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# NOTES FROM DISTRICT 2

THERE IS TOO MUCH GOING ON IN EL PASO.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2009

October is here, so get out your calendars and prepare to fill them with several events going on in the El Paso throughout the month.

First, the El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau has launched its Movies in the Canyon film series. Every Friday and Saturday throughout October, the CVB will show movies at the McKelligon Canyon Amphitheatre. classics such as Grease and E.T. will be shown along with favorites like The Karate Kid, Sixteen Candles, The Breakfast Club, Back to the Future and Rudy.

For a complete list of movies, visit [www.elpasocvb.com](http://www.elpasocvb.com). All showings are free and begin promptly at 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. each evening.

Second, the 4th Annual Great Southwest Book Fair & Sale will be held on Oct. 31 at the Main Library Downtown from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Authors Carlos Fuentes, Claudia Martinez, Xavier Garza and Joe Hayes and others will be present throughout the day to meet attendees and offer readings of their work. Kids are encourage to dress in costume and bring their jack-o-lanterns for the trick-or-treat festival.

For more information, visit [www.elpasolibrary.org](http://www.elpasolibrary.org).

And finally, we will host our monthly District 2 Saturday community meeting on Saturday Oct. 17 at 10 a.m. inside the Memorial Park Library. Rep. Steve Ortega and Commander Mike Austin from the Northeast Regional Command will be this months guests, so make plans to attend and hear great presentations from these two dedicated public servants.

POSTED BY SUSIE BYRD AT 5:47 PM 0 COMMENTS

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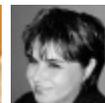
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THINGS TO DO FOR DISTRICT 2

Saturday, September 19 at 10 A.M.  
@ Memorial Park Branch Library.  
District 2 Community Meeting.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

## War on Drugs: Is It Working?



I went backpacking this past weekend and managed not to think about work or El Paso or much of anything. My mind quiet, I came home, relaxed and ready for just about anything.

First thing I did was check out the newspaper to see what I missed. A man from Horizon City was kidnapped in front of this home while schoolchildren watched on. Later that week, he was found brutally murdered in Juarez, his hands carved off and laid over his chest. Eighteen people were slain in a Juárez drug rehab center. Maybe the center was a cover for the cartels. Maybe not. But 18 people were dead.

It is strange to live so close to such daily and relentless and consuming violence, just minutes really. And yet I feel safe. There is not one neighborhood in this city that I would feel anxious in walking around after dark. We are the third safest U.S. city of our size sharing a common border, a common culture, a common history with a city that is by most accounts the most dangerous city in the world today.

It wasn't always that way. I miss Juarez. I miss crossing over for dinner, for New Year's Eve at Martino's, a drink at the Kentucky Club, a walk down to the Cathedral, shopping with friends from out

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### I REPRESENT YOU



SUSIE BYRD

Lucky me. I'm the City Representative for District 2, the best place to live in the best

city in the United States. I grew up in District 2 and came back as soon as I could after attending Emory University in Atlanta. My husband Eddie Holland and I are now raising our three children in the same neighborhood where I grew up. Every day that I have been the City Council Representative for District 2 has been a great gift. I am proud and honored to serve the residents of District 2.

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

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### ABOUT DISTRICT 2

District 2 is one of the busiest political offices in El Paso. We have a lot that we are working on, including: 1. Downtown and central city redevelopment, 2. Historic preservation, 3. Medical Center of the Americas, 4. Better quality development that pays for itself so you and I don't have to pay for it, 5. Impact fees, 6. Air quality and environmental quality and 7. Affordable housing

We also work very hard to make sure that constituents concerns, complaints and ideas are the highest priority. Judy Guitierrez, the District 2 Administrative Assistant makes it

of town... My mom and dad used to take the kids over for a special dinner and the Feria. We haven't been in a long while, a year maybe. It was always familiar, like home. Not anymore. Better not to chance it.

So it is easy to seal ourselves off from the violence in Juarez, not cross over. Bemoan the daily headlines and trust the law enforcement agencies that it will not spill over. But as citizens of El Paso, as citizens of the United States, we should not let our sense of security distance us from the violence in our sister city, from the violence begat from an insatiable hunger for illegal drugs in the United States and the laws that have created irresistible profit margins for greedy thugs with guns. The violence in Juarez is our problem. This region, El Paso and Juarez, have sat perched at the edge of a great renaissance. The insecurity in Juarez has unraveled economic gains in our region. Momentum is lost. Worry sets in.

We can't really afford to just stand by.

It is with this in mind that several UTEP professors and community folks came together to host "A Global Public Policy Forum on the U.S. War on Drugs." The War on Drugs was declared by Richard Nixon 40 years ago. Given the level of violence in Juarez, it is fair to ask whether the war is working and at what costs. The forum brings together thinkers and actors on this issue from all walks of life-- government, journalists, academics, law enforcement--to examine the history of the war, its successes and its failures and to ask what options and alternatives we have as a global community to significantly reduce the threat of drug violence and drug use to our communities. The forum is meant as a time to reflect on current policy but its true aim is to develop an action plan for how we pull our region out of this crisis.

I invite you to attend, to participate, to put in your two cents, but most importantly to act.

## **A GLOBAL PUBLIC POLICY FORUM ON THE U.S. WAR ON DRUGS**

**When: September 20-22, 2009**

**Where: UTEP, Juarez and the Plaza Theatre**

**For more information:**

**<http://www.warondrugsconference.utep.edu/>**

all happen, taking in calls, routing complaints and helping residents solve problems and improve our neighborhoods. Rene Leon, the District 2 Legislative Aide, works on policy research and development and whatever else falls through the cracks.

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### BLOG ARCHIVE

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## RSVP to [warondrugsconference@utep.edu](mailto:warondrugsconference@utep.edu)

POSTED BY SUSIE BYRD AT 2:41 PM 0 COMMENTS 

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

## Community Development Block Grants Available to Improve Low and Moderate Income Neighborhoods



The federal government provides Community Development Block Grants to communities to help them improve low and moderate income neighborhoods. These grants can be used for park improvements, drainage and road improvements,

sidewalks and other capital improvements in low and moderate income neighborhoods.

In District 2, we have recently used these grants for park improvements at Grandview Park and to re-design and resurface the tennis courts at Memorial Park. If you have any projects that you would like considered, you can find more information on the Community Development Department's [website](#). Project requests are due November 13, 2009.



POSTED BY SUSIE BYRD AT 12:17 PM 0 COMMENTS 

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2009

## End of the Summer.



We've had a grueling couple months of examining and building

budgets, debating  
domestic partner benefits, annexation policy and billboards.

I'm sitting at my desk on a Friday afternoon trying to catch up with emails and projects and things to do. The building is empty, the last day of the four-day work week pilot project.

The summer is ending.

House of Pizza is open again after their much dreaded (at least in Central) annual summer vacation. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief and marched up the street to eat pizza and drink beer.

My kids started school this week. The baby started his first day of kindergarten at Crockett Elementary, the same school that my brothers and I grew up in. The baby's class is populated with a whole slew of kids whose parents went to school with me and my brothers. I walk with the boys, when they will let me, down the same path that I walked to school on growing up.

I guess I should be reporting to you all the latest goings on at the city or the new policy question before us, but mostly I just wanted you to know that I love the neighborhood I live in, the very same neighborhood that I grew up in. I love walking up to House of Pizza on a Thursday night in August. I love summer nights in Newman Park. I love walking my boys to school, waving to my parents as we begin our walk. I love chatting with the parents in the school yard, catching up after the summer, so many of us raised and rooted in this neighborhood. I love walking home towards the Franklin Mountain, daydreaming about the day and thinking about everything that I need to do. My love for this city grew on Louisville Street and that is where my heart still remains. The rhythm of this neighborhood is who I am.

POSTED BY SUSIE BYRD AT 1:12 PM 0 COMMENTS 

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MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2009

## Housing, Transportation, Affordability and Greenhouse Gases



I live in Manhattan Heights. It takes me 10 minutes by car to get to work Downtown.

Actually it takes me 5 to 10 minutes to get most anywhere I need to go in a day: grocery store, good restaurants, gas station. My kids can walk to school. We can walk to two parks, the library, the coffee shop in the library, the swimming pool, the House of Pizza, Papaburger and Food Q in five minutes. The bus runs down Piedras and Alabama, just two blocks from my house in either direction.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), this means I live in a location efficient neighborhood.

While the concept of energy efficiency is a familiar term, locations can be efficient too. Compact neighborhoods with walkable streets, access to transit, and a wide variety of stores and services have high location efficiency. They require less time, money, and greenhouse gas emissions for residents to meet their everyday travel requirements.

Based on this idea, CNT developed the Housing + Transportation Affordability Index, which takes into account not just the cost of housing, but also its location efficiency, by measuring the transportation costs associated with place. Some places cost more to live in not because of the costs of housing but because of the costs of transportation associated with living in that place. Location inefficient places require you to spend more time in your car and more money on gas and car travel.

The City recently contracted with CNT to analyze how affordable El Paso is when you take into account housing costs and transportation costs as a percentage of income. You'll be surprised at the results which can be found at <http://www.htaindex.cnt.org/>. There are also maps that show the greenhouse gas emissions associated with car travel in El Paso.

Let me know what you think.

POSTED BY SUSIE BYRD AT 10:05 AM 0 COMMENTS 

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