positive enjoyable environment. We entrench good sportsmanship and encourage each swimmer to achieve his/her highest individual potential. We depend on dedicated swimmers, family volunteers, and parent leaders, along with a caring and experienced home grown coaching staff to promote confidence, camaraderie, health, dedication and respect, while we never forget that the swim team experience is enjoyable and fun! If anyone is interested in swimming next season on the team, look for registration to begin on March 1, 2019!

BRST accepts corporate, as well as individual sponsorships. We are hosts to two home meets and have four away meets (includes Meet of Champions & All Stars) each season. Each team represents between approximately 100 to 200 swimmers and their families. This accompanied with our fantastic community and far reaching word of mouth will give you and your business a large amount of public display within the West Houston and Katy area. See our website https://brmarlins.swimtopia.com/sponsors for more information. We would like to give a huge thanks to our 2018 sponsors: Sanders Family Real Estate, Samson Pest Control, AC Comfort, Accumulators Inc., and Ms. Nancy Finch!

See y’all at the pool!
Exploring the Bicycle Trails in West Houston
By Judith McGlaughlin

Most of Barkers Ridge bicyclists know the Groescheke Hike And Bike Trail quite well: it’s a 3.25 mile trail from the northern portion of Cullen Park to Highway 6, winding past a German cemetery past the West Houston airport, to SH 6 and Patterson Road – a gateway (when open) to Bear Creek Park and the Bear Creek Zoo.

But the true jewels of the West Houston bike trails are on the south side of I-10. This travelogue is one of several planned to help navigate you to these trails, and to describe what’s to be found. This installment describes how to get to the Mayde Creek Hike and Bike Trail, via the Gary & Bonnie Trietsch Park at Baker Road and Kingsland Boulevard.

For a broader view of the West Houston bike trails, include maps, go to the Energy Corridor website: http://www.energycorridor.org/commutersolutions/bike-walk/bike-maps.

Getting to Interstate-10

The most challenging part of the journey is getting to and across Interstate 10. There are 2 options: (1) pack your bike on the car, and drive to the Precinct 5 Constable’s Office at 17423 Katy Freeway. From there you can access the George Bush Park Hike and Bike trail, and proceed west to Barker Cypress Road, at the Barker Cypress Access Road; or (2) from Cullen Park, you can travel by bicycle on South Park View, turning right on Barker Cypress Road at the Chevron station, and proceeding south to Interstate 10 on Barker Cypress. You should be aware that the trail in this section is either in poor shape or does not exist at all, especially around the elevated perimeter of Addicks Dam. In this section, it’s just better to walk your bike along the dirt path. If there is no trail, you should not travel by bicycle on Barker Cypress Road: just walk. While I use Option 2, it’s not recommended for others: use Option 2 at your own risk.

South of Interstate 10

Once you cross Interstate 10, you will proceed south to the bend, where Barker Cypress Road becomes Kingsland Boulevard. Travel west on Kingsland Boulevard until it intersects with Baker Road. Enter the Gary & Bonnie Trietsch Park via the bike trail that runs south along a flood control waterway on your right. You will find the park to your left, which is a great rest stop if needed. As the trail bends to the right, it changes from a wide asphalt surface to a single lane sidewalk. This sidewalk is well used by the local residents, so take care to use proper notification etiquette with pedestrians.

Within minutes, you will come to a fork in the trail; at this point, take the left fork to continue to head south, again along a luscious waterway. Along the path, the trail will intersect with Greenwind Chase Drive: be sure to watch for vehicles. Continue south along the sidewalk trail until you reach the Otto Glaeser Memorial Bridge, that crosses Mason Creek just east of South Fry Road. At this point, you are on the Mason Creek Hike and Bike Trail, a wide asphalt and well-maintained trail that traverses the Creek.

Mason Creek Hike and Bike Trail

Mason Creek Hike and Bike Trail has a number of underpasses to support bicycle and pedestrian travel across the well-traveled Fry Road, West Green Road, and additional smaller streets in the Kelliwood subdivision. You can gain a good amount of speed through the underpasses: some underpasses are curved, so you will not have a full line of vision – be careful! But the trail is beautifully maintained, as is Mason Creek. Soon after pass-
Exploring the Bicycle Trails in West Houston (2/2)

æing under South Fry Road, the creek widens and is engineered with steel structural supports that give it
æven greater grandeur.

Soon after traveling below West Green Road, you will see arches in the distance. This is the Barry K. Kaplan
æBridge, which provides access to the Rick Rice Park on the other side of Mason Creek. Rick Rice Park
æ(http://www.interstatemud.com/rick-rice-park/) was the first major recreational amenity developed by In-
earstate MUD, representing years of local efforts to provide west Houston residents with exceptional parks
æand green spaces. The park features the Memorial Veterans Plaza, which honors the five branches of the U.S.
military with their service flags alongside the American and Texas flags, and the CanCare Overlook,
dedicated to cancer survivors and providing a panoramic view of the park.

æThe total time to get to the Rick Rice Park is about one hour – and it’s well worth the time to spend
æenjoying the parks’ amenities.

æLeading Home

æTo return home, you need only to backtrack the Mason Creek Trail, back to the Gary & Bonnie Tri-
æetsch Hike and Bike Trail. But at the fork that you encountered earlier, now proceed straight on the
æsidewalk trail. This trail will intersect with Crescent Green Drive. Here, turn right and proceed
æeast until you reach Greenhouse Road. Turn left and proceed north on Greenhouse until you arrive at Interstate 10. Proceed through the Interstate 10
æinterchange and turn right immediately on the sidewalk that accompanies the feeder road. From there, you
æcan travel through the Westlake subdivision until you get to the South Mayde Creek Hike and Bike Trail. Take
æthis trail past Mayde Creek Elementary School, past Mayde Creek High School, crossing Ashley Road to return
æto the MUD 238 detention pond trails – and back to Barkers Ridge.
What is the difference between the HOA and Crest Management Company?
by Marcia Thomas

Some homeowners and residents think that the HOA and Crest Management are one and the same. In reality, they are not the same. Let me explain the distinctions.

The HOA is your Homeowners Association Board of Directors along with the homeowners of the Barkers Ridge subdivision. Each homeowner joined the HOA when he closed on his house in Barkers Ridge.

This is your HOA – not Crest Management Company.

Your Barkers Ridge HOA Board of Directors are the five directors who vote on improvements to the neighborhood, approve and sign contracts, and make all decisions for the neighborhood.

It’s a great compliment to be selected to serve as a board member for a homeowners' community association, but it’s also a big responsibility. From meetings to budgeting, the role of a board member is extremely robust, and just a handful of people are the designated decision makers for an entire community.

Barkers Ridge HOA Directors are elected at the Annual HOA Meeting for a term of 3 years. If you have never had a chance to attend the Annual HOA Board Meeting, please accept my sincere invitation to attend the next one in the early Spring of 2019. All residents of Barkers Ridge are welcome and invited to attend the Open Session of the monthly HOA Board Meetings as well as the Annual HOA Board Meeting.

Your community management company, Crest Management Company, was hired by the HOA Board to handle the Association’s administrative functions. Crest prepares the monthly and annual financial reports, manages the Annual HOA Dues statements and collects the payments on behalf of the HOA. Crest is contracted to go out periodically to do the Deed Restriction inspections for homeowners and Crest sends out letters regarding those violations of the Deed Restrictions by homeowners. By the way, when a homeowner closed on his home in Barkers Ridge, he/she signed written documents agreeing to abide by the Deed Restrictions of Barkers Ridge Homeowners Association. You have already given your agreement in advance on your day of closing on your home. Crest goes out once a month to look at the common areas that belong to the HOA. Crest contacts vendors to obtain bids and brings those bids back to the HOA Board for discussion and decisions on vendor selection.

Lindsey Hall-Wikenczy is our current Community Manager at Crest Management Company. Please feel free to contact her for assistance. Her email address is Lindsey.Wikenczy@crest-management.com; phone number, 281-945-4677. Crest Management's office is located at 17171 Park Row, Suite 310, Houston, TX 77084.

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If you want to keep your pet happy, here are some things to avoid.

Even the most happy-go-lucky dogs have some preferences about the spaces they occupy. If you want to keep your pet as happy and comfortable as possible, here are some things to take into consideration.

**Dogs don't like hardwood**

Carpet is more comfortable for your dog when it comes to laying down and sleeping, but it's also preferable when your dog is on its feet. Dogs typically don't like hardwood floors because they feel less traction under their paws. They may even try to dig in with their claws to improve traction, possibly damaging your floors. As a compromise, you can place soft, thick rugs on the floor to help your pets relax. You can also place booties or rubber rings on your dog's feet for better grip.

**Fireplaces can be scary**

You've surely seen a dog get spooked by the sound of 4th of July fireworks. A fireplace isn't nearly as loud, but can still have a similar effect. Plus, those pops and crackles from the flames are a far more regular occurrence. A quieter gas fireplace is more dog friendly. You can also give your dog a chew toy or bone as a distraction before lighting a fire.

**With fences, ignorance is bliss**

A chain-link fence can cause stress for your dog, because it can still see other animals and strangers, but is confined to the yard. If you're considering a new fence, your dog will appreciate a solid one made of wood or vinyl panels. With fewer lines of sight to the outside, your dog will be less anxious.

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*Dog Friendly Dwellings*

BY STEVEN O'MEARA

https://www.har.com/steven-omeara/agent_BINGO
Harris County Flood Control District—Bond Election
By Judith McGlaughlin

Harris County Commissioners Court has called a bond election for August 25, 2018, for the Harris County Flood Control District. Registered voters in Harris County will be asked to vote on what could be $2.5 billion in bonds for flood risk reduction projects throughout the county.

Some of the funds could go to South Mayde Creek – specifically, the removal of silt and the return of South Mayde Creek west of Greenhouse Road to its pre-Tax Day condition. Harris County is also trying to convince the Corps of Engineers to accept a widened channel and a clean-up under the Greenhouse bridge as well as a secondary by-pass of the Mayde Creek Flow which will be in addition to the existing creek and will flow directly into the Addicks Reservoir. As you may know, that portion of South Mayde Creek to the east of the Greenhouse Road bridge is maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers, who must agree to the widening of South Mayde Creek and the by-pass. To date, the Corps of Engineers has not been willing to removing debris, undergrowth, some trees and the trash, debris and silt that has filled Cullen Park (where South Mayde Creek runs before going into the Addicks Reservoir).

A good summary of the South Mayde Creek plan can be found at: http://abc13.com/plan-to-widen-mayde-creek-after-flooding-may-take-years/3633503/.

In addition, a listing of all projects under consideration can be found at https://www.hcfcd.org/bond-program/. The Flood Control District is seeking input to the projects to be funded by the bonds: you may either call the Bond Program Hotline at 713-684-4107 or mail comments in writing to 9900 Northwest Freeway, Houston, Texas 77092, ATTN: Bond Program Communications.

Keep in mind that the Flood Control District cannot make the changes to South Mayde Creek without the cooperation of the Army Corps of Engineers. Contact your federal representatives to let them know that such cooperation is needed.
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