



# Houston NEWSLETTER

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## New Officers, Directors

In the TEDA/Houston election conducted in May, four members were elected to the Board of Directors:

- ❖ **Myra Moren**, Vice President of Marketing and Research, L.J. Melody & Company, a CB Richard Ellis company
- ❖ **Paula Pipes**, Research Associate, Center for Immigration Research, University of Houston
- ❖ **Nancy Powell**, Deputy Director, Harris County Office of Economic Development
- ❖ **Vincent Sanders**, Transportation Systems Planner, METRO

Moren returns to the Board after an absence in conjunction with maternity leave; Sanders, who served as vice president in the '01-'02 year, was elected to a second term. Pipes and Powell are newcomers to the Board.

At its June meeting, the newly-constituted Board (see list on page 4) elected officers for the '02-'03 year:

- ❖ **Vincent Sanders**, President. Sanders, who holds a B.S. in business administration from Wayne State University and an M.S. in transportation planning and management from Texas Southern, joined METRO in 1998 from RMS Services. At METRO, he is responsible for maintaining socioeconomic and travel databases to generate reports on trip patterns, demographic profiles, and patronage estimates for proposed transit service projects.
- ❖ **Myra Moren**, Vice President. Moren, a Baylor graduate with a B.B.A. in financial

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services and marketing, previously served as TEDA/Houston's vice president. With some 13 years of experience in the commercial real estate industry, she is responsible for providing all marketing support for Melody's U.S. professionals. Before joining Melody, she served as market analyst with AMRESKO Research, conducting macro- and microeconomic and commercial real estate analyses on major U.S. metros. Moren's other professional affiliations include Women in Commercial Real Estate and the Houston Real Estate Research Forum.

- ❖ **Christina Todd**, Secretary. Todd earned a master of public affairs degree from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at UT-Austin and a B.A. in political science from the University of Denver. In her position as curriculum and labor market analyst for the North Harris Montgomery Community College District, Todd provides information for program development and review. In her pre-

vious position with TechForce 2000, she conducted labor market analyses, serving education, workforce, and economic development agencies throughout the Gulf Coast region. Themes of researcher and information resource echoed through her earlier positions as a research analyst for the Taxpayers' Research Council of Galveston County, legislative intern with Congressman Lloyd Doggett's Washington office, and partner in a legal evidence services firm.

- ❖ **Greg Grabiec**, Treasurer. Grabiec is community building analyst with United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast. United Way's Community Building Grants award one-time, short-term funding, in grants from \$500 to \$5,000, to community groups to implement special projects. Last year, the United Way distributed over \$100,000 to more than 30 community organizations. Grabiec was part of a United Way team that received a silver "Excalibur for Excellence" medal award in research this year from the Houston chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. ❖

## "It Takes a Village" to Raise a GIS

METRO is among many local agencies and businesses that must efficiently manage current operations and plan for future expansion. METRO's mission is to "provide the safest, highest quality services and mobility solutions that exceed our customers' expectations while creating economic growth." To achieve this mission, METRO management must review and analyze large amounts of data. Those data can be depicted in the form of spreadsheets and database tables, but analysis of most data is best presented in graphic form—as either a graph or a map.

Most of METRO's operation has some tie to what is on the ground. Knowing the *where* element of data is just as important as the *how much* or *what type*. This is why METRO implemented Geographic Information System technology.

GIS is computer mapping technology that links a location, area, or feature on the earth to any number of its associated attributes. Computers, data, people, and procedures are the four primary components of any GIS. As one might guess, accurate data can be the most expensive and complex element of GIS technology. The GIS and the analysis it supports are only as good as the data maintained in the system.

Specifically, METRO's GIS helps staff keep track of the METRORail line, more than 10,600 bus stops, 131 bus routes, 26 Park & Rides, 15 transit centers and nine operations support facilities. Traffic signal and street improvements are also maintained in the GIS. These system elements for improving mobility are all maintained as separate data layers. METRO's GIS also includes such data layers as a street centerline base map with addresses, political boundaries, and aerial photography.

By far the largest, most detailed and complex data layer is the street centerline base map.

Maintaining a street base map can be time-consuming and costly for a city growing as fast as Houston. METRO and other agencies realized that for each agency to maintain this layer for itself would be cost-prohibitive. Several years ago, therefore, the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Data Services Division held meetings to discuss Houston-area geographic data needs. From these meetings emerged H-GAC's Geographic Data Committee, which meets monthly and now consists of more than 32 member public agencies and private companies. GDC members contribute both financially and technically to the maintenance of the Houston-area multi-county street map. The Southeast Texas Address and Reference Map (STAR\*Map) is updated quarterly—at a reasonable cost for any single agency.

STAR\*Map affords another benefit: since it is the "standard" street base map in use by GDC member agencies and firms, the transfer of geographic data between members is nearly effortless and consumes less time and energy.

The GDC recently completed its second multi-county purchase of aerial photography.

This photography provides the foundation to expand the extent of STAR\*Map and improve its overall quality.

The GDC also has fostered a spirit of cooperation among local GIS users. When Census 2000 data were released earlier this year, census blocks, block groups, and tract boundaries did not coincide with STAR\*Map. The City of Houston realigned all census blocks inside the city, and METRO realigned outer Harris County and the METRO service area. The data are now available for all to use.

METRO's GIS has realized a great benefit from participating in the regional GDC. There is significant benefit in sharing effort and cost in geographic data maintenance. In Houston, it really has "taken a village" to raise a GIS.

*METRO Dept. of Planning,  
Engineering and Construction*

## Albertson's Adds to City's Woes

Now that it's gone, Albertson's has finally made an impact on the local retail market. Of course, *veni, vidi, vacant* was not the impact the Idaho-based grocer was hoping for. Shuttered Albertson's (and K-Mart and Service Merchandise) stores have pushed local retail absorption back into the red.

Albertson's announced earlier this year that it was shutting down all 43 of its Houston-area stores, with 10 stores closing immediately while another five soon followed. Shortly thereafter, Albertson's former competition scooped up many of the shuttered stores. Kroger purchased 16 stores, expanding its already substantial lead as the city's biggest grocery chain. Safeway purchased five stores to repackage the sites as Randalls Food Markets. Grocers Supply purchased four stores and leased them to Lewis Food Town. HEB bought two stores located near smaller HEB Pantry stores, which were subsequently closed. The San Antonio-based grocery chain reopened the new, larger HEB stores in September and October.

O'Connor & Associates anticipates that the months ahead will bring better times.

While some of the abandoned locations may stay dark for a prolonged period, the remaining big-box players appear relatively healthy. After all, it is this strength that rendered many of the outgoing stores superfluous.

*Richard Zigler, O'Connor & Associates*

## Location, Location, Location

To many renters, the old cliché still rings true: location—typically meaning proximity to where they work, shop, and play—is the primary factor in choosing an apartment. But amongst similarly-located properties, what matters most to today's renters? More specifically, what matters most to today's *Class A* renters and how can the savvy developer attract these tenants?

Price is always a factor, but if lowest price were the predominant factor, there wouldn't be much of a Class A market. Faced with a wide array of appealing apartment choices, today's renter must wade through a sea of beige carpet, sparkling pools, opulent exercise rooms, and other features that have become virtually mandatory in any new apartment community. One can almost sense the confusion of renters struggling to remember which project was which, as if the only distinctions between the "Park at Here" and the "Reserve at There" were the name of the complex (which may change when it is inevitably sold) and the color of the stucco.

What works in West Houston might not work downtown, and what works downtown might not fly in Clear Lake, but we have seen certain successful trends emerge. Usability is highly valued, as space-efficient floor plans, built-in computer desks, and bookshelves routinely score high with renters. Likewise, attached garages are consistently helping to drive premium rents. Other amenities are less nearly universal: cooking classes, plant potting, sand volleyball courts, and mountain bikes all appeal to different groups of prospective renters.

While it may be too late to attach garages to your property, it's never too late to provide additional services that can boost profitability.

*Richard Zigler, O'Connor & Associates*

## TEDA/Houston '02-'03 Calendar

Meetings (reception 5-5:30 p.m., presentation 5:30-6:30) are free to TEDA members of any chapter and \$10 per person for guests (applicable toward dues if a guest joins TEDA/Houston the same day). Fees and times for other functions vary. Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Houston Branch, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, 1701 San Jacinto.

### October 23—Meeting

*What's Being Done About Houston's Quality of Life?* • Mack Fowler, President, Trees of Houston • Ann Lents, Board Member, The Park People • Deborah January-Bevers, Manager, Quality of Life, Greater Houston Partnership

### November 20—Meeting 5:30-7 p.m.

*Election 2002—What Really Happened and What It Means* • Richard Murray, Ph.D., Professor of Political Science, University of Houston • *Houston Precinct-Level Voter Analysis* • Max Beauregard, Consultant

### January 22—Symposium 8:30 a.m.-noon

*Digging into the 2000 Census: What It Tells Us About Houston and Texas* • Steve Murdock, Ph.D., Chief Demographer, State of Texas • Karl Eschbach, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, University of Houston • *At United Way*

### February 26—Meeting

*Issues in Office Market Analysis* • Speaker TBA

### March 26—Meeting (time TBA)

*Houston TranStar Tour and Presentation*

### April 23—Meeting 5:30-7 p.m.

*The Houston Area Survey—What We've Discovered in 22 Years* • Stephen Klineberg, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Rice University • *At Neighborhood Centers*

### May 28—Meeting

*METRO's 2025 Mobility Plan* • John M. Sedlak, Vice President, Planning, Engineering & Construction, METRO

### June 25—Meeting

*Houston's Commercial Real Estate Markets and Growth Indicators* • Patrick O'Connor, President, O'Connor & Associates • Shady Nebo, Senior Planner, Houston Department of Planning & Development

### September 24—Meeting

*What's Going on in Fort Bend County?* • Jennifer Raymond, Vice President – Commercial Development • Barkley Peschel, Vice President – Development and Redevelopment, Greater Fort Bend Economic Development Council

## '02-'03 TEDA/Houston Board of Directors

### Terms Expiring in 2003

- ❖ Karl Eschbach, Ph.D., Dept. of Sociology, University of Houston, *Webmaster*, 713-743-3950, eschbach@uh.edu
- ❖ Chris Pollet, Neighborhood Centers, Inc., 713-669-5260, chris.pollet@neighborhood-centers.org
- ❖ John Stansfield, 281-933-2588, jstansfield@pdq.net
- ❖ Christina Todd, North Harris Montgomery Community College District, *Secretary*, 281-260-3128, christina.c.todd@nhmccd.edu

### Terms Expiring in 2004

- ❖ Virginia Appl, Houston Independent School District, 713-892-6619, vappl@houstonisd.org
- ❖ Max L. Beauregard, Consultant, 713-864-0549, mbeauregard@houston.rr.com
- ❖ Greg Grabiec, United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast, *Treasurer*, 713-685-2331, ggrabiec@uwtgc.org
- ❖ Sharon Ju, Ph.D., Houston-Galveston Area Council, 713-993-2419, sju@hgac.cog.tx.us

### Terms Expiring in 2005

- ❖ Myra Moren, L.J. Melody & Company, *Vice President*, 713-787-1972, myra.moren@ljmelody.com
- ❖ Paula Pipes, Center for Immigration Research, University of Houston, 713-467-4227, ppipes@uh.edu
- ❖ Nancy Powell, Harris County Office of Economic Development, 713-755-3404, nancy\_powell@co.harris.tx.us
- ❖ Vincent Sanders, METRO, *President*, 713-739-3867, VS02@ridemetro.org

**Visit TEDA/Houston at [www.teda.org](http://www.teda.org)**

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