



Gifford Park's Pride

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

December 2003

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

Plans For Midtown Taking Shape

The final **Destination Midtown** public workshops were held November 17-20 at Mutual of Omaha. These focused mainly on design ideas that were developed during earlier meetings. Some of the ideas presented by the consultants included: making Dodge Street a tree-lined parkway with 3 lanes in both directions and a median with some turn lanes; moving Saddle Creek Road west to 46th Street to allow connection to Dodge and possible expansion of UNMC to the west (Saddle Creek would become a linear greenspace like the downtown Gene Leahy Mall); Farnam and Harney would become two way streets with more retail and restaurants; enhancing the existing park boulevard system including Hanscom, Leavenworth, Dewey, Turner and possible extension north of Dodge; creating bike paths, lanes and routes in our neighborhoods; and incorporating specific design ideas for several business districts and neighborhood centers.

Specifically for 33rd & California, recommendations included: a parking lot on the vacant lots just east of 33rd Street between California and Cass, and a parking lot just west of 33rd Street – both parking lots would be intended for all the businesses; identifying potential areas for angle parking on the east side of 33rd and south side of California; mixed-use of retail and apartments for a couple of existing buildings on the east side of 33rd; planting more trees, removing overhead power lines and other beautification for the business district, along 33rd Street toward Mutual, and along California toward Creighton; keeping most existing historic buildings and adding/extending a few additional storefronts along the streets to attract more businesses. The GPNA plans to get these color sketches and other documents and share with anyone interested.

The master plan process is now about two-thirds done with the final document to be completed around April 1, 2004. We are at the stage where the project steering committee needs to focus on the transition from planning to implementation and what kind of organization/structure will be required to sustain implementation over the long term. One such organization, **Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA)**, is being formed to have representation from each of the neighborhood associations in the master plan study area. The goal of MNA is to address the common neighborhood issues and work with the City, businesses and institutions to see positive change. Since solving the neighborhood issues is critical to the long term success of this master plan study, MNA may be the right vehicle to help the City prioritize the issues and help decide how city resources can be used more efficiently. Stay tuned!

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 4
7:00 P.M.



**Holiday
Banquet**



Creighton University
Medical Center
Becic Dining Room

See Page 3 for details on
the Holiday Banquet!

GPNA Sponsoring 5th Annual Holiday Lighting Contest

Now that we've gotten past Thanksgiving, the "official" holiday season has begun! If you are planning to decorate the outside of your home with lights and/or other holiday displays, now is the time to do so. Not only will you brighten up the neighborhood, but you may also win a prize! Once again, the GPNA will hold its annual **Holiday Lighting Contest**. On the evening of **Thursday, December 18th**, a panel of judges will travel throughout the neighborhood looking for the best holiday displays. Last year, 5 prizes were awarded. Any residential location within the boundaries of the GPNA is eligible to win. Good Luck!



Happy Holidays from the GPNA!

GPNA OFFICERS**PRESIDENT**

Ron Frey 344-0757

VICE PRESIDENT

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

RECORDING SECRETARY

Eve Randone 345-1777

TREASURER

Vicki Frey 344-0757

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Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

HISTORIAN

Eva Swanson 345-1707

KID/TON SCHOOL LIAISON

Jean Beck 344-0722

MEMBERSHIP

Chris Foster 342-6006

NEWSLETTER

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Chris Foster 342-6006

NEWSLETTER MAILING

Mike Bacone 933-7506

PARK

Roger Freeman 557-2914

PARKING VIOLATIONS

Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

TOOL LENDING

Chris Foster 342-6006

WATCH GROUP

Terry Wilwerding 342-2795

WEEDS & LITTER

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

WELCOMING

Vicki Frey 344-0757

From The President . . .

What can you imagine for the future of Gifford Park Neighborhood? Some of you have lived here most of your life. I have enjoyed listening to stories of its past. We must, however, actively plan for the future. If we don't, the future will happen—and it may not work out the way we want. I imagine our future as a series of connections. For our community to be vibrant, we must connect to the energy sources of the community.

We have housing stock that is largely in place—there aren't many vacant lots. Many of the houses, though, need renovation. How do we market ourselves as a neighborhood, to connect to the energy of homeowners who wish to revitalize those homes?

The heart of our neighborhood is Gifford Park and the 33rd and California business district. Many of us use the park and patronize these businesses. There is, however, the potential to enhance the district and to bring in more services. To thrive, these small businesses need to attract patrons from outside the neighborhood also.

To me, an obvious conclusion is that the large employers in our area are a good recruiting ground and an energy source. Wouldn't we want more Creighton and Mutual of Omaha employees living in the Gifford Park neighborhood and patronizing our businesses? On a warm, sunny day one may observe Mutual employees walking to and from California Tacos at lunchtime. Don't we want to encourage more of this?

Perception, however, is everything. What does Gifford Park's front door look like? We may be the greatest neighborhood in town (which we are!), but people judge us by our entrances. As you drive on 33rd from Dodge, look at it from a newcomer's perspective. Do you see, "Welcome to the neighborhood?" As you come on California from 30th, does it make you want to explore the neighborhood more deeply? Does the business district make you want to do business? Does Gifford Park make you want to walk through it?

These are the questions that I think we need to address and set an action plan. A first step to encourage this interaction might be symbolic, but could be profound. We could create a visual connection along 33rd from Dodge, and along California Street through tree-lined streets and possibly widened sidewalks. These are action plan steps we could take ownership of and write grants to implement for long term benefit.

Our neighborhood lies on the fringe of the old Park and Boulevard system. The state of Nebraska will tear down the abandoned bridges over 30th street. We could create beautiful tree-lined connections along 30th Street between Turner Park, Boys Town's green space, Creighton's newly acquired land and Bemis Park to the North.

A visual connection could also be made along Davenport Street to Gifford Park. Something as simple as tree-lined streets can provide a visual continuity between green spaces. The Gifford Park neighborhood would have its own "park and boulevard system." I could envision having neighborhood biking events starting at Gifford Park and linking to the Bemis, Turner, Leavenworth, and Dewey park system.

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.

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From The President . . .

continued from page 2

What can we do to enhance legitimate business at 33rd and California? We would all like to see an enhancement of the services available within walking distance. That is a goal we are working toward. We will be soliciting your feedback on the types of services you would patronize. Then we will work to recruit investment and development to bring those services to our neighborhood. This is a vision of the future of Gifford Park. But we need your participation and insight to make the future happen.

by Ron Frey

City Adopts Property Code

The City of Omaha Planning Department has recently adopted the 2000 International Property Maintenance Code. This code offers the city a variety of advantages in dealing with property management. Provisions of the code will allow housing inspectors to become "certified" with the International Code Council, and eliminates the confusion of using two codes for enforcement. The time period for compliance is reduced from 90 days to 60 days and permits for the inspector to allow "reasonable time". Appeals of violation notices, vacate orders, and demolition orders will go to the Building Board of Review. A seven member board of construction professionals (Licensed Structural Engineer, Licensed Architect, Licensed Sanitary Engineer, Licensed Mechanical Engineer, Licensed Electrical Engineer, General Contractor, and a general citizen of the City of Omaha). A seller of a property under violation must give the City of Omaha notice of sale at least seven days prior to the transfer. Other features of the code include tenants no longer having to wait 14 days for inspection of property by the City, and tenants can be held responsible for any damage they inflict on the property or the unhealthy conditions they create. The new code will allow landlords to register their names or their manager's names, addresses, and phone numbers for contact by the tenants and the City of Omaha. Emergency demolition procedures will still remain in effect.


The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association
requests your presence at the

15th Annual Holiday Banquet

to be held
at 7 p.m. on December 4th
at Creighton University Medical Center
601 N. 30th Street
in the glassed-in (Becic) dining room
south of the cafeteria.

Creighton University Medical Center graciously
demonstrates its support of the
GPNA by hosting this annual event
for members.

There is no cost - you just need
to be a GPNA member.
Please bring a canned good item which will be
donated to a local charitable agency



Creighton
UNIVERSITY
Medical Center

Is Scouting For You?

Hey Boys, if you have completed Grade 5 in school or are 11 years of age, come see what **Boy Scouting** is about. Learn skills for the future now. Troop meetings are **Wednesdays 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.**, and starting in 2004 meeting nights will be **Tuesdays 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.** Call Scout Master **Jim Detwiler 932-1907** or leave a message for a call back.

by Bob Hutton


**TOOL
LENDING
HOTLINE**

*Mike 933-7506
Chris 342-6006*

Mowers - \$5
Rent for most tools - \$3



What's Happening In The Neighborhood . . .

The GPNA congratulates **Thomas Warren** for being promoted from Northeast Precinct Captain to Chief of Police. He has worked on the police force for 20 years and has also worked in internal affairs and information services. We hope Chief Warren can implement effective community policing and law enforcement for our neighborhoods. Congratulations and best wishes, Chief Warren!

Kellom School is saving box tops for education (which can be found on General Mills and Betty Crocker products). Any help in collecting these box tops would be appreciated. They can be taken or sent to the school (1311 North 24th St.) or contact **Jan Franks 345-5765** for a pick-up. Thanks!

The **Joslyn Castle Neighborhood Association's** annual **Tree Lighting Ceremony** will be held **Thursday, December 11th** at the **Joslyn Castle, 39th and Davenport St.** The event will begin at **7:00 pm** with the lighting of a Christmas tree outside the Castle. The **St. Barnabas Choir** will lead everyone in singing traditional Christmas carols. Afterwards, the Castle will be opened until **8:30 pm** for guests to make holiday crafts, visit with Santa, listen to local choral groups, and enjoy refreshments. The association will be taking a goodwill offering at the door for the families of **Yates School** students. The **JCNA** is asking visitors to bring personal hygiene products, such as toothpaste, deodorant, toilet paper, laundry detergent, etc. which will be donated to these needy families. For additional questions, call **Dave** at **558-8414**.

Sheila Haggas, head of school at **Duchesne Academy**, 36th & Burt St., has announced that the sale of the **Foxley Building** has been closed. The building will be converted into an assisted living facility, and interior demolition has been scheduled to begin after Thanksgiving.

Please be thinking of **Eve & Jared Randone**. Jared is recovering from recent back surgery. Eve is the GPNA Recording Secretary and both have been active in the GPNA since moving into the neighborhood a few years ago.

Just a reminder - there will be **NO GPNA board meeting in December** (next board meeting will be the 3rd Thursday in January) and **No GPNA general meeting in January** (next general meeting will be the first Thursday in February.)



GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
 532 N. 33rd Street, Omaha, NE 68131
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
(Please print clearly)



Membership year: _____ *(Membership year runs from June 1 through May 31)*

Type of membership: Single (\$5) _____ Family (\$8) _____ Business (\$25) _____

Name of business _____

Name _____
 (Last) (First)

Spouse _____
 (Last) (First)

Address _____
 (Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Telephone Number: _____
 (Home) (Work)

E-mail Address: _____

Can we contact you for help on any of the following items? (please circle areas of interest).

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Cleanup/Beautification | Tennis Program | Block Captain | Tool Lending |
| Membership | Youth Activities | History | Newsletter |
| Neighborhood Walks | Park | Merchants | Newsletter Distribution |
| Social Activities | Tree Planting | Watch Group | Meeting Program |
| Landlord/Tenant Issues | Calling Committee | Public Relations | School Liaison |

Don't let 2003 slip away without joining the GPNA. Just fill out the form on the left and send it in with the appropriate dues (single - \$5, family - \$8, business - \$25) or bring it with you to the holiday banquet if you've pre-registered. The GPNA has sponsored many great activities this past year - be part of the action in 2004 and join one of the most active neighborhood associations in the city!

**For City Services,
 Information, or
 Complaints
 Call:
 Mayor's Action
 Office
 444-5555**