

Precinct 4

Update

Jerry Eversole, Harris County Commissioner

Winter 2010

Protect Our Waterways

Learn How to Identify Household Hazardous Waste

Before you pick that household cleaner off the shelf at your local store or load up your cart with a 20-pound bag of fertilizer, ask yourself what you plan to do with what's left over. Pour it down the sink? Flush it down the toilet? Throw it in the trash can? Think again.

The fact is that many common everyday household products contain hazardous chemicals—chemicals that should not migrate into waterways, sit in landfills, or flow through sewage treatment centers.

When we pour hazardous chemicals down drains, they eventually find their way into our waterways and into the very water we drink.

"When we pour hazardous chemicals down drains, they eventually find their way into our waterways and into the very water we drink," explains Cheryl Burton-Fentress, Harris County's Household Hazardous Waste program manager. Household products (including pharmaceuticals) flushed down the toilet are sent to sewage treatments centers, which aren't designed to filter out these chemicals; and household, lawn, and automotive products thrown into the garbage can mix when compacted, creating the potential for dangerous explosions.

"We've seen garbage trucks catch fire when something as common as nail polish remover mixes and reacts with another hazardous chemical," Burton-Fentress says.

While some jobs around the house require products with hazardous components, like paints, household cleaners, yard, pool, and



Everyday household cleaners contain hazardous chemicals and must be disposed of properly. Key words on the label such as "corrosive," "flammable," "reactive," or

"toxic" indicate the product is considered hazardous and must be disposed of properly.

automotive products, the key is planning for proper disposal of the leftovers before buying certain products. Burton-Fentress offers a few tips:

- **Read product labels carefully before you buy.** If you see words like "corrosive," "flammable," "reactive," or "toxic," these products contain hazardous chemicals and must be disposed of properly.
- **Buy only what you need.** Buying in bulk may be easier on your pocketbook, but harder on the environment. Gauge the product at hand and how much of the product will be needed.
- **Follow the directions for proper use.** Follow all safety precautions and only use the recommended amount.
- **Dispose of products responsibly.** Drop hazardous products off at Harris County's Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility. Keep all products in their original packaging for easier disposal by technicians.

And the most important tip? **Don't hesitate to call!** The Harris County Watershed Protection Group can answer questions on everything from what constitutes hazardous waste to proper disposal methods. Call (281) 560-6200 or visit online at www.cleanwaterways.org. "We're here to help," Burton-Fentress says. "Together, we can make a real difference in keeping our waterways clean!"

Focusing on the Issues

-
- Sign Bandits
- ...
- Juvenile Curfew
- ...
- Mercer Butterfly Sanctuary
- ...
- Community Center Hours
- ...
- Commissioners' Court, Holiday Schedules
- ...
- Kuykendahl Expansion
- ...
- Fun4Seniors Raffle Donation
- ...
- Parks Improvements
- ...
- Nuisance Abatement

Sign Bandits Beware

Residents Work with Harris County Attorney's Office to Remove Illegal Signs

Look out sign bandits: Residents are working with Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan's Office and Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce to remove illegal signage along F.M. 1960. Signs placed in public rights of way along city, county, and state roadways are illegal under House Bill 413 and violators are subject to a \$500 to \$1,000 fine per day, per occurrence.

Recently, Cedric Loeb, senior assistant for the Harris County Attorney, met with the Government Affairs Committee of the Houston Northwest Chamber of Commerce to discuss a process for eliminating sign violations. Citizens can now assist by e-mailing photographs and details of violations to the County Attorney's Office at communityprotection@harriscountyattorney.net. The office will prioritize violations based on major and repeat violators.

Previous Efforts

Since 2007, the Chamber has hosted three bandit sign blitzes where volunteers removed the signs and phoned violators to educate them

about the law. In 2009, a group from Klein Oak High School took photos of the signs and submitted them directly to the Harris County Attorney's Office. This approach has proven to be the most effective deterrent since major violators are contacted by the County Attorney's Office and informed of their violation, and violators have been cited and fined.

In conjunction with Precinct 4 Constable Ron Hickman's Office, the County Attorney's Office will offer additional sign ranger training. Anyone interested in receiving training is asked to contact Training Corporal Stephenson with the Constable's Office at (281) 580-1210.

"The Chamber does not want to interfere with a business' means to advertise, but there are so many more effective and legal means to promote one's business, and trashy signs on sticks do not best represent viable businesses," says Chamber President Barbara Thomason. For information on what signs are legal, visit the Chamber's website at www.houston-nwchamber.org and click on the "Sign Law Made Simple" link.



Signs placed in public rights of way along city, county, and state roadways are illegal under House Bill 413.

Currently, the Chamber is planning another Bandit Sign Photo Blitz for the first quarter of 2011. Anyone interested in participating can visit the Chamber's website calendar for details.

"Thanks to the continuing efforts of the Chamber and County Attorney's Office, the community has a proactive measure available to eliminate illegally posted signage," says Commissioner Jerry Eversole.

Juvenile Curfew Renewed

Harris County is working to keep kids out of harm's way. It recently renewed the Juvenile Curfew order, which was originally adopted in 1995 and is up for renewal every three years. The Juvenile Curfew Review Committee reported to Commissioners' Court this past September that juvenile violence, juvenile gang activity, and crimes by and against persons under the age of 17 continue in unincorporated areas of Harris County. However, the committee's report also noted the county's nighttime curfew has been an important tool in deterring criminal conduct involving juveniles and reduced the number of juveniles victimized by crime.

Under the order, it is a Class C misdemeanor for children 17 years and younger to be present in a public place in unincorporated Harris County from midnight until 6 a.m. during any day of the week.

The curfew gives Harris County law enforcement officers another tool to investigate suspicious behavior. When officers encounter a juvenile in violation of the curfew, they may:

- Release the minor to a parent or guardian.
- Take the minor before a justice court to answer the charge.
- Take the minor to one of the designated curfew-processing offices.

Exceptions to the order include

juveniles attending or on route to or from a school- or church-sponsored event, those traveling to or from work, and those involved in an emergency situation requiring immediate medical attention.

"Kids who are lingering after curfew may not be up to anything bad, but they do make themselves vulnerable to becoming victims of crime," says Commissioner Jerry Eversole. "The Juvenile Curfew helps protect minors, enforces parental control, protects the general public, and helps reduce the incidence of juvenile criminal activities."

Mercer Butterfly Sanctuary Competition

When tornadoes caused by Hurricane Ike tore through Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens in 2008, they turned its cool, shaded forest floor area into a game of pick-up sticks. Loblolly pine trees, once standing over 90 feet tall, lay on the ground, turning a shaded area into full sun. Not to despair, though. Once the tree removal was complete, Mercer realized that the area was the perfect site for a new butterfly sanctuary and garden. This new feature is a partnership project between Precinct 4 and The Mercer Society (TMS), and will include host and nectar plants for butterflies and moths.

To help create the design for this natural interactive display, TMS and Mercer sponsored the Butterfly Sanctuary Design Competition. Landscape architecture students from Louisiana State University, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University, University of Texas at Arlington, and University of Texas at Austin were invited to compete in a challenge to create designs that included:

- An open-air design.
- Elevated viewing decks and interactive amenities compatible with a park setting and botanical garden.
- A sustainable habitat for butterflies during all stages of development.
- An interpretive area for the public to learn about ways to introduce and

maintain butterfly populations in their home landscapes.

- Eligibility for certification by the North American Butterfly Association.

At the close of registration, seven teams with 21 total entrants from Texas A&M's Department of Landscape Architecture entered the contest. Finalists were selected on creativity and realistic design solutions for this floodway location. The team with the winning design received \$4,000 for the landscape department, and team members split \$4,000 between themselves. Second- and third-place finalists received \$500 for the sponsoring school and \$500 for the winning design team. In addition to providing the \$10,000 in prize money, TMS is contributing \$100,000 toward construction of the garden.

"We're very excited to not only bring this educational display to Mercer, but to work with up-and-coming talent who have special expertise in developing exciting outdoor venues," says Mike Cunningham, Harris County Public Infrastructure Department/Parks Planning, which is facilitating the contest for Precinct 4. The winning design was selected December 8 and can be viewed on Mercer's website at www.hcp4.net/mercer/index.htm. The garden is expected to be complete by November 2011.



A tiger swallowtail poised on a butterfly bush, Buddleia. Photo by Suzanne Chapman

New Community Center Hours

Due to the financial situation facing Harris County, Precinct 4 Commissioner Jerry Eversole is implementing new hours of operation for the three community centers (Crosby, May, and Mangum-Howell) and Doss Activity Building.

Effective Tuesday, March 1, 2011, these facilities will no longer accept private reservations on Friday evenings or Saturdays and Sundays. However, community and civic organizations can still continue to reserve meeting spaces at the three community centers and Doss Activity Building on a limited, space-available basis

Monday through Thursday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Residents need to contact each facility directly for reservations at the following numbers:

- Crosby Community Center (281) 462-0543
- Mangum-Howell Center and the Doss Activity Building (281) 591-7830
- May Community Center (281) 324-3373

Information regarding reservations can also be obtained on Precinct 4's website at www.hcp4.net/ccenters.

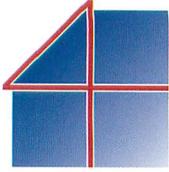
2011 Commissioners' Court Schedule

Find out what's going on in Harris County by attending Commissioners' Court. Meetings will be held on the following Tuesdays in 2011:

Jan. 11 and 25
Feb. 8 and 22
March 8 and 22
April 5 and 19
May 3 and 17
June 7 and 21
July 12 and 26
Aug. 9 and 23
Sept. 13 and 27
Oct. 11 and 25
Nov. 8 and 22
Dec. 6 and 20

Harris County Holidays

MLK Day:	Mon., Jan. 17
Good Friday:	Fri., April 22
Memorial Day:	Mon., May 30
Independence Day:	Mon., July 4
Labor Day:	Mon., Sept. 5
Thanksgiving:	Thur. and Fri., Nov. 24 and 25
Christmas:	Fri. and Mon., Dec. 23 and 26



Harris County Precinct 4
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Administration Office (713) 755-6444

Community Assistance Dept. (CAD) (281) 353-8424
The Precinct 4 Community Assistance Department answers questions and takes requests for road and bridge maintenance.

Residents east of Lake Houston may call toll free: (281) 456-8852

Parks Reservations (281) 353-4196

Community Centers
Precinct 4 community centers offer a variety of programs for children, families, and older adults. The centers can be reserved by local organizations for meetings.

Crosby Community Center (281) 462-0543
Mangum-Howell Center (281) 591-7830
May Community Center (281) 324-3373

Senior Adult Program (281) 893-3726

Subscriptions
Precinct 4 Update newsletter is a semiannual publication for residents of Harris County Precinct 4. To receive this newsletter free of charge, call the Public Affairs Department at (281) 893-3726, send your name and address to the Public Affairs Department at 1731 Hugh Road, Houston, Texas 77067, or visit us on the Web at www.hcp4.net.

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Kuykendahl Road Expansion

Motorists who travel along Kuykendahl Road north from F.M. 2920 to Carlton Woods Creekside Drive will receive relief in their daily commutes upon completion of Precinct 4's three-segment Capital Improvement Project (CIP) of Kuykendahl Road. Commissioners' Court recently awarded construction contracts for Segment A, between F.M. 2920 and Willow Creek, and Segment B, from Willow Creek to south of August Pines Drive. Both segments will

This expansion project will keep traffic moving and provide access for the increased demand for new businesses and services.

be upgraded from an existing two-lane asphalt pavement with roadside ditches to an undivided five-lane asphalt roadway.

The \$13.4 million project will include a combination storm sewer system, roadside ditches, and drainage mitigation within a 100-foot right

of way including detention. Upgraded traffic-control devices and new traffic signals will be installed on Kuykendahl Road at Hufsmith Road. Completion of Segment A is scheduled for December 15, 2011, and Segment B is expected to be complete by August 17, 2011.

Precinct 4's capital improvement construction program includes upgrading the third segment of Kuykendahl Road, Segment C—beginning south of Augusta Pines Drive and continuing north to Carlton Woods Creekside Drive. This segment will be constructed in two parts:

- South of Augusta Pines Drive to Cinnamon Run
- Cinnamon Run to Carlton Woods Creekside Drive

Kuykendahl Road, within these limits, will be upgraded from an existing two-lane asphalt pavement with a 60-foot right of way to a combination two-lane or four-lane concrete roadway, within a 100-foot to 160-foot right of way and drainage outfalls. New traffic signals will be installed on Kuykendahl at the intersection of Augusta Pines Drive and Kuykendahl Road at Creekside Forest Drive.

The cost of Segment C is valued at \$5.7 million and is slated for completion in the third quarter of 2011.

Segment C improvements are a joint participation effort between Precinct 4, Woodlands Land Development Company, L.P., and The Woodlands Road Utility District No. 1.

Kuykendahl Road north of Beltway 8 (west of I-45 and east of Hwy. 290) falls within the Census Bureau's Tract 55, which, according to the Harris County Population Study¹ prepared in February of 2010, experienced the highest growth in population in the county since 1990. The report indicates Tract 55 grew by 81.4 percent, which results in an increase of just over 217,000 residents for an estimated total population of over 485,000.

"This three-segment expansion project is not only necessary to keep traffic moving, it will provide access for the increased demand for new businesses and services that the population growth has generated," says Commissioner Jerry Eversole.

¹Prepared by Harris County Management Services. The full report is available online at www.hctx.net/agenda/FY%202010-11/06-22-10%20CIP-FY%202010-11/06-22-10%20CIP-FY%202010-11%2006a-Population%20Report.pdf

Supporting Senior Programs

Raffle Winner Donates Winnings

Fun4Seniors, Precinct 4's non-profit organization that benefits the Senior Adult Program (SAP), recently came up the winner following the 9th Annual Opry in Humble raffle event, when raffle winner David Rowe donated his \$2,000 grand prize back to Fun4Seniors. Rowe, the president of the Water District Management Company, purchased the ticket in support of Fun4Seniors' fund-raising efforts. "I, and the other principals of the organization, believe in giving back to the communities we serve," he says.

Rowe's donation will directly benefit senior adults ages 50 and older throughout Precinct 4, helping to fund

educational and recreational activities and events such as festivals, museums, plays, concerts, theatrical performances, and sporting venues, as well as transportation for day trip destinations within a 150-mile radius from Houston. "Thanks to David and others who made generous donations during the event, we can continue to provide engaging programs for Precinct 4's senior adults," says Commissioner Jerry Eversole.

For more information on Fun4Seniors events, visit www.hcp4.net/senioradult/events or call the SAP at (281) 893-3726.



Commissioner Jerry Eversole (right) and Jan Sexton, director of the Precinct 4 Senior Adult Program, present a resolution to David Rowe, president of Water District Management Company, for his generous donation to Precinct 4's Fun4Seniors. Photo by Kaci Woodrome

Play Ball!

Precinct 4 Makes Park Improvements

Precinct 4 parks are as popular as ever with sports enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. More than one million people attend functions at Precinct 4 park facilities each year, and that number keeps growing. To keep up with the increased usage, four parks recently underwent upgrades and expansions.

Residents of all ages enjoy the parks and enjoy time together.

Doss Park

Children of all ages are staying out of the sun while enjoying a new covered 2,500-square-foot children's activities pavilion at Doss Park. The \$99,900 (approximately) repurposed pavilion was resurfaced with a rubber Duraplay Surfacing System, which provides fall protection. In addition to traditional playground equipment, the pavilion features a universal badminton/four-square/shuffleboard/volleyball court; four tables with built-in tops for checkers, chess, and dominoes; and

a permanent hopscotch course. "The pavilion gives parents a respite from the sun while their kids enjoy fun and engaging activities," says Parks Director Dennis Johnston.

Bane Park

A \$50,000 fully ADA-accessible restroom, built by Precinct 4 staff, has been added adjacent to the Cy-Fair Sports Association's \$160,000 baseball field, which was completed in 2009. "While we looked at retrofitting the existing restroom facility to meet new ADA-compliance requirements, the most effective use of taxpayer dollars was to build an entirely new restroom," explains Johnston.

Lindsay/Lyons and Burroughs Parks

To relieve parking congestion at Lindsay/Lyons and Burroughs parks, Precinct 4 recently completed the construction of new parking areas.

At Lindsay/Lyons, 120 new spaces



Children of all ages are staying out of the sun while enjoying a new covered 2,500-square-foot children's activities pavilion at Doss Park. Photo by Kaci Woodrome

were added to the northwest corner of the soccer complex. Four sports associations play out of Lindsay/Lyons, and each association has experienced an increase in enrollment due to population growth in the area. The central location of the new parking lot will allow easy access to the baseball, football, soccer, and softball fields.

A new parking lot, located near the entrance of Burroughs Park, serves the softball and soccer fields. The lot includes 145 lighted parking spaces, including five spaces that are ADA-compliant. Additionally, Precinct 4 added sidewalks to the soccer concession and to another parking lot and improved paving to the water well.

Klein Park

New field lights and poles have been added to all four baseball fields at Klein Park. Most of the existing poles, lights, and electrical infrastructure were estimated to be 30 to 35 years old. Overhead wires were placed underground during the project. The cost of the \$250,000 upgrade was partially funded by a \$50,000 contribution from the Spring Klein Sports Association.

"Precinct 4 works to take exceptional care of the park system so that residents of all ages can enjoy the parks and enjoy time together," Commissioner Jerry Eversole says.

Keeping Property Values Up

Precinct 4 recently abated a property in the Villages of Northgate Crossing subdivision.

The structure, located at 23114 Westgate Village, was burned and in major disrepair, and attempts to contact the homeowner were unsuccessful. The \$8,845 abatement was funded through Precinct 4's nuisance abatement budget, and the cost will be

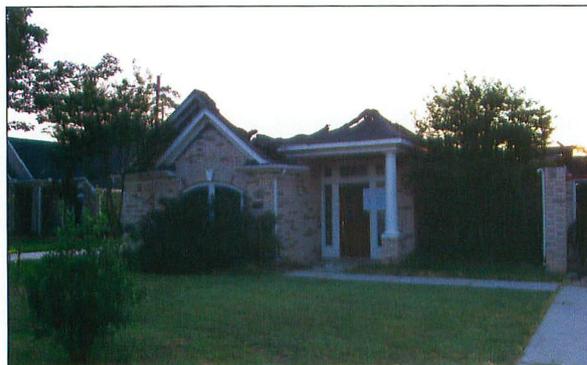


Photo by Kevin Kretzschmar

recouped with revenue generated from the sale of the abated property. To report a nuisance property, call Harris County's Public Health & Environmen-

tal Services Public Health complaint line at (713) 274-6300, or complete an online complaint form at www.hcphes.org/eph/nn_complaint.htm.