

HYDE PARK UNITED

A PUBLICATION OF THE HYDE PARK CIVIC ASSOCIATION

MAY 2011

Hello Neighbors!!



I really like this time of year. The other day I was walking down Montrose Blvd., enjoying the most delightful aroma of honeysuckle . . . FANTASTIC! It is so nice to make the most of these perfect days, before it gets too hot!

Thanks to everyone who has joined our Facebook group; I am enjoying reading the posts and the interaction. It is really evolving into a great community resource for both crime prevention and sharing of ideas . . . keep it up!

Our April membership meeting turned out to be very popular, and we were almost at standing room only. The attendees heard from **Mike Marino**, the General Manager of "Disco" Kroger. He provided us with an update on all the exciting changes happening at the store, along with providing gifts for everyone in the audience. (Yes, I felt like Oprah!)

During April I had the privilege to meet several local neighborhood business owners. I really enjoyed hearing their stories of how they are more than willing to get involved and give back to the Hyde Park residents. We will have more on this topic in future newsletters. Trust me, there are some really neat social gatherings in the works.

One of those local business owners is Realtor **Mike Spear**. I am delighted to announce that Mike is our resident of the month for May. Mike gives up a lot of his spare time to help out with the Civic Association and we can always be guaranteed to see his smiling face at the monthly membership meetings.

On a separate note, Mike has also agreed to sponsor our new email-update/com-

munication service. This is where we will be sending you email updates on meeting schedules, social events, etc.

If we don't have a current email address for you, please send **George Sroka** an email at vicepresident@hydeparkunited.org with your details. I can assure you these email addresses will not be shared, and remain private.

On another topic of communications I am thrilled to announce that our website, www.hydeparkunited.org is about to have a major facelift, thanks to a local marketing/communications firm, Unleaded Communications. They have donated their professional services to help us update this website so you have a go-to resource. We hope to have this finished by the end of May.

Once again, this month is jam-packed full of great stories and articles. I particularly enjoyed the story about **John Zemanek** and his energy efficient home. If you have a story idea, be sure to send it to **Beth Cunningham** at newsletter@hydeparkunited.org. Kudos to Beth for producing a first-class newsletter!

We hope to see you at the May membership meeting. Our guest speaker will be **Katy Caldwell** from Legacy Community Healthcare; she will be giving a presentation on their new facility, which was featured in the HPU April newsletter. So, if you have any questions for her, or the HPU Board, please join us at 7:15 pm on May 2 at the Grace Lutheran Church on Waugh. All the very best!

Trevor Eade
President

BOARD CONTACTS

PRESIDENT

Trevor Eade
president@hydeparkunited.org

VICE PRESIDENT

George Sroka
vicepresident@hydeparkunited.org

SECRETARY

Macy Bodenhamer
secretary@hydeparkunited.org

TREASURER

Carol Brownstein
treasurer@hydeparkunited.org

OTHER CONTACTS

DEED RESTRICTIONS

Stephen Marchione
deedrestrictionschair@hydeparkunited.org

MEMBERSHIP

Stephen Hill
membership@hydeparkunited.org

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Beth Cunningham
newsletter@hydeparkunited.org

NEXT MEETING...

Monday, May 2

Doors open at 7:15PM

The following Special Guest Speaker is ready to take your questions!

Katy Caldwell

Executive Director of Legacy Healthcare

Grace Lutheran Church – See you there!!

www.hydeparkunited.org

P.O. Box 66422

Houston, TX 77266-6642

NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CAPTAINS

Bomar

Dan Schnorr 832-455-7135

California / Westheimer

Kathleen Schipper 713-522-2538

Commonwealth

Timothy Perez 713-304-2672

Fairview / Van Buren

Beth Cunningham 713-557-2567

Hyde Park / Hyde Park Apts.

Linda Carter 713-524-2952
& Alex Aranda 713-533-9474

Hyde Park Crescent

Stephen Hill 281-658-6129

Hyde Park Townhomes

Daniel Posada 713-454-7834

Indiana / Yupon

Brigitte Wignall 832-549-7669

Jackson

Doug Prince 713-471-6816

Maryland

Chris Lemus 713-528-1673

Michigan

Tom Whitworth 713-523-8035

Missouri

Jeanne Wallace 713-528-0834

Montrose

Bill Pesota 713-527-8026

Peden

Mike Lutomski 713-443-4380

Vermont

Sharon Lord 713-522-9427

Waugh

Sue Chin 713-522-3231

Welch

Scott and Lina Rigrod 713-528-2791

West Drew

Mike McKann 713-526-6777

West Gray / Hazel

Sherry Waddell 713-524-7655

Willard

Camille Bogel 713-526-7625

Yoakum

Macy Bodenhamer 713-521-4655

Meeting Minutes

HYDE PARK UNITED CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES: MARCH 2011

Submitted by Macy Bodenhamer, Secretary

INTRODUCTION AND OFFICER REPORTS

The April 2011 meeting of the Hyde Park United (HPU) Civic Association was held at **Grace Lutheran Church** on Monday, April 4.

Hyde Park United President Trevor Eade opened the meeting. Board officers were introduced. **Board Secretary Macy Bodenhamer** asked for a motion to accept the March minutes that were published in the April 2011 newsletter. A motion was made, followed by a second, and the March minutes were approved as submitted by

HPU Treasurer Carol Brownstein submitted the Treasurer's report, which was seconded and approved.

Vice President George Sroka mentioned that our organization would begin using the Constant Contact email distribution service, which would provide greater management and access to e-communication. He also stated that HPU will be holding a volunteer appreciation dinner in June.

Trevor announced a logo design contest to update the HPU existing logo and called for submissions, noting that the contest is open only to HPU members.

Membership Committee Chair Stephen Hill provided an update on membership growth and noted that the social committee is seeking volunteerism from residents.

Cynthia Greenwood and **Kathy Schipper** announced that HPU has 28 current Citizens on Patrol volunteer members and

that a request to HPD for Neighborhood Watch signs for outdoor display has been submitted.

Volunteer **Camille Bogel** was recognized for her efforts in picking up monthly newsletters from the printer and distributing them to other volunteers for distribution to block captains.

NEW BUSINESS

Trevor introduced guest speaker **Mike Moreno, "Disco Kroger" manager**. Mike generously provided all in attendance with Kroger "green" shopping bags.

Mike shared plans for the in-progress Montrose Blvd. Kroger store renovation, which will be a hybrid Central Market/Whole Foods-type concept and the first store in Houston as this model. The remodeled store will have an emphasis on produce and include a bulk-nutrition area, expanded deli, new meat and seafood market, a larger frozen food section, wider variety of grocery products, and even a second-level lounge. The Kroger renovation is scheduled to be completed mid-July. Mike mentioned Kroger's intention to serve our community in an even greater capacity.

Trevor announced the April Yard of the Month recognition to the Ellis family on Commonwealth and that Mr. Ellis, consulate of Malta, may speak at a future association meeting. He also suggested others submit nominations for Yard of the Month.

There was a motion to adjourn the April meeting, followed by a second. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned. ■

Deadline for the June edition of Hyde Park United newsletter is May 22.

Please submit all materials and advertising inquiries to: newsletter@hydeparkunited.org

Yard of the Month 1302 Hyde Park Boulevard



Built in 1906, this lovely Victorian-era beauty is surely one of our neighborhood's treasures. The owners, Sharon and Mitch Young, are both past presidents of the Hyde Park Civic Association, she for seven years, he for two. Stroll or drive by this gem to appreciate in living color the Youngs' devotion to the care and landscaping of their beautiful home.

Neighbor of the Month Mike Spear



A Hyde Park resident for more than ten years on Commonwealth Street, Mike's occupation is also among his favorite activities: Real Estate. Mike's a realtor with Martha Turner Properties and his favorite location is, of course, Hyde Park. Mike's work keeps him busy, but he manages to find time for his other favorite activities — gardening and boating.

Asked what he likes most about living in our neighborhood, Mike declares, "I like walking out my door, and actually knowing my neighbors and the fact that we stop to visit and say HI!!!" Be sure to say "Hi!" when you see Mike around the neighborhood.

JUST dinner.

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Just north of West Gray across from Luby's

Montrose Architect Gets Leaner, Greener

JOHN ZEMANEK KEEPS IT NATURAL WITH HIS NEW ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME

by Karen Derr

Photos by Dalton DeHart

Reprinted with permission from April 2011 *Outsmart Magazine*

Architect and University of Houston Associate Professor John Zemanek is building a new home in the neighborhood he's lived in for over 50 years. He's downsizing from his landmark Montrose home on the corner of Van Buren and Peden. The design of the new home, just one block south on Van Buren, is distinctively Zemanek, with some state-of-the-art energy-efficient features.

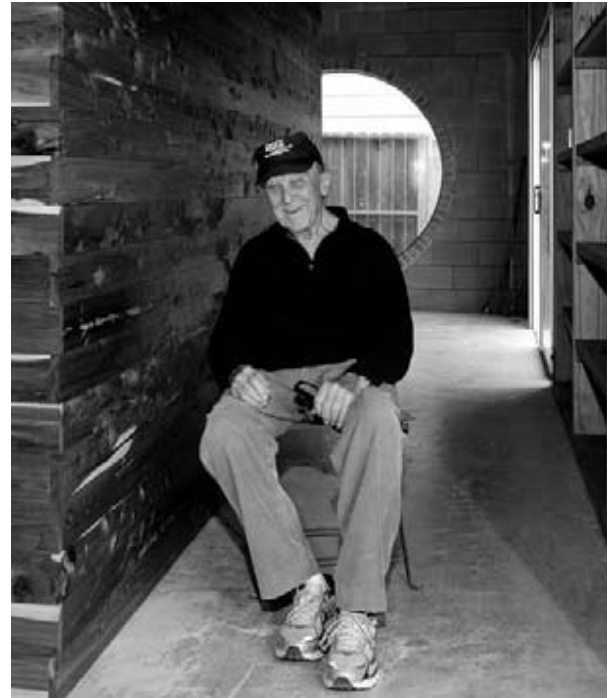
The six-inch thick roof deck is made of Tekton, a cement and recycled wood product designed for superior insulation. Very large solar panels spanning the front of the structure provide approximately 70 percent of the home's electricity. While more restricted neighborhoods or a more traditional style might dictate the panels be hidden or disguised, they are front and center in Zemanek's new home. Along with cedar, concrete, and large expanses of glass, the solar panels work beautifully with this contemporary design. Zemanek has been careful to preserve two large cedar trees growing on the property, and he also used fragrant, locally harvested cedar planks in the interior. "One thing leads to another," the architect remarks.

He, like Frank Lloyd Wright, espouses organic architecture. He shows off a small



stand of Texas wildflowers growing in his front yard. A self-described country boy, Zemanek attributes his love of nature to growing up on a farm. And it's this intimacy with nature that he says makes conservation and energy efficiency important to him. He hopes to have his new home LEED certified. Commenting on the wasteful habits of today's typical consumer, he says that "we're burning the candle at both ends and we don't have to. It's a matter of association. Does burning the candle at both ends [produce] a more complete life, or does coexistence with nature make a life more complete?" He explains with a measure of frustration that "it just doesn't register with some people. They drive through acres and acres of wildflowers and they're playing with their digital toys," says Zemanek, who doesn't use a cellular phone.

Although he's lived in Montrose since the 1950s, he points out that the neighborhood hasn't really changed dramatically compared to Houston outside the loop. He remembers when there were cotton fields around the Galleria. He does think the city's new historic ordinance is very important for neighborhoods like Montrose. He explains that his new house sits on a lot measuring less than 5,000 square feet that had been slated for three townhouse units before he bought the vacant lot for his single-fami-



Building for the future: John Zemanek combines contemporary design with an earth-friendly focus, complete with solar panels, for the home he is building in Montrose.

ly home from a builder. His other reason for supporting ordinances restricting the demolition of historic homes is simple: "I have yet to see a new building that is better for the neighborhood than what was there." He laughs and adds that he excludes his own project, of course.

And what has it been like for Zemanek to live in the epicenter of Houston's gay community for five decades? "It seems to be so naturally integrated. Again using that word nature—it seems like it's always been like this and it's not stressful or conspicuous. There's an 'if the shoe fits, wear it' spirit. It's very nice," he says.

John Zemanek predicts that when the residential building market heats up again, the trend will be toward downsizing, conservation, and energy efficiency. ■

Karen Derr is a frequent contributor to *Out-Smart* magazine.

HPU LOGO CONTEST

Deadline has been extended!

All members of Hyde Park Civic Association are invited to submit entries for a new logo that captures the eclectic charm of one of Houston's oldest inner-city neighborhoods.

Submit your design in .eps or .jpg format by May 22 to president@hydeparkunited.org.

GO GREEN: WaterSmart Landscaping

With this beautiful weather, it is time to work in the yard. Did you know:

- Homeowners use 9–10 times more fertilizers and pesticides per acre than farmers.
- Fifty to sixty percent of our water supply goes to watering landscapes.
- Sixty to seventy million birds are poisoned each year due to pesticides.
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- Read the labels carefully before you apply any garden products.
- Use compost—it builds healthy soil.
- Choose native or near-native plants.
- *Don't overwater* especially if you have applied chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- *Don't bag your grass.* Cut St. Augustine when it is 3 to 4½ inches and set your mower to cut 2 to 3 inches.

For more information on WaterSmart Landscaping contact **Chris LaChance** at 281-218-0721 or c-lachance@tamu.edu. Chris has 18 years of experience as a Master Naturalist and as a Texas Master Naturalist. You may also contact TCEQ to obtain a copy of "A Green Guide to Yard Care" www.tceq.state.tx.us or call 512-239-3100. ■

Submitted by Mary Ellen Whitworth, P.E., from the seminar "Landscaping to Prevent Nonpoint Source Pollution" as part of the Clean Waters Initiative coordinated by Houston Galveston Area Council.

Everyone's Invited! Montrose Bar Cats Gala!

Enjoy all 5 Food Groups — Salt, Sugar, Fat, Caffeine, and Alcohol — while improving your karma! How often does that happen?

A fundraiser for **Montrose Bar Cats** will be held on May 8th at the home of **Nanette Griffin**, 1201 Bomar. Admission is \$20 per person or \$35 per domestic couple.

M.B.C. is a small, dedicated group of neighbors who work to reduce the feral cat population through feeding, trapping, spaying/neutering, and when possible, placing animals to support the quality of life for residents, their companion animals, and businesses in the Montrose area.

Besides a backyard dinner, treat sacks, and other prizes, donors will be eligible for a weekend at The Galvestonian Condominium and a hospitality basket of goodies. This luxury, beachfront condo on Galveston's East End is furnished with a fully equipped kitchen, large-screen T.V.s, Wi-Fi, and has a balcony facing the beach. The winner will have access to the swimming pool, hot tub, and exercise room. There is also an outdoor grilling and dining space with a view of the beach.

An e-vite has been sent to a guest list composed by one of the M.B.C., but we would love to have anyone else who is interested. PLEASE RSVP to ngriffin40@att.net or 281.468.3353 no later than May 4th — and preferably a.s.a.p., so we don't run short of food and drink!



Moo Kitty Winn (aka Cowboy) former stray adopted by Melinda Winn. Melinda is generously donating the beach weekend.



Buddha Belly Griffin-Dove helping with decorations for the fundraiser.

Montrose Bar Cats Update: Of 22 feral cats living at the former Chance's Bar and Mary's Lounge, 20 have been neutered/spayed. It has been an interesting project and relatively easy to accomplish though I'm now facing a real challenge: the remaining two are members of kitty-MENSA! Who do you think will win? I will announce the victor at the next meeting.

— Kathy Schipper

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LOCAL COLOR: FOCUS ON HYDE PARK ARTISTS

This month: Sandie Zilker, Jewelry Designer and Teacher

A self-described “frisky native Texas cowgirl,” Sandie Zilker is one of Hyde Park’s most colorful residents. Sandie never met a color she didn’t like and wears them all—often all at the same time.

Sandie has been teaching jewelry design at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Glassell School, since 1974, and has also taught at University of Houston, where she earned her BFA in Design and Metalsmithing. She picked up an MFA in Metalsmithing at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan along the way, but got back to Texas as fast as she could.

Sandie declares, “The major passion of my work has always been the idea of creating gut-driven art pieces—some wearable, some not. I use lots of materials, almost always metal

and almost always color and texture. Not much neutral in my world.” Her pieces have been exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide. Locally, her designs can be seen at Goldesberry Gallery on Colquitt, High Gloss in Uptown Park, and DesignWorks in Galveston

Besides teaching locally, Sandie holds workshops throughout the U.S. on color, texture, and design materials. She’s on the Advisory Committee for the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, as well as a member of The Society of North American Goldsmiths and the Houston Metal Arts Guild.

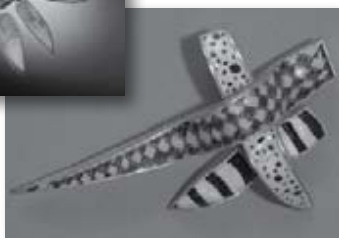
Sandie was a Hyde Park/Montrose resident from 1974 to 1985 and returned to stay in 1998. She loves the neighborhood for its visual



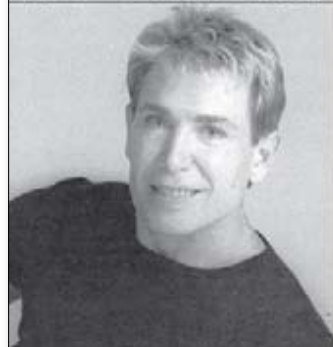
diversity, cultural concentration and eating opportunities. You’ll often see her enjoying a walk through the neighborhood with her cute bad boy, Lester the dachshund. ■

– Beth Cunningham
HPU Newsletter Editor

If you have a favorite local artist you’d like to see featured here, e-mail: newsletter@hydeparkunited.org.



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Positive Interaction Program (PIP)

Reported by Kathy Schipper

Officer Frank Webb of the HPD Mental Health Unit/Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) spoke on the topic of criminal justice and the mentally ill.

In 1955, approximately 559,000 mentally ill individuals were institutionalized. In 2011, there were only 40,000 — and precious few resources available to care for the ones now living on the streets. Texas ranks 50th in the nation in per capita spending on the mentally ill.

It is interesting to note that the Harris County jail houses more mentally ill persons than all 10 Texas mental hospitals combined.

Seventy-one percent of SWAT calls involve persons with mental problems. Thirty-seven percent are armed or suicidal — or both.

Because resources are so scarce, only three illnesses receive treatment: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and severe depression. Two thousand are on a waiting list.

Costs of treatment: community = \$12, jail = \$137, Neuropsychiatric Center at Ben Taub = \$820 and the emergency room = \$1,285.

Officers on the Crisis Intervention Team are paired with a licensed mental health professional and receive 40 hours of training. It is the largest program in the country and the model for state-mandated training.

If a citizen observes an individual in distress, dial 911 and the call will be routed to the Crisis Intervention Team. Examples

of distress: suicidal, making threats to kill self or others, not eating or caring for self, walking on the freeway reading a Bible, etc.

Note: the only person with authority to take a person against their will to the hospital or other care facility is a peace officer.

Please report concerns or questions online to the 802 Westheimer Storefront using this email address: centralpatrol1district@cityofhouston.net. The Storefront will also use this address to send out e-mail messages and alerts regarding recent criminal activity.

HPD again asked that people who want to report suspected criminal activity to contact the HPD Dispatch Line (713) 884-3131.

As a reminder, please report or fax to the Storefront, non-emergency complaints or problems utilizing the Central District One PIP “Citizen Complaint Form,” a copy of which is available on our website. Fax the form to HPD Storefront: (713) 284-8616

The purpose of PIP (Positive Interaction Program) is to facilitate an exchange of information between the Houston Police Department (HPD) and neighborhood residents, using monthly community meetings as a forum. Hyde Park United falls within the boundary of the Central Patrol/District One PIP Group and meets the fourth Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. Everyone is invited (and encouraged) to attend the meetings, which are held at the Police Officers Union Bldg, 1602 State St. The next PIP meeting is May 25, 2011. ■

Neighborhood Crime Report – February 2011

Activity	Street/Block	Premises	Date/Time
Auto Theft	1300-1399 Westheimer	Other Parking Lot	02/10 11pm
	1100-1199 Jackson	Business Parking Lot	02/18 10pm
	1700-1799 C'wealth	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/19 08pm
BMV/Theft	1400-1499 Westheimer	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/27 01am
	1300-1399 Bomar	Residence/House	01/31 08am
	1200-1299 California	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/05 08pm
	1200-1299 California	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/05 08pm
	1500-1599 Fairview	Driveway	02/05 08pm
	2500-2599 Montrose	Restaurant	02/06 11am
	1400-1499 Montrose	Restaurant Parking Lot	02/17 07pm
	1300-1399 W Gray	Other/Unknown	02/22 06pm
	1000-1099 Westheimer	Commercial Parking Lot	02/23 09am
1200-1299 Westheimer	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/27 09pm	
	1100-1199 Peden	Road/Street/Sidewalk	02/28 12am

**Contact HPD dispatch line 713-884-3131
to report suspected criminal activity**

Complete Streets for Neighborhood Livability

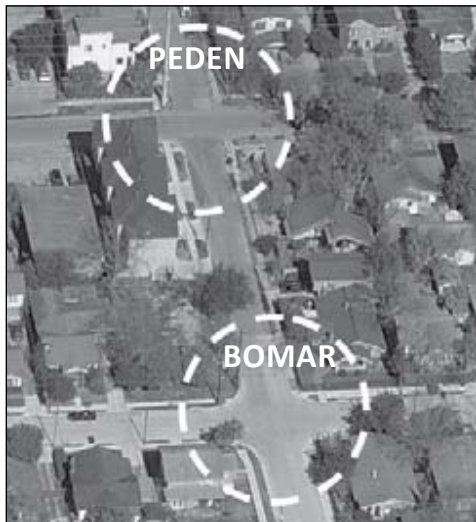
Last June, Hyde Park neighbors learned how traffic calming techniques can improve neighborhood livability from traffic engineer, Ian Hlavacek. Traffic calming is one element of a larger transportation design concept called Complete Streets.

WHAT IS A COMPLETE STREET?

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all travelers. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities can move safely along and across a complete street. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from transit stops.

WHY DO COMPLETE STREETS MATTER?

Here in Hyde Park, we enjoy among the highest rates of walking and bicycling in Houston. Whether we're walking to shops and dinner or bicycling to work and school, many of us are choosing to use active transportation more often. Across Harris County, there are more than 100,000 households without cars, and all of these residents must travel to work, school, and shopping by other means. Complete Streets make travel safer for walkers, bikers, and motorists alike.



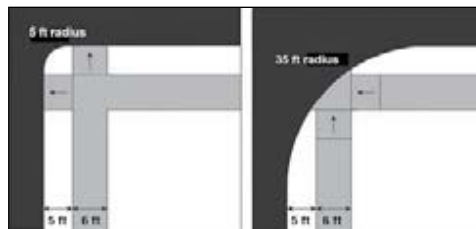
The old Van Buren intersection at Peden is safer for pedestrians than the new ones at Bomar and Willard.

DESIGNING FOR COMPLETE STREETS

If we want streets to work for everyone, design details matter. For example, the width of travel lanes determines whether drivers are likely to speed and also how long it takes a pedestrian to cross the street. Similarly, the curb radius at intersections determines how fast cars go around the corner and whether there's a safe place for pedestrians to wait before crossing.

Here in Hyde Park, recent street reconstruction on Bomar and Willard left the intersections at Van Buren less safe for pedestrians. We have new, larger, curb radii that push back the corners of the intersections so far in some places that the sidewalks no longer meet. As a result, there's no safe place for a pedestrian to stand while waiting to cross the street, at the same time that cars can now turn the corner faster.

This happened because the City of Houston currently has a one-size-fits-all Infrastructure Design Manual intended for suburban-style, car-oriented streets. However, cities like Dallas are currently



A bigger turning radius at intersections makes the crossing distance longer for pedestrians and encourages cars to speed around corners.



With new curbs pushed back at Willard, the sidewalks no longer meet and pedestrians are forced into the street long before it's safe to cross.

developing new Complete Streets design manuals that allow for urban residential streets like ours to work well for all users. We need the City of Houston to adopt a Complete Streets policy, too.

WHAT IS THE OPPORTUNITY IN HOUSTON?

In November 2010, Houston voters approved Proposition 1 Rebuild Houston to establish a dedicated, pay-as-you-go fund to reconstruct and upgrade city drainage and street infrastructure. By adopting new Complete Streets design standards, we can ensure that newly reconstructed streets work well for all Houstonians.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Sign the petition calling on the City of Houston to adopt a Complete Streets policy: http://org2.democracynaction.org/o/6239/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=6356.
- Contact Mayor Parker and our district and at-large Council Members and urge them to adopt a Complete Streets policy to make Houston streets safe for all of us.
- Stay connected with the Citizens' Transportation Coalition (CTC) at <http://facebook.com/ctchouston> or by email to subscribe@ctchouston.org. ■

— Robin Holzer chairs the board of the Citizens' Transportation Coalition (CTC), an all-volunteer nonprofit that works to engage neighborhood leaders in transportation planning.

Welcome to District J

UPDATE ON HOUSTON CITY COUNCIL REDISTRICTING

From the end of Reconstruction to the 1970s, Houston City Council was an all-male, all-white club. The U. S. Justice Department mandated changes which came into effect in 1979. Council was reorganized into 9 District and 5 At-Large seats. As a result, our City's diverse population is better represented, but the difficulties of drawing representative Districts in highly integrated neighborhoods remain.

One of the mandates of 1979 required that when Houston's population approached 2.1 million, two additional District seats would be drawn. That day has come.

The present inclusion of Montrose in District D has often been controversial. A common Hyde Park complaint has been that our concerns are under-represented, lost in the issues of the rest of the District. Redistricting gives us a rare opportunity to join with more like-minded "communities of interest"—areas like the Heights with which we have more in

common not just ethnically, but historically, culturally, and economically.

The proposal before City Council puts Montrose in the center of the newly-created District J. See map: http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/2011/mapa/Dis_J.pdf Along with Heights west of Studemont/Studewood, J encompasses areas south of Montrose all the way past 610, as well as Bissonnet to Westheimer as far west as Highland Village. There is also a large area north of Loop 610 bounded by Highway 290 to the west and N. Shepherd to the east. Conspicuously missing are the River Oaks precincts.

J's voting-age population would be 160,595: 58.7% White Non-Hispanic; 23.1% Hispanic; 8.6% Asian Non-Hispanic; 7.8% Black Non-Hispanic (Source: Houston City Council, http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/2011/docs_pdfs/reDistrict_analysis.pdf).

The aim of the Justice Department is to ensure that minorities are fairly represented, not to bring all like-minded residents into the same district. If Montrose

and District D have been a bad fit, how well will our aspirations and priorities fit in with the rest of J?

Wanda Adams is our current Council Member, and will remain in D after we leave. She believes the proposed plan has some good points, such as increasing Hispanic representation and respecting all current precinct boundaries, but is concerned that J is too spread out. "If Hyde Park and other neighborhoods with nothing in common are joined together, you'll be right back where you started."

She thinks that it might make sense to include River Oaks in J but remove some of the parts around 610 north and south. She is also concerned that the new map may not provide enough Latino representation to pass muster with the Justice Department. Most of all, Council Member Adams cautions, "You will have little time to get to know any candidates for the new seat. Council will probably finish its work in June; the elections will be in November."

Now is the time for us to start thinking about who we want to represent us on Council. ■

—Bill Galbraith, longtime Hyde Park resident and Democratic Precinct Chair

For more info, go to: <http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/2011/>

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A Bit of Hyde Park History

LOCAL RESIDENTS UNCOVER STORY OF 1939 WEDDING IN THEIR HOME

by Kathy Schipper

While Mark and I were contemplating a restoration/remodel of our Craftsman house in the early 2000s, we heard all sorts of stories about the house — stories about Clark Gable throwing a birthday party for Gary Cooper — or another describing how Billie Holiday sang from the upper balcony to a crowd in the street. All the stories are, sad to say, unsubstantiated with facts and presently dismissed as the stuff of myth.

One story, however, was tantalizing and came from a very reliable source, **Eva Laurel**. Just about everyone in the 'hood remembers Eva Laurel (and her cohort **Miss Libby Cook**) decorating the Dolphin Fountain area at holiday time to the enjoyment of all.

Eva told me that a wedding had taken place in the house in the 1930s and she would try to contact the family and get more information. Unfortunately, her source within the family had just moved and she had no forwarding address. Mark and I wanted to meet the couple and see if any of the wedding photos could shed light on how certain rooms in the house looked during the 30s.

So, the house was restored using period-style books as we pretty much gave up hope of ever meeting the mysterious couple. Sometimes I would gaze up the stairwell and imagine a beautiful bride-to-be coming down the stairs in her flowing white gown as Mendelssohn's Wedding March was performed on the piano.

In October 2010, our son **Des** was home from college for the weekend. He came up

the stairs and casually informed me that "some guy is outside and says his dad was married in this house." I shrieked, "Don't let him get away!" and rushed down the stairs.

The "guy" turned out to be **David McKenney** who decided to stop by on a whim accompanied by his wife **Barbie Adams** and their showdog **Udon**. David's parents, **Mary Jones** and **William Nelms McKenney**, were

married in the house on December 29, 1939. Will McKenney is still alive and well — and going strong at age 98! We set a date for a "reunion" with the house and invited Will's grandson **Michael** and his wife **Alice** to come along.



This is what we learned. Originally, the wedding was scheduled to take place at St. Paul's United Methodist Church on Main Street with Will's father, the Reverend McKenney officiating. All preparations were proceeding as planned when the couple received word that Mary's mother, **Berta**, had sustained a broken hip and was confined to a hospital bed with her leg in traction.



There was no practical way for Berta to attend the event at the church in her condition and so another plan was devised. A family member offered the use of her home at 1118 California. It was the perfect solution; the bride's mother could observe the ceremony from a hospital bed placed in the front room of the house and watch as her daughter glided down the staircase.

It is hard to describe the joy in finally getting to meet Mr. McKenney and we all had to blink back tears as Will revisited the house where, 71 years earlier, he had courted his beloved Mary Jones in the autumn of 1939. As Barbie put it, "he gazed up the stairs as if he expected to see Mary coming down on her daddy's arm. It took time for him to organize all the memories that the house held for him, for them." He was a nervous 27 year old groom again!

He showed us where Berta's hospital bed was positioned so she could see the vows exchanged by the fireplace. He laughed as he remembered his mother-in-law with her leg hoisted in the air.

Will McKenney is the last of a line of old-school true and courtly gentlemen. He exudes warmth, kindness, intelligence and good manners — and is still as handsome as ever.

We called Eva Laurel in Hawaii — nevermind the five hour time difference — to let her know of our reunion and how she was right there with us in spirit. Meeting Mr. McKenney and his family is our favorite story of the house — and it's for real!

These recent photos were taken by Michael McKenney. ■

Important Dates & Membership

Garbage & Yard Trimming Collection
Every Monday (except Holidays)
Recycling
MAY 2011
Monday, May 2
Monday, May 16
Tuesday, May 31
JUNE 2011
Monday, June 13
Monday, June 27
JULY 2011
Monday, July 11
Monday, July 25
Heavy Trash (2nd Tuesday)
May 10 – Tree Waste
June 14 – Junk Waste
July 12 - Tree Waste
Monthly Membership Meeting
Monday May 2 – 7:15PM Grace Lutheran Church

Please note – Your automated container & recycling bin should be at your curb by 7 a.m. and removed by 10 p.m., on your collection day. If it appears it may rain, do not put out your newspapers for recycling, because the city cannot recycle wet newspapers (they will pick them up but they cannot be recycled). Also, glass is **NOT** accepted curbside. The closest place to drop off glass (and everything else except toxics) is the recycling place on the corner of Center Street and Harvard. The site has been remodelled with well-labelled containers.

If you do not have a recycle bin and would like to participate in the City’s Recycle Program, please call 3-1-1 to arrange for the City to deliver a recycle bin to your home.

If you are interested in looking at the city’s recycle schedule yourself, or are interested in what may and not be recycled, look at the following website (this is a recent revision): www.houstonsolidwaste.org.



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- Community Activities



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Date:		New Member:		Renewal:	
Lamar Park Donation	\$	Neighborhood Protection Donation		\$	
Name:					
Street Address:					
Home Telephone:		Cell Phone:		Business Phone:	
Email Address					
Community Interest/Concerns:					

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