

Founding the Vermont Commons Civic Association Filing the Petition and Declaration for Deed Restrictions

October 1992 to January 26 1996

The Vermont Commons Civic Association (VCCA) was formed in the fall of 1992 at the initiative of Cay Dickson. One of the major objectives expressed at the founding meeting was to protect the residential neighborhood from commercial encroachment and increasing density.

From the beginning VCCA's founding members created a tax exempt neighborhood association registered with Harris County, the State of Texas and the US Internal Revenue Service. The VCCA members elected a Board of Trustees and established a committee to begin developing deed restrictions to protect the neighborhood.

VCCA members researched the Real Property Records of Harris County to determine property ownership within our boundaries. There were approximately 600 properties within VCCA boundaries. In 1994, non-residents owned more than half of those properties. This was the first inkling of the challenge ahead to gain support for deed restrictions.

A committee was appointed to develop a preliminary draft of deed restrictions, to be presented to the members. Member input and comments were incorporated into the final draft. Margaret Lam, a VCCA resident and practicing attorney, gave generously of her time to guide the development of the final draft and to advise us as to the process for filing the deed restrictions.

One year into this process, the City of Houston held a referendum vote on a "zoning ordinance." The proposed city ordinance, if approved by the voters, would have accomplished similar objectives as the VCCA deed restrictions. For the six months that the ordinance was publicly debated, VCCA members supported the proposed ordinance. When zoning referendum failed in the fall of 1995, VCCA efforts were again re-energized to gain support for deed restrictions. A task force of VCCA volunteers organized a "door to door" effort. Through the fall, Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays of 1995 and into January of 1996, these tireless volunteers met every week and spent weekends knocking on doors, meeting neighbors to explain the proposed deed restrictions and to get signatures. Notifications were sent to every property owner by registered mail as prescribed by state law. On January 26, 1996 the 51% participation level was exceeded and the Petition and Declaration for the Creation of Restrictions was filed with the Harris County Clerk.

Property owners were notified by a second registered mail out and given a one year period to "exclude" their property from the restrictions. Following that option period, the deed restrictions became final for all properties not specifically excluded.

The entire process to organize VCCA and to file the Petition and Declaration for Deed Restrictions had taken three and one half years.