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Parks, Recreation Options One of Midtown's Greatest Assets

If there is one special thing that characterizes the quality of life in Midtown, it is an abundance of parks and recreational facilities. There are one of its greatest assets and a major benefit of living in Midtown.

Midtown is home to several of the city's major parks, and more amenities are being added each year. We are fortunate that when it comes to fun, the folks at Montgomery's Department of Recreation take their jobs seriously. The parks also house Dixie Youth League baseball, softball, and basketball programs.

Parks Meet Needs of Most Residents

A renovated **Vaughn Road Park** now features the state's first Boundless Playground. The playground accommodates children with disabilities while also offering a fun environment for children without disabilities. The park is also a great place to bounce a few tennis balls for the amateur player, walk, fly a kite, picnic or toss a ball. A small ballfield is also located in the park for pick up games.

Children in Montgomery have a new place to play in the downtown area thanks to The Junior League of Montgomery, a service organization of women, which funded the building of the Discovery Village playscape inside **Kiwanis Park**. The park is adjacent to Old Alabama Town and will serve the 30,000 school children who go through Old Alabama Town on field trips as well as local residents.

The **Riverskate Park** on Bibb Street provides a special place for Montgomery youths to satisfy their skating needs.

The **Armory Gymnastics Center** on Madison is always packed with the more than 900 registered participants learning the ins and outs of gymnastics and preparing to compete for state and regional honors.

The **Armory Learning Arts Center** offers classes in music, photography, pottery, theatre, visual arts and yoga. Next door in the complex is the **Armory Dance Center**.

Within various neighborhoods, there are dozens of small parks filled with slides, swings and merry go rounds where kids can enjoy endless entertainment. **Bellinger Hill Park**, in the Garden District, is a favorite hangout for dog walkers, who take advantage of the fenced area to let their pets roam while children play on the park's playground equipment. There are small hidden parks behind Myrtlewood, Country Club Drive and open space parks like **Audubon Park**, **Cloverdale Park**, **LeGrande Park**, and **Louis Armstrong Park** which offer seating, walking paths and places for frisbee and a picnic.

Organized **Community Centers** at Bellinger Hill, Capital Heights, Crump, Floyd and Goode Street offer scheduled programs. Playgrounds are available at most Midtown elementary schools, Bear, Bellinger Hill, Dannelly, Floyd, Highland Avenue and Vaughn Road. These are augmented by extensive school sports arenas at The Montgomery Academy and Trinity Presbyterian School, ASU and Huntingdon College.

The **Montgomery YMCA** augments the city's recreation sys-



tem. The Southeast Branch on Carter Hill Road, Main Branch on S. Perry Street, and Britton Branch on S. Hull Street offer a variety of individual and organized options for individual and group fitness, team sports leagues, and swimming for youth and adults. The Main Branch also offers a full indoor running track, racketball court and cardio equipment, and they recently added a Adults in Motion Fitness Center for those who are just starting out in an exercise routine.

The **Montgomery Therapeutic Recreation Center** Wellness Program is a program developed to promote fitness for persons with disabilities. All persons must have a disability and have completed a physician's medical form to participate. A small membership fee enables all members participation in therapeutic aquatics, weight lifting, and exercise groups.

Oak Park, across from Jackson Hospital, is one of the city's oldest public parks. This large, massive tree covered site is home



to extensive playground equipment, small gardens, covered picnic areas, and W.A. Gayle Planetarium, a favorite respite on a hot day, where young and old can view the planets at one of the largest planetariums in the Southeast.

For those who prefer tennis, there is **O'Connor Tennis Center**, at Highland and Anderson Street, and there are several private courts available in Midtown, ranging from membership clubs to Huntingdon College and ASU.

The city's newest park, **Gateway Park**, which can be entered via Patton Avenue, will add a nearby public golf course option to the mix of public park settings.

For those who prefer watching sports and getting their exercise walking up and down the steps, **Cramton Bowl**, **Paterson Field**, **Riverwalk Stadium**, **Charles Lee Field** and the **Joe Reed Acadome** are also in Midtown.

Area's Best Pleasures Are It's Tree-Lined Streets

But for most Midtowners, taking advantage of walking or running on tree-lined streets is one of the best and most rewarding pleasures of living here. It is a favorite exercise of young moms with strollers, middle age dads who want to keep fit, young professionals who walk to fun places, eateries and shops, and senior adults who enjoy leisurely strolls any time of the day.

There is no other sector of the city that has such mature trees and a multitude of green spaces. It is yet another reason why housing assets in Midtown are in such high demand by the people who understand that a car is not necessary to get from one point to another in neighborhoods they are still not priced out of living in.

Sandra Nickel

Planting and Care of Shrubs

by Paul Curran

In general, trees and shrubs are planted and cared for in the same way, the difference between them being chiefly one of height. One definition of the difference, however, is that while a tree has only one trunk, a shrub has several stems or trunks/

Not so long ago the number of reliable shrubs was quite limited, but today the many new hybrids have lengthened the list and the gardener's choice is almost endless. No matter the region, it is now possible to plant shrubs that will satisfy color needs, bloom at various seasons, cover bare spots where grass won't grow, or grow in such profusion and depth that screening purposes are served.

Planting of shrubs is little different from planting of trees. Early spring is the most favorable time since it gives the plant a long spell of good growing weather to get reestablished. In the milder sections of the country, however, transplanting may be done through the winter months. In New England, evergreens may be planted in September and May, and deciduous shrubs in October and May.

Dry roots are the chief cause of planting failures, and steps should be taken to prevent this – i.e., balling and



burlapping, and heeling in. After receiving shrubs from a nursery, water as soon as possible; shade them from sunshine at first, mulch the ground around them, and prune back severely.

Pruning of shrubs helps to keep them young and vigorous. Rather than cutting all branches off to an even length, prune out the older branches, even though they may be sound. With lilacs, for example, use a keyhole saw, and cut as close to the ground as possible, cutting out the oldest stems.

Some shrubs need pruning every year, especially those that have dead branches as a result of winterkill. (These include some deutzias, hydrangeas, buddleia, spireas and privets.) Other shrubs such as rhododendron, azaleas, magnolia and buddleia should have the flower heads

pruned off after blooming.

Paul Curran is CEO of Cuzcom Internet Publishing Group and Webmaster at Trees-and-Bushes.com, providing a range of quality plants, trees, bushes, shrubs, seeds and outdoor garden products.

Web site: www.trees-and-bushes.com

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- The person who handles your closing transaction is known as an escrow agent.
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Why Drive All Over Town Looking for a Doctor?

Midtowners Prefer Visiting a Physician with an Office Close to Home.

MIDTOWN PHYSICIAN & SURGEON GUIDE

When deciding where to go for medical care, choose from among these Midtown physicians. Each has an office in Midtown; many live here, too. Most are affiliated with either Midtown hospital: Baptist Medical Center South, Jackson Hospital or Montgomery Surgical Center.

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Harry A. Lee, M.D.284-4256
John Allen Meadows, M.D.272-6062

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Nancy Johnson Haring, M.D.293-8059
James V. Harper, M.D.286-3460
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MIDTOWN EVENTS

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Home Games

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August 2,3,4,5,6,7,16,17,18,22,
23,24,25,26,27,28,29

Weekdays: 7:05 p.m. Sundays: 6:05 p.m.
www.biscuitsbaseball.com – 323-2255



PATRIOTIC EVENTS

Children's Flag Parade
Old Alabama Town
Monday, July 4 – 11:30 a.m.

Independence Day
Old Alabama Town
South Block, 210 N. Hull Street
Monday, July 4 – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Patriotic Ceremony: 11:30 a.m.
Parade, visit Davy Crockett, enjoy
dulcimers, banjos, fiddles, see crafts-
people, partake in old time games,
food and drink vendors.

Cloverdale-Idlewild
Association Parade
Monday, July 4
Begins at 2 p.m. at the intersection of
Plymouth and Lexington. Parade ends at
Bottom Park with a neighborhood
block party and band.
Parade runs along Lexington Road.

Riverfront Celebration
Riverwalk Amphitheater
Monday, July 4 – Gates open at
4:30 p.m. Fireworks to start following
the Biscuits baseball game
which starts at 6:35 p.m.

Live bands, children's karaoke, winners
of Montgomery Idol, food vendors,
coolers welcome.



SOUNDS OF SUMMER

Jazz Concert
Lucas Tavern Courtyard
Sun, July 10
Gates open at 6 p.m. – \$5
Bands play 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Old Alabama Town



STARS ON THE RIVERFRONT

Alabama Dance Theatre
Armory Learning Arts Center
Sunday, July 31 – 2:30 p.m.
Madison Avenue
241-2800 – FREE

Alabama Dance Theatre
Riverfront Amphitheater
Monday, August 1 – 8:30 p.m.
www.alabamadancetheater.com
241-2800 – FREE



LIBRARY READING EVENTS

Preschool Story Times
Main Library – High Street
Tuesdays & Wednesdays at 10 a.m.

Clowning Around
(Grades K-6)
Main Library – High Street
Tuesdays & Wednesdays at 1 p.m.

Meet WVAS D.J. Rick Hall
Main Library – High Street
Wednesday, July 13
2:15 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.



MONTGOMERY YMCA

Southeast YMCA Calendar
3455 Carter Hill – 262-6411
Aerobics, Youth, Teen, Adult Sports,
Senior Fitness Classes

Downtown YMCA Calendar
761 S. Perry Street – 269-4362
Senior Fitness: M,W,F at 7 a.m.
Cycling: M,W at 11:45 a.m.
Stretch & Tone: M-F at 12:15 p.m.
Abs: Tues at 5:15 p.m.
Total Body: Tues at 5:45 p.m.
Yoga: Thurs at 5:30 p.m.

Britton/Teen YMCA Calendar
850 S. Lawrence Street – 269-4362
M-F 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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Seminars
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Changing Demographics Explain City's Irrational Housing Growth, Population Decline

With new houses being built in every vacant field, and existing homes being sold like pancakes coming off a hot griddle, does a recent report about a flat population growth in Montgomery confuse you? It should, unless you understand the facts. Simply put, the number of occupants per household has not increased as fast as the number of overall households. In other words, fewer people live in more houses.

Families Following Trends to Exurbs

Montgomery is simply following the trend of most cities, where many families are moving to the exurbs and singles and more childless families are moving to the neighborhoods blessed with the cute shops, good restaurants and plummeting crime rates. Unlike newer areas in town, Midtown neighborhoods also boast tree-lined streets and charming homes, many with picket fences.

In an article recently sent to me, one Providence, RI, journalist Fromma Harrup, writes that the average house built in 1950 was 1,100 square feet and was occupied by a family of 3.54 people. By the late 1990s, the average house had more than 2,000 square feet, even as families shrank to 3.14.

Paraphrasing her story, the modest older home simply no longer fits the supersized American Dream even with a smaller family size. To many, the middle class standard has ballooned to five bedrooms, four garages and a large playroom off a supersized kitchen that would rival a cooking area of a Paris restaurant, she writes.

The columnist went on to say there are other reasons middle class people leave the city once they have children. Schools are an issue. Here, race may play a part and so does class. White and African-American families are moving away from the perceived urban poor. Fortunately many good and improving public schools are attracting middle-class families in Montgomery.

The article's writer said, "you hear parents talk about the dangers of raising children in the city. Yet, the truth is" she said, "the most dangerous place for a teenager is behind the wheel of a car."

Clearly many factors go into a family's decision to live in one place or another, but middle class parents should know they do have choices, and one may be near their old playground. That is, if they can get past the idea they must have a four-car garage, they may be able to afford a big house in Midtown, where in all probability, they won't need four cars, anyway.

Demographic Study Shows Facts

Now back to the facts about Montgomery. I asked AUM demographics expert Don Bogie to look at the ratio of the number of households to population growth. Dr. Bogie

said, "The household/population growth differential that we've seen in Montgomery is explained largely by singles, never married people, the restructuring of households brought about by divorce and the changes in living patterns associated with aging."

Specifically, Bogie's study of the latest Census data noted Montgomery County's population has declined about 994, but the number of housing units has increased 2,345 since 2000.

The never married population increased 6,854 in Montgomery during the 1990s, the number of divorced grew by 4,382 and the number of widowed persons increased by 368.

Importantly, he found, the number of non-family households, or persons living alone, increased by 6,223 during the 1990s, while family households grew by only 2,831. The trend is continuing in the

21st century.

And a recent study for the Montgomery Public School District showed the birth rate continues to decline. It is down to 3,204 in 2003, from 3,655 in 2,000.

More Singles Are Buying Homes

The Hat Team can validate those findings. Over the last several years, we've seen a large number of single women and single men buying homes. Clearly, they're one of the primary markets for smaller size homes. They like to be in the city, not in the suburbs.

A 2000 study by the National Association of Realtors said the growing number of single homebuyers is affecting the real estate business. "Since singles typically have only one adult wage earner in the household, they are more likely to purchase a smaller size home. Over half of these singles are first-time homebuyers, and the demand for smaller size homes means starter home prices are rising," a factor that we're seeing in several Midtown neighborhoods.

While historically singles represent a relatively small percentage of the total homebuying market, the study showed that by 1999, singles accounted for more than a quarter of all homebuyers.

The trend is one that should continue, but not forever. We are seeing more families moving back to Midtown after a few years of carpools and long commute times. They're returning to the neighborhoods of their parents and grandparents because that is where they choose to live.

We welcome all – young, old, single and married, middle or upper class. As we like to say, Midtown is where you grow your housing assets.



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