

# Neighbors often unite when tensions rise

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But as problems and concerns were resolved, the association became less active, with fewer neighbors participating. "In the last three years, it has not been as active. People do not act unless they feel threatened," Roberts said.

Leona Leyland, treasurer of the Section 36 group, confirmed Roberts' assessment. "There are no big projects now. We now meet once every other month. It just really isn't as active anymore. When you have a big problem or complaint, then everyone is involved."

OLDER ASSOCIATIONS are not alone in the "boom and bust" pattern. Officials in other associations, even the newest of the lot, acknowledge the nature of the homeowners' organizations.

"When faced with a potential problem, people will rally round. Neighborhood associations are cyclical," said Dr. Ron Paler, former president of the Meadowbrook Hills and Woods Association, and current chairman of the neighborhood's park development committee.

Jack Joyn, a member of the Springbrook Homeowners Association, agrees with Paler. "When you have a crisis, you will get a 100-percent turnout (at association meetings)," he said.

Joyn recalled an issue within the subdivision about eight years ago in which husbands and wives were opposing stands. "Frankly, beyond

that, there is not much to get involved in without stirring some things up."

Although associations' "boom and bust" cycle makes it difficult to encourage continued participation among homeowners, most association officials defend the need for a parochial attitude. After all, they say, who can better serve and protect the neighborhood?

"We are necessary because we have to maintain and preserve what we have now," Joyn said.

YET THERE is another side to the coin. Whether the parochial attitude inherent in the majority of associations is detrimental, however, depends on point of view.

"I do feel they are parochial in their outlook," Economic Development Corporation Chairman Robert McConnell said. "They tend to turn their immediate attention to their back yard."

While the parochial attitude tends to best serve the interests of the neighborhood, it doesn't always serve the city's interests. "It's a double-edged sword," McConnell said.

The parochial and protective attitude that make associations successful for each neighborhood often serve as a disadvantage, particularly for city officials trying to generate public involvement in citywide issues and concerns.

"I think they are effective. But they could play a more positive role in shaping our community," Council-

man Terry Sever said. Rather than laying low until a crisis arises, associations could, in the meantime, become more active in the city, he said.

BUT SEVER believes the parochial attitude is not entirely the fault of the associations. If public involvement is desired — particularly when the city wants public support on issues — then city officials must direct efforts toward involving associations, Sever said.

"I believe they are too neighborhood-minded. But the fault doesn't lie totally with them, but with the representatives of the city. We need to attend neighborhood associations' (meetings), whether it's the staff or city council periodically."

City council election candidates are always quick to encourage strengthened communications with neighborhood associations when campaigning, Sever said. "Once we are elected though, we seem to forget."

Planning Commission Chairman Philip Arnold expressed similar sentiments.

"Their interests are parochial. But it is up to the planning commission and the city council to inform them of city policy. Usually, they (neighborhood associations) are pretty receptive," Arnold said.

As long as association members or officers take information given them by city officials back to the rest of the organization, then a service has been provided that is of benefit to the city, Arnold said.

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COUNCILWOMAN JOAN DUDLEY, however, views associations' parochial attitude in a different light.

"I have a negative feeling when I hear people speak as though they belong only to that subdivision and not the city," she said. "There's a feeling of exclusivity."

Although acknowledging the successful work that associations ac-

complish within the neighborhood, Dudley expressed hope that parochial attitudes could be set aside when there's a need to work cooperatively for the city's betterment.

There is such a variety of interests here — race, religion, economics. We have got to keep a sense of unity in this city," she said.

While association officials and members may not specifically think in terms of city unity, many are increasingly seeing the need to take

their interests and involvement beyond neighborhood borders.

In a city suffering growing pains through traffic congestion, rapid development and increasing drainage problems, many associations are becoming aware they alone cannot successfully tackle problems.

Some associations are working hand-in-hand with each other. Still others are increasingly opening the doors of communication and involvement with city hall.

# Budget sparks split vote

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what we will tax."

Wolf criticized council's decision to levy an additional mill for roads — without a vote of the people while going to the electorate Sept. 23 "merely asking for a way of financing what we already arbitrarily have done."

The 1-mill tax increase will finance \$2 million of a \$9 million city share of a \$14 million, three-year road improvement program.

Voters also will go to the polls Sept. 23 to consider financing the remaining \$7 million city share of the program with general obligation bonds.

"WE ARE putting the cart before the horse. We are raising taxes now, and never even asking people if we can do it," Wolf said.

Although maintaining he supports the city's capital improvements program, including road improvements, Wolf said "I would like to see us ask and then go from there."

Both Mayor Joe Alkateeb and Councilwoman Joan Dudley criticized Wolf's opposition.

"We have said in our budget deliberations that roads are the biggest problem," Alkateeb said. "The only responsible thing to do today is to face the issues head on and do something about the roads."

Council, Alkateeb said, has the responsibility of ensuring that motorists aren't forced to have "a major adventure" on the city's roads. "I think our budget is a responsible budget and I am proud of it."

Dudley told Wolf that year after year she listens to his support of city programs "but I never hear how you're going to fund it. The demands that are being made by our citizens cost money. The demands for roads are outstanding."

SEVER, WHO joined Wolf in opposition to the 1986-87 budget, did not voice opposition to the 1-mill tax increase. Instead, Sever suggested some cuts in the budget — such as \$50,000 for Heritage Park, another

\$50,000 for the police department, \$3,000 in the council's budget and \$20,000 in general government.

Responding to Sever's suggested budget reductions, Alkateeb said "I had hoped all of these remarkable suggestions would have come up during budget deliberations. I think this isn't the night to do it."

The 1986-87 budget, Alkateeb continued, focuses on the city's road problems and the public's demand for public safety services with the addition of 10 full-time positions — nine in the police department and one in the fire department.

"I hope the city council sticks to its guns," Alkateeb said.

Councilwoman Jan Dolan echoed Alkateeb and Dudley's feelings on the budget. If city council had taken the millage rate up to the 10-mill maximum in 1980-81, the city would not be faced with the problems it is today.

"You are putting your head in the sand if you deny we have problems," Dolan said.

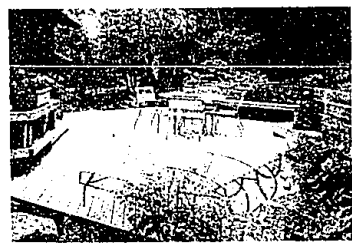
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