



City of Irving *City Manager's Report*

May 23, 2007

Goal No. 2: Vibrant Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Enhancement Program (South Austin Heights) – Following are three updates in regard to the Neighborhood Enhancement Program.

New Neighborhood Association – The South Austin Heights Neighborhood Association was formed on May 7, with more than 30 residents in attendance to approve the bylaws and elect officers. Mike Clark and Judy Hoyack will serve as co-chairs. The Corporate Communications Department will continue to assist this group with their new association. They are in the process of creating their own neighborhood newsletter and will be seeking grant money for future projects. Forming the neighborhood association is one of the major objectives of the Neighborhood Enhancement Project.

Litter Control Awareness – Residents of the South Austin Heights Neighborhood Association, with support from city staff and community volunteers, worked on May 19 to address litter control. This is one of the issues that residents have identified as a high priority for their neighborhood. Keep Irving Beautiful worked with the residents to go door-to-door with information packets to raise awareness about litter control and recycling programs in their neighborhood. Several city staff assisted with the event—including Kirby the KIB Toucan, Sparky the Fire Dog, and McGruff the Crime Dog.

English Street Paving Project – A public meeting has been held with South Austin Heights property owners for the English Street paving project. The paving of English Street, including major storm sewer and sanitary sewer collectors, is the first phase of work within this neighborhood. Construction is expected to begin late this year, subject to completion of right-of-way acquisition and franchise utility relocations. All other streets within this neighborhood are scheduled for improvement upon completion of English Street construction in early 2009.

Neighborhood Association Boundaries Redrawn – The boundaries of the Plymouth Park Neighborhood Association have been redrawn so that the 1,000-plus home area now consists of two associations. This boundary change, which was proposed by a resident in the area, was approved by the association residents during a May 8 meeting hosted by the Corporate Communications Department. The new boundaries designate two neighborhood areas that are more manageable in size. The Plymouth Park association experienced revitalization from residents attending this meeting and now has leaders in place to move forward with a more active group. The new neighborhood association created from the boundaries change consists of approximately 300 homes. Residents will be meeting soon to develop bylaws and vote on a name for the new group.

Goal No. 3: Economic Development

Heels and Hills Half-Marathon – The Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau welcomed the “Heels and Hills” half-marathon to the Las Colinas Urban Center on May 6. The inaugural running/walking event for women broke new ground by becoming the third-largest women’s half-marathon in the country in its first year. Registration reached 1,000 participants, and was attended by more than 1,000 spectators. The “Heels and Hills” half-marathon plans to return to Irving next year.

Olde Towne Redevelopment Project – Delbert McDougal, of McDougal Companies, has entered into a contract for the purchase of the Villa Martinique Apartments on MacArthur Boulevard in South Irving. This is the first contract for the Olde Towne redevelopment, which will extend from the north of Pioneer Drive, east to Britain Road, south to Shady Grove Road and west to MacArthur Boulevard. Residents of the Villa Martinique Apartments vacated their units last September when it was determined that several of the buildings yielded unsafe living conditions. The blighted area will be torn down immediately after the sale. Plans for the Olde Towne redevelopment project under consideration include an urban village complete with homes, shops, restaurants, offices, and parks, centered on the Trinity Railway Express.

Goal No. 4: Safe and Secure City

Vial of L.I.F.E. – The Irving Fire Department is offering Vial of L.I.F.E. Kits free of charge as a new public service to residents age 60 and older. The Vial of L.I.F.E.—Lifesaving Information For Emergencies—is a place for residents to store important medical information that emergency medical personnel, such as firefighters, paramedics and hospital staff, need during a time of crisis. Kits are available at all Irving fire stations.

Red Light Warning Period – The 30-day warning period for the red light enforcement camera system will expire May 30. Beginning May 31, offenders will receive a notice of violation in the mail. The notices will include color photos of the driver's car and his/her license plate. Offenders also will be able to view a 12-second video clip through a Web site provided by ATS, the contracted provider of the red light enforcement services. The first two violations will cost \$75 each. A third violation within a 12-month period will cost \$150. The offense is considered civil, not criminal. Two red light enforcement cameras have been added—at the intersections of O'Connor at Lane and Belt Line at Pioneer streets—to help decrease the severity of traffic accidents caused by red-light offenders. Additional red light cameras are planned to be added in the future.

Fire Department Events – The Fire Department is busy this month with fire prevention education and community service projects. On May 17-19, the department worked on the annual MDA "Fill the Boot" campaign. As part of Emergency Medical Services Week, fire officials hosted an Open House on May 22. Several residents visited Fire Station No. 2, located at Irving Boulevard and Story Road, during the special event. Wrapping up the month will be a Blood Drive hosted by the Fire Department and City Council on May 23-24 at the Irving Central Library.

Thermal Imaging Cameras – New Thermal Imaging Cameras are arriving and the firefighters will be undergoing intensive training with these devices. Through a federal grant, the city will be able to outfit every fire engine with these life-saving units. The Thermal Imaging Camera, or TIC, allows firefighters to see through smoke by using thermal rather than light energy to form an image. The Fire Department expects to have the training completed and the units placed on the fire equipment by the end of June.

Animal Shelter – City staff is reviewing architect proposals for the design of a new animal shelter. Additional work is being done to develop a partnership agreement to construct a facility for the DFW Humane Society to provide extra sheltering and animal adoption services.

Courts Employee on Crime Information Board – Chief City Marshal Mark Eads was elected to serve on the North Central Texas Crime Information Center (NCTCIC) Board of Directors.

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program – Three additional apartment complexes (The Terrace, Woodmeade, and Brookstone) have successfully passed Phase II of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program certification process. All three complexes, which are owned by Westdale Properties, are located on Block Drive. They will hold a combined Safety Social to recognize their achievement on June 14 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Goal No. 5: Diversity

Leaders Without Borders Training – On May 10-11, second-tier management training began for “Leaders Without Borders.” The pilot program for department directors took place last November, with a follow-up meeting on May 4. This training imparts education, conversation and understanding about the cultural similarities and differences in Spanish-speaking communities.

Spanish Refresher Class – On May 3, Human Resources conducted the “Spanish Refresher” class for city employees who had taken Spanish in the past and wanted an opportunity to polish up their skills. Attendees received assistance in constructing phrases that were more directly relative to their work experiences.

Spanish Health Literacy – The Central Library will kick off its Spanish Health Literacy series with a special guest, Hispanic media personality and bestselling author Maria Antonieta Collins. Collins will be the keynote speaker for the series, which is made possible by a grant from Texas Book Festival. Event sponsors include American Airlines and the Wyndham Las Colinas Hotel. Subsequent programs will be held at the East Branch and cover a variety of health topics in Spanish.

Texas Month – The Irving Public Library’s six-month multicultural program series, “Celebrate the Cultures of Irving,” ends in June with a celebration of everything Texan. Programs will be held at 2 p.m. on June 3 and 23 with activities that include fiddle performances, cowboy storytelling, roping demonstrations, rodeo acts and more. Tea & Talk, a book discussion group, will meet at the Central Library at 7:30 p.m. June 14 and at the Irving Mall Barnes & Noble at 11 a.m. June 16. The selection for Texas Month is “No Country for Old Men” by Cormac McCarthy.

Goal No. 6: Effective Communications

Irving ISD Mentorship – Municipal Court employees Diana Soto and David Galvan, and Equipment and Building Services employee Nella McCain served as judges in the Irving Independent Studies Mentorship Showcase at the Academy of Irving on the evening of May 2. This was a community outreach program to assist with judging end-of-year student projects in the Irving school system. City employees were encouraged to participate in this event to better relationships and mentor the youth of our community.

Students Learning Court Process – Twenty-six business law students from MacArthur High School visited the Municipal Court on May 14 to observe trials and to speak with employees regarding the court process. Additionally, the students toured the jail as part of the day’s scheduled events.

Career Fair/Days Participation – During May, city employees participated in career fairs/days at three schools in the Irving ISD and one school in the Coppell ISD. Departments represented at Gilbert Elementary, Johnston Elementary, Valley Ranch Elementary and Austin Middle School were the Police Department, Fire Department, Municipal Court Services, Corporate Communications, City Attorney’s Office, and Inspections. City Manager Tommy Gonzalez was one of the featured speakers at Austin Middle School on May 18, where he talked with eighth graders about the importance of staying in school and getting an education.

Teen Court Banquet – Teen Court held its annual volunteer appreciation banquet on May 8. Tausiq Ahmed, a senior at MacArthur High School, was awarded the Jean Griffin Award of Merit and was recognized as the outstanding teen volunteer for the academic school year.

Goal No. 7: Cultural, Recreational and Educational Environments

Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institute – The Irving Arts Center has been named an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, making it one of only 153 nonprofit establishments nationwide to earn the honor. This new partnership will allow the Arts Center to borrow from the Smithsonian's extensive collection of artifacts. There are approximately 136 million artifacts available for use in future Arts Center exhibits. The partnership also allows the Arts Center access to the Smithsonian's educational resources and expertise in the fields of conservation, collections care and exhibit development. Great membership benefits for patrons, and workshops and study tours for employees also are available.

One Book, One Irving Announced – At the Friends of the Irving Public Library annual meeting on May 22, Mayor Herbert Gears unveiled the book chosen for the upcoming One Book, One Irving program series: "The House on Mango Street" by Sandra Cisneros. The citywide reading program and corresponding events will take place during Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15-Oct. 15. The Friends of the Irving Public Library are sponsoring appearances by Cisneros, who will be featured at a One Book program launch on Sept. 17.

Goal No. 8: Sound Governance

Distinguished Budget Presentation Award – The City of Irving has received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the FY 2006-07 Annual Operating Budget from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA). The budget was judged on four criteria: a Policy Document, a Financial Plan, an Operations Guide, and a Communications Device. Irving has received this award for 19 consecutive years. The budget document is the culmination of nine months of work by all city departments. Special recognition goes to Vicki Ebner and Shannon Phillips for significantly revising the FY 2006-07 budget to conform to the city's Strategic Plan and producing it in an integrated format.

Building Professional Institute – The Inspections Department played a key role in the 15th Annual Building Professional Institute (BPI) held May 14-18 at The University of Texas at Arlington. BPI is an educational conference offering training courses for construction inspectors, architects, engineers, sanitarians, fire protection personnel, real estate professionals, and code inspectors for around 900 students from a four-state area. The Inspections Department provided six teachers and five moderators; recruited teachers from our Human Resources, City Attorney, and City Manager departments; and organized the related golf tournament. Irving also sent a total of 50 students to BPI classes this year.

Employee Weight Loss – A total of 95 employees participated in the Step Up to Health—Scale Down to Fitness employee weight loss competition and lost a total of 741 pounds in a two-month period. The competition, which supports the city's wellness initiative, was sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Department. The grand prize winner in the Women's Division was Evelia Gonzalez, a custodian, with a total weight loss of 25 pounds (14.12 percent lost). Gonzalez won a check for \$1,180. The Men's Division grand prize winner was Scott Johnson, shift duty officer for the Fire Department, with a total weight loss of 54 pounds (19.04 percent lost). Johnson received a check for \$720. The grand prize amounts were collected during registration, where each participant contributed \$20.

Consolidation of Records – In April, 240 boxes of records were consolidated by the Records Division to 169 boxes, producing a savings of \$230 in cost of destruction. The 169 boxes, of predominately Police Department records, were shredded in accordance with City Council approval.

Election Information Provided – There was an increase in callers and walk-ins at City Hall asking for information related to the election and other subjects as well. The lobby reception desk saw an increase of residents approaching the desk for information or assistance. The number of walk-in inquiries made to the switchboard desk increased from 847 in March to 1,015 in April. Phone calls received during weekly business hours average between 5,000 and 6,000 monthly.

Goal No. 9: Infrastructure Network

New Telecommunication System – The Information Technology Department will begin the citywide telecommunication (telephone) system replacement next month to update the city to a single communication network. Smart-trunk technology will be used for the city's extensions; therefore, employees' phone extensions will not change. Several new phone features will be added. Employees will receive a new telephone handset and will be trained to use the new system. Questions regarding the new handsets and use of the system will be addressed during training sessions. The scheduled completion date for this project is July 31.

Milling and Overlay Program – Concrete repairs have been completed on Shady Grove Road. Asphalt paving is in progress, and Public Works/Streets expects to complete the program by the end of June. Concrete repairs will continue to be scheduled ahead of milling operations.

Emergency Response to Weather – The Public Works/Streets Division responded to 23 severe weather calls from the Police Department on May 2 during the hours of 5:30 p.m. and midnight. Calls ranged from fallen trees and high water to debris on the road and mudslides.

Traffic Projects – The Interstate 635 westbound frontage road extension, from Home Depot Boulevard to Belt Line Road, was opened to traffic on May 10. New ramp construction will require approximately two additional months. The overlay of Irving Boulevard by a TxDOT contractor began earlier this month. Daily lane closures are expected throughout the project. In addition, freeway/street lighting inventory for May has been completed. Outage repairs began the week of May 14. Foundations have been prepared for flashing warning beacons on Valley View Lane in front of the Valley View Municipal Complex to warn drivers of exiting/entering trucks.

City Building Improvements – Equipment and Building Services is installing bollards in front of the Criminal Justice Center to improve security for the building. There have been past occurrences where a lack of bollards has proven a point of weakness for the front of the building. This addition will assist with security of the structure as well as provide a safe environment for staff and residents. City Hall renovations for Financial Services have been completed. Additional office space was created and a glass storefront installed to improve security and enhance the look for the department. In addition, the department has completed renovation of the second floor at 3000 Rock Island Road for occupation by Emergency Management. This has provided much-needed space for their operation.

Goal No. 10: Environmentally Sustainable Community

Pilot Program for Bin Recycling – Working to expand participation in the city's curbside recycling program, Solid Waste Services is conducting a three-month pilot program of collecting recyclables in an 18-gallon bin. The Grauwylar Heights Neighborhood Association has been selected as the pilot study area. The program will start June 8, and residents will be able to set out their recyclables in either the city-provided blue recycling bin or a blue recycling bag. Each household within the study area has received a blue recycling bin. The goal is that having access to a recycling bin will remind residents to recycle to increase program participation. Evaluation of the program will take place in September. If successful, the city will consider expanding the current blue bag recycling program to a "blended" program of 18-gallon bins and/or blue recycling bags.

Water-Wise Garden Bus Tour – The Public Works and Solid Waste Services departments are partnering this year on the annual Water-Wise Garden Bus Tour. Residents interested in learning about native plants and Xeriscape landscaping can participate in Dallas Water Utilities' 12th Annual Water-Wise Garden Tour. The tour will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. June 2. The tour bus will depart at 9:30 a.m. from Irving City Hall, 825 W. Irving Blvd. A \$20 refundable deposit is required when registering. Call (972) 721-2345 for more information.