

**vccahouston.org**

PO Box 130891  
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**June 2017**

## CIVIC ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



**Fly your flag  
on June 14th**



Newsletter Published Monthly September thru June  
Vermont Commons Civic Association  
PO Box 130891, Houston, TX 77219  
Issue No. 76

### June VCCA Monthly Meeting

VCCA monthly meetings are the 2nd Monday, September through June, 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, June 12th at 7 PM.**

#### LOCAL POUR

Upscale Just Down The Street

### About Lisa Kasianowitz

([lisa@houstonparksboard.org](mailto:lisa@houstonparksboard.org))

Ms. Kasianowitz joined the Houston Parks Board in 2015. As the Outreach Manager, she connects the HPB with community-focused and civic-minded groups as well as elected officials and partners to receive their input and inform them about the organization's Bayou Greenways 2020 project. She is also responsible for answering public inquiries, hosting presentations about the organization's projects and assisting with event planning.

Before joining the HPB, Lisa served as a media spokeswoman and community relations coordinator with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Lisa received her Bachelor of Arts in letters, arts and sciences with a concentration in environmental science, political science, English and history from Pennsylvania State.

### VCCA Officers 2016 - 2017

**President:** vacant

**VP-Deed Restrictions:**

Andy Tallin [atallin01@yahoo.com](mailto:atallin01@yahoo.com)

**Treasurer:** Chuck Randall [cwrandal@gmail.com](mailto:cwrandal@gmail.com)

**Secretary:** Lillian Skogsberg [lillian\\_skogsberg@earthlink.net](mailto:lillian_skogsberg@earthlink.net)

**Newsletter:** Michael F. Forlenza  
[vcca.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:vcca.newsletter@gmail.com)

**President Emerita:** Jeanette Hix  
[hix@rmi.net](mailto:hix@rmi.net)

The speaker for the June VCCA meeting will be Lisa Kasianowitz, Outreach Manager for the Houston Parks Board. The Houston Parks Board is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) dedicated to providing access to quality parks and greenspace for all people. HPB creates, improves, protects, and advocates for parkland in the Greater Houston region. Since 1976, the organization has utilized public-private partnerships and its extensive philanthropic, government and community relationships to improve parks large and small. The HPB (<http://houstonparksboard.org/>) made up of 36 volunteer Board of Directors and 24 full-time staff members, works with city and county partners, other non-profit organizations, and numerous community groups in fulfilling our mission. It seeks donations of land and other assets, manages capital projects, undertakes studies for the benefit of the park system and raises awareness of the need for adequate parks and open spaces for Houston.

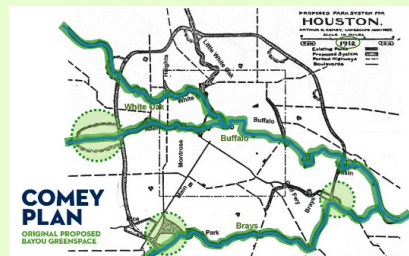
### June 12<sup>th</sup> VCCA Meeting Speaker



The HPB is currently leading the transformational \$220 million Bayou Greenways 2020 [<http://houstonparksboard.org/bayou-greenways-2020/>] project to create a 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston's major waterways. Bayou Greenways 2020 is one of the most ambitious parks projects in the nation and it is happening right here in Houston. Bayou Greenways 2020 is transforming 3,000 underutilized acres along the bayous into linear parks with 150 miles of hike-and-bike trails connecting parks and communities like never before.

The cost to complete Bayou Greenways 2020 is \$220 million. In the November 2012 election, thanks in part to the "Parks By You!" campaign, Houston voters overwhelmingly approved a major bond referendum providing \$166 million in parks funding, \$100 million of which is set aside for Bayou Greenways 2020. HPB is responsible for raising the remaining \$120 million from private funds, federal and state grants and other sources. As of Feb. 2016, more than \$90 million had been raised, including a historic \$50 million donation from the Kinder Foundation.

Bayou Greenways 2020 is just one phase of an even greater vision, the Bayou Greenways Initiative. The Bayou Greenways Initiative is the overarching idea to develop connected green corridors with hike and bike trails along the bayous of the greater Houston area; it is a long-range and Harris County-wide initiative. Bayou Greenways 2020, named for its anticipated completion date, is the portion of the Bayou Greenways Initiative that is located within the Houston city limits.



### Dear Neighbors:

Volunteers are needed for all areas of VCCA from block captains, yard of the month to special activities. It's fun! Please volunteer to help Vermont Commons continue to be a great place to live. Go to the web page [vccahouston.org](http://vccahouston.org) and find out what VCCA has to offer. Or share your ideas at [hix@rmi.net](mailto:hix@rmi.net).



## VCCA Spring Picnic

A gorgeous spring day greeted attendees at the 2017 VCCA Spring Picnic on April 22nd at the home of Jim And Sheila Armsworth (1605 Woodhead).



## Lower Westheimer: A Unique Roadway

Lower Westheimer is a well-known, distinctive street surrounded by an eclectic community, diverse businesses, important architectural buildings, steeped in rich history, and tied to the foundation of our city. It is an important street for vehicular traffic, public transportation, pedestrians, business owners and employees, residents, tourists, as well as the City of Houston.

As part of ReBuild Houston, a portion of the Lower Westheimer Corridor is slated for improvements. The Capital Improvement Plan project includes Elgin Street from Main Street to Bagby Street, and Westheimer Road between Bagby Street and Montrose Boulevard. An enhanced pre-engineering study will result in specific recommendations for these roadways.



With your help, after the nine-month study, we will deliver a preferred roadway design that considers the needs of all of the stakeholders while meeting the goals of ReBuild Houston to preserve and enhance the overall character of the roadway and improve mobility and safety.

Learn more at: <http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/transportation/CMP/LowerWestheimer/>

## Would you like to adopt a drain in VCCA?

Street flooding, one of the problems in our city, is often caused by clogged drains that do not allow the rain water to enter the storm sewer system. Debris such as leaves or trash block the inlets. Other cities with this problem have adopted a variety of approaches to address it. Keeping drains clear is an important aspect to prevent street flooding. At our May VCCA meeting, Stephen Costello, Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Houston, mentioned a program in San Francisco (SF) that addresses this issue problem. SF instituted an "Adopt a Drain" program (<https://adoptadrain.sfwater.org/>).

The Adopt-a-Drain program empowers San Franciscans to "adopt" one or more of the City's 25,000 storm drains (also called catch basins) and pledge to keep it free of leaves and debris. The program helps reduce localized flooding and fosters community engagement by empowering residents and business owners to play an active role in taking care of and improving the neighborhood where they live and work. Highlights of the program are accessed through a website. To adopt a drain means:

- Pledging to keep you drain free of leaves and debris.
- Information is provided on how to care for your adopted drain.
- Periodic training and tools are provided for the drain caretakers.

The San Francisco website provides a city map showing all drains in the city, highlights those that have been adopted and those that still need of volunteers. Similar to other programs, if a resident is interested in adopting a drain, a registration portal is provided, along with a place to enter the address or neighborhood of interest. A resident can then sign up for a drain or two in his area.

It seems like an interesting way to complement the city's efforts to keep the water draining off the street into the storm sewers during heavy rains. The SF Chronicle wrote up the program in December 2016. [[www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/SF-letting-residents-adopt-name-storm-drains-to-10816481.php](http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/SF-letting-residents-adopt-name-storm-drains-to-10816481.php)]

Stay tuned as Houston is considering adopting the program.

## Vermont Commons Real Estate Market *By Cindy Quach*

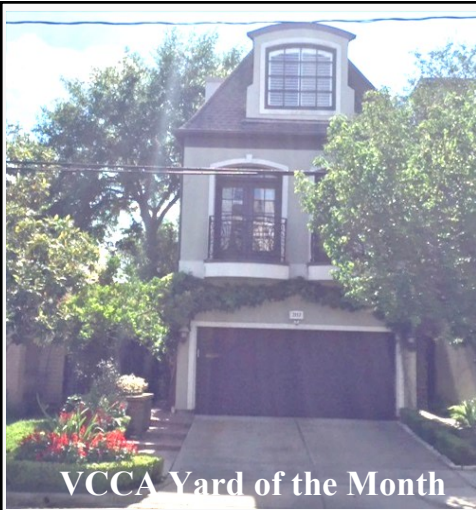
How's the market? On average, single family homes and townhomes in the Vermont Commons area are slowly starting to recover from the recent year-and-a-half slump. Let's take a step back to see how we arrived at today's market: Back in 2011, from January to May, the average sales price per square foot was \$188, for single family homes and townhomes (excluding condos and townhome condos), with homes selling at an average of 96% of their list prices. Then the real estate market started heating up and the average price per square foot over the same January to May time period in 2013, 2014, and 2015 climbed from \$197, \$212 to \$222, respectively, with a sales price to list price ratio of 97%-98%. By 2016, the average price per square foot dropped to \$208 for January to May, with the average sales price to list price ratio back down to 96%. The good news is that this year, from January to May 2017, we have started seeing a recovery in the real estate market, inching up to \$211/sq ft, with a sales price to list price ratio of 97%.

In line with the market prices, the average length of time it takes for homes to sell, known as "days on market," started off higher, at 157 days in 2011, down to 65 days in 2014 and back up to 122 days for 2017, through May.

Likewise, in line with the market price behavior, the number of transactions in Vermont Commons were at 15 in 2011, peaking at 27 transactions in early 2015, and dropped to 14 in the same January to May period in 2016. It's climbing back up to 16 transactions as of May 2017.

Over 30 Brun Street residents gathered to share food, drink and friendship at the block party.





VCCA Yard of the Month

2112 McDuffie is VCCA Yard of the Month. Several townhouses on this block have gone all out with their yard landscaping, but the eye-catching red flowers help this design along. There will be a summer hiatus until September for Yard of the Month. We'll be looking for YOM nominees in August.

**VCCA is in need of Directors** In last month's newsletter, there was an article about a change in VCCA bylaws from a President to 4- 6 directors. Several residents have already volunteered their time to be a director. More help is needed.

Please consider adding your name to the list. With many residents contributing to the association, the volunteer work will be spread around. Contact Jeanette Hix if you are interested or have ideas, contact: [hix@rmi.net](mailto:hix@rmi.net)

### Constable Patrol

It is never too late to join. Please go to the constable patrol web page and see how your help will benefit you and the entire neighborhood.

[www.vcpatrol.com](http://www.vcpatrol.com)

#### VCCA Treasurer's Report - May 2017

Beginning Balance (A)	\$ 5,444.65
<b>Income</b>	
Advertising	\$100.00
Total Revenue (B)	<b>\$100.00</b>
Sub Total A + B	<b>\$ 5,544.65</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
March Newsletter Printing/Mailing	-\$566.00
April Picnic	-\$123.72
990 Filing	-\$39.95
Sub Total (C)	<b>-\$729.67</b>
Balance = A+B-C	<b>\$ 4,814.98</b>
Pending Payments (May 2017 Newsletter)	-\$566.00
Checks deposited	\$660.00
Net Funds Available	<b>\$4,908.98</b>

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### Citizen Patrol Update

David Hoyer, Coordinator

Citizen Patrol set a new record (to my memory) of 342 hours in April! That is over 11 hours PER DAY of volunteering to make Vermont Commons safer. Just having residents out on the sidewalks and streets (when driving) of our neighborhood will make criminals likely to look elsewhere. Our top 3 patrolers by hours were Bob Costantini, Elizabeth McKenzie, and BR Simon, but thanks to all 15 volunteers for a job well done!

## Start Your College Search at UST

Be among the first to see our Center for Science and Health Professions. Visit campus and tour our new home for STEM programs at the **University of St. Thomas**.



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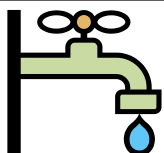
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