

# Communicator

Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association

May 2011

## Beautification/Election Meeting

DATE: May 17, 2011

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

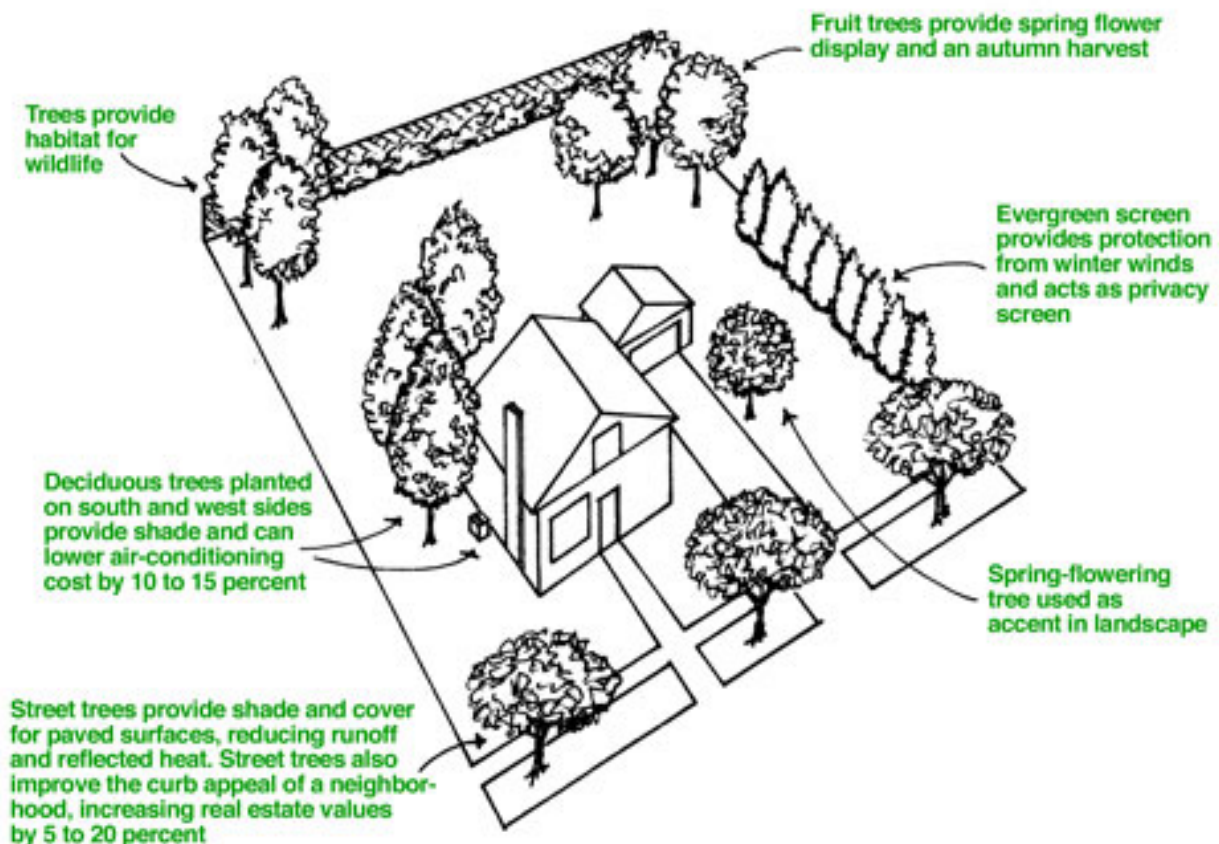
LOCATION: Hotchkiss Elementary School Cafeteria

The topic for our beautification meeting this year will be reforestation in our neighborhood.

One of our residents, Albert Porter, brought this concern to our attention as a result of our neighborhood losing trees due to freeze, storms, wind and decline due to age. He has planted five trees, in an effort to rebalance the six trees lost since moving to Wild Valley in 1977. If we continue to plant trees, as the older ones vanish we will have strong younger trees waiting to keep shading our beautiful neighborhood. Albert also pointed out how trees add to home value, not to mention the enjoyment, beauty and energy savings they provide. Many people don't know that a single shade tree can cut cooling cost 10% - 15% and as much as 40%. Added to that savings, a shade tree reduces the amount of water the lawn needs and encourages beautiful birds to visit.

We will have a representative from Home Depot on hand to discuss shade trees. At this meeting we will have a number of door prizes, including a few baby trees to get you started. So come join us and learn more about the reforestation program.

Don't forget that planting trees is a wonderful activity for parents to do with their children. We will have a "go green" coloring page for the kids, to help acquaint them with tree planting. So bring your kids to the meeting.



(Reprinted from [treesaregood.com](http://treesaregood.com))

### BEAUTIFICATION:

Besides trees, there are other things each of us can do to maintain the beauty of our neighborhood. A well-kept neighborhood is the first line of defense against crime, according to the Dallas Police Department. So not only can we all enjoy a pretty neighborhood, we can also do our part to make it a safe neighborhood.

## **ELECTION:**

This year we have a slate of officers who are willing to continue through next year if needed. However, nominations will be taken from the floor for all positions so come to the meeting and Vote! Some of the positions require your votes. Others are appointed positions. The positions requiring a vote include President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary.

## **KATY TRAIL PHASE IV EXTENSION UPDATE:**

Construction of the Katy Trail Phase IV that will eventually connect the White Rock DART Station with the Union Pacific rail bed (under the Northwest Highway and Abrams road bridges) will begin in May of this year. We have a group of residents who have been following this activity closely, to be sure the plans continue to be what was promised at a neighborhood meeting held with Sheffie Kadane. The plans do include everything as promised. We are fortunate to have this trail with a galvanized steel barrier to prevent cars from running into our neighborhood property. There will be more plants along Northwest Highway which should add to the beauty of our neighborhood. The best part, of course, will be easy access to the Dallas trail system.

## **ALLEY MAINTENANCE:**

Did you know that, in the eyes of the city, it is your responsibility to take care of everything from the curb in front of your house to half way across the alley behind your house? That means grooming your property front and back. Avoid costly fines by Code Compliance by being in compliance with the City Code. The City Code states that your property must not have grass or weeds in excess of 12 inches in height. Vegetation/tree limbs must be trimmed back to at least 18 inches from the edge of the alley/easement and up to a height of 15 feet above the alley. Litter, trash or outside storage cannot be visible from the street or in the alley. And junk motor vehicles (not moved every 24 hours) or vehicles parked on unapproved surfaces are not allowed. Help us keep our neighborhood beautiful, safe and avoid any fines by Code Compliance.

## **OTHER CODE ISSUES**

### **DRAINING POOLS AND HOT TUBS INTO ALLEYS: (By Robert Curry, Mgr. N.E. Code District)**

Neighbors often ask how to dispose of the water when draining a swimming pool. The answer has several parts. First, the City Ordinance prohibits discharging filter backwash from a pool or spa into the storm water system. The best way to dispose of filter water is to use the sewer cleanout on your property. Or, you can use backwash water to irrigate your lawn as long as run off doesn't leave your property.

When draining an entire pool, you can use the same options as those for backwash water. In addition, City Ordinance allows water discharge into the storm water system if the total residual chlorine is not 5mg/L or greater; and if the water does not contain harmful quantities of muriatic acid or other chemical used for pool cleaning. Recommended range for ph must be between 6.5 and 9 to avoid harming the environment.

If you are not able to use the sewer for drainage and have to use the alley, be sure that no water flows on to a neighboring property; and make sure there are no puddles left behind. Puddles are a primary breeding ground for mosquitoes.

## **WATER CONSERVATION:**

Dallas water conservation requirements specify the times of the day a resident may use a sprinkler (automatic or otherwise) to water yards. From April 1<sup>st</sup> to Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, residents MAY NOT water lawns with a sprinkler between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Hand watering or watering with a soaker hose is permitted at any time. Violations of outdoor watering guidelines can result in fines of \$250 to \$2,000 per incident. First offenses will be issued a warning. Make sure you comply to avoid these costly fines.

## **PARKING ENFORCEMENT:**

There is a city Parking Enforcement Department that, in the past, reported to Public Works. It was recently moved to be reporting to the police department. The employees are not police officers. They drive small white cars with lights on top and "Parking Enforcement" on the side. These are city employees who are responsible to make sure everyone is in compliance with parking codes. The code we keep running into with this department is parking in the wrong direction on our streets. In our neighborhood, you should always park on the right hand side of the street. Parking Enforcement patrols all neighborhoods, including ours, so avoid fines and make sure you are parking correctly.

## **PETS:**

The city has a code that requires pets be restrained at all times in a fenced yard, enclosed pen or structure or on a leash. The only exception to this law is when the dog is in an official off-leash site. The city defines this type of site as being, "an enclosed area designated by the Park Board in which dogs are allowed to run at large without being secured by a leash or other restraint." Our neighborhood is fortunate to have one of these dog parks nearby at White Rock Lake. For more information about this park, visit [www.whiterockdogpark.org](http://www.whiterockdogpark.org).

Be sure you comply with Dallas City Code and keep your pets on a leash at all times and pick up after them. This includes the playground at Hotchkiss Elementary School because it is not a designated off-leash park designated by the Park Board. All DISD school property is considered to be private property, belonging to DISD. Because it is a public school, many people believe the school grounds are also public, which is not the case. The Principal of the school is responsible for what happens on the school property. They continue to have children stepping in pet waste when they are out playing on their playground.

In addition there have been repeated reports of leashed dogs being attacked or charged by un-restrained dogs in the neighborhood. We also have a case where an un-restrained dog bit a senior citizen riding by on her bicycle. These kinds of issues are the basis for the city leash law. Be sure you are complying with the leash law and the law that requires you to pick up waste after your dog.

## **LAW/CODE ENFORCEMENT:**

Our city requires enforcement of all city laws/codes. The Dallas Police Department and Code Compliance are responsible for enforcement. You will find both police officers and code compliance officers in our neighborhood for various reasons. When they are here, they are required by law to enforce all laws/codes. We will continue to share various codes with you in hopes of helping you avoid any of the fines associated with code violations. Also note that you must obey speed limits, especially in school zones. Likewise, you must make a full stop at any stop sign we have in our neighborhood.

## **CRIME WATCH**

### **JOIN ENP!**

As indicated in the recent Expanded Neighborhood Patrol flyer, the ENP program has dramatically cut crime in our neighborhood. If you have not already joined, please consider joining because we need as many people as possible to pay for more patrol hours. The more hours we are able to buy, the greater the chance we have of reducing crime. If you have questions, call Donna Mason at 214-348-7721 or write to [enp@mpum.com](mailto:enp@mpum.com).

The annual membership fee is \$150.00 which is only \$12.50 per month. We have found this program to be the most significant crime fighting program our neighborhood has ever had. Just send a check made payable to MPUM ENP and send it to P.O. Box 821733, Dallas, TX 75382 or visit our website at [www.mpum.com](http://www.mpum.com) and pay via PayPal.

### **JOIN THE VIP PROGRAM!**

In addition to ENP, we still have our Volunteers in Patrol program. Please think about joining our VIPs. We could really use your help. The more eyes we have around the neighborhood, the more crime we can prevent. All you need to do is attend a 6-hour Dallas Police Department training class. If you have any time to devote to the neighborhood, even if only for an hour or two a month, please consider joining. Magnetic signs for your car are furnished by MP/UM. The next training class is scheduled for Saturday, May 14th and it will be a one-day training class held at City Hall, 1500 Marilla, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We will advise you later as future training classes are scheduled. If you have any questions about how to join the VIP program, send an email to Dottie Giesler at [vip@mpum.com](mailto:vip@mpum.com) or call her at 214-349-7028 or call Donna Mason at 214-348-7721. You may also contact Sr. Corp. Phil Gordon at 214-671-0160 or you may email him at [phillip.gordon@dpd.ci.dallas.tx.us](mailto:phillip.gordon@dpd.ci.dallas.tx.us)

## **REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:**

We will all have to be especially watchful when school is out to be sure our neighborhood remains safe. If you see anyone looking in cars, walking by slowly peering at houses, walking in alleys, or any other suspicious activity, call 9-1-1 immediately. **DO NOT HESITATE!** Listen for strange sounds or dogs barking. Most of all – know your neighbors. The better acquainted you are with your neighbors, the more you will know when something is out of the ordinary. When you call 9-1-1, make sure you describe what the person is doing that makes them seem suspicious. The emphasis is on suspicious ACTIVITY rather than suspicious people.

## **SOLICITORS – ZERO TOLERANCE:**

With summer approaching, we usually see an increase in solicitors, many of whom are scammers. Legitimate solicitors will abide by the law. They will honor your “No Soliciting” signs, if they are displayed at the front door. And, they will only solicit during the designated hours allowed by the city. The hours: No soliciting before 9:00 a.m. or 30 minutes following sunset of any day, Monday through Saturday. No soliciting at any time on a Sunday or on major holidays.

Call 9-1-1 if your No Soliciting signs are not honored or if you find people at your door during the hours not allowed. Remember, the best rule of thumb...**do not purchase anything from a stranger**. Times have changed! DISD and other schools now prohibit door to door fundraising so do not be concerned that you are not helping a student. Anyone representing themselves as a student will most likely not be legit.

Finally, if anyone knocks on your door after dark, be sure to make some noise inside your house. **Never open the door!** Tell the person **through the door** you are calling 911. Immediately call 911 and report a “suspicious” person knocking on your door.

The best defense against solicitors is to have a no soliciting sign or sticker displayed at your front door. Many of these can be purchased from hardware stores. But if you would like a No Soliciting sticker, free of charge, just send an email to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com) along with your name and address and we will be happy to deliver it to you. The more No Soliciting signs we have displayed, the less attractive our neighborhood will be to solicitors.

## **CRIMES OF OPPORTUNITY:**

Crimes of opportunity are caused by having valuables unattended either in your yard, on your porch or especially in your car. It just takes seconds for someone to grab an item and run. The ONLY defense we have against this type of crime is by depending on the vigilance of every resident.

### **Please pay attention to the following tips:**

- Open garages are a common easy target, even ones that are left open a foot or so.
- Don't leave lawn equipment unattended
- Do not place flat screen TV's so they are visible from the street. If possible, use a locking flat screen TV mount. It may delay burglars long enough to minimize losses.
- Do not put boxes at the curb that advertises new valuables purchased. Instead, take the boxes to the recycle bin at the Town North Bible Church.
- Close your blinds when you are not home. Burglars go window shopping too and know what you have when they look through windows.
- If you open your windows for ventilation this spring, use secondary window locks to prevent someone from opening the window far enough to crawl through.
- Always remember to lock the doors to your house and secure your doggy door if it is large enough for a person to crawl through.
- Join our ENP program so our ENP officer can check on your property while you are out of town

### **Prevention of Burglary of Vehicles:**

- Lock your car at all times.
- Remove all valuables from your car
- Hide anything you need to leave in the car
- When possible, park in your garage
- And make sure you do not leave garage door openers inside a car

### **Prevention of Car thefts:**

- Most car thefts happen in the wee hours of the morning while you are sleeping. The only thing you can do is make sure your car is secured in your garage. Otherwise make sure you securely lock car doors and do not leave your key or extra keys inside the car.

Remember, every single time someone successfully steals even the tiniest thing from our neighborhood, it only encourages them and others to return. Save yourself and your neighbors from property loss – secure all property and watch and listen for anything that sounds suspicious. Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1. The police like to have the opportunity to check things out.

## **HOTCHKISS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL – SUMMERTIME:**

Each year, Hotchkiss Elementary has removed the outdoor basketball hoops when school is out. This has been very helpful because it discourages older teens from outside our neighborhood from using the school as a hangout, a problem we had before we took this step.

This summer, Hotchkiss is one of the DISD elementary schools designated to hold Summer School. School will be in session all summer, so they cannot take the basketball hoops down. However, the janitorial staff will be working until 10:00-11:00 PM and will watch over things.

Our VIP's and ENP officers will monitor the school closely as well. If you see any problems at the school, call 911 if it is an emergency. If it is not an emergency, send an email to [crimewatch@mpum.com](mailto:crimewatch@mpum.com) and report it to Brenna Rivas, our Crime Watch Chairman. If you are a member of ENP, you may also contact the ENP officer via our ENP cell phone carried by the ENP officer.

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:**

Our neighborhood could sure use some help from any of you that might have any time to devote! Every single position in our neighborhood is up for grabs at anytime if you have a special interest and time to devote to the position. We also have some initiatives we would love to implement that currently do not have anyone to make them happen. If you have interest in any of the following positions, please send an email to [president@mpum.com](mailto:president@mpum.com) or [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com). If you do not have internet access, then call 214-349-7028 or 214-348-7721. Volunteers needed:

Block Captain Coordinator and Asst. Coordinator – Surveys have shown lot of people would agree to be a block captain. We just have not found someone to make it happen.

Welcome Committee for new residents, including assembly of a welcome basket or packet.

If you have an area of interest, let us know. We need lots of help and will be happy to match your interest to a neighborhood need. Again, if you have interest, email [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com)

Let your imagination run – if you think of something that would be helpful to our neighborhood, offer suggestions!!

## **GARAGE SALE/FUNDRAISER – VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:**

Each Spring we hear from residents about having another neighborhood garage sale. At this time we do not have a volunteer to pull the garage sale together. It is a great event and it helps the neighborhood raise a little money as well when participants pay \$20 for their space. If you have the time to make this garage sale happen, send an email message or call any of our Neighborhood Association Officers and volunteer!

## **NEIGHBORHOOD GATHERINGS:**

Summertime is the perfect time to have small yard parties or block parties - the more informal and impromptu the better. It's a great way to pull neighbors together, meet new ones and have a lot of fun.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS:**

We would like to know what kind of neighborhood events you believe would be fun for the neighborhood, bring us closer together, give us a chance to meet each other and provide the information needed by residents. Some can be targeted to kids and some can be targeted to seniors and some can be simply general ones that allow us all to get together. If you think of an event our Neighborhood Association could bring to the neighborhood, just send an email to [president@mpum.com](mailto:president@mpum.com) or [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com) or call 214-349-7028. We would love to hear from you!

## **ART SHOW:**

We have realized that we have a lot of artists among us. Some paint, some are photographers, some write books, some quilt or do other needlework, etc. We would like to know if you would enjoy having an art show where you could view and/or purchase art from fellow residents and/or show your own artistic flair. If you would enjoy this kind of event, please indicate by sending an email to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com) or call 214-349-7028.

## WEBSITE:

Take the time to visit our website. You will find a lot of useful information. If you think of information you would like to see on our website, please send a note to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com). We are always looking for content that would be helpful for all our residents. If anyone would like to help publish information on our website, please send an email to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com). Stuart Johnston has programmed our website so anyone can actually edit and add information, once they are given clearance. So if you like to write, have the time to help us keep the website information fresh, please let us hear from you! Stuart can be reached at [webmaster@mpum.com](mailto:webmaster@mpum.com). If you think of information for our website that you believe would be of help to all residents, send your idea to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com).

## EMAIL COMMUNICATION:

If you have an email address, be sure you send it to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com) so you can be added to our neighborhood email list. Those on the email list receive crime alerts, events affecting our neighborhood, updates on the redevelopment of commercial properties around our neighborhood and pet alerts. Our email list has become more important than ever to keep all of you informed. A recent example was to warn people when we had known Scammers going door to door. Make sure we have your email address so we can keep you informed.

## CURRENT OFFICERS:

If you would like to communicate with any of the officers of our neighborhood, see the list below to know where to email or call.

Position	Name	Phone	Email Address
President	Bill Haughton	214-801-2425	<a href="mailto:president@mpum.com">president@mpum.com</a>
Vice President - Admin.	Doug Mahy	214-349-9384	<a href="mailto:vp@mpum.com">vp@mpum.com</a>
Vice President - Zoning	Rick Webber	214-348-3526	<a href="mailto:zoning@mpum.com">zoning@mpum.com</a>
Treasurer	Charley Ramirez	214-341-1861	<a href="mailto:treasurer@mpum.com">treasurer@mpum.com</a>
Secretary	Barbara Hansen	214-340-3339	<a href="mailto:secretary@mpum.com">secretary@mpum.com</a>
Crime Watch	Brenna Rivas	214-460-4908	<a href="mailto:crimewatch@mpum.com">crimewatch@mpum.com</a>
Expanded Neighborhood Patrol (ENP) Coordinator	Donna Mason	214-348-7721	<a href="mailto:enp@mpum.com">enp@mpum.com</a>
VIP Leader	Dottie Giesler	214-349-7028	<a href="mailto:vip@mpum.com">vip@mpum.com</a>
Beautification	Dottie Giesler	214-349-7028	<a href="mailto:beautification@mpum.com">beautification@mpum.com</a>
Newsletter Editor	Kathy Gifford	214-553-5541	<a href="mailto:newsletter@mpum.com">newsletter@mpum.com</a>
Neighborhood Pets	Amy Berliner	214-437-2377	<a href="mailto:pets@mpum.com">pets@mpum.com</a>
Website	Stuart Johnston	214-553-9579	<a href="mailto:webmaster@mpum.com">webmaster@mpum.com</a>
Communication	Donna Mason	214-348-7721	<a href="mailto:info@mpum.com">info@mpum.com</a>
Membership/Safety	Robert Giesler	214-349-7028	<a href="mailto:jazzydott@sbcglobal.net">jazzydott@sbcglobal.net</a>

## In Sympathy:

Many of you knew Joe Prestridge, the long time owner of Merriman Park Automotive on Walling Lane. Joe passed away on March 27, 2011. From 1969-1971 he owned an Exxon station that used to be at Walling and Skillman where Jake's is now. After selling the station, he and his family purchased an adjoining property in 1971, which became the home of Merriman Park Automotive. Since it opened, the company has been in continuous operation and is still owned and operated by Joe's wife Jeanette Prestridge and son Kevin. Joe will be missed by many of us and we extend our sympathy to Joe's family in their loss.

## Yard of the Month: 6976 Walling

(visit our website at [www.mpum.com](http://www.mpum.com) for pictures)

**MPUM's Complete List of Neighborhood Contacts available on Our Website: [www.mpum.com](http://www.mpum.com)**

*The Communicator is a publication of the Merriman Park/University Manor Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 820803, Dallas, TX 75382-0803.*

*Articles, letters and suggestions are invited and appreciated and can be mailed to the P.O. Box or sent via e-mail to [info@mpum.com](mailto:info@mpum.com).*