

Neighborhood News Alerts Archive - 2007

Deconstruction and Debris Removal on Chaucer St., 19 September

(Posted September 2007)

As reported in a previous [Neighborhood News advisory](#), Rice has plans to build a new university-owned child-care center on the west side of Chaucer Street between University and Rice Blvd. As part of the site preparation for this new facility, [deconstruction](#) of three existing buildings recently commenced at 5512, 5508 and 5502 Chaucer.

On Wednesday 19 September, contractors will remove the first loads of demolition debris from the project site. To avoid negative impacts for area businesses, this first removal is scheduled to commence at 6 a.m. and is estimated to take approximately three hours. During this time, Chaucer Street should remain open to normal traffic, but for the safety of those who park on the street, parking will be restricted in front of 5502, 5505, 5508, 5512 and 5519 Chaucer. These property owners have all been contacted concerning this temporary parking restriction.

Following this first removal, two additional debris removal efforts are anticipated, and parking during these times may be similarly restricted. The university will provide as much notice as possible of these temporary restrictions, and we thank our neighbors for their patience as we prepare a place for the children of Rice employees to safely learn and grow.

For additional information, please contact the [Office of University Relations](#).

Rice Stadium and Track Stadium Temporarily Closed

Posted October 2007

For years, Rice has opened some major athletic venues to our Houston neighbors for their personal fitness needs, and even provides free parking in the university's Greenbriar lot for those who visit the campus for such recreation and exercise. Unfortunately, the university recently felt compelled to restrict public access to two campus athletic facilities, Rice Stadium and the university's track and soccer stadium, due to the actions of a small but significant number of campus visitors. Personal trainers, many of whom have taken to using the grounds of this non-profit institution for their for-profit enterprises without insurance or even permission, subject the university to unacceptable risks. Moreover, widespread littering inside and outside of campus athletic venues, and sanitary issues involving dogs and--incredibly--even people relieving themselves on the athletic fields have alcontributed to Rice's decision to temporarily close these major athletic facilities to public use.

Rice is now exploring ways in which these facilities may be reopened for the enjoyment of responsible campus visitors, but with sufficient safeguards to assure that unacceptable behavior is curtailed for the health and safety of all. We ask for the patience of our Houston neighbors as we try to find a way to strike an appropriate balance between welcoming those who respect the rights and property of others, and those who have demonstrated that they do not.

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Stadium Sound System Improvements Near Completion

Posted October 2007

Thanks to the efforts of a “Quieter Campus Committee” composed of representatives of several university offices, a final resolution to longstanding neighborhood concerns about stadium sound spill is now at hand.

Although Rice neighbors have long enjoyed the use of major campus athletic facilities, and many turn out regularly to support their neighborhood teams, the issue of loudspeaker volume and sound spill from these venues has been a concern to some. While the sound systems at university athletic venues have always conformed to guidelines set forth in the city's sound ordinance, by working with professional acoustical engineers to seek creative solutions that go beyond the letter of the law, Rice was able to identify options which assure that stadium volume at the university's baseball, track and football stadiums are pitched for the enjoyment of the fans and with maximum consideration for nearby neighbors.

The first stadium to be addressed was Reckling Park, home of frequent College World Series contenders the Rice Owls baseball team. By constructing an indoor batting cage and restricting the hours of use for the remaining outdoor batting cage, and by moderating the volume of one particular speaker cluster aimed at a set of bleachers along the first base line, immediate and significant improvements were realized and sound spill at this campus athletic venue was greatly reduced.

Second on the list was Rice's track and soccer stadium located near the intersection of Main Street and University Boulevard. At this facility, funding is now available to replace an outdated sound system the speakers of which were located behind the bleachers and aimed toward the field (and the nearby Southgate neighborhood). The new system, installed in September of 2007, is aimed at the bleachers and designed to spill onto the field, minimizing the volume transmitted across University Boulevard.

And, finally, Rice Stadium's scoreboard, centerpiece of free family movie nights for Rice neighbors during the summer and early fall, will soon get a technical

overhaul to assure that game day volume responds automatically to crowd noise, so that it is loud enough to be heard in the stadium under any game conditions, but no louder than it needs to be in deference to nearby neighbors.

According to John Wilbanks, owner of Professional Sound and Acoustics, the company consulted by Rice on this project, "The new system will feature three electronic components working in tandem to continuously sample actual crowd volume and automatically adjust the volume of the stadium sound system so that it is kept at a constant level above that of the cheering fans. If the crowd is larger and louder, the volume will increase so that the announcer can still be heard; if the crowd is smaller and more quiet, it will automatically decrease. With this system, the sound volume will be sufficient for the fans to hear, but no louder than it needs to be, reducing sound spill outside the stadium as much as possible."

Southgate Civic Association president Neill Kelly expressed appreciation for the extra efforts: "I feel Rice goes to extremes to address neighborhood concerns, and it is a privilege to live in close proximity to such a fine institution. The occasional noise is an implicit bargain residents make when they choose to buy property in the area, but we thank Rice for going above and beyond to respect the desires of our neighbors."

Work on Rice Stadium sound system improvements is slated to begin at the start of the university's coming fiscal year, in the summer of 2008.

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(Posted September 2007)**

[July 31 Morningside Variance Letter](#)

(Posted July 2007)