

Dawson Neighborhood News

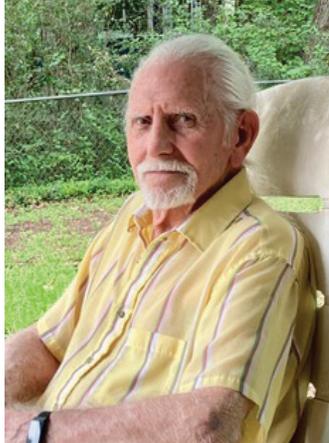
Newsletter of the Dawson Neighborhood Association
and Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team
www.dawsonneighborhoodassociation.org

May/June 2023

Gravel Roads and Horny Toads: Dawson in the 1950s

— Diana Claitor

Charles Swenson has lived on El Paso Street next to East Bouldin Creek for 71 years—since the days when Oltoft marked the Austin city limits, and the only way over our creek was a low water crossing.



“Our streets were gravel, and it was a lot harder to keep your car clean in those days,” says Swenson, 91, who keeps his car and house gleaming and his large yard trimmed and neat.

El Paso Street ended at the intersection of Wilson and from there east, to South Congress and St. Ed’s, were untouched woods. In the other direction, looking from his back yard, Swenson saw cotton fields—yes, cotton fields—stretching south all the way to Alpine Street. There were horned toads (what some called “horny toads”) and plenty of wildlife around here.

He and his wife Janette married at 16 and he remembers going “courting” with her on East Bouldin Creek. There was a little two-rut dirt road that ran down from Congress about where Havana Street is now, and it continued alongside East Bouldin creek on the east side—a lover’s lane locals knew about. Coincidentally, Janette had one requirement when they looked for a house: it had to be on a creek. So, in 1952, the young couple bought a six-year-old house on East Bouldin Creek, next to a creek that was spring fed and provided several excellent swimming holes for kids to swim in.

The 780 square-foot two-bedroom house was fine for the 20-year-old couple with a baby, but as four more babies came, they would add more bedrooms. Early on, the city only provided water and electricity and with no sewage lines or gas service available, homeowners had to have their own septic systems and butane tanks. It got easier after the city built a municipal sewer, but the construction of that pipeline, during which the bottom of East Bouldin creek was blown up and excavated, doomed the springs along the creek. (East Bouldin is now a wet-weather creek and often dry.)

Swenson operated his own painting and paper hanging business for 43 years. He has received offers for his property that he calls ridiculous, and he did once seriously consider selling and moving to a small town, but he thought long and hard and realized how much he’d miss living here. He hasn’t forgotten how this neighborhood had more of a country feel—his kids could fly kites in the fields behind the house—but he is a man who lives in the present. And that present includes those kids: all five children come in from all over the county to meet him for dinner at a South Austin café once a month.

Next Meeting

Monday, June 13, 6:30
Cosmic Coffee, 121 Pickle Rd.

Agenda

Neighborhood Association

1. Approval of minutes
2. Old business
3. New business:
 - a. Water quality and business sites
 - b. Roadwork

Plan Contact Team

1. Approval of February meeting minutes
2. Old business
3. New business
 - a. New developments



El Paso St., circa 1955
—Charles Swenson

Barton Springs Road Mobility Survey

City of Austin is exploring ways to make Barton Springs Rd. safer between South Lamar and Stratford Drive.

Proposed improvements include a reconfiguration of lanes from Lou Neff Road to South Lamar Boulevard to calm vehicle speeds, enhanced and physically separated bicycle lanes, sidewalks connecting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible pedestrian routes through Zilker Park and upgraded transit stops.

Thanks to Our Sponsor



Dawson Elementary serves children ages 3 to 12 years.

Please contact Dawson’s office at 512-698-9151, to set up a time for a tour.

Dawson Neighborhood List Serve: Groups.io

<https://groups.io/g/dawsonneighborhoodassociation>

Find Us On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/DawsonNeighborhoodAssociation>

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We meet on the 2nd Monday of February, April, June, August, October, and December.

Keeping Sidewalks Clear of Obstructions

While the Dawson neighborhood doesn't have as many sidewalks as we'd like, where there are sidewalks it's important to keep them clear of obstructions, including trees and bushes, cars, scooters, rental bikes, and anything else that makes the sidewalk impassible.

As the Austin Public Works Department reminded us in a recent post to Next Door, property owners are responsible for their private trees and all other vegetation in the public right-of-way next to their property.

Overgrown vegetation is a safety hazard and limits the use of sidewalks, trails, streets and alleys. It further threatens public safety when vegetation blocks the view of traffic signs, signals, vehicles, or cyclists.

Trimming vegetation and caring for your trees are effective ways residents can enhance neighborhood safety.

Prune your trees and trim or remove any vegetation that obstructs or grows into sidewalks, streets or alleys.

Use the following quick guidelines to help keep the right-of-way clear:

- Sidewalks: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of and at least 8 feet above sidewalk.
- Streets/Alleys: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the curbline (edge of street

or alley) and at least 14 feet above street or alley.

- Multi-use Trails: Limbs and vegetation must be trimmed back from the edge of and at least 10 feet above multi-use trails.
- Grass and Weeds: Maintain grass and weeds at a maximum height of 12 inches throughout property to the edge of the street or alley.
- Corners: Maintain vegetation at a maximum of 2 feet above ground within a 10 foot setback from the curbline (edge of street) and 40 feet along the curbline from the street intersection.
- Fire Hydrants: Remove trees or plants within 5 feet of fire hydrants.

The City is responsible for clearing vegetation growing in public right of ways.

In addition to keeping vegetation from blocking sidewalks, it is also illegal to park a vehicle so that it blocks the sidewalk. Parking on sidewalks is prohibited by Texas state code Sec. 545.301. The City of Austin imposes a \$40.00 fine for parking on a sidewalk.

As always, contact 311 to report issues with blocked sidewalks or obstructions in the public right of way, such as downed tree limbs.

You can find more information about keeping rights of way clear at the Public Works Department web site: <http://www.austintexas.gov/cleartherow>

Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Association, February 10, 2023

Julie Woods, President, called the meeting to order.

1. Minutes approved.
2. New Police Officer representative was invited to the meeting, but did not attend.
3. Rebecca discussed a phone call with Kit Sheffield, co-owner of land for future development at Congress-Krebs – Wadford.
4. Julia discussed updates on Project Connect.
5. Texas Legislature is proposing major changes that was essentially negate local zoning rules in Austin and throughout Texas.
6. Zilker park oversight is being debated – “rewild Zilker” vs plans that include a new parking garage.

Meeting adjourned.

Minutes of Dawson Neighborhood Plan Contact Team, April 10, 2023

1. Approval of April Minutes
2. Old Business
 - a. 221 Lessin Lane project has started up again
 - b. Columbia Plaza Coffee moving stage and table set ups.
3. New Business
 - a. Tastes Market looks to be gone as signage has been removed.
 - b. There is a new Liquor store on South 1st and Oltorf next to the Texaco.
 - c. More house demolitions on south side of neighborhood, one on Wadford soon. Teardowns and rebuilds mostly.
 - d. City-owned affordable apts sold reported south of us.
 - e. Crime and break-ins on South side report by several people and on NextDoor. Police noticed.
 - f. Homeless encampments and city camping rules changed where city APD has been clearing out Ben White encampments a lot.
 - g. Cap 10k this weekend of meeting.
 - h. Zilker Park possible changes for perusal on city site.