

LOOK UPSTREAM

AUGUST 2007

Are you a homeowner and taxpayer caught up in the north or northwest sector of Harris County's burgeoning suburban growth? What are your views on where we should focus in wise use of our public resources if **we are to achieve and maintain neighborhood prosperity and quality of life in the years ahead?** Neglected issues have long become critical determinates of a community's future according to Stephen L. Klineberg, Professor of Sociology, Rice University.

Seeking answers to this question, a survey by Richard Murray, Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston, was taken of 900 local area residents. More than 62 percent of the voters surveyed said they were greatly concerned that **"there is not enough vision or planning dealing with local problems"**. When asked to rate 12 aspects of life in the Houston area, the respondents gave their lowest ratings to:

- 1. "air quality" (87% = fair or poor)
- 2. "drainage or flood control" (83% = negative ratings)
- 3. "mobility or ability to get around the city" (22% = negative)

(Source: *Environmental Exchange*, July 2003, a newsletter published by the Citizens' Environmental Council).

This comprehensive survey was completed in 2003, some 4 years after homeowners and workers throughout the Cypress Creek area in north and northwest Harris County had reached the same conclusion about flood control. Conspicuously aware they had no public advocate representation in these issues, and concluding there is strength in numbers, they banded together in 1999 pooling their political and financial resources to form a grass roots, proactive alliance; the subsequent survey only serving to confirm the need to do so.

Known as the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, this alliance of neighbors organized themselves through their subdivision municipal utility districts and home owner associations. A charter carefully drafted and signed by all has guided their success in providing stewardship on behalf of the residents throughout the 320 square mile watershed. Their elected 9-member Board of Directors established invaluable, long term working partnerships with Harris County elected officials and agency personnel to improve local flood protection and environmental / floodplain corridor preservation. This Board and 5 standing subcommittees is comprised of your neighbors who voluntarily meet monthly on the evening of the 3rd Wednesday where visions are created and planning is initiated. Flood mitigation actions they have initiated and for which your voluntary 50-cent, tax-deductible donations are being used include:

- Fact-based research which determined that Cypress Creek flood plain maps recently published by FEMA were flawed. (As a result, corrective action is now underway by Harris County Flood Control District).
- Computer modeling research to:
 - (1) Determine where and how deep flood waters will spread in the future beyond the presently mapped 100-year flood plains in the Cypress Creek areas, and,

(2) Determine the effectiveness of Harris County flood land development regulations with the intent to propose improvements if supported by the findings.

- A cooperative undertaking in partnership with TxDOT and Harris County Flood District's Planning Dept. for them to identify, fund and purchase land for multiple use as regional detention basins in the upper watershed area servicing drainage requirements for the immense U.S. 290 Northwest Corridor expansion, the Grand Parkway and exploding urban development.
- Development of the 37-mile "Cypress Creek Greenway" floodplain corridor for use as a means to convey out-of-bank flooding plus trails linking neighborhoods via a system of interconnected nature preserves and parks.
- Interaction with Harris County Commissioners Court concerning financial budgeting, funding capital improvement planning (CIP) for flood mitigation projects and bond referendums sponsored by Harris County.

Look Upstream articles are provided by the Cypress Creek Flood Control Coalition, a 501(c) (3) organization as a public service. Visit their website, www.ccfcc.org for more information on flood insurance, flood protection planning, environmental preservation and membership. If your MUD is not a member, please ask them to join.

