

## Meeting Minutes

Southgate Civic Club

Roberts International Garden

March 6, 2022

Board members in attendance: Jenny Beech, Caroline Freeman, Bill Sanderford, Camille Jenman, Curt Wimberley

Meeting was called to order at 4:33 pm.

### RACS/Constable Update - Sgt Lopez

Sgt Lopez and several other constables were in attendance. Sgt. Lopez gave a brief update. Southgate has RACS service from 7:00-3:00, 5 days a week. Crime is up significantly in the City of Houston - shootings, murders, road rage. Our neighborhood, however, is relatively safe. There are 1-2 burglaries per year, mostly to the businesses on Holcombe. Most of the calls are from CVS. They haven't seen any other crime trends in our neighborhood. If you need a vacation watch, let RACS know (you must be current on your RACS dues in order to submit a vacation watch request). If you come home early, make sure to let RACS know. Make sure to lock your cars. Precinct 1 is working with a lot of neighborhoods to install license plate readers (LPRs). They can get a lot of information from these. You can buy the LPRs and donate them to the county. If the county buys them, it takes longer. NIXLE.com is a website where you can sign up to receive crime alerts and other information from Precinct 1.

Southgate will have 3 voting members of RACS soon.

### Historical Districts – Stephen Curry

Patrick Peters of the Southgate architectural review committee introduced Stephen Curry, architect, founder of Curry Boudreaux Architects. Mr. Curry has a special expertise as the president of Houston Mod and a member of the Houston archeological and historical commission for the City of Houston which helps communities through the process of establishing historical districts.

Why should I want my neighborhood to be a historical district? The best places in the world learn to take their past with them. In 1987, the iconic Shamrock Hotel was demolished after a mere 40 years in existence. At the time, there was a small group of protesters but they did not have the resources to prevent the demolition. It's a tragedy that the building didn't last longer. An important lesson that preservationists have learned is that what you get instead is not necessarily an improvement. Now, there's an active historic district program in the City that can prevent such destruction. There are currently 24 historic districts in the City of Houston, soon to be 25. Boulevard Oaks, Shadowlawn and Broadacres are all historic districts. Historic districts represent a very small percentage of the city. Districts can range in size and style. The most recent is Brunner-Harmonium which is only 1 ½ blocks long.

What qualifies as a district – it must be at least 50 years old and have a significant number of buildings that conform to the original stock. There are no particular style requirements. Districts can have non-contributing properties (meaning that they don't conform to the original stock). Districts can also have property designated as a protected landmark. Any major changes to a structure in an historic district

(ones that would require a permit) require that the change be approved by the preservation committee. Changes must be appropriate for the style of the district.

In order to be designated an historic district, you need 67% approval from the homeowners in the district.

Each district has its own set of guidelines, including scale, floor to area ratio. Planning dept only has purview over what you can see from the street.

Property values in a historic district tend to stay the same, but the edges of the neighborhood tends to improve.

Mr. Curry is willing to have a more detailed meeting on the process if anyone is interested.

President Jenny Beech stated that the Civic Club is not planning to apply for an historic district designation but that if a group of neighbors wants to do it, the Civic Club can assist. Ultimately, this would need to be a bottom up effort. Any property owner can apply.

#### City Update – Jenny Beech

University Blvd construction (Kirby to Greenbriar) is going forward but will probably not start until January 2023. Part of the plan is to make it more pedestrian friendly. Greenbriar to Main section is not on the capital budget yet, but this is under way.

The City is planning to install kiosks with digital advertising in various locations throughout the City, including the Medical Center. The kiosks will have a directory and wifi and will provide advertising revenue for the City. There will be one close to Main & University and quite a few others in the Med Center. The Civic Club is monitoring this development.

#### ARC update - Ed Aviles

Goal is to protect the character of the neighborhood, enforce the deed restrictions. In the last year and a half, we've had two replats that would have violated the setbacks but because the ARC was on top of it, we were able to prevent them from going through.

Disclosed that there's a lawsuit filed against the Civic Club and we are working with our insurance company to defend against it. The Civic Club can't give details about the lawsuit because it's pending.

Meeting adjourned