



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, October 7, 2009

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**American Planning Association Designates Montrose
Top 10 Great Neighborhoods for 2009**

Neighborhood Rides Coat Tails of Downtown Houston Comeback

Houston, TX – The American Planning Association (APA) announced today that Montrose has been designated one of 10 Great Neighborhoods for 2009 by APA's *Great Places in America* program. APA Great Places exemplify exceptional character and highlight the role planners and planning play in creating communities of lasting value. This is the third Great Places designation in the state of Texas.

APA singled out Montrose as Houston's cultural gemstone, a neighborhood that developed its unique character and sense of place during the past century through planning, citizen engagement, and substantial private and public investment. For instance, the neighborhood has five of 15 city-designated historic districts, a vibrant arts and entertainment area with some 200 eateries, and several parks including the city's premier greenbelt, Buffalo Bayou.

"Montrose is the confluence of Houston's contemporary development and its old southern charm," said Mayor Bill White. "It's restaurants, museums, and centers of learning and most importantly, its people of all walks, make it a great example of the vibrancy to be found in this, one of America's fastest growing cities."

"It is no surprise that one of Houston's most distinct and dynamic communities has caught the attention of the American Planning Association's Great Neighborhood for the Great Places in America Program," District Council Member Wanda Adams said. "From its inception, Montrose has always been a vibrant place and pillar of the city. It has been the home of the great Howard Hughes and provided residence to our 36th President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson. From then until now, Montrose has grown into one of the nation's most dynamic communities. It is exceptional in its diversity and its unparalleled mixed land usage as both a pedestrian friendly community and a thriving entertainment district for Houstonians and visitors. We are excited about this recognition and know that Montrose will continue in the tradition and legacy that makes it a remarkable community."

Through Great Places in America, APA recognizes unique and authentic characteristics found in three essential components of all communities — streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces. APA Great Places offer better choices for where



and how people work and live everyday, places that are enjoyable, safe, and desirable.² Such places are defined by many characteristics, including architectural features, accessibility, functionality, and community involvement.

"I'm very excited to be in Montrose today as we announce this year's Great Places in America," said APA Chief Executive Officer Paul Farmer, FAICP. "We've singled out Montrose not only for its unique character and strong sense of place, but also for its active and engaged residents who know that making special neighborhoods like Montrose takes planning, citizen participation and support from elected officials and the business community," he said.

Originally a planned, street car suburb of Houston platted in 1911, Montrose is a fusion of architectural styles, land uses and people. Former residents include President Lyndon Johnson and billionaire Howard Hughes. The neighborhood also contains the heart of Houston's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community.

Montrose is simultaneously eclectic and urbane. There is a thriving art, museum and cultural scene. Local businesses include some of the city's finest retailers as well as everyday merchandisers.

Housing in Montrose also is diverse -- from graceful old mansions and Arts and Crafts bungalows to new townhouses, lofts and patio homes. Rental units comprise two-thirds of the neighborhood's residences.

Montrose has seen its share of hard times. During the 1950s and 1960s, the neighborhood suffered from federal urban renewal projects. It was the work of concerned citizens in the 1970s that initiated improvements to the neighborhood. Change was slow, however, until the late 1990s when more residents started to move into the neighborhood given the city's \$2.6 billion downtown revitalization.

Montrose stands out from the rest of auto-oriented Houston for its walkability. Just as it was when first planned and developed, Montrose remains well-connected to the rest of Houston by sidewalks, bike routes and the nearby METRORail system. Recent planning efforts include the "Walkable Montrose" plan, developed by the Montrose Boulevard Conservancy in 2008. The conservancy's plan seeks to reestablish this street as Houston's grand boulevard. Another effort, the "Montrose Pedestrian & Bicyclist Plan" by the Houston-Galveston Area Commission, recommends more than \$1 million in improvements to the neighborhood.

The nine other APA 2009 Great Neighborhoods are:

Bungalow Heaven, Pasadena, CA
Faubourg Marigny, New Orleans, LA
The Haymarket, Lincoln, NE
Village of Kenmore, Kenmore, NY
Downtown Fargo, Fargo, ND
Ladd's Addition, Portland, OR
Franklin Historic District, Franklin, TN
Historic Hilton Village, Newport News, VA



Browne's Addition, Spokane, WA.

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For more information about these neighborhoods, as well as lists of the 2009 APA 10 Great Streets and 10 Great Public Spaces, visit www.planning.org/greatplaces.

This year's Great Places in America will be celebrated as part of APA's National Community Planning Month in October 2009; for more about the special month, visit www.planning.org/ncpm.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic, and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests, and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Ill, and Shanghai, China. For more information, visit its website at www.planning.org.

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