

November Meeting: Tuesday, November 19, 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 Radar for RACS Cars.
- o Updates on The Towers and St. Luke's Projects and on Street Closing Options.
- o Web Site Demonstration.
- o Nominations for 2003 Officers.
- o Other Topics *To Be Announced* and of Interest.

September Meeting Highlights:

Richard opened the meeting to approximately 45 residents and guests. **Guests included Debra Danburg and Martha Wong (candidates for our district in the Texas legislature), Chris Bell and Tom Reiser (candidates for our district in the House of Representatives), Kent Marsh and Eric Johnson of the St. Luke's development team, Greg Marshall of Rice University, and Doug Matthews, who is working with Bill Rouse on the Southgate web site.**

- (1) Richard reported that **260 residences turned in completed surveys.**
- **75% of respondents favored closing the neighborhood's streets at Travis.**
 - **87% favored amending deed restrictions to make the basic provisions applicable to the entire neighborhood and to implement minimum lot sizes.**
 - **70% to 72% favored amending deed restrictions to require a majority of all residents to change deed restrictions in the future and to eliminate the Section 3 waiting period for implementing deed restriction amendments.**
 - **55% to 57% favored amending deed restrictions to require annual dues, to require annual RACS fees, and to implement more specific architectural controls.**

With these survey results, **Richard engaged Reed Wilson, an attorney who specializes in deed restrictions,** to advise us. The Executive Committee will work with Mr. Wilson to develop changes to the deed restrictions. The highest priority will be changes that 70% or more of the survey respondents favored.

With **survey results supporting closing off the neighborhood streets at Travis,** Richard also **requested the St. Luke's development team to proceed with closure planning,** which they had offered to do at previous meetings. Eric Johnson and Kent Marsh updated us on progress. St. Luke's commissioned Kinley-Horn to perform **a traffic impact study in the neighborhood** over the summer. The study **confirmed the neighborhood experiences heavy traffic during rush hours, especially Dryden, Southgate, and McClendon.** Also, the intersections of South Main with University, Dryden, and Southgate are projected to have heavy congestion when the new St. Luke's building is opened. The **South Main-University intersection will experience even more traffic** with the streets closed.

The **St. Luke's team has met with Houston's Fire Department, Police Department, and traffic control organization.** The mountable curb proposed for separating a Dryden-Swift loop from Travis, which will allow emergency vehicles to cross over onto the loop from Travis, is acceptable. When the team meets with the Solid Waste Division, they will propose that, although the Dryden-Swift loop will be one-way, on garbage pick-up days, the garbage trucks will be allowed to go both ways.

One concern raised is that water flows west to east along Southgate's streets. **When the streets are closed off, water must not be allowed to build up at the closed locations during heavy rains.**

University Blvd. residents expressed concern about the increased traffic on their street. They already have difficulty exiting their driveways. Further, with the intersection at Main already clogged, and Dryden and Southgate closed as neighborhood exits, the degrading of the intersection will make it even more difficult for residents to get onto South Main going either south or north.

Once approved by all the appropriate City departments and divisions, City Council will need to bless the street closings and establish an ordinance. At that point, **a six-month trial will be initiated.** The trial will include a traffic study to define how traffic adjusts and what new problems actually arise.

(2) Richard introduced **Chris Bell and Tom Reiser.** Each **presented a five-minute speech, then each had the floor for ten minutes for questions from the audience.**

(3) **Greg Marshall, community relations manager from Rice, addressed concerns from residents.** The major issue was the **use of the Rice Stadium parking lot for Reliant Park employees on Texans game days.** Employees park at the stadium and are then bused to Reliant Park. A resident who lives across from the lot complained that **the buses start at 4:00 a.m. and didn't stop until sunset.** Another resident complained about **Rice's using the lot for commercial purposes,** especially with the increased pollution, noise, and traffic the neighborhood has to endure. **Greg emphasized that Rice receives no money,** that it is to them no different than offering their parking lot to the church and the synagogue in the area. The situation appeared to be improved somewhat the second time, particularly better security. (See the below item, **Use of Rice Stadium for Reliant Stadium Employee Parking.**)

Another complaint was **loudspeaker noise during baseball, track, and football events.** Also, the strong lights seem aimed at the neighborhood more than the fields.

One resident asked if Rice was going to address the street flooding at the University-South Main intersection due to poor drainage. Greg said that if Rice develops a plan for the vacant lot they own at that intersection, only then will they be interested in doing something about the drainage. Otherwise they don't intend to address it -- it's the City's problem.

A traffic light will be installed at the Rice Blvd.-Shepherd intersection, and that intersection will be a formal entrance/exit to the campus (it is currently closed). He expects that to be the second-most-used entrance and the most-used exit because of its access to Highway 59.

Another issue raised again was the **planes towing advertisements during football games and other major events at the Stadium.** Greg emphasized that he and his colleagues have tried every avenue they know to no avail. If the planes file a legal flight plan and don't fly directly over the Stadium, they can fly and advertise. It was suggested that **residents note the names of the advertisers and let them know we won't be using their products unless they stop flying around the neighborhood.**

(4) **Bill Rouse and Doug Matthews unveiled a draft of a web site for Southgate. Residents proposed the home page read "The Southgate Neighborhood of Houston."** The web site contains active links to RACS, the Harris County Appraisal District, Texas Medical Center, City, Councilmember Mark Goldberg, and County offices. The newsletter, minutes from executive committee meetings, names and phone numbers of officers, and other relevant information will be on the site. A collage of photographs -- houses, streets, yards, the school and playground, etc. -- will show off our neighborhood.

Yet to be developed are a copy of the deed restrictions and a history of the neighborhood. **Bill requested help for someone(s)** who can turn the deed restriction documents into computer format and for someone(s) with knowledge about the neighborhood and/or someone who is willing to research and ask questions of long-term residents. **A bulletin board, for Civic Club members only, will be a future feature.** The bulletin board would provide key and as-timely-as-possible information and news.

The suggestion was made that advertisers could fund costs. However, advertisements would clutter the site, and it was agreed we will not pursue advertisers. The suggestion was made that anyone not familiar with the neighborhood be able to request information on the neighborhood via the site.

(5) University Blvd. residents complained that although the majority of the neighborhood may favor closing streets, University residents will be forced to bear increased traffic. They feel split from the rest of the neighborhood. (88% of University residents voted against closing streets at Travis,) **One Southgate Blvd. resident stated he is favor of closing the streets but offered that we all need to recognize the impact on University residents and help them however we can.** Two suggestions were offered -- rumble strips and reducing the speed limit to 25 mph and placing speed limit signs at every block. **Richard will request the City institute the 25 mph limit and place the street signs, and he will also request an increase in enforcement** of the speed limit. Residents chose not to request rumble strips at this time but will continue to consider them as another abatement option.

(6) Richard reported that MetrOntario had not yet received its variance to demolish The Towers and rebuild on the site. The Planning & Development Commission intends to establish a contract with the company to ensure that once they are satisfied with architectural and structural plans that what is designed is what is built. Richard also reported that **removal of the Burger King at Travis & Holcombe is in the City's Capital Improvement Plan -- for sometime in the future.** That would allow Travis to be extended to Holcombe, a further easing of traffic flow problems.

Radar for RACS Cars: As **one response to the lack of speed limit enforcement along University Blvd.,** the Southgate Executive Committee has decided to promote **a project to obtain and install radar units in the RACS cars.** RACS deputies cannot currently issue speeding tickets because they do not have radar. The only barrier is cost. The Executive Committee and RACS are exploring ideas on financing the radar units with the county, RACS, and adjoining neighborhoods. **Actually, as little as a 3% increase in RACS membership could provide the necessary financing.** (Southgate membership in RACS is about 55%, and University Blvd. membership is 25%.)

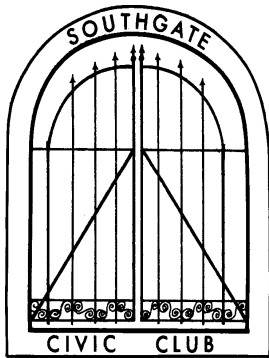
Request for Fun Run Through Southgate: One of the Medical Center organizations is holding a fun run on Sunday, January 5, and **proposed a route proceeding along Holcombe, up Montclair, then back to the Med Center via University.** The Executive Committee agreed the attendant street closings represented unnecessary hardship on neighborhood residents. Richard followed up with Rice University and University Place Association representatives to confirm their support (Rice's Stockton entrance/exit would be closed), then formally replied that **we would not grant the organization's request.**

Roberts News: **On November 19-21, Roberts Elementary will host a Scholastic Book Fair,** a fun-filled book sale and literacy event **geared to excite children about reading and learning.** Parents, children, teachers and the entire community are invited to **"Lasso a Great Book!" at the Reading Roundup, the theme of the Fair.** The Scholastic Book Fair will offer popular books and educational products for all ages, including the newest titles, award-winners, classics, and interactive products from more than 150 publishers. Bring your Christmas list and money on over for a huge selection of books at a great price. **Roberts will use the proceeds to purchase new books and teacher resource materials.** The Fair will be open each day from 7:30 to 3:30 in the school library. Cash and VISA/MC will be accepted.

Use of Rice Stadium for Reliant Stadium Employee Parking: University Blvd. resident J. B. Morris seeks other residents' help in complaining to Rice University.

“Have you been wondering what all the commercial buses are doing in the Rice Stadium parking lot on certain Sundays during the past few months? Noticed all the bus traffic on Rice and University boulevards on these same days? Rice University is allowing the Texans/Reliant Stadium to use the Rice Stadium parking lot for off-site parking for Stadium employees. What does this involve? The short answer: a great deal of needless traffic as well as noise and air pollution for Southgate residents. **Approximately 20 commercial-size buses circulate between Rice Stadium and Reliant Stadium from approximately 4 AM until well after sunset every Sunday that the Texans have had a season game at Reliant Stadium.** The buses line up on University Boulevard starting at 4 AM! Rice has asked the buses to cut their engines off while sitting in the parking lot. Southgate residents who live near the stadium say this just isn't being done all the time or by all the buses. Rice has also asked the buses to limit use of University and Rice boulevards to those portions of each boulevard between Greenbriar and the parking lot entrances on University and Rice. Again, Southgate residents who live on University say this just isn't being done and **buses use University to Main all day most Sundays going to and from Reliant Stadium. Southgate residents who live across from Rice Stadium have asked Rice to require the buses to use Greenbriar exclusively** (thus eliminating bus traffic from the residential portions of both University and Rice boulevards completely. To date, **Rice has been unwilling to agree to this request.**”

“As Southgate residents know, Rice has a history of being a generous neighbor as well as exercising a great deal of discretion and placing limitations on those who are permitted to use its facilities. Unfortunately, Rice may not have exercised its normal vigilance with regard to this decision. **If this use of the Rice Stadium parking lot and the unnecessary traffic, noise and air pollution it creates for Southgate residents concerns you, please express your opinion directly to:**



Block Captains:

Susan Peterson has graciously offered to assume the block captain role for the **2200 block of Goldsmith. Thank you, Susan!**

We now need block captains for the 2100 block of McClendon and the 2100 block of Sheridan. If you are interested, please contact Kim O'Reilly at 713-523-1433.

Southgate Web Site Development

Southgate's web site will be active any day now! Check out the site at <http://www.houstonsouthgate.org>.

Bill Rouse still needs a couple (or more) volunteers to help him convert deed restrictions into electronic format and to research and prepare a neighborhood history.

Please Contact Bill at 713-528-4865.

Calendar:

Future Civic Club Meetings:

February 25 (Election of 2003 Officers)

Future Executive Committee Meetings:

February 11

Our Sincere Condolences to:

The family of **Mark Storm, a long-time resident of Shakespeare.** Mr Storm was an author and artist, including providing artwork for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Welcome New Southgate Residents

Addison: **Doctors Gerarb and Patricia Karsenty, son Antonine and daughter Cecilie**
Sheridan: **Paulie and Andrew McCullough**
Patrick and Donna Wingo
Southgate: **Jack Waymire**
Dr. Hesham and Cherie Chalk-Morsi

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.

Holiday Garbage Pickup: Just a reminder that when the City recognizes a holiday on Monday or Tuesday, our garbage pickup day changes. City employees have holidays on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 24 and 25, and our **garbage pickup that week will be on Thursday, the 26th.** January 20 is Martin Luther King Day, and our **garbage pickup that week is Wednesday, the 22nd.**

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

Happy Holidays and A Great Start for 2003 to Everyone!