

The Downs of Hillcrest Newsletter

March 1, 2025

Published

following quarterly Board meetings

Breaking News: Friday evening a vehicle hit the right exit gate damaging both the gate and the mechanical system that opens and closes the exit gates. SBB is working with our vendors to assess the damage and provide a quick repair. The exit gates will remain open for the time being.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Year 2024 Results

- Net Income in the Operating Account was essentially breakeven, at a positive 53 dollars.
- In the Reserve Account, the HOA completed two infrastructure projects which totaled \$90K. This drove a net loss of \$19.4K in the Reserve Account. The projects were:
 1. Dredging of the waterways that run along Milford and extend almost to the HOA's northern property line. The project cost \$31.6K.
 2. The first phase of a multi-year project to rebuild the eroding banks of several HOA waterways. The portion completed in 2024 was the section that runs along Milford, and the cost was \$58.6K
- Reviewing the results in the Operating Account, below are significant items:
 1. Legal Expenses were \$79.0K, with \$69.9K of that related to the One Coventry matter. Including legal expenses in Jan 2025, the HOA's cumulative net legal expenses associated with the One Coventry matter are \$302.4K. The HOA has recouped legal fees associated with this matter in the past, and we expect to recoup a portion of them in the future.
 2. Utilities were \$33.9K favorable to budget in 2024, largely due to the cooler weather. The weather also contributed to a \$22.5K favorable in Landscape Maintenance.
 3. Pump Maintenance expense was \$9.5K over budget as the HOA had to replace four pumps at an average cost of \$10.8K per pump.
- Turning to the Balance Sheet, the HOA Cash Balance at the end of 2024 was \$689K, and Total Equity was \$330K, up from \$324K at the end of 2023.

January 2025 Results

- HOA net income was \$20.4 favorable to budget in January.
- Essentially all expense categories were favorable to budget, with the exception of Utilities, which was \$1.7K over budget.

- The HOA Cash Balance at the end of January 2025 was \$726K and total Equity was \$357K, up \$27K from the end of 2024.
- The Downs HOA overall financial position remains sound.

Results of the Working Capital Transfer Fee Amendment

- The Working Capital Transfer Fee Amendment passed in December 2024. It had good support from the community with 74% of HOA lot owners casting ballots, and 75% of those ballots being affirmative.
- Under the amendment, beginning on December 17, 2024, purchasers of homes in The Downs pay a new, one-time Transfer Fee at closing, equal to one year's assessment. Based on Downs historical home sales data, this could result in additional income of approximately \$40K per year at the current assessment level. The proceeds from this fee go into the Reserve Account and are used for Downs infrastructure maintenance.
- The first income from this new fee was received in January 2025, resulting in a \$6.7K increase in the Reserve Account.

Election Season

The Downs of Hillcrest Annual Meeting March 25, 7pm at the Holiday Inn

Express Agenda and ballots and proxies will be mailed to all residents in the next week. An email announcement has just been sent as well. The meeting will be followed by a Happy Hour provided by the Downs Connection.

City Council Election Coming May 3 District 11 Council Member Jaynie

Schultz is retiring this spring, after long service both on the City Plan Commission and on City Council. Four candidates have qualified to run for the D-11 seat: Bill Roth, Mona Andy Elshenawy, Jeff Kitner, and Kendall Richardson. You can look up their campaign websites for details on how they present their campaigns.

We in The Downs have had reason to value having a cordial relationship with our City Council representative. City Council is not only the final stop for any proposed change in property zoning. Public safety and transportation infrastructure are also important to all residents. Zoning change proposals often pop up when a new owner acquires an old property. We watch these transactions carefully, with the help of our Council Member. So it's important to focus on the coming election. When turnout is low, your vote is even more important than in high-turnout elections.

Redevelopment Near The Downs

Several properties near The Downs have changed hands recently. The three former Brinker International buildings to our north are to be the new campus of **Trinity Bible Church**, presently located near SMU on Dyer

Street. The former Episcopal Church property on Hillcrest just south of Hillcrest Plaza Drive is now owned by **Mercy Presbyterian Church**.

The newest purchase, just now closing, proposes to bring an **H.E.B. grocery** to the southeast corner of Hillcrest and LBJ Freeway. A community meeting happened recently, at which the company presented an initial drawing, and solicited questions and suggestions from a large gathering of nearby residents. To make this project work, H.E.B. clearly will have hurdles to jump regarding traffic management, periodic flooding on the LBJ access road, and street remediation. Other questions concern making the large building fit in the neighborhood and look like it belongs, and obscuring the delivery bays from sight. H.E. B. has tried for several years to locate in whatever Valley View will become, but owners of the land require a high price in both cost and density. As future meetings are called, Downs residents will have advance notice and can plan to attend.

Here are the basics from H.E.B.: A building about 125,000 SF, located at the southeast LBJ and Hillcrest corner and facing east, toward a 700 space, 2 level parking garage backing up to the flood plain at the east end. The row of office buildings on the south side of Hillcrest Plaza Drive will stay the same, and will benefit from a widened Hillcrest Plaza Drive. H.E.B. plans to use the LBJ access for most ingress and egress. Negotiations with nearby property owners will certainly raise other issues as time goes by. A property rezoning is required for this to go forward.

Speed Bumps on Churchill Way and Willow Lane? While discussing the H.E.B. proposal, one audience member noted that the streets to our south are a “walking neighborhood.” That means speed and safety are concerns when impatient overflow traffic from Forest, Hillcrest and the two big highways tries to cut through. Council Member Schultz noted her office has been working on a proposal to install speed bumps on Churchill Way and Willow Lane to discourage that nuisance. **[CM Schultz asks that residents contact her office ASAP if you have an objection to this idea, as the proposal is being worked at this time. \(jaynie.schultz@dallas.gov\)](mailto:jaynie.schultz@dallas.gov)**

Common Property reports from the board meeting Feb 25

Gate House Most recent work has involved the “utility yard” behind the gate house, which had old electrical connections and an unfinished backyard vibe. A new metal fence now encloses the area, and the old equipment is gone. The next step at the front gate is design of a "The Downs of Hillcrest" sign that can be read from the street. That will be followed by finishing the landscaping. Coordinating all this is Board member Charlie Miller.

Basic Pond Maintenance Now 30 years old, the gunnite bottoms for ten of The Downs ponds require repair to get the best water retention and movement. The total project is expected to cost approximately \$163,000. The Board divided the project into phases. In late 2024, the pond and rock replacement project completed the first phase at ponds 4, 5, 6, 7- & 8 extending from the back northwest corner of the neighborhood and along the gazebo to Masland Circle. The cost was \$58,600. Each of these ponds requires working pumps as well, another expensive item – four pumps had to be replaced in 2024. Melissa Mitchell is the Board member coordinating the rock and pond project.

Keep Wildlife Wild Feeding Mallards and Canada Geese may earn you adoring and loyal quackers, but wildlife experts say it's not wise. Feed attracts others we'd call varmints and increases populations who learn dependence on humans. Wild animals do fine left to their own resources.

Furthermore, with the arrival of avian flu, we're told that wild ducks and geese have sometimes become carriers. We should not encourage the wild ones to gather in places we frequent with our pets.

Residents' Landscape Upkeep The past several years brought damaging storms, fierce winter cold and Sahara-like episodes of summer. Through it all, the Board has worked hard to quickly remove fallen trees and to replace dead shrubs. Tree work is now programmed to be light one year and more intense the next. Long term replanting of 30-year-old shrubs and new life for too-shady grass areas is being worked.

Residents' yards have also suffered. During the COVID pandemic, the Board relaxed enforcement of the CCR requirements for residents' upkeep of their landscaping. Basically, what's visible from common property is covered by the CCRs. These covenants and restrictions mandate sprinklered grass lawns or other nursery material, obscured trash cans, maintenance and painting of fences. In addition, residents are required to maintain their lawns, trees and shrubs so that these are alive, free of weeds and attractive. Failure to do so constitutes a violation of the CCRs. Certainly, dead grass, shrubs or trees would qualify as violations. This spring, the Board plans to authorize SBB to more strictly enforce Downs CCR's regarding homeowner landscape appearance and upkeep.

You can read the CCRs on both the SBB portal and the www.downsofhillcrest website. Call Eusty Hermida at SBB if you need help registering with either one.

Together, Having Fun The **Downs Social Connection** organizes fun events throughout the year for our neighbors and friends in The Downs. Their Coordinator for this year has been the multi-talented **Melissa Mitchell** -host of Happy Hours and coffees, always ready to help anywhere there's a need, landscape planner, and that doesn't mention her day job. Downs events have included street parties with live music and food

trucks, holiday 1K/5K runs, trick-or-treating and other children's activities, monthly lunches and book clubs, antique car shows, holiday progressive dinners and weekly happy hours. The committee is always looking for volunteers to join them and bring new idea for activities and programs. Please call or email **Dianne Doggett** who will be coordinating this creative group for the coming year. Thank you, Dianne!

The first big event this year will be the **Annual Meeting** and reception on March 25.

Additional events will include a **spring party in May, a fall block party in September, Halloween trick-or-treating and a holiday dinner.**

Monthly **book clubs** for men and for women will continue to meet in the neighborhood on the last Thursday of each month. Lunches for men and for women also meet monthly at various restaurants throughout North Dallas.

And, of course, **Happy Hours** will resume this spring - maybe with a difference - so look for your invitation.

Information about all events is sent to residents through **Punchbowl**. So don't forget to keep your email address current in the directory and open all of those Punchbowl invitations that show up in your emails!

Finally, a huge thank you to this past year's committee members who did an amazing job of putting together events and programs:

Linda Perry and Pam Venne with the help of **Susan Andrews** challenged us through books that lent themselves to enthusiastic discussions at our monthly book club meetings. **Bill Perry** did the same for the men's book club and coordinated the neighborhood Spanish conversation group.

Dawn Mellon and Lottie Lyle piqued our interest through programs that included a tour of the Arboretum and a cooking class at Sur La Table and brought us together for the immensely popular neighborhood Turkey Trot.

Dianne Doggett and her husband, Gary Fagelman, introduced us to new and delicious foods at restaurants throughout North Dallas for our monthly lunch outings. Dianne also keeps our neighborhood Facebook page up to date with news items, activity notices and pictures from each event.

Pam Venne, along with Dawn Mellon, chaired our spring Kentucky Derby Party. **Joi Uzoh** organized the neighborhood trick-or-treating happy hour with a scavenger hunt and the children's activities at our fall block party. **Harish Chinai** convinced our car enthusiasts to bring their antique and/or sports cars to the fall block party. **Sherry Krawietz, together with Connie Engels**, chaired our holiday progressive dinner. **Zohra Daredia** arranged outstanding decorations for all of our events. **Ynette Hogue, Mary Blake Montgomery, Megan Stern and Maddy Unterberg** did the hard work of setting up for the events and making sure everything was back in order when it was over.

Miriam Schober greeted each new resident with a directory and encouraged them to join our events and programs to meet their new neighbors.

A round of applause, please, for all of them.

This newsletter is published following The Downs of Hillcrest Board meetings, held quarterly. The next meeting will be Annual Meeting held March 25, 2025, and a newsletter will follow that as well. Edited by Tory Agnich.