



THE BOCA NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION OF THE **BOULEVARD OAKS CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

FALL 2017

CenterPoint Gas Line Replacement to Remain in Alley

On the morning of Oct. 5, neighbors in the 1700 block of North Blvd. encountered a contractor (DigCo) operating a backhoe between the sidewalk and curb at North



Bldv. and Woodhead. Alert neighbors stopped the crew and inquired about the work being performed before any trees were harmed and immediately contacted the BOCA manager, who in turn contacted CenterPoint Energy (CP). CP confirmed that the work was in preparation for relocation of the gas line serving homes in the 1600-1900 blocks of North Blvd and South Blvd. from the shared alleyway to the tree lawn between the sidewalk and curb.

CenterPoint reps stated that the gas line is due to be replaced because of its age and potential for compromised integrity. Normally gas lines are replaced in their current location, but in this case CP planned to move the lines to the front of homes because of a company policy limiting installation of gas lines under pavement due to cost of surface repairs. In other words, dirt and grass are cheaper than asphalt and concrete. Because the alley easement has been paved over in several spots, CP determined the line should be moved to the front before assessing the impact to the neighborhood and its beloved street trees.

On October 12, BOCA met with CenterPoint reps to walk the alley to assess conflicts and feasibility of replacing the line there. When the reps saw majestic street trees in person, they immediately concluded that relocating the lines to the front would pose too great a risk to the trees, and would also be far more costly than replacing the line in the alley.

This project impacts odd numbered addresses on North Blvd. and even numbered addresses on South Blvd. between Mandell and Hazard. Currently, CP engineers are redesigning the project in the alley, and construction should begin in January. Installation of the new line in each block will last about a month. CenterPoint will be in touch with affected residents in advance of the project. New gas meters will be installed at homes with outdated meters.

“CenterPoint” *continued on page 2*

Report Digging in the Right-of-Way!

Thanks to the quick-thinking neighbors who responded to crews digging on North Blvd. last month, a potential street tree deforestation disaster was averted. But we must all remain vigilant about projects that could impact our streets and street trees. Digging in the right-of-way is almost always a sign of something major about to happen. Please let us know when you see it happening by sending a report to info@BoulevardOaks.org or calling 713-528-BOCA (2622). Please program our info into your cell phone.

Not convinced something that looks innocent is worth calling about? Please recall that in 2006 another utility construction company, Total Site, told neighbors they were performing a sewer line repair for the City of Houston at Dunlavy and South Blvd., when in fact they were adding capacity for the proposed Ashby HighRise. Another example, this past August when DigCo was relocating a major gas line that runs under the trees in the Broadacres esplanade in the 1300-1500 blocks of South Blvd. That project was in preparation for a major water line upgrade project that is set to take place next year. In Broadacres, thanks to a call from a neighbor, damage to the street trees was prevented.

The presence of *surveyors* and small colored marking flags is another tip-off that something is coming. Don't be afraid to be nosy and ask questions. Things that appear routine can have huge consequences.

○ Ask contractors working in the right-of-way what they are doing (unless you receive advance notice from BOCA about a roadway, waterline, gas line, or telecommunications project), and notify us of any suspicious activity.

○ Notify the BOCA office when you receive a door hanger regarding upcoming utility work, even if the notice seems unimportant. Notices delivered to homes along the North/South alley in mid Sept. mentioned unspecified utility work (see left column), but no one thought anything of it.

○ Report digging near street trees.

○ Report street tree removal (or trees painted with orange Xs) to the BOCA office so that we can verify that they have been approved by the city of Houston Forestry for removal.



[CenterPoint.....continued from page 1](#)

We appreciate CenterPoint’s efforts to maintain its services and infrastructure, and we especially appreciate the company’s sensitivity to our street trees and historic neighborhood. Kudos to North Blvd. neighbors *Meyer Minchen, Sue & Harry Lawson, Marie Burns and Bette Pesikoff*, for acting quickly to prevent damage to the trees!

[Note: We have asked CP for a list of blocks that are coming due for maintenance and we will share this information with you in the next newsletter.]

Raven Grill, BOCA’s best restaurant!



Going on twenty years of serving Houstonians and travelers from all over the world, the Raven has seen first dates, proposals, weddings, families started, kids growing into adults, actors & actresses, musicians, dignitaries,

curators, artist, activists, politicians, doctors, educators, students, athletes, the list goes on....but whoever you are, when you’re at the Raven, you are part of the family—a neighbor! A lot of storms have come our way and Harvey was one of the worst, but it has made Raven owners Rob & Sara Cromie even more determined to serve our city. The Raven is open, full steam ahead, and the staff is eager to work, so come visit the Raven and support your neighborhood restaurant!

SEAN CHEBEN
HISDV DISTRICT
FOR TRUSTEE

A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE ENDORSED BY:
C Club
Houston Realty Business Coalition

Early voting: October 23–November 3
Election Day: Tuesday, November 7

www.SeanCheben.com
Paid political ad by Sean Cheben for HISD Trustee

Panhandlers fight over lucrative turf at Shepherd & US59



On Oct. 31 at approximately 12:30 p.m., two female panhandlers became involved in an altercation over turf rights at the intersection of Shepherd and US59. One woman pulled a gun on the other and terrified several witnesses as she waved the weapon in the direction of traffic and other panhandlers working the intersection before placing the barrel of the gun against the other woman’s head. The woman wielding the gun was described by witnesses as in her 50s with white/blond hair. Police were called but the women fled before officers arrived.

The situation at the Shepherd intersection and all over Houston is complicated by the fact that the new city ordinances that address panhandling and camping are tied up in an ACLU lawsuit and police may not enforce them until the suit is settled. HPD can only intervene when panhandlers behave in a dangerous or aggressive manner.

By handing over cash well-meaning citizens encourage panhandlers to return and attract more and more of them to the intersection. Houston Police tell us that panhandlers fight over turf at a prime intersections because they can make several hundred dollars in a few hours. Also, the vast majority to those begging on street corners are doing so to purchase drugs, and many of them are not homeless. Some regularly take home upwards of \$50,000 in annual earnings and do not pay tax on the income.

Many of us have difficulty passing by someone in need. Those who are truly homeless often have mental health and addiction issues, and refuse services available to them because they prefer to live on their own. But Mayor Turner warns that giving money to panhandlers is making the problem worse because it prevents the homeless from getting the services they need. Instead of handing over cash, you can truly make a difference by donating to a community organization that does homeless outreach. Many excellent suggestions can be found in the Resource Guide at <http://www.homelesshouston.org/>.

Please do not encourage panhandlers by giving cash. The same goes for solicitors at your door. If you do, they will return, and they will bring their friends.

Recycling to resume on Tues., November 14th in Boulevard Oaks

After a 2-and-a-half-month suspension due to Hurricane Harvey recovery efforts, the City of Houston's Solid Waste Management Department (SWMD) will resume curbside collection of recycling in Boulevard Oaks on November 14. Parts of our neighborhood with City trash collection follow the Tuesday B schedule.



As curbside recycling collection reboots, customers are encouraged to place only the following items in their green recycling carts: paper, cardboard, clean food cartons, plastic containers #1-5 and #7, aluminum cans and bimetal cans. A detailed list of accepted items can be found on department's website (<http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling.html>). Customers are also reminded that glass is not accepted in the curbside containers, but can be recycled at all City recycling drop-off locations. The recycling link previously mentioned lists those locations and has them mapped.

Recycling Collection Schedule can be found here:

http://www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/Recycle_Cal.pdf

All Solid Waste Services Collection Day Information can be found at www.houstontx.gov/solidwaste/service_schedules.html

Subscribe to eNews & Crime Alerts

All neighbors are invited to subscribe to our electronic news and crime alert list. To subscribe, send a message with your name and physical address to info@BoulevardOaks.org.

Boulevard Oaks 2017 – 2018 Officers & Directors (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018)

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|------------------------|------------------|
| <i>President</i> | Sue Payne |
| <i>President-elect</i> | Richard Holt |
| <i>Vice president</i> | Trey Christensen |
| <i>Treasurer</i> | Bob Wright |
| <i>Secretary</i> | Helen Toombs |
| <i>Past President</i> | Don Reid |

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| <i>Directors</i> 2017 – 2020 | Jennifer DeLange Cece Fowler Jean Jenner Geoffrey Walker |
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| 2015 - 2018 | Joe Cialone James Cogan Sue Lawson Julie Mastroianni |
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| 2016 – 2019 | Steve Grossman Norm Rund Peggy Hull James Vick |
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| <i>Committees</i> | |
| <i>Deed Restrictions</i> | Geoffrey Walker |
| <i>Historic Districts</i> | Geoffrey Walker |
| <i>Public Works</i> | John Cutler |
| <i>Trees</i> | Hank Segelke Wallace Hooker |
| <i>Website</i> | Dave Shine Macy Middleton James Cogan |
| <i>Night Out</i> | Bonnie Coffman |
| <i>Easter Egg Hunt</i> | Donna Yanowski |
| <i>4th of July Party</i> | Stephanie Pedigo & Shannon Allen |
| <i>Caroling Party</i> | |

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|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Executive Director</i> | Evalyn Krudy |
|---------------------------|--------------|

BOCA Caroling Party

4:30 - 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 10, 2017

South Blvd. @ 5100 Hazard

On the Deck @ Poe

This annual Boulevard Oaks tradition promises to be fun for everyone! Catch the spirit of the season as we spread holiday cheer with the neighborhood. Share hot cider & cocoa and holiday treats with us and maybe even a visit from Santa. All you'll need is a flashlight to help you read song lyrics after dark. Everyone welcome!

4:30 pm Gather & Sing

4:45 pm Visit with Santa

5:15 pm Sleigh Rides & Caroling

Helpers are needed to bring cookies, treats, or sandwiches on unbreakable platters. Song leaders and set up volunteers also needed. If you can bring food or volunteer to help with the event, please contact event chairman Stephanie Pedigo at stephaniepedigo@comcast.net or call (713) 522-4198. Sponsors needed. Donations welcome!



2017-18 Membership Drive Continues

Support the effort to make this a great neighborhood. Join BOCA today!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Membership \$50.00 Regular

Levels: \$100.00 Sustaining

\$200.00 Patron

Auto Decals

1 Decal

2 Decals

Make checks payable to "BOCA" and mail to PO Box 541330, Houston TX 77254

Greenbriar construction postponed again

Reconstruction of Greenbriar from Holcombe to Rice Blvd. has been pushed back a few more months and is now set to begin in early January. The project will take about 18 months. Crews will start near Holcombe and will work north to Rice Blvd. The contractor will work Monday- Saturday between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Additional construction hours may occasionally occur.



The project team is working with area stakeholders to mitigate scheduling issues with Roberts Elementary, the Rice Village, Rice University, and others. The project includes reconstruction of the roadway, replacement of the storm sewers, and improvement of sidewalks along the length of the project. New sidewalks will be five feet wide except in locations where a four foot width is necessary to preserve trees that would have to be removed to allow for a five foot width. In most cases, the roadway will remain within the existing curb lines, though slight widening of the roadway is contemplated near the Holcombe intersection. The turning radius of major intersections north of Holcombe will be increased to accommodate city buses. The project also includes installation of sidewalks on the east side of Greenbriar from Bolsover to Rice Blvd. and improvements to the left turn configuration from Greenbriar onto Rice Blvd. Tree preservation and pedestrian walkability remain priorities of the project design. Some trees will be removed, but most will be preserved. Project documents may be viewed online at www.rebuildhouston.org/community-engagement.

5501 Ashby variance update

The variance application to reduce the lot width requirement from 60 ft. down to 45 ft. at 5501 Ashby has been withdrawn and the owner now plans to renovate the existing duplex. The Houston Planning Dept. was scheduled to consider the application at its August 24 meeting. However, several dozen Boulevard Oaks and Southampton residents filed protests with the city citing concerns including parking, traffic safety and trash collection conflicts.

Planning Department staff recommended against the variance and the owner withdrew the application shortly before the meeting. Had the variance been approved, it would have allowed for the construction of a 28+ bedroom student dormitory. The site may be redeveloped in the future, but for now the property will remain residential with no increase in density.

New coffee shop & office space coming to Shepherd & Bissonnet!



Rendering of proposed mixed use development at Bissonnet & S. Shepherd Drive

Steve Ybarra, owner of the northeast corner of Bissonnet and Shepherd, tells us that the former 4949 convenience store will soon be demolished and construction of the new mixed-use development will begin before year's end. The ground level coffee shop will be a new concept collaboration between Platform and Greenway Coffee, operators of Blacksmith, Morningstar, and other local coffee shops. The upper floors will be office space.

A NATIVE HOUSTONIAN
WHO KNOWS AND SELLS
YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

ANDREW MCCAIN
TOP PRODUCER

713.526.4847
andrewm@johndaugherty.com