

**ARLINGTON
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL**

POSTOAK

WORKING TO CONSERVE ARLINGTON'S NATURAL RESOURCES

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 4

APRIL 2013

**Note New Meeting Date
First Wednesday**

www.arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

April Meeting

The Parks & Recreation Open Space Plan

**Matt Young,
Assistant Director
Arlington Parks & Recreation Dept.**

**Wednesday, April 3, 7 pm
Fielder Museum, 1616 W. Abram St
(corner of Fielder and Abram)**

It's time again for an update to the Parks Master Plan. Matt will give us the big picture and fill us in on all the details. Our participation is particularly important as we compete with recreational demands.

By the time you see this, there will be only two open house meetings left where you can be heard. Go — and speak for the environment:

**THURSDAY, APRIL 4 • 6 - 8 PM
District 4 - West Arlington
Hosted by Kathryn Wilemon
Fire Training Center
5501 Ron McAndrew Drive**

**MONDAY, APRIL 15 • 6 - 8 PM
District 5 - East/Central Arlington
Hosted by Lana Wolff**

Bring something for the raffle.

Bits & Pieces

Turtle Help Wanted

Okay, turtle fans, this is your big chance to stand up for the River cooter. There must be dozens of you out there, so let's hear it: How many of you have seen this species in Arlington? (Note: We're not talking here about a Red-eared slider.) Please email the editor directly because it's really sort of important in an odd kind of way. Thanks very much.



Today's Inspirational Moment



If you run out of water,
you pray for rain.
If you run out of soil,
you pray for forgiveness.
Gov. Bob Kerrey

Time Again for Adder's Tongue

The funny-looking fern is back at SW Nature Preserve, barely poking through the leaf litter. But there's more than good looks here: Adder's tongue has the highest number of chromosomes (1260) of any known organism. Most species have far fewer. People have only 46. Big question: Why so many?



The Ultimate Neil Sperry?

Our anti-native plant expert might have peaked on March 23 when he devoted his Star-Telegram column to "Nurturing picky plants." All exotics, of course, that need special soil mixes and assorted bits of fussing. So, if native landscapes occupy the smart end of the gardening spectrum, then this column must sit firmly at the other end.



From the President: Dallas Growing Up Danny Kocurek



As a native of Fort Worth, I was always taught as a child that if you were good you would go to Heaven and if you were bad you

would go to Dallas. Growing up we always said Fort Worth was "where the West begins," while Dallas was "where the East ends." Later we made fun of Jerry Jones and the fact that Dallas was the plastic surgery capital of the world. So it has taken a lot for me to turn from a detractor into an admirer of our eastern neighbor.

For those of you who haven't been paying attention, Dallas has changed into a real city. It took tremendous forward thinking and guts to start the DART system years ago. Those brave leaders

are now seeing the fruit of all their hard work. While Arlington residents cannot get anywhere without a car, people living in the Greater Dallas area can go almost everywhere. Transit Oriented Development, where neighborhoods with housing and shopping are built around major transit stops, are popping up all over and attracting folks of all ages who don't want to spend their lives driving everywhere. Imagine getting your groceries, going out to dinner, running in the park and seeing a movie without once having to get in your car. Dallas is now positioned to attract new people and businesses while cities like Arlington slowly wither away.

And then there is the neighborhood drilling debate. The recent city hall shenanigans by the gas companies in Dallas were met by public outrage and pushed back. It appears there are some

Dallas leaders who represent all of their citizens, not just the ones wanting to make a quick buck. While Arlington and Fort Worth decided to allow the gas companies to make all of the decisions and drill wherever they wanted, Dallas has looked into the future and asked, "Do we really want gas wells on every block?" and "Who is going to pay to clean up all this mess?" And while Tarrant County cities have ignored threats to public health and the water supply, Dallas has decided to study these risks before acting. Wouldn't it have been good to know what chemicals were being leaked out of the well sites before they were in place? Remember when a gas site leaked 150 gallons of chemicals into Lake Arlington and the investigators concluded that everything was okay

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller Photos by Wesley Miller



Spring Prairie Walk with Jim Varnum
 Saturday, April 6, 2013
 2 pm – 3:30 pm
 Texas Master Naturalist Jim Varnum leads a leisurely walk around New York

Avenue Blackland Prairie to point out early spring wildflowers and make suggestions for using them in your home landscape.

Blackland prairie in the spring — there’s nothing else like it and no two walks are alike, so come and see for yourself!

Please wear long pants and shoes or boots with sturdy soles. Also, you might consider bringing water (refills provided), sun protection, insect repellent, a camera or binoculars.

Two events this month at NYABP!

3rd Saturday Prairie Stewards Workday

Saturday, April 20, 2013
 9 am – noon

Celebrate Earth Day on the prairie! We’ll continue to remove brush and trees, maybe pick up litter too and enjoy the spring wildflowers.

Bring your handsaws or loppers and gloves and wear thick-soled boots/shoes and long pants. Also consider sunscreen, bug spray and water. Please bring your own container but refills will be available.

Let’s meet for lunch after: It’s a great opportunity to refuel and to brainstorm on prairie restoration. Location will be determined by group vote.

Location

New York Avenue Blackland Prairie is about 1 mile south of IH-20 in Arlington. From IH-20 take the Collins exit and drive east on the service road to New York Avenue. Drive past the preserve, make a U-turn, go back north a bit and park on the south side by the fence.

RSVP is greatly appreciated in case of weather changes, etc., but not required. For more information, please reply to: prairie@acctexas.org.



Wildscape Update Rosalie Rogers and John Dycus



Walk on the Wildside was the big event at the Veterans Park little slice of heaven last month as 90 third-graders from Goodman Elementary School scurried about

in full-immersion mode. The students were divided into groups and escorted to five stations where volunteers proclaimed the wonder of seed balls, butterflies, parts of a flower, the water cycle and metamorphosis.

Outreach coordinator Peggy Quinn reported that 25 volunteers came

together to make the day highly successful. Even the volunteers commented how well-behaved and attentive were the students.

In April the wildscape will pioneer a new approach when the educational program goes to the school. Lessons similar to those at Walk on the Wildside will be presented to Goodman second-graders. A big thanks to science teacher Carrie Donovan for facilitating these learning experiences, to the pluperfect Peggy Quinn for her organizational skills, and to Dawn Hancock and Hester Schwarzer for improving the program.

Meanwhile, back in the trenches, watering continues due to scant rainfall.

Although native plants are drought resistant, new plantings need moisture to get established. Part of the watering is done by the special volunteers from the Arlington Independent School District's eighteen plus program. They also have distributed countless wheelbarrowloads of mulch.

Spring is a favorite time at the wildscape. Volunteers have worked tirelessly to propagate, cultivate and care for the native plants. Their efforts have produced fresh new blooms, which in turn attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

And third-graders bursting with questions.



From the Immediate Past President Grace Darling

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president in 2012. I'll treasure this card forever.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw

Thank you for not being a feverish selfish little clod.



New Rainwater Harvesting Site Dustan Compton



A project was completed recently at our South Service Center located at 1001 SE Green Oaks Blvd.

The Arlington Sunrise Rotary Club funded and installed a rainwater harvesting and raised beds educational exhibit on the west side of the building. I still have a little bit to do on a drip setup for one of the beds and spreading mulch that I plan to complete soon. I have planned our first How to Make a Rain Barrel Class there on Saturday, April 13.

One of the beds has herbs and the other has vegetables. I think there is a lot of potential for outreach from this project, especially when you consider the new landscape that was also installed.

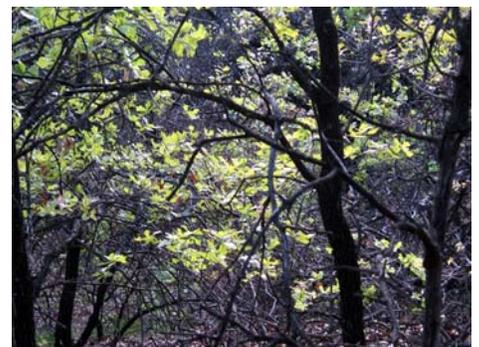


Thanks to Our Last Speaker

At our March meeting Jennifer Chadwell from Arlington Parks & Recreation gave us an enthusiastic update on the progress of Keep Arlington Beautiful.

It was a classic ACC presentation: casual and filled with good information. And our members responded beautifully to our new meeting night by filling the room and asking lots of good questions.

Thanks very much, Jennifer.



In Tune with Nature: The Role of a Prairie Park, or Helping the Prairie Help You

Dick Schoech

We often hear that “we shape our environment and our environment shapes us.” What does this mean? How can our environment shape us? Shaping us is something spouses and friends have not had much success at over the years :). A 28 Mar 2013 NY Times article gave some hints on how this shaping works.

...studies have found that people who live near trees and parks have lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, in their saliva than those who live primarily amid concrete, and that children with attention deficits tend to concentrate and perform better on cognitive tests after walking through parks or arboretums.

The influence of our environment goes much deeper. How can we discover this influence? Do we need to go back to our roots? Many people search their ancestry to learn how their forefathers might have influenced them. We can search our environment to explore how the place we live influences us. How can we begin this exploration and get more in tune with nature? One easy way is to simply begin observing our environment. Look at the native plants, the trees, the landscape, the critters, the soil, and see what we can learn about how our environment is shaping us. To develop a deeper understanding of our environment, visit some local nature areas such as the New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park, SW Nature Preserve, Crystal Canyon Preserve/Natural Area, or Tandy Hills Natural Area. People fought long and hard to keep these treasured pieces of unspoiled land so they could help us understand what our environment was like many thousands of years ago. They must have many lessons to teach us about our environment.

For a crash course on environmental influences, volunteer to help maintain



some of these parks. When you volunteer, you work alongside folks who know a lot about these places. They can answer your probing questions about what each place was like before humans, but especially before Europeans arrived, settled, and began shaping the environment beyond recognition. The ACC Web site can keep you informed of volunteer opportunities.

By observing and questioning, you will soon discover that we live on several soil types. The soil in East Arlington is predominately black clay or blackland gumbo as it is fondly called. The soil in Central Arlington is mostly river sand. The soil in West Arlington is a mixture of red-orange and white clay mixed with sand. We live on land formed by shallow seas millions of years ago.

But examining the soil reveals only one aspect of our environment, although soil has a major influence on everything else, especially the vegetation. Take a guided wildflower tour at Tandy Hills park during Prairie Fest on April 27 and you will learn that while the action in forests is concentrated in the tree canopy and roots, the action in prairies is right under our noses, several feet above and below ground. Your guide will help you open your senses and experience the beauty, sounds and smells from the many grasses, flowers, birds, insects, etc. Some plants, like the antelope horn

milkweed, spread underground so you might be standing on one interconnected network plant 15 feet in diameter. Plants like the flame acanthus flick their seeds at the right time for reproduction. Your Prairie Fest guide can explain how bees and butterflies are interconnected with plants just as we are to our environment.

Is the current plight of the dwindling monarch butterfly population predicting what will

happen to us in the future if we continue changing our environment without listening to our environment to learn how these changes will change us?



Another aspect of our environment involves the vistas along with the wind and stars. To experience this part of the environment, you need a large unspoiled prairie where you can see the blend of colors of Indian grass along with little and big bluestem grasses waving in the breeze. Or, you can see sunsets as you have never seen them before followed by the night sky unspoiled by city lights. The problem is that to experience the

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In Tune with Nature continued from page 6

prairie environment, you need a large piece of native prairie, which is rarely available to today's city dwellers.

Housing development and farming have changed most prairies forever. Luckily, some large unspoiled prairie remnants still exist and people are trying to save these places so we can explore and experience our roots. The Prairie Park in Southeast Tarrant County, about 40 minutes from Arlington, is one ecologically diverse place that some people are trying to save from development so it can be an educational laboratory that helps people discover their sense of place. It is one of the best remaining pieces of the 1.3-million-acre Fort Worth Prairie ecosystem, which is a southern sub-region of the tallgrass prairie, the most endangered major ecosystem in North America. Only several thousand acres of the once enormous Fort Worth Prairie exist today. The remnant in SE Tarrant County is called Fort Worth Prairie Park (FWPP) in honor of this once large, but now almost nonexistent land.



Jarid Manos of the Great Plains Restoration Council discovered this unspoiled remnant of the Fort Worth Prairie in the 1990s and has been trying to save it ever since. Others have joined in the struggle. Friends of the Fort Worth Prairie Park led by Jarid have secured 235 acres of native prairie and are seeking to acquire 1750 adjoining acres owned by the Texas General Land Office.

The land ranges from windy hills to flowing creeks, along with silent, windless

tree groves where deer and buffalo once relaxed for hundreds of thousands of years. Walking through the FWPP, you can easily imagine you are walking with Caddo or Comanche Indians who once roamed this land. Before the Civil War, escaped African American slaves crossed the prairie to freedom in Mexico. It was part of the Chisholm Trail and contains a creek full of fossils, an Indian marker tree, and ruins of a settler's old stone house, cellar, and cistern from the 1850s, along with burial grounds and a mysterious hand-built rock wall almost 3 miles long. Two bison (tested genetically pure) have been acquired and have made the FWPP their home since 2006.

The FWPP is considered a diversity hotspot. Rare plant communities include up to 700 different native plant species. It is a G1/G2 plant community according to the Heritage Ranking System, which means globally imperiled with only 6-20 known occurrences remaining. FWPP is central flyway grassland for nesting birds whose populations are rapidly declining from lack of habitat. Of the 20 most common birds declining in North America, 8 have been recorded at the Fort Worth Prairie Park. FWPP holds international ecological significance as an important breeding and resting ground in the spring and fall for the North American Monarch butterfly migration. See savetheprairie.org for more details on the ecological significance of the FWPP.

Future goals of the current three-phase plan call for a Visitor Center and Ecological Health Field Institute to be established by the abandoned house site at 10700 Old Granbury Road. The center will allow visitors to see and experience the great open prairie expanse and sky while learning 21st century approaches to taking care of our own health through taking care of the Earth.

Plans involve using the prairie to help some of our most abused and wounded people recover, including youth in trouble, veterans suffering from the ravages of war, and incarcerated individuals wanting to start a better life.

Hiking, horseback programs, learning about, researching and participating in ecological health projects are part of future plans to help humans. Plans also



involve helping the prairie recover from the abuse of overgrazing and from pesticides that are destroying some of the once plentiful prairie inhabitants. Healing the prairie means bringing back horny toads (Texas horned lizard), prairie dog colonies, etc. Ideally, wildfires, which are essential to healthy prairie ecology, will be used to control the trees and enrich the soil for future grasses.

So what next? Friends of the FWPP need your help to save this land so you, your children and all future Texans can experience our native environment. The land must be purchased from the Texas General Land office, so a fundraising effort has begun. Some national conservation organizations and county officials are supportive of the effort, but a lot of planning and work remain.

Use of the current park is currently limited due to the lack of access and parking. However, to introduce Metroplex residents to the property, second Sunday guided hikes of the FWPP depart from 10700 Old Granbury Road at 2:00 pm.

Sign up at savetheprairie.org to be kept informed and to get involved. Your support and participation are needed to help acquire and heal this land so it can help us heal and enjoy the subtle interactions between humans and their environment.

Stop the Frack Attack Jo Ann Duman

“Stop the Frack Attack” brought activists to Dallas from all over the US and Canada. The March 2-3 conference was “oversold” with more than 250 attendees plus trainers and facilitators. Texas was chosen as the site so that people from areas where gas drilling is newer could learn from those who have already suffered the years of operations in the Barnett shale with little to no regulation or protection by local and state officials. While I enjoyed meeting folks ranging from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Ithaca, New York, and New England, it was heart wrenching to know that those beautiful areas are under the same attack that has marred so much of the less verdant Texas landscape. Midwest states like Ohio and Indiana were well represented, as were Texans from the recently opened areas of the Eagle Ford Shale.

Jennifer Krill, Earthworks Director, opened the conference with a plenary session recognizing that fracking is fracturing our communities, and the path to healing our community is through our love for our land and our kids, our air and our water.

A panel of Texans followed, some of whom many ACC members have met: Sharon Wilson (Texas Sharon), Kathy McMoreland (Denton and Wise County), Calvin Tillman (former mayor of DISH, TX and head of ShaleTest), Jane Lynn (Fish Creek Monitor), Steve Lipskey (Parker County) and Zac Trehan (TCE program director and member of the Dallas Drilling Task Force). Their descriptions of the impacts they experienced were followed by lots of audience questions and discussion.

Second on the program, Josh Fox appeared on a large screen via Skype and interacted with the audience for an hour. He announced that “Gasland II” will be out in the fall. Among many insights he offered, Josh said another layer of contamination from this industry has been on our democracy. Josh recommended frequently checking the Web site of Artists Against Fracking.

Both days were packed with training courses. The educators were top-notch

and definitely among the best I’ve ever heard. Technical topics, “Fracking 101,” “LNG Exports,” “Pipelines, Compressors Stations, and Other Infrastructure,” “Connecting Fracking, Climate Change and Clean Energy,” were offered along with training for community organizing and leadership development, rural organizing, being a spokesperson, and non-violent direct action.

Rita Beving (Texas Public Citizen and one of our Sierra Club friends) held a session on tar sands and the threat from new and re-purposed pipelines, with Julia Crawford of Dint, Texas, explaining her experience with the Keystone XL pipeline. Julia filed her appeal on March 1 in federal court on Keystone’s use of eminent domain for private (not public) use. To help with legal costs, her family is hosting a benefit concert at their farm near Direct, TX, on Saturday, April 20, with an awesome array of bands. Ticket and camping info are at nacstop.org/standwithjulia/.

The keynote speaker on Saturday was Danny Kennedy, former Greenpeace leader and now president of Sungevity, an online, all-purpose solar installation firm. His book, *Rooftop Revolution*, describes how solar power can save our planet and our economy from dirty energy. Danny noted 200,000 solar energy jobs already exist in the US and employment will continue to increase, compared to less than 100,000 jobs and declining in coal.

Two great speakers closed the Sunday session. Deborah Rogers, Fort Worth area farmer/cheese maker, former financial expert on Wall Street and for the Dallas Federal Reserve, spoke on the declining production being experienced in each of the fracking “plays.” From the Barnett Shale, to the Marcellus back east, and the North Dakota oil boom, Wall Street has taken millions of dollars out of the industry leaving producers loaded with debt. She pointed out the real danger of DOD (drill or default) as companies produce, even when prices are too low for profitable operation, to cover the debt load. Her reports are available on the website for the Energy Policy Forum.

Although originally the industry told us there could be no “dry holes” with shale, and that re-fracturing could continue production for decades, it turns out that production falls rapidly and there are, indeed, already many non-profitable wells due to small production.

As for the North Dakota oil boom using fracking, Deborah noted recent news that oil would be shipped by railcar instead of pipelines, explaining she learned that the companies involved are unwilling to finance pipeline construction because they do not expect profitable oil production will continue long enough to recoup the pipeline investment.

Both Rogers and Kennedy cited financial industry reports projecting near-term decline in the profitability of oil and coal companies, and long-term obsolescence, as renewable energy becomes cheaper due to economies of scale. If we can stop exploration and production the next five years, renewables will take over. The most important things activists can do are prevent exploration, stop the Keystone XL pipeline, and prevent export of US produced or refined fossil fuels overseas.

Tony Ingraffea, PhD, braved bad weather and persevered despite flight cancellations to make it from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, to Dallas by Sunday afternoon. His 2011 study established the greenhouse gas footprint of fracking as greater than any other fossil fuel including coal. His presentation described climate and ties to oil and natural gas, refuting the “biggest myth of all” with data showing natural gas is not a “clean” fossil fuel. Carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas, with methane being far more significant in its impact on global warming. Dr. Ingraffea also presented a Cornell study showing the state of New York could replace all fossil fuel use by 2030, stabilize energy prices, and reduce energy usage by 37 percent. The cost for renewables would be less than investment needed to maintain or replace conventional power generation (nuclear, coal, gas and petroleum) with

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Frack Attack continued from page 8

the same old fossil fuel technology. Google Cornell and NYS Renewable Energy Conversion for that info.

Fun times were added by cocktails and dancing in the ballroom Saturday night. It was great to party with so many young activists, with a good sprinkling of

all ages including gray hairs like me. The North Texas Light Brigade brought in their letters and let us look at them up close, then went out on the Coit Road bridge over I-635 to display a message to passing motorists: NO FRACKING.

On Monday, a bus full of attendees went to Austin to demonstrate at the state capitol, and then to protest outside the Texas Railroad Commission with an "earthquake dance." All in all, this was a great conference that encouraged everyone to continue the fight.

Climate Rally in Washington, D.C. Louise Engel

Over the President's Day weekend in February, 49 Texans boarded a bus for an approximately 30-hour bus ride to Washington D.C. for a "FORWARD ON CLIMATE" rally. This bus excursion was led by Rita Beving, president of Dallas Sierra Club, and her husband, David Griggs. Rita works for Public Citizen and through their courtesy was given two weeks off from her regular work to organize our bus trip. The bus riders ranged in age from 19 to 78 and included students from Austin College, Texas State, Collin County Community College, Austin Academy and Brookhaven College. Approximately \$10,000 was donated for the trip. Sponsors included the National/Dallas Sierra Club, Dolphin Blue, and folks all over the state.

On February 14, the bus picked up groups in Austin, Dallas and Tyler as we began the marathon journey to our nation's capital. We arrived in Washington on Friday evening. After checking in at our hotel, some of us walked over to the Lincoln Memorial. A light rain had just ended, providing this inspiring shrine with an amazing glow. We lingered.

Saturday was a free day and through the courtesy of Eddie Bernice Johnson, many of us were able to get tickets for a tour of the capitol. Afterward everyone enjoyed other sight-seeing adventures.

Public Citizen contributed a pizza party on Saturday evening where we made posters for the rally, and they also provided a pre-rally brunch on Sunday morning at their headquarters. Then our bus took us to the Mall surrounding the Washington Monument. It was astonishing to watch the crowd gathering: The Coast Guard helicopter circling overhead reported that the crowd was approximately 35,000, and it later swelled to 45,000.

We heard several stimulating speakers, including Bill McKibben; Van Jones, President Obama's former green jobs adviser; Chief Jacqueline Thomas of the Saik'uz First Nation from British Columbia; and US Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island. Various environmental needs were addressed, but generally the speakers urged President Obama to follow up on the strong message in his inaugural address about the need to slow climate change.

As the speakers finished and the stands emptied, the crowd started walking up the hill to the White House, eventually circling it and coming back. There was music, there was energy, and there were many posters with slogans such as, "YES to Life on Earth," "Climate Action, It's Our Obligation," and from the Interfaith Council on Climate Change, "Climate Change is a Moral Issue."

The crowd's exuberance was intoxicating. We moved along chanting slogans such as "Hey hey, ho ho, Keystone's pipeline's got to go".

Throughout the morning the temperature ranged between 28 and 31 degrees with a few snow flurries. As the day progressed a really strong, extremely cold wind developed. Later we were told the chill factor was 12 degrees! Although we certainly felt the extreme cold, it seemed to add to the vitality of this large group.

As the rally ended and we returned to the starting area, the crowd began to disperse. It seemed that a majority of the people had arrived by bus so our pickup was necessarily delayed. As we waited approximately 45 minutes, we formed a huddle, looking and feeling like penguins on an ice pack. As soon as the late afternoon pickup was complete, we were on our way back to Texas. We arrived home Monday evening.

I am so glad I had the opportunity to participate in this event. We later received a five-page list of the many media outlets that covered the story. For at least this brief period of time, a large portion of our society focused attention on our need to address climate change. It is humbling, yet satisfying to have been a part of the largest climate rally in our nation's history.

From the President continued from page 2

because they didn't see any dead fish? Apparently Dallas is doing things a little differently. Putting citizens and health ahead of gas company profits.

While I used to hate Dallas for being fake and pretentious, now I hate it for making Fort Worth and Arlington look corrupt and incompetent. However, no matter how it pains me, I have to

congratulate Dallas for thinking about the future and trying to do things right. They have set a high bar that the rest of the metroplex is not even trying to reach.

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THE POST OAK

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Don't Forget!
Wednesday, April 3
7:00 pm
Matt Young

Arlington Parks & Recreation
Open Space Plan