

Neartown Meeting, April 22, 2008

Come to order: 7:10pm

21 in attendance

-This is "The Year of the Street"

-David Robinson just sent in our SNAP requests (21 of them)

-Kris Banks from Wanda Adams's office, City Council District D announced Town Hall Meeting Saturday, April 26, 10:am-12:noon at St. Stephen's Church

-It will address citizens' concerns regarding crime, planning, parks, parking, infrastructure, etc.

-Best to get your qu's in ahead of time (we were requested to send them to David Robinson, who will compile a pile of them for the Montrose area), so City officials have a chance to come up with answers.

-Speaker Mark Loethen, from the City Engineering Department

-CIP's are in his department

-They permit things going on in the right of way

-City is undertaking this year, on a 5-yr rotating cycle, the city will reevaluate standards; this year, they will look at standards applicable to streets.

-Later, they will do the same with water, sewer, etc.

-Regarding streets:

-Last week, City Council approved a Mobility Plan for Houston -to take regional traffic planning into smaller areas, so they can evaluate needs, down the road

-What street standards will be allowed

-What to allow, encourage as development goes on

-Will consider options other than the 4-lane, 2-way divided on large streets, and 2-lane, undivided in residential areas that we currently have

- May allow parking lanes, etc.
- Will examine sidewalk needs, materials, width, etc.
- All standards and engineering on are on the City's website. Mark L. said it's boring reading, but if you want to muck your way through it, the info is there.
- David Robinson said that sidewalks and trees must co-exist
- Mark L. said re power poles in sidewalks - Centerpoint would like to bury them, IF someone (else) will pay for it. However, the large transformer boxes would have to be accessible for maintenance, so they would still have to sit on the ground somewhere.
- width of ROW (right of way)
- Montrose Blvd used to have medians all the way down, including Westheimer to Hermann Park
- A rumor says they were removed to allow parking around certain businesses
- If we replace the median, what happens to parking?
- Claude Wynn said few blocks in the area allow parking any more
- "Parking was confiscated by the valets."
- Liliana Rambo from the City's Parking Department
- Last November, Council passed a Valet Ordinance, including some of the following requirements:
 - Any valid operator must follow regulations, re use of the street for valet parking
 - Increased insurance requirements
 - Vehicles are allowed to be stored on-street
 - Valet companies must have a permit, to park cars in a neighborhood
 - There is no max or min number of cars valets are allowed to park on streets
 - This accommodates long-established businesses, which have fewer parking spaces

- Regulates which routes valets can drive, and where to load & unload
- 3 parking spaces allowed to be used for loading & unloading
- Must display signage noting days and times valet parking is in effect and using street
- Ed Gonzales asked what can we do when valets park too close to driveways?
- Ms. Rambo said to report it to them, to be added to the business's "report card"
- You can also call HPD to write a citation to the valet company, and / or tow the vehicle
- Calling 311 is best, rather than HPD, to report an operator in violation
- Calls to 311 will be transferred to Parking Management / Enforcement, who will send someone out to write a ticket
- Ms. Rambo's answers to questions from the audience:
- No Parking within 30' from a traffic control device (meaning, a light or sign)
- "In areas where we see a problem, we'll put in "No Parking Here to Corner" signs"
- You request those through 311
- She mentioned the Residential Parking Permit Program
- Sylvia Drew asked How can we get red 'No Parking' stripes on pavement, like downtown?
- Those lines went with new parking meters downtown, and are expensive to install and maintain. Meaning, we on residential streets can't get them.
- On residential streets, signs are better, faster, and easier to get.
- To report people parking across sidewalks, call 311, or use Internet 311
- A mobile unit will come out to write citations - mostly available inside the Loop
- If you want "No Parking This Side of Street" signs, let them know.

-A traffic engineer will come out and study the need, to see if they will grant one

-(713) 853-8271 (713) 853-8913 Fax www.houstonparking.org

-(713) 853-8193 (713) 893-8913 Fax liliana.rambo@cityofhouston.net

-Mark Johnson, Neartown Webmaster, demonstrated a few new features of our website.

-Robert Graham announced tomorrow's PIP meeting, April 27, 7:pm, on Operation GreenSweep

-Ed Gonzales told about improvements and upgrades, thanks to a government grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, to the Multiservice Center on W. Gray, which will develop more of the grounds, and make the place useable even for able-bodied people. Currently, it's mostly for use by disabled people.

-He said it is becoming stronger and stronger for filling the recreational needs of disabled people -What Ed didn't say is that some facilities now in place for disabled people will be eliminated, in order to put in the paths, etc. for able-bodied people to use.

-There is a new director, Peggy Turner

-Donald Perkins, Houston Engineering Department, wants a list of civic club contacts. Get a form from him and fill it out. This should be done each time there is a change of officers.

-Ed Gonzales said Avondale is celebrating its 100 yr anniversary, and one feature will be the reinstatement of Walking Tours, of about 30 minutes duration each, down Avondale Boulevard and around the 'hood, with naration noting interesting points.

-A prototype tour was held this past weekend.

-He wants the Neartown Board to take a trial run.

-Adjurn 8:12pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Young

Secretary