

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

azcentral.com

June 5, 2008

By Mike Walbert

Neighbors unite to deal with weed problems

One of its residents labeled last weekend's six-hour work detail a "monumental event" for the Higley Park neighborhood.

Homeowners in Higley Park are taking charge to help clean up their neighborhood, which has been beset by weeds and overgrown landscaping after a homebuilder pulled up stakes.

The neighborhood, northeast of Higley and Ray roads, is a mix of houses built within about the last two years, empty lots, foreclosed homes and towering weeds. Some sidewalks are blocked because of the overgrown vegetation.

Last Saturday, an estimated 50 homeowners decided to do something about it and showed up to snatch up weeds and other vegetation in common areas.

With help from AAM, Higley Park's management company, about more than a half-dozen landscaping companies donated time and workers, and the town of Gilbert donated a large dumpster for waste collection, he said.

"We were all so impressed (with) the great attitude that everyone had," said Steena Stencil, AAM vice president of development services. "It really made you feel a part of the community."

Randall Martin Homes pulled out of the neighborhood earlier this year because of the market downturn. The association doesn't have the money to pay for monthly landscaping efforts, Stencil said. She added AAM officials are optimistic about a turnaround in the housing market, and Higley Park, at some point.

But in the meantime, as homeowners and the management company are facing a difficult situation, neighbors have to rally, homeowner Greg Simon said.

"You've got to get past your own angst and bite the bullet and deal with it," he said.

Simon, 61, has lived in Higley Park for a year. Prior to last weekend, Simon said neighbors didn't really know each other and that the cleanup, which was followed by a cookout, helped bring about some change, possibly setting an example for other communities.

Continued...



"Saturday's event was a monumental step forward in being able to build a community here," Simon said.

Homeowners plan to meet later this month to decide their next course of action, he said.