

Neighbors Socialize on National Night Out

Scott Johnson

The Northfield N.A. has been participating in the National Night Out for many years. The event took place on Oct. 7th this year. In the past it was observed in August. The event provides a forum for neighbors to meet each and an Austin Police Department representative as well.

We joined forces this year with the Ridgetop N.A. with upwards of 50 folks attending. We enjoyed veggie/meat wraps from Phara's Restaurant, tasty pizza from the Parlor, Mexican food from Michoachan Restaurant, and more pizza from Austin Pizza.

We would like to thank Martha Ward and Will Asay from the Ridgetop N.A., Jody Horton and Cindy Black from the Northfield N.A. as well as others who contributed their time and energy .



Northfield residents are highly encouraged to take valuables out of view from their vehicles and homes. Please call 911 if you see anything suspicious anywhere in the neighborhood.



NEIGHBORHOOD HOLIDAY POTLUCK: Monday, Dec 1

Great Food & Holiday Cheer, 6:00-8:00

Spend a little time with your neighbors

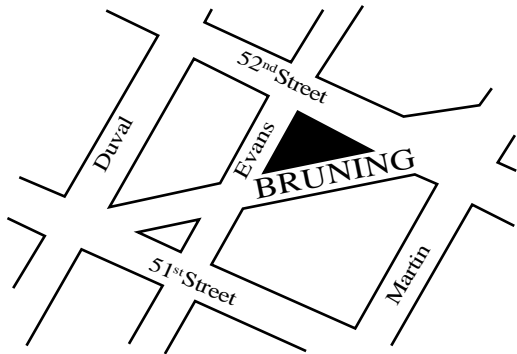
Bring food to share

DaySpring Chapel, Avenue G and 55th

Bruning

Green

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Thanks to all the people and organizations that helped make Bruning Green beautiful this year!

Northfield Neighbors

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Joel Abdullah | Donna Boyter | Denise Mansfield |
| Celina Aguirre | Jonas Chartock | Monty Newton |
| Theresa Anderson | Raquel Dadomo | David Papas |
| Kirsten Bartel | Chris Gleeson | Mary Patrick |
| Cindy Black | Sara Heilman | Lindsay Schell |
| Rick Black | Donald Kokas | Jan Seward |
| Gillian Brody | Greg Madsen | Richard Sniff |
| Jenny Brookover | Luke Maher | Tim Tischler |
| Casey Boyter | Dillon Mahmoudi | Suzette Weber |
| | | Lisa Wright |

North Loop Neighborhood Planning Team

For funding the sidewalk & curb project

College Forward

Jessica Garcia

Keep Austin Beautiful.

Tiffani Erdmanczyk
Nick Hentschel

UT Longhorn Outreach

Veronica Fassio
K'Ora Hill
LaTonya Alexander
Diane Parris

Austin High School

Darrell Green

UT Students

Julie Sunme Lee
Aasia Bhatti
Lance Byburn

Forever Texas

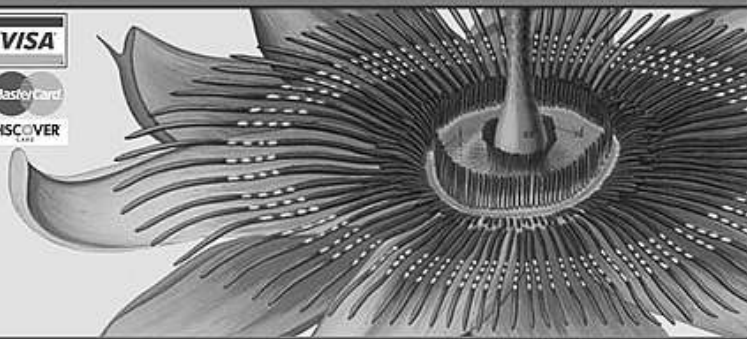
Dianne Tran
Crystall Hall
Karen Louie

Thank you everybody for all of your help and generosity this year!

Cindy Black
Keeper of Bruning Green

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The Electric Bicycle Alternative

Monty Newton

For 12 years now I have commuted from my home on Franklin to my downtown workplace. It's about 7 miles, round trip and figuring in a few lunch rides home I've pedaled about 30,000 miles over the years. I enjoy the fresh air and being able to notice more of the world around me as I fly along. However this summer I decided to treat myself to a new toy to take the edge off the ride, and possibly enable me to have additional energy to ride more. I bought an electric-assist bike — it's not an electric bike — you do have to pedal it. But it gives me a nice little boosts when I start from a complete stop and helps on hills. Because it started out as a regular bicycle, it looks like a regular bike, except that the front wheel has a motor in the hub. There are no chains or belts and it is as quiet as a normal bike. The battery pack, which weighs about 30 pounds, sits on a rack above the rear tire.

I have found that I end up riding more than ever. After dinner I like to ride in the evenings and distance and high summer temperatures do not intimidate. I scoot like Lance Armstrong and don't arrive at work drenched in sweat. I can reach 25 miles per hour easily (has a variable speed control throttle — you can go 8 mph if you wish) and have a range of probably 20 miles.

For me the fun isn't just being on a bike — it's also about NOT being in a car. I like the feel of a bike, and even though younger guys might sneer at the 'electric bike' — it is still a bike. And, from what I can tell, the recharging is not affecting my electric bill!

I won't promote any one brand, but encourage folks to do a google search for 'electric bike kits'. The kit I bought consists of a front wheel (minus tire) with the hub motor, the battery pack and rack, cables and controller. If it gets you out of your car, then that's good.

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WANTED: Newsletter Editor

After publication of the Spring Northfield News, I plan to step down as Editor of this publication. I am making this announcement now in the hopes that a new volunteer will step forward to take my place, and so we can have a smooth, unhurried transition.

It has been an honor serving the community as Editor of the Northfield News. I believe the newsletter provides a valuable service to the neighborhood. It helps to keep people informed about local issues and neighborhood events, and revenue from advertising in the newsletter provides the lion's share of financial support for the Northfield Neighborhood Association. Without this newsletter, our neighborhood association would have difficulty providing the services to the neighborhood that so many people appreciate.

Please consider volunteering to continue providing this service to our community. The newsletter is published three times per year, and it usually only takes me a few days to get everything organized for each publication. Please contact me at swren@sebastianwren.com

Sincerely,
Sebastian Wren

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ADVERTISE IN THE NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is delivered to 1600 homes and businesses, three times per year.

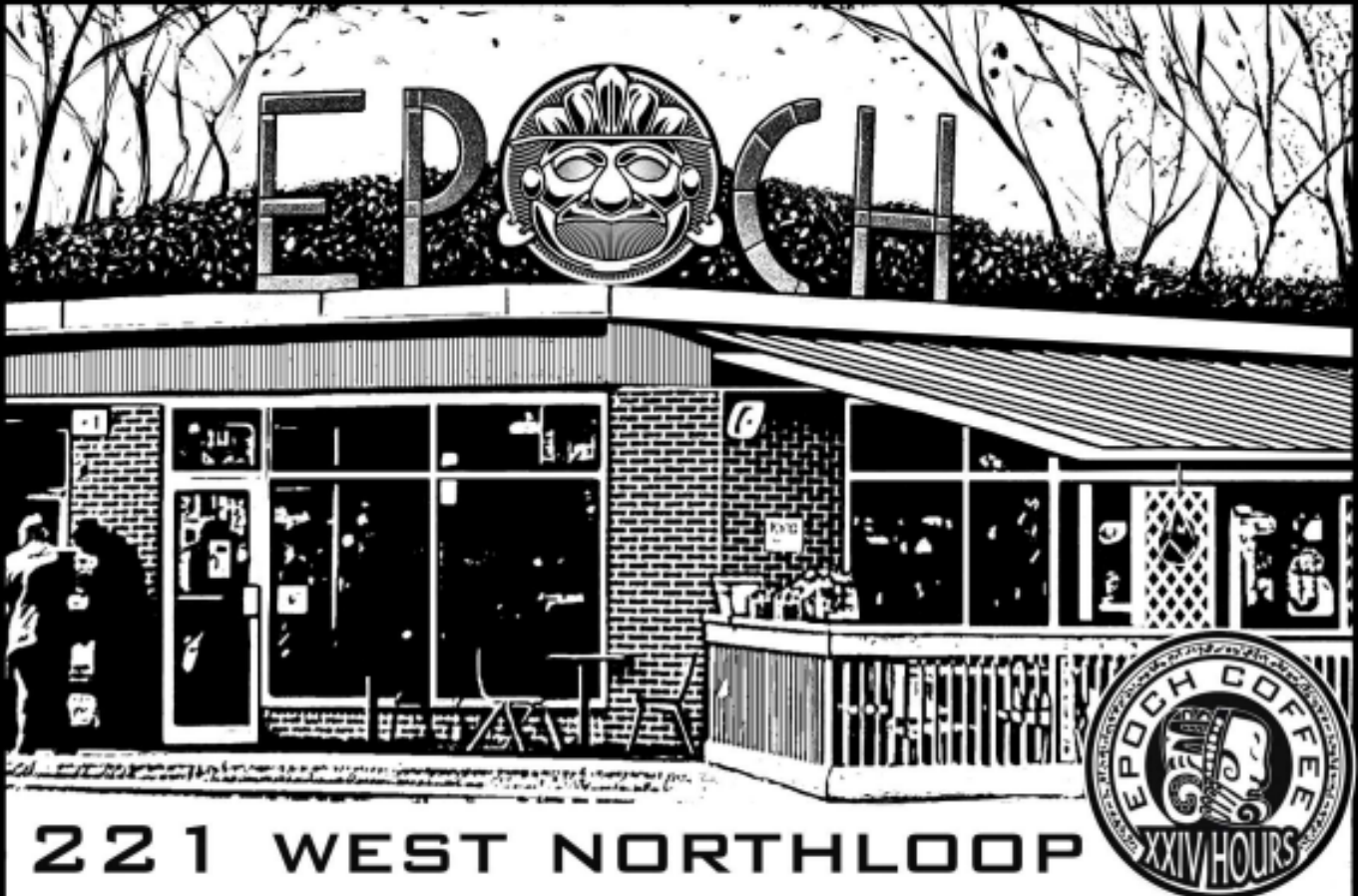
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Dear Neighbors,

Stray dogs and cats are a challenge in our neighborhood. Please do not knowingly feed them or provide them with water because this can also attract rats and possums to feed there. In general, it is best to keep your own pets food inside as well.

The best policy is to call 311 and ask for the Animal Control section of the City of Austin. A stray black dog is currently finding food and causing a nuisance by barking repeatedly after midnight. This wakes up homeowners when they are trying to sleep.

Scott Johnson

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Ear to the Rail – a Stop Near You?

Martha Koock Ward

Rail topics are vital for consideration by our community and soon, since the first service is currently slated for March 2009. The logic of a 51st Street station stop is a natural - except for its proximity to the elementary school, which already is fraught with safety crossing issues and more. In addition, the substandard infrastructure of 51st Street and the lack of available land space for use for a stop/park & ride are show stoppers for a 51st Street stop. One may envision vertical mixed use along Clarkson from 51st north to 53rd, but that is a topic for a later conversation.

51st is unsuitable due to its narrow traffic lanes, congested during high traffic, bizarre confluence of varicose veins of interlacing intersections at the rail and at Duval. In addition, 51st is bordered by single family dwelling zoning. The intersection of 51st & Lamar, the natural destination of much of 51st St traffic, is already problematic. With the expected increased traffic, from the Mueller development, along with additional anticipated 4 story Travis County office and parking garage to be build at the former Chair King, it is easy to imagine traffic back up from Lamar to Avenue F.

An alternate rail stop idea is to have a CapMetro stop, at 53rd and the Rail, adjacent to the track, where "JR's" used auto and truck yard is currently located. 53rd Street is a broad artery compared to the venial capacity of 51st. It is zoned mostly commercial already. Also, 53rd Street goes all the way to Shoal Creek, with a minimum of lights. It is ripe for increased commercial activity, including vertical mixed use. Just look at the increased traffic flow already occurring, by those traveling east to the county offices and to IH35, and then westward home, in the evening.

The "JR" site is an underutilized 3 acres and its car and truck sales business redundant, in our increasingly urban community. "JR's" is adjacent to the extensive Leif Johnson Ford properties, the multi-family apartment complex, and the underused commercial zoned properties, along 53rd/North Loop route. Redevelopment of the "JR" site, from "a sow's ear to a silk purse" seems like a natural choice.

It is exciting to consider a CapMetro rail stop, in a vertical mixed use setting, with rapid transit buses to nearby Mueller development, to state offices, and even to the Triangle. Our community of Northfield and Ridgetop neighborhoods could be best served by having an agreed on priority list and an understanding of negotiating and compromise, in order to leverage the our long sought amenities - sidewalks, a library, neighborhood center, hike/bike trail along the rail.

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Density versus Sprawl

Sebastian Wren

On those very rare occasions when I must drive out to the suburbs and exurbs of Austin, I almost always find myself stuck in traffic, endlessly muttering the same question over and over — “Why on earth would anybody want to live out here?” The commute is murder. The conveniences and vitality of central Austin are miles away. You can’t walk anywhere. There is nothing for kids to do. So why do people want to live there?

Well, it turns out a lot of them don’t really want to live there. They would love to live in central Austin, but they just can’t afford it. For over 15 years, there has been such a housing shortage in the center of town that the suburbs provided the only option for most new home buyers. The expression “drive ‘till you qualify” is as much a part of real-estate parlance as “Location, Location, Location.” If a house is in a great location, it’s going to be very expensive, and if you can’t afford to buy an expensive house, then you have to get in your car and drive until you find a house within your price-range. And every year, you have to drive further.

This isn’t new. Suburban sprawl has been the model for housing development in Austin for over 100 years. Hyde

Park was once a suburb. In fact, Hyde Park was developed so far away from what was then central Austin that the master developer Monroe Shipe had to build a streetcar and a smooth road into town (Speedway) to convince people to buy a home so far away. Our Northfield neighborhood was also a suburb in the 1940s — an orchard in the country was removed to make room for our homes. Crestfield and Allendale followed in the ’50s and ’60s. When I moved to Austin in 1991, Round Rock, Cedar Park, Bee Cave, Buda, and Manor were all distant cities — you had to travel through the countryside to get to them. Now just over 17 years later, they have morphed and merged into Austin’s sprawling, homogeneous, suburban landscape. Now some people are beginning to commute from Hutto, San Marcos, Dripping Springs, Elgin, Leander, and Georgetown — how long will it take for the sprawl to consume those towns as well?

Sprawl is about as American as apple pie and SUVs, but it is still a terrible model for housing development. Sprawl destroys our quality of life, our environment, and our economy. It costs taxpayers billions of dollars to provide roads, utilities, and services to suburban developments — much more than those developments

(Continued on Page 8)

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Sprawl (continued from page 7)

will ever provide in revenue. New, sprawling developments need roads, water, electricity, sewage, garbage disposal services, transit services, police services, fire services, medical services, code enforcement, and of course, schools. When all is tallied, sprawl costs us billions of dollars we simply can not afford.

There are, unfortunately, only two cures for sprawl. The first is to limit our population growth, allowing no more people to move to the Austin metropolitan area. We could create a registry and a waiting list, and allow new people to move in only when existing Austinites move out or move on. That, alas, is illegal.

The second cure for sprawl — really the only viable cure — is densification. When there is more housing in the center of town, there is less demand for housing in the suburbs. When there is abundance of housing in the heart of town, the cost of housing drops, and living in the heart of Austin becomes a more affordable option for more people. More people living in the center of town lowers our tax burden and raises our quality of life. With more density comes better public transit, better bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and better civic services. When more people live closer together, you get more choice in nearby shops and restaurants, better neighborhood schools, and less pollution.

Austin is growing, and it will continue to grow. Our current economic recession may slow things down for a short period of time, but the Central Texas growth engine will rev back to full power again soon. At the rate that we are growing, we just can't afford to continue to push all

new housing growth out into the countryside. We have to encourage more people to live in the center of town.

Our neighbors to the southwest are fighting fiercely against housing densification on the University of Texas Brackenridge Tract. However the University of Texas can not afford to keep hundreds of acres of prime real-estate two miles from downtown in its current state. That land could support many thousands of new homes — homes that would otherwise be built out in the suburbs. Our neighbors to the southeast are fighting against densification of Riverside Drive — again, they are opposed to having thousands of new homes built less than two miles from downtown.

When neighborhoods ban together to oppose dense development, we unwittingly contribute to sprawl, pollution, congestion, and increased economic burden. Central Austin neighborhoods like Northfield must find ways to encourage more dense housing development so that more people can find reasonable places to live in the heart of the city. Otherwise, the sprawl will continue, as will the negative costs and burdens we must all bear.

I won't deny that increased density has its drawbacks. No solution to complicated problems is ever simple and neat. I'm sure I'm misquoting, but I think it was Woody Allen who said, "No one wants to live in Manhattan — it's too crowded!" There are advantages and disadvantages to densification, but the benefits of intelligent densification far outweigh the drawbacks.

If we want better roads, better schools, better services, and lower taxes, then we must stop paying for sprawling development out on the edges of town. We need to support smart growth here in our own neighborhood.

NORTHFIELD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

MEETING DATES

The NNA meets on the First Monday of each month (except holidays) at 7:00 p.m. at the the Dayspring Chapel, Corner of Ave. G & 55th

Monday Dec. 1 (Holiday Potluck)
Monday Jan. 5
Monday Feb. 2
Monday Mar. 2

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