
Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association

Newsletter - September 1996

To My Neighbors:

As many of you know, there is oak wilt in the neighborhood. This disease is very destructive to the oak trees and extremely difficult to eradicate. This issue of the Laurel Oaks Newsletter contains plenty of valuable information about oak wilt - how to spot it and how to prevent it from spreading.

The Transportation committee is looking at the entire neighborhood's traffic flow and related issues, such as condition of street signs, lighting, sidewalks, etc. Should you have any suggestions or concerns you wish to raise, please bring them to our attention. The Transportation committee meets regularly and is always looking for volunteers.

The Neighborhood Association is holding elections in September as promised. A ballot is included in this newsletter with a space for write-in candidates. At our general meeting on September 25 at Canyon Vista Middle School, there will be an opportunity for anyone wishing to run for office do so. We are in need of an election committee to count the ballots so PLEASE call me to help in this most critical area.

Donations continue to come in, but more are needed. The production and mailing of this newsletter alone costs more than \$1,000 and that's not including the volunteer time to put it together. If you can't donate time, then any monetary contribution will help us to continue to communicate about the important issues for our neighborhood.

Lastly, we are looking for the volunteer services of an attorney to help us with our legal papers. If you would be willing to donate some time, it would be most appreciated.

Sincerely,
David Ronquillo
Interim Board President

Oak Wilt Threatens Neighborhood Trees By Vic Hariton

Thanks to the sharp eyes of area resident Kaye LaGrone, we were able to act quickly with the Austin Oak Wilt Project to organize a meeting (held July 8 at Spicewood Springs Library) and formulate a plan to prevent the spread of oak wilt.

Jay Culver and Diane Burbank from the City of Austin's Oak Wilt Project provided a great presentation on this infection and will be helping us with a correction. Laurel Oaks Interim President David Ronquillo forwarded a letter to the mayor's office to have an oak wilt suppression study done in our neighborhood. This study is currently underway. A report will be forwarded to the Board in the near future.

The BIG question that remains is how to pay for any corrective action needed. The infected tree that Kaye LaGrone spotted on Danwood is on city property, so the city may remove the infected tree at no expense to the homeowner. However, the cost of any trenching required to prevent the spread to other trees through the root system (which averages 100 feet per year) is not paid for with local public funds. At \$14-\$15 per linear foot, this can still add up for neighboring homeowners. The domino effect of this disease and the expense involved in preventing further oak wilt infection in this area is an issue the whole neighborhood must face.

With 2,000 homes in the bounds of Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association, a nominal collection could really help any individual that has to deal with such an emergency. The Parks and Environment Committee has proposed that we establish a community emergency fund (like an insurance policy) to help neighborhood homeowners whose trees are infected and to help prevent the further spread of the disease. This issue will be discussed at the Laurel Oaks general meeting on September 25.

Thanks to Laurel Oaks Interim Vice President Sue Beck and the City's Sondra Creighton, wounds on the trees at the Spicewood Springs road construction area have been treated to prevent oak wilt. Also, a letter has been sent to the city requesting an oak wilt survey at this location.

If you are interested in getting involved in issues that affect our neighborhood's natural beauty, please come to the next meeting of the Laurel Oaks Parks and Environment Committee, held the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. For more information, contact Vic Hariton.

Many Thanks to Kaye LaGrone
for spotting a tree with oak wilt,
contacting the city and alerting
the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association!

Development in Horizon Subdivision Could Increase Neighborhood Traffic

By Ralph Bonnell

On August 5, 1996, notices went out about a new subdivision between the south end of Oak Knoll, Manzanita, San Souci Place and Lost Horizon Drive. Plans for this new development currently include connecting Lost Horizon Drive (Great Hills) and San Souci Place (Sierra Vista) directly to Manzanita (Windridge). The new traffic plan, as presented in File Number C8-96-0154, would result in:

- A high volume of traffic cutting through on Manzanita, Buckthorn, Oak View and Township Trail to get to Highway 183 faster;
- An obvious danger to North Oaks students as traffic on Oak View increases.

Most of the streets being affected are narrow, low-volume streets that were never intended to carry such a high volume of traffic. It will also endanger all of our children using the Oak View entrance to North Oaks Elementary School and Oak View Park. The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association Interim Board discussed this issue at their meeting on August 29th.

At the time of this newsletter, the developer's chief engineer appears interested in working with all involved to achieve a traffic plan minimizing the impact to the neighboring community. The City Traffic Planner has also been contacted and will be reviewing the site prior to the printing of this newsletter.

This is the type of issue that illustrates the importance of a strong neighborhood association. We will continue to keep you informed as this project develops.

For more information, attend the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association's next General Meeting on September 25 at North Oaks Elementary School.

September Calendar

September 25	General Meeting/Laurel Oaks Elections - Results
September 26	Transportation/safety Committee Meeting

Fourth of July Parade an Enormous Success By Cheryl Frink

Approximately 450 neighborhood children, adults and patriotic pets marched, strolled and rolled behind a roaring fire truck as the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association teamed up with the Sierra Vista Neighborhood for a Fourth of July Parade.

A fire engine from Fire Station 33 sounded its siren at 9 a.m. to start the parade and a sky-high blast of water from a fire hydrant greeted participants as they finished their route.

Special thanks go to Ann Worthington and Charlotte Hair, Sierra Vista neighbors who have organized this parade for the past seven years and who invited Laurel Oaks to participate in this fabulous Fourth of July activity. We also want to thank Austin Police Department Officer Dennis Smith for keeping the gathering safe and orderly; Austin Fire Department Specialist Wesley Brace and Firefighters Raymond Mendez, Eli Santiago and Gary Priest for lending great excitement and fun to the Fourth of July Parade; McDonald's, Albertson's and Simon-

David for providing generous treats; [Mary "B" Battaglia](#) for offering several large American flags; and residents Sue Beck and Karen Hoekstra for recruiting neighborhood children to make signs for the parade.

More Community Activities Planned By Cheryl Frink

Would you like to work on a committee that generates lots of fun? Would you like to continue to enjoy activities in our neighborhood like the Easter Egg Hunt or the Fourth of July Parade? You're a natural for the Community Activities Committee!

Our next project: A Family Picnic. This could be a great neighborhood get-together, but we need someone to organize it as well as other activities. We've already obtained orange drink and lemonade for the picnic -- we just need someone to pull the rest of the party together.

If you're interested in helping, please contact Cheryl Frink.

School is back in session

- Please observe speed limit signs.
 - Traffic in **both lanes must stop** when a school bus is loading or unloading.
 - Be ready to stop as school crossing guards help students cross our streets.
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Treasurer's Report By Ralph Bonnell

The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association remains in the black, thanks to the strong initial response from our fellow neighbors and continued support of our newsletters and activities from area businesses.

Our account activity since May is as follows:

Beginning Balance	\$284.00
Donations and Newsletter Advertising Sales	\$240.00
Newsletters (May)	(\$372.30)
Signs etc.	(\$16.12)
Interest	\$1.53
Ending Balance	\$137.11

1996 Laurel Oaks Interim Officers

Feel free to contact the Laurel Oaks **Interim** Board about issues that are important to you:

Title	Name
President	David Ronquillo
1st Vice President	Vic Hariton
2nd Vice President	Jeff Walsh
3rd Vice President	Sue Beck
Treasurer	Ralph Bonnell
Secretary	Margaret Harrist

Crime, Safety are Topics at Transportation/Safety Meeting By Sue Beck

The Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association's Transportation/Safety Committee welcomed Lt. Alan Riske, sector lieutenant over patrol officers in Northwest Austin (the ADAM Sector), to its meeting on July 29. Riske, an enthusiastic proponent of Neighborhood Watch and the Northwest Austin Neighborhood Alliance (NANA), offered a variety of tips on safety and crime prevention.

Lt. Riske has asked for additional policemen for our sector and asked for our assistance to join with NANA to push for more money to be allocated in the Austin city budget. Currently, this sector includes 30% of the land in Austin, 25% of the population, and only 17% of the police resources.

He also made an offer to residents concerned about speeders in the neighborhood: upon request, he will make a speed gun available to residents who would like to help clarify the severity of the speeding problem on their street.

Meanwhile, Lt. Riske was pleased to hear that our neighborhood has 22 organized Neighborhood Watch groups. He offered suggestions to Laurel Oaks residents to maintain and improve the safety of our neighborhood, including:

- Do not depend entirely on electronic alarm systems. Find a neighbor you trust to watch your house when you are out of town. Get your neighborhood watch blocks organized. (The Neighborhood Watch contact for the Laurel Oaks area is Linda Cruickshanks at 331-0627.)
- Work with NANA to get more clout with the City of Austin. Today, NANA represents 30 neighborhood associations in Northwest Austin. (The Interim Board of the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association is currently in contact with NANA and will soon begin attending NANA meetings.)

The next meeting of the Laurel Oaks Transportation/Safety Committee will be September 26 at 7 p.m. at the Spicewood Springs Library.

The High Cost of Oak Wilt **By Cheryl Frink**

The potential loss of hundreds of trees in our neighborhood from the spread of oak wilt poses a serious threat to neighborhood beauty and livability. But even if you care nothing about the beauty or shade provided by the trees, remember this:

- Studies have shown that oak trees alone can constitute up to 20 percent of the property value on the average home in the Austin area.
- The cost of removing trees infected with oak wilt could run property owners \$500 to \$600 per tree.

WHAT IS OAK WILT?

Oak wilt is a disease caused by a fungus that clogs the water-conducting vessels of infected trees, causing them to wilt and die. It is considered one of the most destructive tree diseases in the country. More than 10,000 trees have already died of oak wilt in the Austin area.

WHAT CAUSES OAK WILT?

A fungus called *Ceratocystis fagacearum* causes oak wilt.

WHAT TYPES OF TREES CAN GET OAK WILT?

Oak wilt is a problem for live oaks and red oaks (including Spanish oak and Blackjack oak) in the Austin area and throughout Central Texas.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Oak wilt can spread in two ways:

- Underground, it spreads from one tree to the next through connected roots, thus forming expanding patches of dead and dying trees.
- Above ground, the oak wilt fungus can be carried by insects from infected red oaks to fresh wounds on uninfected oak trees.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY TREES HAVE OAK WILT?

In live oaks, the leaf veins will turn yellow or brown while the rest of the leaf remains green. The tips of some leaves may also turn brown, or the leaves may turn yellow with only the veins remaining green. Once live oaks are infected, most gradually drop leaves and die over

a period of three months to a year. In red oaks, leaves quickly turn pale green to brown, usually remaining attached to the tree for some time. Once infected, a red oak will die within two weeks to several months.

WHAT IS THE CURE FOR OAK WILT?

There is no cure for oak wilt, so treatment involves suppression and prevention. Trenches stop the underground spread of oak wilt by breaking the root connections between trees. In certain situations, individual trees can be saved by fungicide injections. However, the use of fungicide will not stop the spread of the fungus through interconnected roots and is not considered a cure.

WHY SHOULD OUR NEIGHBORHOOD RESPOND QUICKLY TO THE OAK WILT PROBLEM?

The oak wilt problem in our area is containable at this point. The quicker the neighborhood works together to enact and fund an oak wilt suppression effort, the more likely the oak wilt on Danwood can be contained -- which we must do to save surrounding trees. In some neighborhoods, oak wilt has killed hundreds of trees and is so widespread that it is no longer considered containable.

WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY OWN TREES?

All property owners with healthy oaks should immediately paint all wounds -- and that means whenever you prune or the tree is damaged in any way -- with a tree wound dressing. The dressing or "paint" is available at nurseries or in garden centers at many stores. A coat of tree-wound paint acts as a barrier which stops any fungal spores carried by insects from entering the wound. In addition, avoid oak firewood. It could bring oak wilt into your yard.

WHO DO I CALL FOR HELP?

- The Texas Forest Service Oak Wilt Suppression Project: 451-2178 or 476-6487
- City of Austin Oak Wilt Suppression Project -- 476-6487 or for city arborist - Jay Culver 476-6486

(The above information was provided by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department Oak Wilt Suppression Project)

Neighborhood Tidbits **By Margaret Harrist**

- A number of attempted sexual assaults occurred at apartment complexes along Jollyville Road in August. Women have been violently attacked in the parking lots and on the grounds of these complexes between the hours of 6 p.m. and midnight. Police believe the attacker picks his victims randomly. He is described as 20 to 26 years old,

- 5'6" to 5'10" tall, with short dark blond or brown hair and a medium build. All area residents should be aware of these attacks and watch for suspicious activity.
- Several cars in the neighborhood have had their tires stolen and have been left standing on blocks.
 - A home on Narrow Oak was burglarized in June while the residents were on vacation. The thief (or thieves) opened the garage door, backed in and loaded up.
 - A resident on Baybridge Terrace Cove reported that some compact discs were stolen from a car.
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Results of the Laurel Oaks Traffic Survey

By Sue Beck

More than 70 residents responded to the Traffic Survey printed in the last issue of the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Newsletter. A number of residents expressed interest in some kind of traffic-calming measure on a variety of neighborhood streets. These comments will be taken into account as the Laurel Oaks Transportation/Safety Committee works to develop a comprehensive traffic plan for the neighborhood.

The response to the questions regarding speed humps on Fireoak and Dundee was as follows:

Fireoak:

- ***Not Opposed*** to Speed Humps: 37
- ***Opposed*** to Speed Humps: 40

(There were also 30 additional homeowners who had signed petitions for speed humps on Fireoak.)

Dundee:

- ***Not Opposed*** to Speed Humps 35
- ***Opposed*** to Speed Humps: 20

As a result of this survey, the Laurel Oaks Interim Board voted to support the installation of speed humps on Dundee. In addition, the Board voted to direct the Transportation/Safety Committee to devise a traffic circulation plan in conjunction with the City of Austin Planning Department. The Board asked for a preliminary report by October 1.

A number of write-in comments were also received from residents responding to the survey, expressing a variety of concerns from throughout the neighborhood.

Since the survey, Fireoak was deemed by the City of Austin to be a primary response route for emergency vehicles, excluding it from consideration for the speed hump program. If you

would like to verify whether your street is also considered a primary response route, call the Austin Traffic Department's Joan Hudson at 499-7012.

Graffiti, Vandalism Curbed at Elementary School; City will Replace Tagged Signs **By Robin Perry**

North Oaks Elementary Principal Kathy Caraway reports that there were no problems with vandalism or graffiti at the school over the summer. As previously reported in the Laurel Oaks Newsletter, in separate incidents last spring vandals robbed a storage building and wrote graffiti on portable classrooms and other property on the school grounds. Since then, alert neighbors have assisted in controlling acts of vandalism by notifying police of suspicious activities at the school.

“Please give everyone a big thank you from all of us [at North Oaks Elementary] for keeping an eye on things,” Mrs. Caraway says.

Graffiti has been spotted in other areas of the neighborhood, mainly on traffic signs. A tagged (or graffiti-marked) stop sign is considered a traffic hazard and will be replaced, usually within an hour of being reported, according to the City of Austin Streets and Alleys department. The tagged stop sign at Danwood and Barrington was replaced promptly by the City after being reported by a Laurel Oaks-area resident. To report graffiti on road signs to the City of Austin, call 476-0935.

Graffiti is not a big problem in the Laurel Oaks neighborhood. However, even a small amount of graffiti leaves a bad impression. Residents can keep it under control by cleaning up graffiti on their property, reporting graffiti in public areas to the City, and reporting suspicious activity to the police.

Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association Election

Ballots may be brought to the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association's general meeting on September 25th at 6:30 P.M. at Canyon Vista Middle School or mailed to the following address:

Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association
PO Box 10998 | Suite 423 |
Austin, Texas 78766-1998

Note: Mail-in ballots must be received by Wednesday, September 25th.

**The Laurel Oaks Newsletter is produced by the
Communications Committee of the Laurel Oaks Neighborhood Association.**

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