

Plans Proceeding for Statues on MLK Blvd.

Modification is Coming to South Park

By Anthony Taylor, Sr.
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It's time for change in South Park and the community is ready for it to take place.

The Southeast Community Redevelopment Corporation, a

501(c)(3) non-profit corporation designed to redevelop the South Park Community, discussed plans in 2001 to convert Martin Luther King Boulevard into a civil rights street with statues of devoted leaders from MacGregor Park to Airport Boulevard. Mastermind Pastor Marvin Delaney's dream of the conversion will come true. Delaney, pastor of South Park Baptist Church located at 5830

Van Fleet, has dreamed for over four years of turning MLK Boulevard into a truly dedicated memorial for its namesake slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The advertising year for the statues is 2006 and the funding year is 2007," said Delaney. "Depending upon the funding, we should start building the first statue on MLK's birthday in 2007."

Southeast Community Development Corp. in collaboration with the South Park/Sunnyside Super Neighborhood's MLK Corridor Project calls for building six mini-parks along MLK Boulevard and featuring statues of noted civil rights leaders.

"The plan envisions the city acquiring houses on both sides

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of MLK Boulevard to turn the land into mini-parks," said Delaney. "We want the statues to be on both sides of MLK. Hopefully, the City of Houston will go through the rights of eminent domain condemning the project rapidly."

Pastor Delaney wants the boulevard to reflect promoting civil rights equality to ensure segregation and discrimination are not revisited. Cost of the project has not been estimated, he said, but this year the public will have more information about the cost, statues and who will attach what portion of the funds.

Currently, civil rights leaders Caesar Chavez, Medgar Evers, Mohandas "Mahatma" Gandhi and Thurgood Marshall will be honored with statues. According to Delaney, each statue will be white and about eight feet tall and feature a water fountain, flowers and symbols of the leaders' struggles.



Pastor Marvin Delaney has a dream for MLK Blvd.

Each great and admired leader is respected for making a difference. Chavez led the United Farm Workers movement. Evers was one of the first martyrs of the civil rights movement and wanted to change his native state, Mississippi. Gandhi led a nonviolent protest and long struggle for India's independence from Britain. King also led nonviolent

protests for civil rights struggle and wanted freedom for Blacks and everyone. Marshall fought for civil rights as an attorney and became a U.S. Supreme Court justice.

According to Delaney, King's statue will be built first. He also said the Shrine of the Black Madonna is one of the collaborators and King's statue will be placed on the vacant lot next to

it. "We are really looking forward to the statues," he said. "Our plans are to start with Martin Luther King's statue and include all of the things that he has done by setting up a memorial and a small mini park in collaboration with the churches in the area."

Delaney said they need help and sponsors from every sector and would love to receive donations, because it is a grassroots movement. Many fundraisers have been planned and they are trying to put them into action.

"We are raising the funds

through the grassroots movement among people in collaboration with the City of Houston," he said. "We plan on seeking help from the city council and getting the schools involved through a project process with Jesse H. Jones High School and the nearby elementary schools will help with fund raising. Although we have not received any response from council members at this time, it will not stop our plans to finish what we started."

He wants MLK to translate into a historic resource that consists of and hopefully has school buses giving tours of the boulevard and transferring it into a tourist area as part of the City of Houston's efforts.

"When the project is finished it will help people to expand on their knowledge, because reading the sides of the statues will give them a real idea of what the leaders did to help mankind," he said. "We hope to turn MLK Boulevard into a mega place

where buses will come through and let people take pictures. We want people from other counties and states to come visit MLK Boulevard. This will also bring many dollars in for the City of Houston, because some of the travel will have to book hotels and also find places to eat. The citizen's of South Park will be so proud of the community."

The pastor said they are ready for the City of Houston and other sponsors to start attaching dollars to the educational, beneficial and long awaited project.

"The public can't wait for this to happen and they love to be part of the changes for the community," said Delaney. "We have many ideas and we need more ideas for and from the community. If someone wants to get involved please just contact me at the church."

Contact Delaney at 713-644-1666 for more information.