



April Meeting: Tuesday, April 23, 2002, 7:30 pm, at the Plaza Hilton Hotel, 8th Floor, on Travis. Reception and cash bar begin at 7:00 pm. Free parking is available in the hotel garage.

Please come to hear and talk about:

- o **Prevailing Lot Size Determinations**
- o **Plan for Southgate Civic Club Web Site**
- o **Plan to Modify Deed Restrictions for Southgate's Respective Sections**
- o **Any New Information About the Beeson and Towers Projects**
- o **Other Topics *To Be Announced* and of Interest**

SPECIAL MEETING: **At 6:30, before the regular meeting, a special meeting will be held,** as requested by a petition of residents and as provided for by the Bylaws. The subject will be **the proposed subdivision of 2107 McClendon into two lots.** The developer will present his plans, Richard will describe actions and recommendations from the Executive Committee, and there will be opportunity for further discussion. There will be no discussion of this subject during the regular meeting.

See the accompanying yellow letter.

February Meeting Highlights: Approximately 35 residents attended the meeting.

- (1) **Richard introduced Paul Colbert,** the only one of several candidates running in the forthcoming primary election who was able to attend our meeting. Mr. Colbert was (as of our meeting) on the Democratic ballot for the Congressional seat vacated by Ken Bentsen. Although he placed behind Carroll Robinson and Chris Bell in the primary election, it is worth noting that Mr. Colbert represented Southgate in the Texas state legislature for 12 years. **Lest we forget, one of Mr. Colbert's legislative accomplishments was that he pushed through legislation that provided the means for Southgate and other deed-restriction neighborhoods to renew those restrictions even though a renewal process had not been written into the original document. His legislation also provided a mechanism for cities to enforce deed restrictions. Our neighborhood benefited directly from this legislation.**
- (2) **Geoff Hutson nominated a slate of officers for the coming year:**

Richard Merrill	President
Beatrice King, Kim O'Reilly, and Laura Macicek	Vice Presidents
Lisa Rigdon	Treasurer
Thomas Perry	Secretary

All except Laura Macicek are incumbents, with Laura replacing Geoff on the executive committee.

There were no other nominations nor volunteers. The motion was made, seconded, and passed to **elect the proposed slate.**

Thank You, Geoff, for your many ideas and contributions. And Welcome, Laura.

- (3) No one was aware of any new developments on either the Beeson building or The Towers.
- (4) **Kiley Athanasiou introduced a highly-charged subject. She explained that Robert Covington, a developer, has purchased the 2107 McClendon property. The property is 100 feet wide, larger than most of the lots in Southgate. Mr. Covington has applied to the Houston Planning and Development Department to replat the property into two lots, each 50 feet wide. He intends to build a single-family residences on each lot. The proposal refers specifically to the creation of a new subdivision to be named Acadian Place. Kiley and other neighbors are very concerned with both the short-term and long-term impacts on property values, the look and feel of the neighborhood, and the meaning of a separate subdivision within Southgate.**

The first public hearing with the Houston Planning Commission was held on February 21. A number of residents showed up at the meeting to object to the replatting proposal. The Planning Commission decided to postpone the decision, conduct a formal legal review, and hear further arguments on March 7.

It was proposed that if the City approved the replatting and the developer continued forward with his plans, Southgate should sue the developer to prohibit him from subdividing the lot. Richard had communicated this possibility to the property owner. Reed Wilson was recommended as an experienced real estate attorney.

Such a suit would cost considerable money. Half of the annual Southgate Civic Club dues are reserved for such contingencies. We currently have approximately \$40,000 in that fund. Further, it was not clear at the meeting how successful the suit would be. Are our deed restrictions strong enough to win?

A relevant case occurred in Southampton in the 1990s. Southampton sued a property owner who intended -- and had City approval to do so -- to divide the property into two lots. Southampton won that case. One distinction between that case and this case is that the Southampton case involved dividing the lot front and back rather than side by side.

Kiley recommended that a **each block in Southgate formally establish its *prevailing lot size* with the City. Once the prevailing lot size is established, lots on the given block cannot be subdivided less than that prevailing lot size.** For example, Kiley has calculated the prevailing lot size on the 2100 block of McClendon to be 65 feet. Had this been already established with the City, the proposed subdivision of 2107 McClendon into two 50-foot lots could not be carried out. Unfortunately, establishing the prevailing lot size cannot stop the current proposal because the developer has already filed his request. **But we can prevent future developer actions like this. And if you don't believe your block has lots large enough to be subdivided, consider this scenario: a developer could purchase two adjacent lots and choose to split them into three smaller lots!**

Kiley described the process for calculating a block's prevailing lot size and submitting it to the City. **This must be done on a block-by-block basis. An individual on each block will need to step forward and perform the calculations, circulate a petition among block residents with 51% agreeing to the designation, and submit the result to the City.** Kiley is already doing this for MacArthur. **Kiley volunteered to assist anyone else who wants to put compile an application for his or her block. Although no formal vote was taken, there was a consensus that prevailing lot sizes should be established throughout Southgate.**

Kiley can be reached during the day at 713-348-6783 or kileya@rice.edu.

[At the March 7 hearing, the Planning Commission postponed its decision to its March 21 meeting to gather more information, especially as a result of the many vocal residents who attended both hearings. At the March 21 hearing, the Commission formally agreed to the developer's proposed subdivision. That outcome, the neighborhood's options, and ramifications will be discussed in a special meeting preceding the regular April 23 meeting!]

Thanks to Kiley, Jane Versalovic, Kim O'Reilly, and Laura Macicek for their leadership in arousing neighborhood interest, organizing the neighborhood's appearances and protests at the Planning Commission hearings, and developing crucial information and actions.

- (5) Richard suggested that Southgate begin to identify and develop any changes that should be made to the neighborhood's deed restrictions. Southgate is divided into three sections, each developed separately at different times in the neighborhood's history. Section 1 extends from the south side of University to the north side of Southgate Blvd. Section 2 is only the south side of Southgate Blvd. Section 3 covers McClendon and southward to Holcombe. **Each section actually has separate deed restrictions.** The deed restrictions in Section 3, for example, require side setbacks of 5 feet, which is more than the setback requirements for Sections 1 and 2.

Section 3 deed restrictions need to be revised by 2010 in order to take effect in 2015. It seems like a long time in the future, but in practice, issues often take several years to work out details, develop the right language, and obtain neighborhood approvals. The executive committee will discuss this at one of its next meetings.

- (6) **Catherline Leachman** inquired about the status of the traffic study and possible traffic modifications that received considerable debate last May. Richard admitted that nothing had been done. His rationale was that he didn't expect a new study to produce results that departed substantially from the forward projections estimated in the last traffic study (1992). Those projections showed a significant amount of traffic on several of Southgate's streets.

Richard suggested that we could take advantage of all the empty lots along Travis and construct a loop between Dryden and Swift. That is a very expensive solution, but perhaps Rice and the City could offer some subsistence?

This whole issue is still quite controversial within the neighborhood. Many residents would like to shut off traffic on some of our streets, while others believe nothing should be done.

One specific issue re-raised during discussion was the traffic along Montclair, especially before school starts and as it lets out. One resident remarked that the situation seems to be getting worse. There is a **Montclair Safety Committee formed last year** that was looking into options such as school speed zone signs (with enforcement), speed humps, sidewalks. (The sidewalk option has its own problem -- yards and possibly trees must be dug up.) That Committee has apparently not made much progress.

University Place Festival: University Place invites all Southgate residents to the third University Place Neighborhood Festival, or **UP-Fest 2002, on Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Rice Stadium.** Rice University and The Village merchants join with University Place in supporting this annual celebration and recognition of all the University Place neighborhoods and to promote community education and safety awareness. The festival is free and fun and fit for all ages. **There will be lots of interesting performances, many by schools and churches from our neighborhoods, and fabulous music from Lady D and the Zydeco Tornadoes. You'll get a chance to talk with and learn from Houston's own crime-and-fire-fighting heroes: Houston Police will be on hand with motorcycles, police cars, the 'Convincer,' the 'Little Helicopter,' and mounted police, and the Fire Department will bring one of its fire trucks. There will be games, face painting, balloons, snow cones, other tasty food and refreshments, plus drawings for prizes. See the attached flyer!**

Ice Cream Social: Reserve Sunday afternoon, May 5, on your calendars. That's the date for the Civic Club's annual Ice Cream Social. As usual, there will be balloons, face painting and crafts for the children dance and conversation music by Seabreeze, and more -- and several flavors of ice cream.

Street Knowledge:

Residential Parking Permits: Within the next two months, expect to see signs on several of our blocks restricting parking to residents (and their guests): 2000 & 2100 Dryden; 2000 Goldsmith, 2100 MacArthur; 2000 McClendon; 1900, 2000, & 2100 Swift; 2000 & 2100 Southgate, .
Congratulations and thank you's to these residents who have led the charge on their blocks!

Kiley Anathasiou

Sherry & Ewing Clemons

Carol Hermes

Betsy Taylor

Hank and Janet Chavetz

Saundria Gray

Duane Sudduth

University & South Main Construction: For those of you wondering what is going there, the City is creating a right-turn lane to accomodate Metro buses that turn wide from University onto South Main. To create this new lane, the City has to cut into the right-of-way area between the street and the sidewalk. **Two large trees in this right-of-way area are being dug up for transplanting on the property owned by Rice.** Let's hope these two beautiful trees survive the ordeal. Meanwhile, be prepared for a few months of hassle as construction proceeds.

Sewer Repair/Replacement: You may have noticed the fluroescent green street/curb markings or seen City workers in the neighborhood. **Sewage backup along the City's easement property behind Swift and Addison and into residents' yards and houses has prompted cleaning and inspection of the neighborhood's sewer systems, perhaps installation of one or more new lines.**

I-610 and SW Freeway Interchange: Driving through the West Loop and SW Freeway interchange is a challenge these days. **Here are Texas Department of Transportation's projected plans for ramp closures.** **Phase 1**(March 15~April 25): Exit from northbound 59 onto southbound 610 will be closed. **Phase 2** (end Apri through May): Exit from southbound 610 onto northbound 59 (headed our way!) will be closed. **Phase 3** (June~early July): Exit from northbound 59 onto northbound 610 will be closed. **Phase 4** (mid-July~mid-August): Exit from northbound 610 onto southbound 59 will be closed. **Phase 5** (mid-August~mid-September): Exit from southbound 59 onto southbound 610 will be closed. **Phase 6** (mid-September~mid-October): Exit from southbound 610 onto southbound 59 will be reduced to one lane only. Expect detours and delays -- and look for alternative routes to avoid the interchange altogether. See web sites www.scotthochberg.com or www.uptown-houston.com for maps, other closures, detours, .

Calendar:

Future Civic Club Meetings:

May 28, September 24, November 26

University Place Festival:

April 20

Ice Cream Social:

May 5

Fourth of July Parade:

July 4

Future Executive Committee Meetings:

May 14, September 10, November 12

Dues Are (Still) Due: It's that time of year once again -- **Civic Club dues for 2002 are due -- \$40 per residence, or \$20 for seniors and residents of multifamily dwellings.** If you haven't already done so, please send your dues (and, if you still have it, the completed form from last month's newsletter) to our Treasurer, Lisa Rigdon, in care of the address shown at the top of this newsletter.

Free Symposium at Rice: Are public schools giving our children a fair shake? Rice University's Center for Education is hosting acclaimed authors Angela Valenzuela, Linda McNeil, and Elnora

Harcombe, who will **address the diverse challenges confronting children in public education and offer positive approaches to overcoming them.** Presentations will include "Subtractive Schooling," "Standardized Tests: Who Pays the Price?" and "The Teacher: The Key to Powerful Learning.' The symposium will be held **Monday, April 22 at 4:30, in the University's Ley Student Center, Grand Hall.** A reception and book-signing will follow the presentations. For additional information, call 713-348-5145.

Neighbors in the News: Seen in the Village News: **Ann Stoudenmire of University Blvd.** will exhibit her monoprints at the Starbucks Cafe on Buffalo Speedway at Westpark. **Ann will donate a percentage of her sales to Casa de Esperanza de los Ninos, a foster care facility for abused and neglected children.** Drop by and see Ann's work.

Welcome New Southgate Residents

Dryden: **Masayoshi and Noriko Shibatani, and daughter Naomi
Anthony and Mary Lucci
Stephen and Anfley Buttram, and son Carter**

Please notify Bea King, 713-521-9390, if you are aware of new neighbors moving into Southgate. Bea has welcome packets containing lots of information about Southgate and Houston.

Please feel free to contact any of your Civic Club officers with neighborhood information or with your interests and concerns about your neighborhood and Civic Club.

President	Richard Merrill	713-961-1408 (office #)	2003 Swift
1st Vice President	Beatrice King	713-521-9390	2057 Southgate
2nd Vice President	Kim O'Reilly	713-523-1433	1936 Swift
3rd Vice President	Linda Macicek	713-664-4289	2122 MacArthur
Treasurer	Lisa Rigdon	713-666-4516	2219 Dryden
Secretary	Thomas Perry	713-660-9488	2130 Southgate

Also, you can send an e-mail note to 'SgateCivClub@aol.com' or to me at 'tomperry56@aol.com.'

Thomas Perry, Editor