



## 2009 Activities Report to Members

The Board of Directors and Executive Committee began 2009 with an emphasis on transportation while monitoring developments in higher education, action in the Texas Legislature, promoting the foundations for the establishment of a quality growth program, updating the development map and advocating for continued infrastructure improvements and rehabilitation.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Several special briefings with Texas Transportation Commissioner Ned Holmes, the newly appointed TxDOT Houston District Engineer Delvin Dennis and Harris County officials focused on priority projects for Greater West Houston—Segment E of the Grand Parkway and the US 290 Corridor. This helped the Association establish its program for transportation advocacy for 2009.

**Grand Parkway Segments E, F1 and F2:** Segment E will not only improve accessibility to underserved areas of northwest Harris County, it will relieve major north-south arterials that are currently heavily congested.

- The Association has strongly supported Harris County in its efforts to speed implementation of construction of Segment E and the beginning of design of Segment F1. We heavily supported design and funding efforts by gathering local support for Harris County Commissioners Court action on Segment E. WHA representatives provided testimony before the Transportation Policy Council and Commissioners Court. The Association supported local primacy for all of the Grand Parkway and communicated that support to all involved counties.
- While the Association cannot fight a lawsuit or negotiate for wetland permits, the two current tipping points for Segment E, we continue to support those who can and provide assistance where possible. Construction of the Grand Parkway

remains a primary transportation objective of the Association.

**The US 290 Corridor/Hempstead Tollway:** The need for US 290 corridor improvement is unquestionable. Focusing on the reconstruction of the freeway mainlanes, potential tollway construction, and commuter rail possibilities, briefings revealed significant funding and policy issues that if left unresolved threaten the design and construction schedules for the Tollway and freeway reconstruction.

- In November 2009, WHA representatives appeared before the Transportation Commission to make the case for \$315 million in Prop 12 funding for the US 290/I610 interchange with construction to commence within 2 years. The battle will be hard for any additional funding for US 290 as TxDOT reported that without additional funds, no new corridor projects would be undertaken for 11 years.
- Given this lack of funding, the new capacity offered by the Hempstead Tollway is needed now more than ever and the Association will pursue this aggressively in 2010. The Association continues to fully support the future inclusion of commuter rail in the corridor to address the long-term mobility needs of Greater West Houston and is working to help plan this service for nearer term implementation.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE REHABILITATION**

A massive, unfunded liability of infrastructure rehabilitation exists in Greater West Houston reports the Infrastructure Rehabilitation Committee particularly relating to drainage systems and roadways. A model identified baseline investment needs in the region and costs were identified. At present no funding mechanism exists to address this problem. However, Association representatives are engaged in ongoing discussions with public leaders on how to deal with this need.

## **DRAINAGE & FLOOD CONTROL**

Enhancing existing drainage systems and providing ample, efficient drainage systems for future growth are guiding the Association's efforts in this important component of our infrastructure systems. The Association has advocated for the implementation of the "frontier channel" drainage system that provides a physical improvement to flood control and means to finance it. This concept will be first implemented in the Upper Langham Creek and then duplicated in other areas in Greater West Houston. The Association is providing input on various models for financing City of Houston drainage system improvements needs—currently estimated to be 2 to 3 billion dollars.

## **EDUCATION**

The Association has worked with the Houston Community College System and University of Houston to identify the higher education needs of Greater West Houston. We continue to pursue the eventual establishment of a four year campus of higher education to serve those needs. In the meantime, we began an initiative to help the University of Houston expand or replace its Cinco Ranch campus—itsself the direct result of West Houston Association efforts in the 1980's. Throughout the year a special task force held sessions with the UofH Board of Regent Chairman, Welcome Wilson and U of H staff members to develop a model of community involvement in designing curriculum and a possible facility for a full four year university. This is a long term priority of the Association. Public education issues and policies were the topic of an Executive

Committee session and the Board of Directors heard from and supported Houston Community College's annexation of Spring Branch ISD boundary.

## **WATER & WASTE WATER TREATMENT**

The Association is assessing the possibility of wastewater regionalization in the unincorporated areas of the region from the standpoint of both water quality and cost efficiency. The Association remains concerned about the impacts on our communities from the significant cost and time requirements of wastewater regionalization. The committee will continue to evaluate the benefit/cost aspects of this concept.

## **CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE**

Lifestyle enhancements for residents in Greater West Houston is the focus of efforts to develop a plan for tying together hundreds of miles of hike and bike trails lacing the area. This project includes mapping all existing trails and recreational areas down to the neighborhood park level, determining needed connections between different trails, establishing a uniform way-finding system and identifying potential new corridor rights-of-way.

## **QUALITY PLANNED DEVELOPMENT**

The Board authorized the Quality Planned Communities Committee to begin implementation of a new program recognizing residential and commercial developments that provide high standards of design and quality. The goal of this program is to encourage commercial and residential developers to implement standards generally associated with master planned communities in projects that are not part of an MPC. These include higher standards for right of way setbacks, landscaping, sidewalks and fencing standards. The program includes a logo designation for the participating developments and builders

## ADDITIONAL PROJECTS IN 2009

**81<sup>ST</sup> Legislative Session:** The Executive Committee monitored several areas of legislation leading up to and during the last legislative session. Focus was placed on transportation; governance and land use regulations; and UofH tier one related legislation.

**Greater West Houston Development Map:** The Board of Directors approved production of the 2010 Development Map. Its unique features will set a new standard for the Association. It will be announced in the coming weeks to members of the Association.

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