

The Cypress Creek area experienced a body blow to its economic structure with the loss of \$135,000,000 in direct costs due to the flooding accompanying Hurricane Harvey. Probably a like amount was lost in lost business sales, lost salaries, reduction of the tax base due to lower valuations, abandonment of homes and departures of jobs/businesses such as HP.

Harris County floods, Cypress Creek floods, it's our history and our nature due to our location and topography. But does it have to be so bad? What's going on in the Cypress Creek area?

It seems we are victims of our own economic success. When we build highways, subdivisions, shopping plazas and edifices beyond description, we interfere with nature. Despite ongoing debate, it seems climate change is causing more intense rain events. Coupled with the fact that we have paved over much of our natural retention/detention areas, more water is entering our streams. The streams cannot cope. Braes Bayou in Houston is an excellent example. As a child here in Houston I never saw Braes Bayou flood, principally because it could take a 17" rain and not overtop. Today, flooding of the bayou starts with a 6" rain. We need to make way for more water.

Harris County Flood Control District is in charge of taming our streams. Over the last 30 years or so they have spent over \$2.1 billion on flood mitigation around the county. Despite the fact that the Cypress Creek watershed is the largest watershed in Harris County by both length of stream and area drained, Cypress Creek has only received six-tenths of one percent of the flood control monies for flood mitigation. We are way behind.

We need to draw the distinction between routine maintenance of streams and flood mitigation. Naturally we want the streams cleaned of debris. That's a routine duty. But what Cypress Creek is crying out for is mitigation. Mitigation can come in many forms: perhaps a super successful levee like the one which protected Inverness Forest from five floods, including Harvey.

Surrounding neighborhoods flooded but Inverness Forest was safe - a true success. Where levees can't be built, flood walls may serve to hold back the flood. Likewise, detention facilities, which range in size from the local developer's pond to large structures like the Addicks & Barker dams, can store excess waters for controlled release into the stream. Cypress Creek has some detention structures but far too few and too small for the largest watershed in the county. Construction of secondary channels and widening and deepening of the main channel can promote water flow. Moving away from flood prone areas also reduces risk for the citizenry and promotes the development of more detention space. So, our mitigation techniques are many and varied, but also absent in the Cypress Creek watershed. The time for action is now.

Harvey was an exceptional storm. Cypress Creek flowed six feet over the bridge at Champion Forest Drive during Harvey. But a year and a half earlier water flowed two feet over the same bridge during a 'rain event': the Tax Day flood. It should have been a wakeup call for the Cypress Creek area but was not. Let's not squander our hard-earned Harvey experience with prevarication and equivocation. The paradigm shift has arrived in the Cypress Creek area and the time for action is now. A flood education meeting will be held at Northgate Country Club on June 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm for all interested parties. Later in June, County Judge Ed Emmett has promised a public meeting at John Wesley UMC to explain the flood bond issue. In August,

Lone Star College-UP will hold a half day seminar on flooding and the local area. Let's learn about our options, express our desires to our elected officials and make our Cypress Creek area resilient and flood resistant. Let's roll!

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