

What Price Redevelopment? John Darling

Redevelopment, we are often told, is good. It counteracts sprawl and therefore spares valuable habitat. In the old parts of cities redevelopment provides new uses for land that no treehugger would think twice about. Environmentalists are urged to embrace high-density redevelopment as the only good way to accommodate the constant population expansion we can't seem to avoid. It all makes a sad sort of

sense until we see redevelopment in a pocket of green space.

Case in point: The land at Division and Mesquite, next to the old Vandergriff building, was recently subjected to redevelopment and several very large pecans and other trees paid the price. This land wasn't anybody's idea of healthy habitat—except for a few squirrels, bluejays, cardinals, and grackles—but some of those trees saw much of Arlington's history; maybe they were already pumping out oxygen and making shade when horse-drawn wagons brought people to the nearby mineral well.

Of course trees don't have rights (alas!), but couldn't we hope that developers might shape their projects with just a little sensitivity? Failing that, couldn't our city authorities demand that redevelopment projects preserve and enhance our shrinking green spaces?

Even though plans for this project were submitted on the last day of the old tree ordinance, the timing wouldn't have made any difference: Many of the trees were under the building's footprint and just had to go without mitigation. Although we are told that the developer is mitigating for the rest generously, no amount of mitigation will compensate us for the loss of those sheltering witnesses to our history.



Looking south toward the Central Library from the former Jim's Hamburgers outdoor dining area.



*What was spared?
A hackberry.*



February Meeting

TOPIC:

**What's Ahead for
Johnson Creek**

SPEAKERS:

**Cheryl Jasper,
Permit Evaluator,
and Gene Rice,
Project Manager, US Army
Corps of Engineers**

WHEN:

**Wednesday, February 8,
7:00 pm**

WHERE:

**First United
Methodist Church,
313 N Center at Division
(enter through north door)**

**Bring Something
for the Raffle!**

From the President Wayne Halliburton

The ACC annual meeting was held Saturday, January 21, and was quite a success. There was great food and lively discussion punctuated by a summary of last year's activities and accomplishments.

Rita Beving started us off by bringing us up to date on clean air issues. She will be back later in the spring to give us the full story. Further reports were given about successes at the Molly Hollar Wildscape last year, including the new compost area complete with kiosks and an interactive learning board. The wildscape was rededicated in Molly's honor in October, and the greenhouse efforts and plant sales are humming along, thanks to a long list of volunteers.

The New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park and Community Gardens of Arlington are making progress. Invasive trees are almost cleared from the prairie, and CGA has found its first home for spring planting at St Matthews Catholic Church. The garden at Hill Elementary School will celebrate its 10th anniversary later this year. The Wimbish Elementary School gardens are taking shape and there may be an Earth Day activity on their April workday.



We had a big surprise when Jackie Savoy, Director of Operations for US Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, let us know that the congresswoman was aware of our efforts and conveyed kind words from her.

We also talked about the Litter Challenge, March for Parks, 4th of July parade, and other events where we had a presence in the past year. Everyone had a chance to mention an issue they would like to see ACC become involved in for 2006, and the following topics were prominent:

- Air quality
- Working with children on environmental issues
- Working more closely with other groups on environmental issues concerning the city

- Raising awareness about recycling, including composting of leaves and yard trimmings
- Having a wildscape theme for the next 4th of July float
- Establishing a Johnson Creek committee and closer monitoring of all creeks in Arlington
- Increasing membership, and perhaps a reduced rate for new members

Thanks to all who participated, shared their food and thoughts, and a special thanks to all who contributed pictures to the presentation.

Garden Time

Community Gardens of Arlington will meet Monday, January 6 at 7:00 pm at St Matthew's Catholic Church, 2021 New York Avenue. We will meet in the music room, directly in front of the disabled parking spots.

Discussion will center on a workday to complete the beds and planting schedules. We need volunteers to serve as board members as well as individuals to plant and maintain the CGA garden.

For more information call Stephen Smith at 817-275-7469 or e-mail buggy188@juno.com.

Thanks. Our sponsors make an extra effort to support ACC. If you'd like to help and publicize your business, call any board member for details.

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller



The workday on January 21 marked a project milestone of sorts: Most of the invasive sapling trees have now been removed. Arlington Parks and Recreation Department (APRD) staffers Karl Browning and Perry Swim manned the chainsaws to bring down the remaining trees and open the big bluestem meadow. Some trees have been left along the south side to provide shade for visitors and habitat for prairie residents, perhaps a roost for a raiding owl or hackberries for a migrant songbird. The entire prairie was also mowed just the week before, so with the two recent marvelous rains, the site should be well on the mend for spring. This last workday, volunteers attacked the woodies and also found time to clear a truckload of trash that included old auto parts, a massive tire, bedsprings, sheet metal, you name it.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who have pursued the woodies over the past two years. Bravo to John Darling, Dagmar Higgins, Diana Kunde, Mary Roberts Turner, Dan von Bose and Laura Whitelaw. Very special thanks go to Scott deGrant's APRD crew for all their hard, dedicated work. With their help, this 10-acre site has been cleared in just under two years. Cut trees and brush were scattered on site and mulched in place, returning organic matter to the soil and preventing trips to the landfill. Their twice-annual mowing schedule (late June and December-January) is preventing the woodies from returning, a major step in this restoration project.

Our next workday in February will feature a general park cleanup, picking up trash and refuse, and looking for signs of early spring. Future plans include initiating a plant survey as well as monitoring and control of invasive plant species (such as KR bluestem, giant ragweed, etc.). All this is clearing the way for wildflower walks, interpretive programs for schools and other opportunities for people who never knew there was a rare blackland prairie remnant right here in Arlington.

If you're interested in participating in future prairie events, contact Jan Miller at jgmiller5594@sbcglobal.net.



Citizens' Environmental Committee Named

Something hopeful happened at the last city council meeting: The Citizens' Environmental Committee was formally announced. Members have been chosen by each council member, and they are Michelle Licater, Craig E Salvea, Fabian Medrano, Jane Bourland, Grace Darling, Roy Miliner, Elizabeth Kohn, John M Davis, and Roger Behgam. Could this be the start of something big?

Happy Birthday to Hill's Happy Habitat Julia Burgen

The 2005-2006 school year is the tenth anniversary for the courtyard garden at J.L. Hill Elementary School, 2020 W. Tucker Blvd., in west central Arlington.

In the spring of 1995, Martha May Martin, a teacher at Hill and ACC member, received an Arlington ISD Foundation Innovative Teaching Grant for \$4,162 to develop the school's inner courtyard into an outdoor learning laboratory. ACC provided volunteer support for design, materials, and labor through the Adopt-a-School program.

Work began in late October 1995. Many loads of gravel were removed as well as boxwood plants, then loads of topsoil and compost were brought in. All of the school's classes were involved in some phase of the effort. By March 1996 the beds were ready for planting. On April 26 of that year a student and volunteer event celebrated both Arbor Day and Earth Day with dedication of the courtyard garden.

ACC newsletters from that time indicated volunteer work by Jim Barnes, Carla Bower, Bonnie Bowman, Julia Burgen, Sarah Dendy, Karen Foley, Margaret Gariota, Anita Garmon, Eddie

Jean Kriedeman, Marianne Hermann, Molly Hollar, Charles Mitchell, Louise Morrison, Margaret Santarelli, and Russ Zimmer. Molly provided plant design; she and Anita helped the students in planting, Anita labored with the gravel removal, and Charles Mitchell made plant signs. Margaret and Jack Gariota built and installed an arbor. Sarah started the Cornell Feederwatch program with the students in 1997.

Following Martha Martin's retirement in May 2000, Sarah and other volunteers from ACC and Hill parents continued with Feederwatch and gardening. When Sarah moved to North Carolina in January 2004, Monica Daily and I took over maintenance of the courtyard with the help of parent volunteers.

We will celebrate the ten-year history of this AISD grant project with an event on **Friday morning, April 28**. Weather permitting it will be in the courtyard; invitations will go out later. **Please plan to reserve the date** as ACC members will certainly be invited. We hope the bluebonnets will still be blooming, along with other flowers and butterflies.

Wildscape Update Molly Hollar



What an extraordinary fall and winter we've had. Instead of our usual fall rains we had a fifty-year drought, high temperatures, dry winds, and many

devastating grass fires. Then, at last, two and a half inches of slow, steady, wonderful rain! It looks like spring is coming, after all. Our wildscape volunteers have had to spend most of their time watering to ensure the survival of native plants not yet established.

After the rain the waterfall rushed over the boulders, making beautiful sounds. Beside the pavilion boardwalk, standing water several inches deep once again produced a seasonal wetland. Winter honeysuckle's fragrant blooms attracted loads of bees and butterflies. Little green leaves poking up from the bases of dormant plants and leaf buds growing fatter on tree branches signal spring's coming explosion of colorful blooms and leaves.

Hundreds of faithfully watered plants in the erosion area now display tiny green rosettes. Volunteers have begun cutting back the brown leaves of dormant plants to make way for spring's wildflowers and grasses.

Arlington Parks and Recreation Dept. surprised us by building new, stronger reinforced doors for the three kiosks adjoining the parking lot to deter vandalism. APRD continues to strongly support the wildscape in so many ways, including moving mulch to convenient locations for volunteers to use in resurfacing the inner trails. This task is done regularly by Mike Warren's Tarrant County Juvenile Services contingent.

APRD's Jay Falgout and Martin Sanchez are always ready to support and assist us in any way they can.

At the APRD greenhouse, Pat Lovejoy leads wildscape propagators in growing native plants for the wildscape and for the spring plant sales, which Pat will coordinate again this year. APRD's Heather Dowell, Lucy King, and Jo Wolfenberger make that project fun with their unfailing support and help. Another great greenhouse ally is Glenn Troutman, Parks Board member, who does all the heavy soil mixing.

The great new compost area continues to educate the community with

helping to upgrade kiosk displays. The "Wildscape Residents" kiosk will soon display another group of photos of wildlife seen here, including a raccoon (courtesy of John Davis), a grass snake (courtesy of Jan Miller), and an armadillo (courtesy of Vicki Brady). Several sightings of bobcats have also been reported. Our resident screech owl lives in the owl house provided and installed years ago by David Hurt of Wild Birds Unlimited in Dallas. We remember when David shinnied up the tree to install the owl house 20 feet above the ground.

To celebrate spring's dazzling display, ACC's fundraiser this year will be a **Workshop on Creating a Wildscape in Your Own Yard on April 29.** Rosa Finsley, Landscape Architect and native plant authority, and John Davis, Urban Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., will lead this workshop. Tentative plans are for Rosa to cover design and native plant material while John will instruct participants in water use and ordinances. The 9:00-12:00 morning workshop will probably include a box lunch picnic if weather permits. Details will be announced soon.

The wildscape's spring native plant sale will follow the workshop from 1:00- 4:00 pm. This year we will have a good selection of Texas native plants, many grown from seeds and cuttings taken from plants indigenous to this area. Included in the sale will be two beautiful native roses, the prairie rose and the swamp roses. Another plant sale feature will be coral honeysuckle, a great hummingbird favorite that blooms to coincide with hummingbirds' stay in this area.

Put April 29 on your calendar for the wildscape plant sale and a ticket to the wildscape workshop featuring Rosa Finsley and John Davis.

Don't forget: Tuesday workdays from 9:00-12:00 or 1:00-4:00. Water and snacks will be provided. Bring gloves and pruners or loppers if you have them.



A Parks crew installs a new rustic fence at the overlook bench.

ongoing compost classes while its faithful Master Composters produce many loads of black gold to improve our soil. Wildscape volunteers spread this compost regularly, with Devanie Fergus and Anne Alderfer taking the lead. Park visitors who have become wildscape volunteers complete our crew of gardeners and propagators.

Perhaps the longest enduring volunteer is Ann Trenton, who has been a faithful and regular wildscape volunteer over too many years to count. Ann is also a member of ACC, NPSOT, Master Composters, Friends of the Library, and other worthwhile organizations. Master Naturalist Patsy Tucker continues

Be a part of the solution... Become an Arlington Master Composter

It's time again for the annual Master Composter class. Whether you know nothing about compost or you're already pretty good at it, you'll enjoy the class, become a better composter, and get some good stuff. And it's free, so do it!

Where: City Municipal Building 101 W. Abram Street

When: Friday February 24, 2006 - 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm and Saturday February 25, 2006 - 9:00 am - 4:00 pm **Fee:** No fee for Arlington residents, \$20 for non-residents.

Attendance on both days is required for a total of 12 classroom hours of formal training to become a Master Composter. Class graduates will receive books, workshop materials, and a compost thermometer.

Community Outreach Requirements: Master Composters are required to spend 20 volunteer hours on public education regarding composting. To learn more, contact Lorrie Anderle, City of Arlington Recycling Coordinator, 817-459-6778 or anderlel@ci.arlington.tx.us. **To register on line, fill out the form at http://www.ci.arlington.tx.us/environment/composting_register.html**



Post Oak Forest in City Hall

An excellent display about the Cross Timbers is now on view on the second floor of city hall. It's not very large, but it does a superior job of introducing our local woodland. The display introduces our local woodland and showcases its importance in terms of the natural and human history of the region. Kevin Charles, Arlington's Landscape Administrator, wrote the human history portion of the display, which received the 2005 Community Forestry Award. Make time to enjoy the display on your next trip to city hall.

Apartments Proposed in Johnson Creek Floodplain

(Editor's note: I have lived across the street from this project for almost 30 years and I'm strongly biased against it for emotional and esthetic reasons. However, here I call for your involvement solely on environmental grounds.)

Recently our Planning and Zoning Commission okayed plans for a four-story apartment complex on Pecan Street near Mitchell. The only Commissioner in opposition was Julia Burgen, who noted that plans called for filling in about 1.5 acres within the 25-year floodplain of Johnson Creek. The fill would be required even though the developers would build very close to the street and would donate the eastern part of the property to the city for inclusion in the Julia Burgen Park on Johnson Creek. The developers say that their fill would have no significant effect on flooding, but we could see this as the first of a nibbling process along a creek where no filling should be considered. In fact, it's a creek that needs system-wide work to greatly reduce erosion, siltation, and flooding, not the opposite.

If you oppose the project, please consider contacting the mayor and your council members. Below are suggested points to make. And please attend the city council meeting at 6:30 on February 14 to speak or sign a card. A big turnout could help.

1. Ask that they vote NO on zoning case Z05-47 and thereby
 - a. keep the city promise to protect the 25-year floodplain of Johnson Creek
 - b. respect the purpose of the purchase of homes in the 25-year floodplain with \$20+ million in tax dollars, which was intended to reduce repetitive flood damage in this designated Special Flood Hazard area
 - c. maintain the premium discount that Arlington recently earned for all residents in flood-prone areas based on its removal of buildings and increased open space in this area
 - d. demonstrate to the Cowboys and Town Center developers that Arlington is willing to do its part in flood reduction and restoration of Johnson Creek. Upstream fill, even in small increments, can cause water volume and velocity problems downstream through the sport complexes and festival district
2. Ask that they use their influence to
 - a. encourage development that treats Johnson Creek as a community asset
 - b. promote creative property trades to keep all development adjacent to Johnson Creek along the streetfronts and out of the floodplain
 - c. prevent additional projects that require fill in the Johnson Creek floodplain



The proposed project would end about 80 feet from Johnson Creek.

Arlington Conservation Council Membership Application

Memberships are good for one year, renewable each January. Your dues go directly to our public education efforts.

Membership Information

Please circle membership category.

Name _____

Individual/Family \$24.00

Address _____

Student \$12.00

New member ☐

Telephone _____

Supporting \$36.00

Renewing member ☐

E-mail _____

Sponsor \$100.00

Other \$ _____

How did you hear about us? _____

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THE POST OAK

Arlington Conservation Council
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Arlington, TX 76004-0216

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't forget!

Wednesday, February 8

Cheryl Jasper and Gene Rice,

Corps of Engineers:

What's Ahead

for

Johnson Creek

Be sure to visit us at

arlingtonconservationcouncil.org



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