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March 2014

CIVIC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



Springtime in the VCCA

Newsletter Published Monthly September thru June
Vermont Commons Civic Association
PO Box 130891, Houston, TX 77219
Issue No. 42

March VCCA Monthly Meeting

The Monthly VCCA meeting will be held on Monday, **March 10th at 7:00 PM** at Café Ginger, located at 1952 West Gray Street in the shopping center near the intersection with Driscoll. We will have a brief business meeting fol-

lowed by a social hour. Come meet your neighbors and make new friends!



Café Ginger

Follow-Up to Questions on Shepherd Drive Construction

During February's VCCA Meeting, several questions regarding the upcoming City of Houston drainage construction project on Shepherd Drive were noted for follow-up. The Communication Director for Council Member Ellen Cohen, District C, provided these responses via email:

Is there any possibility for the streets to be widened to accommodate a center turning lane?

To accommodate a center turn lane, the street would need to be widened (we call this right-of-way [ROW] widening). This means the City of Houston would need to purchase these land parcels from the current property owners, which would adversely impact parking for businesses along the corridor, as well as be cost prohibitive to the City. The proposed paving improvements will maintain the existing geometry of two travel lanes each way with no center turn lane.

What is the total timespan of the project?

The construction duration will be as proposed by the contractors, but our initial estimate is approximately two years.

How is this project funded? Old bonds or new drainage fee funding?

The project will be funded through Fund 4042 -Street and Traffic Control and Storm Drainage DDSRF. It is our understanding from Programming Branch that that fund is new drainage fee-based.

Wanted ! A Volunteer

A Block Captain is needed for the section of Driscoll between Indiana and Fairview. Contact Betsy Banks betsybanks1@gmail.com.

From VCCA President Jeanette Hix:

Thanks to Our Volunteers!

VCCA would not be a success without the many residents who volunteer on its behalf. Joining that list is **Tim Patterson**, who recently volunteered for the Yard of the Month committee, and **Michael and Elizabeth McKinzie**, who will coordinate Citizen Patrol.

Special thanks to **Nancy Higgs**, who chaired the Yard of the Month committee for many years, and to **Linda Perez**, who has been coordinating the Citizen Patrol. Their assistance has been very beneficial to our community, and we wish them well as they pursue other endeavors.

If you see any of these residents out and about, give them a shout of thanks.

Councilperson Ellen Cohen is hosting a meeting on Wednesday, March 5th at 6:30pm at the West Gray Metropolitan Multi-Service Center. The meeting will discuss the CIPs in District C. The project along Shepherd will be included in this discussion.

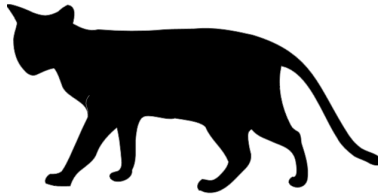
VCCA – Park Civic Merger Update

Some technicalities regarding the enforcement of deed restrictions in Park Civic have come to light; Park Civic is seeking legal counsel to determine the next step for the VCCA - Park Civic merger.

We're Getting Free-Roaming Cats into Homes!

We've recently had some unexpected successes with the VCCA program that pays for spaying and/or neutering of free-roaming cats in our neighborhood.

While the primary goal of our efforts continues to be the prevention of kitten births, the last three cats we've helped are now inside loving homes. In one case, a young cat was tamed by a patient cat lover and brought into her home once the cat was spayed. In the other two cases, the neighborhood cats were already tame, but needed to be fixed and vaccinated before they could be placed into homes.



Reducing Vermont Commons' free-roaming cat population is an ongoing, multi-pronged effort. Preventing kitten births through our spay/neuter program for free-roaming cats is paramount. However, taming wild kittens, re-homing tame cats and keeping owned cats inside are all critical to our success.

If you have unaltered cats/kittens around your house or a neighbor's house, they need to be spayed/neutered. You can identify a cat/kitten that has already been spayed/neutered by looking at its ears. A spayed/neutered cat will have the tip of its left ear clipped off.

If you need assistance getting neighborhood cats fixed, we can help and it's FREE!

Carolyn Levy houstoncatlover@gmail.com
Jane Crowder Schmitt jlc2728@gmail.com
Lisa Rainey brainey2@sbcglobal.net

If you'd like to make a tax-deductible donation to help pay for getting Vermont Commons' neighborhood cats spayed/neutered, please send your check, made out to Rescue Bank (with Vermont Commons on the note line at the bottom), to:

Ms. Elizabeth Asher, Executive Director
Rescue Bank
6363 Woodway, Suite 975
Houston, TX 77057



Come for Coffee

Craving some java and good conversation? Then come meet your neighbors at the monthly **Morning Coffee!**

The hostess for the March coffee will be Vivian Wang on **Tuesday, March 25th at 10 AM, 1904-B Brun Street.**

Crime Prevention Tips— March 2014

There was a break in at a VCCA-area home on Driscoll between Peden and Haddon around lunchtime on February 13. The alarm had not been activated. Intruders broke the rear glass patio door to gain access. The homeowners were only gone an hour. Items stolen included TVs, jewelry, silver flatware and phones. They made a mess of the house, but did not break anything. A police report was filed.

Officer Pate provided the following information and tips:

The police report gives a time span of crime occurrence between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm. The homeowner did not set the alarm.

Tip: Always set the alarm.

There were no serial numbers written down for the stolen items

Tip: Don't wait until tomorrow to write down serial numbers, models, and descriptions of your items

Tip: Take pictures of jewelry. That's the best way to catalogue and identify these items if they are stolen.

Tip: Have dead bolt locks installed on entry doors so that a key is needed both inside and out. If the intruder has to have a key to get back out, it will be much harder for him/her to handle big items.

Always keep your eyes open.

Remember - around 80% of the time, if not more, the police catch a criminal because an alert neighbor witnesses the crime or suspicious activity and calls HPD. The criminal doesn't want to be seen by you or by the police. The criminal is smart. You, as a citizen, resident, homeowner, and neighbor, are able to see unusual activity when the suspect doesn't think anyone is paying attention!

Phone Numbers for HPD Dispatch Center:

9-1-1 — Emergency / Life Threatening Calls
713-884-3131 — Non-Emergency Calls

Crime Update

At the VCCA February meeting, Officer Pate noted that the early December 2013, report of a sexual assault on Elmen Street was a false report.

VCCA Officers

President: Jeanette Hix hix@rmi.net
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2nd VP: Robin Green rbogreene9@gmail.com
Secretary: Lisa McDavid lismcdavid327@gmail.com
Treasurer: Andy Tallin atallin01@yahoo.com
Newsletter: Michael Forlenza & Karen Kane
vcca.newsletter@gmail.com

Lost Lake - Lost No More!

What is going on with the construction along Allen Parkway near Dunlavy? The construction is part of a \$58 million project to enhance and enliven Buffalo Bayou Park from Shepherd Drive to downtown. At the western end of the park will be Lost Lake, a site where a pond that was lost in the 1970s will be restored.

Beautiful gardens will surround the lake. A small visitor center, restrooms, picnic pavilion, boating concession, paddlecraft launch and visitor parking will make Lost Lake one of the park's most popular spots. A magnificent wetland garden area is planned around a restored pond at the intersection of Allen Parkway and Dunlavy. Water will cascade from a feature near street level into the pond, which will form the heart of this garden.

A focal point for the park, the garden will include a robust variety of sweet gum, magnolia and bald cypress canopy trees; redbud and sweetbay magnolia understory trees; various shrubs including Florida anise, coralberry, itea and others; mayapple and hollyfern groundcovers; wetland plants like Louisiana iris, water lily, arrowhead and green arrow alum. Inspired by the project and the vision for Lost Lake, The Garden Club of Houston awarded Buffalo Bayou Partnership a record-setting gift of \$250,000 for this garden area. Approximately 81 new parking spaces will be available at Lost Lake.

- Learn more at: <http://buffalobayoupark.org>.



Yard of the Month for March

The gardens at 2205 Huldy are blooming with pansies, alyssum and foxtail ferns, adding a splash of spring in the neighborhood. Denise O'Doherty and Janette Jeffries enjoy gardening because it is relaxing and therapeutic. Living in this neighborhood gives them a strong connection to our great city.

Got News?

We welcome your news, photos, and editorials, but reserve the right to edit for clarity, style, and length. Send questions and contributions to vcca.newsletter@gmail.com. Submissions are due the 15th of the month preceding the newsletter. *Michael Forlenza & Karen Kane, Editors*



Canine Etiquette

We have a wonderful neighborhood in which to walk our dogs. We especially appreciate when dog walkers abide by the law. This means picking up after our dogs and having our dogs on a leash. The law states that dog walkers are to have direct physical control of their dog at all times. Having a leash means your dog won't dash across the street unexpectedly, and you will be able to control their behavior more easily. It is also essential for walkers to be aware of their surroundings to be safe. If your dog is on a leash, you are better able to pay attention to what is going on around you. We all love having dog walkers in the neighborhood. They add to the fun, community, and safety of our little enclave. Having our dogs on a leash ensures that all concerned will be better safeguarded, and it's the law!

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MIKE SPEAR

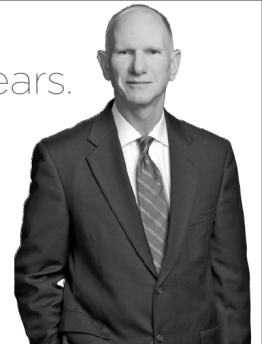
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AT HOME

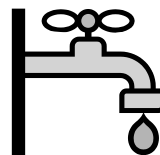
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