

WLP Civic Association Board Members

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Mary McDaniel, Darryl Shields, and Barbara Staley

Vice President: Pat Holmes
Treasurer: Michael Paneral
Newsletter: Gilda Bayegan
Webmaster: Marj Elhardt

Dear Neighbors,

The WLPCA board is busy planning the 2023 Annual Meeting. Please see details, this page and on page 4.

West Lane Place is up against some big challenges right now from METRO and potentially disruptive new ordinances proposed by City Council. We need to stick together to overcome these developments that, combined, present a serious risk to West Lane Place as we know it.

The West Lane Place Civic Association was organized to preserve the character of our neighborhood. Please help us do that by becoming a member if you're not, by volunteering if you already are a member, and by urging others to become involved if you are already a member who volunteers.

An easy way to support our efforts is to attend the annual meeting. Please join us and learn more about the current status of the City programs we oppose, meet District G Councilwoman Mary Nan Huffman, and elect our next WLPCA board.

Sincerely,

Fisher Trigg, President of WLPCA

****WLPCA Annual Meeting****

Tuesday, May 2

6:00 Social; 6:30 Meeting

**Offices of Compass Real Estate
10th Floor, Park Place
4200 Westheimer**

Speaker - District G Councilwoman, Mary Nan Huffman

Election of the 2023 - 2024 WLPCA Board of Directors

Light snacks and Refreshments

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This newsletter is published and delivered to you
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 Phyllis Maddox concerning any problems you may experience receiving your newsletter.

West Lane Place - Three Big Threats

by Gilda Bayegan, Mid Lane

In late February, WLPCA board members became engaged in three big fights: 1. to resist METRO's plan to narrow Richmond Ave for a bus lane; 2. to protest low income housing on Richmond near Wesleyan; and 3. to defeat Houston City Council's deceptively labelled "Conservation District" that, if passed, will undermine our deed restrictions and expose our neighborhood to potentially destructive development.

West Lane Place is not the only neighborhood in harm's way. METRO's plan damages neighborhoods and businesses from Montrose to Edloe and beyond. The low income housing project would negatively impact all local neighborhoods, and the misleading "Conservation District" subverts every property in Houston that relies on deed restrictions for protection. **Unlike some neighborhoods, though, West Lane Place would suffer the negative impacts of all three of these threats if implemented.**

METRO's Plan for Richmond Ave

As longtime residents of WLP are aware, for two decades, the WLPCA has battled METRO's aspirations to run a train down Richmond Ave. METRO is currently pushing for a dedicated bus lane (like the one on Post Oak) running from the Wheeler Transit Center on Main St down Richmond to Edloe, then south to Westpark, reducing Richmond to one lane of traffic in each direction. If this plan materializes, the only access to Mid Lane will be bumper-to-bumper Westheimer and bottleneck Richmond. The WLPCA is fighting this plan. If we're to win, we will need the help of all West Lane Place residents.

Low Income Housing. On February 23, Houston City Council voted "no objection" to the affordable housing project proposed by VERSA Development for **Felicity Oaks**, 4041 Richmond Ave (south side of Richmond between Las Palmas and Wesleyan). Our **District G councilwoman, Mary Nan Huffman**, objected to the project, citing the developer's failure to engage with the community despite delays imposed by the City to encourage community involvement. After discussion, City Council's vote left the final decision up to our state rep, Ann Johnson. We strongly objected to the proposal and recently received the good news that **due to neighborhood pushback, the developer withdrew the project and it is now shut down.**

Proposed Conservation Districts

City Council has drafted an ordinance to create "Character-Protecting Districts" in designated areas of Houston. The proposed ordinance reads:

Conservation District (currently a draft ordinance) What it is: A Conservation District may establish a set of area specific design requirements intended to serve the public interest in preserving and protecting neighborhoods with architectural or cultural importance. Conservation Districts are intended to be flexible. **A minimum of 51% of property owners in a proposed district must support the district's creation.** What it does: **Communities may choose one or more of several standards that will apply to private property within the district.** Once established, changes to private property, that fall into the standards defined by that district, may require review by the City. What it does not do: Conservation Districts don't typically deal with historic materials. For instance, a Conservation District will not typically regulate the replacement of historic siding or windows, as a Historic District does.

(emphasis added)

A superficial reading of this ordinance might indicate it is benign, but it is not. The number of residents it requires to create a Conservation District is only 51%, far fewer than currently required to amend our deed restrictions, and the "standards" the district adopts will apply to our private property. This ordinance would allow a district to be defined that is much larger than West Lane Place, one that includes the heavily populated apartment developments near us. If we become a small portion of residents of the new district, we will lose control of our deed restrictions, allowing high rises, housing projects, commercial development, or who knows what to destroy our neighborhood.

The members of the WLPCA board, committee chairs, and members of the three Deed Restrictions Enforcement Committees are committed to fighting these imminent threats posed against us by our local officials, but we will need your help to succeed. Please respond to our announcements when we ask you to show up at meetings, write or call elected leaders, or if worse comes to worst, vote against becoming a Conservation District.

We will keep you posted. Please stay tuned.

Zoos: a Realistic Assessment

by Deborah Cannon, West Lane Drive

*Here in West Lane Place, we are fortunate to include among our neighbors some of Houston's most accomplished and interesting people. Deborah Cannon is one of those people. Deborah has been both **President and CEO of the Houston Zoo**, so earlier this year when we read a flurry of news stories recounting criminal acts of vandalism and theft at various zoos, we asked Deborah to comment about the role zoos play in our lives and the lives of the animals they house. She graciously agreed. Here's what she had to say:*

Two zoos were recently in the news because of animals which were let loose. The **Dallas Zoo had a series of incidents**, the first being a clouded leopard who had exited her exhibit through a large hole cut in the enclosure. **As it happens, I knew the cat because she and her sibling had been hand raised at the Houston Zoo while I was still there.** The leopard was found a number of hours later in a tree not far from her exhibit. The next day another hole was found, this time in the langur monkey habitat; but luckily none of the monkeys had used that exit! **Shortly thereafter, a lappet-faced vulture died from a suspicious wound.** This bird is very rare and endangered and one of only 27 in captivity, so a tragic loss. Finally, despite increased security **two emperor tamarin monkeys were taken from their habitat; fortunately they were found abandoned a few days later and returned to the zoo.**

The other zoo making news was the Central Park zoo in NYC which had a Eurasian eagle owl escape, again from a large man made hole in its habitat. In reading about its sightings in the Park, on Fifth Avenue and other locations, I was saddened to read one woman's celebration of this "freeing" of the bird. I say "saddened" because it was clear this woman, and probably others, had no understanding of the vital role zoos play in conserving wildlife, not to mention the secure lives they work to provide for their animals.

When I joined the Houston Zoo in 2005 as President and CEO, I too had little understanding of the real role zoos play. However, I soon was impressed with the knowledge of our zookeepers and the incredible care they give to all the animals in their charge. Most animals in

zoos today were born and bred in zoos and are provided with habitats closely resembling those of their wild counterparts. Zookeepers provide them with diets that resemble their natural ones and with veterinary care that includes annual checkups and teeth cleaning. **These animals lead great lives and are unprepared for life in the wild where they have no ability to protect themselves from external predators and would be ill equipped to fend for themselves.** It is unlikely or impossible that the animals that are "freed" or stolen from zoos will be provided with appropriate diets or the care they are accustomed to receiving.

Accredited zoos play a huge role in saving animals in the wild via special projects that provide assistance for animals all over the world. **The Houston Zoo supports 33 projects in 17 countries that provide training as well as technical and financial assistance to partners' efforts to educate and strengthen local communities, conduct research and reduce threats that endanger animals. A portion of every dollar spent at the zoo goes back to helping conserve animals in the wild.**

An excellent example of the contribution zoos make to our understanding of nature and animals in the wild is **the brand new Galapagos exhibit in the Houston Zoo, which replicates what visitors see in the Galapagos and showcases the animals that live there while educating the guests about ways each of us can help save wildlife.** Having recently visited it, I believe it may be the best exhibit anywhere in the country and I encourage everyone to visit this fantastic exhibit and support the zoos that are perhaps our greatest conservationists of the Wild.

*See Humboldt Penguins, Bonnethead Shark, Galapagos Tortoise and more in the fabulous **Galapagos Islands Exhibit** that **opened April 7** at the Houston Zoo.*

**The Houston Zoo
6200 Hermann Park Dr.
713-533-6500**

or

Find out more at:

<https://www.houstonzoo.org/explore/exhibits/galapagos/>

**Recycling, Heavy Trash, and
Tree & Limb Pick-up Schedule for WLP**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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						

MAY


Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	AM	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	J	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23		25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

JUNE

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	26	27	J	29	30	

JULY

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		27	28	29
30	31					

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

Weekly household trash pick up on Mondays. 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.”

Our Annual Meeting will start at 6:00 on Tuesday, May 2

For the second consecutive year, **Compass Real Estate** has offered their beautiful offices on the tenth floor of Park Place, in the **northeast corner of Mid Lane and Westheimer** for our Annual Meeting. We thank past WLPKA President, **Diane Kiecke**, for making this possible.

Our **District G City Councilwoman, Mary Nan Huffman**, is scheduled to join us at 6:30.

The WLPKA proposes the following slate for the 2023 – 2024 board:

- Fisher Trigg, President
- Pat Holmes, Vice President
- Elaine Khalil, Secretary
- Michael Paneral, Treasurer

- Marj Elhardt, Director
- Mary McDaniel, Director
- Phyllis Maddox, Director

(No changes to the current board.)

Does the House Number on your Curb Need Repainting?

Neighbors on Nextdoor recommended this service:

Addressed in Stone
713-530-1258

ISO Crime Watch Volunteers. Despite the highly publicized shocking murder March 30 on Mid Lane at San Felipe, our Crime Watch program is still severely shorthanded. We need volunteers.

This program is designed to **reduce crime through awareness**. It is **not** a program in which volunteers confront any suspicious person.

Please!

Contact Security Chair, Mohammad Bayegan, mohawk@msn.com, for information.