

University Place Association & Super Neighborhood Community Report

June 2013

University Place is the unique community bounded by Kirby Drive, US59, Main Street, and North Braeswood. For more than 20 years, the University Place Association/Super Neighborhood has been serving as a unified and highly effective voice for the diverse interests of our community. The University Place Association (UPA) Board of Directors is comprised of representatives from civic clubs, institutions, and businesses in the area – active participants include Southampton, Boulevard Oaks, MAMA, Morningside Place, Old Braeswood, Southampton Extension, Southgate, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Rice University, Rice Village, and the South Main Alliance. UPA is relied on by homeowners, businesses, and institutional stakeholders in University Place to help resolve noise, construction, traffic, drainage, parking, tree preservation, street reconstruction or resurfacing, and other issues in the community. Kathie Easterly is UPA's paid part-time Executive Director. Erik Eriksson of Southampton is currently President of UPA. UPA Board Meetings are held quarterly.

Security. One of the most important aspects of UPA's community involvement is security. UPA hosts a Quarterly Security Breakfast that includes all of the agencies that police in or near University Place. These include the Houston Police Department (HPD), METRO Police Department, Rice University Police Department, West University Police Department, Harris County Precinct One Constable's Office, Southampton/BOCA Patrol Service, and Texas Medical Center Security. These breakfast meetings are for sharing information, bringing community concerns to the officers' attention, and maintaining the close working relationship between our community and the officers who work in or near it.

Kathie recently briefed a Crime Prevention meeting in Museum Park Super Neighborhood (immediately adjacent to us on the east) to share with Museum Park stakeholders how security, security alerts/distribution of crime information, etc., are handled within University Place neighborhoods, and continues to attend Museum Park's security meetings. Sharing information and working together with our neighbors helps ensure better safety and communication for all.

UPA maintains a strong working relationship with HPD and Kathie attends South Central HPD's monthly Positive Interaction Program (PIP) meetings. These meetings help keep us up to speed about what's going on in adjacent and nearby neighborhoods.

Crime Prevention Town Hall. As in the past, UPA will co-host a comprehensive Crime Prevention Town Hall this year with the Museum Park Super Neighborhood and South Main Alliance. These town halls include detailed presentations about crime statistics citywide and in our South Central District, effective security measures for homes, neighborhoods and businesses, reports about homelessness, mental illness, theft, burglary, narcotics, and other information.

ReBuild Houston Program. ReBuild Houston is the city's 2011 initiative to help maintain and upgrade drainage and street infrastructure through a pay-as-you-go fund and new planning processes.

In January 2013, UPA co-hosted a ReBuild Houston Town Hall meeting at First Christian Church, along with Museum Park Super Neighborhood and South Main Alliance. The Town Hall was attended by Council Member Stephen Costello, Council Members Ellen Cohen and C.O. Bradford Chiefs of Staff, David Bonem and Larry Payne, members of the ReBuild Houston Oversight Committee, and residents and business owners throughout University Place and Museum Park. UPA continues to submit questions about the program, attend the Rebuild Houston Oversight

Committee meetings, and work with members of the committee to better understand the program and lobby for changes to the program as needed.

Rice Village Parking. UPA has long worked with Rice Village property owners to mitigate the parking problems in Rice Village. Last year, at UPA's request, two-hour parking restrictions were implemented throughout Rice Village, and UPA continues to work with Rice Village owners to explore additional measures, such as a Parking Benefits District. These have worked in other cities, and so Houston is moving forward with a pilot parking district program in the Washington Avenue area, to help mitigate its well-known parking problems. UPA and Rice Village property owners will be watching to see how well this works in Houston and whether it should be brought to Rice Village. A unique benefit of parking districts is that after meter installation and other parking improvements are paid for, a portion of the meter revenues is then dedicated to community improvements. UPA is also working with METRO and others to explore the possibility of a much needed circulator shuttle in the Rice Village area.

Hermann Park/Brays Bayou Trail Connectors. UPA lent its support to the Hermann Park/Brays Bayou Trail Connectors project and Hermann Park Conservancy's efforts to obtain funding through the Texas Transportation Enhancement Program. As part of a comprehensive plan to complete 35 miles of trails connecting the Houston Ship Channel to West Houston, the Hermann Park/Brays Bayou Trail Connectors project will provide much needed connectivity for pedestrians, cyclists, and users of public transportation to Hermann Park, the Texas Medical Center, and the surrounding neighborhoods. The project also includes creating a sidewalk from the Almeda and MacGregor intersection along MacGregor to connect with Hermann Park's interior trails.

City Ordinance Matters. UPA maintains close working relationships with City of Houston department heads and elected officials to help make sure that city ordinances, such as the Sexually Oriented Business Ordinance and the Offstreet Parking Ordinance, are enforced in University Place. Offstreet parking and the Residential Permit Parking Ordinance are particularly important in the Rice Village area, as well as neighborhoods adjoining the Rice campus.

The Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA) Advisory Council, comprised of representatives from more than 100 Super Neighborhoods in Houston, meets every month at City Hall. The SNA Advisory Council monitored the recent amendments to Houston's Chapter 42 development regulations and other related ordinances, and lobbied for changes to the proposed amendments. Kathie attends these SNA meetings and also serves on the Main Street Coalition on behalf of UPA. UPA also monitored recent changes to Houston's Offstreet Parking Ordinance to make sure the changes would not adversely affect University Place residents and businesses.

Other Initiatives. Other areas of interest that UPA is actively working on include efforts to adopt Complete Streets policies in the City of Houston (see <http://houstoncompletestreets.org> and <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>) and the improvement of Texas Medical Center access via a SH288 direct connector to the Texas Medical Center.

UPA, at the request of METRO, is also revisiting the University Corridor rail line alignment issue and reiterating our 2006/2007 position, shared by BOCA and other neighborhoods within University Place.

Candidates Forum. As we have done in the past, UPA will host a Candidates Forum this fall to provide University Place residents and business owners an opportunity to meet and hear from those running for office this year. Notice of the forum will be distributed via civic club newsletters and business email lists.