

THE BOCA NEWSLETTER

BOULEVARD OAKS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

Wishing Kathie Easterly a Fond Farwell

By Mary Lou Henry, BOCA President

Kathie Easterly became BOCA's first Executive Director in 1988 and was the heart and soul of the neighborhood for most of the following 20 years. Her skills at representing neighborhood concerns with the City, negotiating neighborhood disputes, keeping CenterPoint from demolishing our trees, organizing our events, looking into special situations, writing our newsletter, prodding our volunteers into action, and a myriad of other things, were wonderful and we will miss her greatly. She even devised a way to return our lost dogs and cats to their owners via the internet. On behalf of BOCA, Kathie was always articulate, well-informed, and relentless.

Kathie is and will always be integrally woven into the fabric of this beautiful neighborhood. She grew up here, raised her two fine sons here, and knows most of us by sight if not by name. She can tell you who is related to the person on the next block and what house your grandmother lived in. She was a student at Poe when the tragic bombing occurred. Kathie led the protest against the proposed "gentlemen's club" at the Southwest Freeway entrance to the neighborhood. She personally inspected pot holes, downed trees, graffiti, illegal fences -- the list of her personal and professional accomplishments could fill the entire page.

She is a friend to many of us, and we all depended upon her through the years. Now, Kathie has resigned to take a position as Executive Director of Urban Harvest in Houston -- a full-time job with sane hours, better pay, less stress, and benefits. It won't seem like BOCA without Kathie. Please join me in wishing her well. We will miss her greatly.



*Photograph by Ben Ballanfant,
courtesy of The Village News.*

A Note to the Neighborhood

By Kathie Easterly

Most of you already know that I am no longer with BOCA and will soon start a new career as Executive Director for Urban Harvest. I'm excited about and looking forward to this new chapter, but I will miss you.

After 18 years as BOCA's Executive Director, you're my extended family. I grew up on Milford, raised my sons on Banks, rode my bicycle to Butera's as a child, climbed trees that are still growing on the streets I grew up on, and went to Poe, Lanier and Lamar, as did my sons. Boulevard Oaks is home to me, and it's been my pleasure to serve you and the neighborhood I love so much. Happily, there are Boulevard Oaks residents on the Board of Directors at Urban Harvest (including their President) and serving on its various committees, and I'll see you in the neighborhood and at the Urban Harvest's Farmer's Markets. Hopefully, I'll also be working with some of you on community gardens in the future. In the meantime, keep up the good work and continue to give BOCA your support. It truly is the hardest-working civic organization in Houston.

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Ashby High Rise Update

By Ron Kahanek, BOCA President-Elect

On behalf of the Boards of BOCA and Southampton Civic Club and the members of the Stop Ashby High Rise Task Force, I would like to thank all of our residents once again for their tremendous support in protection of our neighborhood. It is my privilege to give this update on our efforts. Some of this update may be repetitive for those of you who have been receiving electronic updates but we do not reach all of our residents except by our delivered newsletter.

The neighborhood is in a much better position than we were when this opposition started just three months ago. The City has placed a hold on any further building permits being issued for 1717 Bissonnet. Although the developers were able to get sewer disconnect permits for three of the five buildings, any further permits issued will require the direct approval of senior city officials. The developers have agreed not to seek any additional permits for 90 days while the proposed city ordinance on the traffic impact of high rise multi-family residential projects is being considered.

Throughout this opposition, we have been fortunate to have the unceasing support of Council Members Anne Clutterbuck, Peter Brown and Sue Lovell. Council Member Clutterbuck and her staff have been instrumental in getting the Mayor involved in this project, in offering amendments to the proposed ordinance which added much needed clarity, and in being the only member of Council to vote against the 90 day delay in bringing this ordinance to a vote.

The Task Force has also been helpful in offering clarifying language to the ordinance as it moved toward consideration before Council. We believed the ordinance to be narrowly drafted and urged Council to bring it to a vote and to pass it.

However, the proposed ordinance was delayed for 90 days at the Council meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 7. The stated reasons for the delay were to deal with its impact on projects under construction which were much closer to major streets than the Ashby project and possibly expanding this traffic impact ordinance to include commercial projects.

What happens over this 90 day period is still being determined but Mayor White said, **"My message to the developers and the development community ... you better stop this thing 'cause I'm going to stop it unless you stop it."** Through the involvement of the capable Ashby High Rise Task Force, the cooperation of the Mayor's office, and the support of Council Members Clutterbuck, Brown and Lovell, we will have a role in shaping what is finally returned to Council for a vote.

THIS ORDINANCE, AS PROPOSED WOULD NOT STOP A HIGHER DENSITY PROJECT FROM LOCATING AT 1717 BISSONNET. It would be possible to put in a 99 unit project on the site with exactly the same height and fall outside the ordinance in its latest form. This ordinance was not the only strategy for opposing the project. However, the ordinance would be a major victory in changing the form of the Ashby project to one which is more consistent in size and scale with the existing neighborhood. It would also be a much needed measure for the City as a whole.

There is still a need for financial support. We will likely commission experts for further traffic, fire, safety, and economic feasibility studies both for this project and the surrounding area. This information may be needed even if the ordinance passes in order to combat another unacceptable alternative.

Your contributions can be mailed to BOCA at P.O. Box 540331, Houston, Texas 77254. Please indicate that your donation is for the Ashby High Rise Protest and your money will be kept in a separate account for use only on this project. You will have the option to receive back your proportionate share of any unused funds when the issue is ultimately resolved.

Enjoy your Thanksgiving and be thankful for the wonderful place where you live when you celebrate the holiday.



Santa to stop by Boulevard Oaks Holiday Caroling Evening

Get out your jingle bells for the Boulevard Oaks Holiday Caroling Evening on **Tuesday, December 11, from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.** in the 1600 block of South Blvd. This annual family event is sure to fill you with the spirit of the season as we stroll around the neighborhood spreading holiday cheer. All you will need is your voice and a flashlight so you can read the songbook in the dark.

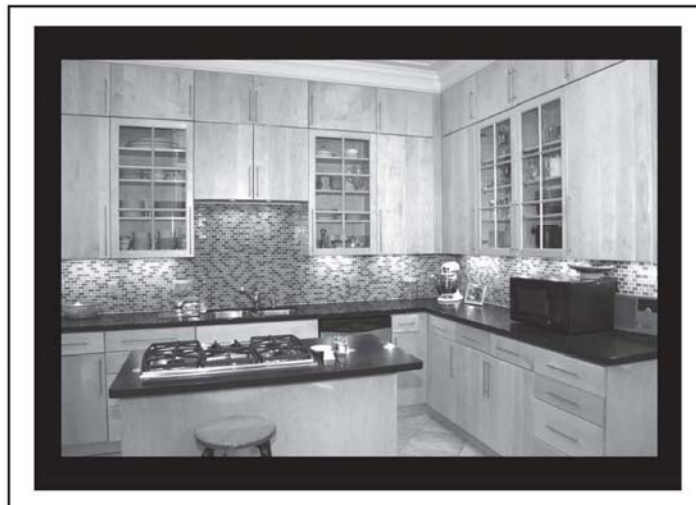
Hostesses Jody Nash and Mary Axelrad are in need of volunteers to lead songs and tend the refreshment tables. If you would like to donate snacks like holiday cookies or sandwiches, please bring your festive finger food on unbreakable platters to Jodi's house at 1617 South Blvd. the day of the event. For more information or to volunteer, call Sue Lawson at 713-526-6400.

BOCA Behind the Scenes

Tom Brokaw once said, "It's easy to make a buck but it's hard to make a difference." We want to acknowledge some of the many BOCA residents and area businesses working behind the scenes to make a difference in the Stop Ashby High-Rise project: Marci, Mark, Alyssa, Braden & Jacob Arnold, Allison Clifton, Carmen Cooper, Cece & Mack Fowler, Click Photography, Gatsby Social Club, Kathy DeLange, Jamie Flatt-Hickey, Nancy Knudsen-Simonsen, George Krudy, Hallie Krudy, Mary Flood Nugent, PICNIC, Karen Payne, Robin & Scott Reamer, Ruggles Café Bakery, Norm Rund, Joe Siff, Janet Spencer, Sophia Synek, Maurice Roberts, Eric Simonsen, Tom Williams, and Marshall & Laura Wilson. Visit stopashbyhighrise.org to find out how you can help in the coming weeks.



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