

Silver Creek Estates 2021 Homeowner Survey Information

According to Texas Star Community Management, the former HOA management company that managed the 2021 Silver Creek HOA election, the Director vote count was as follows:

Elma Goodwin- 34	
George Duncan- 79	*
Linda Lamar- 74	*
Charlene Taylor- 28	
Carol Washington Horton-73	*
Eddie Tucker- 72	*
Samella Anderson- 66	*
Michael Cooksey- 29	
Raymond Lee Jr- 10	

(An asterisk “ * ” indicates Winning member of SCE Board of Directors)

The five Directors elected vowed to engage homeowners and prioritize advancing homeowner concerns over pursuing a Board agenda, making sure that homeowners were the driving force for the work that was to be done on behalf of the Silver Creek Estates community.

A survey was sent out to all 142 Silver Creek homeowners. As you can see from the vote count above, the most homeowners that chose to vote in the election for any one candidate was 79 (56%). (For the purpose of illustration, in recent memory, for the past several elections, the highest number of voters hovered in the 50s...only 35-40%). The number of votes won by the winning Directors ranged from 66 votes to 79 votes, with the average being 73 votes (51%). The winning Directors mobilized a higher number of homeowners to vote than have participated in elections over the past several years. Homeowners voted to be heard and have their desired changes for the community advanced.

The Board of Directors sent out the 2021 Silver Creek Estates Homeowner Survey to all 142 homeowners to determine Board priorities (in addition to anecdotal data collected from homeowners more informally). After cleaning the data of incompletes, pranks, duplicates, etc., the number of survey responses considered was 48 (34%). The average response rate for surveys in general is recognized to be about 33%. The average number of people who voted for the winning Directors, again, was 73. The number of responses considered, again, was 48. This indicates that, of the population of engaged homeowners who voted in the most recent election, **66%** chose to complete the survey. To reiterate, the average response rate for surveys is recognized to be about 33%. The Board got **double** the average response rate for the 2021 Silver Creek Estates Homeowner Survey.

April 15, 2021

Dear Silver Creek Estates Homeowner:

The 2021-2022 Silver Creek Estates HOA Board of Directors is grateful for your continued participation as we work to improve the community through more inclusive governance that is informed by the diverse voices that make up this place that we have chosen to call home.

The Survey data has been analyzed and we appreciate your thoughts and the time you took to share them with us. The feedback was very strong. We wanted to share a few quotes that expressed the overall tone of the responses:

“This survey is a great start. Glad to see the new board members taking the interest to see how we feel. Thank you!”

“I am pleased that homeowners are able to provide this input! Well Done!”

“I am encouraged that we are receiving this type of survey. Resident input is "essential" to improving our HOA.”

In an effort to gauge homeowners’ use of electronic communication, we asked some basic questions around that topic, and these were the responses:

Computer Usage

Over 85% of respondents reported that they use a computer **ALWAYS** or **OFTEN**. The remainder was split evenly between **SOMETIMES** and **OCCASIONALLY**. There were **NO** respondents who stated that they **NEVER** use a computer.

Internet/WiFi Service

100% of respondents reported that they have Internet/WiFi service.

Email Addresses

When Asked:

Would you be willing to provide your email address with the understanding it will not be shared?

Over 94% of respondents responded with a **YES**.

This indicates to the Board of Directors that communication via email should be effective for at least 85% of homeowners.

ELECTION REFORM

Homeowners were asked:

Do you believe that the voting process should be changed to assign a unique Voter ID Number to each property address?

60% - Yes - Improved Transparency and Voter Anonymity is needed

40% - No - Voter names and addresses should be visible on each ballot.

A unique voter ID serves to offer transparency and security because the individual number would be linked to **ONE** homeowner....just as a Social Security Number is linked to one citizen.

Names and property addresses can be forged on ballots. Unique Voter ID Numbers could only be abused if stolen or shared intentionally.

Unique Voter ID Numbers would also allow any homeowner to openly inspect the records, if they suspected a voting issue, without revealing which homeowner voted for certain people or for certain amendments, etc.

Terms – Over 60% of respondents reported that they believe that Board members should serve 2-year terms.

The majority of homeowners favor **2-year terms** over **3-year terms** or **1-year terms** (no change).

Staggered Terms – Over 72% of respondents reported that they believe that Board members should serve staggered terms so that the community maintains at least 2 Board members and important organizational knowledge from year to year, while approximately 28% reported that they believe that all 5 Board member seats should be open each year.

Term Limits – Approximately 66% of respondents reported that they believe that there should be term limits for Board members, while about 34% oppose term limits.

Homeowners specifically made additional statements beyond what was asked. The additional information shared requested to have definitive cutoff times for becoming candidates for Board election as well as definitive cutoff times for votes to be submitted “*like a real election*”. Homeowners have noted that they feel there has not been fairness in the election process and that steps need to be taken to address the process. Specific concerns were stated about neighbors handling proxy votes. Establishing a Voter ID Number should help to address those concerns.

Based on the data directly from homeowners, appropriate bylaw amendments that will be placed on ballot for homeowner vote would include approval of change to:

1. Establish Voter ID Numbers
2. Elect Board Members to serve staggered 2-year terms with term limits
3. Clarify definitive cutoff times and process for candidate nomination & vote/ballot submission

SAFETY

Most homeowners responded stating that they would like to have patrol of the community. There are concerns about having police handle the patrol, given the national climate around policing, use of force, and interactions that have led to a need for uprising. About the same amount of homeowners responded stating that they would like to have both surveillance cameras installed throughout the community as well as some type of random patrol.

Value of Safety Investments

When asked how much value and desirability safety investments like these would add to the community and property value on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – No Value & 5 – Maximum Value), respondents overwhelmingly believe that the investment will add significant value.

Over 40% of respondents selected **5 – Maximum Value**.

Over 30% of respondents selected **4**. So, over 70% of respondents selected either 4 or 5. Only 2 respondents selected 1 – No Value.

Because Safety is a top priority for homeowners, based on the survey responses, the Board of Directors will be exploring options for patrol and surveillance cameras. Several homeowners stated that they would like for the community to become gated. Given the layout of the community and shared alleys with homes that are not in the HOA, this option would not be feasible in the short term.

Parking

All of the homes were built with no front-facing garages to minimize the visibility of vehicles. Deed restrictions were put in place to ensure that homeowners would not park vehicles on the front streets. Each homeowner has agreed to abide by the deed restrictions, and in light of the recent survey, it has become clear that the majority of homeowners want those (and other) deed restrictions enforced immediately. Homeowners are dissatisfied with certain restrictions being enforced and others being ignored for far too long. In the interest of fairness, the enforcement of deed restrictions should be consistent. Each property has at least 2 garage spaces (some have 3) and at least 2 spaces outside of the garage to park in the driveway. Some homes have more than these 4-5 spaces. There should be no need for homeowners to routinely park on the street. Further, homeowners have voiced issues with others parking in front of their property and going to someone else’s home, etc. Issues that were mentioned included: not receiving mail, not being able to receive a delivery to one’s own home, and having one’s own visitors with mobility challenges forced to park elsewhere and struggle, emergency vehicles unable to quickly get into a home when ambulance was called, etc.

There were dozens who have called for street parking to be addressed. A few quotes from homeowners:

“Get the cars off of the streets..!!!!!!!”

“The cars parked on Silver Creek Drive should never be allowed to park there. They are difficult to see at night, and they make the entrance to the neighborhood look cluttered. No homes in the HOA face Silver Creek Drive, so why are people parking there? Please make it stop. Clean up the neighborhood!”

“somehow limit the number of cars, especially non running cars in driveway and on street”

“Enforcement of current [restrictions]”

“Tow them.”

“Fines”

“Heavy FINES”

*“Vehicles [visiting] should be parked in front of home **they are visiting.**”*

“Many Abandoned Cars Parked in Driveways (Registration Expired)”

Enforcement will be gradual. The Board has decided to take the approach outlined by one of the homeowners who suggested it in their survey response:

1. Remind all homeowners that they **HAVE AGREED** to be bound by the deed restrictions of this community.
2. Advise of a specific timeline when Enforcement will begin.
3. After Enforcement begins, there will be a period in which warnings are issued.
4. After that period, fines will be assessed.
5. Fines increase with each violation.

More details are forthcoming.

Lighting

Over 57% of respondents reported that they believe that improved streetlights are needed in the community. Some noted that existing lighting is covered by trees. Others note that visitors have complained about how dark the neighborhood is. When asked about specific areas, most homeowners responded with improvements needed throughout the community. No street was left out of the responses.

A few quotes from homeowners:

“Most streets are dark when I walk at night with the exception of individual home owner lights.”

*“**Lighting is critical when walking. Pedestrian lights strategically placed on either sides of the neighborhood streets with cameras become a community enhancement.**”*

“There should be better lighting at entrances and all streets should have good lighting.”

“As a female I fell it is very important”

The Board of Directors will be exploring options to improve lighting for the community.

Pets

Over 70% of respondents reported that they believe that property owners who are found to have broken the leash law and community rules should face an HOA fine of \$250 for safety violation.

Over 4% believe that the fine should be \$500 per occurrence. The remaining 25% believe that there should be no consequences for homeowners who have broken the leash law and #18 of the Deed Restrictions.

The Board of Directors has been made aware of reports from several homeowners of unleashed pets & pet attacks in the HOA, and understands that it is a serious safety concern, as well as a legal & financial liability for the HOA. The Deed Restrictions, to which **all homeowners have agreed**, already address the issue and there is also a law that addresses the issue. Homeowners have been very clear in the call for enforcement of the Deed Restriction for the Safety of all homeowners.

A notice will be going out to all homeowners regarding the fines associated with enforcement of #18 of the Deed Restrictions. The fine for violation will be \$250 per occurrence, which over 70% of survey respondents support.

More details are forthcoming.

Homeowner Issues

Volunteers will be contacted to serve on the Safety Committee to support homeowners in maintaining safety and resolving conflict. They will be the body that homeowners go to for that purpose—e.g. loud music, parking issues, homeowner disputes, etc.

Quotes from homeowners:

“We agree with the formation of a civilian Safety Committee and minimizing Police interaction.”

“While I believe the Safety Committee is a novel idea and believe that it could provide an immediate impact in the areas of conflict resolution between neighbors, too much conflict and consternation has embedded itself within the SCEHOA.”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Based on the responses, homeowners do want more official opportunities to engage with one another. The majority want at least 2 events in addition to the annual meeting each year. Recognizing that many people want more, and that due to scheduling, people may not be able to attend, the Board of Directors plans to calendar 3 additional events, with the expectation that homeowners will attend at least 2 of those events, based on the responses.

The types of activities that homeowners said they would like to have in the community are as follows, put in order from most popular to least popular. The first 2 were overwhelmingly requested.

1. **Activities for Seniors (Over Age 60)**
2. **Fitness / Wellness Groups**
3. Holidays
4. Brunch Clubs (tied)
5. Activities for Children/Grandchildren (Age 5-18) (tied)
6. Resource Groups
7. Activities for Young Professionals (Age 25-35)
8. Cooking Classes
9. Ladies Groups
10. Book Clubs
11. Men's Groups

The Community Engagement Committee will prioritize Activities for Seniors and fitness & wellness groups.

Value of Community Engagement Investments

When asked how much value and desirability community engagement investments like these would add to the community and property value on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 – No Value & 5 – Maximum Value), respondents believe that the investment will add value.

About 55% of respondents selected either 4 or 5 – Maximum Value.

About 20% of respondents selected 3 – Moderate Value. So, about 75% of respondents believe these investments in Community Engagements will add value to the community.

Only 5 respondents selected 1 – No Value.

Volunteers will be contacted to serve on the Community Engagement Committee to lead many of the ongoing activities as well as the new ones.

A homeowner quote that sums the general sentiment:

“An actively engaged community is an attractive attribute for any neighborhood”

BEAUTIFICATION

In the survey, homeowners reinforced that the parked cars need to be moved off the streets. There were also mentions of cars in driveways that have flat tires, no plates, etc., and a need for those to be addressed as well.

Homeowners responded that the entrance on Silver Creek is outdated and needs to be significantly upgraded to reflect the quality and desirability of the community.

A number of homeowners requested that trash receptacles and dog poop receptacles be placed in a few places around the community. This was suggested as a solution in opposition to putting up signage about the trash. Trash signs only alert visitors that there is a trash problem in the neighborhood, without actually providing a solution.

Homeowners also overwhelmingly named that some properties’ lawns are not cared for in a way that should be the standard for this community. Homeowners should be sure to treat weeds and water regularly, in addition to mowing and edging lawns. Regular maintenance of bushes, shrubs, and trees is also necessary.

The Board of Directors will be investing in improving the landscaping of the Silver Creek entrance and exploring options for addressing the trash issues.

FINANCE

Non-owner-occupied properties

NON-owner-occupied properties in the community have been the source of complaints for a number of issues at a **higher rate** than owner-occupied properties, which is not unique to this community. Issues include: lack of lawn maintenance, loud music, high traffic/cars parked on street, children involved in mischief, etc.

Homeowners were asked if they believe that NON-owner-occupied properties should pay higher HOA fees. **About 75% of respondents gave a response of YES.** The majority of respondents believed that it should be 15%-25% higher. Although there were some who believed that it should be 35% higher.

While the survey results were used to gauge the level of homeowner concern about the issue of renters, it is important for the Board to also consider more general information as well, in determining next steps. The key takeaway from the survey is that 75% of respondents support rental restrictions for their community.

According to the Homeowners Protection Bureau:

- Rental restrictions typically involve maintenance of property values and promotion of community standards.
- **More renters** within a development can result in **higher liability insurance rates** and **lower property values**, so a cap on rental properties might protect members financially.
- Rental restrictions can increase the number of residents with a vested interest in the development’s long-term success, thereby promoting neighborhood stability and a sense of community.
- Renters tend to be more likely to violate association rules and less likely to obey upkeep standards.

The Board will consider the following to address homeowner concerns:

- limiting the number of rentals in the community to be maintained at or below 10% (less than 14 homes), with a waitlist for others
- requiring homeowners to live in the property for a minimum of 3 consecutive years prior to renting the property
- requiring homeowners to apply for prior approval to rent their property (so that the number of rentals can be monitored and maintained at or below 10%)

Homeowner HOA dues

Given that the bylaws were written about 35 years ago, the monetary amounts did not account for inflation. Nothing costs the same as it did in the mid-1980s. \$30 back then is about \$75 today. Homeowners have indicated that they believe that the dues should be higher. Because many of the current owners are retired/retiring and on a fixed income, **at this time, the Board is not seeking to raise dues for current homeowners**, however, something must be done to update the bylaws to account for the costs of the improvements that homeowners desire and for inflation that occurs over the years. This HOA is at a critical point where homeowners recognize that the entrance is outdated, there is a need for security features, and the costs for everything are not what they were in the 1980s. Most homeowners communicated that they would be willing to pay more, because they want to see improvements to the community and those improvements come at a cost.

Existing homeowners will have **NO changes** to the amount of HOA dues at this time.

The Board of Directors should move to update the bylaws, recognizing that **the current cap of \$30 per month established in the 1980s will ensure the continuous decline of the community**. The recommendation is to replace the \$30 cap with language that limits the dollar amount by which monthly HOA dues can be increased annually.

Another issue that was raised by many homeowners was the HOA management company, Texas Star. There were a number of complaints that contain details that we cannot share broadly, however, this direct homeowner quote conveys the overall sentiment:

“The management company is a disaster and has to go.”

We heard you. As you are all aware, the contract with Texas Star was not renewed. The Silver Creek Estates HOA is now managed by Our Community Management.

Top priorities are advancing issues in each of the 5 specific areas: Election, Safety, Community Engagement, Beautification, & Finance.

Thank you all for entrusting us to lead this community.

In Service,

Silver Creek Estates Board of Directors '21-'22