



# Southgate News

May 2006

**Our next meeting will be Tuesday May 23, 2006** at 7:30 pm on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of the Plaza Hilton on Travis between Swift and Addison. Reception and cash bar begin at 7:00 pm. **Purchase drinks in the hotel lobby bar.** Free parking is available in the hotel garage! Please try to attend. Your input is important to the neighborhood.

## Agenda:

- **Water line replacement.** A project representative will address concerns about the ongoing replacement of Southgate's water lines. **(Page 1)**
- **Hurricane preparedness.** Mary Ann Fordyce of Farmers Insurance will discuss emergency preparedness. **(Page 2)**
- **Other topics of interest**

## Water Line Replacement

**Over the next 8-12 months, the water lines in the area bordered by University, Holcombe, Montclair and Travis will be replaced.** No residents west of Montclair will be affected. The current lines range in diameter from 16" (Southgate Blvd., at the request of the TMC) to 2", with most being 6". Like its predecessor, the new Southgate line will be 16" and all others will be 8". This improvement should eliminate the frequent water line breaks the community has experienced and should provide additional water pressure to many residents.

Representatives of the City of Houston and its contactors briefed Civic Club President Catherine Leachman on the project. Important points:

- To install the new lines, **bore pits** (4' deep, 5' wide and 20' long) will be dug in the easements at 100-200 foot intervals. The crews will **bore horizontally** between the pits to install the new pipes. This strategy eliminates the need to dig trenches the length of each block.
- The project will proceed in phases as they lay the new pipe from valve to valve. When a circuit is complete, the installation crew will move to the next phase and a

connection crew will re-connect the service in the first phase. Then the restoration will come in and repair damage

- **Fire hydrants** will be relocated from the corner to the middle of each block. The reason given for this is that a hydrant is less likely to be hit by a car in the middle of a block.
- The digging and boring may **sever streetlight power lines**. CenterPoint Energy's policy is to fix this type of damage only after the project has been fully completed. The City will request that streetlights be returned to service as the work crews move from the area of the affected circuit.
- Needless to say, there will still be significant **effects on lawns and landscaping**. Sod, groundcover, concrete and sprinklers will be **restored to their original condition or better** after the work is complete.
- Shrubs will not be replaced
- The city has hired two urban foresters to care for trees and **attempts will be made not to cut down** or damage trees. At this time, they have not identified any trees that need to be removed. Nevertheless, **some trees may be lost** and depending on the

type, trees may or may not be replaced. Trees that are replaced will be replaced on a per inch basis. For example, a 20" diameter tree will be replaced with multiple smaller trees totaling 20 inches.

- The crews **will try to avoid tearing up driveways**, but in some cases it might be unavoidable. The Civic Club will work with affected residents to obtain street parking permits to use while their driveways are inaccessible.
- Residents will experience **water service interruptions**. Some interruptions will be for 15-20 minutes and others will persist for about 8 hours. The 8 – hour outage will be during the re-connection of service and no one should experience more than one of these long outages. The crews are supposed to put hang tags on residents' doors 24 hours before a long outage and the long outages should be limited to hours

when most, but obviously not all, residents are at work.

- Residents are advised to photograph their front yards and driveways before the work starts. Images of your property will be useful when it comes time to recover damages. Disputes over damages should be submitted in writing to SGCC President Catherine Leachman (address below).
- **It is important that disabled and elderly residents be identified prior to construction because, at times, streets may be inaccessible. Please take a minute to help us identify these folks. Those who need extra consideration are asked to complete the form at the bottom of this page and the Civic Club will assemble a list for the City.**

**A project representative will describe the water line replacement work and answer your questions at the May, 23<sup>rd</sup> Civic Club general meeting. Maps illustrating the routes of the new water lines and the positions of the new fire hydrants will also be available at this meeting.**



If you have medical or other physical circumstances requiring special attention during water line replacement-related driveway or street closures, please complete this form and return to:

Catherine Leachman, Southgate Civic Club President, 2065 Southgate Houston, Texas, 77030 or [cleachman@houston.rr.com](mailto:cleachman@houston.rr.com).

*Please do not call.* The civic club does not want to be responsible for missed calls or transcription errors.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature of concern:**

Wheel chair bound \_\_\_\_\_ Ambulance access concerns \_\_\_\_\_

Other: (please explain)



## **Hurricane Season Preparedness**

Last year's hurricane season reminded Houstonians that we live in hurricane country.

Many Houstonians are transplants to the coast and,

until last fall, had never faced a serious hurricane threat.

At the May 23<sup>rd</sup> Civic Club meeting, **Mary Ann Fordyce** will deliver a program and answer

questions on how to best **prepare for emergencies like hurricanes**. She is a native Houstonian and a licensed insurance agent with Farmers Insurance of Houston.

## April Meeting Highlights

### **Featured Speakers**

#### **1. Mr. Bob Stott (TMC Executive VP)**

*Background: The TMC published a document detailing its 50-year infrastructure plan. The figure on page 21 of the print version of this document illustrated Southgate Blvd. as a main access road to the TMC and open from Travis east through Main to Fannin. This illustration raised concern among the Civic Club officers and precipitated a discussion between Mr. Stott's office and the Civic Club. Mr. Stott assured the Civic Club that this illustration had been drawn in error. The Civic Club Executive Committee asked Mr. Stott to provide written assurance that this illustration did indeed represent an error and not a plan. Mr. Stott provided the Civic Club a letter and agreed to present the TMC's 50-year infrastructure plan to the community.*

**A.** Mr. Stott began his presentation with a **basic description of the TMC**. He noted that 160,000 people visit the TMC annually. The TMC covers about 1000 acres (including Rice University, the newest TMC member). The TMC has its own police, maintenance and landscaping crews. The TMC funds its operation through parking charges and it operates about 26,000 parking spaces. It is about the same size as the Chicago Loop and denser than the financial district of lower Manhattan. The TMC member institutions estimate that there will be about 33 million square feet of improved space by 2008. The current rate of construction is 1.5 million square feet per year. The TMC is required to provide 1.8 parking spaces per 1000 square feet. This parking can be at remote locations.

#### **B. Ongoing and envisioned street improvements:**

- Holcombe will be replaced between Fannin and Braeswood. The water and sewer lines will be upgraded and drainage improvements will be made. There is

interest in expanding Holcombe to four lanes in each direction between Fannin and Braeswood.

- Cambridge will cross the Bayou and continue south from the TMC to the 610 south loop. The TMC is working with the relevant municipalities to have exit and entrance ramps added to 610 at Cambridge.
- Dryden will be made four lanes between Fannin and Main.
- The City has agreed to improve drainage on University Ave. at the request of the TMC. This was also requested by the Southgate Civic Club through the University Place Super Neighborhood action plan in January.
- John Freeman will be extended west across Fannin to Main Street. The road will be constructed beneath a new Methodist Hospital facility.
- Bertner will be extended from the Medical Center to the South.
- Travis will eventually be open from University to Holcombe.

#### **C. Other points of interest:**

- The TMC would like to add street level retail space on Main Street.
- They are studying the feasibility of using people movers to facilitate the movement of people between TMC facilities and remote parking areas.

**D.** Mr. Stott concluded by assuring meeting attendees that the TMC does not want to interfere with neighborhoods and has no interest in using eminent domain powers in the near future. The TMC is willing to talk to the Civic Club about Southgate Street closures, but Mr. Stott offered no opinion on this issue.

## 2. The Honorable Martha Wong

- Representative Wong made an unscheduled visit and updated the community on the Texas Legislature's special session. She reported that, after hours of intense debate, the House was prepared to forward five bills to the State Senate. (*Editors note: Please consult recent sources for up-to-date detailed information on legislative progress*). **Representative Wong invites your comments and questions at (713) 526-WONG.**

## 3. RACS Officers

Lieutenant Carlos Roig and Constable Randall Adams visited with the community about the RACS program and crime in the neighborhood.

- There have been a few thefts from cars in Southgate. Most of these involved items left visible in unlocked vehicles.
- Residents are advised not to do business with door-to-door solicitors and to never give them a credit card, check or ID. Many of these people are criminals intent on stealing your identity.
- The officers advised residents not to post signs on their property advertising the brand name of the alarm system protecting the property. Knowledgeable burglars know how to inactivate alarms and letting them know what brand you have makes it that much easier for them.
- The officers noted that HPD is very overworked and encouraged residents to support the RACS patrol. Email [editorSGNL@yahoo.com](mailto:editorSGNL@yahoo.com) for information on joining RACS.

### ***Civic Club Business:***

- There was a discussion about moving Civic Club meetings to a more economical venue. A decision was reached to hold the May meeting at the Hilton and identify a new meeting place for the September meeting.
- Richard Merrill discussed his efforts to negotiate a discount room rate for Southgate residents at the Hilton. (*See following story for details*)

## **Hilton Discount for Southgate Residents**

The Civic Club has negotiated a discount rate for guest rooms at the Hilton. When friends, family or residents book rooms at the Hilton, they will receive the discount by asking for the **Southgate Civic Club discounted rate**. Sunday through Thursday the discounted rate will range from \$139 to \$159 per night, depending upon the type of room reserved. Friday and Saturday nights the discount

will range from \$109 to \$139. After approximately three months, the Hilton will evaluate usage and determine whether the discount should be continued, increased or decreased. The more the discount is used, the greater the likelihood that the Hilton will maintain or even increase it. Thanks to Richard Merrill for negotiating this rate.

## **Update on Holcombe Beautification**

Southgate has raised over \$1200 for the Holcombe Beautification Project in just six weeks! Business owners will be asked for matching funds. It was hoped that some of the trees would be planted this month, but that may not happen. If not, money will continue to be raised and the entire stretch of Holcombe between Main and Kirby will be planted

this fall. The business owners are also being asked to pay for hedges and shrubs in their parking lots and will be approached about making their signage more attractive. Kathie Easterly of University Place will be asking business owners to remove all illegal signs. The participants in the project have adopted the name "Holcombe Village" to designate the area

and will be working on a fitting logo to identify the district.

**Donations are still being accepted. Donation forms will be available at the May 23 Civic Club meeting.**

## **Neighborhood Notes**

### **We welcome our new neighbors:**

- Michael Smith on Dryden
- Dick Brennan and Maria Schumacher on Dryden
- Aaron and Rachael Foster on Swift
- Ben and Anna Smith on Swift
- Todd and Jennifer Litton on Addison
- Larry K. Johnson on Southgate

**Please notify Bea King** (713) 521-3171 of new neighbors. Bea has welcome packets containing lots of information about our neighborhood and our City.

### **Our condolences to:**

- Bryan and Deborah Domning of Goldsmith on the death of Bryan's mother Mozelle
- Jim Fonteno of Goldsmith on the death of his mother

*Our Sympathies are with these neighbors and their families.*

### **Ice Cream Social**

The 2006 ice cream social was a huge success! The weather was perfect and nearly 100 residents enjoyed ice cream while visiting and listening to the sounds of Al Campbell and his band. We thank Natalie and Jeremy Smith for chairing this event and we are grateful to our sponsors for their generosity: Sally Luna and Heritage Texas Properties, Dr. Rita Cammarata, and Mary Ann Evans and Greenwood King Properties.

### **Southgate Blvd. esplanade**

Sally Luna is collecting money for the upkeep of the Southgate Blvd. esplanade. If you enjoy the Blvd., please contribute. Sally can be reached at (713) 341-1627. Thank you!

### **Reminders**

- Please avoid parking across sidewalks. This violates a city ordinance as it forces pedestrians into streets. There have been several complaints about this. Hopefully these situations can be corrected before cars are ticketed, booted or towed.
- Dogs must be on a leash. It is the law. Also, please clean up after your dogs.

**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	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
Univ. Plc Assoc. Advisor	Thea Fabio	(713)522-7200
Rice Univ. Advisor	Richard Merrill	(713)522-7200

