



Live Oaks on Kirby Saved by Amendment to Tree & Shrub Ordinance *by Evalyn Krudy*

Old Braeswood, and all Houstonians, won a major victory in February with the City Council's passage of the amended Tree & Shrub ordinance which strengthens provisions in the ordinance and reinforces our right to continue planting Live Oaks on street rights-of-way. The revised ordinance was the culmination of two years of work by city officials and local civic non-profit groups including Trees for Houston and the Park People and includes positive changes including raising fees charged to developers for tree removal and adding to the list of protected trees.

A few days before the ordinance was scheduled for a vote by City Council, it was discovered that Live Oaks *(Continued on Page 4)*

Your House Has a History *by Susan Teich, OBPOA Historian*

Growing up in Old Braeswood in the 1960s was a child's dream come true. Ask Shane Reves, who grew up at 7302 Greenbriar. Life revolved around The Triangle and the Shamrock Hilton.

The Triangle, now Old Braeswood Park, was a flat stretch of grass where children congregated daily to fly kites and play football. And, nearly every Old Braeswood family joined the International Club at the Shamrock Hilton to enjoy the swimming pool and the evening entertainment.

The pool was a daily destination in summer, the only pool in Houston with high diving platforms 8-feet wide, one at 5 meters above the water and one at 10 meters above the water. The pool also had the usual springboards. The Shamrock sponsored Luau's by the pool. On occasion, exhibition water skiers from Florida's Winter Garden put on a show using a ski boat operated in the pool itself.

The International Club had shows in The Emerald Room on weekends, and children could attend with their parents. Shane saw Connie Stevens perform. As a member of Singing Boys of Houston *(Continued on Page 3)*

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SAVE THE DATE

Old Braeswood Spring Meeting
7 pm, Tuesday, April 28, 2009
2311 Bluebonnet
Home of Dawn & Richard Gervais

Annual Park Party
3-5 pm, Sunday, May 3, 2009
Old Braeswood Park



Spring Yard of the Season
2335 Bluebonnet



Congratulations to 2335 Bluebonnet and a Happy Silver Flamingo to the owners for being selected as the Yard of the Season.

We have many beautiful yards in Old Braeswood. The choice was difficult because we had a number of nominations, but several people felt this house was beautifully landscaped. The Garden Club agrees; and, thus, the silver flamingo is in their yard for Spring.

It has been the Board's goal for the second year to encourage

beautification of Old Braeswood yards. This yard and previous winners, as well as the Silver Flamingo, are pictured here.

Let's see who can come up with the best yard for Summer—keep your eyes peeled on beauty in Old Braeswood.



Fall Yard of the Season
2306 Underwood



Winter Yard of the Season
2523 Maroneal

Old Braeswood Backs Coleman Bill to Stop Medical Center Condemnation in Residential Neighborhoods by Hugh Rice Kelly

Condemnation of deed-restricted homes is a new strategy adopted by Texas Medical Center, Inc. (TMC Inc.), an obscure service company that manages parking garages, real estate, and miscellaneous Medical Center support functions. Few know that TMC Inc.—and therefore **all** Medical Center members—may “take” deed-restricted homes near the edges of Medical Center—which *includes Old Braeswood, Southgate, and the perimeter of the Rice Campus.*

Rep. Garnet Coleman has filed legislation, House Bill 3709, to repeal TMC Inc.'s ability to condemn homes. The bill would bring TMC Inc.'s abuses to a dead stop. Old Braeswood is one of a number of neighborhoods backing the legislation through a newly formed group, *Neighbors Against Eminent Domain Abuse (NAEDA)*. See website www.stopTMCinc.org. Area civic groups from Morningside on the west to the Third Ward/Riverside neighborhoods adjoining TMC's eastern boundary are joining the coalition supporting passage of Rep. Coleman's bill.

TMC Inc. triggered the issue by targeting for condemnation a block of deed-restricted homes in a small, single family subdivision behind Holcombe and Almeda called “Central City.” Commencing four years ago, TMC Inc. has to date “taken” sixteen homes, “extinguished” their deed restrictions, and bulldozed the houses, initially for a multi-story parking garage for TMC Inc. employees, an ugly tin-walled structure that now dominates this little neighborhood's landscape. Since the beginning of its “takings”, TMC Inc. has relentlessly continued to “take” property, bulldozing 16 houses, one as recently as early March, 2009. The impact has been heavy: more than half of the neighborhood has so far fallen into the hands of the TMC Inc., speculators, and investors. Vacant lots now scar the neighborhood. TMC has announced that the Hornberger Center will be demolished soon, but plans for the site have not been released. However, 250,000 sq ft of office space is planned to be built atop the old Shamrock Parking Garage at Holcombe and Pressler.

TMC Inc.'s condemnation power is a threat to Old Braeswood because we are within the range defined in the same special eminent domain statute used by the Medical Center's service company to bulldoze homes in the Central City neighborhood.

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(now Houston Boychoir), Shane especially enjoyed seeing the teenaged singing star Browning Bryant, who was close in age to himself. Sometimes, celebrities were spotted in the Shamrock's lobby. It was there that Shane once saw The Beatles, a highlight. Shane didn't even have to be at the Shamrock to feel its magic. The green Shamrock Hilton sign was "my bedroom nightlight." It shone through the bedroom window.

There were other thrills. Professional baseball players stayed at the Marriott Hotel then located at Braeswood and Greenbriar. Kids would go hang out in the lobby to see them and get autographs. Shane got autographs from Tom Seaver and Yogi Berra. He went to their games at the Astrodome with friends. And, like many Old Braeswood kids, he had a \$25 season pass to Astroworld.



Shane Reves grew up here — 7302 Greenbriar

The house that sheltered Shane and his family during those years is currently on the market and sits like a time capsule of bygone days. The downstairs has the original plaster walls. The bedroom walls are tongue and groove boards covered with cheesecloth and then wallpaper. The air conditioning is by window units and the heating is by classic radiators. The hardwood floors remain. Nothing has been changed.

Shane's parents, Dick and Micki Reves, now deceased, bought the house in 1965 for \$35,000. It was owner-financed at 6% simple

interest and repaid over 20 years in annual payments. Dick was a stock broker for Rauscher Pierce, working first in the Fannin Bank Building downtown, and then in the Galleria when the Galleria first opened. Micki was active in the Braeswood Garden Club (now the Old Braeswood Garden Club), and both of them attended monthly meetings, at Roberts Elementary, of the Civic Club (precursor to the Old Braeswood Property Owners' Association.)

The original owner of the house, built in 1938, was Daniel Schlanger, a founding partner of the law firm Schlanger, Cook & Cohn, which officed downtown in the First National Bank Building. (Daniel's son, Lee, practices law today as a partner of the Houston law firm Schlanger, Silver, Barg & Paine.) Daniel and Rella Schlanger began appearing in the Houston telephone book at their Greenbriar address that same year, when the phone book was still noting that "Greenbriar Drive" was "formerly South Reinerman".

The architectural historian Stephen Fox includes a picture of the house in his book on Old Braeswood. He notes that it was designed by H.G. McDaniel, a popular architect in this neighborhood, for Borden Construction Company, which built it as a spec house.

Regarding McDaniel's architectural style, Mr. Fox writes that, like other Old Braeswood architects, his "houses were consistently two stories in height, faced with brick, and lit with oversized, double-hung windows. These houses are distinguished by their compact massing and slightly under-scaled appearance. Although simplified considerably in decorative detail from the houses of the 1920s, they were rarely as starkly profiled as some of the houses built in the early 1930s. This look—one that stressed domesticity—was visible in other, privately commissioned houses in Braeswood."

The phrase "one that stressed domesticity" was predictive. Life imitated art at 7302 Greenbriar.

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

had been inserted as a prohibited tree for planting under power lines, a long-cherished target of CenterPoint Energy. This elegant species lines almost half of the streets in inner-loop neighborhoods. The list of banned trees was apparently altered after Hurricane Ike and would have permitted only very small trees under power lines—which would transform ugly overhead lines and poles into Houston’s dominant streetscape feature.

According to Trees for Houston past president Hugh Rice Kelly, “while there are many trees that should not be planted under power lines, Live Oaks pose no harm because of their tendency to spread rather than grow upright. Live Oaks have been planted under power lines for decades by individual residential and commercial property owners, subdivision developers, civic clubs, and tree planting organizations. They are distributed all over the city—east, west, north and south, including industrial and commercial areas. There are hundreds of readily identified examples of Live Oaks over 80 years old still thriving directly beneath power lines—all over the city. Live Oaks define the most famous boulevard in Houston: Main Street from the Southwest Freeway to Brays Bayou. Live Oaks have been the gold standard of street tree plantings throughout Houston for over a century.”

Moreover, Kelly pointed out, *not a single Live Oak fell* on a power line during Hurricane Ike, a factual observation not disputed by CenterPoint. Immense damage was caused by falling trees,



This Live Oak in the Museum District has been pruned to grow around power lines. Live Oaks require only minimal pruning every few years to ensure branches do not come into contact with the uppermost transmission lines.

especially pines and large deciduous oaks, elms, and other large shade trees—not to include Live Oaks. A native of hurricane regions of the U.S., the Live Oak is one of a handful of species that are particularly adapted to high wind survival. Other species on the hurricane-resistant list includes Magnolia, Holly, and Bald Cypress.

Had the ordinance passed without Council Member Pam Holm’s last minute amendment to authorize Live Oaks, the city would have sustained significant long term landscape damage. Thankfully, University Place neighborhoods including Old Braeswood and hundreds of citizens all across Houston united to convince City Council members that Live Oaks are an essential landscape resource, and one that poses no harm to power lines. Council unanimously approved Councilmember Holm’s motion and the enhanced Tree and Shrub ordinance.

The Old Braeswood Trees Committee’s efforts over the past few years have focused on completing the planting of border streets (Kirby, Holcombe, Greenbriar, Main, and N. Braeswood) and Old Braeswood Tree Committee chairman and co-founder of Trees for Houston Carroll Shaddock is elated at the news. His committee will be able to continue planting Live Oaks under power lines in the public rights of way along Old Braeswood’s segments of Greenbriar and Kirby to beautify our thoroughfares.



Spring has definitely sprung here in Old Braeswood and we have some beautiful homes for sale in our neighborhood! Regardless of what you read or see on the news, when it comes to our local Real Estate Market, this is the time to buy with an abundant inventory and great values; and mortgage rates have fallen to a rate of 4.63% on a 30-year fixed loan. So if you have been thinking of selling your current home and moving to a larger or smaller home, then it's imperative to price your home ahead of the market and take advantage of the low interest rates.

Real Estate Statistics for Old Braeswood
March 2009

Total # of Homes for Sale	11	Total # of Homes Sold	2
* Minimum List Price	\$445,000	* Minimum Sales Price	\$435,000
* Maximum List Price	\$1,599,000	* Maximum Sales Price	\$737,000
		* Average Days on the Market	118

Annual Park Party

Old Braeswood Property Owners Association Annual Park Party is moving back to the Spring!

Join us for the Old Braeswood Property Owners Association Annual Park Party on Sunday, May 3, 3-5 p.m. at Old Braeswood Park.



From Our Mailbag

Dear Neighbors

I would like to draw attention to the increasing cat problem on Dorrington and other streets in Old Braeswood. After talking to many animal rights organizations, I feel it is ethically wrong and irresponsible to feed unneutered cats (unneutered wild cats can't be adopted). Please consider spaying a wild cat before feeding it.

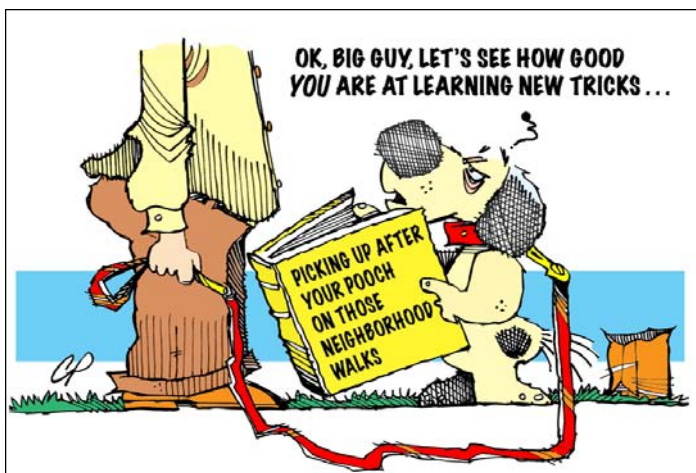
Wild cats become a nuisance when they are left to breed unchecked without proper care. Behaviors like spraying, yowling, roaming, and fighting are mating behaviors. When a cat is neutered, it stops conquering new territories and concentrates on protecting the feeding territory. Just like a guard dog, a neutered wild cat will protect his territory from other cats and will keep the area free

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Don't Forget to Scoop the Poop!

The City now requires every pet owner to:

- 1) Observe the leash law (Section 6-101) which requires pets to be leashed when outside a fenced yard on private property. Dogs must be on leash and under the direct physical control of the owner while on the street or in a public space such as Old Braeswood Park.
- 2) Pick up after pets (Section 6-24) "and carry a means to remove feces with you and promptly remove and dispose of, in a sanitary manner, feces left by such dog or cat.



Violation of these city laws carries a fine of \$500 per incident. We are grateful to all pet owners in our neighborhood for their thoughtful observance of these regulations.

WELCOME

New Neighbors

Lara Frazier
2422 Glen Haven Blvd.

Sherri & Garrett Walsh
3 Braeswood Ct.

Melissa Thomas &
Ajay Vargheese
2249 Maroneal Blvd.

Anna & Scott Campbell
2253 Maroneal Blvd.

Jennifer & Al Peoples
2217 Maroneal Blvd.

Teryle & Lyle Morrow
2339 Bellefontaine Blvd.

Lisa & Raymond N. DuBois
2218 Glen Haven Blvd.



Old Braeswood Directory Published

Thanks to the efforts of Sally Miller and her “team”, Old Braeswood residents now have a new 2009-10 OBPOA address directory. The directory was printed—*in color and free of charge*—thanks to

Buddy Steves
Myron Steves Insurance Solutions

Our thanks, too, is extended to a recent directory advertiser,

Baldrige Landscape, LLC

A list of other directory advertisers appears in our February newsletter.

Please support our advertisers. When you use their services, identify yourself as an Old Braeswood resident. Be sure to thank them for their donation as our advertisers help us do creative things in our neighborhood.

Over the year, you will be reading more about some of our directory advertisers. For example, one of our donors is the Czech Center Houston. The Center is one of the newest venues in the city and is a beautiful setting for all types of occasions. On February 28, Sally Miller organized a “High Tea” fundraiser at the Center for the American Family Therapy Academy. She says the Center is a great place for an event.

For more information, contact Sally at 832-452-0113, sallyeisenmiller@yahoo.com, or refer to the Czech Center Houston advertisement in the OBPOA directory.



From Our Mailbag

(Continued from Page 5)

from rats and other wild animals.

We live at 2313 Dorrington and have relocated a number of cats with the help of AAAnimalPro. But, on the other hand, if you get attached to a wild cat (as I did with a cat I’ve named Testy), please get the cat neutered right away before feeding it. I trapped, neutered, and released Testy. He is a gray Tabby with a clipped ear (a clipped ear is the universal sign for the Trap-Neuter-Return, TNR, program indicating the cat has been spayed and released). I feed Testy and he defends my yard from other cats.

I ask my neighbors to join in a common effort to control cat population in Old Braeswood. Since I cannot do it all by myself, here are some options:

1) AAAnimalPro, www.HoustonWildlifePatrol.com, 832-248-7804, will relocate cats from your property to a reserve in Katy where they are fed. For a \$129.00 set up fee and \$89.00 removal fee they will come, set up five traps, and remove the cats.

2) Cat Veterinary Clinic, W. Alabama, <http://catvetclinic.com/basics.html> does TNR for \$44 which includes a Rabies shot and an ear clip.

3) For more info, go to: <http://www.indyferal.org/Literature/Nuisance%20Prevention%20Tips.pdf>.

Sincerely,

Olga Starostina, c) 713-443-9956

PS: Watch out for Testy, a gray Tabby with a clipped ear.

To stop this threat, Old Braeswood, Southgate, Devonshire, Southampton, Boulevard Oaks, Morningside Place, and Central City subdivision forces have formed a growing coalition to support a reform bill introduced into the state legislature by Rep. Garnet Coleman. Coleman's House Bill 3709 would repeal TMC Inc.'s power to condemn residential property—and to “extinguish” its deed restrictions, but would not affect its power to condemn commercial, industrial or other business property.

Condemnation materialized as a -tangible threat to neighborhoods north of Rice Blvd. when Rice University became a full member of the Texas Medical Center. Under TMC Inc.'s unique condemnation statute, Rice's membership expanded the statutory reach of the service company's power of eminent domain to the edges of the University's holdings, which extend beyond Greenbriar to the Village. Nobody expects a good neighbor like Rice to condemn any residential property, but the same cannot be said of TMC Inc. or some of the Medical Center's other 44 members. Indeed, TMC could, without seeking prior approval of any publicly-accountable body, begin condemning homes for a parking garage or logistics facility north of Rice or south of University Boulevard—under the same power being used today to condemn deed-restricted homes in Central City.

TMC Inc.'s ongoing home demolition campaign in Central City now serves nothing more than undefined future uses. Even more disturbing, TMC Inc. could cite no valid reason for its original foray into condemning deed-restricted homes. Rather, the service company declined to condemn three adjoining non-residential tracts whose owners have the resources to fight condemnation, unlike the little neighborhood behind the TMC Inc. facility. It even declined to build on its own property.

Even today TMC Inc. has open space two or three times the acreage it has so far condemned in Central City. Perhaps TMC Inc. didn't fancy having to view a tin garage in its front yard.

TMC Inc.'s 6-story parking garage has replaced single family homes in the Central City subdivision by extinguishing deed restrictions through its unchecked eminent domain authority.



2009

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Abolishing TMC Inc.'s ability to condemn in residential areas will have no effect on the Medical Center itself, a major employer whose world-famed institutions justifiably add luster to Houston's image. Anyone with an automobile can confirm the limitless availability of non-residential land running north along the Main-San Jacinto corridor, and along the south, southeast and southwest quadrants near the Medical Center, infinitely more land than the Medical Center is ever likely to need.

Submitted by Hugh Rice Kelly

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