

**GARDEN OAKS CIVIC CLUB
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING REGARDING
REBUILD HOUSTON STORM WATER PROJECT/STREETSCAPE DESIGN
FOR ALBA ROAD AND GOLF DRIVE**

By Cindy Bartos, Secretary, Garden Oaks Civic Club

October 14, 2014

Location: Garden Oaks Montessori Magnet School
901 Sue Barnett

President Sheila Briones called the Special Meeting of the Garden Oaks Civic Club to order at 7:04 p.m. Copies of the agenda, survey instructions, and survey forms were distributed. President Briones introduced herself, Valerie Luna from Council Member Ellen Cohen's office, Government Affairs Standing Committee Chair Mark Klein, and Ad Hoc In-Line Storm Water Detention Project Committee Chair Pam Parks.

Mark Klein summarized the Rebuild Houston Storm Water Project and specifically the streetscape design for Alba Road and Golf Drive (the "Project"). He reviewed the preceding timeline of events, including the presentations by the City of Houston to the Civic Club in January, the formation of the Ad Hoc In-Line Storm Water Detention Project Committee (the "Committee"), the petition drive by Julie Maddox and other Alba Road homeowners opposing the Project, and the resolutions passed at the May Civic Club meeting opposing the widening, curbing, and addition of sidewalks to Alba Road. Several meetings with Council Member Cohen's office and other City officials ensued and resulted in the City's offer of a variety of alternative street designs and a request to survey the residents to determine the desires of the neighborhood.

Street design options as they appear on the survey were explained and the floor was opened for questions and comments. Unless otherwise noted, the questions were answered mostly by Mark Klein with additional comments by Pam Parks and other Committee members as well as other residents in attendance at the meeting.

The following summarizes the questions/answers/comments presented:

Q. The original plan presented the possibility of streets intersecting with Alba to also be subject to the same standards – is this still part of the plan?

A. No. The City has indicated the change to cross streets would be minimal. The design would include a smooth transition into Alba only at the intersection.

Q. What about parking on the street?

A. The width of the street could allow for parallel parking.

Comment:

There is concern about an increase in crime with the street being closer to homes.

Q. Will the street be lowered?

A. Yes, no matter what option is chosen, the street will be lowered.

Q. Will the swales still exist?

A. No, the swales will be replaced by the underground pipe.

Q. Did the resolutions passed at the May Civic Club meeting include Sue Barnett?

A. No, the motions applied only to Alba Road.

Comment:

Thank you to Mark and Pam and the Committee for bringing the concerns of the neighborhood to the City.

Comment (Mark Klein):

Originally the City thought the neighborhood just didn't want sidewalks, but through meetings with Houston City Council Member Cohen; the Deputy Director of Public Works, Daniel Menendez; Chief Operating Officer, Harry Hayes; and representatives from the Mayor's office, the Committee was able to voice its concerns. The Committee felt the City listened and gave appropriate attention to the issues raised.

Q. Why aren't we considering the plan for Sue Barnett; don't you think this survey will set a precedent for future street design?

A. Having the grade school on Sue Barnett makes it a different situation. There are plans to rebuild and possibly redesign the school in the near future, but those plans are still in the early stage of development. Without more detailed information, it would be very difficult to make decisions regarding redesign of the streetscape. For example, there is the possibility that the school district could allow more of its property to be used in the street and sidewalk design. The school has a distinct set of needs to accommodate the school's traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular.

Comment (Stephanie Acosta, Parent Engagement Coordinator, Garden Oaks Montessori):

The school's enrollment is predicted to increase from approximately 700 to 1500 with the change in the design of the school.

Comment (Vic Seghers, Vice President, Garden Oaks Civic Club):

The Board discussed this issue and decided there wasn't enough information available about the future of the school to make any decisions concerning street design on Sue Barnett.

Q. Can we pick a side of the street to put a sidewalk?

A. The City will make that decision and could possibly shift the balance of the amount of right-of-way taken on one side to adjust for the side that has the sidewalk.

Q. If the streets are lowered regardless of the plan chosen, won't that mean that the streets will become rivers when it rains?

A. The 10' x 14' pipe placed under the street will carry away the water in most circumstances. In a heavier, more concentrated rain, the excess will flow down the street.

Q. If curbs and gutters aren't part of the design, what will keep the soil from eroding in the lawns during a heavy rain?

A. The design without curbs and gutters will have inlets at the ends for drainage. The question about soil erosion is one that can be addressed, if necessary, at a future technical meeting with the City.

Q. Will the driveways be rebuilt?

A. Yes.

Q. Will they widen the driveways?

A: No, they will be rebuilt to their original condition. Perhaps some individual negotiations could take place once the project is under way.

Comment:

Look at the streets in Garden Oaks Plaza (Azaleadell Drive and Sleepyvale Lane) to see an example of 27' wide streets with curbs and gutters – no sidewalks.

Q. When will the project start and how long will it take? What will be the strategy of the project?

A. The City was ready to start the project in early 2015 with the original plan, but until they hear back from us the project is on hold. The project is estimated to take about a year. The timeline is pending finalization of the plan.

Comment (Resident):

There are studies of increases in traffic related to the width of the street.

Comment (Mark Klein):

The City maintains there is no correlation.

Comment:

60+ cars pass the area in 30 minutes during rush hour.

Q. Can we get more speed bumps added?

A. The existing speed bumps will be replaced. There is a procedure in place with the City to request speed bumps for a given street. This would require a different and separate action.

Comment (Julie Maddox):

I will be working on adding more stop signs to Alba. Contact me if you would like to help with the process.

Q. How will the project affect the Pocket Parks?

A. Depending on the width of the street design, Triangle Park could be severely impacted. Other parks could be affected with future projects.

Comment:

Once a sidewalk is in place, the law will not allow a car to park in a manner that would block the sidewalk.

Q. Is the survey complete or can changes be made?

A. The survey is complete and getting ready to be mailed.

Q. Are there any visual representations of streets with various widths available online?

A. Not that we are aware.

Q. What will happen if the survey is not sent?

A. The City would make the decision on the street design.

Q. Are there any parking restrictions on the street once the street is finished?

A. That hasn't been discussed, but could be addressed if necessary.

Q. Will the decision made be applied to the entire length of Alba, both north and south of 43rd?

A. Yes.

Comment:

Resident stated she would like to have Alba separated into north and south of 43rd and will indicate so on the survey.

Comment:

Homeowners will be responsible for maintenance of sidewalks put in place.

Comment:

Soil erosion has occurred on the area of sidewalk without a retaining wall near 43rd and Alba.

Comment period ended.

Lori Kennedy made a motion to allot up to \$2750 to cover the cost of preparation and mailing of the Alba/Golf Streetscape Design Survey. Terry Jeanes seconded. Motion passed by members of the Civic Club present at the meeting.

It was determined there was no need to rescind or amend any previous motions.

President Briones adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.