

After the Bankruptcy, Where are we as a Community?

Stuart Arouty, on behalf of the Garden Oaks Maintenance Organization

The answer is, we are in Garden Oaks, a great neighborhood whose governing authority is in transition. What does that mean exactly? Well, in the near term, it means that decisions need to be made and your help is needed.

More specifically, our neighborhood is currently governed by an archaic set of deed restrictions written in the 1930s. These restrictions include redacted inappropriate racial restrictions, obsolete regulations, inconsistent rules, and a lack of clear definitions to interpret what the intent was when Garden Oaks was formed. These restrictions were created during a much different time; neighborhood homes didn't have the same value as they do today. Garden Oaks was a rural area, and now as our neighborhood joins the ranks of some of the most highly sought-after neighborhoods in Houston, it should have contemporary and updated deed restrictions that match the current needs of the community. Our neighbors should have the right to live in their dream homes knowing that their deed restrictions reflect the values that this neighborhood holds sacred. Homesteads and investments should be held sacred. Beautiful new homes should be celebrated, encouraged, and protected, NOT subjected to lawsuits.

Garden Oaks deserves a homeowners' association (HOA) that supports what we want collectively. During the past few years, our neighborhood conducted multiple polls which showed that an overwhelming majority of our neighbors wanted an HOA. These same polls also revealed that the same majority did not necessarily support the Garden Oaks Maintenance Organization or "GOMO," as it was then known.

GOMO is in the process of exiting bankruptcy. Soon, control will be flipped back to our neighborhood, burdened with the same formation issues and outdated deed restrictions that existed the day GOMO entered into bankruptcy. We understand GOMO no longer accurately represents our

neighborhood. Garden Oaks deserves better; we all deserve better.

Right now, we still have more questions than answers. In the coming months, as the bankruptcy comes to a close, our neighborhood will need to hold an election for the HOA. The purpose of this election would establish a new HOA board of directors. This is crucial because it will help shape the future of Garden Oaks and develop an HOA that best fits our needs. The new board will be able to use the neighborhood's left-over resources as a vehicle to achieve what Garden Oaks wants: an HOA with a revised vision and a new set of deed restrictions that make sense in today's modern world. This process will neither be quick nor easy. It will require a lot of difficult work from a lot of motivated people. It will take neighbors coming together for the greater good of our community. Healing takes time, and creating something great takes time. Being open to change and being open minded about the way to achieve that change can only help to speed up the process.

Keeping Garden Oaks as one of the premier neighborhoods in Houston must be a priority. It must stay a place where people want to live, raise families, retire, or do whatever it is that brings them here.

We are looking forward to helping Garden Oaks meet its current and future needs. Until the next update, THANK YOU for your help, your patience, and understanding during this process. If you are interested in helping reshape the HOA and getting modern deed restrictions in place, please email help@gardenoaks.org. Please be on the lookout for additional information soliciting candidates for the election soon.

Editor's Note: Garden Oaks Civic Club (GOCC) is a voluntary civic club; it is not an HOA, and it does not enforce deed restrictions. GOCC is a separate entity from Garden Oaks Maintenance Organization (GOMO).