

vccahouston.org
PO Box 130891
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April 2017

CIVIC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PICNIC April 22nd

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Vermont Commons Civic Association
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April VCCA Monthly Meeting

VCCA monthly meetings are at Local Pour, 1952 W Gray St, just behind Cafe Ginger. We meet in a room toward the front. We hope you will join us and enjoy a glass or some nibbles at or after the meeting. See you at Local Pour on **Monday, April 10th at 7 PM.**

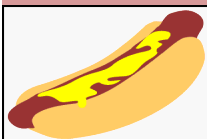


April 10th VCCA Meeting Speaker - Jim Parsons

The speaker for the April 10th VCCA meeting will be **Jim Parsons**, Director of Special Projects for **Preservation Houston**. Preservation Houston is Houston's only citywide nonprofit historic preservation education and advocacy organization. Since 1978, Preservation Houston has voiced strong support for better public policy and protection of our irreplaceable historic resources. Our members, volunteers and staff have been instrumental in the adoption of a citywide preservation ordinance, the designation of local landmarks and historic districts, and the development of a preservation ethic in the Bayou City.

Advocacy is the area where Preservation Houston has had the most impact and, by necessity, the least public visibility. Preservation Houston often works behind the scenes to achieve its goals. The approach is businesslike and not confrontational.

When a building is threatened, Preservation Houston uses its extensive network of contacts to make an appointment with the owner. Typically, our representatives will bring architects, engineers and developers to discuss the merits of historic preservation with a property owner and present the economic data demonstrating the value of restoration versus demolition. Preservation Houston continuously tracks threats to historic buildings and, when appropriate, contacts public officials and promotes media coverage of endangered properties to increase public awareness.



VCCA Spring Picnic April 22nd, 4pm *Fun for the Whole Family!*

You won't want to miss our spring picnic this year at 1605 Woodhead. Jim And Sheila Armsworth will serve as grill-master and hosts this year. In honor of Earth Day, we will be focusing on a recycling theme with lots of fun surprises. Co-sponsors include Vermont Commons Constable Patrol, and we'll be visited by Constables during the picnic. Details include:

- Hot dogs, buns, fixins' will be provided, bring your own sides and dessert.
- Water will be provided, bring other beverages, as desired.
- Activities for kids and a family fun photo booth sponsored by Walter Aymen with Nan & Co. Properties, Christie's International Realty.
- Decoration contest: bring clippings from your garden to decorate our tables, win prizes.
- Glass recycling: bring your glass to recycle; the household that brings the most wins!



In short, you won't want to miss this amazing picnic on April 22nd!
(If the weather calls for rain, there will be no rain date.)

Jim Parsons, a native of Baytown, puts a passion for the state's history and architecture to work as director of special projects and walking tours chairman for Preservation Houston. A freelance writer, editor and photographer, he has written about and photographed cities across the United States. Jim is the co-author of four books on Art Deco architecture in Texas, including *Dallas-Fort Worth Deco*, to be published this summer by TCU Press of Fort Worth.



River Oaks Shopping Center

A neighborhood gem we all know and love.

Here is some information from Preservation Houston: The *Houston Chronicle* is reporting demolition plans for a significant historic structure: a section of the River Oaks Shopping Center on West Gray Avenue. Weingarten Realty Investors, the owner of the River Oaks Shopping Center, has announced preliminary plans to replace a section of the Art Deco center with a 30-story residential tower. The proposal calls for the demolition of the east end of the retail building on the north side of West Gray between Driscoll and McDuffie; the building and its companion on the south side of West Gray were designed by Houston architect Raymond H. Brogniez and built in 1948. Construction could begin early next year and wrap up in 2021. Gerald Crump, a senior vice president at Weingarten, told the *Chronicle's* Nancy Sarnoff that the company may also redevelop other parts of the historic shopping center, which it has owned since 1971.

The River Oaks Shopping Center, including the building slated for partial demolition, is a City of Houston landmark. Landmark status requires that Weingarten's plans be reviewed by the city's preservation office

before a demolition permit can be granted. Preservation Houston will keep its members updated as this matter moves forward.

In 2007, Preservation Houston publicly opposed Weingarten's plans for the original section of the River Oaks center (1937, Nunn & McGinty with Oliver C. Winston). The developer demolished one of the historic structures and replaced it with a new retail building. In 2011, the two 1948 buildings were altered with EIFS and sandstone panels that hid much of their Art Moderne detailing.



Preservation Houston is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation founded in 1978 as Greater Houston Preservation Alliance. Our advocacy effort on behalf of iconic Art Deco buildings led to the publication of PH's book *Houston Deco*, the first extensive examination of modernistic architecture in the Houston area. As a result of this work, Preservation Houston has earned a well-deserved reputation for professionalism and

achievement. The organization has gained prominence through serious, behind-the-scenes advocacy and positive public programming. Preservation Houston played a pivotal role in convincing the Harris County/Houston Sports Authority to preserve Union Station as part of Minute Maid Park. In 2006, Preservation Houston began focusing public attention on the possible demolition of the River Oaks and Alabama theaters; two years later, this effort led to the release of Preservation Houston's book *Houston Deco*, published with the support of the Architecture Center Houston Foundation and the Strake Foundation.

Give Back to VCCA

Looking for ways to give back to the neighborhood? Here are two tips:

- Visit the advertisers in our newsletters and let them know you where you heard about them (the VCCA newsletter!).
- Link your Randall's card with VCCA - we receive donations from the grocery store when Randall's loyalty cards are linked to us.

Citizen Patrol Update

David Hoyer, Coordinator Citizen Patrol did 269.25 hours of walking and driving patrol in February! That's almost 10 hours per day of volunteer keeping an eye on the neighborhood. Leading patrolers were Bob Costantini with 86 hours and Jim & Lillian Skogsberg with 31 hours each.

Patrollers, many of you are approaching expiration of your certification (mine is May 18). I am planning to have renewal paperwork at each of the next two Civic Association meetings. If you can't make the meetings, email me and we will work out another plan. Thank you all for your dedication.

VCCA Treasurer's Report as of March 2017

Beginning Balance February (A)		\$ 4,774.17
Income		
Dues	\$40.00	
Advertising	\$1,600.00	
Total Revenue (B)	\$1,640.00	
	Sub Total A + B	\$ 6,414.17
Expenses		
December & January newsletter printing	(626.00)	
Sub Total (C)	(626.00)	\$ (626.00)
Balance = A+B-C		\$ 5,788.17
Pending Payments (Mar 2017 Newsletter)	(566.00)	
Website Hosting	(107.88)	
Checks deposited	\$ 140.00	
Net Funds Available		\$ 5,254.29

Threat to River Oaks Shopping Center

Neighbors who attended the March meeting expressed concern about Weingarten Realty's plans to rip up the historic façade of the River Oaks Shopping Center to build a 30-story, 300 unit residential tower. Alarm was expressed about traffic patterns, parking scarcity, and property value declines compounded with the the loss of favorite neighborhood restaurants and the destruction of one of the first shopping centers built in the 1930s. The VCCA will be drafting letters to send to City Council, the Mayor, and Weingarten Realty to express our concerns, and these letters will be made available on the website for neighbors to download and mail. We will also be working with neighboring associations to strengthen our voices through collective action. If you have any interest in getting involved, please email Lis Harper at lisharper@icloud.com.

LOCAL POUR

.....
Upscale Just Down The Street

Local Pour - Where Everybody Knows Your Name

VCCA would like to give a shout out to Local Pour and our amazing Monday meeting server, Leah Boeck. Leah has been working at Local Pour since August 2016, and always strives to take excellent care of our neighbors. If you've been to a meeting, you know that after your first visit, Leah will remember your name, your drink, and even your food preferences. She loves Local Pour for the nice and casual atmosphere, and said that she hears all the time from guests "we just walked here from our house." Clearly Local Pour is a local watering hole for VCCA, and we're very appreciative of their hosting our meetings at no charge to us. Please keep patronizing Local Pour and bring your friends - they have a great brunch menu, craft beer, and different drink specials every night. It's nice to go where everybody knows your name!





VCCA Yard of the Month

This month Yard of the Month is 1802 Brun. This house always has nice landscaping regardless of time of year. Keep an eye out for yards to nominate, please, look around your neighborhood and send your YOM to [Lillian skogsberg @earthlink.net](mailto:Lillian.skogsberg@earthlink.net) by April 13th.

The Human Face of Refugees in Houston

At our March VCCA meeting we were joined by Raequel Roberts, the Director of Communications for Interfaith Ministries (IM), an organization that helps resettle refugees in the Houston area. Raequel noted that Houston has welcomed over 2,000 refugees to the area, and Interfaith Ministries is responsible for locating housing and basic household supplies. Houston has become one of the largest resettlement cities in the US. Refugees settling in Houston seek a better, safer life in the US, and there are limited services provided by IM, but volunteers and donations help to supplement the resources they can make available. IM is always looking for volunteers willing to help assimilate refugees, whether through visiting cultural sites like museums and art galleries with them, mentoring programs, or job search assistance. Refugees often arrive with only a suitcase, and IM can only provide one place setting per person and bed linens. Donations of household items such as TVs, sofas, towels, and other items are greatly appreciated. If you're interested in learning more or volunteering/donating, please contact Raequel at [713-533-4973](tel:713-533-4973) or rroberts@imgh.org.

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Constable Patrol 2017

Your Neighborhood Constable Patrol Program is busy registering those who supported the program last year and neighbors who are joining this year. Hopefully, you have already sent in your membership, but if not, check out the web page at vcpatrol.com for easy registration and payment.

There are three constables patrolling in Vermont Commons and Park Civic: Chris Dobbins (night patrol); Dan Thomas (morning) and Raymond Garivey (afternoon and evening).

Please call the Constable at 713-755-7628 if you see anything suspicious. Even if you are not a paid member, the neighborhood needs everyone contacting the constable to keep all of us safe.



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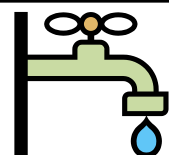
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