

WINLOW *Place*

A WINNING DEED-RESTRICTED NEIGHBORHOOD OF OVER 400 FAMILIES RIGHT IN THE HEART OF HOUSTON!

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Winlow Place News!

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WINLOW PLACE GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, September 25, 7:30 p.m.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
(SW corner of Alabama and Woodhead; South Entrance)

Find out what's going on in the neighborhood!

Neighborhood Night Out

New trash days / recycling

Montrose Blvd Conservancy

Big Neartown gala on October 18th

Nominations for Board positions
Refreshments and social time afterwards

A Plan for Montrose Boulevard Kay Warhol

A group that includes Neartown residents and business owners is proposing to restore Montrose to a "grand boulevard" all the way from Buffalo Bayou to Hermann Park. This nonprofit group, the Montrose Boulevard Conservancy, unveiled their ideas for Montrose Boulevard to the community at a town hall

meeting in April at Annunciation Orthodox Church. The plan is also posted on their website at www.montroseblvd.org Most talk I've heard in the past on renewing Montrose Blvd. has centered on reconstructing the esplanades at the south end of the street. While that is a part of the long term vision, the focus of conservancy's master plan, "Walkable Montrose," are improvements to make Montrose more attractive and functional for pedestrians. These include safety enhancements like clearly marked pedestrian crosswalks and signals at intersections, sidewalk markings on driveways and lighting designed to illuminate walkways. Also covered in the plan are adoption of a standard 6' width for sidewalks, additional street trees for shade, added



landscaping and special projects such as a “landmark streetscape” at Montrose & Westheimer.

At the April gathering the conservancy leaders showed a projected timeline and budget to implement the master plan, which they hope to accomplish by the end of 2010, starting with a demonstration project. The anticipated cost is in the neighborhood of \$5 million (including maintenance costs during the implementation period). 2010 – 2012 is defined as a transition period to establish long term stewardship and maintenance. They said they are planning to work with adjacent civic clubs to submit capital improvement plans (CIP) to request city funding for portions of the project, otherwise funding will depend on private donations. They hope to transition long term maintenance to Harris County Improvement District No.6 (HCID #6). This management district currently covers only portions of Montrose Blvd; the conservancy is counting on the next session of the state legislature to expand the boundaries to include the entire corridor.

Among the reasons that I support the effort of the Montrose Boulevard Conservancy are:

- I subscribe to the idea of streets as places for people – where people can gather and stroll, eat and shop, sit and watch other people – not solely as speedways for cars. I’ve experienced such streets in other cities and I come away wishing that Houston had more of them. Montrose has the potential to be such a place, but it needs focused attention to realize it.
- Relative to other parts of the city, our Neartown neighborhoods are already pretty walkable, with our mix of businesses and homes in close proximity. I’m eager for improvements that will further encourage walking and that put a priority on the safety and comfort of people on foot.
- This conservancy appears to be taking a very pragmatic approach and making choices with an eye toward future maintenance. For example:
 - Their plan calls for following city standards, such as concrete for sidewalks and standard format and materials for signs and light fixtures, to maximize the potential of the city participating in future maintenance.
 - They are working to get the city to adopt new standards outlined in the master plan (e.g., 6’ sidewalks) for any city work on Montrose Blvd.
 - They’ve stated their intent to work with current property owners and encourage voluntary improvements in keeping with the Walkable Montrose plan.
 - They have identified a possible entity, HCID #6, to take over ongoing maintenance of esplanades, tree replacement, etc. I don’t know whether the management district is the right answer, but there is time to understand the ramifications and discuss alternatives.
 - They have prioritized creating a good pedestrian environment over reconfiguring the roadway and adding esplanades. (The latter is described as part of a second major phase, plans for which have yet to be defined)

I applaud the initiative of this group to create a vision for one of Houston’s significant streets. I believe that we have much to gain from what they have proposed. You should judge for yourself. Take a look at the plan. Send an email (montroseblvd@gmail.com) and tell them what you like and what you don’t. As fellow members of Neartown we have an opportunity to engage with the Montrose Boulevard Conservancy to address the challenges that are inherent in any plan for change. Let’s work with them to help ensure that what they ultimately do truly is an enhancement to our neighborhoods.

The Dark Side of Management Districts ?

M. Needham

Kay is 100% right in urging us to become more informed about this proposal and what it portends for Winlow Place. And the time to get involved is NOW.

Many of you know that I am not a fan of the Management Districts which Houston has allowed to flourish within the city limits.

An MD is a taxing entity. Once it is in place, it can assess all businesses in its jurisdiction at a significant tax rate. It can be put into place by 10-15 people who decide it might be a nice idea, and typically these have been people who themselves end up on the Board of said organization. This group can petition the local lawmaker to push this through the legislature in Austin and while supposedly then, there is a lot of advertising / publicity about whether or not this is a good idea, in the proposed MDs affecting our neighborhoods, no such publicity ever appears to have been undertaken.

Once established, the Board is self-perpetuating. It has no obligation to consider input from the populace – people are welcome to attend the supposedly open meetings, but are not allowed to ask questions from the floor and may or may not get something put on the formal agenda. In Houston also, the tradition has developed that once established, a former V&E lawyer has, in many cases, been a participant in arranging a 30-year bond. That bond is then a legal obligation to collect the taxes – if in default, Paul Bettancourt's office is liable for collecting them and Bettancourt himself has spoken directly of his opposition to these districts.

My objection comes mainly from the secrecy surrounding the establishment and direction and the apparent inner circle financial dealings. Upper Kirby has both a Management District and a TIRZ – a development zone. The finances for these entities are impossible to sort out without a degree in forensic accounting. Upper Kirby has definitely spent money on nice daises in the median (Richmond) and red street signs (which don't do a thing for me, but someone must like them) and a few red telephone booths, (which are repainted periodically at vast expense.)

We have tried to get financial information about the running of other MDs, and it also is obscure. Hawes Hill is a law firm which handles the accounting / disposition of funds for a number of MDs and I have been told by that office that it is impossible to sort out exactly how much is spent in each one because there is some overlap on fees etc. They have kindly invited me to their offices to view the “hundreds of pages” of financial information, but I have not had time to look at it yet. Similarly, I have requested a full financial statement from Garnet's Coleman's MD on the other side of Montrose, and that has not been obtained yet either.

On the ones I have seen, roughly 40-45% of the money received goes for the perpetuation of the MD itself – employees / legal expenses for staying in business / benefits for the employees / insurance, etc. Upper Kirby has a budget of several million dollars year; what I see from the outside is Upper Kirby dedicating more of Kirby to the car than the people, and busily chopping down the trees.

Earlier this year, Niko Niko's sponsored a lavish gathering at the Greek Orthodox church to promote the re-development of Montrose Blvd. All of their plans are available on their website. They have, at the moment, set up as a non-profit organization and are soliciting funds for what, in my opinion, should be a private effort. At that same meeting, the main promoter, a local real-estate developer, announced that it would eventually be turned over to the MD that was created on the East side of Montrose, and which now had been expanded to the west side. One of the stated objectives at that meeting was to eliminate the left turn lanes along Montrose and force much of the North/South traffic onto side streets such as Dunlavy, Mandell and Woodhead.

Others, believing that as only businesses are taxed, think that MDs are just fine. One of the reasons Martha Wong was voted out of office was her work on trying to get an MD established that would have taxed residents. If that precedent had been set, the supposition that only businesses were vulnerable would have flown out the window.

In short, as Kay says, the time to get involved is before plans are finalized, especially as the Montrose development group has another “Free food and drink” infomercial planned for Oct. 18th!

RECYCLING NEWS

Some interesting statistics:

% of total waste recycled

US (lower 48 states)	32.5%
NYC	34%
Ft. Worth	22%
San Francisco	69%
HOUSTON (total)	2.6%

Recycling Participation;

Mandell Place	65%
Southampton	61%
Lancaster Place	44%
Winlow Place	25%

Lots has been said about recycling pros and cons, but it’s not too hard to see that if “trash” is not thrown down in the first place, or is picked up and reused, the streets are cleaner, the landfills do not overflow, the neighborhood is cleaner and we are all contributing to a better quality of life for ourselves and our children.

The City has recently made a big jump in being able to take all the plastic now with #s from 1-7 (except for the 6s). This means that water bottles, detergent bottles, 32 oz yoghurt containers, bleach containers etc can be included. Just check the numbers and avoid the white polystyrene take-home boxes as they do not degrade. (There is a complete list on the flyer the City recently sent to every household, along with the schedule.)

In walking the neighborhood with my dog, I have seen a lot of people doing it right – metals and plastic in the bin / papers contained in bags or something that keeps them from flying about and from being mixed up with the plastic. After all, the recycling team does not have time to also sort this stuff. But there is still a lot of “recyclable” stuff going into the big black bins...

Winlow Place was one of the first neighborhoods to press for – and get – recycling pickup. How about trying to regain our crown? It’s up to us!

And yes, the City has complicated life by jiggering the dates for heavy trash pickup and dividing Tree waste from everything else. But it could be worse – imagine if they didn’t collect it at all! Our heavy trash day is still the second Thursday of the month.

Clip this list.

Please note:

Tree waste: November 13, January 8, March 12, May 14, July 9, September 11.
Other heavy trash: October 9, December 11, February 12, April 9, June 11, August 13

BLOG – LOG – SLOG – SLUG??

Every year one becomes a tiny bit more computer literate. Sometimes it is an uphill struggle, and I have certainly not mastered the blog. I do not read our Winlow Place blog (yet). I do not have one of my own, I don't particularly want one, but I am finally beginning to see how it might work to our collective advantage – thanks to our valiant webmaster, Vernon. Why the conversion?

What are the problems we have as a Civic Club?

- One of our main functions, as the WPCCC, is to try and ensure that our members have access to relevant information in a timely fashion so that when collective action is required – as with Trammel Crow several years ago – and plans for Montrose Blvd now - we can communicate with each other.
- The newsletter is a lot of work. Ask anyone who has ever been responsible for it.
- The internet is a way of disseminating news more quickly, but it is still imperfect. Addresses change. People move. New people do not know that the president maintains an "emergency notification" list and that list is incomplete.
- Not everyone has a landline telephone any more so the "telephone tree" system that many groups used years ago is simply ineffective.
- There is a lot of community information that interests only a portion of our neighborhood and which does not qualify as "emergency notification" or even of broad general interest, like meeting local candidates for office at someone's house.

The Board has been addressing this issue for some time. Some very computer literate users would like to abandon the printed newsletter entirely. Other non-computer users point out quite rightly that under those circumstances they would be cut off from information. So what's a Blog got to do with the price of eggs?

Our blog enables us to comment on these events – from crime stats to political gatherings to art shows by members to garage sales. As Vernon points out, this is the forum for discovering whether anyone else is interested in your subject. If we can learn to begin to use it, it will become an enormously useful tool for keeping abreast of what is happening.

So we urge you to go to the website. Have a look at the Blog. See what you might be missing. We can only do newsletters a few times/year – here's a way of filling in the blanks until the next one arrives on your doorstep.

Thanks, Vernon, for continuing to educate us

Meanwhile, if you would like to be added to the president's emergency list, please do that through sending an email via the website.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

2008 DUES ARE DUE

Last year we had 65 paid up members! Let's see if we can do better this year. Block captains—encourage your folk to mail in their contributions. In 2007, the 1700 blocks of both Marshall and Kipling had outstanding participation, with a high proportion of residents chipping in.

Patron: \$100.00 Mail to Denise Hanks, P.O. Box 980712/77098, or

Regular: \$50.00 Just pay at the meeting on September 25th and save the stamp!

Sr. Citizens: \$10 or what you can afford.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email _____

2008 OFFICERS	
PRESIDENT	Mary Needham
VICE PRESIDENT	Bruce Smith
SECRETARY	Kay Warhol
TREASURER	Denise Hanks
NEARTOWN REP	OPEN

2008 COMMITTEE CHAIRS	
SECURITY	Vernon Durke
DEED RESTRICTIONS	OPEN
PUBLICATIONS	Geo. Barnstone
MEMBERSHIP	Denise Hanks
HISTORIAN	Audrey Cook

Your News Sources	
1.	www.citizens.net
2.	www.neartown.org
3.	www.winlowplace.org
4.	www.richmondrail.org

2008 BLOCK CAPTAINS			
1700 Hawthorne	Pam Jenkins	1707 Hawthorne	713.927.2880
1900 Hawthorne	Paul Cobb	1900 Hawthorne	713.522.8030
1700 Harold	Jan Ossman	1716 Harold	713.529.3191
1800 Harold	Connie Reilly	1829 Harold	713.524.9821
1900 Harold	Bob Mercado	1901 Harold	713.522.4433
1700 Kipling	Kris Kelly	1756 Kipling	713.523.2721
1800 Kipling	Sandra Roeder	1817 Kipling	713.529.4111
1900 Kipling	Donia Caspersen	1902 Kipling	717.522.6543
1700 Marshall	Audrey Cook	1745 Marshall	713.522.9398
1800 Marshall	Bruce Chambers	1848 Marshall	713.822.1577
1900 Marshall	Denise Hanks	1911 Marshall	713.520.1277
1700 W Alabama	Randy Mitchmore	1722 Alabama	713.592.9300
1800 W Alabama	Kathy LeGros	1749 Marshall	713.942.2530
1700 Westheimer	Byron Rusk	1700 Westheimer	713.529.5855

Dates to Remember	
-	Recycling
-	Oct. 7th—Neighborhood National Night Out
-	Big Neartown overview meeting
-	Heavy trash (see page 4)

WWW.WINLOWPLACE.ORG

Please check our website frequently and share your news on our blog!

You can improve our neighborhood security by actively adding news to our website.

PLEASE ALERT YOUR NEIGHBORS OF ANY SECURITY VIOLATION IMMEDIATELY!

wpccblog.winlowplace.org

