

**Application to the City of Houston, Texas to designate
a Green Corridor on Yale Street in Houston Heights
as regulated in Chapter 33, Section 104 of the Code of Ordinances**

Applicants

The Urban Forestry Committee of the Houston Heights Association

supported by:

The Houston Heights Association

Trees for Houston

and 75 percent of the owners of commercial property on Yale between 5th Street and 24th Street.

Background

In the late 1980s, neighborhood volunteers supported by the Heights Chamber of Commerce and Trees for Houston raised \$90,000 for trees along Yale. They purchased, planted, and nurtured some 500 trees on Yale between I-10 and Loop 610. Over the past 30 years, many of these trees have matured into the beautiful live oak corridor that is the subject of this application. Some of the original trees in the corridor have been lost, and in some cases replaced with smaller diameter trees as permitted under Article V of Chapter 33 of the Code of Ordinances.

About a decade later, the City proposed to reconstruct Yale. As this would have resulted in the loss of over 190 trees, the community and dedicated Heights volunteers opposed the reconstruction and widening. The City responded by only resurfacing Yale in the existing footprint, and the trees were saved.

The Yale Street Corridor Today (See Exhibit 1.)

Yale Street bisects the historic Houston Heights neighborhood and separates its designated Historic Districts (Houston Heights West from East and South). The street is in transition, with recent development of apartments, town houses, and commercial properties interspersed with older residential properties.

The existing tree corridor on both sides of Yale Street between 5th Street and 24th Street currently comprises over 400 trees. It provides a green visual and physical buffer from increasing commuter traffic flow generated by the recent connection that made Yale a convenient link between Loop 610 and I-10.

The mature trees in the Yale corridor significantly contribute to the shade and cover that is such an important asset in creating the character of the Houston Heights neighborhood. An important recent asset to the tree corridor is its connection to the Heights Hike & Bike Trail, which crosses Yale at 7th Street and links the entire Heights area with Downtown Houston.

Proposed Designation of a Green Corridor on Yale Street (See Exhibit 2.)

While there are some gaps in the continuity of trees along the 19 blocks of Yale between 5th and 24th Streets, the corridor visually appears as a single streetscape element. Currently new trees are being planted, which will further consolidate that effect. In the above corridor, 173 trees have a diameter of 15" or more.

To this end and in fulfillment of the conditions of Chapter 33, Section 104, applicants solicited support from owners of commercial property in this corridor and located the longest potential corridor with 75% support. During the petition period, the owners of 75.58% of the frontage of properties between 150 feet south of 6th Street and 96 feet north of 19th Street, a distance of approximately 1.5 miles abutting Yale Street (excluding single-family residential properties) have signed the attached petition forms supporting the designation of a Green Corridor. (See Exhibit 3.)

The petition period was by ordinance 90 days. During and after that period, some owners have not responded but also have not declined to support the Green Corridor initiative. Others have indicated support for the concept of a green corridor, while declining to sign the petition.

In the rest of the 500 and 1900 blocks and north into the 2500 block, the owners of a lesser but significant percentage of frontage have signed the petition. In these areas, some of the trees originally planted as part of the 1980s Trees for Yale project still exist, and recently new trees have been planted by commercial property owners in these blocks. Together, these original and new trees enhance both new and existing development and could form a future additional component of the proposed Yale Street Green Corridor.

The Benefits of Designating a Green Corridor on Yale Street

- Enhancing and preserving the beauty of one of Houston's most historic neighborhoods.
- Protecting mature trees of 15" diameter or more within the right-of-way of Yale Street and between the right-of-way and the prescribed building setback of 25 feet on a major thoroughfare. (The current ordinance protects trees of 20" diameter or more within these limits.)
- Providing and preserving shade on a busy street and acting as a visual and physical buffer to increasing commuter traffic.
- Enhancing the linkage between sidewalks on a tree-lined street and the Heights Hike & Bike Trail crossing Yale at 7th Street.
- Encouraging existing owners and future investors and property developers to plant more substantial trees within the context of their location in Houston's first designated Green Corridor
- Providing the benefits as described in Chapter 33, Section 104, which states that "trees within a green corridor shall be entitled to enhanced protection as provided in this article, [and the city council may in designating a green corridor, specify one or more particular species, varieties, and/or colors of trees to be planted to the exclusion of others within the green corridor]. Additionally, green corridors may be given priority for expenditure of city moneys for street planting to the extent permitted by law."

Potential Costs of Designating the Green Corridor

As the permitting process after Green Corridor designation differs from the current permitting process only in that trees of 15" diameter will be protected (as opposed to 20" diameter), there may be only minimal difference in costs.

In conclusion, we, the applicants, respectfully request the City Council of Houston, Texas to designate a Green Corridor on Yale Street in Houston Heights from 150 feet south of 6th Street to 96 feet north of 19th Street under Chapter 33, Section 104 of the Code of Ordinances, which states that “nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the city council from waiving any irregularity in any petition or from designating any green corridor for which a petition has not been presented.”

The applicants:

The Urban Forestry Committee of the Houston Heights Association

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Exhibit 1 – The Yale Street Corridor Today – photo montage

Exhibit 2 – Proposed Yale Green Corridor – map

**Exhibit 3 – Summary of petition participation by block and detail inventory
of business property participation in the proposed corridor**

Exhibit 4 – Signature cards for participating business properties

Exhibit 5 – Sample of materials distributed to property owners