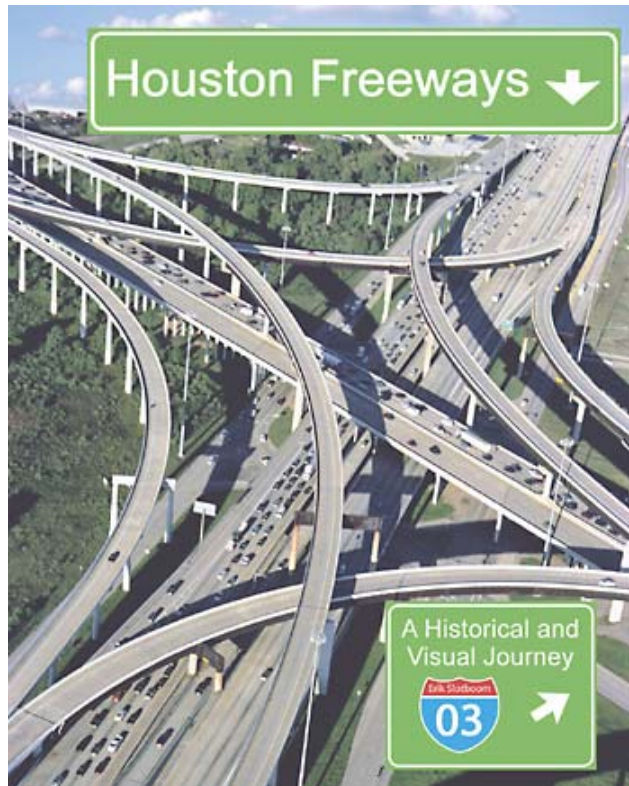


# Bellaire and Southwest Houston Freeway History Overview

Presented to

Bellaire Historical Society, September 8, 2015



Based on the book

## **Houston Freeways** **A Historical and Visual Journey**

By Oscar “Erik” Slotboom  
Published September 2003

# HoustonFreeways.com

- Free download of eBook
- Download this presentation
- Historical Challenge
- Photos, video and features



**2003-2013**  
**10**

Houston Freeways

A Historical and Visual Journey

## HOUSTON FREEWAYS

### A Historical and Visual Journey

by [Erik Slotboom](#)

On September 30, 1948, a crowd of Houstonians gathered on a Gulf Freeway overpass to witness the dedication of Houston's first freeway. Houston's freeway journey began. **Houston Freeways** traces the history and influence of the freeway system with extensive photography, fascinating stories, remarkable people and time capsules from the past.

**2003 Plan Analysis** Updated July 22, 2015

Analysis of TxDOT's plan for downtown freeways and I-45 North (May 10, 2015)

Usually in the \$50-100 price range

**Used Books on Amazon**

**Photos**

Houston freeway photos, mostly construction in progress; also roadtrip photos from around Texas and the USA

**Video**

Video of Houston freeways; also some Dallas-Fort Worth and roadtrip videos

**Five Year Retrospective**

This report, posted on the fifth anniversary of the release of **Houston Freeways**, summarizes Houston's freeway accomplishments in the construction boom period from 2003 to 2008

A (short) listing of errors in the printed book

**Corrections and Updates**

**Links**

[DFWFreeways.com](#)

The web site for my second book, **Dallas-Fort Worth Freeways, Texas-Sized Ambition**, released in 2012

[SolarPlots.info](#)

My web site to plot the position of the sun, mainly for photography

[TexasFreeway.com](#)

The web site I launched in July 2000, managed by Ron Jackson since 2004 but dormant for many years.

[TexasHighwayMan.com](#)

Brian Purcell's excellent site covering San Antonio

**Related Content**

[Sharpstown History](#)

I prepared this for the Sharpstown Civic Association newsletter. It covers Frank Sharp's efforts to bring the original seven astronauts to Sharpstown in 1962 and the 1962 Parade of Homes.

**Book Data**

Author	Erik Slotboom
Released	September 15, 2003
Out-of-print	December 12, 2004
eBook	released June 5, 2005
Pages	416 (380 main text)
Quantity	5000 printed
Size	8.5 x 11"
Format	Hard cover, full color throughout
Illustrations	526 total 215 historical 143 modern 62 maps and graphics 106 photo location maps
ISBN	0-9741605-3-9
Price	List: \$34.95 Actual sales price: \$23 to \$24 <a href="#">Used copies</a> are normally available

### VIEW THE BOOK, PDF FORMAT

	Pages	Low Res Size, MB	High Res Size, MB	Thumbnails
Complete book	413	<a href="#">42</a>	<a href="#">93</a>	
Cover and Introduction	10	<a href="#">0.8</a>	<a href="#">1.7</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 1 Building the System	92	<a href="#">13</a>	<a href="#">16</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 2 Freeway Metropolis	64	<a href="#">4</a>	<a href="#">9.4</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 3 Downtown Freeways	26	<a href="#">5</a>	<a href="#">14</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 4 The Spokes	130	<a href="#">19</a>	<a href="#">50</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 5 The Loops	50	<a href="#">6.6</a>	<a href="#">18</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 6 Freeway Mass Transit	18	<a href="#">2.8</a>	<a href="#">6.5</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 7 Bridges and Tunnels	36	<a href="#">3.4</a>	<a href="#">9.6</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Chapter 8 The Freeway Journey	4	<a href="#">0.3</a>	<a href="#">0.6</a>	<a href="#">View</a>
Notes and Index	27	<a href="#">2.4</a>	<a href="#">3.9</a>	<a href="#">View</a>

### Freeway Excerpts

Gulf Freeway Interstate 45 South	23	<a href="#">3.1</a>	<a href="#">8.3</a>
Southwest Freeway US 59 South	18	<a href="#">2.5</a>	<a href="#">7.5</a>
Katy Freeway Interstate 10 West	12	<a href="#">1.8</a>	<a href="#">4.2</a>
The Loop Interstate 610	20	<a href="#">3.5</a>	<a href="#">8.6</a>
Sam Houston Tollway/Parkway Beltway 8	19	<a href="#">2.4</a>	<a href="#">6.8</a>
North Freeway Interstate 45 North	9	<a href="#">1.5</a>	<a href="#">3.9</a>
South Freeway State Highway 288	10	<a href="#">1.8</a>	<a href="#">4.2</a>
Eastex Freeway US 59/Interstate 69 North	9	<a href="#">1.7</a>	<a href="#">4.0</a>
LaPorte Freeway State Highway 225	11	<a href="#">1.5</a>	<a href="#">3.8</a>

### TAKE THE PHOTO CHALLENGE

Identify the location of these historical and aerial photos.  
Each challenge has 15 photos

<b>Historical</b> <a href="#">Beginner</a> <a href="#">Intermediate</a> <a href="#">Expert</a>	<b>Aerial</b> <a href="#">November 2002</a> <a href="#">September 2002</a> <a href="#">November 2002 and May 2003</a>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

# Origins of Houston's Freeways

1930	Governor Ross Sterling proposes the Houston-Galveston Super Highway
Late 1930s	Houston Mayor Oscar Holcombe promotes the Gulf Freeway
1940	City of Houston buys the right-of-way of the Galveston-Houston Electric Railway
1943	TxDOT approves the Gulf Freeway. Other routes approved in 1945.
1946	Construction begins on the Gulf Freeway

# Houston's Freeway Era Begins

Gulf Freeway Dedication

September 30, 1948



Dewitt Greer and Oscar Holcombe

# Where it all began



Gulf Freeway at Calhoun, November 1948

# Celebrating Traffic

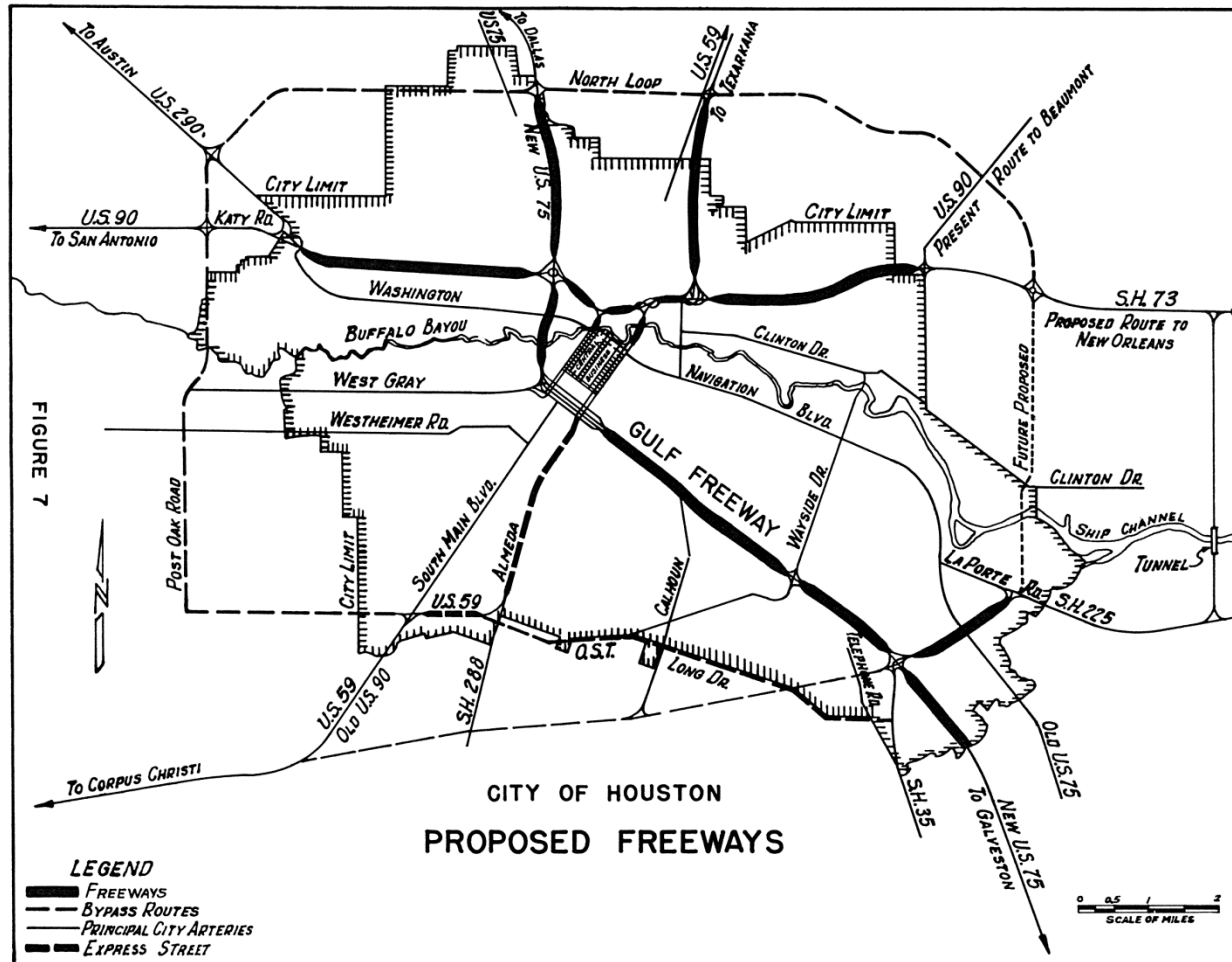


Traffic count sign

1950  
100 million vehicle-miles



# Development of the Freeway Master Plan



**1947**

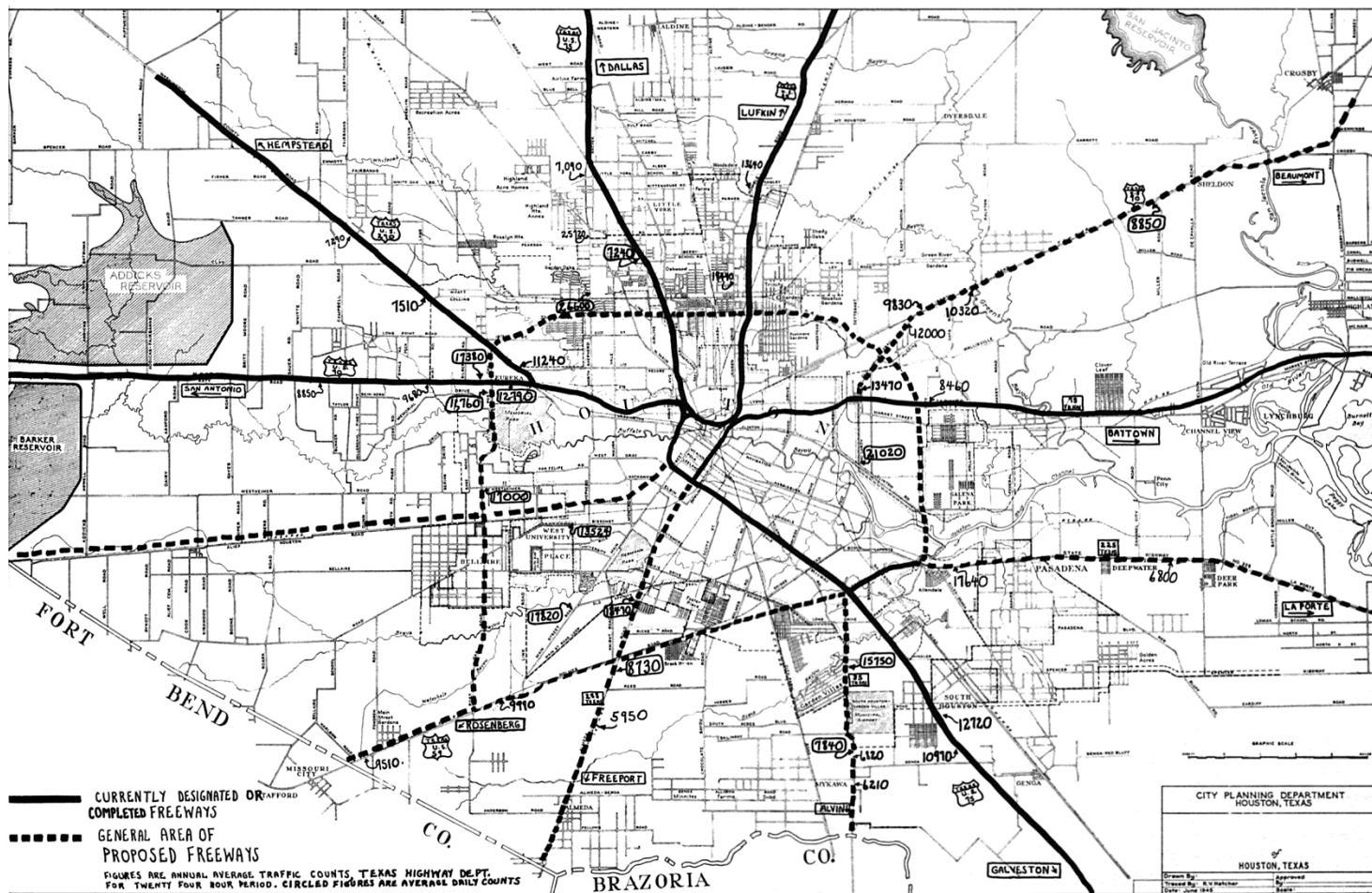
First freeways  
approved by  
TxDOT

**Bellaire**

The plan shows a  
bypass route on  
Post Oak Road,  
but the route is  
not designated  
as a freeway

# Development of the Freeway Master Plan

**1953** Plan shows the West Loop aligned through Bellaire on Post Oak

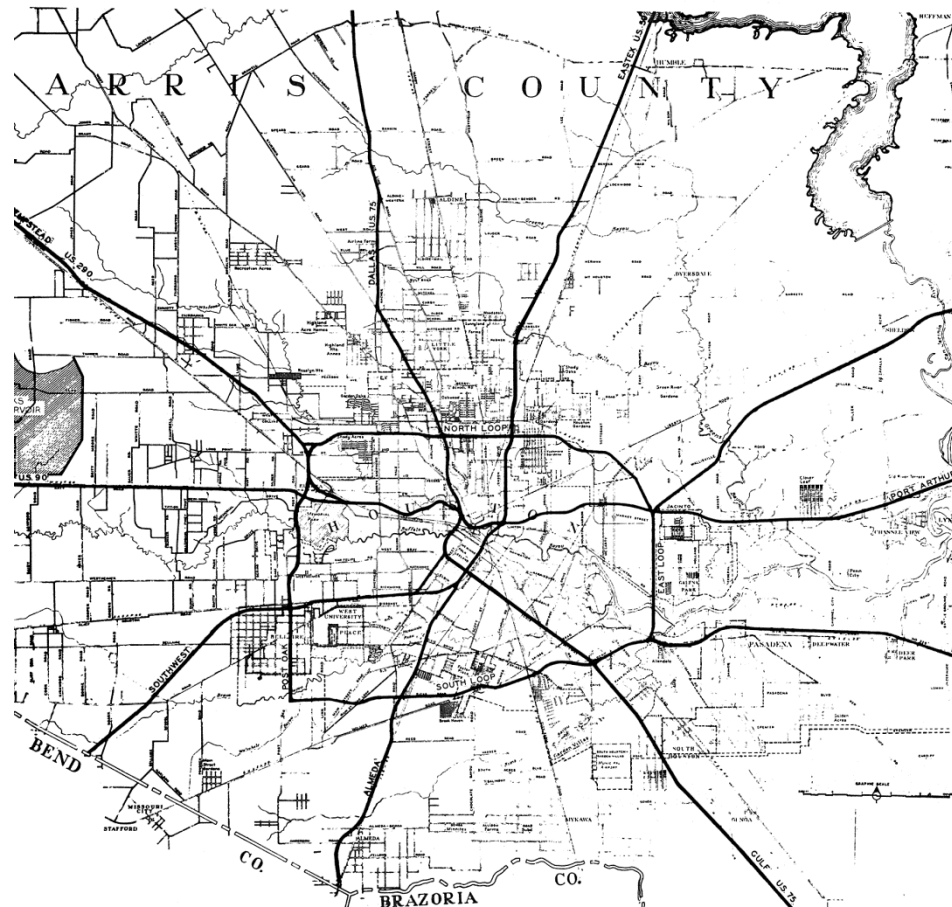


# Development of the Freeway Master Plan

**1954**

Plan has the  
West Loop  
on Post Oak  
and the  
Southwest  
Freeway  
through  
north Bellaire

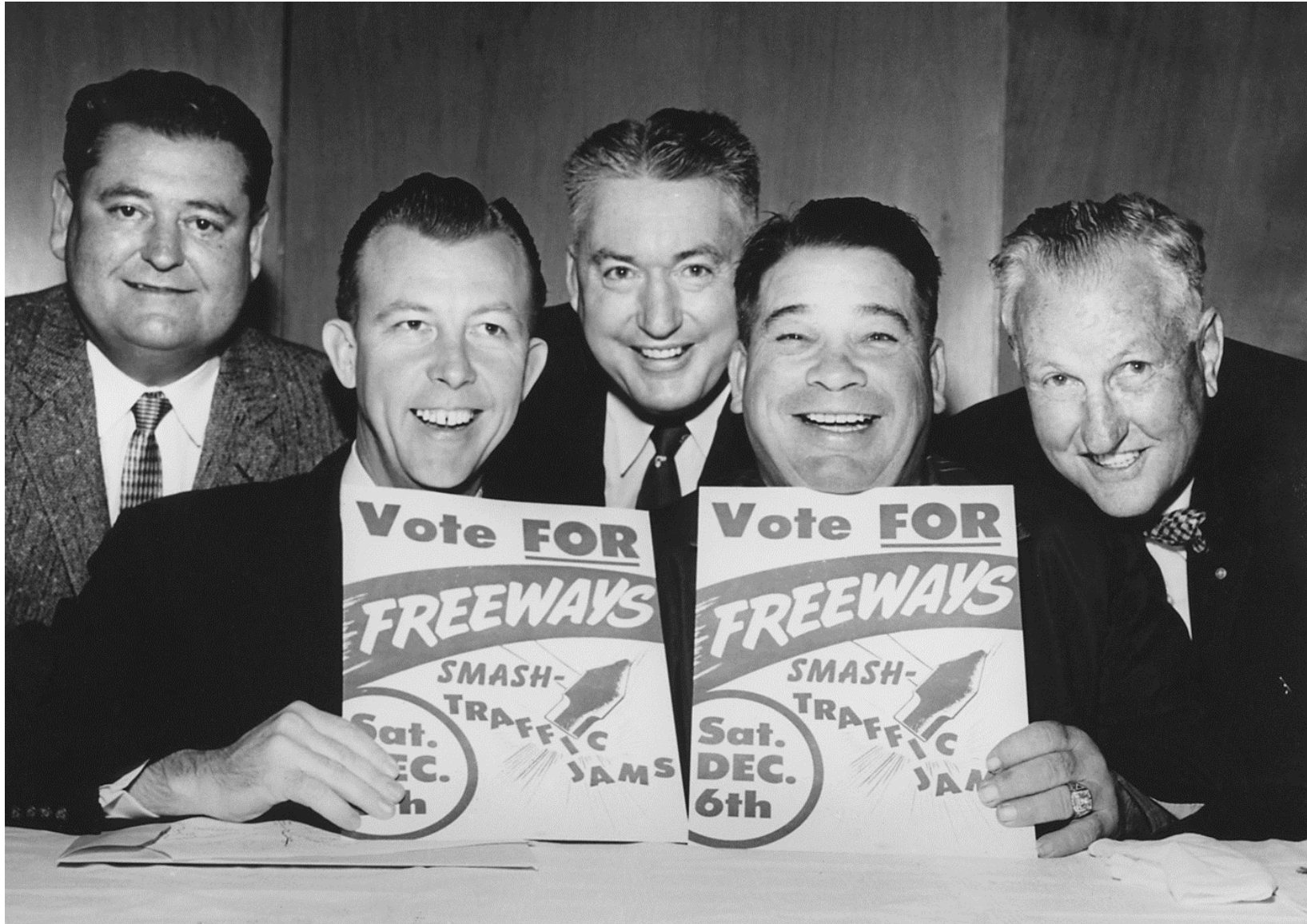
HOUSTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
HIGHWAY COMMITTEE  
MASTER FREEWAY PLAN  
FOR  
HOUSTON & HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS  
MARCH, 1954



## Building Public Support: 1956 \$15 million bond issue



# 1958 Harris County \$15 million bond Election (=124 million in 2015 dollars)



## The Visionary



## TxDOT-Houston Leaders in the Golden Era

Loop 610 and  
inside the Loop

A.C. Kyser, 1907-1984  
Houston Urban Project  
Office Manager,  
1955-1972

Outside the Loop

Wiley Carmichael,  
1912-1996  
TxDOT Houston District  
Manager, 1955-1973



Page 18 Section 1—Annual— Sunday, February 10, 1963 THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

# Expert Talks on Freeways

(Editors Note: The two men most responsible for the freeway and expressway system within Harris County—part of a vast network that will link America's great cities—are A. C. Kyser and Wiley Carmichael, State Highway Department District Engineer. Here, Kyser, with the co-operation of Carmichael, presents the current status and the future outlook of Harris County's primary and interstate system.)




CARMICHAEL KYSER

### FREWAYS AT A GLANCE

A summary of the freeway projects within Harris County. Much has been completed. The remainder is earmarked for construction.

Interstate Highway System (financed 90 per cent by the federal government, 10 per cent by the state):	
Interstate 45	48.2
Interstate 10	48.0
Interstate 610 Loop	38.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>134.7</b>

Primary Highway System (financed by state and county, but built to freeway standards):

U.S. 59 (Southwest and Eastex freeways)	38.1
-----------------------------------------	------

# A.C. Kyser retirement, 1972

Department.

"If you folks get in a traffic jam, it's your own fault," Kyser said. "I'm going fishing."

Kyser was the highway department's engineer-manager

**Albert C. Kyser**  
**Designer of Houston**  
**FRI AUG 4 1972**  
**Freeways Retires**

BY KING WATERS  
Chronicle Staff

The man who supervised the planning and building of Houston freeways has retired to Seadrift, far away from traffic jams and honking horns.

Albert C. Kyser, 65, retired Monday to the coastal town near Port O'Connor after 38 years with the Texas Highway Department.

"If you folks get in a traffic jam, it's your own fault," Kyser said. "I'm going fishing."

Kyser was the highway department's engineer-manager of the city's expressway system for the past 17 years.

"Mr. Kyser was the man behind the system," Bill McClure, a state highway administrative engineer, said. "Most of Houston's freeways were planned and designed under his jurisdiction."

Kyser received a civil engineering degree from the University of Texas in 1929, but joined a highway labor crew

in 1934 because he could find no other work.

"I worked my way up," Kyser said, "but now I'm gone. And I'm happy."

Kyser said he will work on his new home on the San Antonio Bay with his wife Margaret.

"We were working hard as college kids when we met," he said. "I was washing dishes at an Austin cafe, and she was waiting tables."

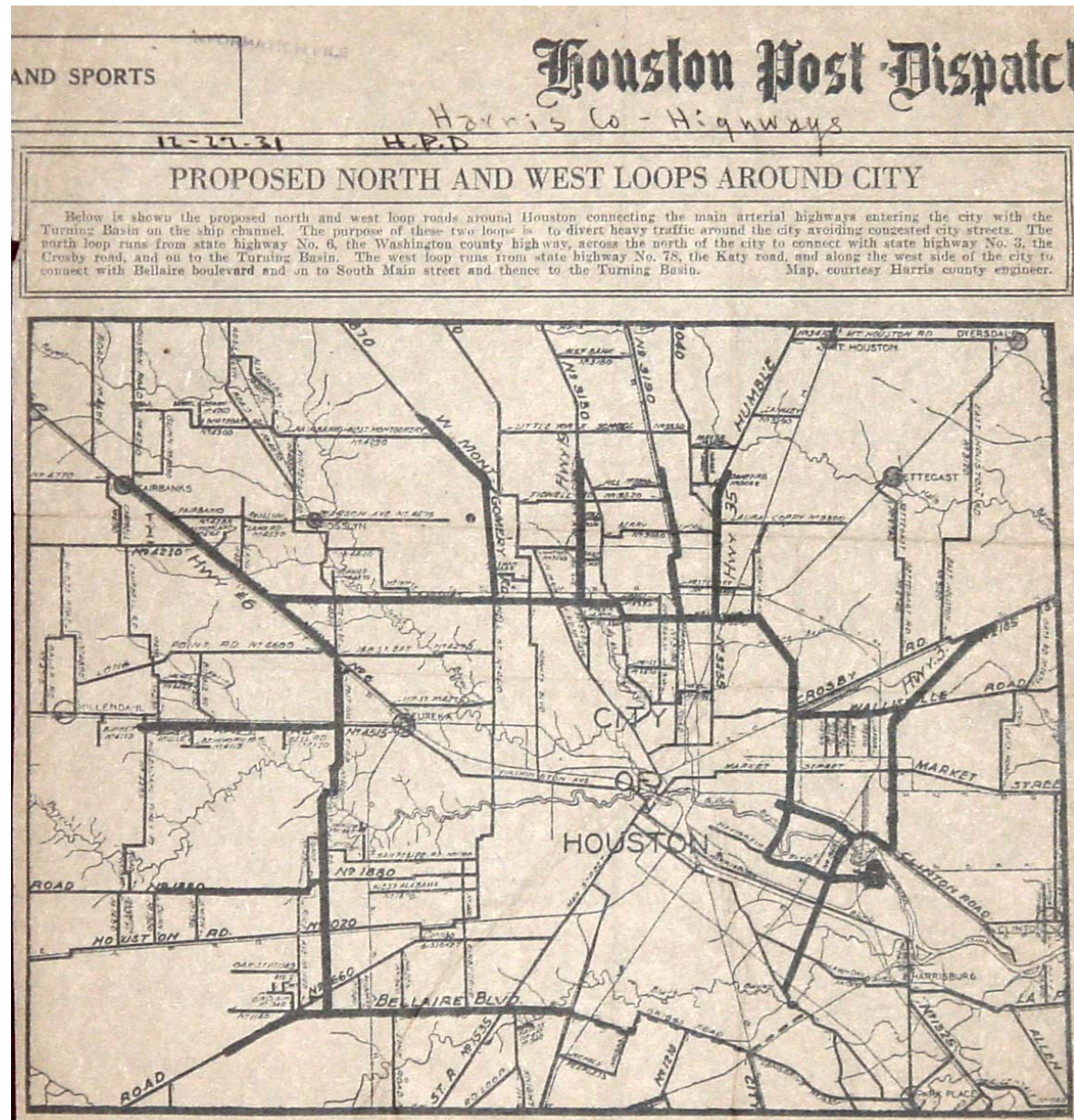
Kyser said he retired just as his pet project, the East Loop bridge over the ship channel, nears completion.

"I drew the preliminary designs on the bridge in 1966," Kyser said. "The project will be through in a few months."

# Origins of a Freeway on Post Oak Road

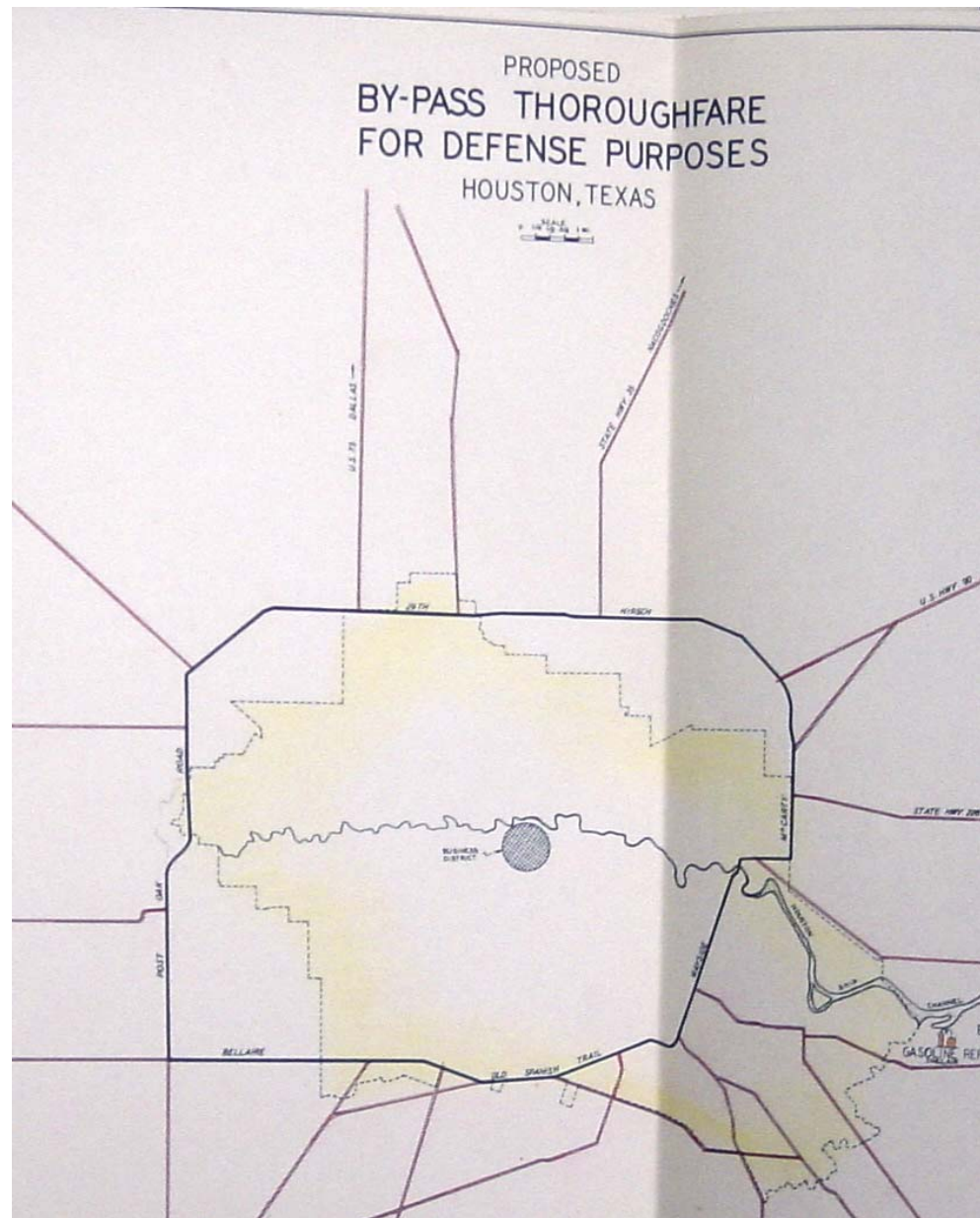
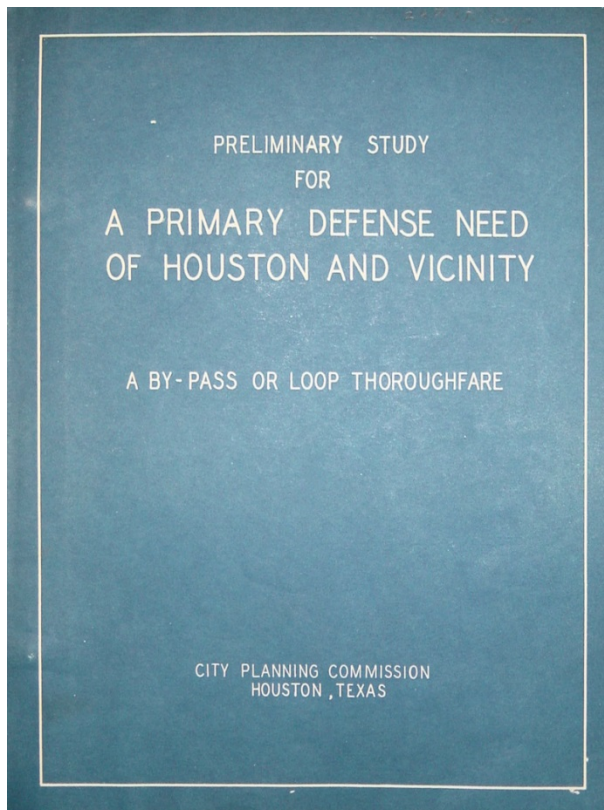
December 1931:  
Bypass routes  
proposed

“The purpose of these two loops is to divert traffic around the city avoiding congested city streets.”



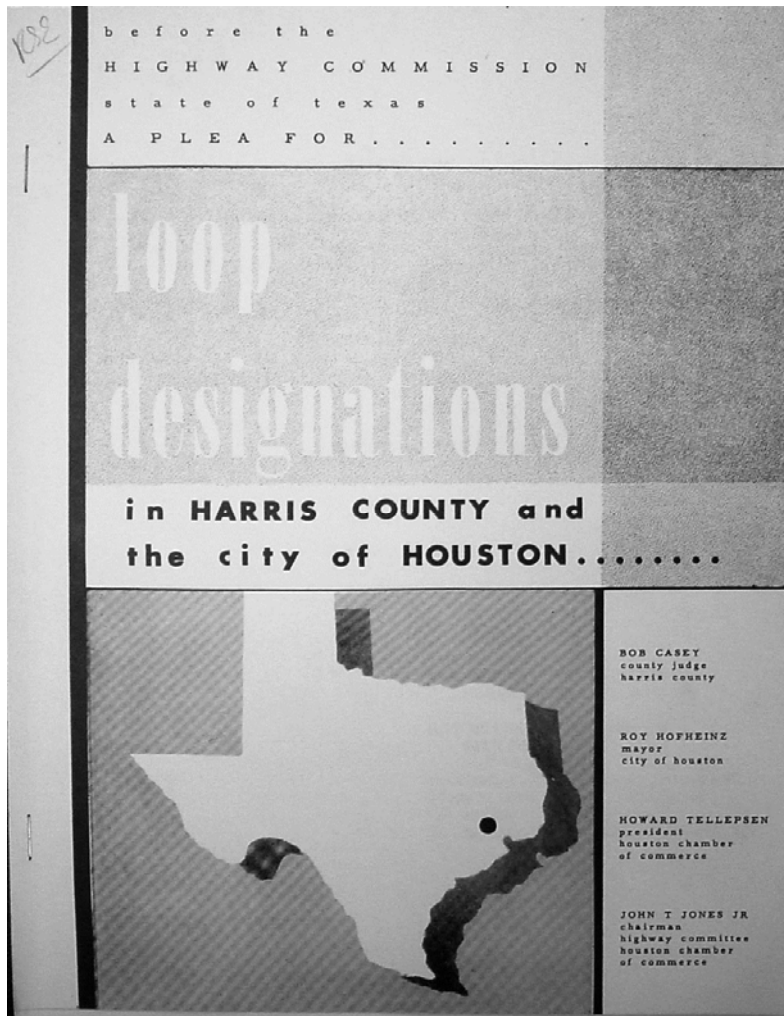
# 1942: Bypass Loop Study for national defense

Loop followed Post Oak Road and Bellaire Blvd



# September 1954: Official Request for inclusion in the state highway system

Shown below: pages from official presentation booklet



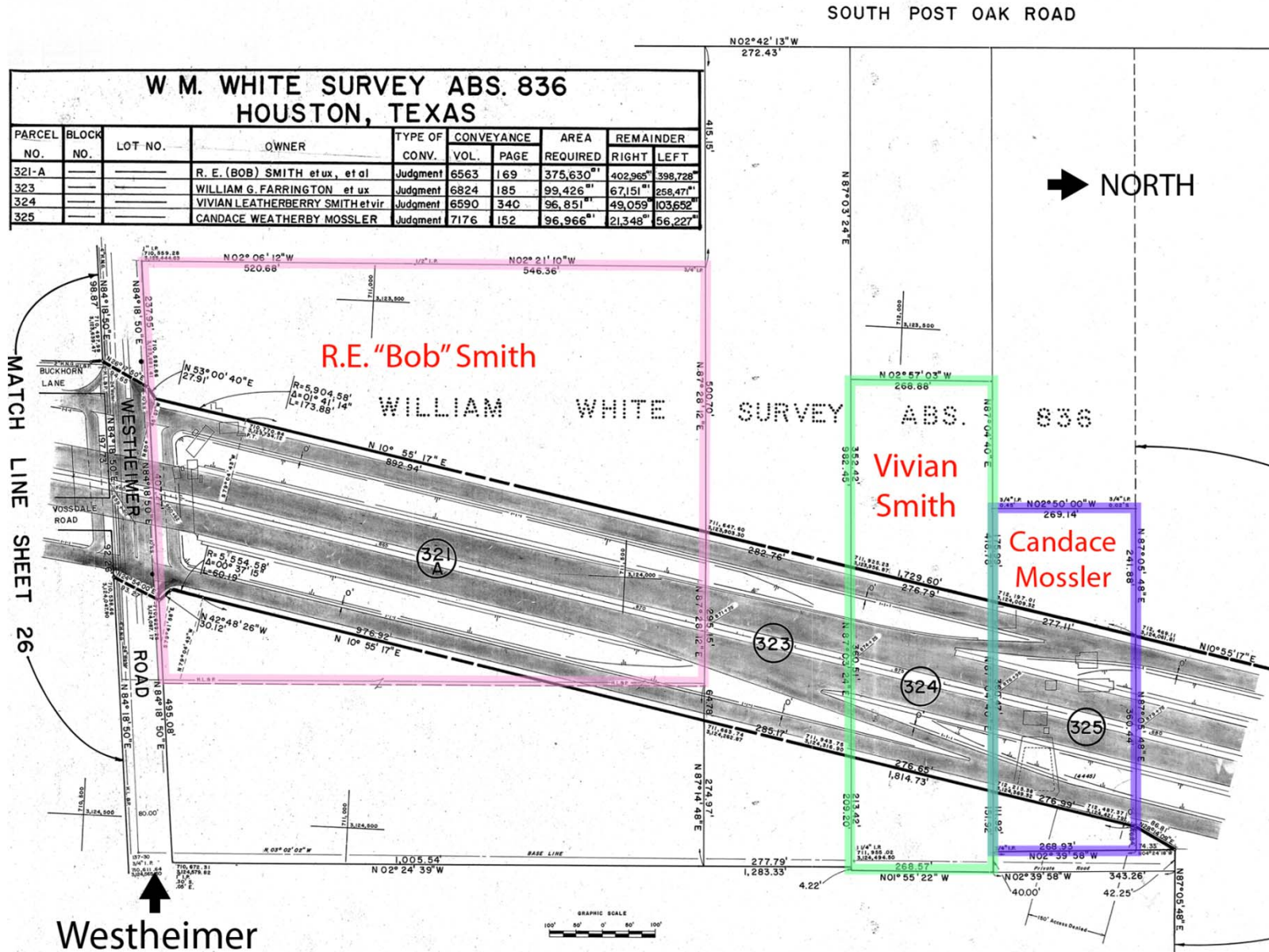
# Influential Support for the Post Oak Alignment

R.E. “Bob” Smith  
1894-1973

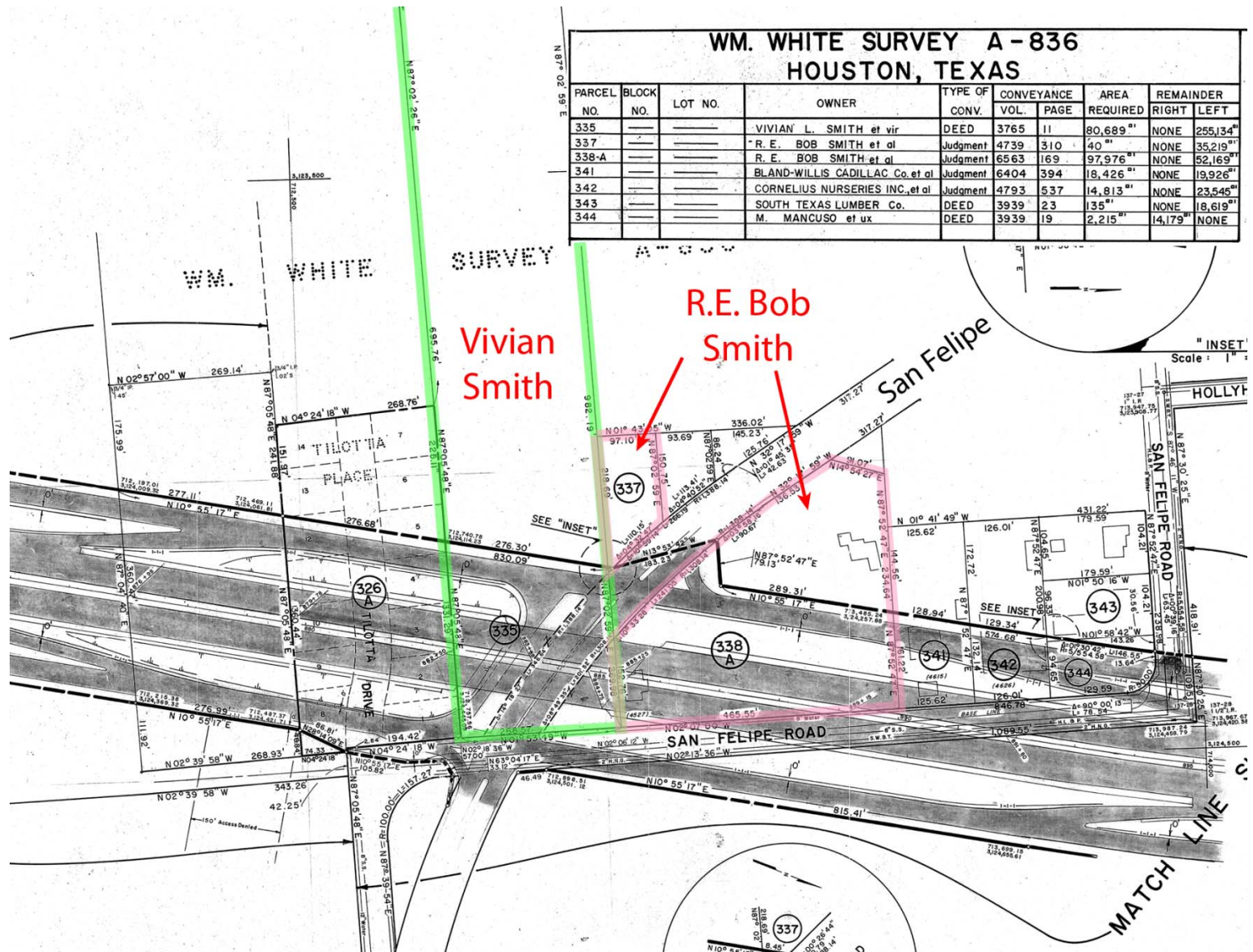
“By 1964 Smith owned  
more land than any other  
person in Harris County,  
over 11,000 acres”  
– Texas State Historical  
Association web site



# West Loop North of Westheimer



# West Loop at San Felipe



# December 1954

## Houston City Council initially rejects alignment due to perceived benefit for Smith

Houston Chronicle, December 23, 1954

“...a majority [of council members] indicated opposition on the argument that the routing would increase the value of vacant land owned by Robert E. Smith, political backer of the mayor”

**AT CITY HALL**

### Freeway Route Due for Defeat

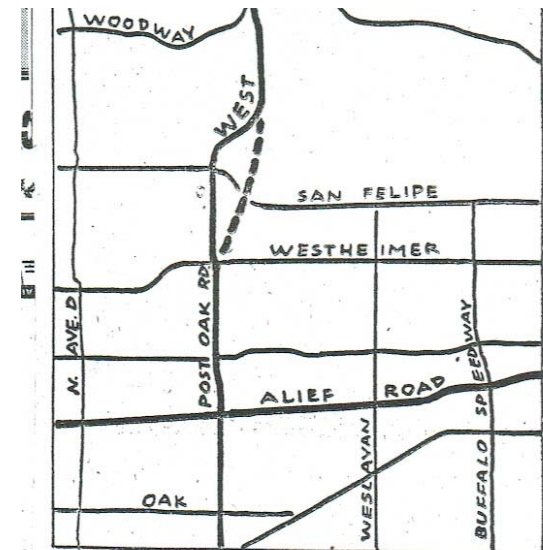
WED DEC 8 1954

Proposed routing of the West Loop Freeway between Buffalo Bayou and Westheimer. Some 250 feet of right of way is needed for the Freeway will be turned down, say way. Post Oak already has 150 feet of right of way, but after an on-the-ground inspection there are expensive improvements on the additional right of way that would have to be acquired when the Freeway route goes just east of Post Oak goes in.

The councilmen argued that this would eliminate a reverse curve on Post Oak just south of the bayou and right of way would be \$350,000 to adopted. And most of them \$450,000 cheaper than if Post Oak were widened, it is estimated.

Councilmen who made the tour with Ellifrit were Dr. Ira Kohler, George Marquette, Matt Wilson, Jim Heflin and George Kessler. Councilmen-elect Shirley Brakefield and W. Gail Reeves also were along.

“The planning commission had no choice one way or the other on the route, except that the route through the vacant areas would be less expensive, City Planning Director Ralph Ellifrit told the councilmen.



**PROPOSED FREEWAY**—This drawing shows the approximate routing of the proposed West Loop Freeway along Post Oak. The broken lines indicate proposed routing east of Post Oak through vacant land, where right of way is cheaper. Otherwise, the freeway generally follows Post Oak. Plans call for 250 feet of right of way. Post Oak now has 120 feet of right of way north of Westheimer and 100 feet south of that street.

## Loop Freeway Gets Tough Punch

BY MEL YOUNG  
Chronicle Staff

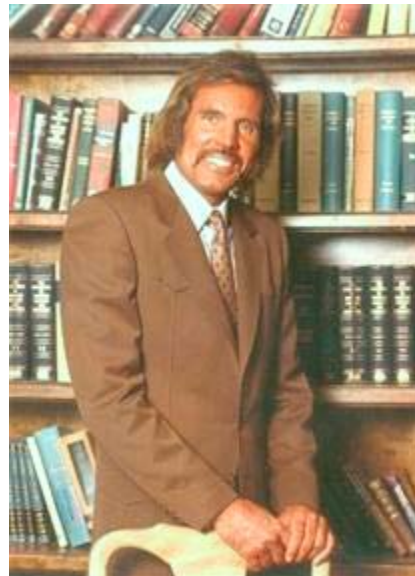
Four city councilmen have dealt what could be a knockout punch to the proposed \$25,000,000 West Loop Freeway.

12-23-54 Chr.  
mayor. It was a tie vote and the motion failed.

The motion was to set building lines only from W. Alabama to Alief Rd., one segment of the project which the city

# Socialite Candace Mossler (died 1976) and Developer Melvin Powers (died 2010)

- Candace Mossler began an affair with her nephew Melvin Powers in 1962
- Jacques Mossler, husband of Candace, moves to Florida after uncovering the affair
- Jacques Mossler murdered in Florida in June 1964, leaving \$33 million estate
- Candace Mossler and Melvin Powers accused; acquitted in sensational trial in 1966
- Powers becomes successful real estate developer, including the Arena Towers on US 59



# Timeline of Loop 610 Planning in Bellaire

Dec. 1954      Bellaire residents protest to city council

April 1955      City of Bellaire refuses to pay for right-of-way cost of \$2 million  
(= \$18 million in 2015 dollars )

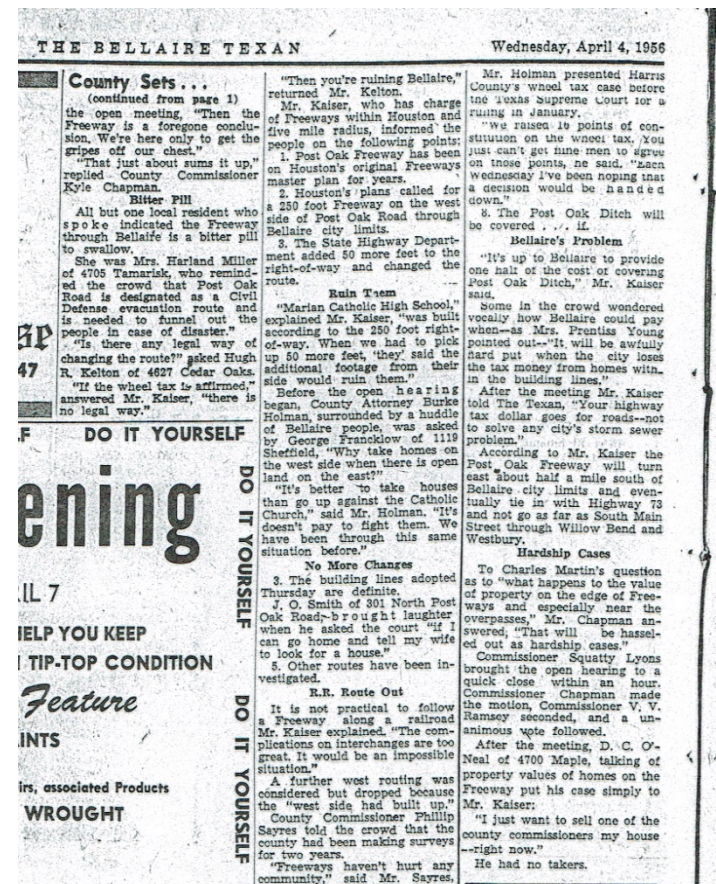


# Timeline of Loop 610 Planning in Bellaire

Feb. 1956 North of Bellaire Blvd,  
alignment shifted to  
the west side of Post  
Oak due to Marian  
Catholic High School

“When we had to pick up 50 more feet [from Marian Catholic High School], they said the additional footage from their side would ruin them”

“It’s better to take houses than go up against the Catholic Church,” said County Attorney Burke Holman. “It doesn’t pay to fight them.”



# Timeline of Loop 610 Planning in Bellaire

March 1956 Bellaire residents pack Harris County Commissioners Court to protest; Commissioners approve final alignment

**P.O. Freeway Hearing Thursday To Draw Many**

Bellaire residents are expected to jam the County Commissioners Court Room Thursday morning for the public hearing on the proposed Post Oak Freeway. "By the number of phone calls I've gotten," said Assistant County Attorney W. K. Richardson, "the room should be filled."

The meeting will be held at 10:30 a.m. on the eighth floor of the new Harris County Court House at San Jacinto and Preston.

"I've told each person calling to come on down, that he is welcome. That's the purpose of the public hearing," Mr. Richardson said.

"Any property owner along Post Oak Freeway or any other interested party can get up and talk or ask questions," the attorney declared.

All the County Commissioners are expected to be at the hearing.

Mr. Richardson will present the map of the Freeway and the application to set the building lines.

In Bellaire, residents within the lines and the fringes have indicated they will attend. Mrs. Prentiss Young, whose husband headed the petition committee to put the question of the Freeway to Bellaire voters, said she and a group of other women will attend, but their husbands could not get away at that time of the day from their offices.

Another Bellaire resident, whose home is within the building lines told The Texan she was going "to see what was going to be said."

**THE Bellaire TEXAN**


BELLAIRE'S OWN WEEKLY COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

Serving Bellaire, Flack Estates, Robindell, Brae Burn Terrace, Larkwood, Willow Bend, Sharpstown

Vol. 3—No. 7      Bellaire, Texas, Friday, March 23, 1956      5c—Subscription \$2.50 per year

**New Post Office For Bellaire?**

**Brass Conferring Here This Week**



And straw and bee-stung faces, arms and legs certainly weren't meant for each other. It was a rough night.

given First Aid by the Bellaire Emergency crew and taken to Jefferson Davis Hospital.

**Bellairites Protest**

**County Sets Final P. O. Freeway Lines**

The Harris County Commissioners Thursday unanimously adopted the building lines of Post Oak Freeway drawn by the Texas State Highway Department.

the County Commissioners Court to do so.

**Cut and Dried**

W. L. Bridgforth of 4633 Maple, who sought and never gained recognition to speak, told The Texan, "Never mind, it's all cut and dried, anyway."

A Bellaire woman after hearing Freeway plans from A. C. Kaiser chief of the Greater Houston Freeways for the Highway Department, commented in

(Continued on Page 4)

**Shops 'n Shoppers...**

**WAGNER'S HARDWARE TO HOLD GRAND OPENING THIS WEEKEND**

WAGNER'S HARDWARE IS Grand Opening values all around. For more details, turn

St. John Church, ship from Post Oak Willows officially w special r p.m. in the Building. A com posed of of Houston ficiate: Al man, past terian; W City Pre Williams. Elmer F itus, Cent D. Craig, and Morg Houston The M. E. Mc byterian who will ate on Meeting the St. headed mittee, Waller, Kurner, Barnhill

# Timeline of West Loop Pre-construction

- 1957-1961 Corridor for freeway cleared in Bellaire
- June 1960 190 of 273 needed parcels for West Loop acquired (both Bellaire and Houston)
- 1961 City of Houston sells 23 acres of Memorial Park to TxDOT for \$816,103 (= \$6.5 million in 2015 dollars)

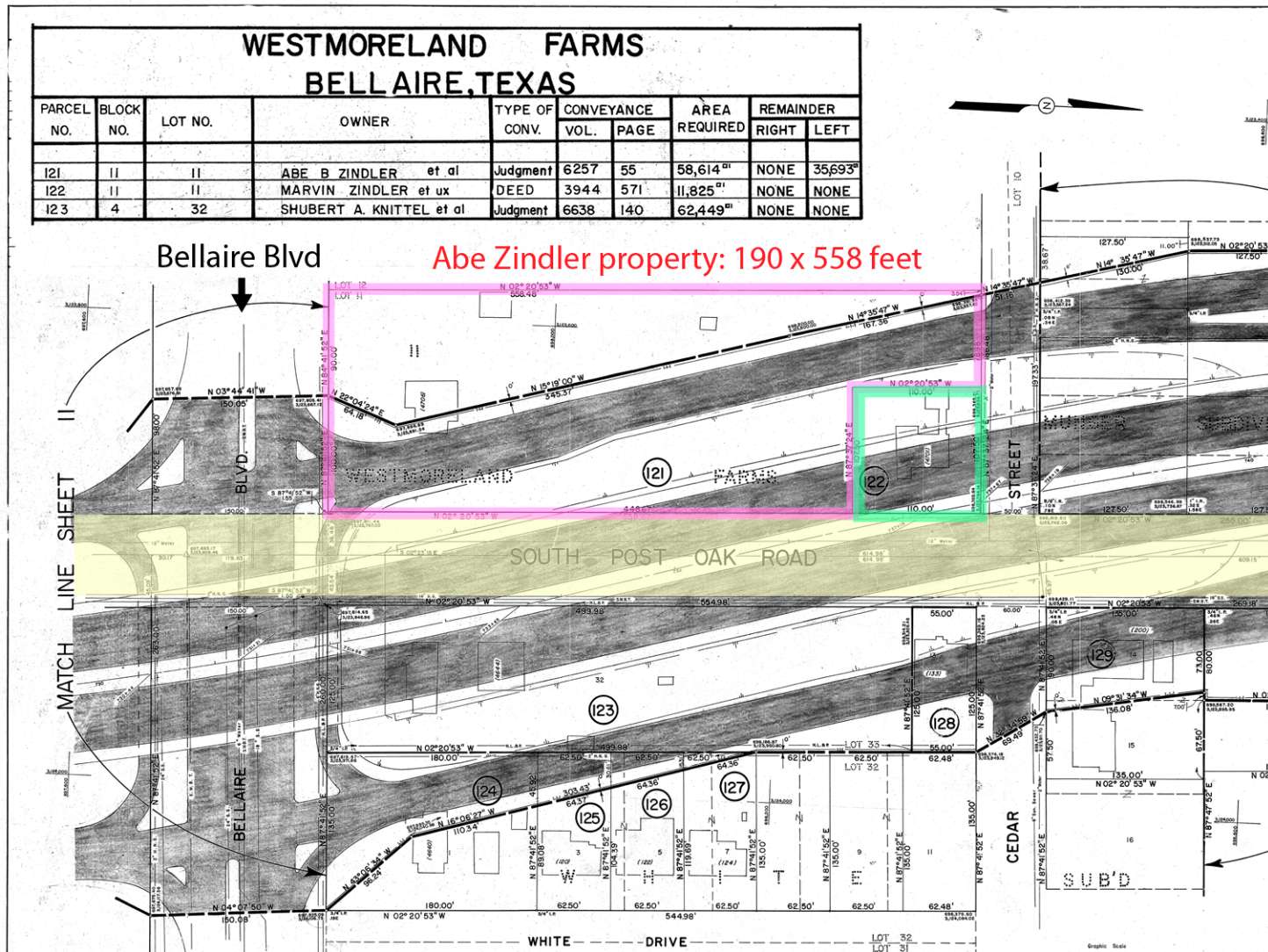


# Right of Way Clearance in Bellaire

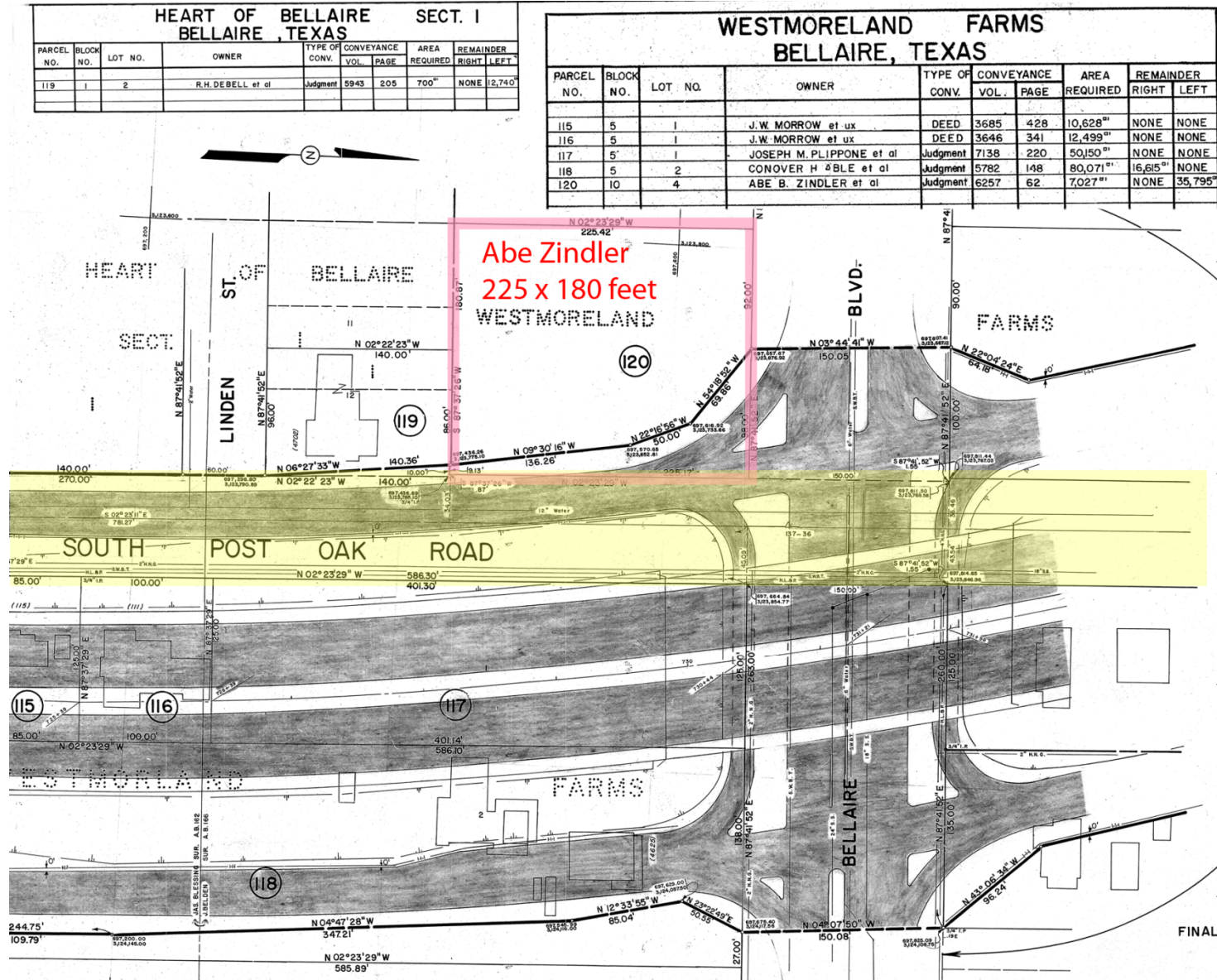


January 1960 photo

# Abe and Marvin Zindler Properties



# Abe Zindler Property, SW corner Bellaire Blvd



Abe Zindler quote in the  
Bellaire Texan,  
November 16, 1955:

"I'm not stuck on it, but  
what can we do about it.  
If they need it, and that's  
the best route, then we  
can't stop progress."

### **Bellairites—**

(Continued from Page 1)  
shack. Now we have remodeled it into a three-bedroom, two-bath home, just like we want it. We have plenty of room for our children and pets, and now . . . Phooey!"

Mrs. Jack Smith of 301 North Post Oak, who has lived at the corner of Post Oak and Spruce for 16 years said, "It makes no difference. They're going to do about what they want to do anyway."

Former Bellaire Mayor Abe

Zindler of 4706 Bellaire Blvd., whose land is next to the proposed Freeway, "I'm not stuck on it, but what can we do about it. If they need it, and that's the best route, then we can't stop progress."

Mrs. Prentiss Young, of 4637 Willow, who with Mr. Young were leaders in the initiative movement said, "We are absolutely 100 per cent dead level against it. If there's anything we could do, we certainly would." Mrs. Young said Mr. Young already had contacted the Texas Highway Department officials.

Another strong opponent of the Freeway, the O. J. Devilles at 4631 Oakdale whose property will be 20 feet away from the proposed highway, said, "If we weren't on it, we'd still be against it. We hate to see it go through. Everybody in our area is for a four-lane highway."

Frank Barber of 1110 North Post Oak said simply he was "resigned to it."

D. C. O'Neal of 4700 Maple whose land is on the west corner of Post Oak and Maple: "Nothing we can do about it. You can't stop progress. It would be just as bad for the folks on the east side if the land is taken off the west side. We'll have to make the best of it."

However, it is well-known that the Incarnate Word Convent at Old Richmond Road and Post Oak which has the newly completed Marian Catholic High School on the grounds, is upset by the proposed Freeway. The present plan lops off 140 feet or more from the convent land, putting the roadway within throwing distance of the new school plant.

"SOFT  
AS A  
KITTEN"



"A Competent and  
Conscientious  
Employment Service"

Owned and Operated  
by a Bellaire resident

**Peggy Lyman  
Personnel**

CA 7-0281

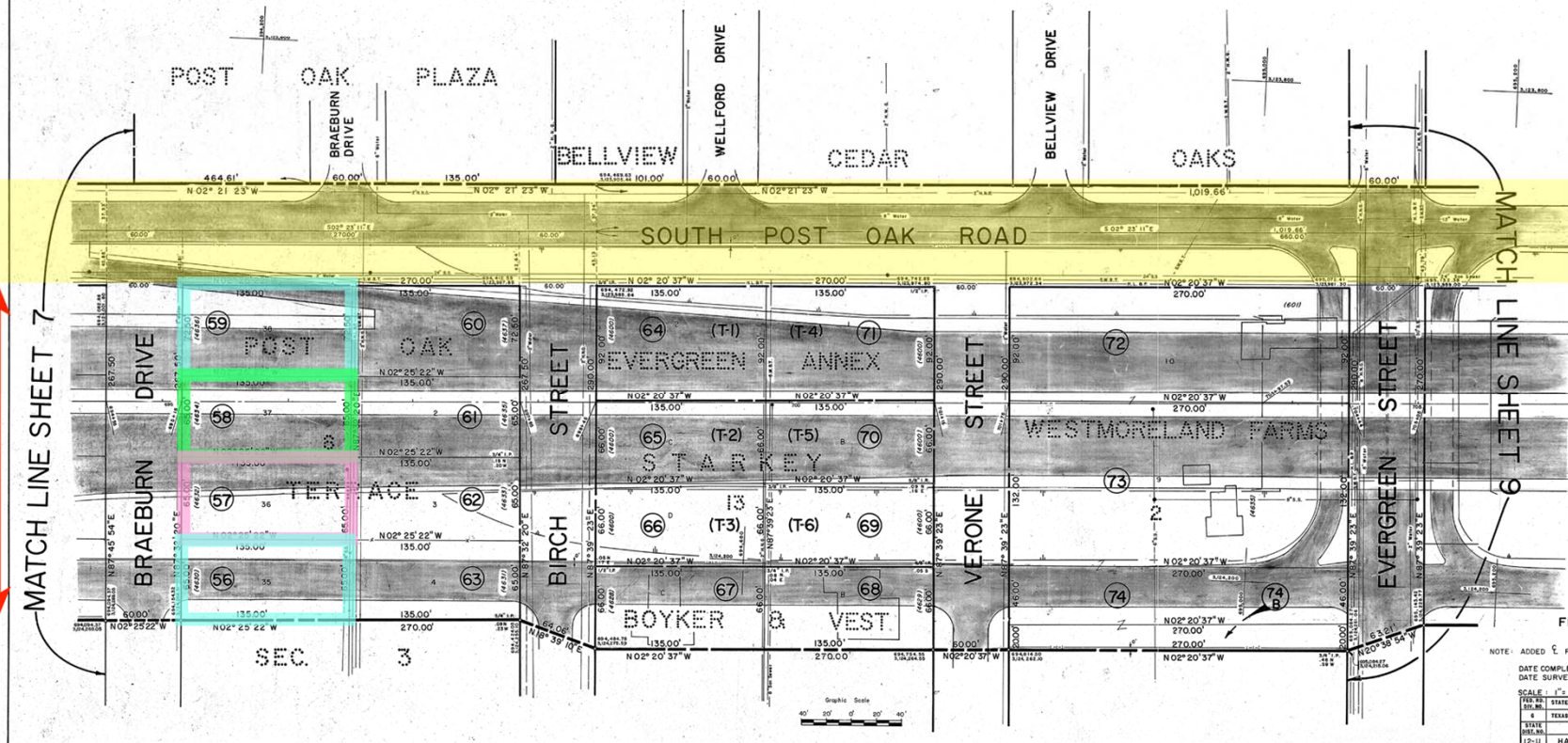
clerical sales technical

**7 Hour Service**

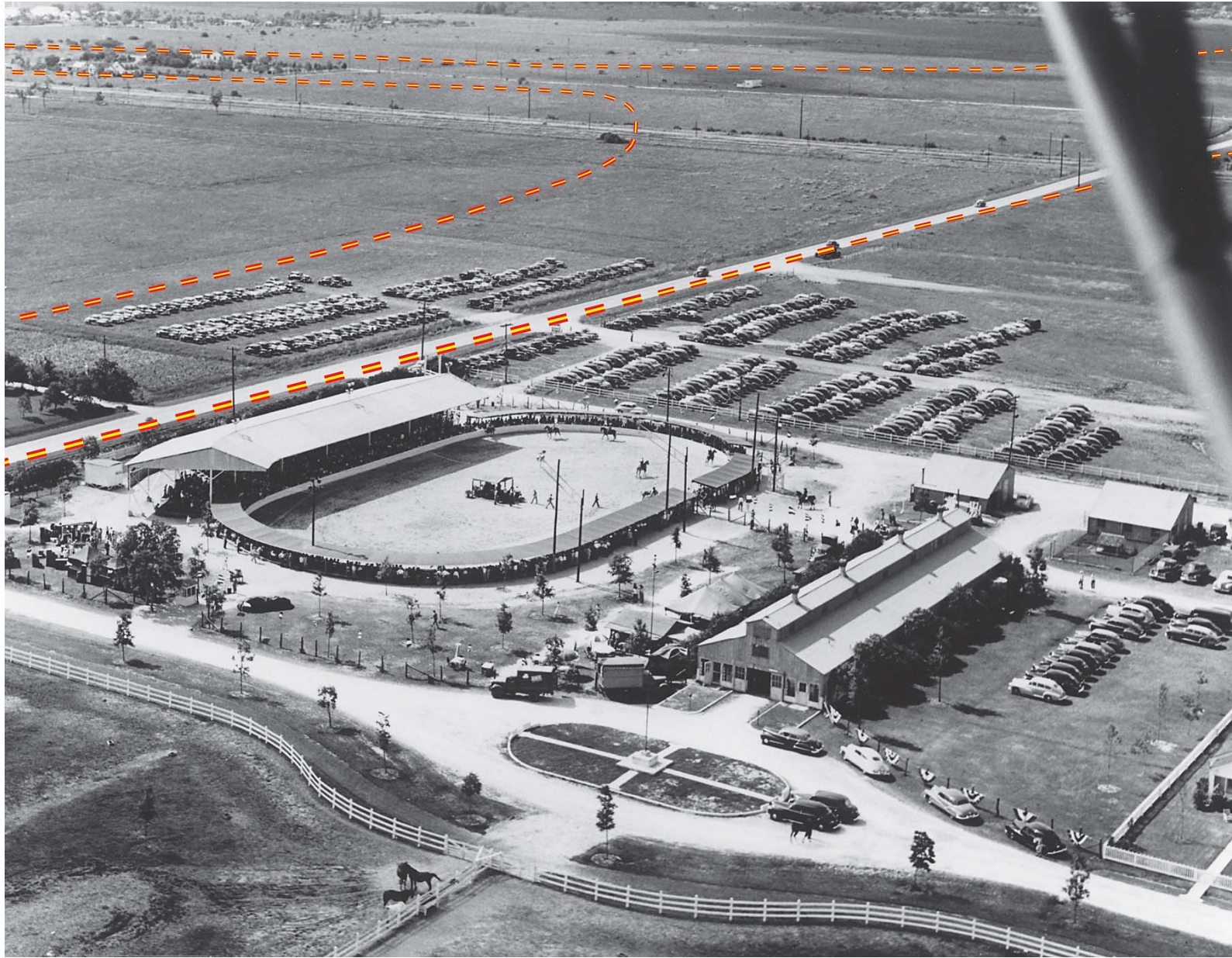
Dry Cleaning

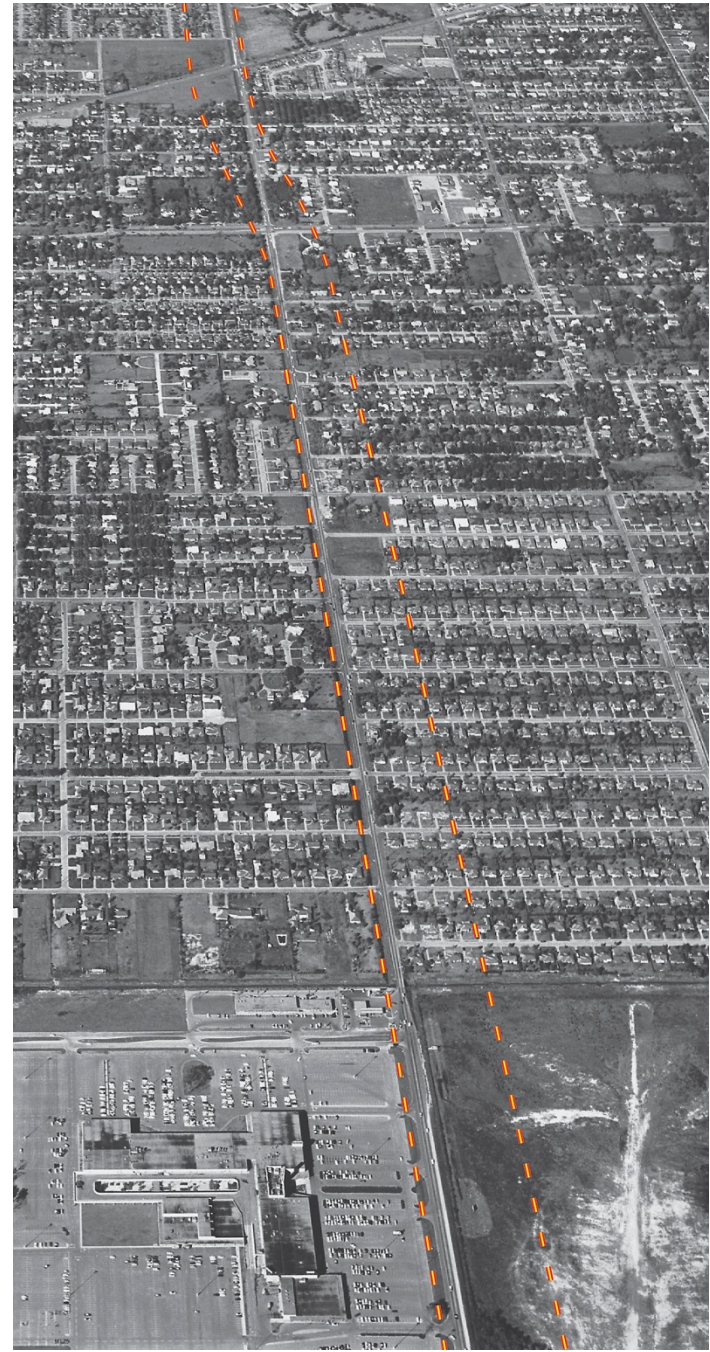
# Acquisition

BOYKER & VEST BELLAIRE, TEXAS									
PARCEL NO.	BLOOD NO.	LOT NO.	OWNER	TYPE OF CONVEYANCE		AREA REQUIRED	REMAINDER		
				CONV.	VOL. PAGE		RIGHT	LEFT	
67	---	C	TRANNIE D. FRAME et ux	DEED	3566 328	8.910"	NONE	NONE	
68	---	B	ARNOLD F. PAUL et ux	DEED	3566 324	8.910"	NONE	NONE	



# Pin Oak Stables, Grandstand left intact





# West Loop at Southwest Freeway

Opened in July 1962, the first modern-design 4-level interchange in Texas



Looking southeast circa 1960

## Design Inspired by the iconic stack in Los Angeles

- L.A. 4-level interchange completed in 1949, fully operational in 1953
- World's first four-level "stack" interchange



1952: A delegation of 56 Dallas leaders visits the interchange

## Construction circa 1961

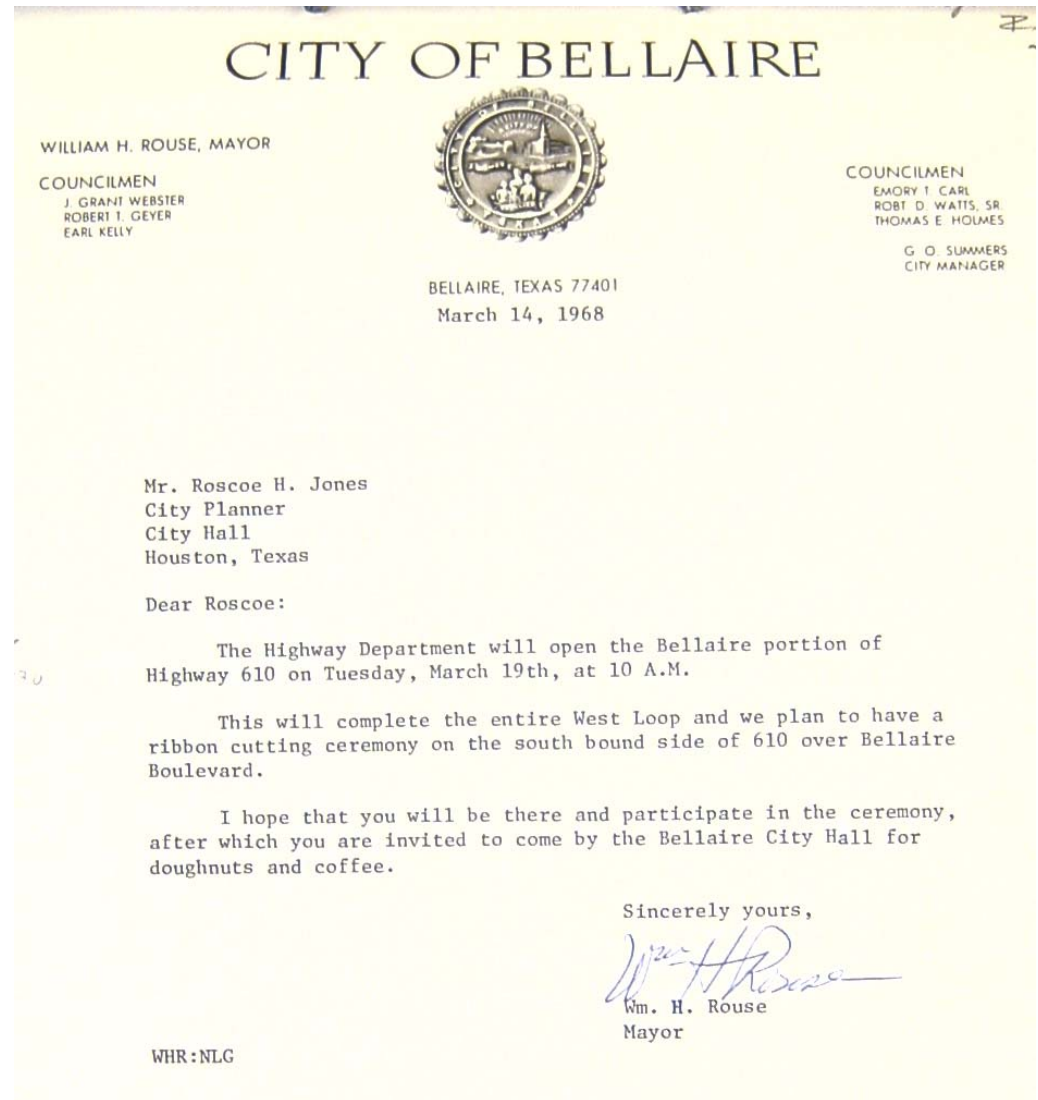


# West Loop in Bellaire Openings

April 28, 1965  
Frontage roads

March 19, 1968  
Main lanes, ceremony  
on Bellaire overpass

No photos of the  
opening were found, but  
the big scissors were  
almost certainly used



# First Practical Crash Attenuators in the U.S.

## October 1968

- Installed on the West Loop at US 59 and IH 10

Below: crash cushion at northbound West Loop at Southwest Freeway



Deadly hazard: concrete abutment at gore point (at 610/10)



# National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

## Signed by President Nixon on January 1, 1970

- Made it very difficult or impossible to build freeways where they were not wanted by locals
- By the mid-1970s most urban freeway-building plans were canceled in all U.S. cities



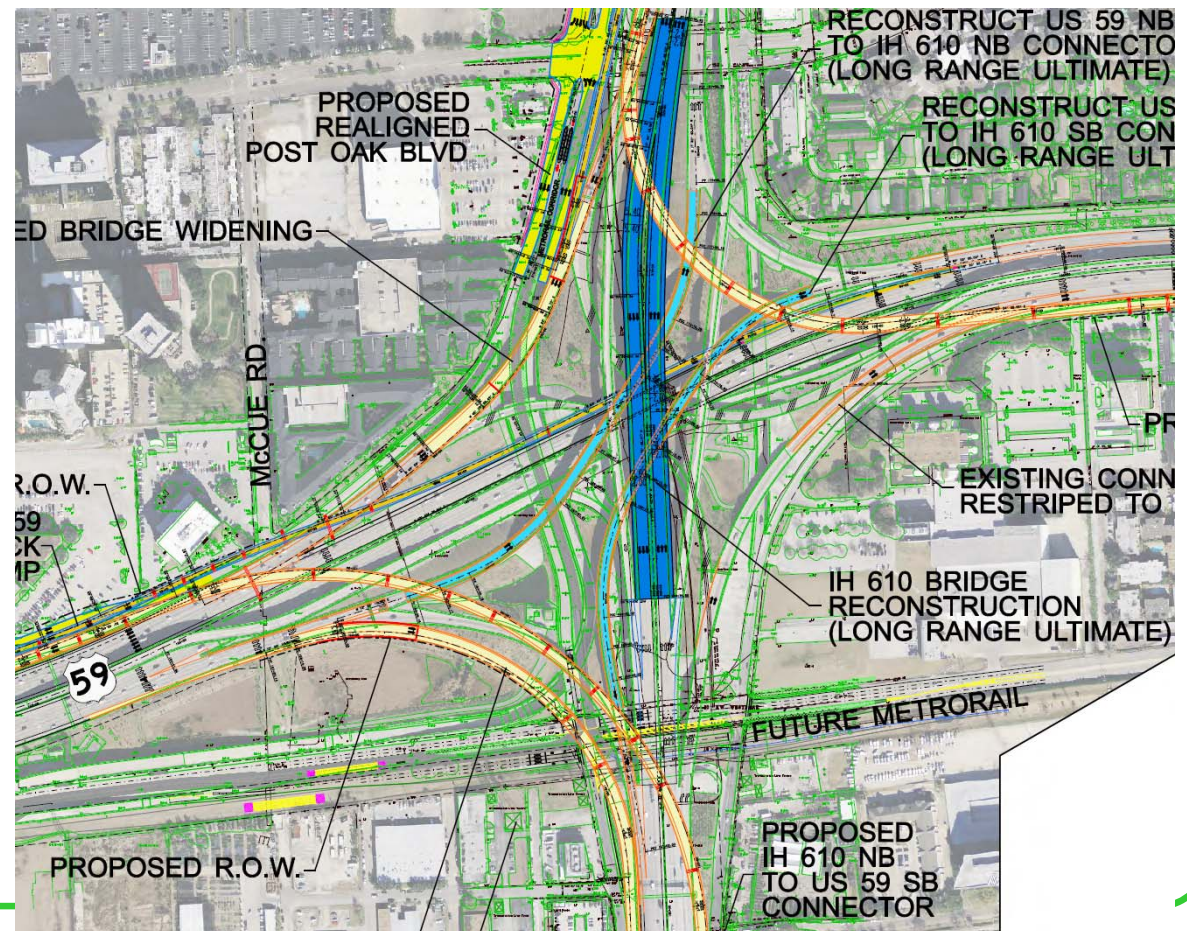
# Ammonia Truck Accident, May 11, 1976

- Truck came northbound through Bellaire, crashed off the connection ramp to southbound US 59 due to excessive speed
- 5 killed, around 50 hospitalized



- 1992: West Loop widening canceled
- 1999-2003: Repaving in Bellaire
- Starting in 2016: First contract of rebuilding West Loop – Southwest Freeway interchange

6 ramps will be rebuilt or modified





## History

# Sharpstown Opened March 13, 1955

## 20,000 Turn Out for Sharpstown Opening

By GEORGE BUGBEE  
Press Real Estate Editor

All roads led to Sharpstown yesterday as some 20,000 Houstonians turned out to help celebrate the opening of the fabulous \$400,000,000 residential development.

Befitting the dedication of a project expected to be twice as large as any other development in the world, the turn-out was believed the largest in Houston's long history of big residential openings.

### FHA Commissioner Speaks

Officials spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at Sharpstown's cornerstone—the trylon, in front of the \$100,000 administration building at Bellaire boulevard and Avenue F—one of the entrances to the 6500-acre project. Principal speaker was Norman P. Mason, commissioner of the Federal Housing Commission, who flew down from Washington to deliver the dedicatory address.

### Tribute to Builders

Developer Frank W. Sharp paid particular tribute to the build-

ers. "This was to have been merely a groundbreaking," he said. "We didn't dream they could possibly erect all of these houses this soon."  
"The developers and builders."  
(Turn to Page 2, Col. 1)

Printed and Edited To Meet Your Needs

THE HOUSTON POST, SUNDAY, MARCH 13, 1955

# You Are Invited to Attend Houston's Greatest Home Building Event

# Sharpstown

THE WORLD'S LARGEST RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

## Officially Opens Today at 3:45 p.m.



THIS IS THE MUCH DISCUSSED SHARPSTOWN TRY-LON CORNERSTONE THAT WILL HOLD THE TIME CAPSULE TO BE OPENED MARCH 13th, 2000 A.D.

You are invited to leave a message or memento in the time capsule addressed to any individual or to the public to be opened 45 years hence. Also to go into the box are newspapers from all over the nation, and messages from city, state and national officials.

The time capsule will be available to you in the Sharpstown Administration Building through Sunday, April 3.

Drive Out - Inspect the Sharpstown Homes and Attend the Dedication Ceremonies to be televised on Channel 2

Guest speaker will include Norman P. Mason of Washington, D. C., commissioner of the Federal Housing Administration, Mayor Roy Hofheinz, and others. Music will be provided by the Timpanobells. On hand for this historic occasion will be veterans, government officials and housing leaders from all over the country.

### Sharpstown

A CITY WITHIN A CITY



- Exceedingly 25,000 homes
- Country Clubs—Golf courses, swimming pools, tennis courts, etc.
- Churches and Schools
- Wide Paved Streets
- Community Shopping Centers
- Excellent Drainage
- Parks
- All Public Utilities



# A Big Success

One month after opening

- 124 homes sold
- 420 homes under construction
- 1120 available lots sold out

One year after opening

- 1000 homes built
- Big birthday party with cake 15 feet high and 20 feet wide
- Jarma Lewis climbed to the top to blow out the candle

## Never a Dull Moment at Sharpstown Party

Celebrating its first anniversary, Sharpstown shot the works in March with a giant birthday cake complete with candle, tele-coverage plus more mundane media, movie stars (Walter Pidgeon and Jarma Lewis—right) plus all the other promotional possibilities in an agog-to-zelotypia comprehensiveness of coverage.

(For the occasion, Builders Marvin Henry and Angelo Mascari paid more than \$5 million for 648 Sharpstown acres on which to build \$35 million worth of \$13,500-\$20,000 homes.)

A year ago Developer Frank W. Sharp paid \$6 million for



With stars in its icing . . .

4,000 acres of virgin prairie—as a site for his suburban city.



. . . Sharpstown burns candle at both ends on first birthday cake



Frank Sharp, 1906-1993

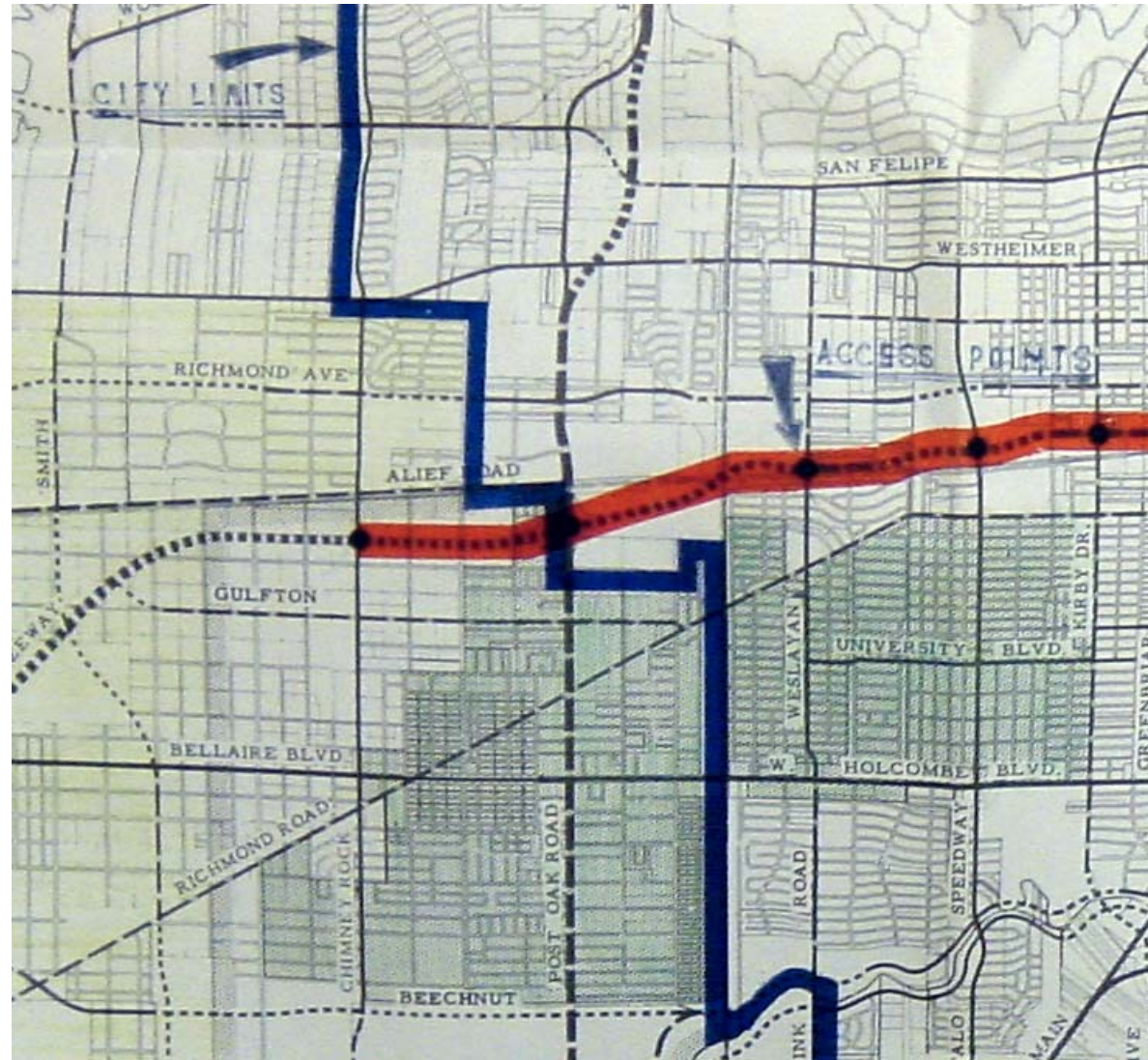
# Frank Sharp's **Wish List**

1. Southwest  
Freeway

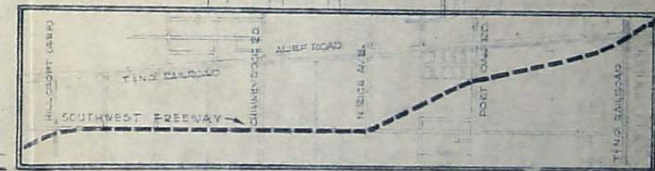
2. Astronauts

# January 1955 Southwest Freeway Alignment

- Through the north tip of Bellaire



- Near Saxon Street in Bellaire, then just north of Pin Oak Stables



# January 1956: Final alignment north of the City of Bellaire

**Southwest Freeway Will Not Touch Bellaire!**

The proposed Southwest Freeway will not touch Bellaire. County Commissioner Kyle Chapman, releasing information on the building lines of the giant superhighway, announces the new alignment puts the Southwest Freeway north of the SAAP railroad.

He also said the cloverleaf interchange at Post Oak Road has been moved north of the tracks and no Bellaire homes and property will be involved in the proposed freeway which will start in downtown Houston and travel west-southwest to the Fort Bend County Line.

Although these new lines have not been definitely approved by the County Commissioners Court, Mr. Chapman said he was "sure they will go through as planned."

The Southwest Freeway will continue north of the SAAP Railroad tracks approximately to north Chimney Rock Road, curve southwestward to Avenue F, curve south to Braes Bayou, crossing Richmond Road in the center of the Country Club Villas. It will continue southwestward crossing Roark Road at Keegan Bayou and continue to the Fort Bend County Line.

**THE Bellaire TEXAN**  
BELLAIRE'S OWN WEEKLY COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER  
Serving Bellaire, Flack Estates, Robindell, Brae Burn Terrace, Larkwood, Willow Bend, Sharpstown

Volume 2—Number 48      Bellaire, Texas, Wednesday, January 11, 1956      5c—Subscription \$2.50 per year

**Council OK's Ditch Cover**

City Council decided Monday night to cover the wide and deep drainage ditch running along Rice Ave. through the business district.

Mayor Hodel announced that property owners along the ditch had agreed to pay their share of the cost.

**They Agree**  
As planned now, the ditch will be covered from Bellaire Blvd.



## Expediting the Southwest Freeway to Sharpstown

- In 1957 efforts were focused on the inner loop section of the Loop
- Outside the loop on hold due to lack of right-of-way

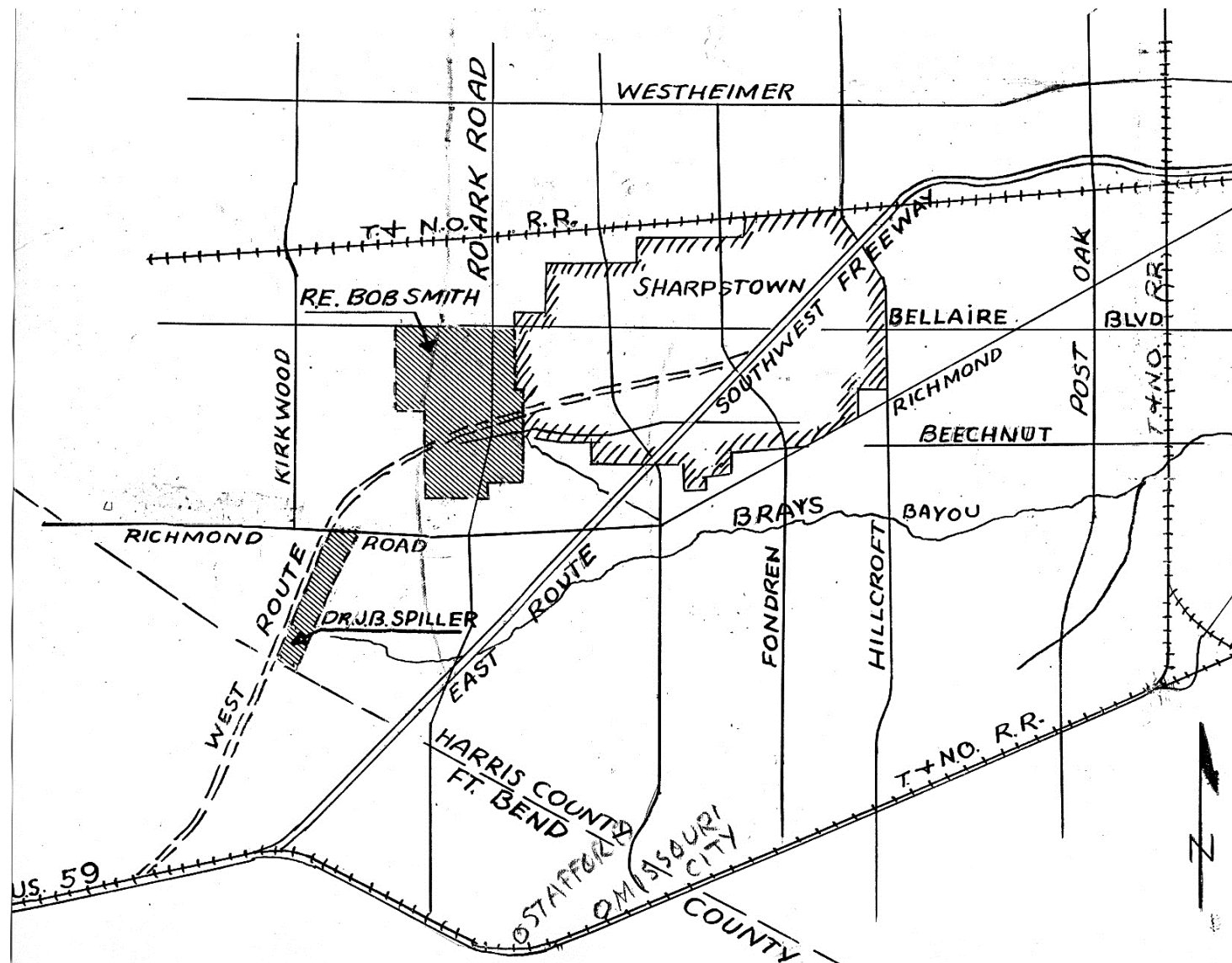


Southwest freeway in the Shepherd/Montrose area

## Construction at Hazard Street 1960



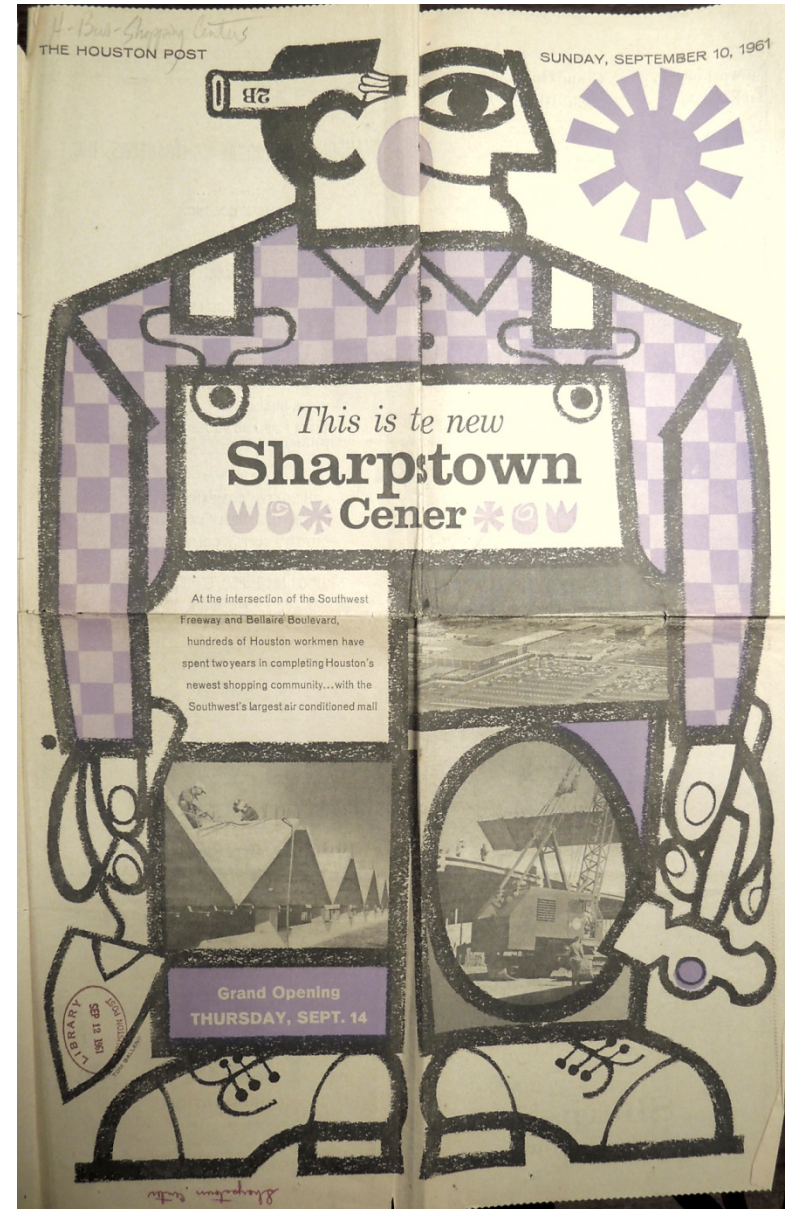
- R.E. “Bob” Smith offered to donate land if the freeway was realigned through his property.



# Landowners Unite to Thwart Smith

- September 1957  
Landowners offer to donate 10.5 miles of freeway right-of-way if construction of frontage roads would begin within a year
- 295 acres valued at \$2.5 million (\$21 million in 2015 dollars)  
Frank Sharp: 3.2 miles  
Others: 7.3 miles  
including J.K. Dorrance Estate, Fred J. Stancliff
- Frontage road construction underway in 1958 and dedicated in December 1961

# Sharpstown Center, Opened September 14, 1961



Opening of the first  
section of the  
Southwest Freeway  
July 26, 1961  
Elevated freeway at Montrose



# US 59 Montrose

- Elevated freeway sunk into a trench
- Completed in 2006
- Elevated section to the east proposed for trench in future downtown rebuild



Main lanes from  
downtown to  
Westpark opened  
July 24, 1962

Sharpstown has  
“Freeway Opening  
Specials”

# Sharpstown's Freeway Opening Specials

Tuesday, the 24th of July is the day that  
the Southwest Freeway officially opens.  
Now, just minutes after leaving work in downtown  
Houston, you will be able to enjoy  
all the conveniences of Country Club  
living in Sharpstown . . . including golf and swimming.  
Remember, there is a home to fit your needs and  
budget in Sharpstown, and now is the time to buy.



## SEE THESE HOMES TODAY



2918 Hlawatha. Builder, Winless-Sampson. GY 4-5760.  
All Brick Colonial  
4 Bedrooms, 2 1/2 Baths, Built-in Kitchen,  
Den with Real Fireplace, Separate  
Dining Room, Living Room. Air-Conditioned. Central Heat.



8118 Edgemoor. Builder, J. B. Building Co., Inc. GY 4-5780.  
All Brick Colonial  
3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths, Built-in Kitchen, Den with  
Real Fireplace, Separate Dining Room, Living Room.  
Air-Conditioned. Central Heat.



8819 Rowan. Builder, Charles V. Blanton. GY 4-3821, GY 4-4635.  
All Brick Early American  
3 Bedrooms, 2 Baths, Built-in Kitchen,  
Painted Den with Real Fireplace, Separate Dining Room,  
Living Room. Air-Conditioned. Central Heat. Carpeted.



7811 Dashwood Drive. Builder, Cavalier Homes. GY 4-7537, RA 3-3486.  
All Brick Rustic Contemporary  
4 Bedrooms, 2 1/2 Baths, Built-in Kitchen, Den with  
Real Fireplace and Walk-in Bar, Separate Dining Room,  
Living Room. Air-Conditioned. Central Heat. Carpeted.

U.S. Highway 290



Sharpstown  
Houston's most complete  
community . . . Churches,  
Schools, Country Club,  
Shopping Center . . .  
all just minutes away

Sharpstown  
Only minutes away  
from downtown Houston  
after Tuesday

# September 19, 1961

Announcement that Manned Spacecraft Center would be in Houston



Front:

Walter Shirra (1923–2007),  
Deke Slayton (1924-1993),  
John Glenn (born 1921),  
Scott Carpenter (1925-  
2013)

Back:

Alan Shepherd (1923-1998),  
Gus Grissom (1926-1967),  
Gordon Cooper (1927-2004)

# Frank Sharp wanted the Astronauts in Sharpstown

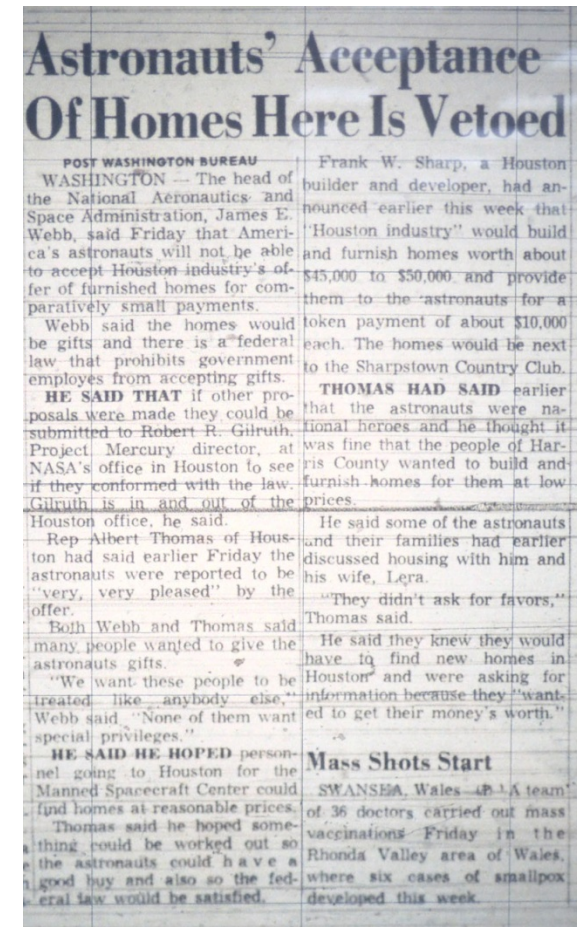
- Late February 1962, Sharp offers homes to the astronauts
  - In the Country Club Estates
  - Homes valued at \$45,000 to \$50,000
  - Price to astronauts \$10,000

2015 dollars

\$360,000-\$400,000

\$80,000

- Rejected by NASA head James Webb on March 2, 1962
  - Federal employees could not receive gifts



# March 6: Each astronaut offered a home in the 1962 Parade of Homes in Sharpstown

*H-Astronauts*

**HOUSTON CHRONICLE** **FINAL**

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Houston: Cloudy, warmer. Low tonight, 55. High Thursday, 75.

Southeast Texas: Cloudy, warmer.

More Data, Sec. 1, Page 16

Vol. 61 No. 145

HOUSTON, TEXAS, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 1962

10 Cents

**GLENN ONLY ABSENTEE; ALL OFFERED HOMES**

## 6 Astronauts Hold First Planning Session Here

*Ho. Chronicle 3-7-62*

As six of this nation's seven astronauts came to Houston to meet Wednesday in a secret all-day briefing session, the Houston Home Builders Assn. made a "no strings attached" offer to give each one his choice of any home in the 1962 Parade of Homes in Sharpstown.

The astronauts met at the Houston headquarters of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 3201 Brock, off Telephone.

The only absentee was Lt. Col. John H. Glenn, Jr., who, NASA officials said, was unable to come here from Cape Canaveral "because of a tight schedule."

The purpose of the Houston meeting, which may continue Thursday, was to discuss with engineers, scientists and technicians the progress on Project Gemini, NASA's program to put a two-man spacecraft in orbit around the moon.

This program will precede Project Apollo, to put a man on the moon.

Spacecraft for these projects will be designed and tested at the Manned Spacecraft Center to be built on the shores of Clear Lake.

While the astronauts gathered in Houston for the first time, they had been preceded here by their wives, who have quietly visited Houston to look for homes and schools for their children.

The Home Builders Assn. made its home offer in a letter to Col. John (Shorty) Powers, public affairs director for the astronauts. Powers has not yet replied. He "hid" the astronauts Tuesday night.

Powers shields them from the public, saying when and where they will be seen.

Gordon Nielson, 3315 Longfield Circle, vice-president of the association group, said, "No builders are seeking personal publicity or thanks. This offer is made by Houston builders as a sincere gesture of appreciation to the astronauts and their families."

The letter, signed by H.H.B.A. president Angelo Mascari, 330 Isalde, said the builders would give the homes free or on any other acceptable basis.

A similar offer made by builder Frank Sharp has been refused by N.A.S.A. officials.

The homes to be exhibited in the Parade of Home June (See VISIT, Page 8)

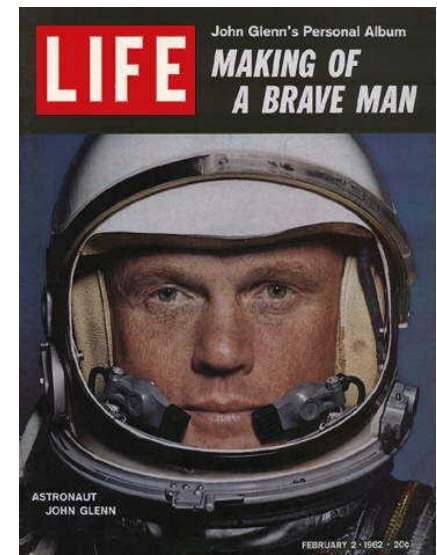


*Chronicle Photo by Larry Evans*

**ASTRONAUTS MEET IN HOUSTON FOR FIRST TIME**—Six of the seven United States astronauts met in Houston for the first time Wednesday—then went under cover. Houston didn't get a chance to greet the astronauts, as their "mouthpiece" whisked them around the city dodging the public and newsmen. They attended an all-day secret briefing session at NASA's offices at 3201 Brock. The astronauts flew to Houston Tuesday and Tuesday night in groups of two. Shown outside NASA's Houston headquarters, they are, left to right, Capt. Virgil I. Grissom, Comdr. Alan B. Shepard, Jr., Comdr. W. M. Schirra, Jr., R. R. Gilruth, director of the Manned Spacecraft center, Lt. M. S. Carpenter, Maj. Leroy G. Cooper, Jr., and Maj. Donald K. (Deke) Slayton, the next man slated for an orbital flight.

# NASA and White House not happy

- Life Magazine \$500,000 exclusive contract (\$570,000 per astronaut in 2015 dollars) had already upset many at NASA, especially director James Webb



- Issue simmered during March, with White House involvement in early April

# Homes Accepted....Then Declined

- March 29  
Astronauts announce that they will accept the homes
- April 2  
Press reports that the issue was escalated to the White House
- April 3  
Astronauts decline offer via their representative at a Washington DC press conference

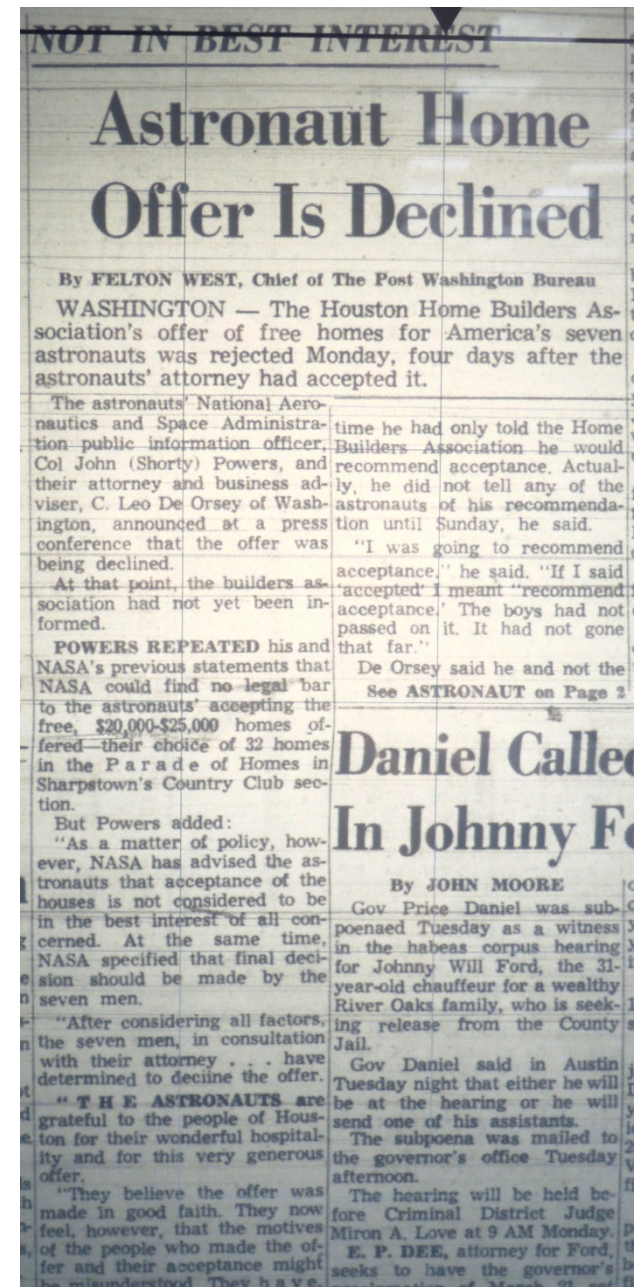
NASA Spokesman:

“NASA has advised the astronauts that acceptance of the homes is not considered to be in the best interest of all concerned.”

Translation: You better not accept the homes!

Astronauts' Spokesman

“It didn't take too much brains to figure out that it would make the boss mad if they accepted and would keep a controversy going.”



# Astronauts welcomed to Houston July 4, 1962



# Sharpstown Parade of Homes on Rowan Street July 1-15, 1962

**\$1,500,000 EXTRAVAGANZA  
OF NEW FASHIONS IN  
LUXURY LIVING!** **THE BIG 1962**  
FOR MODEST BUDGETS

**PARADE  
OF HOMES  
AND HOME SHOW**

**SHARPSTOWN  
TODAY THROUGH  
JULY 15TH**

Sponsored by the  
Home Builders Research  
Corporation of the  
Houston Home Builders  
Association

Featuring the  
Premier of **LIFE'S** "HOME for  
BETTER LIVING"  
First Showing Anywhere of a Gold Medal Home, presented by LIFE Magazine

- See ... 33 Sparkling New Model Homes priced \$17,300 to \$24,000!
- See ... New and Beautiful Furnishings, Decor, Color Schemes!
- See ... Every New Feature that Makes Living More Fun and Lots Work!
- See ... the Texas-size Home Show Tent! 40 Exhibits ...  
New Ideas for Homes, for Living for Convenience!
- Register ... for thousands of dollars in free prizes!

Admission: Adults 50¢ ... children under 12 admitted free

**HOURS:** SATURDAY & SUNDAY, 1 to 10 P.M., WEEKDAYS, 5 to 10 P.M.  
**SPECIAL HOURS JULY 4th 1 TO 10 P.M.**

Directions: Bellair Blvd. to Pella Dr.  
turn left and follow signs to Parade Homes

# Parade of Homes

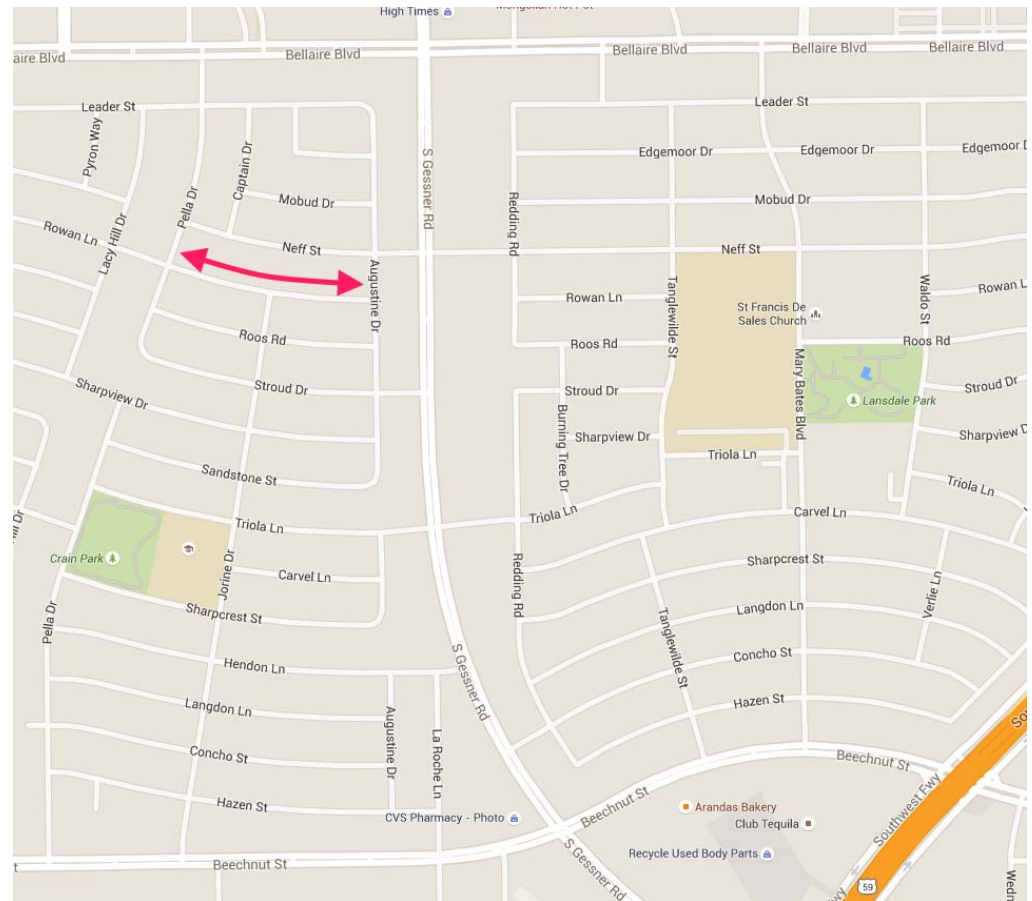
## Sharpstown 1962

- 8800-8900 block of Rowan
- Expected attendance: 200,000

## Previous locations

- 1952 Edgewood
- 1953 Oak Forest
- 1954 four subdivisions
- **1955 Meyerland**
- 1956 Glenbrook Valley
- 1957 Briarmeadow
- 1958 Sharpstown
- 1959 Westbury
- 1960 Walnut Bend
- 1961 Briargrove Park

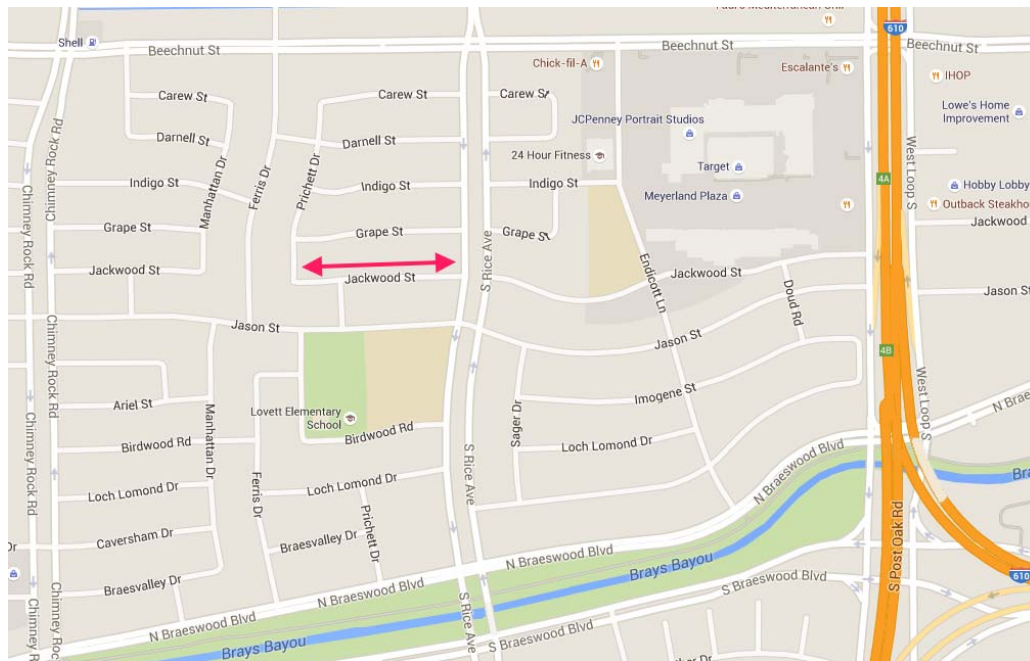
## Location of Rowan home site in Sharpstown



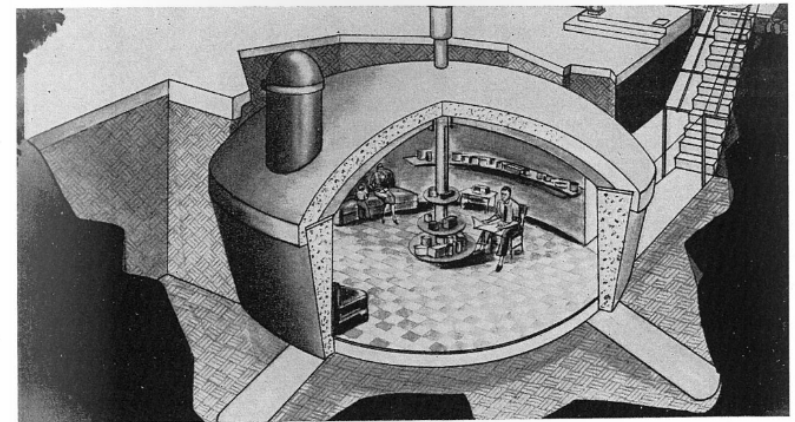
# 1955 Meyerland Parade of Homes

- 5100 block of Jackwood
- 30 homes
- 8 original homes torn down
  - 7 McMansions
  - 1 vacant lot
- 5102 Jackwood featured an underground bomb shelter

“The well-publicized H-bomb shelter is reached through a stairway off the kitchen. Erected by Clean Span Engineering Company, the shelter has been highly praised by national civil defense experts.”



## FAMILY SIZE BOMB SHELTER!



THE FIRST H-BOMB SHELTER ever erected in a speculative house is featured in the home at 5102 Jackwood sponsored by the Houston Home Builders Association. While national civilian de-

A separate air intake through the filter periscope changes the air every 15 minutes. It will accommodate up to 10 persons comfortably for a week or more. It has a diameter of 14 feet and

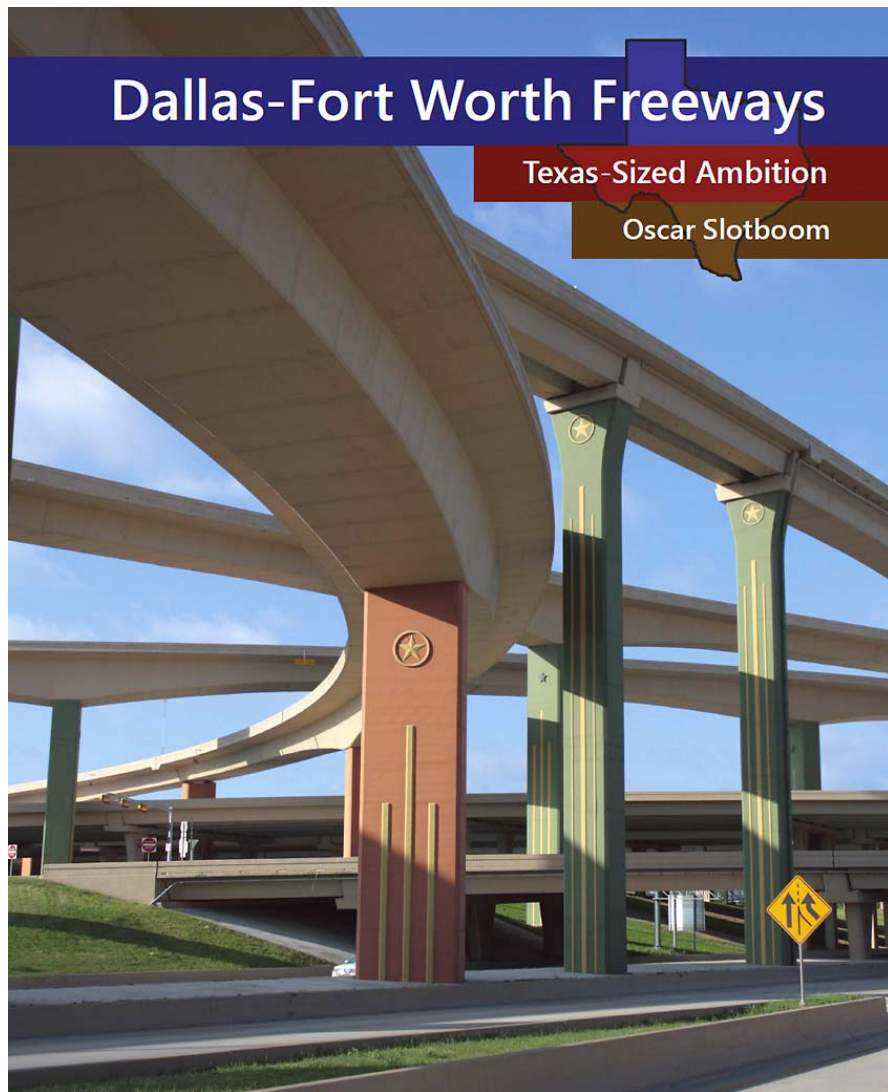
# Frank Sharp Finally gets His Freeway



April 9, 1965, opening of main lanes through Sharpstown

# Dallas-Fort Worth Freeways, Texas-Sized Ambition

[www.DFWFreeways.com](http://www.DFWFreeways.com)



## Featuring

- Celebrations and opening stunts
- Central Expressway
- Stemmons Freeway and the JFK assassination
- SH 114 and the Delta 191 crash
- Texas Stadium
- “How Motorists and Other Living Things Can Find Happiness in the Dallas Freeway System” narrated by Mel Blanc

Thank You

Questions

