

history in river oaks

# River Oaks Boulevard

## Restoration Project by The River Oaks Foundation

Submitted by River Oaks resident **Susanne Pritchard**

The River Oaks Foundation is a nonprofit corporation that was established in October 1999 by **River Oaks residents Bolivar Andrews, Gwyn Smith, Caroline Gregory and Paul Hobby** for the purpose of raising funds for the beautification



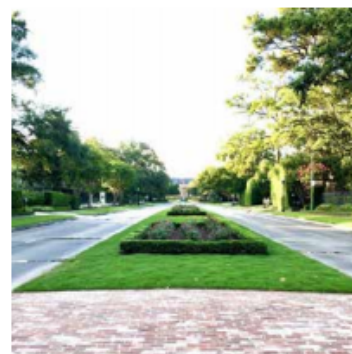
and preservation of the hallmark green spaces and common areas of River Oaks. Today, the seven-member board is made up of **River Oaks resident volunteers Susanne Pritchard, Dick Wynne, Melanie Savitz, Chris O'Sullivan, Risher Randall Jr., Kelley Trammell and Carrie Pepi.**

Over the years, the foundation has completed many improvement projects such as planting new trees in parks, building gardens in green spaces and repainting the River Oaks monuments in their original pale pink color. Most recently, the foundation took on the task of refreshing the somber appearance of the most iconic green space in River Oaks: the boulevard. The project came about when lifelong **residents Chris O'Sullivan and Risher Randall, Jr.** approached the foundation with a plan to improve the appearance of the grassy but otherwise bare esplanades.

A committee was formed to investigate options to update the design concept, while keeping the look of the original esplanade layout. In a moment of serendipity, **board president Susanne Pritchard** found a linen, one-cent postcard on eBay depicting a 1930s view of the boulevard with a colorized photo credited to the River Oaks Garden Club. The image in the 1930s postcard, as well as additional photos from the Metropolitan Research Center at the Houston Public Library, showed a design that closely resembled the modern-day esplanade at the north end of the boulevard closest to River Oaks Country Club. This particular esplanade had been privately built by the Flores and Holmes families with the help of **Gary Moss of Moss Landscaping.**

As a result of their impressive work, which closely resembled the historic images collected by the foundation, **Moss Landscaping** was chosen to lead the important task of bringing the rest of the boulevard esplanades back to their former beauty.

**The Robert and Janice McNair Foundation** generously presented the foundation with a lead gift of \$250,000 and more gifts from Boulevard and neighborhood residents soon followed.



"After" esplanades with brick end caps, zoyia grass and rose gardens



"Before" photo of the boulevard esplanades



This past spring, with COVID-19 affecting everyone's lives, more neighbors than ever were seen outside walking, biking and enjoying picnics on the green spaces of River Oaks. With that in mind, construction was started and completed as quickly as possible on the esplanades north of San Felipe with beautiful results. The campaign is now halfway there, having raised \$1.5 million toward the \$3 million goal. The remaining esplanades will be finished in phases as participation increases and fundraising goals are met.

It is our hope that River Oaks residents will share our enthusiasm for the importance of this project. We feel strongly that

these historic esplanades deserve to shine as beautiful, welcoming beacons of our neighborhood. If all 1,600 homeowners participate at some level, the rose gardens on the boulevard can be quickly completed and maintained in perpetuity fulfilling the founders Aim and Ideal of "Having created a beauty spot, to keep it just that, by a most rigid and thoroughgoing maintenance.

For more information or to support this project, please check the website <https://riveroaksfoundation.org>.

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