

Hi Neighbor!

September has arrived, and with it comes that first little hint that summer is beginning to give way to fall. Around The Fountains, there is quite a bit happening as we finish out the summer and begin looking ahead to 2027.

Some of what we're working on is exciting. Some of it is simply necessary. And some of it comes from circumstances none of us could have planned for. But all of it has something in common: taking care of the community we share and planning rather than waiting for problems to become emergencies.

This summer certainly gave us more than our share of surprises. The August 6 storm brought considerable damage to trees and grounds throughout The Fountains, with downed trees and debris affecting both common areas and individual homes.

The emergency response was about much more than cleaning up our common grounds. Trees and debris had to be removed from and around homes, and areas throughout The Fountains had to be made safe. Cartwright's response was extraordinary. They put The Fountains first in their response to the storm and worked quickly to help us deal with the damage and make our community safe again. We are very grateful for the way they responded when we needed them. The emergency work was necessary and created an extraordinary expense that we had not expected. The Board has been working carefully through how those costs can be addressed while protecting the funds needed for regular operations and ongoing maintenance.

Watch your mailbox for more information about this and mark your calendar for October 15. That evening's quarterly Board meeting will include an opportunity to hear more about the storm-related costs and ask questions.

The funds that are set aside in reserves are growing, but they are not yet at a level that allows the Association to comfortably absorb every extraordinary expense that might come our way. That is one reason we are being particularly careful about the funds available for the remainder of this year.

We also must consider the possibility of an unusually demanding winter. We certainly aren't predicting one, but a heavy snow season could create added costs for snow removal, or other weather-related needs. Just as we could not predict the summer storm, we cannot predict what kind of winter we will have, and the impact to the budget and reserves could potentially be extraordinary.

The goal is to address the extraordinary costs we know about while keeping enough flexibility to respond if something unexpected happens without turning every surprise into an emergency spending decision. Planning for the unexpected is part of responsible stewardship, even when we hope we never have to use that part of the plan.

And the storm also reinforced something else we have been working on the importance of taking a longer-term approach to the trees on our common grounds.

Developing a Community Tree Stewardship Plan was an important first step, and the Missouri Department of Conservation has been tremendously helpful as we work through what comes next. Their urban forestry expertise has given us guidance not only on trees that perform well in the Kansas City area, but also on what makes sense specifically for The Fountains, with recommendations and guidelines for how to approach the long-term care of our common grounds with regard to the age, diversity and suitability for the Fountains in general.

That is an important distinction.

Choosing a tree for an individual yard is quite different from choosing a tree for common property. A homeowner can select a tree based on personal preference, available space, appearance, or shade. Trees planted on common grounds have a much longer list of considerations: mature size, location, compatibility with utilities and other infrastructure, maintenance needs, longevity, replacement planning, and how the tree will fit into the community.

That change in perspective is an important part of the new approach. The trees on common grounds are a community asset, and caring for them needs to be more than an occasional decision when a tree becomes a problem.

During this work, the urban forester also emphasized something many of us already know from living here: our trees are one of the things that make The Fountains special. He noted that communities with substantial tree cover can see meaningful added value to residential property, citing estimates in the range of 20–30% in some circumstances. Just as importantly, trees contribute to the quality of the environment in which we live, providing shade, cooling, beauty, and benefits to both physical and mental well-being.

That makes caring for the common-area trees about much more than deciding when a tree needs to be removed. It is about protecting an asset that contributes to our homes, our neighborhood, and the experience of living here for years to come.

The Board has adopted a Community Tree Stewardship Plan, and the next step is working through the implementation details. That work is still underway and will include evaluating existing trees, identifying maintenance, removal, and replacement needs, developing an appropriate list of species for common areas, where to start replacement, and parallel planning for existing stock. An important part of this work will be to incorporate it into annual planning and budgeting.

You can help put the Community Tree Stewardship Plan into action. If you have been waiting to replace a tree in your front yard, the information included with this email can help you get started. The residential tree list focuses on what should not be planted, rather than limiting you to a short list of what you can plant. It includes a section of trees designated “Do not and Absolutely Do Not Plant.” This gives homeowners a much broader choice and at the same time while help diversify the types of trees in The Fountains over the long term.

If you would like to plant or contribute to a tree on common grounds, there is a list of 10 approved trees for common grounds. In other words, whether you're replacing a tree in your own yard or adding a tree to our common grounds, you can be part of putting the plan into action. If you have questions about the tree guidelines or forms, please contact our Grounds Chair, Toni Travalent, tloutini@sbcglobal.net. The "tree" list for residential AND the 10 trees for the common grounds is attached. The residential planting form is also attached.

At our annual meeting, we talked about the importance of beginning to plan now for the future needs of The Fountains. That work is no longer just a conversation—it is underway.

The Community Tree Stewardship Plan is one example. We've moved from recognizing the need for a different approach to trees on our common grounds to developing a strategy and beginning the work of determining how it will be implemented.

We are taking the same approach to other areas of the community.

The Fountains is growing older, too. The first phase is approaching 25 years old, while the newest phase is around 15 years old. Twenty-five years may not seem old for a neighborhood, but the infrastructure that supports a community ages right along with the homes.

Monarch pond's siltation plans have not moved as quickly as we had hoped. And drainage issues still are emerging. These are examples of the kinds of issues that require more than a quick fix. They require continued attention, information gathering, and thoughtful planning over time.

Some of that longer-range work was necessarily put on hold while we responded to the immediate needs created by the summer storm. As that emergency work winds down, we can return our attention to those projects and continue developing the details needed for 2027 and beyond.

Not everything can—or should be—done at once. Good stewardship means understanding what we have, deciding what needs attention first, and making thoughtful use of the resources available to all of us.

So, when we talk about planning for 2027, we aren't simply talking about putting numbers on a budget worksheet. We are beginning to build a clearer picture of what The Fountains will need in the years ahead—and how we can prepare for it responsibly.

There have been a few changes in the membership of the Fountains Architectural Review Board (FARB) this year, and we are pleased to welcome David Mitchell to the 2026–27 FARB, joining Jim Coldsnow, Bob Hoffman, and Ken Crawford.

There is a wonderful bit of Fountains history represented on this year's FARB. Jim, Bob, and David are all original residents who were here when The Fountains Association was formed. Ken Crawford, also is a new member, and he is a former resident, now returned. That kind of first-hand knowledge of our community and its history is a real asset.

FARB is also looking at ways to make the architectural review process easier for homeowners to understand and navigate when they are considering changes to their homes or property. Watch for announcements from the FARB Chair about monthly meetings, opportunities to get questions answered, and other ways FARB can help homeowners through the process.

We appreciate the neighbors who volunteer their time to serve on FARB and look forward to the work they will be doing for The Fountains.

One of our sure signs that fall is approaching is the change in our irrigation schedule. As temperatures begin to moderate, irrigation will be reduced to two days a week from three. IDL will continue to watch conditions and adjust the schedule as needed. A little less watering is good for both the landscape and the water bill!

Envision Landscape is already looking ahead to the end of the season as well. Plans are underway for fall leaf cleanup and the final fertilizer application, helping prepare our grounds for the months ahead.

After all the talk about trees, infrastructure, budgets, and planning, let's talk about some of the things that make a neighborhood a neighborhood!

Fall Y'all: October 9 at the Soldier's Gazebo. Come enjoy a little fall fun and spend some time with your neighbors!

A fall clothing drive: October 5–16.

Mark your calendars for our annual Soup & Chili Supper on November 7. Nothing says fall quite like a bowl of soup or chili and good neighbors around the table.

For more information about the Clothing Drive or Fall Y'all, contact Linda Wells at lindaw9291951@gmail.com.

And then, of course, Halloween will be here before we know it! For those of you who are new to The Fountains, Halloween is more of a decorating opportunity for us adults instead of treating little goblins. We have very few if any trick or treaters in The Fountains, so if you'd like to support the kids with treats in Raintree Lake proper watch for the call to support the annual trunk or treat event in the clubhouse parking lot.

There is a lot happening around The Fountains as we move into fall. Some of it is serious work that will help us prepare for the future, and some of it is simply the fun of being neighbors. After a summer none of us expected, I think we've all earned a little fall weather, some time with our neighbors, and a few opportunities to just enjoy living here. Thank you to everyone who has helped, volunteered, answered a call, shared information, or simply pitched in when something needed to be done. Those things may seem small individually, but together they are what make The Fountains a great place to call home.

Enjoy the cooler days ahead, and I'll see you around the neighborhood!