

May 2023



The Castle Hills Reporter



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A bi-monthly newsletter for the residents of the City of Castle Hills published by Neighborhood News, Inc.

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Happy Summer Neighbors,

It is with GREAT pride that I share that this May will mark my 3rd term of service to the City of Castle Hills as Mayor. Never in my wildest dreams was there any consideration to run for Council or Mayor. Truthfully, it wasn't something discussed amongst immediate family or even extended family. Since graduating from Baylor University, the sole objective; was working to support the family business and start to make a life; which happened to be in Castle Hills.

Unbeknownst to me, there were severe problems in our local government and community; the divisiveness had stalled community improvement and was sending reverberations through all our public service departments. These are the very departments that have come to define who we are as a community for the last 72 years and most importantly that provide the level of service that we have all come to love and expect. The years of service have been anything but normal as many of you all have seen through the news; largely politically but also including a global pandemic and a statewide power outage. The reality is that the scars have provided an invaluable education on how to be a resilient servant leader and how we progress as a community.

As we embark on this 3rd term together, there are a handful of accomplishments that we have achieved as a city, that we should relish in. While the majority of these have been discussed in monthly Reporter articles updates, the magnitude of the impact isn't lost on me.

- Hiring and retaining the longest serving City Manager in the last 20 years, Mr. Ryan Rapelye. In March 2023, Mr. Rapelye celebrated 5 years of service to Castle Hills. This has been the single biggest accolade for our city, having continuity in leadership has enabled Castle Hills to establish plans and oversee the successful execution of those plans with the same leadership.
- The borrowing of street and drainage debt, one of which was at a historic low rate is another major accomplishment in 2020. This provided the opportunity for the City to complete the reconstruction of fourteen streets and a major drainage project. The second round of funding is one in which YOU the reader had a hand in last November. This common City borrowing practice was accomplished by City Council action in 2021 and was authorized by the voters in 2022. The pragmatic borrowing of debt has given us the ability to make enormous leaps in the progress of our city. Instead of saving all year to do 1 street, we can complete upwards of 9 streets as well as addressing drainage projects which have threatened property in the past.
- This last point is an amalgamation of numerous small successes.
 - » Lighting, electrical, and walking improvements at the Commons.
 - » Reflective, legible, branded, and match street signs throughout the city.

(Continued on page 3)

CITY COUNCIL

JR Trevino
Mayor

Joe Izbrand
Mayor Pro-Tem, Place 1

Frank Paul
Place 2

Kurt May
Place 3

Jack Joyce
Place 4

Beth Daines
Place 5

CITY STAFF

Ryan Rapelye
City Manager, (210) 293-9673

Maria Franco
City Secretary
(210) 293-9681

Nora Davis
Finance, (210) 293-9674

James "Jim" Ladewig
Fire Chief
(210) 342-2341, ext. 217

Steven Zuniga
Police Chief
(210) 342-2341

Rick Harada
Public Works & Animal Control
Department Director
(210) 293-9676

ALL EMERGENCIES, EMT, FIRE & POLICE CALL 911

Non-emergency (210) 342-2341

Monthly Meetings

All meetings are held at
City Hall unless otherwise posted.

City Council
2nd Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.

**Architectural Review
Committee**
1st Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Upon Request

Board of Adjustment
4th Monday, 5:30 p.m.
Upon Request

Zoning Commission
1st Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.
Upon Request

**Crime Control & Prevention
District**
3rd Monday, 5:30 p.m.
Quarterly or as needed

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(Continued from page 2)

- » Implementation of telecommunication technology to allow virtual participation in City government meetings.
 - » Overall positive culture at City Hall, for staff and City Council.
- It isn't a secret that we can't possibly afford to pay our staff their weight in gold for their amazing service, but we can provide a great place to work. In recent years, we have restored that workplace quality of life.

All these accomplishments have moved the needle but make no mistake there is still work to be done. Over the next year you will see the successful execution of our next round of street and drainage projects. From there we will get our infrastructure onto regular, more cost effective, life extending maintenance plan. The other benefit is that we will then be able to redirect our attention to addressing other quality of life components in Castle Hills. As always, if you are interested in how, you can serve your community please reach out and we can find a place that meets your availability and your talents.

Here are a few photos from our Castle Hills Fiesta. If you didn't make it out, we missed you! I look forward to seeing you at future events at the Commons!

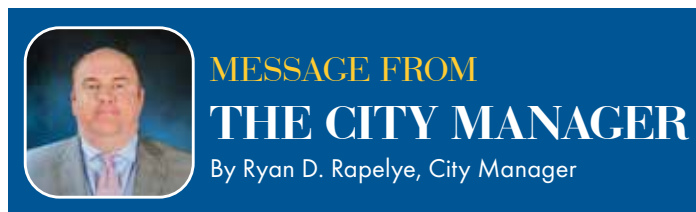
Yours in service,

JR Treviño

Mayor

JTrevino@CastleHills-TX.gov

210-559-5940



This summer, the City of Castle Hills will be taking the steps to develop the FY 24 Fiscal Year Budget. The FY 24 Budget will be only a nine-month budget instead of the traditional twelve months. The City of Castle Hills current fiscal budget operates from January 1 through December 31, the goal is to change the fiscal year to eventually run from October 1 through September 30 which is consistent with majority of cities in the State of Texas. The FY 24 Budget once adopted in September of this year will be for the period January 1 through September 30, 2024. Next year when we develop the FY 25 Budget, this will get us on track and the FY 25 Budget would begin October 1, 2024.

This year during the development of the FY 24 Budget, staff will be working with City Council to prioritize areas of the organization, specifically the retirement plan for City employees, including compensation in comparison of other cities to ensure we are competitive to recruit and retain employees, also finalizing the allocation of the federal funds related to ARPA, and evaluating of other areas related to services for the City of Castle Hills. Every year when we develop the budget, it is not only about revenue and expenditures, but also a review of City services consistent with best practices for our organization to improve and evolve in the coming years.

For instance, in the development of the last two annual budgets, the City Council reviewed extensively the sanitation services provided by the City of Castle Hills. Prior to this, rates and operations had not been reviewed in over ten years. In my experience, it is always best practice for cities to review rates based on service/operational expenses including the landfill costs every 3-5 years. During the development of these two fiscal year budgets, staff provided an extensive list of cities in the surrounding area who are either municipalized or have automated services. We also reviewed those cities' rates of services/operations. Castle Hills, Alamo Heights, and Olmos Park are still municipalized when it comes to sanitation services.

Many cities have shifted to automation versus municipalization of sanitation services in recent years partly due to workers compensation injuries. Even if automation is considered in the future, alleys may

(Continued on page 4)

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City of Castle Hills Resident

(Continued from page 3)

still have to be utilized for service. Automation more than likely, does result in one 96-gallon container, one collection a week and more than likely little or no brush/recycle services. Brush and recycle services would have to be incorporated into the contract and would be an additional cost.

The multi-year review of our sanitation services/operations has resulted in the City Council approving a phased-in rate increase and improved wages for Public Works staff to ensure we are competitive to recruit and retain employees. The goal of this was to bring in revenue to support the operational expenses for providing these services, and ultimately, a self-supporting fund which is not subsidized by other areas within the General Fund.

Mr. Harada, our Public Works Director and his team do an excellent job based on the current level of service/demand. We have worked to send out informational pamphlets related to sanitation services with guidelines and holiday schedules to assist residents and we will continue this each year. With the increased rate for service, we were also able to incorporate and expand sanitation services, this included rolls off staged periodically at City hall for additional brush collection and now have two bulk drop off events for the City of Castle Hills.

As for the development of the upcoming FY 24 Fiscal Year Budget, we will have a budget calendar presented to City Council in June, this will consist of a series of meetings in July and August with adoption of the annual budget taking place in September. A copy of the budget calendar will be on the website in mid-June for anyone who wishes to attend any upcoming budget meetings this Summer.

As I had mentioned in previous Reporter articles, I will have an employee from a specific area of our organization provide some insight on a particular city service and/or process which answer questions and highlight the work being done by our city employees. We will refer to "Catching up at 'The Castle'". The second edition can be found in this month's Reporter, I have asked Maria Franco, our new City Secretary, to provide some insight into the City Secretary office.

As always, I would like to send a THANK YOU to all our employees who make up "Team Castle Hills" for their commitment to the City. I appreciate all they do for the city and our organization on a daily basis.

Please contact me at rrapelye@castlehills-tx.gov or at the office at 210.293.9673 if you have any questions on projects or need assistance with services from the City of Castle Hills.

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Catching Up At The Castle... CITY SECRETARY'S OFFICE



What does the City Secretary do?

The history of City Secretary or City Clerk is the oldest public servant in local government. A Biblical reference to the town clerk is found in the Book of Acts chapter 19:35.

In Castle Hills, the City Secretary is hired by the City Manager and through the years the City Secretary's Office has become the center of government.

The City Secretary performs many duties vital to the daily operations of the city and is the direct link between the citizens of the community, city staff, and the elected officials.

The City Council of Castle Hills holds meetings on the second Tuesday of each month and the City Secretary is responsible for issuing the City Council agenda and bringing together all reports and supporting documents to inform the public on the actions of its local government. The City Secretary also attends the meetings and keeps the minutes for the City's boards, committees, and commissions.

The City Secretary is the official "Record keeper" of the city and serves as the City's Open Records Coordinator, to ensure all open records requests are fulfilled promptly and reviews all records provided by staff and refers all requests that need a ruling from the Attorney General's Office to the City Attorney.

The City Secretary serves as a vital role in administering local elections, to ensure compliance with city, state, and federal election laws and policies and ensures that city elections are conducted in a fair and impartial manner.

The City Secretary also takes care of the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) permit and distance regulations and is responsible for reviewing applications and signing all permits for TABC license premises within the city limits.

As City Secretary I am committed to providing support, assistance and information to our local government and providing excellent customer service to the citizens of our community.

I am blessed to be part of this great and thriving community of Castle Hills; I am here to help you with any questions you might have about our city government, and if I don't know the answer, I will research the answer or ask someone that knows. Please stop by city hall, and say hi, I'd love to meet you!

THIS IS MUNICIPAL CLERKS WEEK, APRIL 30-MAY 6, 2023, CELEBRATING OUR CITY SECRETARY LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS.

Professor William Bennett Munro, the eminent political scientist, wrote: "No other office in municipal service has so many contracts. It serves the mayor, the city council, the city manager (when there is one), and all administrative departments without exception. All of them call upon it, almost daily, for some service or information. Its work is not spectacular, but it demands versatility, alertness, accuracy, and no end of patience. The public does not realize how many loose ends of city administration this office pulls together." (1934)

"The Castle"

Maria Franco, City Secretary

Castle Hills Community Organization Events 2023

Saturday, May 20, 2023 - Concert in the Commons (7:00 – 9:00pm)

Saturday, June 17, 2023 - Splash Day
(Time to be decided)

Sunday, July 16, 2023 - I Scream for Ice Cream Day –
come join us for an Ice Cream Social
The Community Room (2:00 – 4:00pm)

Saturday, August 5, 2023 - Drive-by School Supply Drive to benefit Castle Hills Elementary and Jackson-Keller Elementary. (9:00 – 11:00am)

Saturday, September 23, 2023 - Concert in the Commons (7:00 – 9:00pm)

Saturday, October 28, 2023 - Trunk or Treat
(5:30 – 6:30) **Concert in the Commons to follow** (7:00 – 9:00pm)

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 - Wine and Cheese Night (members only) (6:30 – 8:00pm)

All activities are free and open to anyone except for the December event, as that is the Board's "thank you" to our current members.



COUNCIL COMMENTS



JOE IZBRAND

PLACE 1

Mayor Pro-Tem

Dear Neighbors,

A little more than a year ago, in March 2022, I included the following comments in my Castle Hills Reporter article. I am sharing them again because the need to address this matter remains as important now as it was when I first raised the issue. The only thing that has changed is the urgency by which it needs to be resolved. After a tough budget year last year, I am confident my council colleagues will prioritize improved recruitment, retention and benefits as we begin our budget planning this summer for the next fiscal year:

"We need to ensure we have the resources in place to recruit and retain the highest caliber of police officers and, once they have completed their years of public service, provide them with a strong retirement program.

I believe we need to raise our financial support to their retirement program from 1.5 times their annual contribution to two times their contribution. The preponderance of area municipalities already offer this incentive and, if we don't become competitive, we will risk losing our officers to other departments and find it very difficult to recruit new officers.

These are the men and women who put their lives on the line for us every day. They deserve to be recognized for their bravery and rewarded for their vigilance with the knowledge that 'we have their backs.'

I fully recognize that increasing the contribution will likewise increase our city budget. But failing to do so will have an even more detrimental impact, on our safety.

I hope you will join me in recognizing the significant contributions each and every city employee makes to our community. We are fortunate to have outstanding individuals working on our behalf in administration, courts, fire, police and public works."

Thank you for the opportunity serve as your voice on city council. Let's stay in touch at facebook.com/izbrandplace1. You can also reach me by email at izbrandplace1@gmail.com.

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KURT MAY
PLACE 3

Working Together For Continued Progress

As the election results are now final as of this publication, the citizens of Castle Hills will have re-elected both a sitting Councilman and a Mayor. The only contested election may end with a long-time community organizer and participant serving along with the current City Council. This opportunity to continue serving this city is deeply appreciated. I look forward to working with every City Council member to achieve great things for Castle Hills and continue our forward progress.

The chief objective in this new budget cycle is to maintain our balanced budget with some firm priorities. Those priorities should be to establish competitive retirement and benefits packages for city employees, finish the streets and drainage projects already started, and promote the kinds of amenities that make a city a community. To do this we must begin with addressing our recruitment and retention of police officers. The protection of our city residents and businesses is the priority our citizens most universally support.

In addition, I would like to work with any member of this community, any member of a standing committee or Board or Commission, and any member of the City Council along with Mayor Trevino on sustainable renewable energy for our city, and our city services. This may involve both public and private coordination, and collaboration with both the City of San Antonio and Bexar County. It is far more productive to work with our city's neighbors for a common purpose than to ignore our common interests, thus costing our city more in the long run.

As always, I do enjoy hearing ideas from citizens and friends.

Kurt May
Councilman, Place 3
City of Castle Hills
210-273-8134



JACK JOYCE
PLACE 4

Friends and Neighbors,

I hope you all had a wonderful Fiesta!

As the Council Liaison to the Parks and Projects Commission, I would like to update you on the activities of the Commission this year. Bernard Juettemeyer serves as Chair, with Cindi Martinez, Matt Dotin, Maddie Dillon, and Dr. Vic Sylvia as members. Robert Crawford recently was appointed as an alternate.

The Commission has been working hard on projects that will enhance the beauty and amenities provided by our city. For example:

- After reviewing numerous possibilities, the Commission has recently approved a playground structure for the Commons. It is a colorful, shaded structure made for kids up to 12 years old. The cost, including installation, is approximately \$45,000. The Castle Hills Woman's Club has generously donated \$10,000 to the effort, greatly reducing the cost. We expect it to come before City Council very soon.

Another improvement to the Commons is the provision of additional electrical service to allow for easy access to power for vendors and others, such as a band, who often make use of the Commons. This was completed in time for Fiesta.

At this time, we are studying the options for providing more readily available bathrooms to the Commons. Options include a new structure or portable bathroom trailers, or perhaps some combination of the two for large events like Fiesta.

- Commissioner Maddie Dillon has taken the initiative to contribute to the City's efforts at beautification. With some help, she has brought back to life three of the brick planters which reside at key entrances to City streets. In a true team effort, with labor contributed by the Castle Hills Garden Club, power washing by the City's Public Works department, and plant cost picked up by the City, the planters at Carolwood, Atwater, and Prinz have been rejuvenated. It's amazing how just a little bit of color can add life to a street entrance.
- The Commission will propose that, upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, it become the stewards of the Plan, responsible for managing the implementation of its many priorities, for assuring the Plan receives regular reviews, for managing any amendments to the Plan, and for coordinating with the Economic Development Committee to explore funding options.

Feel free to contact me to discuss these or other topics.

Jack Joyce
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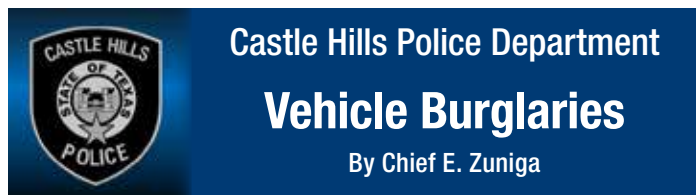
Emergency Notification System - Rave Alert

An Emergency Notification System was identified by the Emergency Management Committee earlier this year as a need for the community. The system would allow the city staff to notify the residents and city staff of any emergency situations that are occurring within the city or local area. The system that the city will be using is called Rave Alert and is managed by Rave Mobile Alert Systems. Once the system is in full use later this May, city residents will be advised by phone, text and email of any emergency situations occurring in our area, as well as city information of street closures, office closings, and garbage collection notices. The system allows for city staff to tailor the messages for our residents to give precise information that pertains to the Castle Hills area.



Once the system goes active, a Rave Alert link will be on the City of Castle Hills website which will guide individuals wishing to join the alert system through the process of registering. The system will ask for your personal information as well as by what means you wish to receive notifications. You can choose a voice message on your home or cell phone, text message, email or all three. Depending on which options you choose, you will need to enter the appropriate information that is requested. You will also have options on what type of messages you wish to receive. You will be able to "opt-in" on Emergency Notifications, Street Closures, City Events, City Notifications and Garbage Collections as well as other choices that will be available once the system is on line. In addition to city information, residents will also receive notices from the National Weather Service and Bexar County Emergency Management for situations affecting the Castle Hills and Bexar County area.

The system is not limited to only Castle Hills residents, Castle Hills business owners can also join the system to stay abreast of issues in the area. Additionally, family members that are not in the local area may join the system to be alerted of emergency situations affecting their family members in the Castle Hills area. Please keep monitoring the Castle Hills homepage for additional information and the Rave Alert link. Brochures will be available at all city offices as well as being distributed by city staff.



Vehicle burglaries are occurring at alarming rates. As with many crimes, vehicle burglaries are often a crime of opportunity. Here are a few tips to make yourself a hard target for 2023.



- secure your vehicle(s)
- hide valuables in the trunk or somewhere out of sight
- park in well-lit and/or well traversed areas
- when practical, remove valuables and weapons from your vehicle altogether

Remember this phrase; "hide, lock, take" With no valuables in sight and a secure vehicle, would be criminals are very likely to move on to the next one. Don't be the next one!

On a different tidbit of advice, take extra precautions to secure your personal information. This most certainly includes debit/credit cards, id's, and social security numbers. One of the primary areas of compromise is at the mailbox. We have previously posted the following:

The business strategy is simple....."If the red flag is up, game on." This is a quote from the leader of an organized crime enterprise that was arrested for mail theft and check fraud/forgery. It refers to the flag on your mailbox providing the requisite visual cue for the USPS that you have mail you would like picked up and ultimately delivered. Herein lies the issue. USPS employees are not the only ones looking for mail in your box. A growing trend is for opportunistic criminals to drive neighborhoods while seeking mailboxes with their flags raised, indicating outgoing mail for them to steal. ***More aptly, mail theft is perhaps the preferred way for criminals to steal your identity.***

As a continual reminder, please report suspicious activity or suspicious person(s) to the police immediately by calling (210) 342-2341 or dialing 911 if it is an emergency.

Archives/Edited – Original Print Feb-2015

New project?

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Yes, the businesses that you have come to know and love in your newsletter are now available in our NEW Online Service Directory.

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Online Business Directory







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CITY SNAPSHOTS



Traveling Safety Tips



Traveling for business? Or just taking a vacation? No matter what the reason, you can always make sure that you're traveling safely.

Here are some tips to help you out:

1. When it comes to securing your house, there are two main things to keep in mind: the doors and windows. Make sure all doors and windows are locked, including garage doors and back doors (which can be accessed from outside). Also make sure all windows have latches or bars in place to prevent them from being opened by intruders.
2. Turn off utilities: Before leaving town, make sure all utilities are turned off at the source—including water, gas and electricity.
3. Leave a light on.
4. Lock all doors and windows.
5. Keep your curtains closed and blinds drawn.
6. Don't leave valuables in plain sight, and don't leave cash or credit cards lying around the house when you're away.
7. If you're going out, tell someone where you are going, who you are with, and when you plan on returning home (and then actually follow through).
8. If you have a pet, it's best to find a friend or neighbor who can take care of them while you are away. If that's not possible, you might be able to board them at a local kennel. If neither of those options work for you, consider hiring a pet sitter for the duration of your trip.
9. While traveling, don't leave valuables in your car—they're easier to break into than they look!

10. When staying at an unfamiliar hotel, don't leave anything valuable in the room while you're gone—even if it's just for a few hours!
11. When traveling by car, be aware of any state laws regarding child safety seats and seatbelt usage for children under 18 years old. Also remember that child seats aren't allowed on airplanes unless they are specifically approved by the airline (which most aren't).



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A Quality Neighborhood Starts With You

A Residential Guide for Property Maintenance

Q. What is a violation?

A. A violation is an instance where a residential or commercial property does not meet the minimum standards as set out in the City's ordinances.

Q. What is a notice?

A. A Notice of Violation is mailed to the property owner and resident when a violation is observed or discovered. The purpose of a Notice of Violation is to initiate corrective action. It is not the intent of the City to issue citations, but to gain compliance with City codes for better health, welfare, and safety within the community.

Q. How long do I have to fix the issue?

A. Each violation has a timeline of 10 days to resolve. The Notice of Violation will contain the timeline for corrective action and when a Code Inspector will re-inspect the property.

Q. What is a citation?

A. If the violation has not been brought into compliance after the re-inspection date, the Code Inspector may file a citation through the Municipal Court. The fines for City ordinance violations vary, but can be issued for each day the violation exists, with each day being a new violation.



Q. What if I do not understand the notice I receive?

A. If a resident needs clarification, it is best to contact the Code Inspector who issued the notice. The contact information for the Code Inspector is located on each Notice of Violation. A resident may also call the Code Inspector at (210) 293-9678.

Q. What if I need more time?

A. For an extension, please contact the Code Inspector who issued the notice. Depending on the violation, some extensions may be granted.

Q. How can I report a code violation?

A. A violation can be placed by visiting the city's website: www.cityofcastlehills.com, or by leaving an anonymous voicemail at (210) 293-9678.

For more information, contact Code Compliance Inspector at (210) 293-9678 or visit www.cityofcastlehills.com.

- 1 **Grass**
Grass must be mowed and no greater height than 12 inches tall.

- 2 **Debris Prohibition**
Properties must be free of any weeds, high grass, brush, old logs, trash, or debris whatsoever.

- 3 **Trees**
Trees must be maintained at 12-feet above the sidewalk, and 14-feet above any street or alley.

- 4 **Vehicles**
A junked vehicle, including part of a junked vehicle, that is visible from a public place or public right-of-way is a public nuisance. Vehicles must be fully operable, assembled, and have current license and registration information visible.

- 5 **Parking**
All vehicles must be parked on a paved surface. Any vehicles parked on paved streets during the hours of 2:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. is prohibited and will be enforced by Castle Hills Police Department.

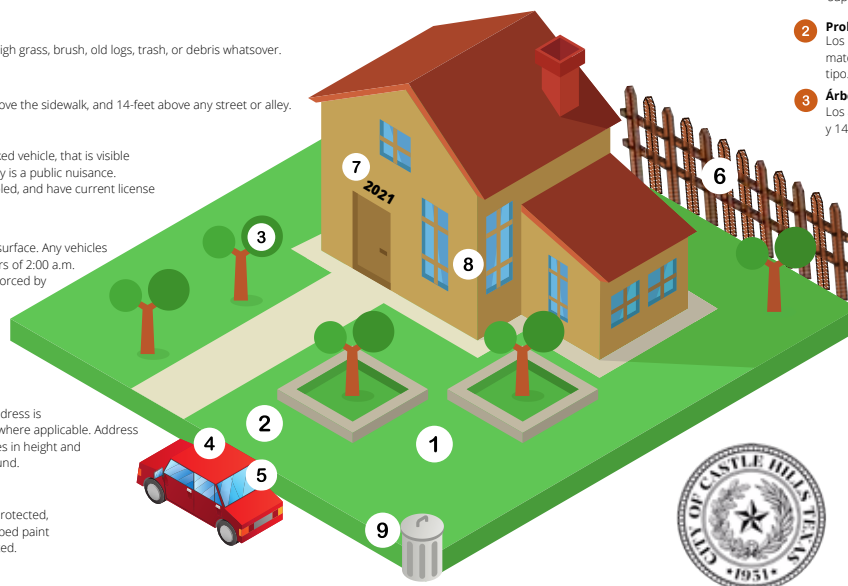
- 6 **Fences**
All fences must be well-maintained and in good repair.

- 7 **Address Numbers**
All residences must ensure that their address is clearly visible from the street and alley, where applicable. Address numbers should be no less than 4 inches in height and of a color which contrasts with background.

- 8 **Protective Treatment**
Exterior surfaces must be maintained, protected, and in good condition. Peeling and chipped paint shall be eliminated and surfaces repainted.

- 9 **Trash**
Garbage containers shall not be placed curbside or in the right-of-way for collection earlier than 6:00 p.m. the day before collection, and must be removed at the earliest possible time on collection day. Reminder, (3) 32 gallon containers.

CASTLE HILLS, TEXAS



- 1 **Hierba**
El pasto se debe cortar y no debe tener una altura superior a las 12 pulgadas.

- 2 **Prohibición de Escombros**
Los patios deben estar libres de malezas, pasto alto, matorrales, troncos viejos, basura o escombros de cualquier tipo.

- 3 **Árboles**
Los árboles deben mantenerse a 12 pies por encima de la acera y 14 pies por encima de cualquier calle o callejón.

- 4 **Vehículos**
Un vehículo desechado, incluida parte de un vehículo desechado, que sea visible desde un lugar público o un derecho de paso público es una molestia pública. Los vehículos deben estar completamente operativos, ensamblados y tener la información de registro y licencia actual.

- 5 **Estacionamiento**
Todos los vehículos deben estar estacionados en calles pavimentadas. Está prohibido y será multado por la estación de policía de Castle Hills.

- 6 **Cercas**
Las cercas deben mantenerse bien cuidadas y en buen estado.

- 7 **Números de direcciones**
Todas las residencias deben asegurarse de que su dirección sea claramente visible desde la calle. Números de dirección debe tener no menos de 4 pulgadas de altura y una color que contrasta con el fondo.

- 8 **Tratamiento protector**
Las superficies exteriores deben mantenerse, protegerse y en buen estado. Pintura descascarada y desconchada se eliminarán y las superficies se volverán a pintar.

- 9 **Basura**
Coloque los contenedores de la basura en la banqueta el día anterior después de las 6:00 p.m. de la tarde. Recordatorio, (3) 32 contenedores de galón.





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The ARC is a nonprofit life plan continuing care retirement community (CCRC) in beautiful San Antonio, Texas.
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