



## August 2013 Brichta Neighborhood News Bulletin

Dear Neighbors,

August is heating up for the neighborhood in more ways than one:

### **Ballot Approval for Murrieta Plan to be Made by Council Tuesday, Aug. 6**

Over the past six months, several residents from Brichta and other neighborhoods in Ward One answered Councilor Regina's call for public participation in the planning process for the renovation and expansion of Joaquin Murrietas Park's amenities. We were able to get some desired improvements included in the new master plan sponsored by Councilor Romero, such as restored ball fields, more playing fields, more and improved bathrooms, more ramadas, a dog park, a walking/jogging path, a native plant and animal education station, more native vegetation using harvested watering systems, and a nature path connecting to our Anklam wash entrance and completing a Tucson Mountain watershed trail from the park. Unfortunately the remediation of our natural resource park soil was not included among the candidates for the ballot. But the City Environmental Services is still working with the EPA and other agencies for grant funding.

This coming Tuesday, August 6, the Mayor and City Council will decide which of the many eligible projects can be put on the November 5 bond election for funding. If you support getting the plan on the ballot, please say so at the 5:30 meeting in City Hall, or send your support statement to Councilor Romero at [regina.romero@tucsonaz.gov](mailto:regina.romero@tucsonaz.gov). We would appreciate it. I have attached the support statement from Brichta Neighborhood Association.

### **HHW/Med Collection at El Rio Center Saturday, Aug. 10**

Beginning its new policy of rotating free monthly collection of household hazardous wastes and medications, Tucson Environment Services will begin in Ward One. On Saturday, August 10 you may take all your prescription medications and hazardous wastes (paints, acids, auto fluids, pesticides, herbicides, batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, computers, cell phones) to El Rio Neighborhood Center on Speedway. Do it now so you don't have to travel to another ward next month. It will be held the second Saturday of every month at the host ward's designated collection point.

### **Walk-Through to Start Brichta School Planning, Thursday, Aug. 22**

Those of you interested in what becomes of the Brichta Elementary School facility are invited to participate in a walk-through of the building and grounds with TUSD Program and Planning Manager Bryant Nodine on Thursday, August 22, at 1:30 pm. He is the one who will ultimately have to decide and recommend to the district what is to be done with Brichta, and so far, we are the first entity that

has shown a serious interest in it and has ideas about what to do with it. The City of Tucson is not considering acquiring it since it can't afford the maintenance. And at the moment, our favorite idea of turning the whole property into a neighborhood park is off the table because the City simply has lost too much Parks and Recreation funding already. That is why Councilor Romero was so tenacious in seeking the money to pay for the Murrieta plan in time to get it on the next bond election and our resource park remediation has been deferred.

I have invited a number of other good resource people to join us who may be able to help us implement a plan that will return some benefit to the neighborhood in exchange for the school. Several Brichta residents have been talking since last year about neighborhood climate emergency planning, and since Brichta's closure, we have discussed how we may be able to use the building as a cooling and emergency center, now that we will be seeing more and longer periods of power outage, which will be accompanied by water shut-offs, loss of phone services, and food shortage for lack of refrigeration facilities. All of these were experienced by our neighbors just west of Greasewood along Ironwood Hills in July whose lines went down for four days. They were forced to leave their homes and seek shelter, water and food in hotels, restaurants, clubs, places of employment, and shopping malls.

We would like Brichta Neighborhood to be the first in the city to develop an effective plan for dealing with such emergencies and a facility where we can go to protect the lives of our vulnerable residents. More people die of heat than any other climate-related emergency, and southern Arizona has been identified by climate scientists as the most vulnerable region in the U.S.

The keys to survival in a desert environment are shade, cooling, water, and fresh produce. If Brichta were to have a self-sustaining solar system with storage batteries large enough for the whole building and the maximum number of cisterns for stored water, all of those needs could be met because the stored water and proper water channeling, the grounds could produce enough food for the neighborhood for an extended period. [See "Native Foods" story below.]

One of my colleagues on the Environmental Services Advisory Committee has succeeded in getting Catalina Methodist Church to serve its congregation in this way, and hopefully, more organizations across the City will follow suite. Their solar system goes in next week, and she hopes to get the cisterns installed on her next fiscal year's budget. Currently we have no facilities in the Tucson region that can sustain enough power and services beyond 72 hours to air condition their facilities. After that length of time, if the outage is wide spread enough, water and sewer pumping stations will shut down and cell phone services will be overloaded. If individuals have transportation and mobility limitations, they need an emergency cooling facility close by.

Of course, the issue for us is how the necessary improvements to Brichta can be funded, so one of the main things we have to consider in our planning is how can Brichta produce an adequate revenue stream to pay for and maintain it, which may also entail being purchased by someone. This is a difficult problem, and we are exploring many possibilities and consulting different agencies to find out what is possible. You have heard me suggest that small green businesses, including those who would be involved in the retrofitting of Brichta, be able to lease spaces in the building. I have also suggested that we include an adult and child day care in the facility, which would serve two purposes: it would provide professional care givers at the site who would be available in emergencies, furnish temporary living spaces, and have working kitchen with food storage capacity, and it would be a convenient, regular place for our families to take their dependent children and elders while they work or are away from their homes if these family members require continuous care. [See story to follow.]

So at this point we can run any ideas we have by Mr. Nodine to see what TUSD might consider, and in the meanwhile, he has said that TUSD's closed schools can be rented for up to five years, which could at least give us options to start with. The longer the building remains vacant, the less valuable it is to them and to us. Our neighborhood security would be improved if people were using the facility and discouraging vandals and break-ins. If people who were paying for spaces in the building agreed,

we might be able to have access to it for neighborhood gatherings, which would improve the visibility of the businesses inside.

Another possibility suggested to me by communication with the Mayor and visits with green builders, energy efficiency consultants, and urban agriculturists is that we allow a limited number of completely green homes to be built on the grounds, retaining the building and surrounding landscaping, and sold by the contractor who would buy the property. If a viable purchase opportunity came up, TUSD could ask the voters to approve the sale. The earliest this could take place would be at the 2014 elections.

I have invited a very forward thinking local green builder who uses natural local materials, an edible forest landscape and water harvesting designer, our contact from Abundant Communities Trust for urban farming, a solar and energy efficiency consultant, and a real estate lending consultant, as well as Councilor Romero or Diana Rhoades from our Ward One office. With all these resources together in the beginning, we should be able to start generating different options to explore further. So if you want to be in this discussion, please come if you can.

It will be VERY HOT in the building because the power and water have been shut off and the building closed all summer. This actually works out well, since it will give all of us a real world experience of what our homes will be like during a black out like the one suffered by the neighborhood on Greasewood and Ironwood Hills last month. Some of our residents could die after two hours in that kind of heat. Gregg Garfin, UA's nationally recognized climate scientist, has said if the weather station temperature registers 106, the inside temperature will be over 120. Weather station thermometers, however, are all located 6 feet off the ground and not in direct sunlight. Satellite heat images of actual ground surface temperatures in the same areas are at least 10 degrees higher than the recorded ones, and again, inside temperatures are even higher than that. It's better to be outside under a tree than in your homes when the power is off, and the space we walk in between the ground and 6 feet above ground is much higher than official temperatures. That is why we have to limit our outside time here in the summer. It's literally a killer!

Our gracious neighbor Marianna Carreras, who lives across the street from the school, has offered her home after the tour if we wish to continue our discussion and our outside guests can stay a little longer.

### **Climate Resiliency Plan to Focus on Outreach, Strong Community**

As you may recall, our climate emergency discussion group was planning to survey the neighborhood to find out just how vulnerable we are to extended heat waves or other climate-related health emergencies. But we decided household information was too sensitive to ask for and many households would not participate. We can all imagine, however, what our principal vulnerabilities are, such as advanced age (with or without infirmities), dependent family members with health problems, people suffering lung, heart, blood pressure or diabetic conditions, people who have physical impairments that limit mobility, sight, or hearing. All of these conditions increase vulnerability to heat exhaustion, suffocation, stroke, or heart attack if one spends too long in extreme heat.

According to the only extensive study done of comparable neighborhoods during a heat wave--the 1995 heat wave in Chicago--the factor that gave one of the neighborhoods the fewest deaths in the city was the neighborhood with the closest social ties to each other. These residents had multiple and regular contacts with their neighbors. They knew who their elderly, homebound and chronically ill neighbors were and routinely checked on them. They helped each other out when needed. Everyone felt personally cared for by neighbors. Everyone knew who to turn to and how to contact them when needed. It saved their lives.

So we are turning our focus toward building a stronger neighborhood community by reaching out to our neighbors and offering information and resources to help them prepare for such emergencies. Though many people don't think of the people in their neighborhood as their primary community, they are usually the first people available to help in an emergency. We are trying to develop our communication system to include all Brichta households and not just those on this electronic list. I'm seeking volunteers on each street to take responsibility to see that particular homes get important news either by phone or hand delivery. Neighbors on your street now have lists of addresses for which we have only a phone number or no contact at all.

We also want to welcome new neighbors who move here, tell them about our neighborhood association, and provide them with information and resources they may need. New neighbors regularly move into our rental homes, and we usually have homes for sale. If we make a habit of including everyone in our community, we can build the social ties that will see us through situations that an individual or household might not be able to overcome alone.

### **Reestablishing Native Foods Solution to Growing Food Shortage**

Our neighbor Raul Ramirez called my attention to an article that was later also sent to the planning group for the neighborhood vulnerabilities session at the Climate Smart Southwest conference. From the New York Times, it is about the coming food crisis:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/22/opinion/our-coming-food-crisis.html?> Raul also sent a related article about UC Santa Barbara's research to reestablish the heritage food trees and crops grown at the Spanish missions in the beginning of California's settlement by Europeans at

<http://www.californiamissionstudies.com/>. As you may be aware, Tucson is foremost in the world in native seed banking and lending at Native Seeds Search, and Bioversity in Florence, Italy, is borrowing their seeds to exchange with people in similar climates. We also have local organizations for re-establishing our own heritage fruit trees and native food plants, particularly in the restored convento, but also in sites like Manzo Elementary School and Manzo neighborhood gardens.

Two major American corporations have a monopoly on world food supplies and water sources, and people in the countries who grow that food are starving because they cannot afford to use their own water supplies or buy their own produce and feed for their food animals. Manzanto owns 97% of the commercial seed stock in the world, and Nestle owns 95% of the globe's water sources. That means that to grow the amount of food needed for the whole world, agriculture-based countries have to buy Manzanto seeds to grow crops that only first world countries can afford to pay for. They can't. The cost of the seed, the price of the water to grow them, and the price the first world will pay for the products are driving the global famine now in its fourth year. Because of their limited transportation capabilities and their focus only on large single crops prevents these poor agrarian countries from exchanging food with nearby regions as they did in the past.

Only with all parts of the globe returning to the cultivation of the food plants that grow naturally in their climates with the water they have and consuming them locally can we begin to reverse the growing global famine. Every area needs to be harvesting and storing its own local seeds to avoid the high cost of commercial seeds. Seeds produced by crops from Manzanto seeds belong to Manzanto. Here is a passage from the Times article telling what's preventing our return to the local agricultural productivity of original food cultivation in this country. The article began with reference to Arizona's rising heat and drought and our long agricultural history, the one along our own Santa Cruz being the oldest in the U.S.

"Fortunately, there are dozens of time-tested strategies that our best farmers and ranchers have begun to use. The problem is that several agribusiness advocacy organizations have done their best to block

any federal effort to promote them, including leaving them out of the current farm bill, or of climate change legislation at all."

### **Tucson Meet Yourself Seeks Volunteers**

If you love our popular cultural food festival and would like to help put it on this year, October 11-13, Tucson Meet Yourself's new director Saul Macias III is asking to talk to groups of 15 or more volunteers who want to train and work for the festival. Contact him at 520-307-0649 or [saul@tucsonmeetyourself.org](mailto:saul@tucsonmeetyourself.org).

### **18 TPD Calls, No Burglaries in July**

Uncharacteristically, we had no burglary calls last month. It was hot tempers that prevailed in July. But we had three reports of suspicious persons, so we may be curtailing some potential burglars with ongoing vigilance. The main deterrent seems to be whether the suspicious person knows he has been seen by someone.

Last month we had a neighbor offer to share a special security patrol with others, and this month we have this suggestion from our neighbor Jim Davis: "Perhaps we could get 20 or so neighbors to register for installation and get a gonga deal [on surveillance cameras]. Of course with our referrals and effort we should get the system free and a discount on the installation." He provided this website: [SurveillanceCameras@framnik.com](mailto:SurveillanceCameras@framnik.com)

Calle Campana de Plata had the most TPD calls with a suspicious person, 2 disturbances, a loud party, and a code violation. Saddle Hills had the most fearful: a rape, a welfare check, a panic call of unknown cause, and a 911 hang up. Silverbell Road had an unverified alarm, 2 threatened thefts, and a stolen vehicle. Suspicious persons were reported on Wagon Wheels Dr. and on Brichta Dr., and there was a traffic hazard at Brichta and Silverbell.

Do report code violations that present hazards to others and to the wildlife. Untended or accumulated garbage, especially in this heat, presents health hazards to humans and animals alike, Loose cats and dogs attract wild predators and present traffic hazards; discards or vegetation allowed to accumulate in alleys and easements attracts snakes, spiders, and vagrants; and untrimmed trees and bushes prevent clear views of streets and alleys and provide cover for lawbreakers. In addition to having a negative effect on surrounding property values, disabled vehicles left for long periods leak toxic petroleum products into the air and soil and attract pakrats, snakes, feral cats, and thieves. The number to call is 791-4605. Say you want to report a code violation, and the operator will put you through to the inspectors office to take the address. They will send an inspector out who will give the offending party 30 days to correct the situation or be fined.