



Garden District Civic Association Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 21, 2021, 3:00 PM

Leola's Cafe & Coffee House, 1857 Government St, Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Many Thanks to Leola's Café & Coffee House for hosting the meeting and providing delicious nibbles. Their patio was the perfect venue.

WELCOME, *Claire Casey Pittman, GDCA President, & Justin Kozak, GDCA Vice President*

- Claire: GDCA Mission: Build a community and help neighbors as a liaison between agencies and neighbors.
- Current Board Intro and election – Three board members are stepping down and need to be replaced. Many thanks to Liz Spaulding, Joy Couvillion and Neill Terry for their dedication and hard work. Allie Guay was nominated to be on the board and elected with a unanimous vote. Bailey Houghtaling volunteered to join the board after the meeting was adjourned. I'm sure she will be approved.
- Justin: 2020 Accomplishments- security patrols & updates, utilities, Mike Schexnayder worked on alley maintenance, Ari Kocen fills doggie bag dispensers, Anne Trapp delivers welcome packets, Claire puts out a monthly newsletter and Tom Douthat works on drainage problems. He communicates with DPW and recently saw a vacuum truck on Cherokee.

LIVE OAKS

- Condition of the Garden District Live Oaks, *Lee Rouse, Arborist, Bayou Tree Service*. There are signs on the medians, "Dues at Work" and "Live Oak Collective" where 19 live oaks with the greatest need were recently trimmed. He used to be a county agent, is a tree home care specialist and taught about native plants. Live oaks are native to Louisiana. People think native plants are easy to grow, but it is a misconception. They are easy in the wild where live oaks have plenty of room for their roots and are naturally fertilized by falling leaves which rot and put nutrients back into the soil. Urban trees require maintenance. There is not much space for roots in the urban setting. People mow under them and remove the falling leaves.
- There are five specific styles of pruning.
 1. Remove dead wood
 2. Sucker growth removal in the crown of the tree
 3. Remove any branch that will eventually cause problems
 4. "Boulevard Prune" = decide on the height

5. When trees in the median are so large that they grow into people's yards, remove the branches that grow down and keep the branches that grow up.
- There are 157 remaining trees in the medians that have not been trimmed.
 - Best care: Put the same mulch under every tree. Discourage planting under trees. (cast iron plants and Asian Jasmine). Plants at the base of the tree hide any rot that might be there.
 - **Live Oak Love Collective:** Heather Sewell Day, who heads the Live Oak Love campaign for the preservation of the live oaks, explained the program. One block of trees at \$1,000 per tree will need to be committed before Bayou Trees will come trim. It needs to be worth their while to bring all their equipment. If neighbors on that block do not have funds to cover the expense of the whole block, they can ask sponsors to call Claire Pittman or ask Claire to call them and explain the program and its advantages. The money will go into a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that was set up especially for the live oaks, so donations may be written off taxes. People who want to donate do not have to commit to \$1,000. Any amount is appreciated and will be used toward the tree care. It can be pooled and used for blocks that don't have the expense of all their trees covered. These individual donations will help the neighborhood as a whole. If the budget allows, there might be money that the civic association can use to fill in a void.
 - **MULCH DAY:** On April 3rd, Bayou Trees will deposit mulch where they previously trimmed trees. Residents are asked to come help spread the mulch on that day. Please come help. We need all hands on deck.
 - **UNDER THE OAKS** – May 16th 3-6pm, we are planning to have a picnic on the shady vacant lot at the corner of Drehr Av. And Cherokee St. Bayou Trees will sponsor a live band.
 - Question asked: If the City owns the trees, why don't they trim them. The City does not have the manpower, equipment or budget to trim trees for beautification. They work strictly on hazards. Bayou Trees is under contract with the City Parish, for regular tree trimming.

SECURITY

- Updates & General Crime Prevention, *Cpl. Seth Gauthier, Police Liaison, Baton Rouge Police Department*
- Cpl. Gauthier has been working in our neighborhood for two years. We have two officers patrolling approximately 25 hours a month right now. The past two months have been quiet, possibly because of the cold weather. The patrols handle simple traffic laws. They ask that we do not park in front of fire hydrants because the neighborhood does not have very many and if there were a fire it would be essential that they are not blocked.
- Suggestions:
 1. Lock it up! Your car and any back buildings. Most thieves pass up a locked car unless there are valuables visible inside. Then there is a 50/50 chance they'll break in.
 2. Have good lighting.
 3. The Garden District is not a high crime area. We don't have serious crimes, mostly disturbances and property crimes from "walk-about" from other areas.
 4. For lower-level crimes call the police at 389-3800.
 5. Some people think stop signs are optional. Please obey them.
 6. Parking across sidewalks is illegal.

7. A resident mentioned speeders on Park Blvd. Cpl. Gauthier will request speed control measures.

CITY

- Council Update, *Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, District 10*

Our new councilperson, Carolyn Robinson Coleman, lives in Beauregard Town. She told us about herself and asked if we had any issues. Tom Douthat had contacted her about drainage, so she contacted Fred Raiford, Director of Drainage. They will speak more about that later. She asked us to contact her at CCOLEMAN@brla.gov. She is also available at carolyncoleman4@yahoo.com, but the first one might work better, as her assistant will get it.

- Government Street Road Diet, *Marlee Pittman, Mid City Redevelopment Alliance* (midcityredevelopment.org)
- The first study of Government was done in the early 2000s. Then CPEX updated it. The Road Diet has money for landscaping, but not for maintenance. Residents brainstormed about how to get the maintenance done. There was some discussion about gardening and trash cans.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Saturday, April 3, 9 AM - 11 AM Mulch Day
- Sunday, May 16, 3-6 PM Under the Oaks Picnic Fundraiser
- Mid City Redevelopment Alliance is planning to organize a garage sale that will include all the Mid City neighborhoods. Date to be announced.
- April 10th will be a Mid City Cleanup Day.

CLOSING

Visit us at gdcabr.org