

# University Oaks Newsletter March 2005

## President's Letter

Greetings,

We recently lost one of our long-time residents, Dr. Cato, 4375 Faculty Lane. Our sincere sympathy is extended to his family.

I'd like to use this opportunity to encourage you to attend our monthly civic club meetings and become familiar with the issues we face as a community, and learn what you can do to become involved.

There are many ways to be involved in UOCC – from just attending a civic club meeting – to spending a couple of spare hours each month serving on a committee. Preserving the character and quality of our great neighborhood requires community participation. So I appeal to you: find out what you can do to help.

The Board of Directors devotes many hours to improving our community and if you have any ideas, suggestions, or can volunteer to help, please give me or any board member a call.

Yours in service,

*Larry N. Bahn*  
President



Next meeting of the UOCC:

Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 PM

Location: 

Home of Evelyn and David Broussard  
4830 Rockwood



## Community Concerns

### Treasurer's Note

2005 dues letters were delivered or mailed to property owners in February. We have already received an avalanche of checks – thanks to all who have paid so promptly.

The treasurer made an unfortunate gaffe on the letter this year; the UOCC address at the top of the dues document contains the wrong zip code which has caused some mailed checks to be re-routed or returned to the sender. **Please note the correct zip code is 77288-8365** (the zip belonged to our previous PO Box). If you want to find out for sure if your check made it, call me at 713-440-6492. Please have your dues in to the Club ASAP. We fully intend to assign late fees beginning April 1. No foolin'.

*Tim Ditto,*  
Treasurer, UOCC

## Crime

A scam artist was caught and banished from the neighborhood this month thanks to an alert neighbor and quick action by the police. A young male had been posing as a tree trimmer; the story was his crew was working on the next street and just needed a little more trimmings before heading to the landfill on Wayside. This man collected money for small jobs but did nothing. A call was placed to one of our patrolling officers, Joe Schooler, when the scam artist stupidly returned to one of his victim's homes the next day. The only stupider person in this report is the owner who had already paid \$21 the day before. That owner, and alert neighbor who made the call was me and I did not retrieve my cash. For my good work in helping catch this criminal, I will be happy to accept gifts of any kind and size at 4389 Harvest Ln. Here are the telephone numbers to have ready when criminal activity is suspected:

Joe Schooler: Office 713-247-4544  
Pager 713-710-4395

Police Dispatch: 713-222-3131  
South Central Police Station: 713-651-8100

I recommend posting these numbers on your refrigerator and calling them (when needed) in the order listed above. DO NOT call police headquarters. DO NOT call 911 unless someone is hurt.

*Tim Ditto*

## Information Every Family Should Know

Do you know what your blood type is? Do you know the blood type of everyone in your family? Find out. Could be important some day.

Is there is someone in your family that is bedridden or is on oxygen? Are any of your neighbors aware of this? Find out. Could be important some day.

## University Oaks Book Club Schedule

April 6, *Year of Wonders* by Geraldine Brooks  
Host: Deborah Thompson

May 4, *The Kite Runner*  
Host: Robyn Webb

June 1 or 3, TBA

July 6, *Crossing Over* by Ruben Martinez  
Host: Linda Goldstein

## Volunteers Needed

A volunteer is needed to organize an HPD neighborhood watch program. Please contact Clyde Leuchtag at: [clyde@leuchtag.com](mailto:clyde@leuchtag.com)

Additional volunteer web masters are needed to help complete upgrade to new UOCC website. Please contact Clyde Leuchtag.

## Volunteers Available

Need help with 'little things'? Need a prescription picked up from the pharmacy? Something moved around the house, etc.? Call Catherine Nelson at 713-440-0870.

## Reminder

### "Pooper-Scooper" Law

Here's the wording of the city ordinance applying to all pet owners:

Sec. 6-24. Defecation by dogs or cats.

- (a) It is the duty of each person in control of a dog or cat to promptly remove and dispose of, in a sanitary manner, feces left by such dog or cat.
- (b) It shall be the duty of each person in control of a dog or cat to be in possession of materials to remove feces left by such dog or cat.
- (c) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under this section that the person in control of the dog or cat is owner of the premises, or the owner's agent of the premises, where the dog or cat deposits the feces.
- (d) Violation of this section is unlawful and any violation shall be punishable upon conviction by a fine of not less than \$75.00 or more than \$500.00. Each act in contravention of this section is a separate offence. (Ord. No. 03-1275, § 1, 12-17-03)

## Classifieds

### Baby Sitting & Pet Sitting

Red Cross certified, University Oaks resident  
References available.

Ilana (M) 832-439-8107



## Community Calendar

**Newsletter Deadline:** Friday of the last week of the previous month.

**Civic Club meeting:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month. Next meeting is March 9<sup>th</sup> at the home of David and Evelyn Broussard, 4830 Rockwood.

**Recycling:** every other Tuesday (March 1<sup>st</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>)

**Trash pickup:** every Tuesday

**Heavy trash pickup:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month (next pickup March 8<sup>th</sup>)

### Friends of the Houston Public Library **Annual Bargain Book Sale**

March 11, 12, & 13, 2005 – At the George R. Brown Convention Center – Hall D

Member's Preview Sale: Friday, March 11, 4:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Free and Open to the Public: Saturday, March 12, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM and Sunday, March 13, Noon – 4:00 PM Bag Day - \$10 Bag

For more information 832-393-1387 or

[www.friendsofhpl.org](http://www.friendsofhpl.org)

Proceeds benefit the Houston Public Library



## Contacts

### **Mailing address:**

University Oaks Civic Club

P.O. Box 8365

Houston, Texas 77288-8365

### **University Oaks fax line:**

713-440-6492

### **University Oaks webmaster:**

[webmaster@universityoaks.org](mailto:webmaster@universityoaks.org)

### **Email Newsletter entries to:**

[newsletter@universityoaks.org](mailto:newsletter@universityoaks.org)

### **The UOCC Newsletter is posted online:**

[www.universityoaks.org](http://www.universityoaks.org)



## Board of Directors and Officers

President	Larry Bahn	713-748-0470
Vice President	Robyn Webb	713-741-2105
Vice President	Tom Burton	713-440-0804
Secretary	Wilbert Taylor	713-747-3347
Treasurer	Tim Ditto	713-440-6492
Director at Large	Pat Wycliff	713-741-2555
Director at Large	Clyde Leuchtag	713-398-0855



## DEED RESTRICTIONS NEED AN OVERHAUL

Houston has the distinction of being one of the only large cities in the entire world without a citywide zoning ordinance. Theoretically this means the city is like a monopoly board game: anyone can build just about anything anywhere. So when people who visit Houston they often expect to find a mess. But they are often surprised to find that much of the city is composed of attractive, well behaved neighborhoods. What makes these neighborhoods appealing is another form of regulatory control called deed restrictions. Deed restrictions are neighborhood covenants that help to preserve property values by promoting cooperation and helping to protect and maintain a prevailing character in a neighborhood.

Deed restrictions nearly always regulate what kinds of uses may be located in a neighborhood as well as things like the minimum lot size, minimum size of residences, how many homes may be built on a lot and building set back requirements. Many of Houston's neighborhoods go much further by specifying allowable building materials, the colors houses can be painted, types of roofing, building heights and allowable types of landscaping.

Compared to these neighborhoods, University Oaks has very few such regulations. Primarily these govern things like occupancy, lot sizes and building set backs. If you stand on the corner of any facing street in the neighborhood and look along the line of the front facades, you will see that they conform to a common set back. With so much stylistic variety in University Oaks houses, this is one of the few things that is uniform. But remarkably this common set back does not conform to the setback allowed in the deed restrictions. The deed restrictions actually allow houses to be built within twenty feet of the front setback but the houses on most University Oaks streets conform to a thirty foot setback. This gap has been discovered; it means that developers working in the neighborhood can now encroach on what has been a common unifying pattern in our neighborhood. When houses are built to different setbacks the result is a rag tag appearance to the street.

Remedying this discrepancy between what the deed restrictions allow and what has been common and courteous practice is an important priority. It will require revisions of our deed restrictions. While we're at it we should also amend the restrictions to better address development excesses that have become the norm in present day Houston.

1. Height restrictions. Our regulations restrict the height of a house to two stories and an enclosed attic. Such a provision contains too much wiggle room. To keep new houses from towering over their neighbors, a specific dimensional height limitation (30 to 35 feet is common in many Houston neighborhoods) should be introduced.
2. Ground area ratio restrictions. Our present covenant specifies a minimum floor area requirement for houses in the neighborhood. This was an important and common way to promote consistent property values in a developing neighborhood. But today neighborhoods are realizing the importance of having maximum lot coverage regulations as well to prevent developers and home builders from maxing out sites, hemming in neighbors and disturbing drainage patterns.

Recent speculative development has greatly eroded the character of many of Houston's neighborhoods with oversized new construction. Developers want to build as much house volume as possible to maximize their profits and to do this they want to build out as much of the site as possible. They see neighborhoods as opportunities. The people who live in a healthy neighborhood, on the other hand, see it in a very different way. For them their lot isn't just a space on a Monopoly board waiting for someone to come along and make them an offer.

Deed restrictions are different from zoning in the fact that a neighborhood itself must play a direct role in determining and protecting its own future. It can't wait for the city to do it for them. Houston's City Planning Department has been a strong supporter of deed restrictions, but it remains the job of the neighborhood to initiate the protections it needs and to determine what kind of future it wants for itself. Deed restrictions need to change in response to new conditions. These issues need urgent attention. The president and the board need to know how you feel.

*Bruce Webb*  
*UOCC Architecture Committee*