



# EASTWOOD VOICE



The Newsletter of the Eastwood Civic Association

February 2006

## “MAPS VOL. 4, PGS. 42-43”

BY PAUL O'SULLIVAN

After my neighbor moved into the house next door - the house in which he grew up as an adolescent - and began renovations he began to tell me many stories of my house, the original owner, and the greater neighborhood in general. When I had a little free time, I did a little research on the history of my own house.

From my neighbor, I discovered that the original owner of my house was Thomas Flavin. Mr. Flavin was an Electrical Supervisor with HL&P and was the son of a Galveston doctor. In an era before automobiles were prevalent, Mr. Flavin would make the trip from Galveston to Houston in two days on horseback, resting overnight at a halfway point. I will have to keep this in perspective when I travel to Galveston and experience a slowdown on the causeway! Mr. Flavin lived with his wife, Emma, and mother in Houston's East End before building a two bedroom Arts and Crafts brick bungalow at 4703 Walker. Mr. Flavin's position with HL&P explains a lot of the switches, junction boxes, ceramic wire nuts and other items that I have found in the attic and in the crawl space underneath the house.

Eastwood was developed in the early 1900s, and the Flavin House was one of the later ones to be constructed in the neighborhood. The deed recorded with Harris County in 1923 mandated that the house to be built on the lot was to be ...“of a value not less than \$4,000.00.” My research at the Texas Room, next to the Downtown Public Library, indicates Thomas and Emma Flavin did not live at 4703 until 1925, which is the date that I assume construction to have been completed on the house.

Searching for the plat map of Eastwood was a bit more difficult than searching the Grantee Deed records at the Harris County Administration building at 1001 Preston. Having avoided the microfiche and microfilm readers as an adolescent, I found the folks at the records warehouse - 2 blocks away - to be invaluable. The physical records are housed in the warehouse and copies of the deeds can be obtained at that site. Map records may be viewed at the warehouse, but I had to obtain the location of the map I wanted and present that to the staff at the main building. At 18" x 24", the maps are oversized and a non-certified copy costs \$6.50. The map of Eastwood can be found in

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Eastwood Civic Association Meeting • February 6, 2006 • 6:30 - 7:30 pm • Cape Center

DAVID BEIRNE - DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS FOR THE HARRIS COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

## IT CAN'T HAPPEN NEXT DOOR, CAN IT?

The Eastwood area has dodged a bullet, this time.

As you know, we have been involved in protecting our neighborhood using the Prevailing Lot and Building Set-back Ordinances. It has been a three-year campaign so far. Almost all of the homes in the blocks where there have been volunteers are in the process of being protected.

In December, we received notice of a variance request at the corner of Sidney and Clay, in the L. B. Moody subdivision. It took a long time to get any information on the variance requested or what the project would be. We finally found out it would be a three-story student luxury housing complex with parking on the ground floor. We later learned that the variance was to make “zero-lot line,” building all the way to the property lines. If this block had been protected by a petition for the Special Building Line, the variance request would not have been considered.

It was at the the Planning Commission hearing that we discovered this was actually to be a mid-rise reaching 70 feet tall. The parking would be the first floor with three two-story floors of living space above it. Would you like a 70 foot wall starting just a few feet

out your window? A letter-writing campaign from our friends and neighbors, with support from Council Member Carol Alvarado and James Rodriguez, was able to persuade the commission to reject the variance request, stopping the project, for now.

Cathy Sessums and Steve Parker got the ball rolling to get this block protected under the Lot and Building Line Ordinances. Volunteers Paul O'Sullivan, David Borg, Karen Niemeier, and Diane Barber also helped blockwalk to get the signatures. By the time this newsletter reaches you, the 4100-4300 blocks of Clay Street will join nearly 50 blockfaces (more than 400 homes) in seeking to maintain their character. City Council has given final approval to three blockfaces and nearly 20 more will be going to them shortly. Once the packets with the petitions are submitted, variances cannot be given for those areas.

This tale should be frightening to you. It proves, as has happened in other areas of town, that not only townhomes, but anything can be built next to your home. The City and the Planning Commission want to help, but it is up to the homeowners to do the work. Since, without deed restrictions, almost any type of business can open next door as well, it is important to renew or reinstate them for each

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Volume 4, pages 42-43, which shows the properties on each block, original street names, and deed restrictions as outlined by the developer, The Wilson Company.

As I found out from my online map searches, Lockwood Drive was previously named Maplewood Drive, as shown in the original map. The esplanade on Park Drive was originally a drainage ditch, instead of the grassy area that it has become. The concrete border that encompasses the Flavin House was a later addition and the garage once had a second story that was later removed. The Flavins had no children, but they did have a nephew who inherited the house after the death of Thomas and Emma Flavin. The swing that used to hang from the southwestern corner of the covered porch may be long gone, but the memories will continue. I am having the original deed and subdivision plat framed, so that it becomes a permanent part of the Flavin House giving future homeowners a head start on their research. Being the third family to own the house, I get a feeling that I am as much a curator as I am a homeowner. ☑

#### References -

[www.houstontx.gov/planning/forms/forms.htm#hf](http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/forms/forms.htm#hf)  
[www.houstonheights.org/historicalresearch.htm](http://www.houstonheights.org/historicalresearch.htm)

IT CAN'T HAPPEN NEXT DOOR, CAN IT?

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subdivision.

Eastwood's deed restrictions have to be renewed by April 2008. The process can take from 18 months to two years to complete. This is why we have already started the process. Why is this being mentioned in this article? The most active volunteers on the Prevailing Lot and Building Set-back campaign will be working on the deed restriction renewal drive. The Eastwood subdivision is the only one in our association with active deed restrictions. If those lapse, it could open the door to the deterioration of the residential character in the entire area. We simply can't allow that to happen.

You can't count on every variance request being denied, particularly if no lots in your subdivision have filed for the ordinance protection. For the next two years, it will be important for homeowners wanting to protect their property, to volunteer to gather information needed, organize block walks, and submit their own packets. Cathy and Steve will help you organize, plan your petition drive, and review the information to make sure it meets the requirements prior to being submitted.

Several neighbors have expressed an interest in adding the additional protection of deed restrictions. The best way to learn how to do this is to help with the Eastwood effort, then you will know the steps required. The best way to start out, however, is to work on Prevailing Lot and Building Set-back petitions. This will help you gauge whether your subdivision has the support necessary to get deed restrictions. Then, if it isn't ready yet, at least your block will have the protection of these ordinances. Don't wait until you have a 70-foot tall building outside your bedroom window. ☑

## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

### SUPER NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

The most recent Super Neighborhood (SN) meeting was held on January 10. The two most significant agenda items were the election of new officers and the approval of the SN Action Plan for 2006.

New officers elected were the following: Steve Parker (President), Gordon Goss (Vice-President), and Connie Wright (Secretary). Officers will serve a 2-year term from 2006 to 2008. The SN Action Plan, described in last month's Eastwood Voice, was approved with minor revisions and will be presented at the upcoming CIP meeting.

The remainder of the meeting focused on announcements and updates from Harris County Flood Control (plan to excavate Braes Bayou from the Ship Channel to Lawndale is out for bids); from Carol Alvarado's representative (summarized a recent news release and announced the Council Member's intention to have a town hall meeting in March on deed restrictions); from TXDOT (discussed future planned projects for local highways, all of which are under consideration for 2010 and beyond); and from the Mayor's Citizen's Assistance Office (gathered information on areas of concern—specific troublesome properties and illegal commercial truck traffic on neighborhood streets—to be brought to the mayor's attention). The next meeting will take place on Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 PM, at the Villa de Matel Conference Center in Lawndale.

### TREE PLANTING PROJECT - DIEZ PARK

The volunteer turnout for the January 7th tree planting was incredible! From Austin HS students, to Little League players and supporters, to arborists and civic members, the trees were all in the ground in under an hour! Thanks to ECA members Paul O'Sullivan, Cathy Sessums, Steve Parker, Josh Espineda, Bob and Suzette Pruitt, John Parras, Rick and Ricky Noriega, and City Council Member Carol Alvarado and James Rodriguez, for their work and to Mayor Bill and Andrea White for bringing this beautification project to Eastwood.

### EASTWOOD VOICE NEEDS YOUR HELP

We need volunteers to help write articles, distribute newsletters to block captains, and block captains to pass them out to their blocks. We also need to get the newsletters to areas which don't currently get them. If you want to write a story, don't worry, we have editors and proof-readers standing by to help. It is the information and history that you have that is important to share. Help us collect the stories that make the Eastwood area the community that it is.

The Eastwood Voice is a monthly publication of the Eastwood Civic Association. If you have story ideas or comments, or would like to help pass out copies to your neighbors, please contact us at PO Box 9542, Houston, TX 77023 or at [eastwood.voice@eastwood-houston.com](mailto:eastwood.voice@eastwood-houston.com).