



Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn and Play

February 2003

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Vacant Housing Concerns GPNA, Creighton

Creighton University's Master Plan was the subject of a special meeting held last November for GPNA members. A concern was voiced about the safety and security of the vacant housing Creighton owns in our neighborhood. The area in question is bordered by Webster and California Streets on the north and south and 30th to 32nd Streets to the east and west.

Representatives from the GPNA recently met with Creighton, prompted by complaints on several properties, to discuss alternative ways to address the issue. The University has a decision to make: whether to demolish problematic properties now and wait to remove the remainder on schedule or move now to demolish all properties currently owned by Creighton, leaving several lone houses and a field of grass. The former seems most likely at this point in time, due to the impact it may have on remaining property owners. The University owns all but a few, and those remaining properties have been in contact with the University about negotiating terms of a selling arrangement, although none have been reached yet.

Rezoning of the properties will need to take place with the city first. Mass demolition is tentatively scheduled for the entire block and then preparation will begin on a new parking lot and ambulatory care center in the next two to five years.

Expect some movement in the area over the next several months as we take on these issues together. It's encouraging to know Creighton is responsive to resident concerns and struggles with us against crime and drug abuse in our neighborhood. If you have any concerns about the months ahead please don't hesitate to contact myself 556-2090 or Chris Foster 342-6006.

by Cynthia Shuck

NOTE: The GPNA Executive Board is currently exploring ways to make joining or renewing memberships more "user-friendly". Look for more information in future newsletters. You can still join our Association or renew your membership the "old-fashioned" way by completing the application on page 4.

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 6
7:00 P.M.

Guest Speaker: Pat Slaven
City Park Planner

The History Of The Boulevard
And Park System

Creighton University
Medical Center
Dining Rooms A, B, and C

Free Tax Help Available Now

The site for the annual free tax assistance has been moved to the Lay Apostolate Center at St. Cecilia's Cathedral, 40th & Webster St. This makes our site even more accessible this year. Tax help will be available every **Monday** starting **February 3** through **April 14** from 1 to 4 p.m. and from 7 to 8:30 p.m. and on **Saturdays** from **February 8** through **April 12** from 10 - 11:30 a.m. Everyone is welcome! IRS representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood for the 9th year in a row. Processing of basic tax returns and electronic filing will be available again this year. No appointment is necessary; walk-in appointments only. For more information, call 551-3629.



HAPPY
VALENTINE'S
DAY!



GPNA OFFICERS

INTERIM PRESIDENT

Chris Foster 342-6006

VICE PRESIDENT

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

RECORDING SECRETARY

Ron Kirey 344-0757

TREASURER

Dana Carlton-Flint 346-4575

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Dan Sweazy 345-0125

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Chris Foster 342-6006

COMPLAINTS

Leo Wilwerding 348-1433

HISTORIAN

Eva Swanson 345-1707

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Jean Peak 344-0722

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Chris Foster 342-6006

NEWSLETTER

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Eve Randone 345-1777

NEWSLETTER MAILING

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PARK

Roger Freeman 557-2914

PARKING VIOLATIONS

Leo Wilwerding 348-1433

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Cynthia Shue 556-2090

TOOL LENDING

Chris Foster 342-6006

WATCH GROUP

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

WELCOMING

Vicki Kirey 344-0757

The Interim President's Column

What would you think of video surveillance cameras at 33rd & California? Will it deter some of the crime and inappropriate behavior we experience too often? Would you feel safer to walk in our business district? Of course these questions lead to more questions than answers: Where would they be installed? What is the picture quality? Would a video tape of a crime be admissible in court? Would the cameras get vandalized? Who would monitor the surveillance? Would the cameras just "relocate" the problems to some other part of the neighborhood? How would you feel about being video taped when walking in the area? I certainly do not have the answers, and it's unfortunate the GPNA needs to consider this, but the reality of how to make our streets safe makes this an option worth trying.

In the coming weeks we plan to install video surveillance equipment at 33rd & California. The GPNA received a grant last year to purchase a monitor, 5 infrared cameras (one with audio), a VCR, and computer software for remote viewing of the monitor. We will position the cameras to monitor activity on the public streets and sidewalks around 33rd & California. If the system works like we hope, we may add cameras to cover more of the business district. Again, the goal of video surveillance is to use it as a tool to improve public safety in the business district.

Video surveillance was one of several strategies we discussed at the January 22 meeting with **Captain Thomas Warren** and the local business owners. The meeting was prompted by concern over two recent robberies and other on-going problems. The most serious of the robberies occurred earlier in January when the California Bar and one of its owners was robbed and tied up at gunpoint on a Saturday morning. When I heard the owner describe in detail what happened, it made me think...how would I respond if that was me, a family member or a friend? - It's something no one wants to think about. Incidentally, the police say they have some leads in the investigation.

Despite our neighborhood's struggles, there are many things to look forward to. I want to focus on one item in particular that you will hear more about in the coming months. It will most likely be called the "Midtown Community Plan", and the Gifford Park neighborhood is part of the target area for an unprecedented master planning process that will take 12 to 18 months to complete. The target area is from Center to Cuming and Saddle Creek to about 20th Street. Funding efforts for this project are nearly complete with significant contributions from many of the major businesses and institutions in the Midtown area.

I believe this "Midtown Community Plan" will offer each of us the unique opportunity to participate in planning the future of our neighborhood. I can assure you the businesses, institutions, government, and neighborhoods who represent this project's steering committee, have already put forth a lot of time and effort, and I believe we are all committed to work together - stay tuned.

by Chris Foster

Editor's note: If you have something that would be of interest to our neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for our monthly newsletter. Editorials must be approved by the GPNA Executive Board. Articles can be left at the GPNA Office; please include your name and phone number. Contact Sue Wilwerding (342-2795) or Chris Foster (342-6006) for information regarding the newsletter.

For City Services, Information, or Complaints

Call:

Mayor's Action Office

444-5555

Roger Vipond - A Good Neighbor

Roger B. Vipond, a long-time resident of the Gifford Park neighborhood, died on January 25, 2003. He was a family man, an insurance man, a pilot, a fisherman, a gardener, a churchman, a jelly-maker, and a good neighbor. He was 78 years of age and lived with his wife, Sue, (they celebrated their 54th wedding anniversary) at 34th and Webster Street for 43 years. He and Sue had 10 children, 29 grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

Roger worked at Mutual of Omaha as a department manager for 31 years and usually walked to work. During World War II he was a pilot on B-17's and B-29's. He continued his interest in airplanes with membership in the Commemorative Air Force-Great Plains Wing, restoring and flying vintage planes. At the age of 70, he piloted an L-3 reconnaissance plane from Council Bluffs to Midland, Texas.

Roger was an avid fisherman. The annual family pilgrimage to Blanche Lake near Battle Lake, Minnesota, was high on his priority list, making the trip just last summer in spite of failing health. He was a gardener too, always planting a large vegetable garden and not forgetting the flowers. As a churchman, he and his family were and are members of the St. Cecilia parish. One of Roger's many talents was jelly making. A summer ritual at the Vipond house was making beautifully clear glasses of jelly.

As neighbors, Roger and Sue have been members of the GPNA from at least 1992. They always decorate their house for Christmas, even decorating a tree in the back yard to the delight of all. Several times their efforts were recognized in the GPNA holiday lighting contest. At other times, the Vipond house is distinguished by an American flag prominently displayed every day.

Roger will be missed and the GPNA offers our sympathy to Sue and her family.

by Eva Swanson

GPNA Eligible for OCF Grant

Our neighborhood association is eligible for an excellent grant opportunity from the Omaha Community Foundation (OCF). We have received grants for our fall cleanup the past two years, but this year let's get more creative and see what we can think of. Eligibility requirements are: a) must involve the membership of the neighborhood in the decision-making process b) proposed project will address an identified problem and provide a budget c) priority funding will be given to proposals from low-income areas d) neighborhood groups that propose to work with businesses, agencies, institutions, or other neighborhood groups will receive priority.

The maximum grant request is \$2,500. All grants over \$1,000 require a match. This match may be in the form of cash or donated goods and services (in-kind). The application deadline is April 1. The entire grant application can be found by going to www.omahacf.org. For more information, or if you have any ideas on what this grant could be used for, call **Chris Foster (GPNA)** at 342-6006 or **Anne Camp (OCF)** at 342-3458.

What's Happening In The Neighborhood

Please keep the **Bogard** family in your thoughts and prayers as **Tom Bogard** has become ill. Tom, his wife **Marian**, and the Bogard family have owned property and businesses around 33rd & California for many years. As you know Tom's son **Brad** is the owner of **California Tacos And More**.

GPNA member **Kenny Burlison** is recovering from a recent attack by an intruder that occurred at his workplace near downtown. KETV ran a story about the incident and showed Kenny's injuries after being shot three times in his foot. He says even though he will be recovering for at least 10 weeks, he feels lucky he is here to talk about it.

GPNA member **Heather Nelson** had a baby girl, **Onna-Marie**, on January 22 at Midlands Hospital. Heather has been an active member helping with Watch Group, neighborhood cleanups, walks and heading up last year's Easter Egg hunt. Congratulations!

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Can You Help?

We have several blocks where we need people to deliver newsletters on the odd-numbered months. There are four small square blocks between 33rd to 37th from Burt to Cuming (each of these blocks has about 20 residents). Also there is a larger square block bounded by 30th to 32nd from Cottage Grove to California (this block has about 30 residents). The job is easy and quite rewarding...and you get a little exercise, and it's only 6 times per year! Call 342-6006 if you are interested in any of these five routes.

Also, if there is anyone interested in developing and maintaining a web site for our neighborhood association, call 342-6006. We have lots of neighborhood material already in electronic file format that is available for someone with the time and talent.

