



A Letter from the President by Dee Murray

Dear Old Braeswood Neighbors,

What a busy time we have had since the last newsletter. Finally the elections are over, Hurricane Ike is in the past, and now we face the busy holidays. There are many things to be concerned about, but most of us remain positive about the future.

Our annual meeting on November 12th had a smaller audience than usual, but was a great time to socialize with some new neighbors and reconnect with old friends. Liz Alhand and Ross VanWassenhove were wonderful hosts and their lovely home was a great backdrop for the evening.

The Executive Board officers will remain the same for one more year with the exception of replacing 3rd Vice President Becky Pivec. The Pivec's have moved out of the neighborhood. Susan Teich was elected as the new 3rd Vice President. I would add that we will not be "replacing" Becky, that would be impossible. She and her husband, Wayne, have given years of service to this community and they will be missed.

You may remember that the Board established five goals for the 2008 year:

1. Park Enhancement
2. Development, increase revenue
3. Communication
4. Maintenance of deed restrictions
5. Beautification

(Continued on Page 2)

Old Braeswood Park Re-Opening by Christine Robins

A good time was had by all who attended the Grand Re-Opening of Old Braeswood Park & Annual Park Party sponsored by the Old Braeswood Property Owners Association. Thanks to the generosity of our residents, Old Braeswood Park now boasts an updated play structure with plenty of play features for all to enjoy!

(Continued on Page 4)

In this issue:

Street Reconstruction Petition Drive	2
Your House Has a History	3
OB Park Grand Re-Opening ... Party	4 - 5
Barking Dogs Raise Ire	6
Real Estate Report	6
Make a Donation to Trees for OB	6
Neighbors (Social) Committee	7
It's Auto Burglary Season	7

**Watch your
mail for your** 

**“Street
Reconstruction
Petition”**

Street Reconstruction Petition Drive by Evalyn Krudy

Thanks to the 100 members who have signed petitions requesting that the city reconstruct our streets, storm sewers, curbs, gutters and sidewalks (where they exist). Over the past year, our block captains have done a great job of tracking down neighbors to sign the petitions, which will result in the replacement of the major infrastructure in our neighborhood. Clearly, this is a very important project and one that is long overdue.



The infrastructure in Old Braeswood is 60 to 80 years old. But the life expectancy of a street, under the best of conditions, is 40 years. The only way to have neighborhood infrastructure replaced is through the city's petition process. We would like to submit qualifying petitions for our

entire neighborhood by the end of the year in order to reserve a place on the city's street reconstruction list. The waiting period is five to eight years; and the work is funded through our tax dollars. For a nearby example of what a reconstruction project can do for a neighborhood, visit Braeswood Place to our west. Some five years after submitting their Neighborhood Street Reconstruction petitions (NSRP) to the city, construction has commenced.

For those of you who the block captains were unable to reach, we will be mailing petitions to you this month. We ask that you sign and return them by December 21. Currently, we have three streets that qualify for reconstruction. Don't be let your street be left out! Please sign and return your petition as soon as it arrives.



A Letter from the President (Continued from Page 1)

The first goal has been accomplished thanks to Chris Robbins and her Park Board. In fact, the Park was awarded a 2008 Certificate of Recognition Award for the Renovation Project at a special Mayor's Proud Partners Luncheon held November 17th.

The second goal of increasing revenue will be continued into the new year; however, adhering to the budget was accomplished thanks to Liz Alhand.

The third goal of increasing communication has been accomplished due to the increased frequency of the newsletter, the new social activities, and our welcoming of new neighbors. Thanks to Sharon O'Neil, G.G. Hsieh, and Dawn Gervais.

The fourth goal is ongoing, but the activities of the ARC were increased this year because of all of the building that is going on in our neighborhood. Thank you to all of the ARC and the Enforcement Committee.

The fifth goal is ongoing, but the *Yard of the Season* has been implemented with Bob & Rachel Thompson's yard (2306 Underwood) as the first to receive the **Silver Flamingo**. The *Yard of the Winter Season* is LaVerl & Louis Daily's yard at 2523 Maroneal. Also, we are still working on presenting the petition to the City for street replacement. Additionally, Carroll Shaddock has been very active along with others in completing the street tree pattern on W. Holcombe, Kirby, Main Street, Greenbriar, and throughout Old Braeswood.

With the help of all of you, we have had a great year. We will establish new goals for 2009 and we would love to hear your suggestions for improving Old Braeswood.

Warmly,

Dee Murray, President, Old Braeswood Property Owners Association

The writing of my column this time is for everyone in Old Braeswood who still asks himself “What is that?” when passing by the southwest corner of Bellefontaine and Greenbriar. Obviously, it is a grassy lot with large plants spaced evenly and features a 22-foot pole with a cylinder on top. But, why?

First, about the large plants (to give you more time to guess about the pole). The lot belongs to Maroneal resident Mark Hausknecht, who is using it as a fruit orchard. The plants are young trees: olive, Satsuma, grapefruit, Meyer lemon, Mexican thornless lime, loquat and orange. These can

grow in Houston because they are perennials, not needing the “chill time” of the deciduous fruit trees. To combat our gumbo soil, Mark has grafted them onto the root stock of the trifoliolate orange, a plant commonly used in Texas to hedge in cattle because of its thorns and impenetrability. Mark is a cardiologist and this tip was provided to him by an arborist who happens to be one of his patients.

OK, so why the pole? It is a Maberry bat house

(www.maberrybat.com) that Mark put up last December to entice bats for mosquito control. The pole is galvanized steel from France, 2 1/2 inches in diameter and 22 feet high. The cylinder on top of the pole is open at the bottom. Inside are four tubes coated with a coarse material to give bats a toehold. The outside of the cylinder is black to absorb and conserve heat from the sun.



Mark Hausknecht

So far, the bat house has had no residents (no telltale droppings on the ground below), but it usually takes a couple of years to attract them to a new home. Mark knows they are in the vicinity, because he sees them at night flying over his swimming pool. Also, the bridges over our bayous have bats. They like the spaces between the I-beams, heated by the road above.

Instead of spraying for mosquitoes, Mark is enlisting natural predators of insects, the bats (hence the bat house) and martins (hence the martin houses by his pool). Instead of relying wholly on grocery stores, he is farming his own fruit and eventually may add vegetables. (He supports Urban Harvest, which promotes locally grown food and teaches horticultural skills, <http://www.urbanharvest.org>.) Instead of following our local pattern of planting the same kind of tree throughout a neighborhood, he is diversifying, as a way of ensuring that no one disease can wipe out all his trees. (Mark recommends the Urban Forest Keeper course offered by Trees for Houston.)

Mark’s lot on Maroneal partially backs onto the orchard lot, and also onto another Bellefontaine lot that Mark owns. Eventually they may all be joined, creating an outdoor space for Mark and his wife, G.G., that is eco-friendly in every way.

[This is the sixth article in a continuing series on houses and people in Old Braeswood. Suggestions for future columns are welcome.]

Old Braeswood Park Grand

Old Braeswood Park Re-Opening

(Continued from Page 1)

City of Houston, District C Council Member Anne Clutterbuck spoke at the event and read The City of Houston Proclamation declaring October 26, 2008, "Old Braeswood Park Day"!

Honored guest Katherine McGovern recounted the many happy times she and her husband, the late John P. McGovern, spent in Old Braeswood.



Anne Clutterbuck, Kathy Lord,
Katherine McGovern

Following the ribbon cutting ceremony, guests rocked to the sounds of The Gloryhounds, dined on James Coney Island and enjoyed the company of friends and neighbors.

Although Braeswood Park is a City of Houston Park, for those of us lucky enough to call Old Braeswood home, it is our park; it is Old Braeswood Park.

Please help keep our park clean. Pick up any trash you may see littering the grounds, clean up after your pets, and report any problems to the Old Braeswood office.



Christine Robins, Dee Murray, Becky Pivec

Neighbor children pose by the new playground equipment at the Old Braeswood Park grand re-opening party



Additional Donors to the Park Renovation Campaign

A big "thanks" goes to the over 100 generous donors to the Old Braeswood Park Corporation's (OBPC) Park Renovation Campaign. The following donors are in addition to those published in our September Newsletter.

Benefactor (10,000 and up)
The City of Houston

Park Backer (\$1,000-\$2,499)
Elayne & Demo Kouzounis

Park Booster (up to \$500)
Annette & Arthur Bracey; Claire & John Coale; Dawn & Richard Gervais; Ruth Kosieracki

Re - Opening & Annual Park Party



Neighbor kids enjoying our new Old Braeswood Park play equipment

Park Renovation Project Receives Recognition

by Christine Robins

The Old Braeswood Park Corporation was honored with a Certificate of Recognition from Keep Houston Beautiful at the 24th Annual Mayor's Proud Partner's Award Luncheon on Monday, November 17, 1008.

The honor recognizes the efforts of the 2008 Old Braeswood Park Renovation Project for encouraging and supporting cleanup and beautification projects that help make Houston a cleaner and more beautiful city.

Thank you to all those that donated during our capital campaign and helped make this special recognition possible.

Park Underwriter's Reception Not Dampened by Weather

by Christine Robins

The rain could not dampen the spirit of the underwriters who donated \$500 or more to the 2008 Old Braeswood Park Renovation Project.

A lovely reception to honor the underwriters was held at the home of Barbara and Don Schaffer on Wednesday evening, October 22, 2008.



Anita O'Shaughnessy,
Barbara & Don Schaeffer



Sally & Bill Russ,
Samia Khalil,
Kathy Lord



Jay Plotkin,
Mansel & Brenda Rubenstein



Margaret Clegg,
Bill Murray,
Joe Clegg

Barking Dogs Raise Ire

by Dee Murray & Evalyn Krudy

Barking dogs can be one of the greatest neighborhood stressors. Please do not leave your dogs outside to bark all day long. Barking is often a sign that the dog is not happy about being left alone. The incessant noise can be a serious aggravation to your neighbors.



Bring your dog inside if you must be away for an extended period of time. You can also hire a dog walker if it's difficult for you to return home before the end of the workday. You might also consider having a trainer work with your dog to help calm this problem.

Or, if you are on the receiving end of this noise, and have already tried talking to your neighbor, you may want to call RACS or HPD for help. The responding officer can issue a warning or citation.



Real Estate Report

by Dawn Gervais

Uncertainty over the national economy and lingering effects of Hurricane Ike have cooled Houston's real estate market. Yet, despite an ongoing slowdown in property sales, Houston still outperforms most other U.S. markets.

The Houston housing market continued to feel the effects of the troubled national economy this past October as well as residual business interruptions caused by Hurricane Ike. New monthly data released by the Houston Association of REALTORS® (HAR) reflects improvement from market performance in September, when Ike derailed thousands of real estate transactions. However, the number of property sales across the greater Houston area declined last month when compared to October 2007, with sales of single-family homes down 20.1 percent.

Year-to-date home prices are still up compared to 2007 and national figures show Houston continues to fare better than many other U.S. markets, some of which have experienced depreciations of as much as 40 percent. Nonetheless, we must watch closely to see what further action the Federal government may take to stimulate the economy, particularly on behalf of home owners.

Month-end pending sales - those listings expected to close within the next 30 days - totaled 3,579, which was 21.5 percent lower than last year and suggests another likely sales decline next month.

Having said this, remember it is a good time to buy with lower interest rates. Many agree it is the best market in years in terms of choice, which is evident when you drive around and see all the beautiful homes for sale in our neighborhood and surrounding areas.

MARKET REPORT for OLD BRAESWOOD as of November 15, 2008

Number of Homes for Sale – 13 Average Sales Price - \$1,198,000.00
Average Days on the Market - 155



Make a Donation to Trees for Old Braeswood

by Evalyn Krudy

Through *Trees for Old Braeswood*, over three hundred street trees have been added and replaced throughout our neighborhood and along our major thoroughfares over the past three years. "Street trees" are the trees of a coordinated species which line the streets in the area between the sidewalk and the curb, also known as the "parkway" or "tree lawn." These trees beautify our neighborhood, help cool our streets, improve air quality, and create a sense of place befitting of the history and elegance of Old Braeswood.

Now that the trees along Holcombe and Kirby are in place (thanks to your generosity), it's time to focus on the interior of the neighborhood. You can see evidence of our "interior" street tree plantings at Bluebonnet & Morningside, Maroneal & Morningside, and on Underwood near Main Street.

If you have questions about this program or if you wish to place an order, please contact the office. And please watch your mail boxes for the annual *Trees for Old Braeswood* solicitation coming soon!



Our program plants 15- and 30-gallon size trees, although larger trees are available. If you would like to be a part of this transformative effort now, simply return your order form and tax deductible contribution.

Even if you do not need a tree in front of your home, please make a contribution to help complete the planting throughout the neighborhood. (Note: On streets without sidewalks, trees will be planted about five feet from the curb.)

Neighbors (Social) Committee by G. G. Hsieh

Thanks go to all the hardy neighbors who ventured out in the pre-Ike days to attend the Federal Reserve Bank tour on September 11th. We were treated to an interesting and informative tour being reminded that the Federal Reserve Bank uses no tax dollars for its operation. It has its own sources of revenue. (However, it does influence monetary policy, which as of late, has been using a few of our dollars).

Residents of Old Braeswood really enjoyed a spirit of community after Hurricane Ike when neighbors gathered on the streets to remove debris, help each other out, and share wonderful pot luck cookouts. The spirit continued into October when we celebrated National Night Out. There were block parties on Underwood—thanks to Julie Cohn and Jordana Slawin for organizing the wine and pizza party, and on Maroneal where new and old neighbors could meet and share a meal before enjoying Amy's ice cream in the park.



Speaking of parties, the festive park re-opening was another opportunity to socialize with our neighbors (see related articles and photos). As a reminder to all, there are many events at Rice University that are mostly free and open to the public. To access this information, go to www.rice.edu/neighbor. A quick perusal of a week in November included a free Friday night family movie, a faculty concert recital, a film documentary screening from a branch of the Baker Institute, free stress reduction sessions, and several sporting events. Hope you can take advantage of some of the great opportunities next door.

Look forward to a new neighbors welcoming coffee in January or early February. In the meantime, say hello to your new neighbor, return a lost dog, throw that newspaper closer to your elderly neighbor's door, and take a walk to enjoy the beautiful weather. Have a joyous and safe holiday season; and thanks for being involved.

Cheers! *G.G. Hsieh*

2009 Officers & Chairpersons

President	Dee Murray
1 st Vice Pres.	Buddy Steves
2 nd Vice Pres.	Bob Birenbaum
3 rd Vice Pres.	Susan Teich
At-Large	G.G. Hsieh
At-Large	Sam Bernstein
Treasurer	Liz Alhand
Secretary	Dawn Gervais
Past President	Agelia Pérez Marquez
Architectural Review	Marilyn Archer Colleen Elliot Matthew Kelley
Directory & Block Captains	Sally Miller
Historic	Susan Teich
Flood Control	Carroll Shaddock
Newsletter	Sharon Lund O'Neil
Park	Christine Robins
Enforcement	Sam Bernstein John Eldridge David Robins
RACS rep	Ryan Maierson
Social	G.G. Hsieh
Trees	Carroll Shaddock
University Place	Kathy Lord
Welcome	Dawn Gervais
Manager	Evalyn Krudy

It's Auto Burglary Season by Evalyn Krudy

Don't be a victim!

It's the time of year we normally see an increase in auto burglaries (aka BMVs). With the downturn in the economy, BMVs may be worse than ever this year. Please don't be a victim of this crime.



Nearly every car that is targeted has one thing in common: highly visible items with potential resale value. These items include purses, iPods, GPS devices, window mounts for electronic devices, laundry (clean and dirty), food items, brief cases, and laptops. Criminals do not usually break into a car hoping something is there. Instead, they select a car because they see something of value.

Here's what you can do to prevent Auto Burglaries.

- Lock your doors and take your keys.
- Leave nothing visible of value in the console, seats, or floorboards.
- Don't leave change in the console or cup holders.
- If you must leave your purse in the car (which you should not do), put it in the trunk.
- Place GPS and other devices in less obvious locations. Test those locations for the effect it has on its operation and how well such devices can be seen from outside the vehicle.
- Remove indicators of GPS, radar detectors, or other devices like suction cup marks.
- Call RACS immediately—at any hour—when you observe any suspicious person, vehicle, or activity.

RACS Patrol, 713-755-7628

Your Neighborhood Remodeler/Builder
2007 Remodelor of the Year




WilliamShaw
& Associates
Design | Build | Remodel

WilliamShaw

4206 Law Street
Houston, TX 77005
713.661.6664

www.wmshawandassoc.com

*Creating Spaces for a
Lifetime of Living*



**OLD BRAESWOOD
PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 541346
Houston, TX 77254-1346

Phone: 713-807-1787

Email: info@oldbraeswood.com

www.oldbraeswood.com

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
