

December 1, 2002

Volume 1, Issue 6

SLNA Newsletter

South Lamar Neighborhood Association www.southlamar.org

**Next Meeting: Dec. 19th - Holiday POT LUCK Social
7:00 to 9:00 pm - Unity Church Youth Education Annex**

This Issue

- ❖ Holiday Pot Luck
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The December meeting will be an informal social rather than a meeting with a set agenda, so everyone can meet each other in a more personal environment. After our founding President & Vice President pass their torches to their successors and the entire 2003 Slate of Officers is sworn in, the remainder of the evening will be for visiting and “grazing” on all the goodies.

Meet new neighbors, catch up with the old ones. Your level of involvement in the SLNA organization itself is up to you. But if nothing else, attending meetings and activities allows you to match faces with all the names you’ve been seeing in these newsletters.

I’ve lived on Roberts Avenue for over 20 years, but never felt I “belonged” until SLNA was formed, and I joined, in January 2001. By attending SLNA meetings, I have met dozens of neighbors beyond my own street, and can truly call this “my neighborhood”. Now, when my distant neighbors stroll my street, I usually recognize them! It has even been a constructive outlet for the activist in me that I’ve stifled all these years.

Please try to join us on Thursday, Dec. 19th, any time between 7 and 9pm, in the 2-story annex of Unity Church on Del Curto. And if you’re like me and don’t cook, you can bring chips & dips or store-bought cookies. I, for one, will eat anything.

The Treasurer will also be accepting renewals from current members as well as new memberships -- see back page for the form. (Remember, SLNA dues are due in **January** of each year, regardless of the original date you joined, so our Treasurer doesn’t have to keep track of whose dues expire in which month...)

Hope to see you there!

Carol Gibbs
Newsletter Distribution “Czar”

Safe Routes To School

by Patricia Fiske, Sidewalk Committee Chair

The SLNA Sidewalk Committee (Patricia Fiske, Jennifer Marine, Steve & Ann Lacker, Krista Mt.Joy, Oscar Lipchak, Bryan King, Bill Stoughton), worked diligently for weeks on a SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL grant application for TXDOT funds. If awarded to us, we will enhance the pedestrian routes to Zilker Elementary School for students living on this side of Lamar. The city furnished the engineering data and then forwarded the entire package to The Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) for final review.

Our initial application had three Phases: Phase 1 - 691 feet of sidewalks with ADA ramps along the southwest side of Bluebonnet Lane from Lamar Boulevard to Del Curto. Phase 2 - 2501 feet of sidewalks along the west side of Del Curto from Bluebonnet to Clawson. Phase 3 - 1400 feet of bike lane along the west edge of Clawson from Lightsey to Ben White.

The City of Austin advised us to eliminate Phase 3 because striping Clawson would not meet TXDOT standards. They also suggested separating Phase 1 and Phase 2 into two separate applications, to not exceed funding limits. Jennifer heroically juggled all the dynamics of the Thanksgiving holidays in order to get the revised applications resubmitted by the December 1 deadline. The City has since passed them on to TXDOT, so now we just have to keep our fingers crossed!

Farewell from the PREZ

We are bringing to a close the second year of SLNA. Some day, we'll look back and read "SLNA founded January 2001" and say "I was there!" It has been a fantastic two years for me as president – a real learning experience! I have lived in the 'hood almost 13 years but never met most of you till SLNA came along. Even though a battle with developers brought us together, I wouldn't have it any other way. I have met so many incredible people in the 'hood and I know many of you will be life-long friends.

Looking back over the past year I am amazed at wide array of presentations at our meetings: the President of ACC; CoA Public Transportation, Bike Safety, Wildlife Rescue, Monorail, Save Our Springs, Neighborhood Night Out, and the CoA Forester! We debated the parking ordinance, amended the Bylaws, produced an Oak Wilt Video, and of course we have had some good social gatherings along the way. We even launched the newsletter this year!

It takes a crowd of volunteers to make SLNA click and my hat is off to everybody that has helped to get us where we are. Special thanks go to Patricia Fiske and her Sidewalk Committee members who worked on the TransTexas walkability workshop and later prepared our TxDoT grant application; Kathryn Stern, chair of the Oak Wilt Committee, for putting together the treatment workshop and continuing to battle oak wilt in the 'hood; JoDee Myatt for her fast turn-arounds on all the newsletters; Carol Gibbs and all the individual distributors who got the newsletters out on short notice. Marci Roberts keeps me in line, every step of the way; Hilary Dyer is always taking copious notes; Kevin Lewis keeps tabs on the South Central Coalition and Austin Neighborhoods Council; and Bobby Hubertus, tracking the membership and counting the money!

And of course I am going to gush about our very own www.southlamar.org website and the guy that makes it happen, Bill Stoughton. Neighborhoods all over the city constantly compliment our website. Great job, Bill!

Our "e-village" also keeps expanding, with over 100 on the Yahoo email list, a.k.a. "jungle drum". Follow the links on the SLNA main page if you want to sign up for the email group. Team SLNA is fantastic.

There is strength in numbers and unity, and I think we have all made SLNA a better place. The coming year will continue to be challenging for the incoming officers. Developers are circling in the sky and find our close-in 'hood very desirable. We must continue to be proactive in shaping the future of our 'hood, or it will be done for us. As we pass the SLNA torch to Kevin Lewis, Steve Lacker, Hilary Dyer, Bill Stoughton and Charlton Perry, our SLNA 2003 officers, we encourage the rest of our neighbors to join us in our community. Let's keep having fun for years to come!

Happy Holidays,
Bryan King

Communing with Winter Trees

By Ryan Gossen, Arborist and SLNA resident

It has been estimated that trees account for 15% - 18% of the property value for some homes. Why are trees so valuable? I'm convinced that one, perhaps subtle, part of their appeal is that if you wanted to, you could climb them. Here are a few observations about three species of trees that I have climbed in various seasons.

Red Oak -- Fall commuters grinding across highways over the greenbelt look off to either side and see spots of brilliant red canopy in the olive drab sea covering our trails and creeks. A dry day in December is the best time of year to climb a Red Oak – or to be anywhere near a Red Oak with the light filtering through those incredible leaves. Climbing a Red Oak before its leaves fall is safer because barren, dead branches are easily identified. This is one of my favorite Texas trees, and it pains me that they are perhaps the most potent vectors of Oak Wilt. While Live Oaks can linger for a good decade after infection, Reds often die in a month, leaving behind a carcass enmeshed with a mat of fungus and spores to be spread to neighbors by the sap (Nitidulid) beetle. Red Oaks are more vulnerable because, unlike White Oaks, they do not produce the vascular plugs ('tyloses') that can halt the damage done by breakage or disease.

Cedar Elm -- December is a good time to stay out of Cedar Elms. These are the ubiquitous 30-40 foot tall trees with small, serrated leaves that have just fallen after turning yellow. If you must climb one, note that the branches ending with tiny fibrous twigs are more likely to still be alive whereas dead branches will have already dropped their smaller twigs. When Cedar Elms lose their leaves, we suddenly see all the Mistletoe that's been lurking among its leaves. Mistletoe is a completely parasitic plant that sends its roots into the phloem (inner bark) of the host tree. Like Oak Wilt, it blocks the vascular system, and if it has been there a while, the branch will develop a swollen collar at the site. Mistletoe does not kill Cedar Elms, but it may kill a branch or two. The only effective way to fight it is to remove the host branch, making the cut several inches towards the trunk from the infection site.

Cedar (Juniper) -- Wet weather creates another danger for the committed tree climber. When a tree is saturated, its fibers are more likely to split, plus its limbs are far heavier than normal. The bark on most trees softens with moisture, and the lichen that adheres to it swells and becomes slippery. This is enough to keep me out of most trees for months. But certain Cedars are my refuge for off-season climbing. A large mature Cedar that has been pruned over the years can afford two or three companions in its limbs, which stay dry and hard even in wet weather. The fibrous bark keeps insects and lichen at bay and will not absorb water. Deadwood is fairly obvious on Cedar and is stronger than most other deadwoods because of its resistance to decay. Sitting in Cedar branches above wet winter ground, one feels suspended in the arms of summer. Unfortunately, Cedars rarely get big enough to go very high in. Truly comfortable branches are rare, most being at about a 45 degree angle. If you see a good climbing Cedar, you just can't afford to pass it up!

SLNA Development Update

By Bryan King

2414 Thornton Rd - Condo development - This property is one lot with both MF-2 and SF-3 zoning. The developer wanted the compatibility setbacks (required between MF and SF properties) waived. Such a waiver normally requires proof of a true "hardship". At the November hearing, the Board of Adjustments (BoA) suggested the developer show what he could build without any waivers, to prove up the hardship. The developer has since dropped the request for the waiver and now claims he will just build an even denser project than what he had presented to us. He has yet to prove he can do that, and we believe it's because it would be a less marketable project, and not a smart investment. This one is far from over, but it will probably be on the back burners for a while. Congratulations to the Thornton Road neighbors who took a stand!

Lamar Storage at Kinney Rd & S. Lamar - This one has been dormant for several months and is now churning again. SLNA learned after-the-fact that the developer had a private meeting with the City's Transportation Director last month, and had convinced him to support their project (using parking data from other cities). Once we learned of this meeting, we requested a similar private meeting with the director, to give him the full picture. We are especially concerned about the unique challenge posed for moving vans/trailers when navigating the sharp angle intersection, and their plan to have the entrance open into our neighborhood rather than onto Lamar Blvd.

Del Curto at Bluebonnet (the big "Commercial Property For Sale" sign). This property is owned by the Wong family and encircles the stone house at 2502 Del Curto. This land and adjoining properties (the Trailer Park, Maria's Taco Xpress, Russell's, and other residential properties on del Curto that are considering selling) comprises 10+ acres. Huge retail development typically needs 10 acres. And the realtor told several neighbors that Walgreen's and HEB have both expressed interest in it! Such development would bring commercial business two blocks into our residential neighborhood (concrete and pavement, lights, trucks, noise, through-traffic, etc.). We need to watch this one closely!

Russell's Bakery - Lamar at Bluebonnet - apparently stalled out because the property is "split-zoned" (front half is Commercial, back half is Single Family) and has been a nightmare for Russell's to get permitted. A consultant has been hired by the owner (W. O. Harper Trust) to get it rezoned so it can be developed. We should be concerned that when the back half of the lot ceases to be SF-3, it could lead to increased density of future development of all of the surrounding property mentioned above.

South Lamar - I have been talking to the City and the UT architecture department about doing a South Lamar Corridor Plan: "The Boulevard", from Town Lake to Ben White. The city has no money right now, but they also haven't said "no" (yet). Working with Zilker NA and Barton Hills NA to develop a clear guiding plan, including all stakeholders' input, we'd have a better chance of retaining and attracting desirable, neighborhood-friendly businesses -- and maybe a few less car lots?

Please speak up if you are interested in getting involved in any of the development projects. There is lots of information on the SLNA website.

Farewell from our Vice President

What an honor it has been to be a part of the birth of South Lamar Neighborhood Association. The relationships I have made have enriched my life and I am so grateful for that.

I feel absolutely privileged to have served as vice president under Bryan King as president. He has supported me in times of need and is a well of inspiration. Our association has leapt forward due to his leadership and the time he has put into it.

I know that no one person can do this alone and we have some remarkable people that have put a lot of time towards our organization with incredible ideas and the willingness to make it happen. The best evidence of this is the executive committee that will be taking over in January.

The Nominating Committee had such talented people available to consider that we had little trouble in choosing the nominations. I am eager to see their progress in the coming year and look forward to supporting their efforts.

Thank you for being involved and supporting us for the past two years.

Marci Roberts

CHANGOS Ad 3.5w X 4.5h

OFFICE DEPOT Ad 4h X 5w

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*Wishing Everyone a Safe and Happy Holiday
and a Healthy, Prosperous New Year!*

South Lamar Neighborhood Association

Member Information: Current Member _____ New Member _____

Please complete the following information. Couples, please use both first names.

NAME(S): _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

AREA CODE & PHONE NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

If you do not live in the SLNA, please note the address of the property you own in the SLNA:

Dues \$10 per year per household

Or be a "Big Bubba": \$20 (or more) per year

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

[] Request hardship waiver of Membership Fee

Make checks payable to South Lamar Neighborhood Association

Mail to Bill Stoughton, 3200 South Oak, Austin, TX 78704

Check out the SLNA Website at www.southlamar.org

Membership in the Association shall be open to all residents or residential property owners within these boundaries:

North - Oltorf;

South - Ben White;

East - Union Pacific Railroad;

West - S. Lamar / Manchaca;

Membership in the Association shall be issued on the basis of residency and payment of annual dues. Persons meeting the above criteria but who are unable to pay membership dues may request a reduction in dues or a waiver. The privilege of introducing motions and voting shall be limited to those who have joined the Association at least ten days prior to any regularly scheduled or special called meeting. Complete bylaws are available at www.southlamar.org and will be available at regular meetings.