This issue of the Ridge Runner focuses on the legacy of the Addicks and Barker watersheds—and the role they play in the lives of our residents. The most critical role is managing the flow of stormwater from major tributaries upstream of the reservoirs, through the reservoirs, and eventually into Buffalo Bayou—a role that they have struggled to play in recent years. We look at the status of flood mitigation funding for Mayde Creek, one of the key tributaries to Addicks Reservoir, and the strategy of the Flood Control District in mitigating the risk of flood damage, following the approval of a $2.5 billion bond offering by Harris County voters in August 2018.

The City of Houston and Harris County have also set aside thousands of acres in the watershed for recreational use. We continue our exploration of the many trails in this region, focusing on the George Bush Trail at the Barker Clodine Road trailhead. It is here that we discover the true legacy of these watersheds, the Marks LH7 Ranch, whose headquarters is located in the open field just left of South Barker Cypress Road as it merges into Kingsland Boulevard. We highlight the remarkable story of this ranch in this newsletter, and bring you more stories and a gallery of photos by way of links to our new website, https://barkersridgehoa.org/.

Of course, this is our spring issue as well—and we herald the new season and its upcoming activities. This calendar of events includes the Annual HOA meeting on March 19, the Easter Egg Hunt on April 20, and Swim Team Registration which is already in full swing. This is also the time to prepare your yard and flower beds for the spring, and we bring you several articles on what steps you can be taking now.

As always, we look for your comments, questions, and insights.

Patrick Hughes, Barkers Ridge HOA President

Harris County Approves Flood Risk Reduction Projects for South Mayde Creek - by Judith McGlaughlin

Only a year after Hurricane Harvey dumped 27 trillion gallons of water on southeast Texas, flooded 204,000 Harris County homes and apartments and killed more than 50 residents in the region, in August 2018, Harris County voters overwhelmingly approved a $2.5 billion flood infrastructure bond, designed to protect the area in future storms.

With the passage of the bond program, Harris County’s Flood Control District (HCFCD) will make the largest investment in flood protection in the county’s history. Coupled with estimated federal matching funds, the district plans over the next decade—plus to spend more than $5 billion on at least 230 projects, including channel...
unimprovements, detention basins, floodplain mapping and home buyouts in each of the county’s 23 watersheds.

For our community, over 31 inches of rain were recorded at the South Mayde Creek bridge at Greenhouse Road during Hurricane Harvey, causing the creek to swell seven feet over its top of bank and surge into the homes adjacent to the creek in the Westlake Forest subdivision. As resistance was met at the Greenhouse Road Bridge, the water rushed up a spillway and rapidly flooded Saums Road. This tsunami of water pulled concrete footings on the Westlake community fence from the ground and flipped the fence like kindling, sending water into backyards of homes that were already receiving water in their front yards from the street flooding. The volume and force of the flood waters damaged the drainage infrastructure and pushed large volumes of silt and debris into Cullen Park, making the creek even more vulnerable to heavy rainfalls.

But this was not the first time that South Mayde Creek overflowed its banks: since 2014, 12 such events were recorded, including the Tax Day flood in 2016 and the Memorial Day flood in 2015 and, most recently, the creek rose two feet over its bank in December of 2018—in no small part due to the four-foot silt deposits on the bottom of the creek bed and to the channel’s narrower width resulting from the Harvey-generated silt deposits.

Annette Baldwin of the Westlake Civic Improvement Association and I had the opportunity to discuss the plans for the Addicks Reservoir and, more specifically, South Mayde Creek with Matt Lopez, the Precinct 3 coordinator for the Harris County Flood Control District, and Jonathan St. Romain, a project manager for the District focusing on the Addicks Reservoir.

Our takeaways are as follows—

**There is money from the approved bonds for South Mayde Creek**

In fact, there are four major projects focused on South Mayde Creek in the list of 230 projects, representing $135 million of capital spending. The “Right-Of-Way Acquisition, Design and Construction of Channel Conveyance Improvements and Bypass Channel for South Mayde Creek” (Project C-36) is at the beginning stages, with the completion of a feasibility study in 2017 and a “Preliminary Engineering Report” (PER) completed in October 2018.

Other projects identified for our area include the $15 million replacement of the Greenhouse Road bridge (C-47) which, today, effectively acts as a dam for waters flowing from HCFCD property west of Greenhouse Road to federally-owned property maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the east side of the bridge. HCFCD has also plans to construct a stormwater detention along Lower South Mayde Creek (C-46) – and another such basin along Upper South Mayde Creek (C-48) near State Highway 99.

You can find the list of all projects at [https://www.hcfcd.org/2018-bond-program/bond-program-project-list/](https://www.hcfcd.org/2018-bond-program/bond-program-project-list/).

**Near-term, the District will “de-silt” the four channels feeding Addicks Reservoir**

While each of these capital projects will take a number of years to complete, HCFCD has started work on Project F-52, a $30 million project to desilt and rehabilitate 17 drainage channels that drain into the Addicks Reservoir. Of the $30 million total budget, Harris County approved $3.9 million and engineering/design work is underway. Silt removal will start with South Mayde Creek (west of Greenhouse Road), then move to Bear Creek, Langham Creek, and Horsepen Creek. The South

*Continued from Page 1.*

*Continued on page 3.*
Flood Risk Reduction Projects for South Mayde Creek

Mayde Creek desilting project is scheduled to occur in the summer of 2019, and there will also be some minor repairs made to the Greenhouse Road bridge (not to be confused with the project to replace the bridge, which has not yet started.) This work is intended to return the efficiency of each of these four channels to pre-hurricane levels.

HCFCD is also working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to coordinate the desilting and debris removal in South Mayde Creek on the east side of the Greenhouse Road bridge. While HCFCD owns a 90-foot easement along the channel to allow it to conduct these activities, given changes to the channel, the specific boundaries for this easement are unclear, and the District is not sure it has the property rights to do the dredging. Additionally, if the project is deemed strictly "maintenance", the District has more flexibility in removing the debris and silt; however, if deemed a wetlands project, they will need permits from USACE. The District is now exploring these issues with the Corps of Engineers.

But the South Mayde Creek projects will take time to complete -

The 2017 feasibility study recommended stormwater conveyance improvements for South Mayde Creek between Fry Road and Greenhouse Road, and construction of a bypass channel east of Greenhouse Road on the Addicks Reservoir.

In March 2018, Harris County authorized $495,000 to conduct a "preliminary engineering report" (PER) – which in the first phase of the PER provided a more detailed plan for a portion of the feasibility study recommendations. The PER concluded that channel improvements – widening and/or deepening the channel – could be accomplished without the need for additional property acquisition by HCFC. Construction of the bypass channel, it concluded, would require extensive coordination with approval by the Corps, as well as a detailed investigation of potential environmental impacts. In October 2018, the Harris County Commissioners Court authorized the County Judge to execute an agreement with USACE to allow the Flood Control District access to Addicks Reservoir property in support of this project.

Given the need to coordinate with the Corps, the design and execution of the bypass channel east of the Greenhouse Road bridge will take longer than its western counterpart – but it is clear that one project cannot achieve the desired goals without the other. At this stage of the project, a timeline has not been constructed: discussions with the Corps of Engineers have only begun (although the District has been able to take borehole samples from the area required for its hydraulic modeling).

At the same time, the District will begin identifying potential sites for the detention basins along both Lower and Upper South Mayde Creek. Once identified, the District must negotiate with property owners to secure the land. Once the property is acquired, the District will design channel projects in conjunction with the stormwater detention basins to increase stormwater storage capacity within the South Mayde Creek service area.

What we can do –

With funding and a clear plan in place, the key issue for residents in our area is time. We will continue to monitor the steps being taken to implement the South Mayde Creek projects and work with the District, as is possible, to resolve issues that might delay project planning and execution. We will keep you updated on the progress of these projects throughout 2019, and will call for your help as such issues emerge.
The damage caused by Hurricane Harvey provided overwhelming proof of Harris County’s vulnerability to flooding. Disastrous floods in 1929 and 1935 led to the creation of the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD), which was charged with partnering with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to adopt a regional response to flooding. A half-century of structural solutions followed (such as the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs), but as farm fields and prairies were developed, flood risk reduction infrastructure proved unable to keep up with growth. After a few decades, bayous that had been able to hold a 1 percent or “100-year” flooding event could barely handle a 10 percent, or “10-year” event.

After the 1970s, HCFCD and local decision-makers began applying a range of strategies beyond large dams and concrete channels, including the adoption of floodplain management, somewhat strengthened building regulations, including mandatory detention ponds and buyout programs to remove homes “hopelessly deep” in the floodplain. The region, however, continues to be challenged by flooding, in large part due to the way that Houston – particularly West Houston - has grown and continues to develop. Meanwhile, changing weather patterns have led to increasing rainfall amounts and frequencies.

The approval of the $2.5 billion bond program represents a significant change in the ability of HCFCD to fund flood risk reduction projects. Many of the projects on the 2018 bond program list had already been identified but were, for years, unfunded. It will take at least a decade for these projects to be executed: for nearly two decades, the HCFCD has plodded along with an annual budget of roughly $120 million, a sum that remained constant as the county’s population exploded, forcing engineers to divide projects into bite-sized portions or shelve them entirely.

In April 2018, the Greater Houston Flood Mitigation Consortium (http://www.houstonconsortium.com/) released a comprehensive report on the strategies that Harris County should adopt to address this “new era in flood mitigation”. Among other principles, the Consortium concludes that there is no one silver bullet solution to flooding and no single policy or combination of strategies and tactics that will entirely prevent damages from future floods. And importantly, ensuring collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions is crucial to effective implementation.

The ultimate “solution” will require both structural and non-structural strategies. The projects that the Harris County Flood Control District has slated for the Addicks and Barker watersheds represent a multi-layered approach to regional flood mitigation –

- The “Frontier Program” - which includes the development of regional detention basins and a supporting drainage infrastructure – which may be in conjunction with local developers and land owners in advance of future development.

While on-site detention basins may be required as part of a single project, regional detention projects address flooding on a larger geographic scale and are used to reduce existing flooding or help prevent increased flooding from new developments.

Continued on page 5.
The Larger Picture – Mitigating Flood Risk in the Addicks Watershed

- Improvements to channel conveyance capacity - which includes increasing the size of the channel itself by widening or deepening it, adding bypass channels, or by modifying/replacing bridges. The planned replacement of the Greenhouse Road Bridge acknowledges that no matter how wide the South Mayde Creek channel, this bridge greatly restricts water flow, by being too low and too narrow.

- Improvements to local subdivision storm sewer systems – in many older neighborhoods in the Houston area, much of the existing storm sewer network cannot handle a two-year storm since those systems were designed for a much smaller amount of rainfall at the time they were built. The District has recommended that $84 million be spent on subdivision storm sewer improvements in the Addicks watershed alone.

- Collaboration with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on understanding and improving the capacity of the Addicks (and Barker) Reservoirs – in October 2018, Harris County approved $6 million for HCFC to work with USACE to conduct a comprehensive study to evaluate and recommend projects to improve reservoir capacity, which may have been significantly reduced by uncleared vegetation and the accumulation of silt deposits. (Note, USACE already has work underway to implement dam improvements to minimize the risk of failure when the reservoirs are full.)

In addition to the District’s current strategy, the Greater Houston Flood Mitigation Consortium made the following recommendations -

- Change or clearly define operational procedures for Addicks and Barker to release as much water as possible without creating downstream flooding in order to hold more water entering the reservoirs from upstream areas.
- Connect Addicks and Barker to allow water transfer between reservoirs when one is fuller than the other.
- Buy out, elevate or flood proof homes that are within the flood pools up to the spillway elevation.
- Preserve lands that store water, including at least 30,000-50,000 acres of the Katy Prairie (an amount that researchers have determined would be sufficient to provide local and downstream benefits) and nearby agricultural lands.
- Restore portions of the Katy Prairie that have been converted to agricultural land, increase the flood control benefit of that land.
- Adopt stricter detention, infrastructure and development regulations for new development.

What About a “Third Reservoir”?

In 2015, an extensive study of a new reservoir upstream of Addicks Reservoir (the “Plan 5” reservoir) was conducted. A plan to construct a levee at Cypress Creek was part of the 1940 plan that saw Addicks and Barker constructed. “Build the third reservoir” became a mantra for politicians from our area running for office in a post-Harvey world.

The “Plan 5” reservoir defined by the 2015 Cypress Creek Overflow Study would capture the

Continued on page 6.
massive volumes of floodwater that flow from the Cypress Creek watershed into Addicks Reservoir during major rain events. The Greater Houston Flood Mitigation Consortium concluded that the biggest outcome of the third reservoir (as defined in the overflow study) would be to eliminate this overland flow, opening up 18,000 acres of currently flood-prone land for development, specifically in the Katy Prairie. The reservoir did nothing to reduce the inflows into Addicks and Barker Reservoirs or to lessen downstream flooding on Cypress Creek.

A different reservoir, in the same area but with very different design goals, the Consortium continued, could be of real benefit to Cypress Creek, which has significant flooding issues. Such a reservoir would require new analysis because the Cypress Creek Overflow Study did not attempt to study flooding in this watershed.

The Consortium argued that the preservation of the Katy Prairie is an effective flood control strategy. The undeveloped land already plays a vital role in flood mitigation by soaking up water, reducing flooding downstream. Indeed, the Houston Chronicle reversed its support of “Plan 5” in late-April 2018 and in November 2018, Jim Blackburn, co-director of the Severe Storm Prevention, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center at Rice University and a faculty scholar at the Baker Institute argued that paying landowners to preserve the natural “sponge” of the Katy Prairie “would be more effective and cheaper than building a new reservoir. But we need to pay the landowners. So, success would be paying them to store water and keep their land natural. Failure would be transfer all of this land to real estate development or speculation.”

So What Does This Mean for Us?

We are just at the beginning of our understanding the totality of the problem—much less being able to define a solution and course of action going forward. However, there are a few threads that we can offer as next steps:

- Understand the role, timetable, and drivers for other agencies involved in defining and resolving flood mitigation issues. This is particularly true for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—who will lead a 3-year study to find out how to restore the capacity of the Addicks and Barker Reservoirs—and whose collaboration is essential for the completion of the South Mayde Creek projects.

- Understand the current status of development vs. conservation plans for the Katy Prairie. Is it possible for developer plans to co-exist with expert recommendations to use this “natural sponge” to substantially affect flood mitigation in our community? And, what happens if we fail?

Please e-mail your questions and comments to barkersridgehoa@gmail.com. As we build our understanding of the issues and answers, we will also be building a community of individuals who share these concerns and would be willing to make a positive impact on the ultimate solution.

1 Source: https://www.hefcd.org/projects-studies/cypress-creek/cypress-creek-overflow-management-plan


Exploring the Bicycle Trails in West Houston – Part 2 (continued)

By Judith McGlaughlin

Our third installment in this continuing series returns to the George Bush Hike and Bike Trail, highlighting the second leg of the trail, which takes you to South Fry Road at Highland Knolls, then back home by way of the Mason Creek Hike and Bike Trail (described in the summer issue of the Ridge Runner) or by traveling north on South Fry Road.

The George Bush Trail has another leg that we will explore when we highlight the Terry Hershey Hike and Bike Trail in future issues. The trail that runs along the Barker Dam, located behind the Precinct 5 Constables’ Office and the various buildings along the Interstate-10 feeder road, is indeed part of the 10.6-mile trail. It ends at a park and parking area on State Highway 6, where it connects to the Terry Hershey trails through an underpass below SH-6.

This article highlights the portion of the trail that runs west, from a parking area located deep in the George Bush Park, and ends at South Fry Road. In our previous article, we described a bridge on the first leg: this bridge traverses the Upper Buffalo Bayou, one of two major channels in Barker Reservoir. The second major channel is Mason Creek, which intersects with the Upper Buffalo Bayou channel within the reservoir (but not visible from the trail).

The westbound segment of the George Bush trail is a flat, winding, and quite picturesque trail, with an oak tree-lined paved surface, and many benches and swings located throughout its two-mile trek. The most notable features of the trail are the long, wooden bridge found about a mile from the trailhead and the ever-present view of the waterways, including the Upper Buffalo Bayou channel and other drainage channels located in the region. The trail closely attaches itself to these channels for most of its path.

However, at around the 1.5-mile marker, the trail bends away from the channels, heading due north. The oak trees that lined the trail are replaced by pine trees, leaving a

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coat of orange pine needles that provide a softness to the trail’s surface. The trail wraps around, and redirects itself on a western path, where evidence of civilization (adjacent neighborhoods) begin to emerge. The trail ends at South Fry Road and Highland Knolls.

From this juncture, you will cross South Fry Road at a protected traffic light intersection, where you will continue your journey north, using walkways in the Nottingham Country MUD Greenbelt Park. There is a short use of sidewalks along Fry Road that intersects with the trail system at Mason Creek. Use the underpass at this intersection to cross Fry Road.

From here, you can follow the Mason Creek trail to the Gary and Bonnie Trietsch Park described in the summer issue of the Ridge Runner, and return to the north side of Interstate-10 via Kingsland Boulevard and South Barker Cypress Road.

On our next installment, we will stay on the north side of Interstate-10 and explore the Cullen Park

... And Discovering Our Past

In the last issue of the Ridge Runner, we explored one segment of the very long, very straight section of the George Bush Hike and Bike Trail – starting from the trailhead at Barker Clodine Road, traveling south through the Barker Reservoir, and ending at a parking lot in the center of George Bush Park.

In this issue, we have taken you from that same parking lot in George Bush Park, heading west toward South Fry Road. But first, we need to revisit our first leg of the trail, where a historical landmark is found just before you reach the trailhead. This landmark, located at 1019 Barker Clodine Road, is the former site of the Marks LH7 Ranch. Of all the ranches that used to sprawl across Harris County, only this ranch (and its headquarter location only) survives.

In its heyday in the late ’20s and early ’30s, the LH7 covered more than 33,000 acres and hosted an annual rodeo on the same professional circuit as Madison Square Garden. Its owner, Emil Marks was the kind of Texan that you read about in Texas fables and tall tales – a poetry-spouting cattle hand who got rich and went bust, who helped save Texas Longhorns from extinction, and who was one of the four riders of the Houston Fat Stock Show’s first trail ride, the Salt Grass, in 1952.

After Marks’ daughter, Maudeen, inherited the ranch homeplace, she sought help from the Harris County Heritage Society to designate the LH7 Ranch a state archeological landmark - the commission’s highest designation, the same category as San Antonio’s missions and Houston’s San Jacinto Battlefield. When the commission granted the ranch that status in 1985, Maudeen hoped that the barn, bunkhouse and other ranch buildings could be turned into a living-history exhibit.

But, no one ever found money to turn the ranch into a museum. And in 2009, at age 90, Maudeen died. Her nephew, Milo Marks, inherited the ranch headquarters and its remaining pasture, a little over
Attracting Wildlife
By Cheryl Conley, Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition (TWRC)

It seems that everywhere we look we are seeing trees being torn down and grassy areas being turned into parking lots. Sadly, there’s not much we can do about it. There are things you can do, however, to help replenish some of the natural resources that are destroyed. You can turn your backyards and even small apartment balconies into areas that attract wildlife, butterflies and even bees.

You can provide food by planting wildlife-friendly plants. Choose plant species that bloom and fruit at various times of the year. Like the woodpecker, some birds will dine on insects during the summer but will eat berries in colder weather. Shrubs and trees can provide seeds and berries for mammals and birds while a flower garden will provide food for a variety of insect pollinators and hummingbirds. Bird and squirrel feeders are great to help supplement what is found in nature. If you can, leave dead trees. They can be a food source by attracting insects, lichens, mosses and fungi.

Every living thing needs water. Birds not only need water to drink but to bathe in. The easiest way to do this is to provide a birdbath or a shallow dish of water. Make sure to keep it clean and be careful to use animal-friendly cleaners! No bleach or anything toxic. If you’re fortunate enough to own a little land, you can add a water garden or pond to your property.

Wildlife needs cover from the elements just like we do. In our area we don’t have to worry about snow but we often get heavy rains and extreme heat. Again, dead trees work great for some species. Planting dense shrubs provide shelter for rabbits, turtles and some bird species. Don’t forget about man-made shelters, too, like bathhouses and birdhouses.

There are books available to help you garden for wildlife. One of them is, Texas Wildscapes by Kelly Conrad Bender. It’s published by Texas A&M. Texas Parks and Wildlife is also a great resource. Some organizations provide instructions and help so that your school or home can become a Certified Wildlife Habitat. One such organization is the National Wildlife Federation.

You can make this a family project and have fun with it. Get the kids involved. Plant some trees and shrubs, hang some bathhouses and squirrel boxes and decide where you want your birdbaths.

TWRC Wildlife Center is getting ready for a busy spring and we’re looking for baby feeders. We’ll train you to care for baby squirrels, baby opossums and baby birds so you’ll be ready to start in the spring. No previous experience is needed—just a desire to help wildlife babies, a great attitude and you must be reliable! Send your resume or letter of interest to operations@twrcwildlifecenter.org.

Discovering our Past—the Tall Tale of the LH7 Ranch

19 acres near the intersection of Kingsland Boulevard and South Barker Cypress Road. In 2012, at Milo's request, the Texas Historical Commission is considering whether to remove the ranch's landmark status – but it, too, has survived.

When you visit the LH7 Ranch headquarters, there is little that remains, save for the Texas Historical Commission’s marker, a sign with photos commemorating the ranch and its legacy, a windmill, and a watering trough for cattle. Beyond the pasture, there are newly constructed apartments that failed to adopt the ranch theme that Maudeen had hoped would prevail as ambitious developers sought and ultimately won this historic land.

Barkers Ridge Real Estate Update—March 1, 2019
By d. Diane Sanders

MY BIG HOUSE SOLD FOR $250K & MY NEIGHBOR’S LITTLE ONE FOR $225K: WHY?

This is the #2 Question BR residents ask me. The answer: Quantity discount. It is the same principle as purchasing a LITTLE BOX OF SUGAR vs. THE GIANT BAG OF SUGAR. Packaging, distribution, development…all cost about the same on these products. On a house, it costs relatively the same to develop a lot for a 3,000 sq.ft. home vs a 1,900 sq.ft. one. Let’s say, for our purposes, that amount is $50K. This cost can be spread out more on a larger vs. a smaller home. Additionally, the cost to construct a one story is significantly more than a two story. The concrete slab is the most expensive material in building – it is cheaper to go up!! So, you will routinely see a very small one story selling for over 10-15% more per sq.ft. than the biggest two story. The exact same sized one and two story will often vary by 5-7% per square foot.

Of course, there are other variables that contribute to the sales price and price per square foot, the most obvious of these is: location, condition/upgrades. I am finding today, if a home is upgraded in the sought-after whites and grays – it will sell for top dollar in record time. If you are remodeling your home TO SELL, I would recommend this color scheme. If you are remodeling to live in your home for the next 5-10 years, do what you like – enjoy your home. Our homes give us such comfort, joy, peace and the feeling of security; we should enjoy them – make your home your delight. I can tell you – I HAVE. Most of you would cringe when stepping in my house! I preach neutral colors all the time. However, our home looks like Sherwin-Williams exploded! I love bright, vibrant, bold colors. Most buyers, however, need the muted pallet. Keep that in mind. Love it for you, neutral it for buyers.

Prices are off to a nice start for the first part of the year. 2018 ended at $88 per sq.ft. To date for 2019, there are 6 sales; we are sitting at almost $92 sq.ft. Keep in mind, this is a very small sample size of all average sized homes that have been updated for the most part. There are no LARGE or lower end homes in this mix. There was one foreclosure: it was the nicest foreclosure to come on the market in a long time -not that it didn’t need some items ($82 sq.ft.). These sales are bucking the trend for early in the year sales coming in at lower prices. I do hope and think this is pointing to a good year for BARKERS RIDGE!

If you are considering selling, please give me a call. Our BR listings routinely get about 1% more for the seller than ‘the field’ of agents. It costs about the same to use the top-notch realtor/broker in the area – and often it costs less! In fact, over the last two years, out of about 35,000 realtors in the Houston area, Diane Sanders ranked #2 in sales in 77084 and our area. The agent/office ahead of me has over 60 folks working with him; we have 5 total! (Data available upon request.)

Barkers Ridge Statistics January 1, 2012–March 1, 2019
(Total/FC = Foreclosures)

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(All sales data is per HAR MLS; deemed reliable but not guaranteed.)

* With only 6 sales, the Foreclosure data is skewed. We don’t have a FC issue.
How Can the HOA Force You To Comply With Your Community's Rules?

By Bill Gammon

It’s simple. You GAVE the Association that right when you signed the contract for deed on your humble abode. Under Texas statutory law, as well as the Declarations on file for a community, Homeowner Associations typically have the right to restrict use of lands that fall under their scrutiny and assess penalties and other curative measures to ensure that deed restrictions are enforced. So what is the procedure for enforcing deed restriction violations in the community, you ask? Follow me.

(1) Notice, Notice, Notice!

Whether the Association is self-managed or operates under the guidance of a property management company (PM), alleged deed restriction violators must: (a) receive notice that there is a violation on their lot, and (b) be allowed the opportunity to cure the alleged violation in a reasonable time. It’s called Due Process and nobody, not even criminals, are spared this luxury. It’s one of the fringe benefits of being American.

The Association or PM must send notice (or multiple notices) to the violator that action must be taken to remedy the situation. The violator can respond in kind and request a hearing to dispute the violation, or s/he can give notice that the violation has been cured. This process can sometimes involve numerous iterations of notice and response, with each instance requiring a minimum number of days (usually 10 days from date of notice) for a proper reply. In accordance with Texas law though, the violator typically has up to 30 days within which to request a hearing to dispute and/or resolve the alleged violation. Yes, it’s a time-consuming process, but it’s meant to protect the rights of property owners - a fundamental right and principal motivation for landowners since before Texas was a republic.

(2) Notices Don't Scare Me, Bring On the Lawyers.

As the caption opines, some folks are simply too darn stubborn for their own good. Or maybe they have a really good reason that the Maytag is in the front yard and the weeds are taller than Yao Ming in platform shoes. For these obstinate types, the Association or PM has to involve the services of your friendly neighborhood attorney. The attorney will then send a deed restriction violation letter to the offending party with a time-specific window within which to respond. The violator will then either (a) cure the violation and report such, (b) dispute the violation, or (c) ignore it.

This letter is followed up with an inquiry to the Association/PM to determine if the violation has been cured, or to report that the homeowner is disputing the claim. No more violation, no more attorney intervention. If the violation continues, the attorney will send a final deed restriction demand letter, including a notice that further inaction will result in the filing of a lawsuit and temporary injunction against the homeowner. Again, the violator has the option of ending the fun by curing the violation and "calling off hounds", so to speak. The homeowner always controls his level of discomfort in this process.
Complying With the Community’s Rules ...

(3) Congratulations, You’ve Just Won a Brand New LAWSUIT.

For those violators who choose to ignore/avoid fixing the violation, they get to experience that great American past-time known as the lawsuit. The attorney prepares a petition, gathers affidavits of fact from the Association or PM, then files suit at the local courthouse. At the Association’s request, the attorney will then prepare a statement of legal fees to be forwarded to the homeowner for collections. Hint: mow your yard before things escalate to this stage, because it’s much cheaper to keep your mower in fine cutting shape than paying for the lawyer’s bills.

Note: for special situations, like when the neighbor is building that 500-ft spire dedicated to the moon god Luna, and time is of the essence, the attorney can send a cease-and-desist letter coupled with an immediate filing with the court seeking an injunctive-type remedy.

As you can see, the entire deed restriction enforcement process can be cumbersome and long. However, it ensures that no one is unfairly prosecuted for a violation that is alleged in error and/or that the violator is given adequate time to remedy the condition.

Relevant Code Sections from Chapter 209, Texas Property Code are:


Welcome to BarkersRidgeHOA.org

We are happy to introduce the Barkers Ridge HOA’s new website, https://barkersridgehoa.org. This site will replace www.barkersridge.org as the “official” communications vehicle for the Association—and we hope to use this site, in conjunction with barkersridgehoa@gmail.com to extend and enhance our communications with our residents.

The pages are reasonably self-explanatory: we have a “governance” section to house our governing documents and apply for exterior modifications to your home; a “pool” section for pool-related information; an “events’ calendar; an “images” section for event-specific photo galleries; a “resources” section that includes key contacts, the current and past issues of the Ridge Runner, community updates, and information about key places around Barkers Ridge (schools, trails, and parks); and “get involved”, outlining our community’s committees and Neighborhood Watch program.

We want to thank Ms. Diane Sanders for her support of the community’s initial and long-standing website— which served this community so well for so very long. This site will remain to support Diane’s real estate business, and she will provide links to the new site to access current versions of documents owned by the Association. We also would like to recognize the work of fellow resident, Steve Crane, who developed and maintained Diane’s site over the years.
Barkers Ridge Swim Team Readies for 2019 Season
By James Matthews

Barkers Ridge Swim Team (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 coaching staff to promote confidence, camaraderie, health, dedication and respect, while we never forget that the swim team experience is enjoyable and fun!

BRST was first formed in 1992, by two Barkers Ridge parents Denise Allen and Linda Hendrickson. It’s hard to believe that 27 years later, we are gearing up for another great swim season! Back in 1992, we had 40 swimmers, and, by 2012, that number had grown to 156! However, our goal remains the same - to promote personal growth, self-esteem, fun, and, instruction in the sport of swimming.

We are excited to say that the 2019 BRST Swim Season Registration is now OPEN through May 1! Come help us celebrate over 25 years of summer fun. An on-site registration will be held during our parent meeting on March 30th at 6pm, however; please try and register online at https://brmarlins.swimtopia.com.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar 2—May 10</td>
<td>Registration Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 28</td>
<td>Parents Meeting</td>
<td>Start: 6:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 29</td>
<td>Practice Start</td>
<td>Monday through Friday in afternoon, then changing to mornings after school is out on May 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 18</td>
<td>Time Trials Meet</td>
<td>Start: 9:00 am</td>
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<td>Jun 4</td>
<td>Home Meet</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Jun 11</td>
<td>Home Meet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 15</td>
<td>Home Meet</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jun 24 or Jul 1</td>
<td>End of Year Party</td>
<td>Date depends on Meet of Champion date</td>
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Essential Oils  
BY ANN-MARGRET TOBER

Essential oils are the natural extracts of the life protecting fluids of natural vegetation. Plants develop their own protection against the pathogens in their environment which is stored as an oil. The oils are most commonly extracted from the plant material through steam distillation.

Many of these oils have some of the strongest antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, antibiotic, antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties found today. They are found to be supportive of the digestive, circulatory and immune systems.

Driven by higher demand for over the counter "natural" remedies free of the side effects that can come with prescription drugs, interest in essential oils has increased.

The many benefits of high quality, pure essential oils has been demonstrated through a wealth of clinical research. Choosing oils wisely means to choose a brand that is veritably third party tested with the results made publicly available, making sure they contain no synthetic chemicals or dyes, being sustainably sourced from indigenous areas by responsible growers. Some companies try to extend the oils by adding synthetic, lower quality products and dyes which are more likely to give you an adverse reaction to the oils and not give you the desired effect.

Essential oils are some of the oldest and most powerful therapeutic agents known to man. As early as ancient Egypt, they have been used for their medicinal properties. In the 1900’s modern research got its start as French researchers began to explore and document their properties. This was soon followed by researchers and practitioners in Germany and England. Names like Valnet, Tisserand, and Schnaubelt did foundational work and many of their findings provide the basis for much of our modern allopathic medicine (drugs).

There are basically three ways to use essential oils – aromatically, via direct inhalation, or diffusion topically, which allows oils to quickly enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. Be mindful of proper dilution of the oils when dealing with infants, young children, or the elderly. Only high-quality oils may be used internally to provide immediate help for oral, gastrointestinal and other concerns.

Concludes Eric Zielinski in The Healing Power of Essential Oils, "Used medicinally for thousands of years through a variety of nonconcentrated forms, the true power of these oils is not in facilitating one-time therapeutic effects (as drugs do), but in addressing physiological disharmony and helping your body achieve the inner balance it needs to heal itself. Essential oils are used consistently in our daily lives to support emotional, physical and environmental issues within our families. At its core, this health journey is about balance. The foods you eat, the drinks you consume, the supplements you take, the medicines you use, the emotions you carry around, the feelings you have about your job, your financial practices, the stressors you allow in your life - all of these contribute to or diminish your experience of an abundant life."

For more information, visit “Mrs. Ann’s Oil Corner” on Facebook.com

To verify that an oil is safe for internal use, look for the FDA label of Supplemental Facts on the bottle.
What Exactly is a Discount Realtor/Broker?

BY STEVEN O'MEARA
https://www.har.com/steven-omeara/agent_BINGO

A discount Realtor is exactly what it sounds like: a real estate agent that offers lower pricing (or some other sort of financial incentive) to their buyers and sellers. They might list or help buy properties for a reduced commission, or they may offer buyers a commission rebate. In a world where many homeowners are doing the initial legwork themselves, i.e., using tools like Zillow and Trulia to research properties on their own, discount brokerage makes sense in the scheme of things.

Here are how some of the most popular discount realtor models work:

Reduced listing commissions - On the selling end, these are Realtors that offer to list a property for less than the traditional 3-4% listing side commission.

Buyer rebates or refunds - Buyers agents get 3%-4% of the sales price. On the commission rebate model, a discount realtor would take that percentage and then give the buyer a cut of that money back. Rebate-based discount realtors typically offer anywhere from 10% to 50% back on their commissions.

Tiered services - Some discount realtors offer different service levels, each with a different commission fee or flat rate. The cost typically depends on the level of service and responsibility the agent will have in the transaction.

Obviously, there are lots of benefits to using a discount realtor -- many of them cost-related. Beware the "limited service" model and choose the "full service" Broker with a proven track record and reviews.

"Selling a home is always stressful. Having a knowledgeable and competent realtor makes a stressful situation a pleasant experience. Steve is that realtor. There are many realtors to choose from; choose wisely. I highly recommend Steve."

Steve O'Meara
Broker Associate, Realtor

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Spring is emerging, so take advantage of the cool temperatures to catch up on these tips ...

While the coming spring weather will renew the life in our now dormant yards, there’s a couple of things you need to do before the spring months to make sure your lawn looks great throughout the year.

Grass mowing is usually not necessary in January: a light covering of leaves can protect grass from cold weather, but do not allow to collect heavily and kill the grass below. In February, lawn care experts tell us that it’s time to begin mowing twice a month, mowing the grass at 3 inches high with a grass catcher. The grass catcher will collect any weeds that have gone to seed and prevent re-seeding. Using a broadcast spreader, apply Scott’s weed and feed fertilizer with atrazine on your lawn. Atrazine is excellent for eliminating dollar weed. (In the summer, you will need to apply Turf Builder, Turf Builder with Iron, and a pre-emergent weed preventer product in the late fall to prevent weeds.)

Remove clover and crab grass individually by hand, root and all, from your lawn. Do not mow it over because it will reproduce and begin to overtake the grass. An aluminum flower planting trowel should be used to remove crab grass that is not full grown.

Check your sprinkler system to ensure all stations are working properly. Check for broken heads or broken water lines. Poor pressure could indicate a broken or leaking pipe. Install risers or relocate sprinkler heads if the spray is not reaching properly. This is sometimes necessary as plants mature and grow, and the spray pattern is obstructed to other plants. Lawn areas can be timed 8-10 minutes per station. A daily operating schedule set to 5:00 am is advisable March through August, but every other day is also a reasonable schedule to begin the season. A rain sensor will automatically turn off the system during a rain and prevent needless irrigation. Don’t forget to check for rotors or heads that are spraying onto the street needlessly and make the necessary adjustments.

Sprinkler upgrade attachments are available to enable distribution of organic fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and mosquito killer on a regulated schedule. A mechanical attachment with cabinet storing contained chemicals can be spliced in to your existing irrigation system at a modest price.

Mow weekly March through June at 3 inches high. Use a measuring tape to measure the blade height. This should be done on a level concrete surface. Therefore, if your grass is hard to cut at 3 inches, raise the wheels 1 notch, which is 1 inch higher.

By using a mulching mower, the clippings can be recycled and nitrogen put back into the grass. The clippings are an organic fertilizer. If you mulch the grass, however, do not mulch grass that is too high. It will develop an excess of clippings in the thatch and the hot weather and humidity will cause a fungal bacteria to grow. The grass will begin to yellow and lose its vigor and rich, green luster. It is always best to use a blower or rake to disperse or collect any excess clippings if you are mulching your grass. Excess clippings on your lawn are an indication to raise the mower.

Source: https://www.houstonlawncarelandscapeservices.com/monthly_tips_houston_lawn_care_landscape.php
How to Clean Out a Flower Bed in 4 Easy Steps
By Marcia Thomas

Put on your garden gloves and let’s get started.

1. Assess and trim back your plants according to each plant’s tag. The instruction tag should give care instructions. If you don’t have the tag, google the flower name to learn about its care. Workers at a garden center can also be good sources of plant information.

2. Weed and Rake. Pull up all weeds by hand in order to pull up the entire root of the weed. Rake the flower bed of all debris using an adjustable rake with adjustable tines so it will not rip up your flowers. Dispose of all flower bed debris.

3. Fertilize the plants according to their care instructions.

4. Mulch the flower beds. Mulching helps to keep the weeds from popping up in the flower beds. Mulching helps keep moisture in the soil to keep the plant roots cool when the summer really heats up. Ultimately, mulching keeps the flower beds looking clean, neat, and pretty. There are various varieties of mulch -- hardwood, pine straw, cypress, cedar, and more. My personal favorite is cedar mulch. It repels pests, smells great, and really keeps my flower beds clear of weeds. Several inches of cedar mulch really keeps the flower bed in great shape. Cedar mulch can also be used just as a top dressing on top of cheaper mulches in order to save some money.

Happy Gardening!

Tips for Growing Grass in Shady Yards
By Marcia Thomas

Our neighborhood has many beautiful mature trees. The trees are absolutely gorgeous but the shade underneath the trees really keeps the common variety of St. Augustine turf grass from looking its best. St. Augustine grass really needs sunlight to thrive.

I asked a professional lawn care company for some tips to help the grass to grow and thrive underneath the trees.

♦ Water the grass once a week during dry periods, and fertilize it three times a year. This can help replace the nutrients that are being absorbed by the tree.

♦ Check for adequate drainage: It’s important to avoid excess moisture in the grass.

♦ Do not mow the grass under the trees as often as the rest of the lawn. Let it grow a little longer.

♦ When mowing your lawn, allow shaded grass to grow a little taller. More leaf surface means more sunlight absorption. Be sure to remove clippings afterwards.

♦ Clean up fallen leaves and other debris quickly from shaded grass. You don’t want anything acting as a barrier between the grass and the sunlight.

♦ Minimize traffic in shaded areas to decrease stress on the grass.

♦ If the grass is under a tree, examine the tree to see if you can prune some limbs back to allow more sunlight in. (It’s best to consult with a certified arborist when doing this to prevent permanent damage to the tree, however.)

♦ Prune the tree’s lower branches. This will allow more light to filter through to the grass underneath.

♦ The type of grass that has been planted under large trees is called Amerishade. It is a variety of St. Augustine that was developed to grow under trees. It is pricier and is a special order item. It generally runs about $200.00 more per pallet than regular St. Augustine.
### Key Dates in March and April 2019

- **March 11—15**—Spring Break for Katy Independent School District.
- **March 14**—Stop the Greenhouse Landfill monthly meeting, 6:30 p.m., Westlake Volunteer Fire Department, Large Conference Room.
- **March 19**—Annual Meeting of the Barkers Ridge HOA, 6:30 p.m., Westlake Volunteer Fire Department Large Conference Room.
- **March 28**—TCEQ Public Hearing on Greenhouse Landfill, 7 p.m., Houston Marriott, 16011 Katy Freeway.
- **April 13**—4th Annual Katy Area Safety Fest, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Typhoon Texas.
- **April 17**—Monthly Meeting of the Barkers Ridge HOA, 6:00 p.m., 17171 Park Row, Suite 310.
- **April 19**—Holiday for Katy Independent School District.
- **April 20**—Barkers Ridge Easter Egg Hunt and Carnival, 10 a.m., Barkers Ridge Recreational Area.
- **April 21**—Easter Sunday.

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### BARKERS RIDGE EASTER EGG HUNT & CARNIVAL

**Saturday, April 20, 9:30–Noon**

Featuring—

- Easter Egg Hunt
- Easter Bunny
- Bouncy House
- Games

**Easter Egg Hunt**

10:00  Age 0–3  
10:30  Ages 4–6  
11:00  Ages 7 and up

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Happy to represent Barkers Ridge in the Community for almost 25 years

...closing in on 500 SOLDs (sides) in BARKERS RIDGE in that time (15+ sales on average per year), may I say:

“Thank you, Barkers Ridge for your TRUST.”  ...SANDERS FAMILY REAL ESTATE...

d. Diane Sanders