



## Spoon.

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### Report of the President

As the Program Committee began planning for 1984-1985, chief among numerous concerns was the need to provide greater participation and involvement for the entire membership of the Rice Design Alliance. To that end, two new programs were initiated which enjoyed considerable success. John Kaliski undertook the task of organizing a series of three "Fireside Chats" where local architects presented their own work for review and discussion. Additionally, for the first time RDA sponsored a tour in June to Newport, Rhode Island under the guidance of Barrie Scardino. The tour was extremely well received, and was financially beneficial to RDA as well.

Another new project which was initiated and published this fall was an illustrated tour booklet of the museums-Rice University-Hermann Park area of Houston and surrounding residential neighborhoods prepared by the Anchorage Foundation of Texas for the Rice Design Alliance. The Board of Directors expects this project will remain a handsome contribution to the city for some years and will continue to raise RDA's visibility level.

As for the more traditional programs, Stephen Fox and William F. Stern organized the fall lecture series, "Architects Speak for Themselves," which was consistently well attended. A tour of quite remarkable downtown offices, "Executive Suites," was produced by Herman Dyal. The tour was of exceptionally high quality, although attendance was less than desirable. In January 1985, Andrew John Rudnick organized a superb winter symposium concerning the redevelopment of the Fourth Ward in Houston. Rudnick and his panelists played to a packed house.

Spring 1985 brought an unusual lecture series on "Gardens," organized by Karl Kilian and Lorraine Wilde, which was highly successful. Andrew John Rudnick assembled a spring symposium on "Planning for the City of Houston," which brought together a variety of

interested citizens, as well as public and private officials and developers.

*Cite*, the Architecture and Design Review of Houston, was published by RDA under the guidance of John Kaliski, chairman of the Editorial Board. *Cite* explored such topics as Houston in the 1950s, the Fourth Ward and Allen Parkway Village, Houston townhouse design, and housing outside the loop. The quarterly review's readership continued to increase, both locally and nationally.

No list of the year's endeavors could be complete without special thanks to Leslie Davidson, who helped organize the annual meeting, and to Bill Neuhaus, who made available for viewing his own new offices as well as the facilities of Stages, all located in the vicinity of the Star Engraving Building on Allen Parkway. Lorraine Roberts continued to persevere as Executive Director, and was a constant source of goodwill, charm, and - when necessary - muscle power. LaNeil Gregory initiated informal planning sessions addressing the long-range needs and goals for RDA, and the entire Board of Directors consistently proved to be of enormous support and assistance to me personally. Finally, Dean Jack Mitchell of the Rice School of Architecture continued to guide and assist us all, and through his efforts helped ensure a particularly successful year.

W. James Murdaugh, Jr.

#### Financial Report 1 July 1984 - 30 June 1985

Receipts	
Memberships	\$49,662
Program Income - Tickets	7,957
Program Income - Contributions	4,300
Architectural Tour	4,579
RDA Salaries and Fringes	13,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$79,998</b>
Disbursements	
Program Expenses	\$23,906
Contributions	
Farish Gallery	1,000
Sophomore Field Trip	1,000
Operating Expenses	17,229
Salaries and Fringes	30,558
<i>Cite</i>	13,478
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$87,171</b>
<b>Deficit of Disbursements Over Receipts</b>	<b>\$7,173</b>

UnCiteLy

## Land Use Abuse



The Park Laureate, under construction, 1985, House/Reh Associates, architects (Photo by Paul Hester)

### Jan O'Brien

Pretend for a moment that you are a developer in Houston. In researching sites for a new office park you discover a large tract of land on Memorial Drive which now contains garden apartments. You learn that while Memorial is currently two lanes wide from Loop 610 to this site, it has adequate right-of-way to increase it to four lanes. Another plus for access, Chimney Rock Street, the first major north-south route west of the loop, is in the process of being extended to link with Memorial almost directly across from the site in question. Additional research reveals a right-of-way for Wirt Road that will link I-10 to Memorial close to this parcel of land. No land-use restrictions or deed restrictions apply to the land, even though it is surrounded by quiet residential villages. In Monopoly, Houston-style, this is a prime site which even in a soft market could attract tenants tired of crawling along clogged freeways to downtown destinations. You would be a fool not to grab it.

This is not, however, a board game. The site described is now The Park Laureate, formerly the site of Frank J. Forster's Detering Lodge (See *Cite*, Spring 1985, p. 9); the first office building, a nine-story structure, is nearing completion. The project, developed by Hettig/Kahn Development Corporation, planned by Herbert Pickworth, Associates and designed by House/Reh Associates, has many positive features. Plans call for a park with jogging trails and lakes as well as additional office towers, club and restaurant facilities, and retail. A dangerously narrow bridge on Memorial is being widened, and new park land dedicated in an area that has no neighborhood parks.

On the other hand, residents of the nearby villages have no say about increased traffic and office towers above their backyards, for while these neighborhoods are zoned, their authority does not extend past the village boundaries.

In older, pre-war residential areas of Houston that were not incorporated as villages, the only protection homeowners have are deed restrictions. For example, there was a time when Montrose was a totally residential community similar to Hunters Creek or Tanglewood. The lapsing of the deed restrictions in 1937 was recognized by the city as potentially disruptive but no action was taken to keep the restrictions in force. Perhaps their fears were eased when the first non-

conforming structure to move in was a neighborhood church. While the power of deed restrictions is also limited to each subdivision, some progress has been made in keeping these in force - and hopefully aiding homeowner's in preserving existing neighborhoods. State Representative Paul Colbert, of District 132, has sponsored House Bill 2256. This bill, which is now in effect, created legal mechanisms to renew or amend existing deed restrictions, and to create or recreate deed restrictions where they no longer exist. In the past, deed restrictions were generally set up for several decades, then were automatically void unless renewed by 100 percent of the landowners. The new law requires only 75 percent of the property owners to renew or amend and even aids in the creation of deed restrictions where they have lapsed. These are useful tools that depend on concerned neighborhood groups to have any effect.

While this is heartening, many areas of Houston carry no restrictions. As shown in this example, residential neighborhoods that abut large parcels of unsubdivided land are particularly vulnerable. Ironically, the same group of homes that were once thought of as a neighborhood also can be seen as a market. And these same people, for convenience, well may support the offices and stores that disrupted their serenity and upset their land values.

The individual histories vary, but towers have recently been built adjacent to the neighborhoods of Tanglewood, Avalon Place, and Southgate. This may not indicate a trend, but neither are we discussing an isolated case. Will Houston choose to remain dependent on market forces and the vision of individual developers? Are Houstonians interested in having a voice in the future of their neighborhoods and their city? The compendium of plans being put together by Houston's Department of Planning and Development (see *Cite*, Fall 1985, p. 15) appears to rely on active neighborhood associations and may not address these crucial interstitial areas, leaving border areas vulnerable. ■