

August, 2007



City Lights DeSoto, Texas

A publication of the City of DeSoto Community Relations Department



Council Corner - A Message from Denise Valentine



Talk to me!

What an exciting time for the City of DeSoto! We have just purchased Nance Farm, a historical site which

can become a tourist destination for visitors to this city and an educational opportunity for students in area schools.

We recently passed an ordinance which increases fines and requires micro chipping for loose dogs. A new philosophy of "one bite and you are out" has been adopted and deems any dog that causes serious injury a "dangerous" dog.

Both of these decisions were accomplished by listening to the input of DeSoto citizens. In both instances, public meetings were held to give you, the citizens of DeSoto, the opportunity to have your say. We received input through your presence at meetings, internet mail

messages and through casual conversations both in person and by telephone. **Thank you for caring and sharing!**

It is a challenge to maintain the atmosphere of an All-America City. The key is communication and we are a city that thrives on open communication from and to all citizens. The most enjoyable part of my recent campaign efforts was the opportunity to chat with you about what you think is important for DeSoto.

Let's continue the dialogue!

There are many avenues open for you to share your ideas and opinions. Mayor Bobby Waddle recently continued the tradition of having the "Mayor's Quarterly Meeting" with representatives of homeowner's associations and another will be scheduled for the next quarter. Our City Manager, Jim Baugh, with the help of city staff, holds Town Hall meetings in the spring and fall. Watch this newsletter for announcement of the next meeting. There is an "open mike" opportunity at the

end of every City Council Meeting. During this time, any citizen can speak on any subject relevant to the city. It is another opportunity to be heard. The City Councilmember that represents your area is always open to hearing from you. Invite your Councilmember to your homeowner's association meetings. Or meet for a cup of coffee at Starbucks – did you know there are now 2 in town?

Another opportunity for open communication exists in the DeSoto Dining and Dialogue program. The next dinner event takes place September 22nd. If you have not had the opportunity to participate, you are missing a great experience! If you have already participated, it is time to participate again – you will get to know a different set of neighbors. You will share a meal with other citizens of DeSoto while learning more about each other. You can share not only your personal experiences but also your outlook for DeSoto. We need adults **and** young adults (high school age) to participate.

Sign up today through their web site at desotodininganddialogue.org or by calling Kathy Jones at 972-230-9648.

We look forward to hearing your ideas, opinions, concerns and suggestions. Tell us what is the best method for communication with you? Is it this newsletter, local newspapers, the web site? Is there a market in DeSoto for more live plays, symphony, jazz? Would you like to see art shows or galleries? What type of facilities would we need to support cultural arts?

How can you communicate your thoughts? You can email through the city website at www.ci.desoto.tx.us, or my personal e-mails address is dvalentine@ci.desoto.tx.us. You can also call 972-274-CITY – that's 972-274-2489. **Talk to me!!!**

**Denise Valentine
City Councilmember
Place Three**

What is the Status of the Pleasant Run/Westmoreland Intersection Widening Project?

Traffic has been transferred to the new pavement on the north side of Pleasant Run Road. Westmoreland is currently closed to southbound traffic and the contractor is in the process of relocating the underground utilities on the south side of the intersection.

The goal is to have the intersection pavement and signal light complete by the end of August just in time for the beginning of school. After this is complete, the focus will be on landscaping, installing irrigation and street lights and clean up.

If you have questions about road projects, please call Development Services at 972 230-9609.



A Few Simple Tips on Home Safety

Home is where the heart is; there is no other place like it. But most of all it's where you want to be comfortable, safe and secure. Your home should be one of your security blankets in a troubling world.

Home security is made up of many things, including landscaping and lighting, doors and windows, locks and keys, alarms and safes, and sometimes even your loving dog. All of these things work together to help comprise your safety.

An alarm system can also be used for life safety in the home. Carbon monoxide detectors, smoke or heat detectors, medical emergency buttons, and water sensors can save lives.

However, an alarm is only a notification system to let someone know that your first line of defense has been violated. As such, it only makes sense to have your own local emergency responders (police, fire and medical) monitor your alarm.

Did you know that in case of a fire, panic or medical emergency, your local city-provided monitoring service will have the appropriate emergency personnel dispatched to your home faster than any private alarm company? If your alarm is monitored by DeSoto's 911 Call Center, emergency responders are in route to you while the private alarm company is still making phone calls.

If you have an alarm monitoring system in your home, consider having it monitored by the City of DeSoto's 911 Call Center. There is no faster response to your alarm system than the response provided by your city. For more information on the City of DeSoto Alarm Monitoring Program, please contact 972.230.5248.



Come out to the fishin' hole at Briarwood Park for the city's annual Kid's Fishin' Day on Saturday, August 25, 2007 from 9 a.m. to noon. Briarwood Park and Pond, located at 1625 W. Belt Line Road, will be generously stocked to increase the kid's odds of a memorable fishing experience. Kids' under 14 are welcome and must be accompanied by an adult. You can bring your own fishing gear. No fishing license is required. If you don't have your own equipment, everything your child will need to catch fish (i.e.: rod, reel, bait and tackle) will be provided. Volunteers will be on hand to assist you and your child in catching the fish. Registration is \$5 per child and includes a t-shirt. Prizes will be awarded by age category for the largest fish caught. Applications will be available at the City of DeSoto, Parks & Leisure Services Department beginning August 13th or on-line at www.ci.desoto.tx.us. You can also register at the event. For more information, call 972.230.9650.

CITY CALENDAR

August

- 2,3, 4 FY 07-08 Budget Workshops— 2nd & 3rd @ 6:00 p.m. 4th @ 9 a.m. - City Hall
- 6 Park Development Corp. Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 7 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 7 National Night Out - 6 to 9 p.m.
- 9 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 14 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 21 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 25 Briarwood Kid's Fishin' Day - Briarwood Park - 9 a.m. to noon
- 28 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall

September

- 3 Labor Day Holiday - City Facilities Closed
- 4 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 6 Keep DeSoto Beautiful Board Mtg. - 6:30 p.m. - City Hall
- 10 Park Development Corp. Meeting 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 11 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 15 VIVA DeSoto Hispanic Heritage Celebration -
- 18 City Council Meeting - 7 p.m. - City Hall
- 24 Taste, Trade & Auto Show of DeSoto - 5 p.m. - Civic Center
- 25 Planning & Zoning Commission Mtg. - 7 p.m. - City Hall

DeSoto is Looking for Non-Profit Arts Organizations Who Would Like to Apply for Arts Grants

If you enjoyed a performance of *A Raisin in the Sun* in the Corner Theatre in February, the Irving Symphony's performance during the Reading, Writing and Rhythm Festival last spring, or the DeSoto Art League Juried Art Show in City Hall in June, you enjoyed programs funded by DeSoto's Cultural Arts Grants Program. These are just a few of the arts opportunities made available to DeSoto residents by this program. We are currently accepting applications for projects scheduled for 2009.

For the last couple of years, the City of DeSoto has offered \$20,000 in grants to fund arts programming in our city. These funds are derived from the Municipal Hotel Occupancy Tax and state law mandates that a portion of these funds may be awarded as Cultural Arts Grants. These funds are intended to serve as a financial catalyst to assist local organizations in developing opportunities for participation in the arts. The role of the Cultural Arts Grant Program is the encouragement, promotion, improvement, and application of the arts, including instrumental and vocal music, dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture, design and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography and craft arts, motion pictures, radio, television, tape and sound recording, and other arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of these major art forms. In addition to

monetary funds, the program also grants complimentary use of the Corner Theatre to those who qualify.

The Cultural Arts Grant Program is coordinated by the DeSoto Arts Commission and each year in late summer they put out the call for projects seeking funding. To be eligible, you must be an active nonprofit arts organization who can demonstrate sound artistic direction and financial management. Community involvement is also strongly considered. Funded activities must take place within the city limits of DeSoto. Examples of previously funded projects include community theater, art shows, the CDC Gospel Concert, dance performances and jazz concerts. Applications are accepted from August 1st until September 30th. Qualifying nonprofit arts organizations can request funding for their projects as well as an in-kind grant for use of the Corner Theatre.

Application forms are available at DeSoto City Hall, 211 E. Pleasant Run Road, in the Community Relations Department and may also be downloaded from the city's website at www.ci.desoto.tx.us. To request a grant application packet or for more information on the City of DeSoto's Cultural Arts Grant Program, please call Kathy (Maples) Jones at 972.230.9648.



Economic Development Corner

Why is the former K-Mart Still Empty?

The DeSoto Economic

Development Corporation (DEDC) has been working diligently to find new retail tenants to fill or redevelop the former Kmart building. In the latter half of 2002, market analysts predicted a very questionable future for Kmart. In November 2002, the DEDC contacted the building owner, who owns a third-generation private realty investment firm in Pittsburgh, PA, to discuss a strategy to fill the building, in the event that Kmart were to declare bankruptcy. Immediately, the building owner's in-house leasing director and the DEDC pursued Target, Lowe's, Home Depot, Kohl's, JC Penney, Stacy Furniture, several movie theaters, and Sears Grand to fill the 91,000 square foot space. In April 2003 Kmart declared bankruptcy and terminated their lease with the owner of the building.

From November 2002 to May 2005, the DEDC worked with the owner's leasing director to find new tenants for the building. Before starting construction on their store in Cedar Hill in September 2003, Target offered the owner \$4 million for the building in May 2003. The building owner wanted \$12 million for the building, so Target chose to build a store in Cedar Hill first.

Lowe's also expressed an interest in our market, but the building was too small to accommodate its new size requirements. Home Depot looked at the building once in fall of 2003 and again in the spring of 2004 before deciding that the site was too small for their needs. Consequently, Home Depot chose to construct a new store in Lancaster, north of the existing Wal-Mart Supercenter. Kohl's and JC Penney were unprepared to place a second stand-alone store in our market, since each business already had a store in Cedar Hill. Sears Grand was still testing its new store concept and was not ready to place a new, stand-alone store in our market.

The leasing director and the DEDC subsequently sought ways to redevelop the nine acre property by demolishing the old structure and carving up the nine acre tract into five parcels for restaurants and stand-alone retail

stores. A few of the restaurants targeted were Carabba's Italian Grill, Texas Roadhouse, La Madeleine's, Taco Cabana, Appleby's, TGI Friday's, Black Eyed Pea, Salt Grass Steakhouse, Silver Fox Steak House, Bennigan's, Texas Land and Cattle Steak House, Red Lobster, Claim Jumper, Ryan's Family Steakhouse, Razzo's Cajun Café, and Dave & Busters. However, we were not able to get a large restaurant or retailer to lease the far, back corner of the property to make the whole project work.

In June 2005 the owner of the old Exxon on the southwest corner of Pleasant Run and I-35E obtained a permit from the City of DeSoto to begin construction on a new Exxon gas station. Through the efforts of the DEDC, Henry S. Miller Commercial (HSM) became very interested in getting the old Exxon and the Kmart properties under contract, studying the market, purchasing the properties, and then redeveloping the ten-acre corner as a new retail center. However, the Kmart owner would only give HSM a third of the time it needed to complete its analysis of the market and the property. Therefore, in an attempt to gain control of this corner, which serves as a primary entrance to our community, the DEDC considered purchasing the one-acre corner and the former Kmart property with the accompanying nine acres of land. After consultation with our attorney, the DEDC chose instead to enter into lease agreements with each of the two property owners so that HSM would have up to six months of time to complete its analysis. After six months of analysis (March 2006), HSM concluded that the cost of the Kmart property was significantly greater than what the market would support. Most of the retail and restaurant tenants were unwilling to pay sufficient lease rates to pay for the cost of redeveloping the center, even with substantive sales tax contributions from the DEDC and/or, possibly, the City of DeSoto. Although HSM did not purchase the former Kmart property, it did purchase the one-acre corner to develop a new, 8,000 square foot retail shopping center. This is the location of our new Starbucks Coffee, and also houses T-Mobile, Ace Check Cashing, and one other retail business.



This is the former K-Mart building, located on Pleasant Run Road at I-35.

In the spring of 2006, through a relationship with the DEDC, Frank Mihalopoulos, who did much of the early retail development in Cedar Hill, expressed an interest in redeveloping the 10-acre tract on the southwest corner of Pleasant Run Road and I-35E. After several months of analysis, he, too, concluded that the cost of the Kmart property was significantly greater than what the market would support. Most of the retail and restaurant tenants were unwilling to pay sufficient lease rates to pay for the cost of redeveloping the center, even with substantive sales tax contributions of the DEDC and/or, possibly, the City of DeSoto. Additionally, Frank discovered that existing restrictions, easements, and assessments between Long John Silver's, Luby's, and the owner of the Kmart property narrowly restrict the type, character, and size of any future redevelopment. An existing, gas distribution line, both beneath and in the middle of the parking lot, also severely restricts any future construction on, or redevelopment of, the nine-acre tract.

The DEDC is excited about HSM's new, 8,000 square foot retail development on the southwest corner of Pleasant Run Road and I-35E! The City of DeSoto is currently inspecting final plans to construct a 70 foot monument on the southwest corner to mark the entrance to our community. Mayor Waddle, other city councilmembers, DEDC board members, and other members of the community have expressed a renewed interest in redeveloping the former Kmart building and the accompanying nine acres. The DEDC will begin a renewed emphasis to find one or more retailers to fill the former Kmart building and create an attractive entrance to our All America City.

If you have any questions related to economic development in the City of DeSoto, please contact the DeSoto Economic Development Corporation at 972.230.9611.



VIVA DESOTO!!
Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month
Saturday, September 15th
2 to 6 p.m.
DeSoto Town Center Outdoor Amphitheater

Local talent, Norma Valles con Mariachi will perform at VIVA DeSoto at 3 p.m. Norma is the Queen of Mariachi music in the DFW metroplex.



Join us for an afternoon of Mariachi music, Tejano bands, dancing, food and fun.
Admission is free.
For info call 972.230.9651

The Next DeSoto Dining and Dialogue Dinner Is Scheduled for September 22, 2007

Racial issues are not easy to discuss. But it is a conversation we must engage in if our cities are to be all they can be. DeSoto now has a vehicle to make this conversation possible. It is called DeSoto Dining & Dialogue. The program, run by a volunteer group of DeSoto citizens as an independent non-profit organization, seeks to bring DeSoto citizens from different cultural backgrounds together over dinner, for the purpose of encouraging cross-cultural communication.

Dinner tables involving 8 to 10 people are held twice a year. They start at 6 p.m. and end at 9:30 p.m., in homes, churches, and restaurants all over the city on the same night. Registered participants will receive invitations to their assigned dinner location. Anyone who lives or works in DeSoto can participate in the program by agreeing to be a guest at the next dinner scheduled for Saturday September 22, 2007. Guests need only bring an open mind and a willingness to share ideas and experiences. To balance the tables and enhance the experience, both male and female guest of all ethnicities and ages are needed. High school students can receive community service hours for participating. Trained facilitators at each dinner provide structure to the evening and use techniques designed to minimize debate and maximize sharing and understanding.

If you would like to participate in the next dinner event as a guest, please call Kathy Jones at 972.230.9648 or go to the DeSoto Dining and Dialogue website at desotodininganddialogue.org and submit a guest registration form to attend the September 22nd dinner. **Registration forms must be received no later than August 25, 2007.** If you have already attended a dinner and would like to be a host, please let Ms. Jones know and the Dining and Dialogue board will contact you with details. As host, you would agree to welcome a group of 8 to 10 people into your home or other location and cover the cost of their meal. A trained facilitator will be assigned to manage the conversation.

By participating in DeSoto Dining and Dialogue, we are starting the conversation that transforms DeSoto into the consummate American city.

Take a Seat in



Coming Attractions:

September 12th - 7 p.m.
Amateur Hour sponsored by **New Next Generation Youth Build, Inc.** Do you sing, dance, act, recite poetry? Come show off your talent or let us judge your original song or play. Call 214.523.9537 for ticket and show information.

September 13-22nd - 6 p.m.
Oh My Child sponsored by **New Next Generation Youth Build, Inc.**

Children have secrets that parents may not find out about until they are grown. How do parents deal with it? Come see how some families cope in this dramatic stage play. Call 214.523.9537 for ticket and show information.

The Corner Theatre is located at 211 E. Pleasant Run Road in DeSoto Town Center.

These programs are made possible by an in-kind theater use grant obtained through DeSoto's Cultural Arts Grant program.



The City of DeSoto is, once again, the proud owner of Nance Farm. This historic home built in the 1850's, was subject to foreclosure and will now be preserved for generations to come. Nance Farm is located at 1325 Greenbrook Dr. in the Mantlebrook subdivision.

Mayor Waddle to Serve as Secretary of the North Texas Council of Governments

DeSoto Mayor, Bobby Waddle was recently elected Secretary-Treasurer on the Executive Board of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG). NCTCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating regional development.

NCTCOG serves a 16-county region of North Central Texas centered around the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. Their 230 member governmental organizations represent cities, counties, school districts and special districts. NCTCOG promotes regional cooperation on projects involving air quality, transportation, public safety and regional training. It is quite an honor to have Mayor Waddle represent DeSoto as Secretary-Treasurer of NCTCOG.



JULY 21ST - AUGUST 25TH, 2007

- Ages 5-19 years of age
- Boys and Girls
- U5-6 \$60
- U7- above \$65.00

Sign Up for Youth Soccer

Sign up at the DeSoto Recreation Center

Information
972.979.8553