

T H E H E I G H T S

Newsletter of the Houston Heights Association

Volume 33, Number Nine, September 2007



Heights Presbyterian Providing Major Prize for Bike Rally

At the August meeting of the HHA Bike Rally committee, Rev. Mark Downs of Heights Presbyterian Church announced that his church will provide a new child's bicycle for the rally. The bicycle will be awarded, after a drawing, to a 12-and-under participant who finishes the rally.

Heights Presbyterian is also providing all the volunteers for one of the rally check points. The volunteers will be validating rally cards and passing out water.

You can get information at www.houstonheights.org/bicycle.htm and can register on-line at www.SignMeupSports.com.

General Meeting: US 290 Open House

Please note that the September 10 General Meeting will have special hours: 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM and will be primarily in an open house format. There will be a brief business meeting at 7:00 PM.

The meeting room at the Fire Station will be filled with maps, diagrams, and videos describing the US290/Hempstead Highway project. Two representatives from TxDOT's public involvement effort will be on hand to answer questions, listen to your ideas and concerns regarding the project, and provide printed information. Heights residents are especially interested in how this project will work with the long-range transit plan known as METRO Solutions.

Light snacks will be generously provided by HHA President Jim Potter and his wife, Barbara. Thanks, folks!

At a public hearing on July 16, hundreds of residents and business owners along the Hempstead Highway corridor got a look at the transportation improvements planned for the area. You can see what they saw by visiting www.my290.com and by coming to the September HHA meeting.

The US290/Hempstead Road Corridor project is a cooperative effort of TxDOT, the Harris County Toll Road Authority, and the Federal Highway Administration. The purpose of the project is to reduce traffic congestion in the US 290 corridor, improve roadway

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San Jacinto Stone

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operation and traffic mobility on US 290 and Hempstead Road, and bring roadway facilities up to current design standards. Project costs are estimated at \$4 billion.

From Loop 610 to Beltway 8, Hempstead Road will be extensively widened, managed (toll) lanes installed, and a bike trail built. From Beltway 8 to the Grand Parkway, the project will be built in and adjacent to the US 290 right of way. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2011, and the public involvement process is near completion. Right-of-way acquisition is planned for late 2008.

Of particular interest to the Heights is the 50-foot right-of-way being reserved for future high capacity transit along Hempstead Road and US 290. No particular transit technology is proposed as part of this project, although the METRO Solutions plan envisions a commuter rail there in the future. Our concerns as a community have always been how a transit line could be built to serve – and not disrupt – Houston Heights.

Nominations of members to serve as Directors starting next year will be accepted during the brief business meeting starting at 7:00 PM. Please see the article on page 5 for a complete election schedule.

Musicians Wanted

The Heights Holiday Home Tour Committee is seeking musicians of all kinds to add a little Holiday Cheer to the porches of our tour homes. If you are interested in performing, please call Marianne at 713-703-7658.



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PROPERTIES

Next Month

The October 8 General Meeting will focus on education and HHA Director candidates. Members of the Education Committee will be on hand to discuss their activities in the community. Our HISD School Board Member Natasha Kamrani and our Houston Community College Trustee Yolanda Navarro Flores are expected to give us updates on their organizations.

Candidates for HHA Director terms starting in 2008 (or their representatives) will have the opportunity to speak briefly on their qualifications. Please see the article on page 5 for a complete election schedule.

The Heights is published monthly by the Houston Heights Association. Its purpose is to acknowledge achievements and to inform HHA members of events.

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METRO Considering MKT Right-of-Way

A brief article in the August 22 issue of the Houston Chronicle was the first notice most people got that the Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO) board meeting that same day included consideration of buying the MKT right-of-way and putting in a commuter rail train! A link to the article appears below.

The MKT, for those who are relatively new to the Heights, is the abandoned Missouri Kansas Texas Railroad line that ran along 7th Street west of Heights Boulevard, angling to the south east of the Boulevard. It is currently owned by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The City of Houston has long had plans to buy it as part of their Rails To Trails Bikeway program and is still moving forward, with completion of this section expected in 2008.

Commuter rail would be devastating to property values in the southern part of Houston Heights! Imagine a train running a few feet from your house at 5:00 AM bringing in commuters from Cy-Fair; try selling your house under these conditions. Commuter rail would not even stop in our area, so we would see no benefit.

Worse, METRO has refused for two years to engage in any substantive discussion with the Heights about our concerns. The article says METRO refused to give the Chronicle a map or even say why they want the property.

The August 22 article was "buried" on the obituary page. There was nothing on the METRO website about the METRO Board agenda. By the time most people knew of the meeting, it had already occurred. Because METRO requires speakers at the Board meetings to sign up to speak in advance, the neighborhood would have been voiceless even had we attended. Even TxDOT, the agency who owns the property, was not informed of METRO's interest, according to the article.

A follow-up article in the next day's Chronicle said that the METRO board was surprised to learn of the City's plans for the right-of-way. The vote was postponed until METRO could confer with the City, but it was expected to be rescheduled.

There are differences of opinion on whether the existing right-of-way is wide enough to carry both a bikeway and a rail line safely, especially at the narrowest portion through the southeast portion of Houston Heights. There are also significant health and aesthetic concerns about having them so close together.

Feeling Frustrated?

It's time to barrage our elected officials with letters, emails, phone calls, and visits. It's time for our City Council Member to demand a face-to-face meeting between METRO's President and the Heights community.

For updates on this and other land use issues, write to landuse@

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Demo Watch

Another 18 buildings were permitted for demolition or relocation in Houston Heights between July 18 and August 20, according to data supplied by the City of Houston Code Enforcement Division. This brings to 263 the total number of properties demolished or moved out of the neighborhood.

On average, 2.4 buildings are demolished in the Heights every week. Establishment of historic districts is the only legal way to deter demolition and relocation of our historic housing stock. If you live within the boundaries of the proposed historic districts and have not yet signed the petition of support, please do so now. The petition and other information about the historic district effort are available at www.houstonheights.org. Use the pull down menu under property issues.

Below is the list of properties recently permitted for demolition.

1639 Arlington
2220 Cortlandt
803 Waverly
1337 Waverly
109 W. 4th St.
628 E. 6 1/2 St.
628 E. 9th St.
136 E. 23rd St.
414 E. 28th St.

Anti-Graffiti Squad Report

If you came to the monthly meeting in August, you were among the first to see the new graffiti-fighting trailer. The trailer holds all the equipment and supplies needed and allows for much more efficient work. The Heights Anti-Graffiti Squad covers 13 square miles of the



city, from 610 to I-10, from Durham to 45. With this configuration, the trailer can also be lent to neighboring communities who have expressed a desire to duplicate the great success we have had in the Heights. Our graffiti has been reduced 99% in a little over one year. The ongoing efforts of the graffiti squad have been keeping the unsightly tagging barely noticeable. HPD, Neighborhood Protection, and Metro all have contributed strongly to the measure.

The Heights Rotary stepped up to the plate and funded half the cost of the trailer with the rest coming from donations given by citizens just like you. The removable signs were donated anonymously. If you would like to make a donation to help fight graffiti, you can do so by clicking on [this "donate" link](#) to the HHA web site, or sending an email to CleanHeights@aol.com. It is through your generous donations that we continue to enjoy a clean community. The Anti-Graffiti Squad is entirely volunteer.

If you see graffiti, call 311 to report it to the city. You can also contact 311 through the Internet. Sending an email to the Heights Anti-Graffiti Squad at CleanHeights@aol.com lets the Squad know where it is as well.

Grants Available to Heights Educators

It is time once again to submit grant requests to the Houston Heights Association if you educate children within the boundaries of the Association. This program is available to all educators and schools within those boundaries, regardless of affiliation. Limits are \$750 for an individual and \$1000 for a team. Funding is granted based on the number of children impacted, the ability to be shared and duplicated by other classrooms, and other guidelines that will be available online after September 15 or by contacting Sheila Tybor at stybor@houston.rr.com or Karen Derr at karen@karenderr.com.

Resumption Of Printed Newsletters

At its August meeting, the HHA Board decided to resume printing and mailing paper copies of *The Heights* to all members and printing copies for distribution at neighborhood businesses, starting with this issue. Electronic editions will still be available on the web site and announced through email.

Watch for more information about the transition in the October issue.

Attention Heights Fiction Writers

This Holiday season, the Houston Heights Association Education Committee will once again sponsor a "Holiday Read Aloud" at our Heights Library. Last year, Heights children enjoyed a private reading with published author Anne Sloan and received their own copy of her original story and refreshments. Your own holiday children's story could be featured this year.

All work must be original, 600-1000 words, written by a Houston area middle school through adult author who can attend the Read Aloud on the second Saturday in December. Entries are due by November 15. Contact Sheila Tybor at stybor@houston.rr.com or Karen Derr at Karen@KarenDerr.com.

Donations

Our thanks to the following donors for their generous support of the programs of the Houston Heights Association.

Kelly Simmons & Keith

Crane – Urban Forestry
in honor of Angela
DeWree

Stacy & Kay Sutter – Historic
Preservation

Director Election Schedule

Six of the fifteen positions on the HHA Board of Directors will be filled by election over the next few months. Five positions are opening due to normal expiration of terms; members elected to these five positions will have three-year terms. The sixth position is for the last two years of a term ended by resignation.

The five nominees receiving the highest numbers of votes will fill the three-year terms; the nominee receiving the sixth-highest vote count will fill the two-year vacancy. The schedule for the election of Directors to serve terms starting in 2008 will be as follows, in accordance with the By-Laws and Policies of the Association:

- September 10, Nominations for Board of Directors will be held at the General Meeting. Nominators and nominees must be current members of the Association. Nominators may speak for two minutes, seconders for one. Please be sure before you nominate someone that your nominee is willing to commit to serve. Nominees will not be allowed to speak on their own behalf during the September meeting.
- By September 12, the Election Committee will distribute to nominees election packets containing bylaws, policies, articles of incorporation, committee responsibility list, detailed election schedule, and a statement confirming that the nominee has read the bylaws and policies and agrees to serve in accordance with them if elected.
- By September 15, signed statements from nominees are due, as well as a 50-word statement from each nominee for publication in the October newsletter.
- October 8, nominees or their representatives may speak on their qualifications at the General Meeting for 3 minutes. They will also draw for ballot positions.
- On or before October 15, the Election Committee will mail a ballot with a control number to each member whose dues are current as of October 1.
- By November 10 at the close of the post office, ballots returned by mail must be received with control numbers intact.
- November 12, polls will be open for secret balloting in person from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM before the General Meeting. The Election Committee will tabulate ballots and announce the results during the meeting. The results will be published in the December newsletter.

New Members

Please welcome the following new or returning members to the Houston Heights Association.

Geri Adler
American Cancer Society,
Danielle Soria-Orozco
Bill & Beverly Brannan
Joe & Becky Byers
Emily & Kenneth Cole
Tim Corcoran
Suzanne & Vaughn Counts
Farmers Insurance,
David Lorms
Barbara Gardner
Ike & Karly Gibbs
Ed Gonzalez
Alisa Starbird, Broker
Associate, Greenwood
King Properties
Edward & Janet Hess
Jacob Klementick
Louise Konig
Drew & Kat Laxton
Katie McFarland
Trudy Nelson
Chris & Jen Paschke
Ken & Elaine Schneider
Amanda Slate
Michael Stencil
Stephanie & Ed Sullivan
Marianne & Tim Sulser
Stacy & Kay Sutter
UpStage Theatre,
Mary Ann Richie
Trina Wacasey
Laura & Richard Wolfe

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houstonheights.org and request to be put on the Land Use Committee mailing list.

There are many important issues in our area; this one just rose to the top of the list.

Both articles are available on the Houston Chronicle web site:

8/22: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/5076637.html>

8/23: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/metropolitan/5080009.html>

Green Day 2007 in West 11th Street Park

Friends of West 11th Street Park has begun planning its second annual Green Day in the Park. This year, Green Day will be on Saturday, October 20, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM and will feature a free concert by legendary folk singer, Shake Russell.

Green Day will be a time for celebration, education, and fun. According to Lorraine Cherry, president of Friends of West 11th Street Park, "We want to bring everyone together to celebrate this new city park, and to thank the many people who helped make it happen." West 11th Street Park was saved from development in May of this year after years of efforts and the dedication of countless donors and supporters, the City of Houston, the Houston Parks Board, the Friends of West 11th Street Park, and State Senator John Whitmire to continue this habitat for generations to come.

The event will also bring out various Green organizations so that the public can ask questions and possibly get involved. "Last year, we had six organizations represented, and this year we hope to bring even more into the event," said Helen Shumway, a Friends board member who is spearheading the event planning.

Green Day will also be a fundraiser for the park. A recent survey of park users indicated that most want to see the park trails improved, the habitat

Relay For Life 2008

The American Cancer Society is bringing Relay For Life to the Heights! Local organizers are looking for anyone interested in joining them on the planning committee for this event set to take place in May 2008.



Contact American Cancer Society Staff and your Woodland Heights neighbor Danielle Soria-Orozco at 713-706-5632 or danielle.soria-orozco@cancer.org for more information on how you can be a part of this awesome event. Come and be a part of your neighborhood's fight against cancer!!

enhanced, and additional rest areas installed. Since the City of Houston Parks Department has limited funds to support park improvements, the Friends organization needs to raise the money to respond to what people have said they want in the park. Green Day plans include a silent auction, a plant sale, and a donation jar for food.

Shake Russell has enriched the Texas music scene for 30 years, and Green Day in the Park provides a rare opportunity for his many fans to come and hear a free concert against a beautiful, forested background.

Oak Forest Movie In The Park

Oak Forest Homeowners Association invites surrounding civic associations for a free night of fun on October 13 for Oak Forest's Movie in the Park. The fun starts at 7:00 PM on a giant screen outdoors at Oak Forest Park, located at 2100 Judiway. The public is invited to bring chairs, blankets, and refreshments for a relaxing evening. OFHA will provide free popcorn made fresh on-site.

The free event is reminiscent of the old-fashioned local drive-in of the past, when people of all ages gathered together to watch box office hits under the light of the stars. It's the kind of event many of today's adults enjoyed when they were kids.

Oak Forest Homeowners Association understands the importance of community bonding and has coordinated this event to bring friends and neighbors together. "Movie in the Park" promotes a strong sense of community that can lower crime statistics while also giving our residents an activity that encourages family time.

For more information about the Oak Forest Homeowners Association or "Movie in the Park," please visit their website at www.ofha.org, email them at hotline@ofha.org, or call OFHA Public Relations Co-chair Andrea Warren at 713-385-7707.

Calendar (continued from back cover)

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|----------|--|--|
| September 30 | Oct 1 - <i>recycling</i> HHA Land Use 6:30 PM Fire Station | 2 Urban Forestry 6:30, Fire Sta. Bike Rally mtg, 6:30 PM 1045 Ashland | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Heights 1st Sat. Tree Counting and Planting |
| 7 Bike & Skate Rally | 8 HHA General "Education" 7:00 PM Fire Station | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 <i>Deadline for November issue</i> | 13 |
| 14 | 15 - <i>recycling</i> HHA Board 6:30 PM Fire Station | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 HHA Education 6:30 PM Fire Station | 23 HHA Holiday Tour Committee 7:00 PM Fire Station | 24 PIP Meeting 7:00 PM 1602 State Street | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 - <i>recycling</i> | 30 | 31 <i>Halloween</i> | | | |

Community Calendar

Events planned by other community organizations.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, Historic Houston's salvage warehouse is open. Call 713-522-0542 or visit their web site www.historichouston.org for more information.

September 20 - October 6, Opera in the Heights presents *Carmen* by Georges Bizet in Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. For tickets or more information, visit www.operaintheheights.org or call 713-861-5303.

October 12 - 27, UpStage Theatre Evening Series presents *The Pink Panther Strikes Again*, a comedy by William Gleason based on the film. Friday and Saturday evenings, 8:00 PM, Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.upstagetheatre.org or call 713-838-7191.

October 13, 7:00 PM, Oak Forest Homeowners Association presents a free movie in Oak Forest Park; see page 6.

October 20, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, Friends of West 11th Street Park present Green Day in the Park; see page 6.

November 8 - 17, Opera in the Heights presents *The Marriage of Figaro* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in Lambert Hall, 1703 Heights Blvd. For tickets or more information, visit www.operaintheheights.org or call 713-861-5303.

Future History

November 30 - December 2,

Holiday Home Tour

February 24, 2008, Awards

Dinner

April 4-6, Spring Home Tour

June 7, Fun Run

October 5, Bicycle/Skate Rally

Holiday Docents And Head Docents

Want to attend the Heights Holiday Home Tour for free? Volunteer to be a docent and receive a free ticket.

Experienced docents are also needed to act as Head Docents at the various houses. Interact with the homeowners, manage the docents, and keep the tourgoers flowing through the house.

Call Marianne at 713-703-7658 for details.

HOUSTON HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION
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Calendar of Events for September 2007

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|---|--|---|----------|---|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | | 1 Heights 1st Sat. |
| 2 | 3 - <i>Labor Day</i> HHA Land Use 6:30 PM Fire Station | 4 - <i>recycling</i> HHA Urban Forestry Group 6:30 PM Fire Station | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 HHA General "290 Corridor" 6:00 PM Fire Station | 11 HHA Bike Rally Committee 6:30 PM 1045 Ashland | 12 | 13 | 14 <i>Deadline for October issue</i> | 15 |
| 16 | 17 - <i>recycling</i> HHA Board 6:30 PM Fire Station | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 HHA Education 7:00 PM Fire Station | 25 HHA Holiday Tour Committee 7:00 PM Fire Station | 26 PIP meeting 6:30 PM 1602 State Street | 27 | 28 | 29 <i>continued within</i> |

HHA headquarters: The Fire Station is on the corner of Yale and 12th Streets.

HHA web site: <<http://www.houstonheights.org>>