



Village NEWS

Mayor Joins Opposition To Bissonnet High-Rise

“I believe that the proposed development of a 23-story mixed use development with over 450 parking spaces, on the site of the Maryland Manor apartments, will impair mobility on Bissonnet, a two-lane street.”

Houston Mayor Bill White

By Kathleen Ballanfant

Residents opposed to a high-rise apartment building in the 1700 block of Bissonnet added some fire-power to their arsenal this week with the opposition of Mayor Bill White to the project.

If angry Southampton residents plus the personal opposition of Dist. C Council Member Anne Clutterbuck and At-Large Council Members Peter Brown and Sue Lovell weren't enough, developers now had the mayor's per-

sonal displeasure to deal with.

State Sen. Rodney Ellis and State Reps. Ron Coleman and Ellen Cohen also oppose

the project.

Boulevard Oaks and Southampton civic clubs engaged noted trial lawyer

Rusty Hardin “to pursue all of the legal options that our neighborhoods can use to stop the proposed development,” said Chris Amandes, who is working with Hardin and a group of lawyers who live in the neighborhoods and oppose the project.

In the two weeks since the project became public knowledge, BOCA and Southampton Civic Club have built an active grassroots organization to oppose construction of the 23-story building at 1717 Bissonnet at Ashby. They have built a website (StopAshbyHighRise.org), collected signatures on petitions, and gotten various elected officials involved.

Residents planted signs in the Sunset medians Thursday night, their bright yellow and orange slogans greeting travelers on Friday morning. By Friday afternoon, a City of Houston public works employee was out removing them. An alert Southampton Civic Club employee was able to rescue the signs, however, and reposition them out of city right-of-way.

Large banners were also hung on fences and buildings throughout the neighborhood, which show a caricature of a high-rise building with face, arms and huge teeth gobbling up the neighborhood of single-family homes.

Residents of Southampton and Boulevard Oaks subdivisions met 10 days ago to discuss what could be done to stop construction of the 23-story building. But there were few options at their disposal, although Clutterbuck and the other elected officials continue to seek a solution.

One suggestion brought up at the meeting was a temporary city moratorium on high-rise construction in residential neighborhoods, which Brown has requested of Mayor White and his fellow council members.

“I want to emphasize that the moratorium is a delay, not a ‘taking,’ and that this matter is urgent and serious,” Brown said in a letter to the Mayor and Council.

Traffic congestion in the area was a major concern, and Clutterbuck says the city's legal department is exploring a moratorium high-rise building until the Traffic Impact Analysis & Access Management Ordinance can be passed.

“The City's legal department is looking into whether or not this ordinance could be applied retroactively to this development based upon their initiation of the permit process,” she says.

“While no building permit has yet been issued by the City of Hous-

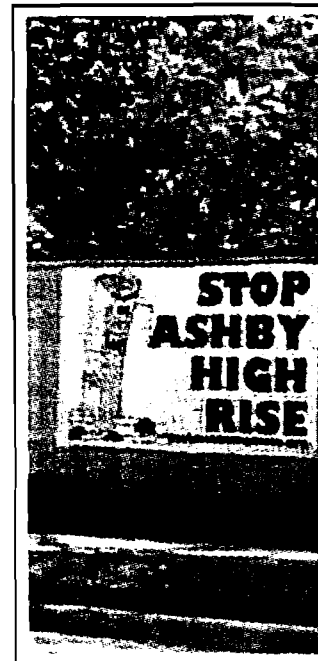
ton, Buckhead Investments have already begun the process of applying for the necessary permits to begin demolition of the existing site and construction of the redevelopment.”

Residents plan to show up en masse at Tuesday's city council meeting to voice their concern for the neighborhood.

On Wednesday, a protest will be held at 1801 Bissonnet, next door to the proposed high rise site, from 4:45-6:15 p.m.



Signs on Sunset oppose a high-rise at 1717 Bissor



Banner on Southampton fence.