



Gifford Park's Pride

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

November 2003

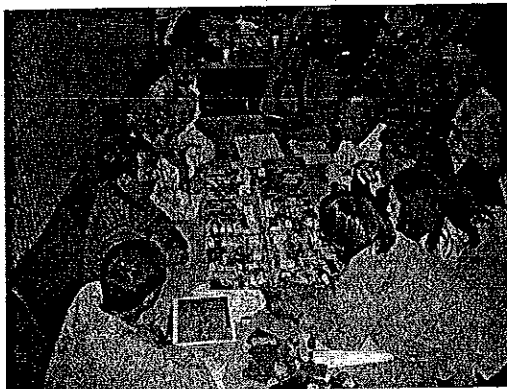
A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Ideas, Energy Generated at October Destination Midtown Meetings

More than 70 neighborhood residents, business leaders and city officials crowded into an OPS conference room October 14 to participate in the ongoing Destination Midtown project. Those present broke into small groups to exchange ideas concerning the issues brought up during the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis.

All of the groups agreed that poor perception of the area and absentee landlords were perhaps the biggest issues to be resolved. Several groups suggested tighter building code enforcement for landlords who do not comply in a timely manner. It was also suggested that renters be better informed of their rights and the need to report unsafe or unsanitary conditions to authorities in order to make landlords comply. The perception of midtown being an unsafe, unkempt part of town was attributed to the lack of basic maintenance along the sidewalks and buildings on some of the main thoroughfares. The groups suggested that sprucing up the sidewalks and landscaping along these routes might help present a more positive image to commuters. In addressing the issues of crime, drugs, and prostitution in the area, several groups cited a need for a quicker response by law enforcement. It was suggested that neighborhood organizations could form stronger ties to the police department to resolve this issue.

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GPNA members gather at the Oct. 15th Destination Midtown meeting to design a neighborhood business center.

See Page 3 For The Destination Midtown November Public Meetings Timeline

Next Meeting

**Thursday, November 6
7:00 P.M.**

**Guest Speakers:
Kevin Denker
City Planning Department
Topic: Code Enforcement**

**Rodney Hay
Topic: Food Preparation Safety**

**Creighton University
Medical Center
Dining Rooms A, B, & C**

2003 Fall Cleanup Highlights

Once again the GPNA "Cleanup Crew" took care of business at this year's annual fall cleanup, held Saturday, October 18, in Gifford Park. This year's great weather (maybe the best ever for a fall cleanup) made it possible to do almost all the planned activities. The main event was of course the cleanup - we filled two trash compactors (provided by Dale's Trash Service). The other events included: the pumpkin patch (over 100 pumpkins given away - Earl May Garden Center gave us a great deal), pumpkin painting supervised by the Slayden family (Betty, Tiffany, Kayleen, & Jacob), Jan Franks, Brittney Rubek, Zach Rubek, and Prenisha Barfield, Police Officer Juan Fortier and a cruiser on site to educate children about public safety, Rodney Hay providing us with great barbecue beef and pork; The Wolf House spreading wood chips (provided by the City Parks Department) around the park trees and also providing treats; Loren Johnson with J'N'J Grocery providing hot dogs again this year; Lilly Estes and Jack Sutton with California Bar providing pop & ice, recycling a lot of

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From The President . . .

Autumn has finally come with a vengeance. It seemed, for a while, that summer would linger on indefinitely. The colors are stunning this year, but are only a reminder that the end of the year is coming quickly.

From a community standpoint, it seems like the last quarter was consumed with "Destination Midtown" activities. It will extend on through this next quarter also. I have talked to many of you who have had involvement in the plan and appreciate your input and involvement. Sometimes I get a little tired of talking about it, but I realize how important a tool this will be for our neighborhood. It provides a template to build on. I have seen bankers and developers who are excited about the possibilities of development—primarily between Harney and Farnam, from Mutual to UNMC.

This has corollary implications for us. I don't think we want the big money redevelopers here in Gifford Park, reshaping things in the neighborhood. But they anticipate that over time, the population of people who wish to reside in the midtown area will increase. That means there is an opportunity for people who may want to purchase and fix up older homes. We don't want outsiders to make decisions for us about our neighborhoods, so I am planning on being involved in the final set of design meetings in November. I'd love to see you there.

I talked to several people in our neighborhood this last week when we were planning the Haunted House. Once again, I am impressed with all of you who live here and your willingness to volunteer and make our events successful. Some of you came out to help. Some of you spent a Saturday or Sunday to make or buy treats. I want you to know I appreciate it. I had several people apologize for not being more involved.

I want you all to know that being involved doesn't mean you do something for every activity or attend every meeting. Volunteerism is where you identify an opportunity that motivates you to be involved, on an issue that is important to you. Once in a while, but not every time, it could also mean helping out in a pinch. Thanks to those of you who helped me out in this pinch with the Haunted House.

Have a great Autumn!

by Ron Frey

Haunted House "Frightfully" Successful

Were you able to experience the 9th Annual Haunted House, sponsored by the PKA Fraternity? There were plenty of ghouls, chills, zombies, and monsters to go around. The PKA house was well organized and the event started promptly at 7:00 pm.

Many volunteers from the neighborhood donated candy and baked cookies, bars, and brownies for after the tour. Those who manned the refreshments witnessed how eager the children were to put the "heebie jeebies" behind them and find solace in the "haunt-free" carriage house for treats. No treat went to waste!

There were many smiles, but a few tears from some who thought it scarier than they expected. Many of the older children were repeat customers and went through the house several times. I even interviewed some older kids who worked at Mystery Manor. I asked them to compare. They said that this Haunted House was just as good as Mystery Manor! I'd say that makes it worth every penny!

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Chris 342-6006

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Destination Midtown: November Meeting Schedule

Mayor Mike Fahey Town Hall Meeting

Date: Wednesday, November 5th

Time: 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Location: Field Club of Omaha 3615 Woolworth Avenue

Mayor Mike Fahey will host a special 'Destination Midtown' Neighborhood Town Hall Meeting to address neighborhood concerns related to the midtown study. Neighbors and businesses are invited to attend.

NOVEMBER | Workshop #2

Design Charrette #2 will refine the general concepts and design ideas that were developed during the first design charrette. Designers will examine, in detail, opportunities for mixed-use, pedestrian oriented development; infill development; public space development; and transportation improvements. The charrette will follow the same format as the previous charrette, and will focus on the study area's main corridor, the area between Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street.

Location:

Mutual of Omaha's Innwave Building
3201 Farnam Street, Second floor

Parking available on the east side of the building. Overflow parking available in the Visitor's Lot on 33rd Street between Farnam and Dodge. Entrance to the building faces Farnam on the north side.

Dates and Times:

Workshop #2 will last a total of four days. The general public is encouraged to attend as much as possible. Attendance is strongly encouraged during the project kick-off meeting the first day, and during the final presentation on the fourth day. Attendance is optional, but encouraged, during the progress review sessions held during the lunch hour and at the end of each day. Lunch will not be provided.

Monday, November 17

12:00pm – 1:30pm • Project Kickoff Meeting

Tuesday, November 18

12:00pm – 1:30pm • Public Review/Design Team Lunch

6:00pm – 7:30pm • Progress Review

Wednesday, November 19

6:00pm – 7:30pm • Progress Review

Thursday, November 20

6:00pm – 7:30pm • Final Presentation

For more information, visit the website:
www.omahachamber.org/DestinationMidtown

Kids In The Garden

Even though my tomato plants are still producing this late into the fall, all I can think about is next year's plantings! What will I plant next year? What did/didn't work this year? I am excited for spring even though it is still two seasons away. One of the most exciting things I am thinking about for next year's garden is getting neighborhood youth involved. For next spring and summer I am planning a Saturday morning youth program. I am not sure what age groups I will focus on, but I do know it will involve learning about nature and gardening in a very hands-on way. It won't be all dirt and worms (although there will be plenty of this, especially worms — think vermicomposting). There will be art created and games played as well as the more traditional fun garden activities. If you have children between the ages of 3 and 15 that may be interested in being involved, there will be more about this program in future newsletters. If you are interested in helping design this program or have Saturday mornings available to volunteer, please call Kate O'Brien at 496-8419.

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2003 Fall Cleanup . . . continued from page 1

metal and appliances, and the GPNA receiving over \$400 in memberships and donations. A new activity introduced this year was to have supervised groups of children help pick up litter in the park, business district, and an alley to "earn" their free pumpkin and food - **Roger Freeman, Jackie Foster and Raquel Ayala** supervised this effort.

The rest of our dedicated volunteers included **Lloyd Canfield, Bob & Virginia Hutton, Darryl Hutton, Ron & Vicki Frey, Cynthia Shuck, Kate O'Brien, Jared Randone, Terry & Sue Wilwerding, Steve Wilwerding, Jim & Kathleen Wilwerding, Billy Dooly, Mike Caban, Kirk & Jean Peck, Mike Bacome, Mike Wilwerding, Ben & Austin Sweazy, Chris & Sallie Foster, Leo Wilwerding, Richard & Bonnie Kaster, Eva Swanson** and members of the **Wolf House (David Staenberg, Kevin Dorenbach, Greg Werts, Justin Brooks, John Clark, Michael Nurez)**. **Creighton University Medical Center** provided a pickup truck and **Yates School** provided tables and chairs. **Norita Collar** from the City Planning Department and other volunteers helped haul trash for elderly folks. And a special thanks to the **Omaha Community Foundation** for providing most of the funds for this event through a neighborhood grant (dumpsters and trash compactors ain't cheap!) This grant encourages creating opportunities for neighborhoods to build stronger communities through positive activities involving many people - we believe this event accomplished these goals. Thank you all!

by Chris Foster



Top: The Gifford Park parking lot at the height of Fall Cleanup 2003

Left: a scene from the popular "paint your pumpkin in the pumpkin patch" activity

Haunted House . . . continued from page 2

Thanks to all the volunteers who helped with crowd control, who volunteered to bake and/or bring goodies. The **Wolf House** guys were helpful as usual. **Jan Franks** and the **Slayden** family monitored treat intake. Thanks, especially to the **PKA House** guys who made this a "fun" (if you can call being scared spine-less fun) event!

by Ron Frey

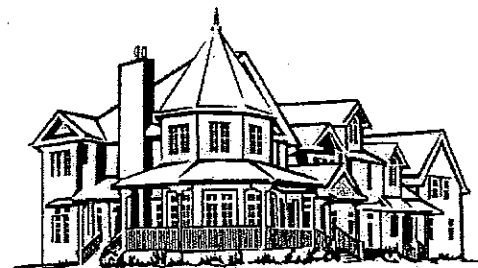


Some of the ghoulish "residents" of the PKA Haunted House take a break from scaring their "guests" from the Gifford Park neighborhood. Over 30 members of the Creighton fraternity participated in this year's event.

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CU Masterplan Update

Creighton University presented a two-tiered surface parking lot design at the general meeting last month. As promised, the plans indicated a green-scape buffer and fence between neighborhood housing and the new parking lot development. Presently, the University has installed temporary boundary markers to eliminate any parking on the unpaved surface, which was observed last month. Work on the new lot is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2004.

by Cynthia Shuck

Destination Midtown . . . continued from page 1

"I'm very encouraged," said **Mike Caban**, a resident of the Gifford Park neighborhood. "One thing our group came up with is you can't work on the positive until you address the negative. This is a good start to doing that."

The focus of the October 15 meeting was how to achieve successful neighborhood business centers. After the crowd of more than 60 participants dispersed into small groups, each group was assigned the task of creating a neighborhood business center using 30-foot scale models that sat on the table before them, with each model representing a different part of midtown Omaha. **James Moore**, community design principal for HDR, gave the groups guidelines to consider. The ideas and fervor with which each group tackled this project pleased and impressed **Doug Bisson** of HDR, Destination Midtown project manager. "I think you can see the excitement level," he said. "Part of this whole concept was to get people taking about it and see the potential of their neighborhoods. I think we accomplished that tonight."

Source: Destination Midtown November 2003 Newsletter

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