

THE HISTORY OF CANDLERIDGE

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Imagine yourself standing at the intersection of Altamesa and Woodway streets forty one years ago in 1968 looking southward. You would have seen a very few houses and mostly wide open pasture land with the pyramid-like roof of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church perched on the ridge in the distance. That church, built in 1968, was apparently the first building built in the CandleRidge area. The church was surrounded by pastures and cows. French Lake was just a stock tank for the cows. It would be about eight years later before construction even started for the CandleRidge subdivision.

Wedgwood subdivision was almost fully developed when building in CandleRidge began. As best I can determine, home building in CandleRidge started in 1976. At that time, Hulen Street ended at about Kingswood Drive. Steve Little, with Ambassador Homes, built many homes in CandleRidge. He said that he recalled hearing lots of dynamiting going on during the early days of CandleRidge. That was because bedrock was not far below the surface. Residential construction was largely completed by 1984. CandleRidge was at least ninety percent complete when I moved here in July 1982. However, some of the commercial development came a few years later. Even today, there are a few undeveloped commercial areas in CandleRidge.

A 1978 marketing brochure by the developer of CandleRidge gave some interesting facts and insights:

- It emphasized that CandleRidge was a “planned community” that would “encompass all the good things in life that thoughtful planning could provide.”
- It would have 4½ miles of linear parks and greenbelts with over 100 acres of open space.
- “A 4½ acre lake is being developed and landscaped”
- It emphasized the features and availability of membership in the Racquet Club that has “Fast-Dri granular playing surface” on the tennis courts, an existing clubhouse, and will soon have a junior Olympic size pool.
(Some of those facilities still exist at Hulen and Brandingshire as part of the Hulen Street Baptist Church.)
- Over 30 quality custom home builders were already building in CandleRidge.
- Homes were priced from \$40,000 to over \$100,000.
- Over 200 families moved into CandleRidge within a year of the grand opening.

CandleRidge (with a capital R) was developed by the CandleRidge Development Corporation. A plat map dated December 9, 1978, shows fourteen separate phases for the development. However, about 95% of the current CHA area, to include all of the single family homes, were included in only six phases. They were phases I, II, III, IV, V, and IX. Each phase had its own covenants or deed restrictions, but they were essentially the same except for the particulars addressing the size of homes, placement of garages, etc. Phase I, the first area built, was the northwest area of CHA along Cinnamon Hill Drive and Foxfire Way. Phase IX in the southeast corner of our area between Weatherwood Road and West Cleburne Road was the last of those six phases. Phases VII, VIII, and XIV were mostly within the current CHA area, but they were largely commercial areas that included duplexes or apartments in three areas along Hulen Street. Five other phases were outside of the existing CHA area. They included Parkwood Estates, Parkwood East, and The Meadows which are all south of Sycamore School Road. The CandleRidge II area developed a few years ago by KB Homes west of Hulen Street was not part of the original development and also is not included in the CHA area today.

The CandleRidge Homeowners Association (CHA) is totally independent of the CandleRidge Development Corporation. CHA was initially established and incorporated in 1978. The earliest known bylaws were approved in 1981 and were totally revised in September 2003.

The boundaries are established by the association in coordination with the City of Fort Worth. The northern boundary is generally the greenbelt by the creek but includes houses on both sides of Cinnamon Hill Drive. The eastern boundary is West Cleburne Road. The south is Sycamore School Road. The west is generally Hulen Street, but CHA does include the triangular area west of Hulen between Altamesa, Brandingshire Place, and Hulen Street.

The CHA board of directors is composed of five officers (all elected for one-year terms) and five committee chairpersons. The committee chairpersons include the President of the Candleridge Garden Club and the leader of the COP for this area. (Both of those organizations are independent of CHA but work closely with CHA.) The board generally meets every other month, and there is at least one general membership meeting, usually in September. At least three times a year CHA publishes a newsletter that is sent to all homeowners (approximately 1300 addresses) in the area. The homes are virtually all single family homes, but there are approximately sixty duplexes on the northern part of Fuller Circle, Tall Meadow Lane, and a few along Sycamore School Road. There are 66 street names (including cul-de-sacs) within the CHA area.

Candleridge Park is a City-owned and maintained park located in the center of the CHA area. By design, the park has limited parking because it was intended only as a neighborhood park, not a regional park. The greenbelt along the creek (mostly Sycamore Creek) is one of the longest in Fort Worth. It includes over two and one-half miles of paved trails, twenty-four park benches, about eight picnic tables, a nice playground area for children, and lots of trees. Most of the trees were planted by the City but were extensively watered in their early days by members of CHA. The focal point of the park is French Lake. However, the lake is not just for decorative purposes; it also is part of the flood control system. The dam was originally built about 1978. It started leaking on December 2, 2002, and ultimately the entire drainage system of the dam had to be ripped out and replaced by the City. Much of the twenty-four year accumulation of silt was also dredged and removed at that time. The extensive residential construction over the years in the watershed area of the lake had greatly increased the volume and speed of the runoff into the lake. The new drain system doubled the capacity for the water to flow out of the lake. The redesigned dam was completed on July 18, 2003.

The CHA has also been involved in various park projects. It paid for the aerator (sprayer) that was installed several years ago to help keep the water fresh. The CHA paid for the flagpole which was installed in September 2003 and for the shrub bed at the base of the flagpole which was installed in April 2004 and had major additional plants added in the spring of 2009. Volunteers, with support from the CHA, maintain five other shrub beds throughout the park. The CHA purchased four additional park benches that were installed near French Lake in 2004. The CHA has also been quite involved with signs in the park. In July 2003, CHA developed and paid for four signs showing the distances between various points in the Candleridge Park trail system. CHA has sponsored several Eagle Scout projects to improve the park. Drew Harnish completely renovated and painted all the horizontal Candleridge Park signs in the area in November 2003. Jeff Lanzara completely renovated and painted the thirteen vertical Candleridge Park signs in May 2004. The vertical signs were ultimately replaced in the winter of 2008 with new signposts made of recycled plastic. The pedestrian bridge at French Lake was painted a number of years ago as an Eagle Scout project and is expected to be painted again in 2009 as an Eagle Scout project.

Two major additions to the playground area of the park are planned for installation in 2009. One is the Par Course Exercise Center which consists of fifteen separate pieces of exercise equipment, primarily for adults. The equipment, paid for by CHA, is now on hand and awaiting installation by the Parks Dept. The other major addition is about \$50,000 of assorted playground equipment and six additional park benches. \$25,000 of this is funded by the Fort Worth Housing Authority (which operates the nearby Candleridge Apartments) and the other \$25,000 is funded by a matching Fort Worth Parks Dept. developmental

grant. Most of the playground equipment is for the 2 to 5 age range. All of it will be installed near the existing swing set.

Throughout the years the CHA has worked closely with the City to protect our interests, especially concerning French Lake and the overall Candleridge Park. Other areas of concern and involvement are zoning, code enforcement, animal control, graffiti, utility service, garbage service, police and fire protection. CandleRidge has a very low crime rate, and much of the credit goes to the effectiveness of our local Candleridge/Foxfire Citizens On Patrol (COP). They are citizen volunteers who regularly patrol the area and work in close coordination with the Fort Worth Police Dept. In May 2003, CHA organized a Traffic Management Committee that developed a Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan that was approved by the City in June 2004 and was implemented by the City. This resulted in several actions that improved the traffic flow and safety within Candleridge. For the past ten years, CHA has had a New Neighbors Committee that personally visits, welcomes, and gives a small gift to each new CandleRidge homeowner. The organization and focus of the CHA has evolved over the years and will continue to evolve as needs of the neighborhood change.

A recent major task of the CHA was to capitalize on the opportunity presented by the development of the local Barnett Shale gas operations. CHA invited the adjoining Wedgwood Neighborhood Association to join them in a joint effort to negotiate a good gas lease for their residents. The nine member joint committee, chaired by Glen Estes, met about twenty times from October 2007 to May 2008. They successfully negotiated a very favorable lease with Dale Property Services who was leasing for Chesapeake Energy. The lease paid a \$15,000 per acre signing bonus for an initial three year period and an additional \$15,000 per acre for a two year renewal. The royalty rate is 25% of the wellhead market price. The leases were all signed by the property owners in May, 2008. It is estimated that about 1,400 leases were signed and that the average property owner received close to \$5,000 for the bonus. Now we must wait to see if they actually drill within the three year period to start producing some royalty income.

A side benefit of the gas leasing effort was the development of a website for CHA. The website was needed to establish an efficient method to deal with a very high volume of questions and concerns via email as well as to register residents willingness to participate in our leasing effort. Paul and Kerri Elder generously gave of their time and professional expertise to establish the website and operate it for one year without any cost to CHA. It would have been extremely difficult for the gas leasing committee to operate without benefit of such a great website. Although the website is no longer operated by the Elders, CHA continues to operate a website and has greatly benefited from the initial website effort by the elders.

The CHA has been fortunate to have good leadership throughout the years. Within the last eight years, two of the presidents of CHA have won the Ben Ann Tomayko. This award is given by the Fort Worth League of Neighborhood Associations in coordination with the City of Fort Worth Neighborhood Outreach Office. This award, which has been awarded only six times, honors the most outstanding neighborhood leader in Fort Worth. Madelyn Gibbs served as president of CHA for five years and was the first winner of that award. Glen Estes, the current president of CHA received the Ben Ann Tomayko award in 2009. We hope to have more winners of that award in the future.