
Willow Meadows News

August 1996

September Meeting

The next meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club is Tuesday, September 10, 7:30 p.m. at the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. Please come and take part in what is going on in your neighborhood.

From The President

With the risk of sounding too dramatic, this may be the most important newsletter you ever receive. That is because inside this newsletter is the first survey that kicks off the project to rewrite our 40 year-old deed restrictions. You have an opportunity to say what you would like to see or not see in the governing legal documents that heavily influence how strong and valuable Willow Meadows will be in the future. We are talking about your investment in your house, so please take a few moments to answer the survey and help us get started in the right direction to protect your future.

For those of you who missed the June meeting, it was probably the biggest crowd in years, with more than 80 of your neighbors in attendance. While the main attraction seemed to be about the pros and cons of speed humps, we also learned of pending trash collection changes, as well as numerous other topics of interest. We will continue to strive to keep the meetings interesting as well as short, but we also want to give everyone a chance to voice their opinions. We would like to hear yours.

Our September meeting will focus on our kick off to the deed restrictions project, and we will review other business of interest. In addition, the City of Houston has indicated they intend to send a speaker to talk about plans to upgrade and expand bicycle/jogging routes around the city, including the Braes Bayou trail. For all of you bikers, joggers, walkers and roller bladers, this could be good news for you.

Please pay special attention to the deed restrictions survey enclosed. We want and need your feedback for this very important project. We also welcome any volunteers to help us with this monumental task.

I look forward to seeing you all at the September civic club meeting.

Sincerely

Current Willow Meadows Civic Club Officers and Executive Board

President:	Chris Brouwer (723-9235)	Security:	Jane Leslie (729-4918)
Vice President	Charles Rusciano (721-3136)	Maintenance:	Harry Boswell (728-5208)
Treasurer:	Joanne Gore	Deed Restrictions:	Doug Koy (723-0067)
Secretary:	Veronica McKenzie (729-3696)	Architecture:	Rob Chase (723-4878)
		Beautification:	Randall Doe (297-5648)

TREASURER'S REPORT

The following report indicates the collection of dues in the amount of \$79,100 since the beginning of the year, which is \$6,882, or 9.5%, greater than we collected through the same period last year. The number of households that have paid to date is 563, or 68.5% of the total households in Willow Meadows. Those households that are paying partial payments please remember to send the balance to Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235, and save us the postage sending you reminders.. We are more than pleased with the dues collections and we hope to break the 70% participation rate this year, but we still wonder about the remaining 30%. We need everyone to pay their share, so please mail in those dues as soon as possible.

Please don't be misled by the large surplus. As the incoming dues dry up to a trickle, our expenses will continue at an average of \$5700 per month. Please note our 1996 budgeted expenses below.

SECURITY	\$ 57,750
MOWING	\$ 4,000
MOSQUITO SPRAYING	\$ 2,700
SECURITY STICKERS	\$ 641
POSTAGE	\$ 750
LEGAL	\$ 2,000
OTHER	\$ 1,000

LOST & FOUND

Did you leave something behind at the June civic club meeting? If so, please call Chris Brouwer at 723-9235.

NEW ARTICLES WELCOME

We will always welcome any ideas or news you may have for the Willow Meadows newsletter. We believe this newsletter should be used for communicating anything of interest to our neighborhood. Please contact Chris Brouwer if you want to contribute a news item.

SPEEDING

Please don't miss the update on speed humps in this newsletter. One of the comments from people opposed to speed humps is that it is a shame that the majority of law abiding drivers should have to be penalized due to the speeding of a small group of people. Can you disagree with that argument? Because of the uproar regarding speeding in residential areas around Houston, the constables have begun efforts to more strictly enforce speed limits. Perhaps you have noticed the constables using radar in Willow Meadows recently. Be forewarned. If you speed, you may get a ticket. Nobody should be above the law.

Category/Description	Jan. 1, 1996-July 31, 1996
REVENUES	
Dues	\$79,100.00
Interest checking	\$00.00
Interest savings	\$1,937.18
Advertising	\$30.00
Other Income	\$00.00
Total	\$81,067.18
EXPENDITURES	
Bank charge	\$ 3.00
Miscellaneous	\$565.00
Mowing	\$2,600.00
Pest control	\$673.45
Postage	\$318.00
Printing	\$640.78
Security	\$33,687.99
Supplies	\$134.10
Total	\$38,772.32
SURPLUS	\$42,444.86

SECURITY REPORT

The volume of calls that our Constable officers are receiving has increased significantly over the past few months. Residents are not only calling the Constable more often to report suspicious activity and persons in the area but also appear to be reporting more minor types of crimes that previously may have gone unreported. We are encouraged by the pro-active response our residents are taking to deter crime in our neighborhood. Remember that our contract patrol is a service we are paying for and we need to make effective use of it. It is important that our officers know what is going on in all the different areas of Willow Meadows. If HPD handles a situation for you that affects the security of other residents, please also call the Constable, even if it is just a follow up after the fact.

Since our last newsletter was printed in May, we have seen an increase in criminal activity, which the Constable predicted might occur once schools recessed for the summer. The problem has been particularly bad since around the July 4th holiday. We are hoping that since schools are now starting again the problems we are seeing will go away.

Below is a list of the more serious incidents reported to the Constable or taken from HPD stats:

May 24: 4400 blk. Meyerwood, auto theft

June 22: 4400 blk. Lympbar, burglary of a residence

July 1: 4300 blk. O'Meara, theft of a bike

July 4: 4700 blk. O'Meara, burglary of a vehicle - A side window was smashed out and the vehicle was ransacked. However, nothing was missing.

July 4: 10100 blk. Cliffwood, burglary of a vehicle - Same as above however sunglasses and car ashtray containing loose change taken.

July 6: 4300 blk. O'Meara - A resident stepped outside at 4:30 a.m. and observed the silhouette of a man hiding behind a tree near the property line. The neighbor next door later observed that security

lights on his home had been pushed down to darken the area.

July 6: 4400 blk. Nenana, auto stolen from drive during early morning hours

July 10: 4500 blk. Waynesboro, attempted theft of a vehicle

July 14: 4400 blk. Lympbar, burglary of a residence

July 22: Willow Meadows Baptist - Youth reported stealing newspaper from the recycling bin in parking lot.

July 25: 4300 Waycross blk. (Willowbend Subdivision) -A heavy set white male driving a maroon Chevrolet pickup with the rear license obscured, stood near the door of the truck and exposed himself to a woman who walked by at approximately 8:35 a.m. The Constable had taken a similar call thirty minutes prior just north of 610 but was not able to find the suspect. No other "sightings" have been reported since.

July 26: 4300 blk. McDermed, burglary of a residence

July 28: 4300 blk. Meyerwood, burglary of a residence

August 1: 9600 blk. Greenwillow, burglary of a residence - The resident left home at 11:00 a.m. returning thirty minutes later to find front door kicked in. Reported a VCR, radio and an electric razor missing.

August 2: 4200 blk. Nenana - Plants reported stolen from two front porches.

August 4: Sarong, burglary of a vehicle - The car was unlocked in the drive and someone took a car phone.

August 4: Waynesboro, attempted theft of a vehicle

August 4: HPD detained juveniles who took bread from the Kroger's dumpster and pushed a basket

through the southeast section of the neighborhood throwing bread onto lawns.

In other news, we have had some staffing changes in our Constable patrol. Our new full time officer is Sergeant Charles Rosser, who is the supervisor for the Precinct 7 contract program. Our new part time officer is Deputy Jeff Thomas, who previously was assigned to a neighborhood north of 610.

Sergeant Rosser is working with us to address resident's concerns over the visibility of the patrol in the neighborhood and also the speeding problem we continue to observe on our neighborhood streets. Some tickets and warnings have already been written and this effort will continue on an ongoing basis. We hope that increased Constable visibility on the problem streets and the threat of being ticketed will deter speeders.

Please remember that with the school year beginning it is important to observe school zones. It is hard to get back into this habit after the summer break but the Constable will be monitoring the school zones in our area.

The constables offered another important tip: Please don't get in the habit of letting your young children answer the door. It is much harder for them to recognize danger and they could easily let in a stranger.

Finally, National Neighborhood Night Out was on August 6th. The Constable officers were out during the evening and noted several blocks in the neighborhood where residents participated. The largest gathering was in the 4400 blk. of Cheena with about thirty people in attendance. Food was served and even Constable A. B. Chambers dropped in. Other gatherings were in the 10200 block of Cliffwood, the 4300 block of Nenana, the 4400 block of Woodvalley, and on Piermain. It was nice to see the response we had and we hope that next year we will see more blocks participate.

Don't forget that we encourage interaction between our Constable deputies and residents. Please do not

hesitate to call them even if you just want them to stop by and introduce themselves or to ask them a question because they are very willing to comply.

1997 CIVIC CLUB OFFICERS

It is never too early to think about the upcoming year. We have been very pleased with the dedication of the Civic Club board members this year and in previous years. But nobody can carry on forever. We know we will have some vacancies next year, so we would love to have some new volunteers to join our ranks and help us carry on with important projects in the next year. If you would like to know what positions may be available and what the duties are for any of the board positions, please call Chris Brouwer at 723-9235.

GRAFFITI

There is probably no neighborhood in Houston that is free from graffiti. Even while we don't have a major gang problem in Willow Meadows, gangs do have their proclaimed territories in Houston and they like to mark them as a reminder to their adversaries. As scary as it all may seem, there is no reason to be afraid. But we do have a duty to eradicate graffiti whenever possible. The City of Houston reminds us of these important points:

1. If you witness graffiti vandalism in progress, call 911 immediately, but do not attempt to stop the criminals. Crimestoppers pays rewards for information on graffiti vandals (call 222-TIPS).
2. If you discover graffiti on your property, report the crime to Houston Police at 222-3131 and request that a report be made. Retain the report number for your records. You are required to remove the visual blight as quickly as possible. Local paint stores offer discounts on paint for this purpose.
3. If you see new graffiti on public property, please report it as soon as possible to the Mayors Anti-Gang office at 247-1576. They can arrange for graffiti to be removed within 3 days. Recent graffiti on the

soundwall at Greenwillow and Loop 610 was quickly handled by this office following our call.

YARD SALES

As we mentioned previously, there are certain rules regarding yard sales that you must observe. The maximum amount of yard/garage sales you can have in one year without a sales tax permit is 2. If you have more than 2 sales per year, it is considered you are running a business, and that is a violation of deed restrictions. Also, please show some courtesy to your neighbors and pick up your signs after your sale.

Some neighbors on Willowgrove came up with a good solution. They held a 7-family sale in July, which allowed them to split their advertising costs and of course it drew a lot of customers due to the large variety of things to offer. Everyone considered it a great success, and seven families cleared out some unwanted possessions and made some extra spending money altogether in one unified weekend. It also gave everyone a better chance to get to know their neighbors, and they even threw a pot luck supper after the sale. Everybody reportedly had a lot of fun. And they picked up their signs when the sale was over! If you are considering a garage sale, ask your neighbors if they are interested. The synergy should produce a successful sale, and it will cut down on the number of individual sales we see every weekend. If you think a major garage sale for the whole subdivision would be worthwhile, let us know.

DOES IT BUG YOU TOO?

City of Houston Ordinances Section 28-38 and Section 28-39 clearly state that it is unlawful to place any advertising sign on curbs, sidewalks, utility poles, trees, street signs and esplanades. We all know the city has better things to do than chase after people who place these signs, but be aware that the fine from the city ranges from \$150 to \$200. The Houston Police Department could issue a ticket for as much as \$500! Nevertheless, we not only see the weekend garage sale signs, but we get littered with signs such as for painters, blown-in insulation, etc., etc., etc.. If these eye sores bug you as much as they bug me, please adopt the telephone pole nearest your house, and if it

gets “peppered” with business advertising, please don’t hesitate to remove them. Of course we are sympathetic to lost pets, so we can understand those signs, but after a few weeks of getting weather beaten, we have to assume the sign has done its job. If you see garage sale signs that someone carelessly left behind after the sale, please pick them up and discard them appropriately. We can all pitch in to keep our neighborhood more beautiful.

YARD OF THE MONTH

We have certainly faced a hot and dry summer. With negligible rains in June and July, it was hard to keep yards alive. In spite of the drought, there were still some beautiful yards throughout Willow Meadows. The Yard of the Month awards for the recent months are:

June: 4327 O’Meara

July: 4806 McDermed

August: Stay tuned....the sign has disappeared!

With the rains in early August, many yards have started to green up again. Most of the browning observed this year was due to cinch bugs, which can easily be controlled if you catch them early.. Nevertheless, if the rains keep up, your grass should recover. A light fertilizing in September or October will help strengthen your lawn before the winter. Don’t forget that when the evening temperatures dip below 60 degrees, conditions are favorable for the brown patch fungus. Look for it and treat it quickly (better yet, put a preventative treatment before you see brown patch) and you will keep a beautiful lawn. Since Houston has a fall growing season, you still have time to landscape and plant some colorful flowers to accent your yard into the winter.

ATTENTION ALL GARDENERS AND WOULD-BE GARDENERS

The Greenwillow Garden Club has been a part of Willow Meadows for many years, having been established in 1959. The members would like to extend an invitation to all of those interested in learning about flowers, going on interesting field trips

and pursuing civic club goals. Please come join them! Meetings are held the second Thursday of the month, September through May, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. For further information, please call Linda Miner at 721-8810. We hope to hear from you!

NEIGHBORHOODS TO STANDARD

As you may have noticed, a lot of things are going on in Willow Meadows this year. Because our neighborhood was selected as a participant in the City of Houston's Neighborhoods to Standards program, Willow Meadows is getting a little extra attention this year. That includes additional street lighting that has been installed in June and July throughout the subdivision, updating of street signs and resurfacing of our streets.

In regards to resurfacing, as we indicated in a separate circular, the project began in earnest in April and was to be finished in August. The contractor selected by Metro got behind schedule, focusing a lot in the west section, just across from the Meyer Park Center. Metro put some pressure on them and they have accelerated their program in the remaining sections. While the contractor was working in the west section, the City of Houston was making some spot repairs in the south section at some intersections of Willowilde. When they learned there was a contract to repair and resurface the whole subdivision, they dropped their project in midstream to allow the contractor to finish up. Meanwhile, the contractor had some extra asphalt, so they started resurfacing the west section, but we quickly asked Metro to stop them when it became clear they were not following our specifications of surfacing curb to curb. Needless to say, we have learned a lot about municipal contracts, and after numerous phone calls and meetings, we are crossing our fingers the resurfacing is finished correctly and in a timely manner. The project is now projected to finish in October.

TRASH COLLECTION CHANGES

During the June meeting, we had a presentation by the City of Houston Solid Waste Department. With a short video and a question and answer session which followed, we learned about the Automated Refuse

Collection Program initiated by the city 3 years ago. While the purpose of the presentation was to introduce us to the program and prepare us for eventual implementation, we have since learned that equipment shortages will prevent our neighborhood from getting into this program until next year.

The Automated Refuse Collection program utilizes the large rolling trash bins you may have noticed in surrounding areas. The bins are mechanically collected by a truck from the curbside which requires less manpower, increasing productivity and reducing job-related injuries. Collection will be reduced to once a week, but the bins are quite large and designed with close fitting lids to keep animals out. For those of us who may be physically challenged, there are smaller containers available, and arrangements can be made for the driver to come get your rubbish bin.

In parallel with the Automated Refuse Collection, there will be a separate collection of yard trimmings. These collections will utilize your standard trash bags, but the refuse will go to be recycled, which not only is good ecologically, but it slows down the filling of our expensive landfill areas.

More about these programs will be available as we get closer to participation in these programs. Meanwhile, please keep on recycling as much as possible, and please remember to put your trash out just before trash pick up. The city can and will issue tickets if you put your trash out days in advance or after scheduled pick up.



DEED RESTRICTIONS

In the last few months, deed restriction complaints have been very few. We are investigating one house which is reported to be repairing a large number of vehicles, and we are re-opening an investigation of another alleged business nuisance.

Enclosed in this newsletter is a **VERY IMPORTANT DEED RESTRICTION SURVEY**. We indicated at the last civic club meeting that the Board had finally committed to reviewing the potential to update our deed restrictions. Many of you may not be aware that Willow Meadows is actually 18 distinct sets of deed restrictions dating approximately 40 years. Many things we face today were not even considered so long ago. For example, as more people realize what a great location we have here, they would like to move here and update their homes. You may have noticed some significant home improvements in recent years. All of these improved homes help increase your property value. Some people have indicated that if it were possible to have two-story homes, we could see our neighborhood values really grow in the next decade.

Therefore, we have made some initial efforts to explore deed restriction updates. The first step was to meet with other civic clubs to learn what they have been through in this process, and the second step was to obtain legal advice on how to proceed. Now we have set a budget of \$2000 for legal fees for this project. The next step is a very important one, and that is to see what **you** want. The enclosed survey touches on some very significant points which you may or may not like. Maybe you think we need to drop some of these ideas altogether, or maybe you think we need to be stronger. This survey is only the first step to seeing which direction you want us to go with Willow Meadows and your investment in the future. Once you return the survey and we tabulate the results, there is still plenty more to do. Legal wording is very critical, and then you will see a draft proposal of any modifications. After the draft deed restrictions, we hope to be able to present the final deed restrictions for your signature. This whole process is not quick; it would not be unusual for this to take one year.

Please help us help you with your future. Take the time to reply to the attached survey and return it to Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235. We value your opinion.

SPEED HUMPS?

If you came to the June meeting, you would have seen that this was the hot topic of the evening. There were many people strongly in favor of speed humps and many people against speed humps. Those in favor cited speeding cars and the danger they posed to children, pets and any of us that may be out for a walk. Those opposed cited the inconvenience, the potential for damage to cars, the hindrance to emergency vehicles as well as the unsightliness of the signs and striped crossings.

As the group was fairly evenly split on the subject, we elected to postpone discussion until the next meeting in September. We encouraged everyone to experience the speed humps already installed in the Westwood subdivision adjacent to Willow Meadows directly across the railroad tracks, or in other surrounding areas, such as Linkwood subdivision.

Our discussions in September may be for naught. Applications that were submitted by individuals also had to be considered by the City of Houston for liability reasons, and we are aware that individuals submitted speed hump applications for many of our neighborhood streets, including Willowgrove, Cliffwood, O'Meara and Greenwillow. The city acknowledged receipt of the applications and followed up with traffic count and speed surveys in July. You may have noticed the black cables across some streets during the week of July 22 and 29. Those streets that meet the criteria for speed humps will then be prioritized, and funding will be confirmed by the end of this year. As many of you may already know, there have been so many applications for speed humps around the city, and currently only one quarter of those will be funded. Therefore, even if some streets in Willow Meadows qualify, speed humps are not guaranteed. Existing applications will be reconsidered

through four 6-month cycles for the program,
afterwhich they will be dropped.

RECYCLING REPORT

The schedule for recycling in the coming months is as follows:

August 20, September 4 (Wednesday), September 17, October 1, 15 & 29, November 12 & 26. .

The green recycling bins are the property of the City of Houston, and there is one bin allocated to each house in our neighborhood. As we indicated last month, if you are missing a bin and wish to replace it, you can call the City of Houston Recycling Hotline at 865-4201. You can also contact Henrietta Bell at 660-0309, because she has a small stockpile of bins since working so hard to get our neighborhood into the recycling program.

Don't forget: Heavy trash pick-up is the fourth Wednesday of every month. It is a violation of City ordinance to put heavy trash out for pick-up earlier than the weekend preceding scheduled collection. The schedule for the coming months is:

August 28, September 25, October 23, November 27.

SPECIAL NOTE: Remember that due to the Labor Day holiday, all city services are closed on Monday, September 2, and our normal trash pick-up is rescheduled to Wednesday, September 4 instead of Tuesday.

If you care about your neighborhood as much as we do, lend a hand to keep up the appearances of the neighborhood. That includes not putting your trash out days in advance of pick-up (that is also a violation of City ordinance). The trashmen are not always so neat, or maybe you overloaded a bag which then split open. Don't leave it for the rest of your neighbors to look at. Please pick it up and bag it for the next pick-up. If you are out walking and picked up one piece of garbage or one forgotten sign, that is one less eyesore that is littering our neighborhood. Together with minimal effort, we can make Willow Meadows a more beautiful neighborhood.

Please read the ESPLANADE NEWS section to see how your neighbors helped us beautify Willow Meadows.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

PRECINCT 7 CONSTABLES: **748-8900**

EMERGENCY: **911**

POISON CONTROL: **654-1701**

MAYOR'S OFFICE: **247-1888**

MARTHA WONG, DIST. C: **247-2004**

CITY SWITCHBOARD: **247-1000**

WATER/SEWER REPAIRS: **754-0600**

NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION: **525-2525**

TRAFFIC LIGHT/SIGN REPAIRS: **865-4000**

1996 CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS

MARCH 5

JUNE 4

SEPTEMBER 10

DECEMBER 3

ESPLANADE NEWS

Many thanks go out to the volunteers who came out June 8 to donate their time to make for a better looking Willow Meadows. While the group may not have been as big as we could have hoped for, they all quickly pitched in and did a great job along West Bellfort. Risking cuts from broken glass and rashes from poison ivy, they trimmed trees and bushes and picked up rubbish along the way. A few energetic souls later went and cleaned up the trash at the Greenwillow/610 underpass. It looked great for a while, but of course the trash continues to accumulate. You too can help by picking up some trash as you walk, bicycle, or drive by. Many thanks to the whole gang, including Mrs Meyers for the soft drinks. We hope more of you can pitch in next time to help us keep our neighborhood looking good.

CIVIC CLUB DUES

This is just a reminder that the Willow Meadows Civic Club dues are \$150 for the full year. That is really a bargain compared to surrounding subdivisions, and we believe it is money well spent. It covers the constable patrol, with 60 hours per week of neighborhood security, both while you are at work and asleep. The dues also pay for weekly mosquito spraying during the summer months, and we believe they have been more effective this year in controlling the pests (the dry summer has helped!). Dues also cover maintenance of the West Bellfort esplanade. In addition, dues go towards legal fees that will be encountered in deed restriction enforcement and other consultations. None of the dues goes towards any board members; we are all volunteers to the civic club. Almost seventy percent of your neighbors have already paid their dues. If you haven't paid any dues or made only partial payments, please help us and help your property values by mailing your check to Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston TX 77235.

DEED RESTRICTIONS

All deed restriction complaints are reviewed and appropriate steps taken for enforcement. Complainants are advised in writing of the Board's actions on their complaints. Please use the form below to report suspected violations.

REMEMBER, Willow Meadows is a residential subdivision of single family dwellings.

**WILLOW MEADOWS CIVIC CLUB
P.O. BOX 35551
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77235
DEED RESTRICTIONS COMPLAINT FORM**

NAME OF
COMPLAINANT _____ DATE _____
—

ADDRESS _____ TELEPHONE

NATURE OF COMPLAINT: (Please be specific - Give Names, Addresses, Dates, Details)

If legal action would be required, are you willing to be a complainant and appear in court as a witness if absolutely necessary? _____

Do you know of any other residents in your section of Willow Meadows who will also appear in court if necessary? _____

PLEASE DO NOT TELEPHONE COMPLAINTS TO THE OFFICERS OF THE CLUB IF YOU ARE NOT PREPARED TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN COMPLAINT. The Civic Club cannot take action without a written complaint.

Please mail your completed form to the address above. Your name will not be divulged unless you are a complainant in a lawsuit.
