

**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.**

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- **75% of respondents favored closing the neighborhood's streets at Travis.**
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  - **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.**
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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.

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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.

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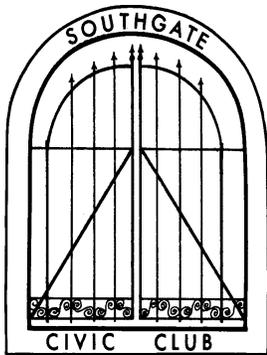
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**Roberts News:** **On November 19-21, Roberts Elementary will host a Scholastic Book Fair,** a fun-filled book sale and literacy event **geared to excite children about reading and learning.** Parents, children, teachers and the entire community are 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.

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“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:**



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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.

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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.

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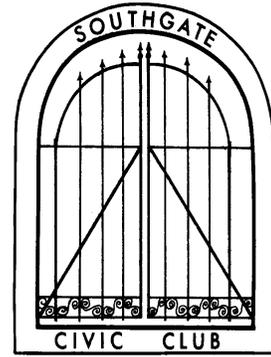
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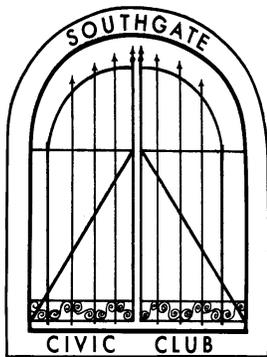
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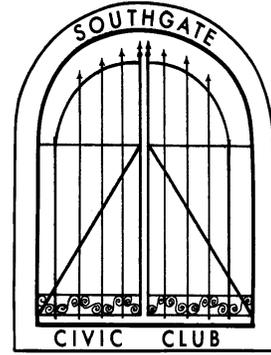
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- o Results of the Survey on Deed Restrictions and Closing Streets.
- o Southgate's Web Site.
- o Other Topics *To Be Announced* and of Interest.

***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.***

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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.**



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**

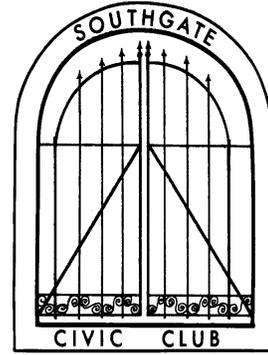
Please notify Bea King, 713-521-9390, if you are aware of new neighbors moving into Southgate. Bea has welcome packets containing lots of information about Southgate and Houston.

**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



**May Meeting**: Tuesday, May 28, 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 **Representatives of St. Luke's Development Team will present their plans for a new building behind the Hilton Hotel. 1,450 cars will enter and exit via Southgate Blvd. each work day. Discussion will include possible street closures to restrict neighborhood traffic.**
- o **Representatives of MetrOntario will present Updated Plans for The Towers.**
- o **Plans to Modify Deed Restrictions for Southgate's Respective Sections.**
- o **Web Site Design.**
- o **Other Topics *To Be Announced* and of Interest**

**Note the Accompanying Green Sheet Letter and Survey.**

**Please Take a Few Minutes to Answer These Questions and Return the Survey** to Your Block Captain, to Richard Merrill, or to Any of the Civic Club Officers.

**The Officers Will Utilize This Information to Determine Neighborhood Interest in Addressing Critical Issues such as**  
Deed Restrictions and Street Closures as a Response to Development & Traffic.

**Thank You for Your Time and for Your Advice.**

Last May's newsletter contained

**An Unleashed Dog Story:** Residents on Southgate Blvd. were hosting a party at their house, and their dog was tied up in the back yard. **Another dog not on a leash** came into the yard and bit into the hip of the tied-up dog. The dog was severely-wounded and was put to sleep a few days later.

Sadly, this year's May newsletter includes

**Another Unleashed Dog Story, in a resident's own words:** "Two days ago a loose dog mauled our cat right outside our door. He came into our yard, chased her down; she died on the way to the Emergency Vet. She was a beloved pet and never left our yard. **A young couple were walking and lost control, they said, of their big dog.** I heard the commotion and ran outside to extricate our cat from his jaws, but it was not soon enough. **I am left with bites and emotional scars. The couple left, and we have heard nothing from them.** They have not even called or come by to see how our pet was doing."

No resident, animal, or child should have to be attacked by an animal in our neighborhood.

**The City's Leash Law states:**

**"It is against the law for dogs to roam at large. Dogs must be enclosed in a fence, or when off the owner's property, must be on a leash."**

Owners of dogs running at large can be fined \$75, and their dogs can be impounded.

**Volunteers Needed to Help Develop Web Site Content:  
Convert Deed Restrictions into Electronic Format or  
Prepare a History of the Southgate Neighborhood.**

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.

Contact Bill Rouse at 713-528-4865.

**April Meeting Highlights:**

(1) As provided for in the Southgate Civic Club By-laws, **a number of residents requested a special meeting to formally address their concerns regarding the proposed subdivision of the 2107 McClendon property into two separate lots and to establish appropriate action by the Civic Club to address both the short-term and longer-term ramifications.** The special meeting was held prior to the regular meeting. The meeting began with approximately 20 residents in attendance, ultimately increasing to more than 40.

**Robert Covington and Schact McCollum**, owners of the 2107 McClendon property, explained their plans for development of the property. Mr. Covington and Mr. McCollum's firm are in the business of purchasing property, building new houses, and selling those houses. They have been active in other areas of Houston -- Bellaire, Braes Heights, West University, Memorial, Tanglewood. **They purchased the 100-frontage-foot property intending to remove the existing house, subdivide the property into two lots, and build two new "nice" houses, each about 3500 square feet.** One will be a "Country French" design with window and shutter features to carry out the design and with stucco exterior and stone trim. The other will be a more traditional design with stucco and either brick or stone trim. Based on feedback from neighbors and Southgate's formal architectural review, they have located garages in the backs of both houses.

Deed restrictions for Southgate Section 3 (which includes McClendon) require side setbacks of 5 feet from the property line. For unattached garages, the side setback requirement is 3 feet. The front face of both houses would be the required 25 feet from the street -- the same for all the other houses along McClendon. Mr. Covington and Mr. McCollum emphasized their intent to protect the existing "nice" trees on each lot, particularly the two large trees in the front. Some trees in the back may be removed. One resident behind the lot requested that a tree be removed because of the impact on his yard.

Mr. Covington and Mr. McCollum explained they were willing to sell the single undivided lot if someone were willing to buy and ensure the lot was developed as a single lot with a single dwelling. Their asking price was approximately \$370,000, basically representing their costs to-date and no profit. They stated **this has not been a pleasant experience for them. Had they known they would encounter the displeasure and resistance of the neighborhood, they would not have purchased the property.**

Richard described the history of development along McClendon. Most of the original lots were platted with a frontage of 60-65 feet. As people purchased lots on which to build houses, some bought one lot plus a portion of another, while others the bought the remainders. Thus some lots today have frontages of 100 feet, while others have frontages of 50-55 feet. (Most of the Southgate Section 1 original lots were 50-foot wide. Larger lots in Sections 1 and 2 are one and a half original lots, or 75-foot wide.) Other McClendon lots have been subdivided within the last 20 years. For example, the 2nd and 3rd townhouses located on the south side and east end of the 2000 block were built on lots subdivided to approximately 44 feet wide. **Richard stated that he has reviewed the Section 3 deed restrictions, and they do not appear to**

**contain any prohibition against subdividing in the manner proposed for 2107 McClendon. Further, the above history tends to establish a precedent supporting the right of an owner to subdivide.**

Richard has reviewed our situation with a respected real estate attorney who has handled similar cases for other areas of Houston. After reviewing the case, the attorney commented, "I'd love to represent you, but I'd hate to take your money and not be able to deliver." **He did not believe we could make a viable case.**

Kiley Athanasiou emphasized that the way to keep this situation from happening in the future is to **establish prevailing lot sizes for each block in Southgate**. Once a prevailing lots size is set, say at the equivalent of 60 feet (prevailing lot size is actually based on square footage), no lot on that block can be subdivided to a lesser size. Kiley has done this for the 2000 block of MacArthur. The City just established this ordinance in January of this year. Kiley offered to help anyone who wishes to develop the calculations for a block and submit the petition to the City.

**Some McClendon residents commented that even though they wished the subdivision would not occur, they feel the overall outcome has been positive. They are satisfied with the builders' plans and especially gratified with the builders' willingness to work with residents on each side of and across the street from the lot.**

**Richard recommended that the residents and the Civic Club no longer oppose the subdivision, that we welcome the builders to our neighborhood, and that neighbors work with them to create the best two houses (and new residents) the neighborhood can have.** The recommendation was turned into a motion, seconded, and agreed to by both voice and show of hands.

#### Regular Meeting

**(2) Bill Rouse, Southgate's liaison with RACS, introduced Dennis Van, one of the Precinct 1 constables that serves our area. Dennis stated that there have been no crimes in the neighborhood since January. He advised us all to know and stay in touch with our neighbors. If we see something strange going on at a neighbor's house, especially when neighbors are out of town, we should call RACS. Dennis or one of his fellow patrol officers on duty will drop by and check out the situation. When asked if he would respond to a situation happening at a resident's house if the resident were not a RACS member, Dennis said that he would if he were called and saw something going on. He would take care of the situation and let the formalities be worked out later. Bill will follow up with RACS leadership on this issue.**

Dennis confirmed that he and his colleagues will respond to complaints of someone making too much noise. One resident complained that during a recent track meet, Rice had the PA system speakers turned directly toward the neighborhood. Dennis said that he cannot do anything about excess noise at a Rice event. In response to a question, **Dennis said that he can give speeding tickets but, since he does not have radar, he cannot validate that a car was going faster than the speed limit. He watches for cars not stopping for school buses letting off or taking on students, running stop signs, etc. He affirmed that door-to-door solicitors are not desirable in this neighborhood. Often, the kids selling magazines, candy, and whatever have committed crimes, often in other cities and states.**

Dennis was asked if he could do anything about the cab drivers at Travis and Southgate when they throw trash out their windows. Dennis said he could if he caught them in the act. **[Editor: Dennis did catch a cab driver in the act. He told the driver he would ticket him and fine him \$250, or as an alternative, the driver could enlist his fellow drivers waiting around the corner to help him pick up the trash on the street and tell them and others not to throw trash on the street anymore. Last seen, the cab drivers were hastily picking up used plastic cups, hamburger wrappers, and other trash!]**

**(3) Bill Rouse is heading a subcommittee of the Executive Committee charged with developing an Internet web site for Southgate Civic Club (other members are Richard Merrill and Lisa Rigdon). The concept for the web site is that it would have two primary feature areas. One would be a "store front"**

containing deed restrictions, history of the neighborhood, perhaps some photographs, all of which would be public information. The other feature area would be a bulletin board only for residents. The bulletin board would offer the opportunity for residents to alert other residents to critical and timely information such as suspicious people or cars in the area, having a bicycle stolen, seeking help in finding a lost dog, etc. Bill stated that if 25% of residents engaged in electronic dialogue, our neighborhood could be even safer.

Bill is talking with Rice University staff about help with developing the bulletin board feature and potentially hosting the site. Other opportunities are also being explored. Those attending agreed that a web site for the neighborhood should be pursued.

(4) **Kiley Athanasiou** was asked to explain some of the issues around **prevailing lot size determination and qualifications**. For a block to qualify for a prevailing lot size, **75% of the lots on a given block must fall within 10% of the calculated average lot size** (excluding corner lots). **The 2200 block of MacArthur could not meet that requirement**. Also, **51% of residents** on the block must sign the petition to establish the calculated prevailing lot size. All the dimensions of each lot can be found online the Harris County Appraisal District's web site (or in their microfiche/paper files, if one prefers). Kiley again offered to assist anyone who wishes to step forward and perform the calculations and obtain the signatures and submit the application for his or her block.

(5) Each of the Southgate sections has its own **deed restrictions**. Richard explained that the **Executive Committee believes there are changes that could be made to strengthen all the deed restrictions and make them uniform across the whole neighborhood, if residents agree we should do this**. He suggested we may not want them quite as dictatorial as some suburban neighborhood restrictions (such as specifying acceptable house colors). Section 3 has a particularly onerous restriction about the timing of amending its restrictions that we may want to alter (changes must be defined by 2010 but cannot take effect until 2015). **Skip Christy** stated he is attempting to arrange for deed restriction specialists to speak at one of our future meetings.

All concurred that the Executive Committee should proceed to develop proposals to strengthen and unify the deed restrictions. **The next step will be a survey of all residents. [Editor: See the attached Survey!]**

(6) There was no news from Mr. Beeson about his project. MetrOntario, the company that intends to tear down The Towers and rebuild an office building on the site, recently contacted Richard. They are still developing their plans and will meet again with us when they are further along. There are **rumors that St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital plans to erect a multistory tower surrounding the Hilton**. He will be following up with St. Luke's to learn more about their plans and timing. **[Editor: May 28 Civic Club Meeting for both St. Luke's and MetrOntario!]** Richard has maintained contact with Rice University about their plans for the vacant lot at Main and University. They still have no firm plans.

(7) **Skip Christy** said he has **observed several No Parking signs missing or down**. He did not know whether the signs had been removed by residents, would-be parkers, or pranksters.

**Ice Cream Social:** **Kim O'Reilly and Laura Macicek**, co-organizers of this year's Ice Cream Social, estimate attendance this year at between 150 and 200 people. Thank you's to Kim and Laura for their time and energies spent telephoning, following up, worrying, and all those tasks required to organize an event like this. Particular thank you's to **Alison and Jon Bieser, Sam and Laura Claiborn, and Alesandra Merrill and Tracey Gilliland** for their personal time and talents. And special thank you's to **Robert Flanders (Today's Vision), Sandra Wilkenfeld (Wilkenfeld Speech & Language Learning Center), and Mary Ann Evans (Greenwood King Properties)** for their financial sponsorships.

**Membership:** 205 households, approximately 1/3 of the neighborhood, have paid 2002 dues. Last year's membership was 236 households.

## **Street Knowledge:**

**Residential Parking Permits:** In addition to those mentioned in last month's newsletter , thank you's also to **Peter Day and Valeri Johnson** for leading the charge on the 2000 block of Dryden.

## **Calendar:**

**Fourth of July Parade:**

**July 4**

Future Civic Club Meetings:

**September 24, November 26**

Future Executive Committee Meetings:

**September 10, November 12**

## **Welcome New Southgate Residents**

Addison:

**Eric, Mary, and Allison Polnau**

Swift:

**Dennis and Judy Cox**

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.

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

Thomas Perry, Editor



**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:**

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

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](mailto: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

Hank and Janet Chavetz

Sherry & Ewing Clemons

Saundria Gray

Carol Hermes

Duane Sudduth

Betsy Taylor

**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](http://www.scotthochberg.com) or [www.uptown-houston.com](http://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