

METRO-MOBILITY TALKS

Uptown Neighborhood Initiative

VISION TO REVITALIZE UPTOWN LEOPARD STREET CORRIDOR

A grassroots organization of concerned citizens is working to turn the Uptown section of Leopard Street and the surrounding neighborhood into a pedestrian-friendly garden district filled with shops, restaurants, and walkways.

The Uptown Neighborhood Initiative (UNI) is a grassroots, citizens action group made up of commercial business owners, residents, and other interested parties who reside on or near Leopard Street, in the Uptown area. The organization's vision calls for converting Leopard Street from a four-lane road into three lanes and widening the sidewalks on either side to create a pedestrian thoroughfare with benches and trees and other greenery to attract pedestrians.

UNI is committed to turning its vision of creating a garden district into reality within the next five years, says Darlene Gregory, owner of East Meets West Productions, who serves as president of the organization.

UNI got its start in November 2009 when Corpus Christi Police Chief Troy Riggs invited area business owners and residents to a meeting to address homelessness in the area. The meeting led participants to begin thinking in broader terms of ways to improve the neighborhood and that led to creation of UNI in December of 2009. UNI began holding monthly meetings to discuss ways to rejuvenate the neighborhood and developed ideas for improving the neighborhood's appearance, generating excitement, and boosting pedestrian traffic.

In May, UNI organized a neighborhood cleanup that attracted 149 volunteers, including Mayor Joe Adame. Those who participated in this one-day event collected 18.5 tons of trash and mowed and trimmed 10 acres of empty lots and highway easements. The area targeted by UNI extends down Leopard Street, Lipan Street and Antelope Street from Tancahua Street to North Port Avenue. The Leopard Street Corridor, as it is called, includes all the streets in between these larger roadways.

The organization is privately funded by the organization's members. "Several of us have put up several thousand dollars," Gregory says. The goal is not only to make the area better for those who live and work there but to attract new businesses, residents, and tourists.

The next event is scheduled for October 2, 2010. Group members meet at noon on the second Wednesday of every month at the Corpus Christi Police Officers Association.

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