

Hillcrest IX Highlights

Newsletter of the Hillcrest IX Homeowners' Association Summer 2019

Mid-year Report



Major maintenance of Tracts A and E (upper and lower arroyo) and the outer perimeter, as well as painting of the perimeter wall and

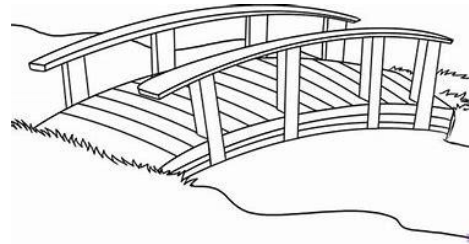
arroyo signage has been completed. The only remaining item on the list, scheduled to be done early next year, is to rework the drainage at the south end of the arroyo next to the perimeter wall. Heavy riprap and boulders will be installed to minimize debris and increase water flow toward the existing drainage holes.

Board member Keith Kennedy, who oversees the landscape maintenance of our common areas, was recently able to negotiate a contract for monthly grounds service with South Mountain Landcare (“SMLC”). SMLC specializes in maintaining natural area open space has conducted our major arroyo maintenance work for since 2010. We are excited to have their expertise now benefit our community year around.

The Landscape Committee will be convening in the fall to select natural desert trees to plant along Hearn Road where the remaining Eucalyptus trees were removed. If you are interested in participating in this fall project, please contact Keith.

With the property maintenance up to date the Board has several remaining goals for this year; recalibrate the Reserve Fund, revamp the HOA website and review the CC&R’s for sections needing to be updated. The Board will be presenting their recommendations for the CC&R’s amendment at Annual Meeting 2020.

Early this summer a broken support joist was discovered underneath the arroyo bridge. A thorough assessment of the bridge revealed that the 40-year-old original wood framing had succumbed to subterranean termites, rendering it unrepairable and unsafe for pedestrian traffic. Mountain Vista Construction was contracted to build a new bridge. For a marginal cost to upgrade the infrastructure material from pressure treated wood to steel, the Board unanimously voted to go with the steel option as it will eliminate the cost of replacing support beams and joists over time. The new bridge has wood decking and metal railings to match the railing at the south end of the arroyo. Check it out on your next walk through the community!



Modernization of financial processes ongoing

Secretary/Treasurer Ryan Hildreth has been spending hours and hours analyzing our HOA finances to see where we can make improvements, from bookkeeping practices to collection of dues and fines to efficiencies in expenditures. One big change he has instituted is the creation of a Statement of Account (“SOA”) which contains a record of dues and fines that have been paid or delinquent. Homeowners will be notified if their account is delinquent and will be able to check their records against the SOA, and bring their account up to date. The SOA will

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also ensure that Title companies will have an accurate record of a homeowner's account upon sale of the house.

The Board researched several auditing firms before selecting Howard Simon, CPA to conduct an outside review of our 2018 financials and tax filing. Mr. Simon specializes in HOA's, making his firm particularly appropriate for our Association. He spent a great deal of time providing guidance to bring our financials up to bookkeeping standards so that a compilation could be conducted. As discussed at the Annual Meeting in January, our governing documents only require an internal audit and report to the members annually, but it is good practice to have an outside review conducted periodically by a CPA firm. The compilation has been completed and the report is posted on the website under the "Financials" tab.

Ryan's research has also focused on the current funding of our operating and reserve accounts. Our annual budget is \$33,600 which has remained unchanged since 2003. Dues have been increased four times since inception of our development in 1980. Historical records in the Association's files revealed that each dues increase averaged 27%-30%. The chart below illustrates the years between increases, semi-annual and annual cost per homeowner, and the HOA annual budget for those time periods. "???" denotes gaps in the record as to the exact year the increase was instituted.

Years	Semi	Annual	HOA Budget
1980-1993	\$66	\$132	\$15,840
1994-???	\$85	\$170	\$20,400
???-2002	\$110	\$220	\$26,400
2003-2019	\$140	\$280	\$33,600

Many Realtors and potential buyers are shocked to learn how low our HOA dues are in comparison with other HOA's. There are several reasons for this.

Early in our history many residents volunteered to serve on the Parks Committee doing special projects such as moving rock at the south end of the arroyo, raking debris, rehabbing the bridge, rebuilding and painting the Vita Course stations, arroyo entrance signage, and general stucco and paint repair to the perimeter wall. These projects, along with the bar-b-ques accompanying them not only saved labor costs but had an added benefit of fostering a greater sense of community.

Other money savers have been the bidding of contracts to ensure the best value for our dollars. In addition, the creation of the reserve fund in 2012 enables us to set money aside for necessary maintenance and protects us from surprise special assessments. Perhaps the biggest money saver, however, has been the willingness of residents to volunteer service on the Board of Directors. Our HOA has been self-managed for over 30 years; undoubtedly saving thousands of dollars that otherwise would have been paid to outside property management companies.

To some extent the Great Recession (2008-2016) depressed the cost of labor and materials and some operating costs. Non-dues income (primarily comprised of transfer fees paid to the Association upon the sale of homes) was also used to plug holes in the budget. Non-dues income is great to supplement the budget but cannot be counted on from year to year. With the economy now humming along, the cost of labor and materials, city services and ongoing operating expenses have increased exponentially. Despite creative cost saving measures, we are currently 38% short of funding our annual operating expenses and annual reserve fund contributions. The board is currently reviewing options to close this gap in funding.

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Trail 25/Bridal Path/Easement Update

The city's investigation into this 25-year-old issue has been a lengthy process. Since our last newsletter the city Parks Preserve and Planning Development offices reaffirmed that the easement between Hillcrest IX HOA and Pointe Mountainside HOA ("PMGC") was dedicated as a public multi-use trail on the development's original plat map, with PMGC retaining ownership of the easement and responsibility for the maintenance of it. PMGC disagrees with the present position of the city and is conducting further due diligence to explore their options with regard to the city taking over maintenance of the trail. As such, PMGC has informed the city and us that they will no longer maintain the trail as they believe the city is responsible for maintenance. Depending on the outcome of their efforts, PMGC may be revisiting options they discussed with the 2018 Hillcrest IX Board which was announced at Annual Meeting in January of this year. One option they presented is to deed the easement to Hillcrest for a dollar. The other is to remove the trees along Hillcrest's side and maintain what is left. They are also considering gating each end of the easement to prohibit cross traffic, opening it up for maintenance only. Whether the easement can be closed after so many years of public access remains to be seen, however. There may be other options our HOA's can explore and the conversation remains ongoing. Stay tuned...

Block Watch News

Summer is here and many of us leave the fiery furnace of Phoenix for cooler climates, at least for a long weekend or perhaps for even longer. Before you leave town, ask a couple of your trusted neighbors to keep an eye on your house while you are away. Be sure to tell them

- when you will be gone
- how to contact you in case of an emergency
- if you expect anyone to be at your house during your vacation

You can also ask them to park in your driveway from time to time and remove any flyers left on your front door or driveway.

In addition, remember to put a vacation hold on your mail (this is easily done by visiting usps.com) and stop newspaper delivery.

Another tip: while you are at home, be sure to keep your garage doors shut. An open garage door is an open invitation to a crime of opportunity.

Kudos to Hillcrest IX resident Thom Berger who called **Phoenix Police Crime Stop**



602-262-6151 on June 30th to report 4 men in their thirties parked on the street. Two of the men were monkeying with their white Ford

Escape with CA plates as if it had mechanical problems. The other two were knocking on doors. When a resident answered they said they were looking for their friend Michael. They didn't know Michael's last name, nor did they have his cell number. Thom thought their story didn't add up, so he called Crime Stop to report them. Phoenix PD was later seen looking for the men, but we don't have a follow-up report to their actions.

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Please go to <https://www.bmcainfo.com/our-e-bulletins.html> and download the Black Mountain Community Association July e-bulletin. It contains 21 pages of interesting and relevant stories regarding our North Phoenix neighborhood.

Your Block Watch Team

Bob Shepard 602-320-4395
Cheryl Joseph 602-448-3619
Alice Couto 774-626-0617

Care of our common areas

As a reminder, placing landscape trimmings, yard or household debris in the common areas is prohibited by the **CC&R's Section 21**. Although Hillcrest IX does not govern the trail easement along the eastern boundary of our subdivision the same courtesy applies there. If you have landscapers or other contractors doing work at your home please let them know that all waste materials must be hauled away.

Hillcrest IX residents play a vital role in the care of our common areas. Alerting the Board to a problem or concern, picking up trash while walking, keeping pets on leashes and picking up after them, identifying areas needing replenishment and selecting the plants and trees to be installed are among the many ways residents contribute to keeping our common areas beautiful. *Thank you.*

City of Phoenix announces partnership with Goodwill

Our neighborhood is now part of the city of Phoenix's Reimagine Phoenix Curbside donation program. You can now schedule a free pickup of many of your gently used items including clothing, shoes, linens, small appliances and home décor. Goodwill will

pick up your items for free and find new homes for them. For more information, visit <https://reimaginephx.goodwillaz.org>, or call 602-698-1940.

Guests in town? Need a Parking Variance?

Our CC&R's require that during the restricted hours of 2:00AM-5:00AM, vehicles must be parked in an enclosed garage or on a paved driveway.

Tours are conducted periodically between the hours of **2:00AM and 5:00AM** to check for parking violations. Our CC&R's provide for an occasional variance. If you have guests or visitors who will need to park on the street, please contact a member of the Board, or send an email to hoaboard@hillcrest9.org to request a parking variance. The Board is happy to work with you on short-term parking arrangements.

Exterior Architectural Improvements

If you are considering exterior improvements to your home, please review the **CC&R's Architectural Control Sections 4-6**. Exterior changes require an Architectural Change Application, which lists common improvements needing architectural review. If you are unsure whether your project requires approval, please send an email or letter to the Board, with a description of the project and its intended use. Architectural Applications are reviewed monthly at the Board Meetings. Applications and a checklist for submittal can be found on our website.

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Home Sweet Home



By Kayla Vronoski

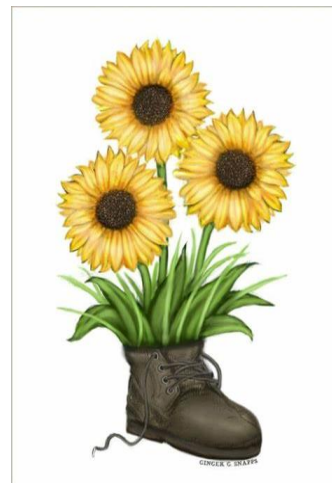
Matt grew up in Northern California and I grew up in Chino Valley. Matt and his former roommate moved to Hillcrest IX in 2014 after searching for rental houses in the area for weeks. It turned out to be a lucky find! I moved in with the guys in 2015 and immediately loved the neighborhood, too.

When Matt and I decided to buy a house, we looked at several options in nearby neighborhoods, but nothing lived up to our house in Hillcrest. After every house we looked at, we would get back in our car and compare it to our rental in Hillcrest IX. While we liked a few of the houses we looked at, we couldn't imagine living anywhere else, so we took a chance and asked our landlord if she would consider selling to us. To our eternal gratitude, she not only agreed, but helped make the process as easy as possible.

We love how quiet and peaceful our street, and the neighborhood in general is. There is a sense of community in Hillcrest. Every visitor comments on our amazing views of Lookout Mountain and North Mountain. We both enjoy hiking the mountain or walking through the arroyo and appreciate the natural desert landscape. I love seeing the abundance of wildlife in the neighborhood such as the cactus wrens and quail, as well as occasional sightings of other creatures like owls, bobcats, javelina and coyotes. Hillcrest IX feels like a little desert oasis far outside the city, but everything we need is so accessible still.

Last year, Matt built 3 raised garden boxes and we have been enjoying trying to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables and wildflowers. It has been challenging to get the right soil to support our plants, and of course to keep them well watered during the hot summer months, but the biggest challenge has been keeping sneaky, clever birds from eating all the tomatoes! We have a pair of curve-billed thrashers who seem to think we've planted the garden just for them! This year we have planted and harvested arugula, kale, chard, zucchini, tons of tomatoes, carrots, spaghetti squash and pole beans. We are looking forward to harvesting the watermelon, pumpkins and peppers next. We've also enjoyed the wildflowers and the pollinators, like bees and butterflies, which are attracted to the garden.

We look forward to raising our sweet baby girl, Hazel, in Hillcrest XI and being able to let her play and explore outside. We like to go for family walks and look forward to teaching her to ride a bike in our cul-de-sac.



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City of Phoenix Bulk Trash Pickup (Area 11) Fall 2019

Placement begins on **October 26**
Collection begins on **November 4**

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



Annual Picnic

Saturday, November 2, 2019



Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 25, 2020

2019 HOA Board & Architectural Committee Meetings

HOA Board and Architectural Committee meetings are held at 5:00 p.m. at the Fountain of Life Church located at 1055 E. Hearn Road (in the foyer where Annual Meeting is held). **A copy of the meeting agenda will be posted on our website under Board Information two days in advance of the meeting.**

We look forward to seeing you there!

Tuesday, September 3, 2019
Monday, October 7, 2019
Monday, November 4, 2019
Monday, December 2, 2019
Monday, January 6, 2020

Board Contact Information

Jesse Cuiilty - President
602-882-9027

Bob Shepard - Vice President
602-320-4395

Ryan Hildreth - Secretary/Treasurer
603-781-5506

Barbara Gearhart - Director
602-863-1729

Keith Kennedy - Director
602-809-2741

Email

hoaboard@hillcrest9.org

Mailing Address

Hillcrest IX HOA
PO Box 9972
Phoenix, AZ 85068

Website

www.hillcrest9.org

Arroyo Trivia



Cholla cactus provides critical habitat for southwest native birds such as the Cactus Wren and Curve-billed Thrasher. Several of these bird homes were seen in our arroyo during the spring nesting season!