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# Sharpstown Today

Issue 1, volume 39

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August 2014

## HBU Husky Football Ready To Go!

DUNHAM FIELD WILL BE THE SITE FOR THE 2014 HOME OPENER AGAINST MCMURRAY

## Plant It Forward "Urban" Farms

LOCAL NON-PROFIT HELPS REFUGEE FARMERS





BY JIM BIGHAM

This issue finds us in the middle of summer with the Houston heat and humidity, as we continue to work on many, many different projects and address various issues.

The first half of the year brought a renewed focus on battling commercial encroachment, mostly auto dealers, and we met with HPD's Auto Dealer command staff to find a solution to this chronic problem. We discovered however that this is simply not a priority for HPD. In all fairness, the current ordinance which requires the seller to post a for sale sign, hasn't kept up with the internet and online ads. In general it's almost impossible to prove an ordinance violation, and with limited manpower assigned to the unit, it's rare for an Officer to be available. Patrol units from Midwest or South Gessner simply don't respond to this type of call so we have turned to the courts, filing numerous lawsuits against the property owners who allow this commercial activity. This has been effective but expensive, and we intend to revisit the issue with proposed changes to the city ordinance, but that will likely be a 2015 or later project.

Regarding security, we continue to work closely with our private contractor S.E.A.L., adding a fourth Officer to the program, and allowing us to more effectively cover the large footprint of the subdivision. This is a very unique effort as we are the only private subdivision to develop this type of patrol initiative. We have divided the area into four separate patrol "sectors", allowing the Officers to become familiar with the streets, people, and activities that occur in a smaller area. We developed "sweep" and "intensified sweep" techniques to saturate portions of the neighborhood at

key times with marked patrol units, in order to be highly visible and deter the bad guys. Based on HPD crime reports, S.E.A.L. dispatch logs, and neighborhood feedback, we have deployed as many as three units at a time during these sweeps, with an Officer in reserve to handle calls. You may have noticed this increased presence, which seems to be paying off with fewer property crimes, specifically burglaries. We've added detailed crime data from HPD in this issue and will continue to monitor and revise the deployment of security resources as needed.

In January we began the process of identifying the entity responsible for the deteriorating conditions at the Bellaire-Fondren intersection which led us to the Greater Sharpstown Management District (GSMD). The improvements, which were funded and installed by the SW Houston Redevelopment Authority in 2007, have long been

neglected and were in very poor shape. To be clear these are City of Houston owned streets and improvements, and the GSMD has a contract to maintain them, which in our view has been poorly done. Any casual observer would note that these conditions would never be allowed to happen in the Galleria or Downtown, and yet even after asking Council Member Mike Laster to intervene we were met with confrontation, broken promises, and personal attacks. The GSMD manager, rather than simply taking care of the broken pavers, filthy sidewalks, benches, weeds, faded pedestrian markings, and broken crosswalk safety equipment, the very maintenance they're required to do under contract with the City of Houston, felt the urge to address our Board directly with letters to our homes. This clumsy, but somewhat effective strategy revealed

much about those who earn a living off the public trough. Two and a half years after our first inquiry about these poor conditions, the GSMD began power washing, restriping, and weeding this location. **We were left wondering why such a fight over such a simple thing.** In my opinion, the conditions while improved are still far short of the minimum standards we should expect. There will be more to this story as the article on page four reveals the next chapter. Stay tuned!



## SHARPSTOWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.

7211 Regency Square Blvd., Suite 117  
Houston, Texas 77036-3137  
PH: 713-789-2311 FAX: 713-789-2311  
E-mail: sharpstowncivic@gmail.com  
Web: Sharpstowncivic.org

### OFFICERS

**Jim Bigham; President** CCT2  
713-568-8124  
**Jodi Ogden; Vice President** CCEE3  
713-962-1069  
**Charmaine LeBlanc; Treasurer** Sec 5  
281-687-1323  
**Dale Davidson; Secretary** Sec 3  
713-789-2311

### DIRECTORS

**A. Rivera** CCEE3 - Deed Restrict.  
**Pat Menville** Sec 2 - Deed Restrict.  
**John Lorenz** CCT2 - Architecture  
**Paul Kahlich** CCT2 - Architecture  
**Paul Rafferty** CCT2 - Safety & Security  
**Ray Driscoll** CCT3 - Govt. Relations  
**Jeanette Kew** CCT3  
**Loletha Thomas** CCEE3  
**Pat Felder** Sec 2  
**Paul Schooley** Sec 2  
**Liz Mendiola** CCEE3  
**Mike Laster** Sec 1

### BOARD MEETINGS

(Generally the 3rd Monday)  
NO MEETING in August  
Monday, Sep 15th, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.  
Sharpstown Community Center  
Harbor Town Dr. @ Bellaire  
Meetings are open to the public.

## New Bilingual (Spanish) Admin Staffer Field Case Manager Position Approved

Major changes are in progress at the SCA Office as **Amy Garcia** and **Kourtney Gray** join our team. While our previous office admin and committee coordinator **Diane Robertson** recovers from a serious health scare, Amy steps in to handle admin duties to include membership, title company information requests, invoicing, and communications support. She is bilingual in English and Spanish and is a great addition to our organization. She is already helping provide more frequent and timely updates to our web site and news alerts, and we look forward to her helping us create a more professional responsive association.

Kourtney joined us part time and learned the basics of our association operations in the admin role but has taken up the challenge of filling the Deed Restriction (DRV) and Architecture (ACR) committee coordinator role with Diane's absence. She's working closely with Angelique Rivera and Pat Menville as we prepare for the next steps in deed restriction enforcement.

The SCA Board has approved the addition of a third staffer, a FIELD CASE MANAGER, that will be supporting the DRV and ACR system in the field. While we have historically relied on volunteers to help substantiate and document violations, this has proven slow and cumbersome. All volunteers have personal time and energy constraints that limit their ability to provide updates on cases. In the past the SCA has occasionally outsourced this activity to independent contractors, but the program has always been quite minimal. We intend to identify, recruit, hire, and train the right individual that can move the operation forward.

In other news, with the successful scanning and archiving of most historical documents, the office is beginning the next phase of implementing an industry specific management software platform that will streamline all organization processes, including more effective communication. This is a major project that will take place over the weeks and months ahead. It remains a stark reminder of where we've been, operating for most of 2013 with volunteers and modest hours of paid staff, and now transitioning to a complete and active organization, ready to focus on the primary mission of architectural control, deed restriction enforcement, and safety & security.

### Sharpstown Civic Association, Inc. Operating Results (Preliminary) Period ending June 30th, 2014 (Modified Cash Basis)

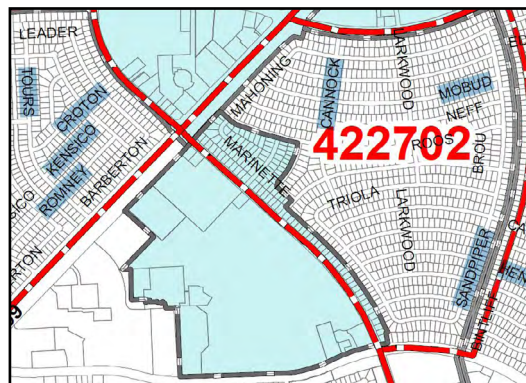
RECEIPTS		
Membership Dues	\$	52,403
Membership - Associate		450
Security		88,026
Advertising		75
Transfer Fees		19,950
Refinance Fees		1,555
Architectural Fees		1,676
Legal Fees Reimbursed		3,945
Other		287
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>168,367</b>
EXPENSES		
Accounting	\$	3,456
Bank Charges		406
Security		85,993
Deed Restrictions (Legal)		18,672
Depreciation		-
Beautification		672
Insurance		837
Deed Restriction (Other)		300
Membership		4,026
Mosquito Spraying		2,599
Office Supplies		402
Payroll		25,750
Payroll Taxes		3,547
Office Lease		5,206
Newsletter		4,333
Telephone		1,802
Govt. Relations		1,233
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>159,234</b>
<b>Unrestricted Net Assets (Decrease)</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>9,133</b>

# Homes Annexed by City of Houston Section 2 included in 2013 TIRZ Expansion

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES RELATING TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE, INCLUDING POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL ENCROACHMENT, HAS THE FULL ATTENTION OF SCA LEADERSHIP.

**O**In March 2013, the City of Houston, through City Council Ordinance 2013-212, approved the expansion of the boundaries of Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) #20. 109 homes were annexed, as part of a rectangle shaped block in the north west portion of Section Two. The purpose of the annexation is to facilitate the construction of some unspecified project for HBU, with various "options" including a science complex.

The annexation does not create any additional tax burden for property owners, rather it allows for TIRZ spending in the public right of way. The proposed HBU project appears to be unfunded or in a later phase, (they do not even own the land yet) but the framework for com-



mercial encroachment, with almost certain City of Houston (TIRZ) financial involvement, has been established.

As you know, our entire subdivision is restricted to single family use only, and we have consistently worked to protect against commercial encroachment. This year alone our efforts include multiple lawsuits filed against property owners who have converted these homes to commercial use. These cases involve the storage of materials, heavy commercial vehicles, and retail traffic, all of which create

real safety, noise, and traffic problems. We've had preliminary discussions with many parties, and it is unclear whether our deed restrictions will provide any real barrier to a vigorous, organized effort to build a commercial facility (science building complex, retail stores, parking lot, or who knows) inside our boundaries. **City of Houston involvement via TIRZ #20 is a game changer!** And while neither the TIRZ nor HBU has the authority of Eminent Domain, the COH does. In 2007, the Uptown Development Authority (Galleria area) persuaded Houston City Council to

seize property for redevelopment. The COH condemned a small parcel of land on San Felipe while paying the owners a million dollars less than market value. It's not hard to imagine a similar scenario for a reluctant seller in Sharpstown.

**We were not informed in any way,** nor were there any public meetings or other communications about this matter, other than the standard legal notices and regularly scheduled meetings of City Council and TIRZ #20. This is far from a done deal, and we are fully engaged in evaluating the situation in order to determine the next steps. We'll keep you up to date as we learn more.

## BIG CHANGES TO CITY OF HOUSTON ANIMAL ORDINANCE

We are pleased to announce that after some last minute organizing, communicating, and persuading, BARC and the Administration agreed to accept a "friendly amendment" to the proposed changes to Chapter 6 of the municipal code. This item was passed 15-1 on Wed. March 26, with two successful amendments.

At the urging of **Sharpstown** and **Westbury**, the two largest subdivisions in the City of Houston, Super Neighborhood Alliance leaders were able to persuade BARC managers and the Mayor to include an amendment. See the language below, which for the first time places a hard limit (3) on the number of cats at a residence:

**Sec. 6-86 License Requirement:**  
*(a) It is unlawful for any person to own, keep, possess or have control over four or more adult dogs, four or more adult cats, or any combination thereof exceeding three adult dogs and three adult cats on residential property within 100 feet of any other building used for human habitation. The distance shall be measured in a straight line from the nearest point of the structure or fenced enclosure where the animal is contained to the nearest point of the building used for human habitation.*  
Thank you for all your support!

# Summer Brings Robbery Increase Residents should be alert and aware!

CONTACT SHARPSTOWN PATROL (S.E.A.L.) OPERATIONS AT 713-338-2266 TO REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY. DIAL 911 TO REPORT A SERIOUS CRIME THAT JUST OCCURRED OR IS IN PROGRESS.

**S**ummer has brought us a major increase in robberies, with shots fired and victims assaulted.

The Sharpstown Subdivision faces an urgent and serious increase in violent crime inside the subdivision boundaries. Over the last few weeks, street, driveway, and home robberies have skyrocketed, mostly inside the Country Club Terrace 3 section, but across the entire subdivision, with a dozen robberies reported to Houston Police. Residents are urged to be aware of their surroundings and be cautious walking alone or carrying anything that appears valuable. It seems an iPhone is valuable enough.

The latest incident involved an older male pedestrian who was robbed at gunpoint by two black males yesterday afternoon, on Kendalia while walking from the bus stop on Bellaire. His daughter, who was arriving to pick him up, attempted to follow the suspects in their light gold or silver Lexus. The suspects fired as many as four shots toward her vehicle. S.E.A.L. Officers Brackin and Flores were just beginning a combined sweep of that section and were flagged down by the victim moments after it occurred. EMS and

HPD were dispatched to the scene. The victim, a visitor and non-resident, was treated and was not transported.

The Safety Committee began to notice an increase in robbery reports several weeks ago, but the Houston Police crime stat web site which provides 1,7, and 30 day incident info was not posting the DAY & TIME of the crime. We could not determine exactly when these were happening, but that has been resolved, and we now have hard information to report. We generally experience one or two violent crimes per month across the entire subdivision, usually categorized as assaults, which are often related to family issues and domestic violence. We RARELY have a robbery report, but in the last 30 days or so we have had a dozen.

Residents should be cautious at all times. Contact Sharpstown Patrol (S.E.A.L.) operations at 713-338-2266 to report suspicious activity AND the Houston Police Department emergency by dialing 911 to report a SERIOUS CRIME THAT JUST OCCURRED OR IS IN PROGRESS. Stay safe and keep us informed!

Offense	May 14	Year Ago	Chg	Chg %
Burglary	18	23	-5	-22%
Theft	18	29	-11	-38%
Auto Theft	3	1	2	
Aggravated Assault	0	0	0	
Robbery	2	1	1	

Date	Hour	Offense Type	Block Range	Street Name
7/5	8	Rape	7800-7899	BEECHNUT
5/27	23	Robbery	6700-6799	REDDING
5/9	21	Robbery	8500-8599	DASHWOOD
5/13	22	Auto Theft	7100-7199	GESSNER
5/25	23	Auto Theft	7800-7899	GULFTON
5/6	7	Auto Theft	7800-7899	KENDALIA
5/16	9	Burglary	5600-5699	HAZEN
5/20	13	Burglary	6700-6799	LANGDON
5/3	10	Burglary	7000-7099	ROOS
5/11	18	Burglary	7400-7499	BARBERTON
5/21	11	Burglary	7700-7799	EICHLER
5/3	17	Burglary	7700-7799	ROMNEY
5/11	17	Burglary	7700-7799	ROMNEY
5/20	9	Burglary	7800-7899	GULFTON
5/4	8	Burglary	7800-7899	SANDS POINT
5/11	23	Burglary	7900-7999	REDDING
5/20	13	Burglary	8100-8199	LEADER
5/17	17	Burglary	8500-8599	STROUD
4/5	9	Burglary	8800-8899	ROOS
5/1	11	Burglary	9000-9099	NEFF
5/29	9	Burglary	9200-9299	CARVEL
4/30	6	Burglary	9200-9299	ROOS
5/20	17	Burglary	9300-9399	SHARPVIEW
5/23	12	Burglary	9600-9699	LANGDON
5/1	12	Theft	6800-6899	LANGDON
5/13	16	Theft	6800-6899	LANGDON
5/16	22	Theft	7000-7099	HENDON
5/3	23	Theft	7000-7099	ROOS
5/4	21	Theft	7100-7199	GALLEON
5/6	1	Theft	7400-7499	MARINETTE
5/8	14	Theft	7700-7799	SANDPIPER
5/1	23	Theft	8100-8199	LANGDON
5/2	2	Theft	8400-8499	CARVEL
5/16	0	Theft	8500-8599	CARVEL
5/10	17	Theft	8800-8899	HAZEN
4/27	18	Theft	8800-8899	ROWAN
5/6	12	Theft	8800-8899	STROUD
5/4	14	Theft	8900-8999	LANGDON
5/21	21	Theft	8900-8999	TRIOLA
5/19	12	Theft	9000-9099	CONCHO
5/15	22	Theft	9000-9099	TROULON
5/22	12	Theft	9300-9399	SHARPVIEW



# Breakthrough on Bootleg "Hotels" Major Offender brought into Compliance



us entry to take these photos. We immediately reported the life safety and code violations to the City of Houston, with code enforcement inspectors visiting and writing ten citations, totaling \$16,000 in fines. We also gave the owner notice under Texas Statute, Chapter 209 that we intended to file suit within 30 days.

The owner, facing the serious expense and time of dealing with both the City of Houston and the court system placed them on the market for sale. When the SCA office received a request from a title company for information on these two homes, we gave them a NOTICE OF VIOLATION and made it clear that a lawsuit was pending. The title company communicated this to the buyer and the owner then began working with us to convert them back to single family use. We made multiple visits and inspections and within a short period the situation was resolved. This is the first of many such cases that we are pursuing and we will keep you up to date as we proceed.

The deed restriction committee had a major breakthrough late in 2013, which resulted in the closing of a pair of homes that were being used as "hotel" type, short term rental habitations. The properties were eventually sold by the owner after working with the SCA to convert them back to single family use.

In late fall 2013 the SCA was approached by an individual who can only be described as an informant. He had been a tenant in

one of these homes, renting half of the garage. See the picture above on the bottom right, and you'll notice that the garage was split into two rooms. The kitchen was converted into an additional bathroom and shower, with the dining room, living room, and den converted to rooms as well. These properties were located side by side in Terrace 3 and had a total of 20 (twenty) rooms with lockable doors constructed inside. The informant was in the process of being evicted and allowed

Please review this document that was filed on 2/20/2014 with the office of the Harris County Clerk. The full policy can be viewed on our website and is also available via email or hard copy by contacting the SCA Office.

### POLICY REGULATING THE PARKING AND STORAGE OF COMMERCIAL VEHICLES, RECREATIONAL VEHICLES, AND TRAILERS

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in order to define the extent of and the manner in which the SCA will enforce the noxious or offensive activity or condition restriction in place for the Sharpstown Community by and through the provisions set forth in the dedicatory instruments on file for each section comprising the Sharpstown Community, and pursuant to the authority given to the Board by the Texas Property Code, the SCA adopts this Policy setting forth the parameters of acceptable commercial vehicles, recreational vehicles and trailers present on lots located within the Sharpstown Community.

# Summer Meetings Blend Refugee Farmers with City Council Leadership.



Houston City Council Member, At Large Position 1, **Stephen Costello** joined us for our June meeting. CM Costello chairs the Budget & Fiscal Affairs committee and has been deeply involved in city finances since first elected to council. He is serving his third and final term and brought important context to the current budget situation.

One item of interest was the reminder that the Houston Fire Department budget expanded greatly after the tragic loss of Captain Jay Janke in the Four Leaf Towers high rise fire in 2001. Costello remarked that prior to that event HFD routinely staffed fire trucks with three firefighters, but in the period after the line of duty death, HFD increased the manpower to four firefighters per truck. This has been a major factor in escalating employee costs, to include pension and other related matters. He briefly discussed the revenue cap that the city may face in the next cycle and took questions about the drainage fee and the Rebuild Houston program. Several attendees spoke pas-

sionately about their dissatisfaction with the newly enacted Equal Rights Ordinance which CM Costello supported. Our thanks to the city-wide elected Council Member for visiting the Sharpstown community and listening to our concerns. He didn't flinch or duck any questions and we wish we had more time for the dialogue.



Our July meeting featured **Kassy Rodriguez** with the non profit organization Plant It Forward Farms. This group has several urban farms in the community, and they provide fresh, seasonal produce for Houston residents. All of the farm products are free of chemical pesticides and are freshly picked for sale. The concept is to create so called urban micro farms, while supporting refugees. Kassy described how many of the farmers are Congolese and have been provided with tools, training, and not least importantly the land on which to farm.

A primary location is on Fondren near Braeswood, on land under the joint control of a local church, with several more including Upper Kirby, Heights, Montrose, Westbury, and a soon to be developed plot in conjunction with St. Paul's here in the Sharpstown community.

The primary model way for neighbors to get this fresh produce is through a subscription system with a weekly bag of seasonal items running about \$24. The

varieties change with the season, but as we have a very long growing calendar the refugee farmers with as little as 25 subscriptions can earn a livable wage. This allows these individuals to become self sufficient through a sustainable urban farm. Farm stands are available at each location too, and residents are encouraged to visit and buy what is available, just like some of the top chefs in town, who have discovered the unparalleled quality and taste of non-GMO organic produce just out of the field.

As icing on the cake, Kassy brought bags stuffed with produce for our door prizes, and two lucky attendees got to try these wonderful vegetables. Our thanks to Kassy and we look forward to hearing more about this interesting and important organization. Visit their web site: [Plant-it-forward.org](http://Plant-it-forward.org)



Photo: By Plant It Forward Farms

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### HBU HUSKY FOOTBALL

Sat, 9-6, Dunham Field, McMurry, 7:00 pm  
Sat, 9-27, Dunham Field, Abilene Christian, 7:00 pm  
Sat, 10-18, Dunham Field, Stephen F. Austin, 7:00 pm  
Sat, 10-25, Dunham Field, Nicholls, 7:00 pm

### WALTER LIBRARY

8-6, 8-13, 8-20, 8-27, Teen Gaming 4:00 pm  
8-5,8-12,8-19,8-26, Children's Crafts 4:00 pm  
8-7,8-14,8-21,8-26, Children's Story Time, 4:00 pm

### GREATER SHARPSTOWN MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Monday, 8-25, 12:00 pm, Board of Directors Meeting  
Location: Chinese Community Center

### SW HOUSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Thursday, 8-7, 11:30 am, Board Meeting  
Location: Brays Oaks MD Office

### BAYLAND COMMUNITY CENTER

Monday(s), Ballroom Dancing, 2:00 pm  
Monday(s), Strength Training, 10:15 am

## Sharpstown Subdivision 2014 Heavy Trash Schedule

CLIP OUT AND SAVE THIS SCHEDULE

Month	Mon.	Tues.	Collection
January	13	14	Tree Waste ONLY
February	10	11	Junk Waste
March	10	11	Tree Waste ONLY
April	14	8	Junk Waste
May	12	13	Tree Waste ONLY
June	9	10	Junk Waste
July	14	8	Tree Waste ONLY
<b>August</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Junk Waste</b>
September	8	9	Tree Waste ONLY
October	13	14	Junk Waste
November	10	12*	Tree Waste ONLY
December	8	9	Junk Waste

You may place waste at curb no earlier than  
6:00 PM on the Friday prior to collection

