

West Lane Place Civic Association

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A LETTER from the PRESIDENT

Dear Neighbors,

Best wishes for 2017. We are excited about the new Board members who started last July. They are bringing new ideas and energy to our meetings. During 2017, you will see new beautification projects and a new format for our annual meeting. We believe you will appreciate these changes. If you have any questions or suggestions for the neighborhood, please contact me or any of our Directors or Committee Chairs. Contact information is located on the inside covers of the Directory, or you can use the "Contact Us" feature on the WLPCA website.

This newsletter initiates our 2017 membership drive. Enclosed please find a membership form and a return envelope addressed to Karisa Gallucci, our Membership Chair. The form includes a place to indicate your interest in becoming more involved in our programs which include Crime Alerts, Crime Watch, this Newsletter, the WLPCA website, National Night Out, and our Annual Meeting. In addition, we support the landscaping and signage at the entrances to our neighborhood. Thank you for your continued financial support and volunteer efforts. Our neighborhood continues to be a sought-after location to live keeping our real estate values steady in this uncertain economy.

We again held National Night Out in October. Thanks to you our NNO is one of the largest in Houston. We again had a large contingent of first responders attending, including the Sheriff and Interim Police Chief. Cynthia Trigg, our Hospitality Chair, and many neighborhood volunteers make that event so successful and so much fun.

This newsletter can only be successful if you, our neighbors, submit ideas and information to Gilda Bayegan, our Newsletter Editor. Information about new businesses in the neighborhood, new neighbors, neighborhood restaurant reviews, vacations to unexpected places, hobbies, etc. would be very appreciated.

Thank you for your continued financial and volunteer support. The Board and our WLPCA Committees are looking forward to working with you to make this an even better neighborhood.

James Brodnax

President

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by the **West Lane Place Civic Association**

The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) of each article, and not necessarily those of the WLPCA.

Please contact Circulation Captains, **Mary McDaniel** and **Phyllis Maddox**, regarding any problems you experience receiving your newsletter

Get ready. METRO is trying again to put trains down Richmond Avenue. Long term residents of West Lane Place will remember the battle that the WLPCA, Afton Oaks, and countless businesses and residents along Richmond waged against this project in years past when METRO significantly altered the plan approved by voters, and attempted to split Richmond Avenue with a light rail system similar to the one on Main Street. Thanks to the organized, energetic resistance of citizens, and the promise from U.S. Rep. John Culberson not to fund the project, it did not succeed. But METRO hasn't given up. Since we will be equally affected by this disastrous project, it is important to share with you this article by Chris Seger, recently published in the Afton Oaks newsletter.

For 26 years, METRO has attempted to force a light rail line down Richmond Avenue similar to the one on Main Street, and for 26 years, Afton Oaks has joined other neighborhoods and businesses up and down Richmond in fierce opposition to the plan. *If built, this rail will split our neighborhood in half—north to south, it will destroy magnificent trees, it will encapsulate us geographically, and it will attract vagrants.* METRO has persisted in their attempts to have rail on Richmond Avenue, and they are mounting another attack in February.

In 2003, a city-wide referendum was held to get bonding authority from the citizens of Houston to expand light rail beyond the existing Main Street line. The ballot for the November 2003 referendum contained the following abbreviated description of the proposed route: ... **Westpark – Wheeler Station to Hillcroft Transit Center. There was no mention of Richmond Avenue.** METRO is trying to hide the fact that they nullified our vote by changing the name of this route to the “University Line,” thinking that after 14 years, Houstonians will forget they voted to have it on Westpark in the first place.

Well, we in Afton Oaks have not forgotten, and here are some facts behind our position.

Building rail on Richmond Avenue will:

- substantially and negatively impact the quality of life in Afton Oaks. The construction period will take over two years, and thereafter we will have a dangerous, fast-moving train slicing through our neighborhood every six minutes or so. We will also have a significant problem with rail stations in and near our neighborhood. **Light rail in Houston has been described as a “rolling homeless shelter.”**
- seriously hamper ingress and egress from Afton Oaks. We will no longer have the opportunity to turn east or west at Newcastle because the median crossing will no longer exist. This rail project will necessitate the closure of all median openings except at signalized intersections. Motorists desiring to turn

left onto side streets will be required to continue through to the next signalized intersection and execute a U-turn movement.

- decimate small businesses during and after construction. During the two years of construction every small business on Richmond Avenue will be faced with failure, just as many of those on the Main Street line failed when it was built.
- reduce vehicular traffic and general mobility along Richmond. Trains will have precedence at intersections and the smooth-running boulevard that is Richmond Avenue will no longer exist.
- increase risk to travelers on Richmond from the 66” high pressure water line that lies very near the surface of Richmond Avenue from Wheeler to Drexel.
- **destroy mature and magnificent oak trees** all up and down Richmond, such as we have in our Richmond Avenue esplanade. A count was made in 2004 that showed 86 enormous Live Oak trees that would be cut down if rail were built.

Westpark, the route voters approved in 2003, remains the better choice because:

- METRO already owns the Westpark right-of-way! They paid \$74,000,000 for this right-of-way and it can be used without much difficulty today.
- there is great potential to increase property values along Westpark.
- there will be no loss of vehicular traffic lanes on Westpark as will be lost on Richmond Avenue
- Westpark will service a wider area, including the communities of Bellaire and West University.
- Westpark already has an existing bridge over the Union Pacific railroad.
- six bridges that cross the Southwest Freeway between Spur 527 and Shepherd will provide access to Westpark from lower Richmond Avenue.
- Greenway Plaza can be reached from Westpark with an approved connector, such as an aerial crossover.
- Westpark has none of the flooding problems that exist on Richmond Avenue and does not have a high pressure water line under the route.

Building rail on Richmond would be a disaster for our neighborhood and our quality of life would suffer forever after. **We will continue to fight this intrusive project, but to succeed we need your physical and vocal support.** Please plan to attend meetings that METRO will hold as they try to sell the concept to Houston. We will keep you informed as events unfold.

Harvesting the Rain

by Chris Elhardt, Mid Lane



Chris and one of the four rain barrels he harvests

I invite you to join us in Rainwater Harvesting!

Despite the recent deluge, when many of us were considering the construction of onsite arks while simultaneously attempting to overcome our irritation at the drainage fees, we should remember the last couple of summers of sparse rainfall, uneven settling of slabs, cracks in walls and driveways, stuck doors and the expense of keeping pools filled. Such is living in West Lane Place. There is a bit of relief, however: Rainwater Harvesting. If you've got a fishpond in your backyard, you won't have to risk your koi by replenishing with chloramine treated city tap water. I don't have much hair, but rainwater is supposed to be superior to municipal water for washing your hair. It's great for watering your indoor plants, too.

We have been harvesting for about four years and look forward to continuing for many more. Anyone interested in rainwater harvesting is welcome to come by and see our setup.

Rainwater harvesting is an ancient technique enjoying a revival in popularity due to the inherent quality of rainwater and interest in reducing consumption of treated water. Rainwater is valued for its purity and softness. It has a nearly neutral pH, and is free from disinfection by-products, salts, minerals, and other natural and man-made contaminants. Plants thrive under irrigation with stored rainwater. Appliances last longer when free from the corrosive or scale effects of hard water. Users with potable systems prefer the superior taste and cleansing properties of rainwater.

Excerpted from the Texas Manual on Rainwater Harvesting:
http://www.twdb.texas.gov/publications/brochures/conservation/doc/RainwaterHarvestingManual_3rdedition.pdf

WLP Crime Watch Volunteer Nabs Solicitors

by Gilda Bayegan

On the afternoon of New Year's Eve, one of our Crime Watch volunteers spotted a solicitor in West Lane Place peddling cleaning products door to door. He confronted the solicitor, explained that West Lane Place does not allow solicitation, and asked him to leave. The solicitor refused to go, and our volunteer explained that he then would drive behind the solicitor to every door, and that his chances of selling anything would be very unlikely. Rather than leave, the solicitor shouted that our volunteer was harassing him, and enlisted the help of a supervisor who also was in the neighborhood. The supervisor then called the Houston Police Department to make a complaint about our heroic volunteer!

A constable quickly appeared from his patrol in Lynn Park, followed by an HPD officer. Once the officers saw our hero's ID as an HPD Citizens Patrol volunteer, they gave him their full support. They persuaded the solicitors to exit West Lane Place, and discovered the name of the company that had sent them. In the hope of preventing more solicitation in the future, our volunteer telephoned Sierra Solutions, the Nevada company that employed the solicitors, and asked them not to send others here. They assured him they would not.

We thank our shy hero (who wishes to remain anonymous) for his vigilance and perseverance in relieving us of these unwelcome door to door callers.



An Addition Coming to West Lane Place Street Signs

by Gilda Bayegan

Stay tuned, there's a nice little improvement in the works. **Tim Ng**, of **Bash Place**, noticed and investigated the identification markers he saw atop street signs in other neighborhoods. Then he presented his research to the WLPCA board, which enthusiastically approved the idea. A committee chaired by WLPCA board member, **Ann Iverson**, selected a design and submitted it to the City of Houston, where it currently awaits approval.

The markers will not replace street signs, but will be added above the signs like finials. They will be small, pleasant reminders that we are a distinct neighborhood with a name and an identity. **Good thinking, Tim!**

JANUARY

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24		26	27	28
29	30	31				

FEBRUARY


Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	J	23	24	25
26	27	28				

MARCH

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21		23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

APRIL

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	J	27	28	29
30						

 = Tree waste; **J** = Junk & tree waste pick up

Weekly household trash pick-up each Monday. NOTE: Recycling is every other Monday, on highlighted days in boxes. Please have your bins out on the curb by 7 am and in by 10 pm.

“Tree Waste” is defined as “clean wood waste such as tree limbs, branches, and stumps (lumber, furniture, and treated wood will NOT be accepted.)”

“Junk Waste” is defined as “items such as furniture, appliances, and other bulky material.” *

* Junk and tree waste may be left on the curb a day or two prior to collection day.

We want YOU!



to

Please take a moment

to renew your

West Lane Place Civic Association

membership

or

JOIN!

Membership materials are enclosed with this newsletter

We need everyone to be involved.

It's only \$25 for the entire year.

So, please, won't you sign up now!

Announcements

Weekend Leaf Blowing. A neighbor on Lana Lane asks you to consider rescheduling Saturday and Sunday appointments with your lawn maintenance providers so that the weekends can be more peaceful for everyone who lives near you.

Big Yard Sale. Marianne Ivany of Mid Lane is searching for neighbors interested in joining forces for a **multi-family yard sale**. If you would like to clear out your excess and superfluous clutter, and have a good time with neighbors, send her an email. ivanym@stthom.edu