



Greater Mission Bend Area Council On-Line Newsletter

Providing a Voice for the Citizens of Greater Mission Bend

GREATER MISSION BEND AREA COUNCIL UP-DATE

February 2010

Comments from the President

Mike Martin - GMBAC

The new year is barely underway and already events are rushing past at the speed of light. The Greater Mission Bend Area Council hasn't slowed one bit as we work to strengthen your community. We started the year with a bang by having Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia and Fort Bend County Sheriff Milton Wright address our board and a handful of interested citizens. All in all, it was a very productive meeting. Following our meeting with the respective county judges, Ed Emmett and Bob Hebert, I can tell you for sure, our county officials know we are here. And that is a good thing, because we are going to need all the help we can get to be able to address most of the problems faced by the Greater Mission Bend Area.

West Oaks Mall

Speaking of which, one of the bigger problems we have had to stand by helplessly and watch has been the demise of the once proud and glitzy West Oaks Mall. When it was first built, West Oaks Mall was the gleaming diamond that said to the world, we are a community worth recognizing. In fact, the mall's early name was West Oaks Fashion Mall. That said it all. Unfortunately, it didn't last and we all stood by helplessly

Mission Statement

The mission of the Greater Mission Bend Area Council is to empower residents, businesses and organizations of the Greater Mission Bend Area by collectively addressing our common issues and concerns.



Bob Leitner, VP GMBAC, Adrian Garcia, Harris Co. Sheriff, Milton Wright, Fort Bend Co. Sheriff, Mike Martin, President, GMBAC

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and watched the mall go into steady decline. This was brought on by a number of factors, one of which was the outward migration of a large prosperous middle class in the Mission Bend area. When these folks left, they took with them significant financial resources, which kept the mall prosperous. While we welcome our new neighbors, it seems that, collectively, they do not have the financial resources of those whom they replace. Just the fact of the matter.

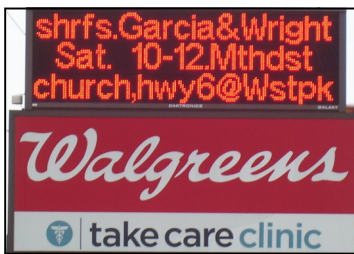
Since that time, there has been significant development along

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the Eldridge and Briar Forest corridors. Also, Highway 6 south to Highway 90 (South Main) has undergone significant development and continues to grow. This new development to the east and the south of the mall has more than offset any outward migration from Mission Bend per se.

Over the past twenty years, the bloom has left the rose and the once alluring name "West Oaks" took on a bit of a stigma. Even West Oaks Baptist Church, from which the mall took its name, has ceased to exist. The bulk of the

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Thank you, Saleem Mahmood, Manager of the Walgreen's Drug Store at Bellaire and HWY 6 for helping to get the word out about the meeting with the Sheriffs by posting a notice on your digital sign.

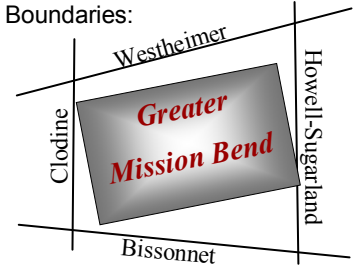
History of Office of Sheriff in Texas

The Office of Sheriff in Texas was created by the Texas Constitution. There are 254 Counties in Texas and each county has a Sheriff. By statutes, the Sheriff is a Texas peace officer, a conservator of the peace, enforces the criminal laws of the State, and is responsible for the county jail, bail bonds, civil process, and security of the courts. In some small counties the Sheriff is also the tax collector.

The Office of Sheriff is one of the oldest offices known to our system of jurisprudence. Sheriffs are elected to office and serve for a four-year term. The size of Texas Sheriffs offices are as diverse as the population of their counties.

<http://www.txsherrifs.org/memorial.asp>

The Greater Mission Bend Area Boundaries:



Newsletter Ideas Welcomed!

Please email pictures & articles to:

GMBACouncil@SBCGlobal.Net

This will be a monthly newsletter filled with information that relates to the Greater Mission Bend area as well as "News You Can Use!".

GMBAC Contact Information

Email

To receive Newsletters & Up-Dates, please send us your email address to:

GMBACouncil@SBCGlobal.Net

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 720692

Houston, Texas 77272

Join the LinkedIn Group

<http://www.linkedin.com/>

Join the Facebook Group

<http://www.facebook.com/>

Fax Number

713-634-2861

Website & Blog

www.GMBAC.Com

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congregation of West Oaks Baptist Church can be found today at Grand Parkway Baptist Church and points west. There's almost something symbolic about that.

To make matters worse, the mall went through a succession of ownership problems, leading finally to a bankruptcy, which literally drove out many of the tenants which might otherwise have stayed. When the leases of these tenants expired, literally, there was no authority available with which to renew. Having no lease exposed these businesses to all kinds of risks and they sadly packed up their goods and moved on down the road. Sad indeed.

The Good News

But, neighbors, take heart because help is on the way. One of the first items on the agenda for the GMBAC board for the New Year was to set up a meeting with **Tony Daniel**, manager of the mall. We did indeed meet with Tony and were also fortunate to have **Gary Karl** attend the meeting. Gary is a representative for the mall's new owners, **Pacific Retail Capital Partners**. We had a wonderful visit with these people and left with a renewed sense of hope that the mall is not only going to be revived, it will be renewed and will be better than ever. They shared some of their development ideas with us, and just let me say this much, you are going to be very pleased with what they plan to do. Some of this information will be released later in the Spring as plans take shape. Please feel free to leave your ideas about the mall here on the GMBAC web site. They will be checking in from time to time to get the public (you) response. So, don't be shy.

Malls tend to be big news in this town and West Oaks is no exception. **Andy Cerota** of Channel 13 has been covering our events for over a year now. Last year, Channel 13 aired a special story about the efforts of the Greater Mission Bend Area Council. Yesterday, Cerota did a story on Channel 13 about the mall and its new ownership. You can follow the link to the story if you missed it:

<http://abclocal.go.com/ktrk/video?id=7242961>

Also, we are making progress with our web site development, although it is still a work in progress. You can see the web site at www.GMBAC.com. At least at this point, the site is functional. In order to post, you have to go to the login and register your name. This is a bit of a cumbersome process at this time; but at least it will allow you to post messages and have your opinions "out there." And so, as they say, stay tuned. The best is yet to come.

MIKE MARTIN - President
Greater Mission Bend Area Council

Earned Income Tax Credit Can Help Families and Stimulate the Texas Economy

(AUSTIN) — Texas Comptroller Susan Combs says a slow economy means more Texas families may qualify to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on their federal income tax.

"2009 was a tough year," Combs said. "Many people lost jobs or took home less pay. But if you worked full-or part-time for at least part of 2009, the Earned Income Tax Credit could put money back in your pocket."

EITC refunds are based on family size and income. Families with three or more children and less than \$48,279 in earned income during 2009 may qualify for a tax credit up to \$5,657. The EITC is also available to families with two children and an earned income less than \$45,295, who can claim a tax credit up to \$5,028. Families with one child earning less than \$40,463 may qualify for a tax credit up to \$3,043. For a childless family earning less than \$18,440, a credit up to \$457 is available.

More information about how to qualify for the EITC, printable materials for businesses and community organizations to distribute and helpful links to IRS tax forms and publications can be found on the Comptroller's **W e b s i t e** at www.window.state.tx.us/taxinfo/eitc/ or by calling the IRS at (800) 829-1040. Information is also available about the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, which offers qualifying taxpayers free tax preparation assistance and free electronic tax filing at many locations.

"Last year, more than 2.3 million Texans claimed the credit and received more than \$5.3 billion in EITC refunds," Combs said. "That's an average of \$2,313 per qualifying household, bringing financial relief to families and a boost to the Texas economy."

Internal Revenue Service

<http://www.irs.gov/>

"Worried about an IRS audit? Avoid what's called a red flag. That's something the IRS always looks for. For example, say you have some money left in your bank account after paying taxes. That's a red flag."

-- Jay Leno

Principal Cuts May Prevent Foreclosures

At least 7 million borrowers will lose their homes this year and next unless there is a broad increase in property values or lenders become much more willing to cut the principal on mortgage loans, an analyst with Amherst Securities Group told the U.S. House Financial Services Committee last month.

That testimony has motivated Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. Chair Sheila Blair to consider incentives for lenders to cut principal on \$45 billion in mortgages her agency has acquired from seized banks.

"We're looking now at whether we should provide some further loss-sharing for principal write downs," says Bair. "Now you're in a situation where even the good mortgages are going bad because people are losing their jobs."

While principal reductions are rare, some banks are doing them. In the third quarter of 2009, about 21,000 home loans were modified by reducing the principal, according to Mortgage Metrics, a government publication.

Mark Zandi, the chief economist for Moody's Economy.com, suggests that banks receive a federal match of \$1 for every \$2 in principal reductions they offer to home owners.

"You're not going to wipe out all the borrowers' negative equity," he says. "This just gives them enough hope to get them committed again."

Source: Bloomberg, John Gittelsohn and Prashant Gopal (01/07/2010)

**Money isn't everything,
but it sure keeps the kids in touch!**

**Ready to File Your Taxes?
The Government Awaits**

IRS agents are ready and standing by to process your 2009 tax return. If you're like the majority of American taxpayers, you'll probably get a refund. So the sooner you file, the sooner you'll get your money back. (Last year, the average refund topped \$2,800). And if you join the growing ranks of taxpayers who file electronically—and elect to have your refund deposited directly into your bank account—you could get your money back in ten days or less.

<http://kiplinger.com/>

GMBAC Board Members

- Donna Kinerd**
Clayton, Sec. 1, 2
*
- Chuck Machauer**
Clayton Woods
*
- Veronica Rogers**
Great Oaks South
*
- Michelle Gabel**
Keegan's Ridge
*
- Wayne Thompson**
Kingsbridge Com. Assoc.
*
- Jodie James**
Kingsbridge Village
*
- Bob Leitner**
Mission Bend Civic
*
- Mike Martin**
Mission Bend HOA
*
- Christine Clark**
Mission Bend North, Sec. 3
*
- Joyce Nible**
Mission Bend South
*
- Kevin Jackson**
Parkside @ Clayton Park
*
- Dianne Williams**
Wingate HOA
*
- At Large Members**
- Winetta Billings**
- Terry Blair**
- Bert Garner**

**Non-Emergency
Harris Co. Sheriff**
713-221-6000

Fort Bend County Sheriff
281-342-6116
Emergency 911

Useful Resources

- **Alief ISD**
<http://www.aliefisd.net>
- **Fort Bend ISD**
<http://www.fortbend.k12.tx.us/>
- **SPCA**
<http://hspca.convio.net/site/>
- **The People Lawyer**
<http://www.peopleslawyer.net/>
- **Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services**
<http://www.hcphe.org/>
- **Report Street Lights out (# on Pole)**
<http://cnp.centerpointenergy.com/outage>
- **Texas Department of Public Safety**
<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/>

(Share Your Useful Resources)

**Primary Election
March 2, 2010**

Fort Bend Republican Party
<http://www.fbcgop.org/>

Fort Bend Democratic Party
<http://www.fbcdp.org/>

Harris County Democratic Party
<http://www.hcdp.org/>

Harris County Republican Party
<http://www.harriscountygop.com/>

Harris County Voting Information
<http://www.tax.co.harris.tx.us/>

Fort Bend County Voting Information
<http://vote.co.fort-bend.tx.us/WebVoter/default.asp>

**Elected Officials Representing
Greater Mission Bend**

Ft. Bend Co. Commissioner Andy Meyers,
Precinct 3 (281/494-1199)

<http://www.andymeyers.com/>

Harris Co. Commissioner Steve Radack,
Precinct 3 (713/755-6306)

<http://www.co.harris.tx.us/Pct3/>

**Fort Bend County Judge
Robert Hebert**
(281-341-8608)

<http://www.co.fort-bend.tx.us/>

**Harris County Judge
Ed Emmett**
(713/755-4000)

<http://www.judgeemmett.org/>

**State Senator, Dist. 17
Joan Huffman**
(713/662-3821)

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/>

**State Senator, Dist. 18
Glenn Hegar**
(281/391-8883)

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/>

**State Rep. Dist. 28
John Zerwas**
(512/463-0657)

<http://www.johnzerwas.com/>

**State Rep. Dist. 149
Hubert Vo**
(281/988-0212)

<http://www.hubertvo.com/>

Texas Legislature Online
<http://www.legis.state.tx.us/>

State and Local Government

State of Texas
<http://www.texasonline.com/portal/tol>

Harris County Government
<http://www.co.harris.tx.us/>

Fort Bend County Government
<http://www.co.fort-bend.tx.us/>

News You Can Use

Greater Mission Bend Area Real Estate Market Report

By Donna Kinerd - Broker

With a great deal of fine tuning of the search criteria in MLS I was able to determine the sales and leasing activity for the Greater Mission Bend Area. Below is the activity for January, 2009 as it compares to January 2010.

January	2009	2010
Sales Activity		
Total # of Sales	33	20
Total # of F/C*	18	9
Year Built	1989	1983
Non-F/C* Sales Price Per SF	\$.54	\$.59
F/C* Sales Price Per SF	\$.45	\$.50
Days on the Market	65	22
Total Active Sales Listings	191	193
Total F/C*Sales Active Listings	21	21
Rental Activity		
Total Rented	30	20
Rental Rate per SF	\$.56	\$.64
Active Listings	57	72
Price per SF for Active Listings	\$.65	\$.64
Year Built (Active Listings)	1983	1983
* F/C = Foreclosure		

**For More Information about the
Houston Real Estate Market**
<http://www.har.com/Newsroom/>



Banana Trees

DON'T TRIM YET

Plant Damage from the Blizzard of '09 and The 2010 Extended Freeze

By Laura Beth Jackson

Don't Trim...wait until the threat of freezes are over, around March and April. Last recorded freeze recently was April 1st but the usual last freeze is about March 15th. If they still have some green in the brown branches, they are still alive. But if they are mushy, limp and black, cut all the way back to the ground. Hopefully it will come back from the roots in spring.

The freeze and snow that hit Houston in December and January, has killed and damaged many plants in our subdivision. Also, if you have already trimmed back tender shrubs too early, be sure to cover them in the future so they wont freeze back even more. When covering plants, use old sheets, blankets or frost cloth making sure they come all the way down to the ground to keep the heat in. Then topping plants with plastic to protect from freezing rain, never put the plastic directly on plants because it will freeze them faster. When it gets real cold, even the wrapped plants can still freeze in unusually cold weather. This is what happened in my yard. It was too cold for just sheets. You can use C9 or C7 Christmas lights under a cover to really keep a plant warm.

CHECK OUT THESE LINKS FOR THE
BEST INFO ON HOUSTON PLANT CARE!

http://ktrh.com/pages/gardenline_newsletter/GardenTalk_12-17-09.htm

http://ktrh.com/pages/gardenline_newsletter/2010/gardenline_1-14-10.htm

<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/6331512/Treatment-for-Your-Cold-Damaged-Palms>

<http://www.tampabay.com/features/homeandgarden/how-to-care-for-palms-after-a-frost/1064048> (Palms)

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<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg318> (Palms)

<http://www.tropicamango.com/freeze-damage-car.html> (fruit trees)

<http://www.canr.msu.edu/vanburen/frstflw.htm> (fruit trees)

<http://ktrh.com/pages/GardenlineArchives.html>
(All kinds of special topics for Houston Gardening...sign up for email tips every week!)

<http://warnerstreesurgery.com/Frost%20Protecti>

If you are unable to open any of the links in this newsletter, copy and past the website address to your browser.

WARNING: 2010 Census Cautions from the Better Business Bureau

Be Cautious About Giving Info to Census Workers by Susan Johnson

With the U.S. Census process beginning, the Better Business Bureau (BBB) advises people to be cooperative, but cautious, so as not to become a victim of fraud or identity theft. The first phase of the 2010 U.S. Census is under way as workers have begun verifying the addresses of households across the country. Eventually, more than 140,000 U.S. Census workers will count every person in the United States and will gather information about every person living at each address including name, age, gender, race, and other relevant data.

The big question is - how do you tell the difference between a U.S. Census worker and a con artist? BBB offers the following advice:

** If a U.S. Census worker knocks on your door, they will have a badge, a handheld device, a Census Bureau canvas bag, and a confidentiality notice. Ask to see their identification and their badge before answering their questions. However, you should never invite anyone you don't know into your home.

** Census workers are currently only knocking on doors to verify address information.

Do not give your Social Security number, credit card or banking information to anyone, even if they claim they need it for the U.S. Census.

Stay updated on crime in your neighborhood with alerts in your inbox!

<http://spotcrime.com>