



MISSION STATEMENT

Approved September 17, 2007

The Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA), a meaningful partner of the government of the City of Houston, will act as an advisory council to the Mayor focusing on issues of community impact and community outreach, will speak with one voice to the city, and will participate in decisions of local significance made by the city.

September 28, 2010

City of Houston
Mayor Annise Parker and City Council Members
900 Bagby
Houston, TX 77002

Re: SNA Flooding and Drainage Committee Findings

Dear Mayor Parker and City Council Members:

The Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA) Flooding and Drainage Committee has identified several issues that can significantly help alleviate Houston's flooding problems. These important issues should be addressed regardless of the outcome of Proposition 1 (Renew Houston) in the general election and before any changes or additions to City ordinances governing flooding and drainage.

- ***Citizen stakeholders need a seat at the table.***
Houston developers have historically had a seat at the PW&E's table. As one of the strongest advocates for neighborhoods, the Super Neighborhood Alliance should have at least equal access.
- ***Enforcement of existing ordinances governing detention and drainage.***
Houston ordinance requires that unless a property is less than an acre or greater than fifty acres, it should have detention at a rate of 0.5 acre-feet per acre of increased impervious cover.
- ***No more unwarranted variances.***
No variances should be granted for detention or drainage unless there are well-documented and valid reasons, such as permeable concrete or other low impact designs.
- ***An end to Grandfathering - any new development should get ordinance-required detention even if was previously 100% impervious.***
Due to the granting of so many unwarranted variances and poor ordinance enforcement in the past, many areas lack needed detention. Grandfathering prevents ever correcting this "oversight". New plumbing and electrical work must be brought up to code; so it should be with drainage and detention.
- ***Any entity building a road within the City limits, including TxDOT and HCTRA, should be required to meet City code.***
- ***Detention should be located where it's needed.***
Large regional detention ponds are ineffective at preventing flooding of homes or businesses if storm water from a heavy Houston downpour cannot get to through the conveyance system; local detention is still required.
- ***New regional reservoirs should be added upstream before growth eliminates the opportunity.***
The City of Houston, Army Corp of Engineers, and HCFCD should all work together to build new upstream reservoirs in watersheds not yet fully developed.

- ***Increase capacity in Buffalo Bayou by returning presently uncontrolled waterways to their original stream beds flowing into, rather than around, Barker and Addicks reservoirs if this can be done safely.***
Even with both reservoirs closed, sufficient flow is allowed to bypass the reservoir to cause significant flooding along Buffalo Bayou, including downtown Houston. The City of Houston must work with Congressman Culberson, Congresswomen Shelia Jackson Lee and the Army Corps of Engineers to capture the uncontrolled Turkey Creek and Long Point Creek waterways.
- ***Preserve green space that already acts to prevent flooding.***
Areas like the Katy Prairie or forested areas like Lake Houston act as natural detention and recharge aquifers whose depletion increases our susceptibility to flooding.

Some mix of credits and penalties may be useful to ensure compliance with City ordinances. Some suggestions are: A homeowner or business can reduce their fee if they:

- *Put in more detention than is required and/or add larger than required drainage to the development.*
- *Use permeable concrete for sidewalks and parking.*
- *Add substantial "tree-girth" to their property.*
- *Remove concrete and revert to green space.*
- *Employ low impact design to reduce water runoff.*
- *Use pier and beam construction.*

But they, and their contractors, would be heavily penalized if:

- *They fail to implement the drainage plan agreed upon by the City.*
- *It is found at a later date that the drainage analysis performed was intentionally incorrect.*
- *The need for detention or drainage is concealed, whether deliberate or inadvertent.*

There is no question that Houston's flooding problems will continue to get worse if nothing is done. The SNA Flooding and Drainage Committee look forward to review the Proposition 1 Ordinance. Our hope is that the Ordinance details include:

- *Amount of new fees for homeowners.*
- *Formula to calculate their proposed tax burden on businesses and homes.*
- *Percentage of the new fee that will be assessed on homeowners, existing businesses, or new development.*
- *How much of the responsibility for drainage in new developments will be transferred from developers to the public.*
- *What percentage of the revenue generated will go to Flood and Drainage projects and what percentage to roadway improvements.*
- *Voters may be more inclined to support a drainage fee if they were promised that the recently passed water rate hike would be rescinded.*
- *How the permitting processes can be made more transparent and consistent so that special interests don't have undue influence on the Planning Department and PW&E engineers.*

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Mayhorn
Super Neighborhood Alliance, Acting President

cc: SNA Flooding and Drainage Committee
SNA Advisory Board