



Southgate News

April 2006

Our next meeting will be Tuesday April 25, 2006 at 7:30 pm on the 8th floor of the Plaza Hilton on Travis between Swift and Addison. Reception and cash bar begin at 7:00 pm. Free parking is available in the hotel garage! Please try to attend. Your input is important to the neighborhood.

- Agenda:**
- **Mr. Bob Stott**, Executive Vice President, Texas Medical Center will discuss the TMC's 50-year strategic plan (see following article for details).
 - **A representative from the Rice Area Constable Service** will discuss the RACS program and crime in our neighborhood (see article on page 2).
 - **Other topics of interest**
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Southgate Civic Club Membership Drive

Thank you to those who have joined the Civic Club for 2006. If you have not yet joined, please consider joining when you receive our flyer in your mailbox very soon. Thanks!

Texas Medical Center Development and our Community

The TMC has released its 50-year strategic plan. This document, entitled "A 50 year Master Plan 2006 Update", is available for examination at www.tmc.edu/masterplan/50year/sld001.htm.

Noteworthy to Southgate residents are potential changes to both Southgate Blvd. and Dryden Road. An illustration on slide 24 of this document shows Southgate Blvd. unblocked and extending across Main **through to Fannin** unhindered through our neighborhood. This illustration also shows Dryden extending across **Fannin to Bertner** and into the heart of the Medical Center. **If implemented, these arrangements would make both Southgate Blvd. and Dryden Road major thoroughfares in and out of the Medical Center by way of our neighborhood.**

In a meeting with the Civic Club Executive Committee, a representative of the TMC indicated that the Southgate Blvd. illustration is an error and that TMC will correct the website version of the map. They cannot, of course, correct the 3000

printed copies. **The Civic Club has also requested a letter from TMC verifying that this is unequivocally an error and not a plan.**

The TMC representative did indicate that the alterations to Dryden Road are part of the long-term plan for moving traffic in and out of the Medical Center, but was unable to provide additional details.

Mr. Bob Stott, an Executive Vice President at the TMC, has agreed to address these and other issues concerning Southgate residents at the April, 25th Civic Club General Meeting. Hopefully, Mr. Stott will be able to provide the community with the written assurances and explanations that we need.

The Civic Club encourages Southgate residents to attend this meeting and take advantage of this opportunity to learn about the Medical Center's plans, ask questions and be heard.

Neighborhood Security

For several years, the **Rice Area Constable Service (RACS)** has been contracted by the residents of Southgate to provide the community police service beyond that provided by The Houston Police Department (HPD). The annual cost of this service is \$230 per household (\$150 for seniors). Participating residents may contact RACS **for any police need** and expect a uniformed, armed deputy at their door within a few minutes. RACS also offers participants a **"Vacation Watch"** service where patrolling deputies will watch a home while the residents are out of town. Some residents feel that the vacation watch alone justifies their annual RACS payment.

Southgate is a relatively safe neighborhood, however it does have crime and there is **crime in the immediate area**. Consider the following crime stats recorded by HPD for Beat 10H80 which is bordered by 59, Braeswood, Kirby and South Main and includes the Southgate Neighborhood: In the period from August 2005 through January 2006 there were **2 Forcible Rapes, 15 Aggravated Assaults, 13 Robberies, 65 Burglaries, 25 Stolen Cars and 119 thefts from cars**.

Most Southgate residents probably feel that their property taxes should fund ample police protection and question why they should spend additional money for RACS patrols. The reason is simple:

RACS provides additional security to our community that an overworked Houston Police Department cannot provide. Four years ago, Houston had 5600 police officers; it now has 4600 and 200 more officers are retiring this year. Houston has 2.2 officers per 1000 citizens while the national average is 2.5 and New York City has 4.2. Because of the crime overload in the City, HPD is focusing on bodily injury crimes. To accommodate these violent crime calls, all other crimes are being handled as officer availability permits. In addition, Sam Houston State University has been contracted to perform an allocation study to see where the available officers should go. Since Southgate is a relatively safe neighborhood, officers may be reassigned from Southgate to more dangerous areas. **The bottom line is that RACS is and will increasingly become the police "first responder" for Southgate.**

We have initiated a membership drive to increase community participation in the RACS program. Our goal is 100% participation, one house at a time. If you already participate, we thank you and ask for your continued support. If you do not participate, please consider joining the RACS program. Ask your neighbors who do participate if and how RACS has helped them. **Let's work together to keep Southgate a beautiful and safe place to live.**

To participate, send your name, address and phone number along with payment to:

RACS
2523 McClendon Street
Houston, Texas 77030



A RACS officer will give a presentation and answer questions at the April 25th meeting

February Meeting Highlights

Invited Speakers:

1. Asmara Tekle Johnson: Eminent Domain and Deed Restrictions

Asmara Tekle Johnson is the Chair of "Citizens Against Eminent Domain Abuse". *"The mission of Citizens Against Eminent Domain Abuse is to observe, preserve and protect the character and integrity of residential neighborhoods within the greater TMC area and particularly within the immediate area of SH 288, from encroachment by TMC and other institutions given the power of eminent domain"*. This organization was founded after the Texas Medical Center used eminent domain powers to acquire property and build a parking garage near the TMC McGovern Campus (the former Nabisco plant on Holcombe). Ms. Johnson is a Visiting Professor of Law at Texas Southern University, a lawyer and a member of the affected Central City neighborhood.

She explained that in November of 2004, the TMC informed the Central City community that it would build the parking garage. **The TMC used its eminent domain powers to acquire one lot, purchased others and had them all replatted** for construction of the parking structure. Twice the Honorable Ada Edwards of the Houston City

Council delayed the replatting hearing, but the TMC eventually prevailed. Ms. Johnson explained that **this occurred despite the fact that the neighborhood is deed restricted**. She explained that **an entity with eminent domain power (TMC) also has the power to extinguish deed restrictions**. In this particular case, the TMC used a statute created in 1959 that empowers the TMC to acquire properties adjacent to or contiguous with its existing properties. The acquisition of property for this parking structure represents the first time that the TMC has used this statute. **Any property adjacent to a TMC property is vulnerable**.

Ms. Johnson explained that Representative Garnet Coleman sponsored a bill to address this issue. The first law that he proposed would require entities to give notice to communities before applying this statute.

Ms. Johnson asked for the support of our community. She can be reached at asmara@teklelaw.com or at (832) 621- 5645.

2. The Honorable Anne Clutterbuck, District C Council Member

A. Her staff members include: Tim Douglass (Chief of Staff), Sharon Shanahan (Scheduler), Barbara Hite (Constituent Liaison) and Marta Crinejo (Agenda Director).

B. The Council has been very busy dealing with Houston's increased crime. The Council appropriated 10 million dollars for **police overtime** and wants at least five new police cadet classes. In addition, one hundred officers are being moved from duty at the jail to patrol work.

C. Ms. Clutterbuck and Council member Toni Lawrence (District A) are putting together a **forum on deed restrictions**. This forum is tentatively scheduled for early May 2006.

D. She reported that the City is conducting a third traffic study to assess the need for a traffic light on Greenbrier at Roberts Elementary School.

E. A member of the community asked Ms. Clutterbuck to address her stand on the expansion of the TMC into the neighborhood. She reported that she supports street closures to the extent that the neighborhood wants them. She also reported that she has discussed the expansion of Travis with Mayor White. This expansion is not on the current Capitol Improvement Plan, but Baylor College of Medicine is reportedly assembling a consortium to purchase and demolish the Burger King at Holcombe and Travis to allow for Travis to be extended to Holcombe.

Civic Club Business:

Bylaw Amendment Approved

The following Amendment to the Civic Club bylaws was unanimously approved: Article VI Section 2 stated: *“Withdrawals from funds of this club shall be signed for by two of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, and a Vice-President designated by the President”*.

Amended document states: *“Withdrawals of \$500 or less from funds of this club shall be signed for*

by one of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, or a Vice-President designated by the President. Withdrawals of over \$500 from funds of this club shall be signed for by two of the following three officers: President, Treasurer, and a Vice-President designated by the President”.

Remember to Consult the Southgate Architectural Review Committee before Remodeling

Thinking about remodeling? If you have plans to remodel your house or garage and it involves the exterior, you should have your plans reviewed by the architectural review committee. This committee will look at your plans and make sure that they conform to the deed restrictions of the neighborhood. Having your plans reviewed will avoid the possibility that you get half way through a project only to discover that there is a violation of some kind requiring a costly change in plans. You may not know that Southgate as a whole is made up of four separate sections, each with different

deed restriction language. So just because you see something in one part of Southgate, or even across the street, it doesn't necessarily mean that it conforms to the restrictions in your section. Contact Skip Christy at his office, (713) 524-2462, to arrange for the committee to review your plans (please don't call him at his home number as messages left there are not always picked up promptly). You should allow two to three weeks for this process; the committee tries to be as quick as possible, but all are volunteers who have other obligations.

Block Captain Needed on Dryden

NEEDED! We need a block captain to deliver the newsletters for the 2200 block of Dryden! It really does not take long to deliver the newsletters and they are only published 6 times a year – February, April, May, September, October and November. On rare occasions, block captains will be asked to

deliver something extra like a survey, but effort is made to make all deliveries coincide with the newsletters if possible. Anyone interested should contact Bert Calabro at (713) 218-9042 or bncalabro@hotmail.com.

Hilton Discount for Southgate Residents?

Richard Merrill is trying to negotiate a discount rate for Southgate residents who rent rooms at the Hilton on Travis. The location of the Hilton makes it an ideal Hotel for residents to house visiting family members, friends and business associates. In order to convince the Hilton that friends and family of Southgate residents should receive a discount

off of the Hilton's rates, it would be helpful to have some data addressing how much members of the community patronize the Hilton. If you rent rooms at the Hilton for yourself, your associates or your family, Richard would appreciate a quick email detailing that usage. Email him at fabiomerrl@aol.com. Thank you!

Flood Watch

The Texas Medical Center and Rice University monitor the levels of the Harris Gully and the Brays Bayou and provide this information in real time at the following web address: www.floodalert.org/BraysFAS/. This site broadcasts webcam images showing the level of the Harris Gully as it enters the Brays Bayou,

rainfall tables and current weather radar images. In addition to its real time components, the site contains information about the flooding history of the TMC area. There is a stunning collection of images captured by the webcam during Tropical Storm Allison.

Holcombe Beautification Project

University Place Association, several business owners along Holcombe and the Texas Medical Center have formed the **Holcombe Redevelopment Coalition**. The coalition's mission is to beautify Holcombe from Main to Kirby. They have identified three initial goals: (1) plant trees in the parkways and esplanades along Holcombe (2) landscape parking lots and (3) reduce the number of signs along Holcombe by encouraging businesses to share signs.

Residents of Old Braeswood, Morningside Place and Southgate have been invited to contribute to this effort through donations to purchase trees. Initial tree planting is in progress and will continue through April. Another round of planting is

scheduled for the fall.

You may contribute in your name or as a gift for a friend or family member. Donors contributing the full cost of a tree may do so in honor of a loved one. All contributions are tax-deductible and the trees are earmarked for planting in the neighborhood specified by the donor. (Note that there are physical limitations as to where the larger trees can be planted.) This is a great way to improve the environment and beautify the neighborhood. **If you would like to contribute to this program, please make checks payable to Trees for Houston/Southgate, 2260 W. Holcombe, #162, Houston, Texas 77030.**



Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I will contribute \$_____ towards the purchase of a tree.

Does your employer offer matching funds? Yes _____ No _____
(Please include information if you have answered "yes")

Buy a whole tree:

15-gallon trees (6-8 ft. tall) \$150

65-gallon tree (10-12 ft. tall) \$650

30-gallon tree (8-10 ft. tall) \$300

100-gallon tree (12-14 ft. tall) \$1000

Donation in honor of _____

Contributions are fully tax-deductible!

Neighborhood Notes

- We welcome new neighbor Mike Smith to Dryden.
- Wayne and Deborah Campbell have relocated from Montclair to Macarthur.
- Reminder: Heavy trash day is the 2nd Thursday of the month. Please do not put your items on the curb before the preceding weekend. Note that standard trash pickup is on Wednesday in weeks with Monday holidays. Thanks!
- **Please notify Bea King** (713) 521-3171 of new neighbors. Bea has welcome packets containing lots of information about our neighborhood and our City.

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.

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| President | Catherine Leachman | (713)669-1289 |
| Vice President | Stan Druck | (713)942-2347 |
| Vice President | Blaine Hollinger | (713)665-4458 |
| Vice President | Veljko Roskar | (713)666-2416 |
| Treasurer | Bill Burge | (713)667-6808 |
| Secretary and Newsletter Editor | Andrew McCullough | (713)666-9745 |
| RACS Representative | Richard Lazear | (713)942-7788 |
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