

September Meeting: Tuesday, September 24, 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 Tom Reiser and Chris Bell, candidates for U.S. Congress, 8:00 - 8:30.
- o Updates on The Towers and St. Luke's Projects and on Street Closing Options.
- o Results of the Survey on Deed Restrictions and Closing Streets.
- o Southgate's Web Site.
- o Other Topics *To Be Announced* and of Interest.

***Whether You're a Democrat, Republican, Green, Independent, or Whatever,
Remember to Vote on November 5
for the Candidates of Your Choice.
You Must Be Registered 30 Days in Advance.
We Are Precinct #148, and We Vote at Roberts School.***

May Meeting Highlights:

Richard opened the meeting with approximately 75 people in attendance. Special guests included Councilmember Mark Goldberg, Republican Congress hopeful Tom Reiser, and two newspaper reporters, in addition to representatives of the MetrOntario (The Towers) and St. Luke's development teams.

(1) Richard emphasized that **the Texas Medical Center is expected to double in activity and working population over the next 7-10 years. From 1500 to 6000 cars, eventually more, will be passing by -- or through -- our neighborhood** and desiring to park on our streets. In addition to the The Towers and St. Lukes projects, Beeson Properties (recently joined by Hakeem Olajuwon) have announced plans to build adjacent to the Holiday Inn, other developers are tentatively planning a 17-22-story building on the vacant lot at Southgate and South Main, and Rice University will construct some facility, perhaps a convocation center with parking for as many as 4000 cars, on the lot at University and South Main.

Mark Goldberg stated that he and Richard had met with the developers to hear their plans, explain the City's requirements, and convey the neighborhood's concerns. Mark expressed his appreciation for Richard's deep and sincere involvement in the discussions with developers and representation of Southgate's concerns. He also expressed appreciation for the developers' willingness to interact with the neighborhood.

Mark agreed that **closing streets on Southgate's east side is a viable option for mitigating cut-through traffic. He cautioned that there will be a number of organizations within the City that will**

need to approve any such plans. Fire Department Station 3, located at Fannin and Braeswood, serves our neighborhood. Because Station 3 vehicles approach us from the east, closing streets will affect their ability to access fires and other emergencies. One solution could be to identify another station for the neighborhood. Housing and Urban Development also need to approve, but Mark does not see that as a problem. The Police Department need to approve, also for emergency access concerns. Finally, the Solid Waste Division need to bless the plans because of truck access and mobility. He suggested that a pilot program could be instituted for 90-180 days to test both the neighborhood's and organizations' issues.

(2) MetrOntario reviewed the plans they presented at the November 2001 meeting. They **will replace The Towers with a new building -- 7 office floors, 4 parking stories, 200,000 square feet office space.** The footprint will be slightly larger than The Towers building, but there will be no additional impact on the back of the lot. Entrance and exit will be along Holcombe, including any waste pickup. The exterior design of the building is still being worked and debated, but they expect to utilize low-reflective glass. The height of the building will be slightly higher than the current building. A wall will minimize the sound level from the parking area. They expect administrative offices rather than medical services (A trend within the Med Center is to move administrative staff and functions to the periphery, with medical services such as such as laboratories and diagnostic clinics concentrating internally). **Groundbreaking is targeted for February 2003, with completion in the May-July 2004 time frame. Demolition would begin a few months earlier, around October-November 2002.**

(3) St. Luke's plans to construct a new parking and office building, 15 stories tall (11 parking stories and 4 office floors), directly behind the Hilton Hotel. Entrance to and exit from the building will be on Southgate Blvd. (between Travis and South Main). Some 1400+ cars will enter and leave the garage each working day, cars which now park elsewhere in the Med Center. They will request the City install a traffic signal at the South Main and Southgate intersection. **They hope to have their construction permit by July 1, with groundbreaking about September 1. Completion is targeted for December 2003.**

The exterior of the top floors will resemble the current St. Luke's Towers facade. Screens will cover the garage floors (parking ramps need to maintain air circulation, hence they cannot be enclosed). They do not require a variance, but they realize they will have an impact on the neighborhood and would like to work with us to minimize that impact. **During the discussion about closing off the east-side streets to Southgate, the St. Luke's team asked: Do you want this or not? But we must decide soon.**

(4) Several options to reduce the likelihood of traffic flow through the neighborhood were reviewed. Closing off all the streets along Travis would virtually eliminate cut-through traffic, but would reduce residents' freedom of egress and entrance as well. McClendon would become a dead end street. Southgate and Addison would be dead ends as well, although traffic could easily loop from the west route to the east route or onto/from Addison. The difficult challenge is closing Dryden and Swift, and one solution offered was to connect the two streets using the east lane of Travis as the connecting loop, with a median down the center to close off the one-way northbound traffic on Travis' west lane. The median could be a mountable curb so emergency services could still access Dryden and Swift.

One concern expressed was that when University Blvd. floods during heavy downpours, a lot of traffic then take advantage of Dryden and Swift. They would instead have to use the Holcombe and Sunset/Rice thoroughfares.

Traffic could be eased by extending Travis south to Holcombe through what is now the Burger King property. The franchise owners have a profitable business and do not wish to relinquish the property.

Rice University has petitioned the City for a **traffic light at Rice and Shepherd.** This could result in more university traffic exiting on the north side of the campus. It could also hinder Rice Blvd. traffic patterns.

(5) Richard informed everyone that the 2107 McClendon site that was to have been subdivided into two lots has a new deal. Skip Christy has entered into the arrangement with the builders, and part of this deal is that the property will remain a single lot! There was much applause for this outcome.

Medical Center Transportation Master Plan

Two community forums were held this summer to review **preliminary results of a Transportation Master Plan for the Greater Texas Medical Center Area**. A Steering Committee and Technical Committee include representatives of Rice, METRO, the City, Reliant Park, Texas DOT, Friends of Hermann Park, South Main Center Association, and various residential representatives are working with consultant Kimley-Horn & Associates to project traffic impacts of Medical Center expansion plans and to develop options for handling the increased traffic flow. **Kathie Easterly of University Place is on the Steering Committee.**

More than 30 Southgate residents attended these forums, which were intended to obtain community reactions, concerns, and ideas. **One of the proposals was to widen Greenbriar from Rice Blvd. to South Main. Southgate residents expressed serious concerns about this, including that a wider street would only bring more traffic when we all should be encouraging increased use of METRO, that children's safety at Roberts would be at increased risk, and many old trees would have to be destroyed.** Other issues raised ranged from traffic light placement to covered walkways from remote parking lots to impact of more concrete on already poor flood control. Stay tuned.

Community Protection Seminar: Harris County hosts a free Community Protection Seminar on Saturday, October 5, 2002, 8:30 a.m. to noon, at 1019 Congress in the Jury Assembly Room. **Topics include Deed Restriction enforcement, illegal dumping, price gouging, and public nuisance abatement.** Anyone planning to attend is requested to call 713-755-1288 or 713-755-8282 by Thursday, October 3.

Southgate Sign Graffiti Damage

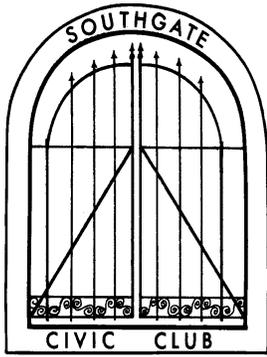
Kim O'Reilly places and retrieves the Southgate Civic Club meeting signs, all of which were purchased this Spring. Following our May meeting, she found one defaced by graffiti: "Saint." The sign will have to be replaced. If you have any information about this, please let Kim know. If you see anyone defacing our or the City's signs, please contact RACS or HPD.

Roberts Rules: Enhance your morning or evening walk by checking out the **newly refurbished Butterfly Garden at Roberts Elementary**. See if you can find the presidential plantings!!! Join Roberts educators and parents in their goal to beautify, inspire and educate. If you would like to donate plants or need to divide your own plantings, call Jenny Sommer at 713-665-2675 or e-mail at sommerhous@aol.com.

Did you know that **Roberts Elementary has students whose heritages represent 43 countries and Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist religions** -- besides (because of?) offering one of the best elementary educational experiences in Houston?

In Recognition of Our Block Captains

A few days before each Civic Club meeting, these newsletters are distributed to each of you so you will know about the meeting and its discussion topics and be informed of the previous meeting's results and other situations and people within and affecting Southgate. Occasionally other announcements and documents are distributed, such as Richard Merrill's letter and survey this summer. **All these items magically appear in your mailbox or on your front porch as a result of the time, foot energy, and dedication of several volunteers -- our block captains. Kim O'Reilly, who coordinates the block captains, and the rest of us on the Executive Committee thank every one of these block captains for their work supporting our neighborhood. And we hope you will thank them yourself.**



And, by the way, **Kim is in need of a block captain for the 2200 block of Goldsmith. If you are interested, please contact Kim at 713-523-1433.**

Southgate Web Site Development

Bill Rouse is putting together a web site that would provide residents with Internet access a means to view deed restrictions, learn the neighborhood's history in words and photos, and seek new information affecting the neighborhood. Bill needs volunteers to help him convert deed restrictions into electronic format and to research and prepare a neighborhood history.

Skills : Word Processing and/or Scanning with OCR Software and/or HTML and/or Graphics.

Interests or Knowledge: How Our Neighborhood was Shaped by Developers, Time, and Residents.

Please Contact Bill Rouse at 713-528-4865.

Membership: 221 households, approximately 1/3 of the neighborhood, have paid 2002 dues. Last year's membership was 236 households.

Our Sincere Condolences to:

The family of Mrs. **Ruth Parks** of 2250 Dryden, who died this past Spring. Mrs. Parks was a long-time resident of Southgate.

The family of Dr. **Curtis Burge**, who died on September 11. Dr. Burge was a past president of the Southgate Civic Club He is survived by his daughter-in-law Dottie, on Goldsmith, and grandson Bill, Jr., on Sheridan.

Street Knowledge:

Residential Parking Permits: Signs went up this summer on many of the neighborhood's blocks: "Parking Not Permitted without Valid Permit." Those blocks no longer resemble parking lots and are much easier for garbage trucks, emergency response vehicles, and residents to navigate! Many of the parkers have simply moved to other blocks. Montclair between Southgate and McClendon is one of these, with cars parked on both sides of the street ("No Parking" signs may have been removed). A reminder to residents who wish to limit parking on any block: Petition the City for No Parking or for Residential Permit Parking signs.

Calendar: --- Note Date Changes ---

Future Civic Club Meetings: **November 19 (Nomination of 2003 Officers)**

Future Executive Committee Meetings: **November 5**

Nomination and Election of 2003 Officers: Nominations commence at the November 19 meeting. Elections take place at the February 25, 2003, meeting. If you wish to volunteer or encourage

someone else to volunteer for an office or have questions, please contact any of the current Executive Committee members.

Welcome New Southgate Residents

Addison: **Erick and Pam Wilson, and Nathan**
Dryden: **W. A. (Bill) Jentsch, Jr.**
Goldsmith: **Dr. Dan Jacks and Dr. Joanne Oaks**
McClendon: **Coleen Shannon**
Richard and Evelyn Lazear, and Lee and Richie
Southgate: **Edgardo and Teresa Acevedo, and Patrick**
Swift: **Juan and Yolanda Londono, and Julian, Andres, and Rosa**

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	713-961-0408 (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	Laura 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