



# On Common Ground

Volume 26 Number 4

April 2020

26 Years Preserving Our History – Protecting Our Future

*Under Pressure from Developer during COVID-19 Crisis*

# TURNER TORPEDOES TALKS

## KILLS HOPES FOR BRAZOS GREENBELT

**Council Cowers as  
Only Two of Council Members Respond to Citizens' Pleas to Reinstate Comment Period**

**HOPES RAISED BY PUBLIC WORKS** during the February 24, 2020 meeting at The Montrose Center were smashed by Mayor Turner's sudden and unexpected announcement on . April 2 in an email sent via Public Works: [SEE RIGHT > mere hours after others at City Hall had reached out to civic leaders asking for additional emails commenting on the merits of the proposal, and saying the public comment period had been extended through April 12 in view of the COVID19 restrictions.

Within minutes of receiving the email shown, leaders of the Westmoreland Civic Association sprung to action, contacting Courtland Place, Audubon Place, Neartown Association, and First Montrose Commons seeking volunteers willing to speak before City Council despite the Coroanvirus Stay Home orders. CM Kamin called several Civic Association Presidents to assure us of her regret over the Mayor's decision and to offer her support—yet when three spoke before Council on April 7, CM Kamin was not present.

*more p 2 & p 3*

Dear City of Houston Resident,

Thank you for taking the time to review the Houston Public Work's proposed alternatives for the Brazos Bridge Project.

Please be advised that the Houston Public Works Department along with Mayor Turner has made the decision to resume the project with the original design.

For more information please visit [www.buildhoustonforward.org](http://www.buildhoustonforward.org).

**NOTICE – Special Election May 19, 2020  
You cannot vote if your dues weren't  
paid before March 20, 2020**



## Torpedoed by Turner ...

from p 1

Only CM Davis (B), and CM Robinson (2) asked any questions of the three speakers. Davis wanted to know whether the Spur was City responsibility or TxDOT (the Mayor informed him this portion is the City's). Davis then asked the speaker, Ms. Colaco of Westmoreland, whether there were any traffic counts in the area. Given the sudden nature of the Mayor's action, there was no opportunity for the speaker to have obtained this data, although Mr. Weatherford of Public Works had repeatedly referenced such information during his prior public presentations of the greenbelt proposal.

CM Robinson (2) commented on Dr. Longmire's long commitment to Neartown improvement, and voiced his own endorsement of the greenbelt proposal, but concluded his remarks by saying he understood the difficult decision the Mayor faced.

The Public Speakers Session of the Council Meeting April 7 was also noteworthy for the fact that not only was there no serious discussion or questioning of the economic merit of rebuilding an exit ramp designed in the mid-1950's, but more time was spent discussing amending the health regulations pertaining to the keeping of poultry in citizens' back yards than to this issue!

During the recess following the meeting CM Alcorn (5) approached the 3 speakers and asked questions about the issue, stating she felt inadequately informed to have participated in the discussion during council.

### District C Council Member



Abbie Kamin  
[districtc@houstontx.gov](mailto:districtc@houstontx.gov)  
 832-393-3004

### At Large 1 Council Member

Mike Knox



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 832-393-3014

### At Large 2 Council Member



David Robinson  
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 832-393-3013

### At Large 3 Council Member



Michael Kubosh  
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### At Large 4 Council Member



Letitia Plummer  
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 832-393-3012

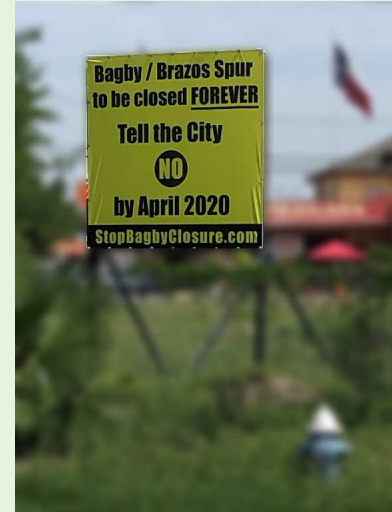
### At Large 5 Council Member



Sallie Alcorn  
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 832-3933017

## Developer Mounts Effective Disensus Campaign During COVID19 Lockdown

**CONTRARY TO MAYOR TURNER'S ASSERTIONS** that there was no consensus from the public meetings at which the proposed greenbelt project was presented, a large majority favored not wasting money to reconstruct an exit ramp whose need was disproven during the nearly nine months of its closure. However, a developer with interests in properties along Brazos street managed to completely confuse the issue by falsely implying that Spur 527 would be permanently closed. In fact, only **one** of the FOUR exits to Midtown from the Spur is affected by this proposal.



*Signs appear on private vacant land in Montrose, more than ¼ mile from the affected exit, as developer sows fear and disinformation about greenbelt proposal.*

Form letters emailed to the Mayor's and CM's offices warn of dire economic consequences if the viaduct were not immediately reconstructed. They speak of severe negative impacts from the downturn in traffic and warn of decreased property values and city taxes! The letters completely ignore the City's commitment to a more walkable, green area in Midtown, and the economic boon such a change would bring, harkening back instead to the failed futurist ideas of the 1940's that more automobile traffic brings greater prosperity. We note that the developer of the properties predicted to be so adversely affected by this greenbelt has his offices in the 3000 block of Richmond Avenue – in UPPER KIRBY and not Midtown. How can he then appreciate the potential financial windfall to the City *and his properties* from creating more walkable safe places in the densely built Midtown area?

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Houston: Of Developers, By Developers, For Developers

# Mayor Forfeits Once in a Century Opportunity

Turner Continues Post WWII Legacy that Destroyed Original Fourth Ward Residential Neighborhoods

None of these letters provide any objective evidence of economic harm directly caused by the emergency closure of the Brazos viaduct. Indeed, how can one say with certainty that any economic harm was not due to other factors—a pandemic lockdown for instance?

**How exactly does one determine consensus during a pandemic lockdown in which gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited?**

Lacking large development offices and staff to blanket Council and Public Works with contrived form letters, how can small

not-for-profit neighborhoods and civic associations fairly compete in a dialog about the future for the next 60 years? Developers have an inherently unfair advantage in lobbying City Hall over neighborhoods. They regularly produce large graphic signs to promote their interests. Most Civic Associations, on the other hand, struggle to maintain their voluntary membership and to maintain their amateur websites and networks of communications. Against such odds, exactly how does Mayor Turner and our City Council Member suggest we convey our strong support to remove this relic of 1950's engineering and replace it with a location safe for pedestrians and cyclists in our ever increasingly dense neighborhoods?

The Mayor's capitulation to a petty pressure campaign during a public health crisis has resulted in reinstating a contract to construct a viaduct which is not in keeping with his inaugural promise of Vision Zero. Indeed, when open before this viaduct regularly fostered crashes in the poorly engineered compound intersection of Westheimer/Elgin with Brazos and Bagby Streets. Pedestrians and cyclists attempting to exit from Westmoreland via Hawthorne to cross under this viaduct literally took their lives in hand as confused motorists looked everywhere to find their way, except at the pedestrians!

The Mayor's contention that the contract had already been let before he paused it to consider a different alternative does not necessarily mean that the City must now resume work on this flawed contract. Indeed, fiscal prudence suggests the opposite. Why should we spend nearly \$4 million to reconstruct a viaduct built to satisfy the City's needs in the 1950's when the City now faces a nearly ¼ billion-dollar shortfall in its upcoming budget year revenue? This is hardly fiscal responsibility! The argument that this contract somehow is necessary because of the current

economic downturn is at best misleading. It would provide work for a handful of persons during a time when tens of thousands

*“There was no consensus;  
there will never be consensus.  
The bridge was there before,  
so let's just put it back!”*

need help—literally less than a drop in a bucket.

The Mayor's hurried decision, and stubborn adherence to it are anti-democratic. Why, less than a day after extending the public comment period, would he suddenly stop all discussion, prevent the collection of information demonstrating the consensus he sought, and move to rebuild a viaduct whose need was eliminated when US 59 was rerouted from Brazos and Bagby Streets to the east side of Downtown to connect directly with the Eastex Freeway decades ago?

The Mayor's decision is not in keeping with his vision of complete communities. Instead it continues the division of Houston's oldest residential communities started when another Mayor and Council decided that these old areas of the historic Fourth Ward weren't worth preserving as they sought new routes for highways and freeways after World War II.

At the very moment when people living in distant suburbs are flocking back into the City, the Mayor has decided to reconstruct ramps designed specifically to move

them rapidly in and out of the City to these suburbs.

**The silence and timidity of Council in this matter is disturbing.** While it is true Houston has a strong mayor form of government, that should not mean we exist under a feudal form of government in which our elected representatives serve as little more than extras on the Mayor's stage at press conferences.

The time is come for us to email and call each Council Member to uphold their responsibility to the citizens who elected them. We must demand that the promised extended comment period be immediately reinstated – and further extended to compensate for the interruption caused by the Mayor's hasty action. We must insist on a fair, open, transparent discussion of the merits of rebuilding the Brazos Street viaduct, *and* the merits of *NOT* rebuilding it considering the City's current pressing needs.

Until this can be done there is no structural or safety reason to resume construction. This Mayor has stopped construction during disasters before (e.g.-Harvey) so the City could use all its resources on the disaster. **He should not use the current disaster to prevent honest debate on whether to build for the future or to rebuild the past.**

For more information visit

<https://midtownmontroseparks.org>

Midtown Montrose Parks  
WALK • RELAX • BIKE • CONNECT  
Save Tax Money! Don't rebuild the  
Brazos St. Bridge. Build a park!

Whatever happened to **THE PEOPLE ARE THE CITY** Mayor Turner?



# What can YOU do to STOP the WASTE?

Visit [midtownmontroseparks.org](http://midtownmontroseparks.org) and click the Show Support! option.



**Sign the petition to let the Mayor know what a consensus means!**

OR – you can do nothing and let him rebuild a bridge designed to meet the needs of drivers in 1955!



# KEEP CALM AND WASH YOUR HANDS

## NOTICE of SPECIAL ELECTION on Proposed Amendments to Article 7 CAFMC Bylaws

Approved by Unanimous Vote of the Board of Directors for submission to the Members  
**Vote to be held Tuesday, May 19, 2020\***

### Existing Bylaws, Article 7:

#### ARTICLE SEVEN: DUES

7.01 Rates. The annual dues shall be Ten and No/100 Dollars (\$10.00) per person for Residential and Associate Members. The annual dues for Commercial Members shall be set by the Board at its sole and unilateral discretion. All dues for Residential and Associate Members are payable on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year and are effective upon payment. All dues for each Commercial Member are immediately payable upon the initiation or the renewal of such membership and are effective upon payment. Dues paid in any given calendar year are for that year unless the member has paid twice, in which case, dues will advance to the next calendar year.

### Proposed Bylaws Article 7

Article 7.01 is repealed in its entirety and replaced with:

7.01.a Rates. The Board of Directors shall set the annual dues for RESIDENTIAL MEMBERS, ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, and COMMERCIAL MEMBERS each September, to be effective for the following calendar year.

7.01.b Approval of Rates Required Dues set by the Board in accordance with Article 7.01.a above shall require approval by a simple majority vote of the members present and eligible to vote at the November Meeting of the Association prior to the election of Officers and Directors, except that increases in the amount of dues greater than 25% (twenty-five percent) shall require approval by a vote of at least 60% (sixty percent) of the members present and eligible to vote at the November Meeting of the Association. There shall be no distinction between the class of Members voting (RESIDENTIAL, ASSOCIATE, or COMMERCIAL) so long as the vote is cast by a MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING at the time of the voting (Article 6.02; 6.03).

7.01.c Payment Due Dates Payment of RESIDENTIAL or ASSOCIATE DUES is required on or before January 1<sup>st</sup> each year and is effective immediately upon payment. Payment of COMMERCIAL DUES is required immediately upon the initiation or renewal of such membership and is effective upon payment for one year from the date of payment. Dues become DELINQUENT the 60<sup>th</sup> (sixtieth) day following their due date, resulting in the loss of MEMBERSHIP IN GOOD STANDING STATUS, (required to vote).

7.01.d Application of Payments Payments in a calendar year for RESIDENTIAL or ASSOCIATE MEMBERS shall be applied to that calendar year's dues, EXCEPT—if the payment is made later than 60 days prior to the November Meeting of the Association it shall be applied to the following year's dues instead, and shall not confer voting privileges in contravention of Article 6.03; or if multiple payments are received during the calendar year, any payments in excess of the dues owed shall be considered donations to the Association unless the MEMBER requests a refund of such excess payments via email send through the Association Website to the TREASURER within one week of their receipt. The TREASURER SHALL NOT be required to notify MEMBERS of excess or multiple payments within a calendar year. Such payments may NOT be carried over into another calendar year in payment of subsequent year's dues.

**NOTICE – The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons, Inc. will hold a SPECIAL ELECTION to Amend Article 7 of its Bylaws, Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 7:00pm – provided the Stay at Home Order and Public Gatherings Guidelines Permit - as our Bylaws contain no provisions for voting other than in attendance, no other arrangements can be made. We will schedule reschedule the Special Election at the first regularly scheduled CAFMC Meeting following the lifting of the Order**



**N**eighborhood Patrons provide very substantial financial support to The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons, greatly facilitating our work to preserve and protect our unique historic urban neighborhood.

If you own a business in or near First Montrose Commons and are interested in becoming a Neighborhood Patron, please contact us via email at [president@firstmontrosecommons.org](mailto:president@firstmontrosecommons.org) . We'd be happy to discuss this program with you!



The Center for Women's Healthcare

4100 MILAM STREET  
AT WEST MAIN

TUESDAY – FRIDAY  
9:30AM – 3:30PM

713-797-9200 [cwhccopier@gmail.com](mailto:cwhccopier@gmail.com)

[HTTPS://WWW.THECENTERFORWOMENSHEALTHCARE.COM](https://www.thecenterforwomenshealthcare.com)



## COMMERCIAL MEMBERS

**VIEBIG, McCOMMON & ASSOCIATES, P.C.**  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

EXPERIENCE      JUDGMENT      TRUST

401 W. Alabama Street      (713) 529- 9949      [info@vmatax.com](mailto:info@vmatax.com)  
Houston, Texas 77006      (713) 529- 9702 fax

<https://www.timberlinefitness.com>

**Timberline**  
FITNESS STUDIO

**METEOR**  
INTERNATIONAL  
TRAVEL, INC.

**Marie-Theres Fischer Odermatt**  
President

512 Sul Ross  
Houston, Texas 77006  
(713) 621-5481  
CELL (713) 298-6566  
FAX (713) 621-5485  
e-mail: [meteortvl@aol.com](mailto:meteortvl@aol.com)

If you own a business and wish to become a commercial member of First Montrose Commons, please contact us via our web page:

<https://firstmontrosecommons.org>

As you can see, the economic downturn from the COVID19 Emergency has hit our Commercial Members and Our Civic Association as well. Please do your best to financially support our neighborhood businesses during this crisis so they will still be with us when it is done.





## TIRZ 27 Board to Conduct Virtual Meeting Online April 20, 6:30pm

Potential Funding for Spark Park to be Decided

**T**WICE postponed, the critical issue of matching funds for the Spark Park at AIMS is slated for a decision at the April 20, 2020 meeting of the TIRZ 27 Board. This meeting will be via videoconference because of the ongoing COVID19 restrictions on public meetings. **Persons must preregister online in order to participate in the public speaking portion of the meeting.**

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tZQode2ogzMsVauSMOaDK92QSiQdlDtRkw](https://zoom.us/join/https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tZQode2ogzMsVauSMOaDK92QSiQdlDtRkw). (no hyphens)

Or you can scan the QR Code below



Please preregister now and speak at the beginning of this important meeting to urge the Board to fund our Spark Park. **Funds provided by the TIRZ will NOT increase our property taxes.** Rather they are the result of the increased taxable value of properties within our zone, and **these taxes have been captured to use for improvements within our own neighborhoods.** This is an excellent opportunity to eliminate the Park Desert FMC has had since HSPVA took over the property at 4001 Stanford 40 years ago.

## The Problem of Determining Consensus when You don't Prepare to Actually Measure It

**P**olling is a very tricky thing. It is used for all sorts of purposes by all sorts of folks. But there really is a science behind it—if you really want scientifically valid results. Therein lies the rub.

The first book I was given in my college Introduction to Statistics class was titled **“How to Lie with Statistics”**. Meant to be a humorous gesture by the professor, that book instead opened my eyes to the often-subtle ways improper sampling or design of questions can produce “statistics” or “results” to “prove” anything.

**It is in this context that we must believe Mayor Turner’s assertions that “No Consensus Exists!”, and believe his assertion that “No Consensus Will Ever Exist”.**

They are true because the Mayor failed to properly design the sampling method or the questions to determine whether a consensus existed or could be formed about replacing a 60+ year old bridge with a modern greenbelt.

Allyn West, Ph. D., a Senior Communications Specialist with the Environmental Defense Fund wrote a very educational op-ed in the *Houston Chronicle*:

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/Why-is-it-so-hard-to-say-yes-to-walkability-in-15190737.php> (no hyphens)



I strongly encourage you to read it, both for its content and excellent style.

Allyn further decided to –completely unscientifically–test whether there is or is not a consensus over whether to rebuild the viaduct or to build a park instead. He conducted a poll using his Twitter account. He freely admits there was no scientific sampling here—the sample comprises people who use Twitter, and who were motivated enough to respond to his Twitter poll.

**The results:**

**And as of this morning on April 14:**

**521 Votes**

**93.7%**

**Favor the greenway**



Allyn West  
@allynwest

Mayor Turner said “there is no consensus,” so the city will rebuild Spur 527 the way it was and kill a proposed greenway park concept. What should the city do?



456 votes · 1 day 11 hours left

9:35 AM · 4/10/20 from Houston, TX · Twitter for iPhone

||| View Tweet activity

34 Retweets 30 Likes

**So, now we are left with two equally valid “measures” of consensus. Which of the two shall govern our choice of whether to accept the design decisions of 1955 or those of 2020? How do you feel YOUR city should spend nearly \$4Million of YOUR TAXES during a pandemic and economic emergency?**

I recall that in 1959, the year the new Southwest Freeway opened at Hathaway and Bagby, my family had a 1936 Ford Model 68 with a rumble seat. I also recall with some fear how horribly long it took to accelerate that car through its very noisy three gears up to a roaring 47 mph so we could drive down the new freeway. I cannot say that these memories of that bygone era inspire me to recreate that portion of the Southwest Freeway now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Please visit [midtownmontroseparks.org](http://midtownmontroseparks.org), click the Show Support! option and help Westmoreland, Courtland Place, Audubon Place, First Montrose Commons, Preservation Houston, and Bike Houston get our message across to Mayor Turner loudly and clearly.

It is not too late to undue a decision based on biased and invalid data, Mayor Turner. It is not too late to keep your campaign promise to fully implement Vision Zero and eliminate this dangerous bridge.

**Vision Zero does NOT mean Zero Vision, Mr. Turner!**



## Action in the First Montrose Commons Historic District

All Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness MUST be filed ONLINE <https://cohweb.houstontx.gov/hpt/Login.aspx>

HAHC Meeting – Thursday, April 23, 2020 at 3:00pm – via Virtual Online Methods

As of April 15, 2020 no applications for Certificates of Appropriateness had been filed for the FMCHD.

### Quick Action by Historic Preservation Officer results in Removal of Non approved HVAC vents from Contributing Bute Addition Apartments

OWNER AGREES TO INSTALL HVAC UNITS BEHIND APTS., REPLACE DAMAGED BRICK WITH MATCHING BRICK.

Roman McAllen, HPO, arrived on-site quickly after calls from FMC about damage to the exterior walls of the apartments at 4105 Garrott. The owner of the building met him there and the ensuing discussion persuaded him to remove the offending HVAC units and install more appropriate units along the rear side of the building. Further, the owner committed to replacing the damaged brick with matching brick.

### Methodist Hospital Exploring Plans to Assume Control of Mental Health Co-Op

Houston's Methodist Hospital continues to explore whether to assume control of the Mental Health Co-Op in FMC. Though slowed by the current COVID19 crisis, representatives of the hospital have contacted CAFMC, asking about requirements to restore the historically contributing structures, parking requirements, and other matters as they prepare a proposal for submission to their Board. They already hired a consultant to review the condition of the buildings and formulate initial estimates of the cost to properly restore and bring them up to code.

Should this deal pass, it would be the largest restoration effort within a single Historical District and would greatly improve the quality of life for both the clients of the Co-Op and our neighborhood.

### 200 in 2020 Membership Drive & Donations for the Spark Park Stall as COVID19 Restrictions Continue

We began 2020 with a bold challenge: to increase the paid Residential Membership of First Montrose Commons to 200. The initial response was great, but once the Stay Home Work Safe orders hit, renewals ground to a halt.



Likewise, the order resulted in the cancellation of critical fundraising activities for our new Spark Park. Thus far, we have received donations totaling \$3,320 from 3 FMC residents. We and the AIMS PTO need to raise approximately \$150,000 to meet the community support requirement for this park.

Please contribute to this important venture for our neighborhood. Make your check out to SPARK, and in the Memo field write "Spark Park at AIMS". Send your check to SPARK FMC, 603 W Main St., Houston, TX 77006-5618.

We will collect and hold your check until the Stay Home order is lifted, and then present all the collected donations to Spark at once. Spark is a 501(c)3 corporation, and your donation to the park is 100% TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

Thanks to Steve Longmire, Marge Frazier, and Donna Drennen for kicking off the FMC donations for the Spark Park!

CALL BEFORE YOU START

832-393-6556

AVOID RED TAGS & CERTIFICATES OF REMEDIATION

### 2020 Board of Directors – The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons, Inc.

Stephen Longmire PRESIDENT		William Stewart VICE PRESIDENT	
Jordana Goldman TREASURER	Robin Williamson SECRETARY	Leslie Turner HISTORIAN	
Marlene Matterson DIR. OF ACTIVITIES	Stephen Longmire/ Ron Boyd DIR. OF COMMUNICATIONS	VACANT DIR. OF MEMBERSHIP	Bruce Clark DIR. OF SECURITY

The Civic Association of The First Montrose Commons, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501(c)4 Corporation. Dues and Donations are NOT tax deductible under IRS Regulations. We meet at 7:00pm each third Tuesday, except April, October, and December. Residential Membership is open to anyone who lives or owns property in our incorporated area (bounded by W. Alabama, Richmond, Montrose and Spur 527-Milam). Dues are \$10 per person per year, payable each January. Commercial Memberships are open to qualifying businesses and institutions subject to Board approval – see our website for details.

The First Montrose Commons Historic District of the City of Houston is wholly contained within First Montrose Commons. It is the policy of our Civic Association to attend each meeting of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission to assure full compliance with the provisions of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance as it applies to our Historic District.



our social network works for you<sup>SM</sup>  
**firstmontrosecommons.org**  
 stay connected



#### HELPFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

##### CRIMEREPORTS™

<https://www.crimereports.com/>

##### LEXISNEXIS® | COMMUNITY CRIME MAP

<https://communitycrimemap.com>

##### EMERGENCIES -LIFE, PROPERTY IN

**IMMEDIATE DANGER → 911**

##### NON-EMERGENCY POLICE

(Parking Violation, Crime Report)

**713-884-3131**

HPD NO DOPE HOTLINE 713-466-3673

ALL OTHER CITY SERVICES 311

BEST TO USE SMARTPHONE APP

##### NEXTDOOR.COM

– South Montrose Group

**HIDE - LOCK – REPORT  
EVERYTHING!**

**POLICE PATROLS ARE DATA DRIVEN**

## NEVER LEGAL



1. Parking on any street for more than 24 hours.
2. Parking blocking ANY portion of ANY sidewalk – EVER.
3. Parking between the sidewalks and the curb.
4. Parking within 20 feet of ANY intersection.
5. Parking within 30 feet of STOP sign or crosswalk.
6. Parking facing the wrong way.



*Not even for "just a minute!"*

**The STREET IS NOT YOUR GAR-  
AGE**

**CALL BEFORE YOU START**

**832-393-6556**

**AVOID RED TAGS & CERTIFICATES OF  
REMEDATION**