
Willow Meadows News

May 1997

June Meeting

The next meeting of the Willow Meadows Civic Club is Tuesday, June 3, 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

We hope this second newsletter of the year finds you and your family doing well. With so much rain this spring, its hard to remember we were fighting a drought at this time last year. Now everything is growing so fast, and most yards and gardens are looking great. Thanks for all your efforts to keep our neighborhood looking beautiful.

Great things continue to happen in and around Willow Meadows. You may have noticed we even got a little publicity in the Houston Chronicle regarding the desirability of older neighborhoods such as ours where you can get good house value and update to a real showpiece for much less than some of those further away subdivisions. I am convinced our great location near to the Loop, the Medical Center, the Galleria, Greenway Plaza and Downtown will always help our home values. All we have to do is our part to keep our neighborhood attractive. We also noticed that while some houses for sale have not seen too much action, others are selling extremely fast; I noticed two houses which sold within one week of going on the market in April!

As usual, we must remind those of you who haven't paid dues that we are counting on you to pay your fair share. These dues are very important, as they pay for 60 hours per week of constable patrol to help minimize crime in our area, they pay for upkeep of the West Bellfort esplanade, they pay for summertime mosquito spraying, and they cover any capital improvement projects we may undertake in our neighborhood. In 1997, there will be a significant outlay for legal expenses as we work on updating the deed restrictions, as well as tax exempt status which we just completed. We need your support, and we hope you appreciate that this is money well spent.

Please plan to come to our next Civic Club meeting on June 3 at the Willow Meadows Baptist Church. There we will provide the most current information on neighborhood projects, as well as other surrounding activities. Your comments are always welcome at these meetings.

Sincerely

Chris Brouwer

1997 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:	Dean Gore (729-7935)	Deed Restrictions:	Doug Koy (723-0067)
Secretary:	Ruth Tynes (729-1477)	Architecture:	Rob Chase (723-4878)
		Beautification:	Randall Doe (297-5648)

TREASURER'S REPORT

This report summarizes the 1997 year to date revenues versus expenditures through April.

Category/Description	Jan. 1-April 30, '97	1997 Budget
REVENUES		
Dues	\$ 72,225.00	\$81,000.00
Interest checking	0.00	0.00
Interest savings	1,436.67	2,800.00
Advertising	175.00	400.00
Other Income	0.00	0.00
Total	\$ 73,836.67	\$84,200.00
EXPENDITURES		
Bank charge	\$ 81.31	\$ 0.00
Donations	0.00	500.00
Miscellaneous	316.38	1,000.00
Mowing	1,000.00	4,400.00
Pest control	134.69	3,500.00
Postage	845.01	550.00
Printing	0.00	600.00
Security	20,405.40	61,400.00
Supplies	0.00	150.00
Legal Services	1,750.00	5,000.00
Total	\$ 24,532.79	\$77,100.00
SURPLUS	\$ 49,303.88	\$7,100.00

At this point, we are actually a little **behind** last year's dues collection, with 63.5% of the neighborhood paid up year to date. As you know, our primary source of revenue is your dues, so please submit your annual dues of \$150 as soon as possible to: Willow Meadows Civic Club, P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235. While you see a big surplus above, through the rest of the year, our expenses will far exceed our revenues. We need your help.

SPEED HUMPS: AN UPDATE

You may recall that one street in Willow Meadows has been approved and funded for speed humps this year. The section of Greenwillow between Cheena and Loop 610 should have speed humps installed before this summer. Greenwillow north of Loop 610 and Cliffwood are still in the running for speed humps in the next round of funding which takes place this summer.

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

In regards to the street resurfacing project, you may be aware that the contractor did come back to fix some trouble spots. They did mill off some asphalt and regrade areas where extreme ponding had occurred. In addition, they rebuilt curbs in some areas. At this time, Metro has advised us that the project is essentially complete, so if your trouble spot was not fixed, it probably will not be fixed under this contract. We have noticed some pitted areas in the asphalt on Wigton and Greenwillow just north of Loop 610, indicating poor adhesion, and we have asked the inspectors to review and correct these problems. Now, if we could only get them to take away the dilapidated project signs which we have been reminding them about for more than two months!

You should see more lighting on our neighborhood streets also. During April, as part of the Neighborhoods to Standard program, many new street lights were added throughout Willow Meadows. In addition, there were new lights installed along West Bellfort thanks to Houston Lighting and Power.

Finally, we are seeing some new trees along the West Bellfort esplanade. MC Management and Development Inc. has been delayed by all the spring rains, but they managed to get some trees from the perimeter of their tree farm to start installations around the Meyer Park Center. As we went to press, the planting had just begun, and we are looking forward to a beautifully landscaped thoroughfare through our neighborhood.

Not so far from our neighborhood, Center America has put up their project sign on the Stella Link center, and they plan to start renovations this summer. You may also hear the jackhammers in the distance, as the City

has started to tear up and replace Stella Link from South Main up to South Braeswood.

WILLOW MEADOWS IN THE NEWS

Willow Meadows had some great press coverage in some recent articles in the Houston Chronicle. Perhaps you saw the article which indicated how many people prefer to move back into the neighborhoods they grew up in. It provides a certain continuity and stability to a neighborhood. As Willow Meadows was highlighted, we think that is a great vote of confidence in how desirable a neighborhood we have, from home value, to shopping convenience, to proximity to major employment centers, such as the Med Center, Galleria and Greenway Plaza. At least three highly respected realtors live in our subdivision, so that should speak for itself.

In another article (Houston Chronicle, April 20), our neighborhood was featured in an article that showed how “with imagination, love and money, 50’s style houses take on a 90’s look.” Most of the photos in the article were of a beautifully remodeled Willow

Meadows home, and the article pointed out how neighborhoods such as ours which were far away suburbs in the 1950’s are now part of the city’s core, and how yuppies who used to turn up their noses at areas such as ours are now finding them more tempting. The article stressed how the original ranch style homes were meant to be open and airy, and how remodelers are buying up some of the darker houses, and “transforming them into homes with all the comforts of suburban showrooms or the sophistication of urban lofts.” Willow Meadows was mentioned with other near-Loop neighborhoods such as Braes Heights and Afton Oaks as “being settled by a new and more diverse population willing to pump money into their homes.”

NEWS 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.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Perhaps you have noticed all the attention last month to volunteering. Our current and past Presidents of the United States made a big pitch about how we can make this country a lot better place to live if we stopped complaining and put a little energy into volunteer work, whether to help our children or our neighbors. We don't want to use this as a "soap box", but the points are valid. We do need volunteers to keep our neighborhood strong, and we want to encourage you to think about what little extra bit you can do to help. Of course you don't have too much time, but if everyone put in even one hour a week, it would be much more than we are getting now. Don't forget your civic club officers also work full time jobs to support their families, and their volunteer work for this neighborhood is because they care.

Many thanks to those of you that do volunteer. We owe a big thanks to our Block Captains who tirelessly deliver newsletters and flyers to your doorstep. We thank our Section Leaders who distribute and assist the Block Captains. Thanks to our diverse group of volunteers for the deed restriction project, who have spent many long hours researching and discussing what they believe will be best for our future. Thanks to all the board members who donate some of their spare time to manage their respective functions. Many thanks go out to the volunteers who have helped on esplanade clean-ups and other civic projects.

But....we can use more help. Many of you may have great ideas or experience but don't have too much time for any labor. Maybe some of you have the muscle power but don't think you have any ideas. It doesn't matter. We can use any time you have to offer. We appreciate that we had lots of experts on street paving and drainage **after** the City resurfaced our streets, but where was that expertise when the project was announced, as we could have used you to help us monitor this project? You can help in many ways, or you can just stay home and complain about how terrible everything is. Its your choice.

We do have an immediate need for a volunteer. We need a Section Leader for the south section of the neighborhood, to cover the area between Greenwillow and Cliffwood, south of West Bellfort. Leona Wroten has devoted countless years to our neighborhood, and she is seeking someone to take over the responsibilities of counting and distributing newsletters to the Block Captains in that area. Please call if you can help

We will also seek new officers and board members for next year. It is not too early to think about these interesting positions.

JUST A LITTLE MORE PATIENCE...

Thanks to the neighbor who pointed out the ponding problem on South Braeswood near Greenwillow last year. The whole esplanade area of South Braeswood retains a lot of water, but there is a particularly bad collection area just across from the synagogue. Unfortunately, due to the dry conditions last year, the City of Houston didn't take any action. When we reminded them this year during the recent heavy rains, they did come out and clean out a drain, which helped alleviate some of the problem. There is still a drainage problem, and the City of Houston has indicated they will re-grade the area to improve this. Just be patient....

RECYCLING REPORT

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

May 28 (Wednesday following Memorial Day). June 10 & 24, July 8 & 22, August 5 & 19

Acceptable materials for curbside recycling include aluminum and tin cans, #1 and #2 plastics, glass bottles and jars, telephone books, newspapers, magazines and used motor oil.

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:

May 29 (Thursday following Memorial Day), June 25,
July 23, and August 27

ABANDONED STREET?

Many neighbors have called regarding the signs installed on Meyer Park Boulevard, a side street near Luby's Cafeteria which connects the South Post Oak feeder road to Meyer Forest Drive. This seems to be an important street for many of us to return back to West Bellfort after visiting the Meyer Park Center. We called the City of Houston as well as MC Management and Development Inc. to follow up on this issue. You may recall that the Meyer group built that street during development of Meyer Park in anticipation of high density developments, including perhaps an office building. As those projects haven't materialized, the most likely continuation will be additional commercial construction. With this in mind, MC Management and Development Inc. is obliged to advise the City they would like to buy back the street in the event they want to alter this street to fit into their future plans. The sign by the City of Houston is a formal procedure to announce they will relinquish control of this street. In discussions with MC Development, they have indicated that they have no immediate plans, especially with the vacancies they have in the center. In some of their more ambitious development plans, they do imagine they may construct more retail shops on the north side of Luby's, and with that, they may alter the Meyer Park Boulevard, perhaps reducing it from 4 lanes to 2 lanes. We are under the impression that nothing will happen in the foreseeable future, but the Civic Club has gone on record with the City of Houston to express our concern if our access back to West Bellfort would be diminished by any changes to this street. The Meyer group is willing to share their long-term plans with the Civic Club, and they indicated we should have some blueprints to show at our next general meeting.

CIVIC CLUB DUES

This is a reminder that Civic Club Dues are payable at the first of each year. We are off to a good start, currently only a little behind last year's collections, with more than 63% of all households paid up to date. We are counting on the rest of you to help us beat the 70% participation last year. But how about that remaining 30%? You too benefit from the constable patrol, as well as the mosquito spraying, the esplanade maintenance, and this newsletter, as well as all the behind-the-scenes work by your volunteers.

If you haven't paid your dues yet, or if you misplaced your dues notice, please make your check for \$150 payable to Willow Meadows Civic Club, and mail it to P.O. Box 35551, Houston, TX 77235. Don't forget to indicate how many security stickers you would like. Members also will receive our new 1997 neighborhood directory.

For your information, here are the percentages of dues paying members by street through April. How is your street doing?

Breakwood: 50%	O'Meara: 66%
Cheena: 77%	Osby: 62%
Cliffwood: 59%	Piermain: 55%
Firestone: 66%	Sarong: 67%
Greenwillow: 60%	Silverwood: 79%
Knickerbocker: 68%	Waynesboro: 49%
Lemac: 61%	Wigton: 74%
Lymbar: 86%	Willowgrove: 72%
McDermed: 60%	Willowisp: 53%
Meyerwood: 71%	Woodvalley: 61%
Nenana: 63%	

DEED RESTRICTIONS

Since our last meeting, there have been no additional deed restriction complaints registered. The last complaint concerning alleged business activity at a house on Firestone was actually posted one year after the original complaint and the activity has ceased.

The Deed Restriction Modernization Project continues. We were a little too optimistic when we went to press with our last newsletter, which indicated we were already sending a draft to the lawyers. There have been a few issues which have been debated amongst our volunteers, most notably the issue of how tall a house would be allowed if we go to new construction. This will certainly be an important issue for all of you to consider when you see the full draft version later this summer. Currently, the deed restrictions draft is indeed with the lawyers for review and comments, and we hope to have the draft distributed to all of you perhaps in June. **VERY IMPORTANT:** When you get this draft, please look at it carefully and in a timely manner. We must have your response, or things may not go the way you want them to. If you are not the home owner,

we will require you to forward these deed restrictions to the owner for their review. Once that review is complete, every one of us will again receive the final revised documents for signature.

If you have any other questions regarding the deed restriction project, or if you have some time to help us in the final steps of this project, please feel free to call any of the Civic Club board members.



March: 9722 Cliffwood

April: 4318 Wigton

Recipients of Yard of the Month will receive a sign for the month plus a gift certificate for use at Wolfe's Nursery presented by Morgan Personette Properties. Shame on the person who stole our last Yard of the Month sign.

SPRINGTIME GARDENING TIPS

Here are some gardening tips to keep a beautiful lawn and landscaping through the coming months:

AZALEAS: You can still trim your azaleas back by as much as 1/3 and apply a fertilizer suited to azaleas and other acid loving shrubs. You shouldn't fertilize from June until the azaleas finish blossoming next spring.

FLOWER BEDS: You should mulch all your beds with at least a few inches of mulch material. Mulching helps retain moisture, saving on your water bill, and it keeps the plants' roots cooler to sustain them through the hot summer months. It helps minimize weeds, and we are sure you won't mind less weeds.

LAWNS: You still have time to fertilize your lawn if you want to make it healthy before the hot summer. It is a good time to make a preventative treatment against chinch bugs which love to invade our lawns when they become hot and dry.

THANKS, ESPLANADE VOLUNTEERS

Harry Boswell did a great job organizing a major cleanup of the West Bellfort esplanade and the McDermed entrance from South Post Oak. We now have three additional crepe myrtles to fill some voids, and the hedges along the bayou have been trimmed to a good height to improve visibility. Harry also rounded up a big crew looking for adventure, excitement and the daring thrills of working around poison sumac! Amongst those joining in the two adventure packed weekends to clean up debris, trim and fertilize the trees, weed and mulch were: Susan Marsh, Robbie Chase, David Tobin, Greg Walling, Doug Koy, Chris Brouwer, Don Twardowski, Chris Griffin, Richard Ray, Bruce Bell, Gary Stokes and Beth Allen and family. Thanks for your help!

SECURITY REPORT

PLEASE NOTE: NEW PHONE NUMBER. Shortly after our December Civic Club meeting, the Precinct 7 Constable office was relocated, and with that comes a new phone number. **NOTE THE NEW NUMBER: 643-6602.**

Since our last newsletter, we have experienced several incidents involving theft of, or from, vehicles parked on the street or in driveways. This is the most common type of crime in our neighborhood and one we have warned you about previously. We all need to remain alert.

The morning of February 20th, between the hours of 12:30 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. Willow Meadows and Willowbend subdivisions experienced a rash of car burglaries. All of the vehicles had a window broken out and at least three of the vehicles had radios and other personal property stolen. The first incidents were reported in the 4300 block of Sarong and continued to move south to the 4300 and 4400 blocks of Osby, the 4300 block of O'Meara, and the 10400 block of Cliffwood. The thieves then headed into Willowbend subdivision breaking into a car in the 4800 block of Tonawanda and another in the 4800 block of Creekbend. Both the Constable and HPD responded to the initial complaints on Sarong shortly

after the crime spree began, however, the thieves managed to evade the police.

On February 28th another burglary of a motor vehicle was reported in the 10100 block of Willowgrove.

On March 22, around 4:00 a.m., we had two more incidents. The first call was in the 4300 block on O'Meara where a neighbor reported that suspects in a vehicle tried to break into a car parked across the street, set off the alarm and sped away. A few minutes later, a resident in the 10300 block of Cliffwood called in to report that someone was attempting to steal a vehicle parked in her drive. Apparently the thieves broke into the car but due to mechanical problems were unable to get it started and had to flee again before the police arrived.

On March 26th, a vehicle was stolen from a driveway in the 4600 block of O'Meara during the daytime.

A locked garage is clearly the safest place for your vehicles. Those residents that could use their garages except for a little clutter might find a spring cleaning effort worthwhile. If you have no choice and must park outside, your vehicle is much safer parked in a well lit driveway than on the street. If the area you park in is dark, the expense of adding some lighting might be worth it. Other deterrents to theft are alarm systems and "The Club". It is also important not to leave valuables such as cell phones, cd's and briefcases out in plain view.

Other criminal activity in the area includes the following:

April 23 - 10300 Willowgrove: Theft of some front porch furniture.

April 30 - 9900 Cliffwood: Prowler reported in backyard around 3:00 a.m. This neighbor reminded us that a dark house, with no lights on outside or inside, may be an invitation to a burglar.

April 30 - 4400 Cheena: Prowler reported on side of house around 3:30 a.m. (See above similar location)

We also had an aggravated robbery on April 11th in the 4500 block of Hazelton. This was in Willowbend subdivision but very close to our neighborhood. The resident was robbed by a black male after pulling into her driveway around 10:00 p.m. She was apparently followed into the neighborhood.

Sgt. Cerda warns us that our proximity to Meyer Park makes us especially vulnerable to being followed home and robbed. Women and the elderly are usually the targets for this type of robbery. He suggests that we pay better attention when driving into the neighborhood on our way home. If you suspect that someone is following you, go around the block and confirm this to be the case. If you are being followed, drive to the nearest well lit place where there will be people around or drive to the police substation on Beechnut. If you have a cell phone, dial 911 for help and be prepared to give information about your location and direction so police can locate you. If you have no choice but to go home and suspect you are being followed, back into your driveway as a precaution. This action might intimidate the person who jumps out of the other car to rob you because you are in position to run over him.

We have been very happy with the service provided by Sgt. Cerda and our other officers. The only complaint we have received about service involves response time during periods when there is no Contract Constable on duty in any of the neighborhoods in the program. Between our neighborhood and Willowbend, we have 100 hours of coverage a week. We also benefit from the contract coverage Precinct 7 provides other subdivisions in the area such as Woodside and Knollwood. There still are some hours in a 24 hour period where there is no officer on duty in any of the contract neighborhoods and we must rely on HPD for service. We do not print the schedule for several reasons, however, we recommend that if you have an emergency between the hours of midnight and 7:00 a.m, you should call 911 first and follow up with a call to the Constable. You may request that the Constable follow up with you about any incident that HPD handles. We want to make sure that the Constables are aware of problems in the area even though they may not have handled the original call.

Finally, schools will be recessing for the summer very soon. We traditionally experience more problems during this time of year. As we have previously suggested, do not leave lawn equipment and bikes out where they can easily be taken. Also, do not leave garage doors open while you go inside or run a quick errand. Be aware of strangers in the neighborhood and do not hesitate to report anything that looks suspicious.

SOUTHEAST: 9200 Lawndale, tel: 926-1247
SOUTH: 5100 Sunbeam, tel: 738-1936
NORTHEAST: 5565 Kirkpatrick, tel: 675-3208

Household Hazardous Wastes, such as antifreeze, batteries, paint, paint thinners, household cleaners and pesticides, are prohibited from normal and heavy trash collections. For proper hazardous waste disposal, please call 247-8589.

GARBAGE COLLECTION

Here are some important reminders regarding rubbish collection in Willow Meadows:

- Place your container face-front to the curb, with the handle facing towards your house.
- Keep the container away from cars parked along the curb and away from overhead trees, especially if you don't want the large trucks to damage your tree branches.
- Bags of grass clippings and leaves should also be placed at curbside on normal trash pick-up days, but keep them 3 feet away from the containers.
- Don't forget the monthly Heavy Trash pick-up on the 4th Wednesday of every month for those items too large for these trash bins and which are not otherwise recyclable.
- Recycling with your green box-style containers is every other Tuesday (changes to Wednesdays when there is a Monday city holiday).

Please note the schedule exceptions indicated in the Recycling News section further in this newsletter.

Residents may also dispose of heavy trash items before the scheduled Heavy Trash pick-up by going to one of the City's three neighborhood depository facilities. There you can dispose of furniture, appliances, tree limbs, remodeling rubbish, etc. You are permitted to dispose of up to four automobile tires per household per three month period. Depositories are open 7 days per week, except holidays, from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. You must have a Texas Drivers License and a current utility bill as proof of residence. These facilities are located at:

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

PRECINCT 7 CONSTABLES:	643-6602
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

WILLOW MEADOWS COMPLAINT FORM

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.

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

REAL ESTATE CORNER

The real estate market continues to be strong! While some houses sell within a few weeks, some stay on the market a long time. What could cause a house to remain unsold? Additions or converted rooms that do not look like they fit into the original design and quality of the house are often a turnoff. Dark rooms and few windows are also a negative as they make the house look smaller and less airy. Keep these points in mind if you are considering an addition or remodeling in the near future.

What projects have good payback? According to a recent article in the Houston Chronicle, kitchen remodeling and remodeling of the master bedroom are projects with good return. The yard is also a good place to invest money. A nice backyard with outdoor seating and anything that extends your living area to the outside are very appealing. Nice looking shrubs and curved beds out front will greatly increase curb

appeal, as well as make our neighborhood look nice. Replace large

overgrown shrubs with new landscaping, and your house will look larger and fresher. Curb appeal is the key to getting a buyer to decide if they want to see the rest of your house. A buyer may not go inside if they are turned off by the first look. Landscaping is a wise investment at any time, even if you don't plan to sell right away. When appraisers review a pending sale, they look around the neighborhood for "pride of ownership" to determine an overall neighborhood value. You can always do your part to increase your property value.

1997 CIVIC CLUB MEETINGS

JUNE 3

SEPTEMBER 9

DECEMBER 2