

**MARCH
2006**

Floodplain Apartments: A Better Approach

John Dycus

NOTE: ACC members, please do not send a copy of this to Mr. Michaels, as he has already seen it.

An open letter to:
Tom Michaels
Director of Development, Madison Communities

Tom,

Appreciate the material you sent concerning your apartment project on Johnson Creek. Nice try.

Actually, your proposal has merit, just not at this location. There's a stated desire to energize the corridor between UTA's northeast quadrant and downtown. The City Council desperately wants to revitalize downtown. So let's put new student housing downtown.

Let's work with city leaders and willing land owners to redeploy underutilized property and their aging structures in the city's core for, as you say, the highest and best use. Three hundred residential consumers would be a powerful magnet for commerce downtown, perhaps the precise spark that downtown needs.

And suddenly you go from goat to hero. It's good to be a hero. Recall that 15 residents spoke at the Feb. 14 City Council meeting against your Johnson Creek work, and another 33 registered in opposition. One Arlington resident registered in support; none spoke.

Or let's put your housing community in UTA's South 40 or on UTA land along Center Street formerly occupied by Bauder



Madison Communities Prairie Crossing project in Commerce was completed in August 2005.

March Meeting

TOPIC: Is There a Green Alternative?

SPEAKER: Brent Villareal,
Green Mountain Energy

WHEN: Wednesday, March 8,
7:00 pm

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

**Bring Something
for the Raffle!**

Floodplain Apartments *continued from page 1*

Fashion College. And please, let's pioneer robotic parking in the Southwest. Let's crown the concept with a living roof for improved insulation year 'round and so the buildings won't create a heat island in the summer. Let's employ Solatube collectors and bathe the interiors with natural light, reducing the need for electricity. Let's make the paving porous, capture the storm runoff and reuse the gray water.

Let's set the industry abuzz with a project that exceeds LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards for high-performance, sustainable buildings. Then get ready for the local, national and maybe even international media to come calling, as surely they will, and their accounts will boost Madison Construction's bottom line more robustly than the most expensive ad campaign.

Now you've gone from goat to hero to visionary.

We're hurting for visionaries in Arlington, Tom. Proclaim the right progressive ideas and you could become the big-concept president overnight. It's a small club.

Or you can be just another developer who thinks with his chainsaw. We've never needed to import these people, as we grow our own, and they have gotten

much of what they've wanted in the city the last 40 years. See the nocturnal bulldozing on Rush Creek a couple of years ago, and what recently happened to the land around the old Vandergriff



Johnson Creek after the 3.5-inch rain on February 25. Judging from the debris line, the water was at least 5 feet higher at its peak. The arrow points to a developer's stake that appears to be at the southeastern corner of the property.

showroom downtown, and the clear-cut acreage at Interstate 20 and Bowen Road, for just three examples.

This crowd would scrape the Pecan Street lot clean for yet more Arlington transitory housing in a single-family setting, forever altering the neighborhood

DNA and bringing increased traffic where it's passionately not wanted. The odds favor them getting away with it because, sometimes, profit and projected tax revenue transcend all.

Besides, what do they care, it's not their neighborhood, these aren't their neighbors, and the only folks who have to like what they're doing are the ones who grant the permit.

We've never met, but I want to believe there's more to you than that.

John Dycus

roboticparking.com/home_broadband.php
ecoroofsystems.com/history_files/c_history.html
greenroofs.com/solatube.com/oasisdesign.net/greywater/indoorreuse.htm
usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19

Update: The rezoning application, case Z05-47, has been continued twice and is now scheduled to be heard by Council on March 14.

THE POST OAK

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New York Avenue Blackland Prairie Park Jan Miller

Next Workday: Saturday, March 11 9:00 am - noon

Prairie patrol for trash and a look at the first spring blooms. We might take down a few trees along the property lines. Water will be provided. Bring hand tools, gloves and wear sturdy shoes and long pants.

Clean Air Group Sends Weak Message Bonnie Bowman

Like a reporter, I arrived late and left early to observe a special meeting of the Clean Air Steering Committee on Monday, February 27. Sadly, I can't say I feel that I missed much, except my ability to make a definitive statement on the outcome. The purpose of the meeting was to consider sending a letter to the governor regarding a recent order to TCEQ, the environmental arm of the state government, to expedite permitting for gas and coal power plants.

The meeting involved some background that I missed, then presentations from Wendi Hammond of Blue Skies Alliance and from TXU that I saw. Blue Skies represented the group that wanted to send a letter to the governor requesting a delay in granting permits, at least until modeling data of the effect of the plants was available. TXU, the company that has permits in the expedited pipeline, claims that such a letter would "chill" their potential investors.

When I left, the vote was 8 for and 8 against, and the two sides were locked in position. There was unanimous frustration with the conflicting timelines of rules, permits, SIPs, data modelling,... that inhibit the ability of this committee to take control of the air quality issue. But, at this point it is almost 5:30 pm, people are beginning to leave—and I joined them. The prediction of those more seasoned than I, who were also leaving, is that no letter would be sent.

PS This was a difficult meeting to follow because it wallowed in acronyms and jargon. Hence the much abbreviated report. Hopefully it is accurate!

Editor's note: The next day, February 28, Scott Streater reported in the Star-Telegram that the committee did decide to send a letter, but "the letter approved Monday is far weaker than the draft favored by clean air advocates. 'We're very disappointed,' said Wendi Hammond of the Blue Skies Alliance, a Dallas-based advocacy group. 'I think this committee did the public a great disservice today.'"

The Next Big Thing: Gas Leases on City Land Grace Darling

Arlington officials anticipate significant revenues from natural gas leases on (under, actually) city-owned land. They are now in the first phase of a bidding process. We have been assured that all environmental precautions are being considered, but it's important for ACC members to learn about the issues and stay abreast of developments. To help get us up to speed, we ought to consider adopting a mission statement similar to the following:

Mission:

- (a) To educate ourselves about natural gas drilling policies and practices.
- (b) To study the facts and issues related to gas drilling in Arlington, identify areas of concern, and devise solutions.
- (c) To present our findings and conclusions to ACC members and propose a course of action.
- (d) To draft a position paper based on a consensus.

Background: The Barnett Shale is a black rock formation underlying at least 14 counties in North Central Texas, from Denton County south to Hill County, and from I-35E west to Palo Pinto County. The shale is rich in natural gas deposits that are said to be the modern equivalent of the East Texas oil field. Natural gas is extracted by a process called fracture technology, which uses water and sand injected under high pressure to create tectonic stresses that crack the rock and release the gas within. The Fort Worth Basin, site of ancient shallow seas and thick shale strata, is one of the most intensively drilled areas in the United States. The city of Fort Worth passed a gas well drilling ordinance in fall of 2001; prior to that time, gas well drilling within city limits was handled as a zoning issue and required an application for planned development. Four years later, Fort Worth is revising this ordinance to tighten regulation and conservation measures. Arlington officials are now poised to open public and private lands to gas drilling. We hope to benefit from Fort Worth's experience and craft appropriate guidelines that will ensure safety of the community and respect the natural environment while maximizing profits.

continued on page 5

Texas Wildscape Workshop and Texas Native Plant Sale



Workshop:

Saturday, April 29 9:00 am - 12:00 am
 The Montessori Academy
 3428 W. Arkansas Ln
 8:30 am - 9:00 am
 Registration and refreshments

**On Saturday morning,
 learn how to create
 your own wildscape.**



Plant Sale:

Saturday, April 29 1:00 - 5:00 pm
 Molly Hollar Wildscape at Veterans Park

For a list of plants expected to be available
 and more details, go to
ArlingtonConservationCouncil.org

**On Saturday afternoon,
 invest in organically grown
 native plants for your wildscape.**

Texas Wildscape Workshop

Location: The Montessori Academy. North of I-20 at 3428 W. Arkansas Lane. From Green Oaks Blvd go east on Arkansas Lane to entrance road.



Rosa Finsley, landscape architect and native plant authority, and John Davis, Urban Biologist, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., will show you how to use native landscaping and employ thoughtful design to create a backyard that is inviting to people and wildlife alike.

Included in topics covered will be design, plant material, water use, and ordinances.

Workshop requires pre-paid registration.

Registration deadline April 22

Confirmation - By email or phone; will not be mailed out. **Refund - Requires notification by April 22. No refunds for late cancellations or no-shows.** Questions? Call Marian Hiler at 817-277-3998 or email info@arlingtonconservationcouncil.org

Mail check and registration form to:

ACC, PO Box 216, Arlington, TX 76004-0216

Name _____

Address _____

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Box lunch from Jason's Deli (optional, add \$6.00)

Sandwich choice, check one:

turkey roast beef ham vegetarian

Workshop \$24.00 _____

Box Lunch \$6.00 ea _____

Total enclosed _____

Last Children in the Woods? Candy Halliburton

Back in the day—WAY, WAAAY back—when I was a child I hung out in “the woods.” It was chock full of trees. These woods were only a half dozen blocks in any direction from our homes. Our parents didn’t worry about it when we played in the woods, and when we reached our teens, we were even allowed to return home after dark. We frolicked, caught and released lightning bugs, rode bikes and played sports on the paths and in the parkland around the woods. In the winter we ice skated on frozen ponds and sledged down any land mass resembling a hill. We relished our outdoors existence. Though my parents were never hikers or campers, as an adult I became one. I simply love being outside.

From those early experiences I gained an appreciation of our natural world. But back then there were no computers. TV was still black and white with shades of gray, and there were only three or four stations. There was no Disney channel or MTV. There were no video games, CDs or DVDs. Reality TV was “Father Knows Best.” What was a kid to do for fun? Why...take to the outdoors and find her own adventure!

On the Diane Rehm show on NPR January 2nd, I listened to an interview with Richard Louv, author of *Last Child In the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. Aside from thinking, “Wow, there’s a disorder for THAT?” I thought the author’s study of the daily habits of children and the relationship to nature was relevant to today’s lifestyle choices and to ACC as an organization.

According to Louv, a recent Kaiser Family study observed that children spent 44 hours a week plugged into the media—this includes home computers, television and Gameboy. I’m not certain if this takes into account hours spent on the cell phone. My daughter’s monthly cell phone bill is a tabulation of thousands of minutes exhausted in conversation with friends. And she is in good company.

Even physical activity is different today. In today’s world of sports, the word “organized” is symbolic of a change in custom. Games and practices are scheduled and have time constraints. The nonstop movement and spontaneity of the “pick-up” game seems to be a thing of the past. According to Louv’s research, historically the greatest increase in childhood obesity coincides with the greatest increase in children’s organized sports. And where, with all this organization and hours of media inertia, is the time to slow down and literally smell the (prim)roses?

One reason given by Louv for keeping our children inside is the “boogeyman in the woods” threat. Even though studies show that children today are the safest they have been since 1975, and most abductions, by far, are family related, incessant media coverage on a single abduction leads to public suspicion, fear and panic.

Since we can’t turn the clock back to the good ol’ days, what can we do? A caller to the NPR program had a practical and creative response. She combines modern technology with nature. Once or twice a week, she takes her children on digital-camera photo walks. They walk in the neighborhood or in a park and take pictures of nature: a flower nodding on its stem, a bird on a branch, a wilted leaf. The photo explorers then return home and do any number of things with their saved pictures.

If asked, I bet each ACC member would have a half dozen ideas on how to engage our kids and get them off the couch or away from the computer screen. For parents, the challenge is daunting. And what about all the children who have no opportunities for direct contact with nature? By encouraging and developing school courtyards like those that have blossomed at Hill and Wimbish, and by sponsoring wildscape field days, we show our joy in nature. I am convinced that when they become adults, these same children will remember their field trips as something more than a break from the classroom routine. If we are lucky, some of them, at least, may choose to carry the torch of stewardship on behalf of our natural environment.

Gas Leases continued from page 3

Goals: To issue recommendations from a study of the conditions under which natural gas drilling may proceed, including but not limited to:

- Wellhead location – distances from residences, parks, and other public structures; distances between wells
- Drilling pad – size, fencing, sound baffles, access roads/easements, landscaping, maintenance
- Noise – maximum level in decibels and hours of operation; mitigation
- Water – source, fees, recycling, discharge
- Permits and Contracts – issuing agency, fees, letter of credit, liability insurance; post-closure remediation and environmental cleanup
- Regulation – targeted vs generic ordinance; oversight; penalties; enforcement
- Revenues – general fund vs restricted account; short- and long-term spending objectives



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

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Please circle membership category.

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THE POST OAK

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Don't forget!

**Next Meeting
Wednesday, March 8**

**Brent Villareal,
Green Mountain Energy
*Is There a Green Alternative?***

Be sure to visit us at
arlingtonconservationcouncil.org