



# Gifford Park's Pride

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

March 2005

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

## GPNA To Participate In Pilot Residential Code Enforcement Survey

The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association is participating in a Midtown Neighborhood Association pilot study with the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The study relates to residential code violations many of us in the area and surrounding neighborhoods are faced with. Some of these infractions are minor and easily addressed. Many are more serious and become a hazard not only to those living within the home but also to members of the public that may come in contact with the home or property. The GPNA is expanding its study to view the entire neighborhood area to better evaluate the problems that some properties may have.

While many might think it is better to focus on absentee landlords, the fact is that there may be problems a homeowner may have but be unaware of the laws. The difference between the two is that the landlord is supposed to know the laws and refrain from violating them. That is not the case in this area where landlords may use the ability to deviate from these laws due to the ignorance and/or lack of education of the renters. The GPNA would like to bring the value and respect of the neighborhood back up to a level that can give pride to everyone that lives here! Thus there is a goal to survey the GPNA area and document these issues; you and your neighbor's help is needed.

With the results of this study, we hope to provide information and most importantly rectify chronic problems in our area so that we may all have the pride that a community as strong as ours should have. Volunteers are needed to assist in the evaluation of our neighborhood. They will be given training to educate them on what constitutes major violations as opposed to minor issues. Volunteers will be trained to use the equipment needed for documenting properties. Please make the step in bringing our homes back up to the value we deserve. If you would like to volunteer your time for a day to help with this project, please contact **Ron Frey 344-0757** or **Chris Foster 342-6006**. We need to start now!

***For a related article on this issue, see page 2***

**Next Meeting  
Thursday, March 3  
7:00 P.M.**

### **Candidates' Forum**

**City Council - District 3:  
Anne Boyle  
Jim Vokal**

**Mayor:  
Dave Friend**

**Creighton University  
Medical Center  
Morrison Seminar Room**

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**Executive Board Meeting  
Thursday, March 17  
7:00 P.M.  
Yates Alternative School  
32nd & Davenport St.**

## **16th Annual GPNA Easter Egg Hunt**



**Saturday, March 26  
Noon (Sharp!)  
Rain or Shine  
at Gifford Park  
Children Ages 12 &  
Under**

**Bring Your Easter Baskets  
& Be Ready To Hunt!**

**GPNA OFFICERS****PRESIDENT**

Ron Frey 344-0757

**VICE PRESIDENT**

Cynthia Shuck 556-2090

**RECORDING SECRETARY**

Kate O'Brien 496-8419

**TREASURER**

Vicki Frey 344-0757

**NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES****ADVERTISING**

Dar Sweazy 345-0125

**COMMUNITY GARDEN**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**COMPLIANCE**

Leo Wilwerding 345-1433

**HISTORIAN**

Eva Swanson 345-1707

**KELLOM SCHOOL LIAISON**

Jean Peck 344-0722

**MEMBERSHIP**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**NEWSLETTER**

Sue Wilwerding 342-2795

**NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION**

Chris Foster 342-6006

**NEWSLETTER MAILING**

Mike Bacome 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 & LITER**

Jim Wilwerding 551-1344

**WELCOMING**

Vicki Frey 344-0757

*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.*

**From The President . . .**

"Speak softly, but carry a big stick." This was Teddy Roosevelt's famous policy. But knowing when to speak softly and when to use the stick—that's when the debate begins. When do you strictly enforce the rules without regard for anyone, and when do you cut someone slack and accommodate for special considerations?

Our differing personalities naturally give us opposing perspectives on the issue. You even see this in families. One spouse might be the enforcer of the letter of the law, the other flexes and allows for exceptions. Both are valuable. Some traditions refer to tensions like this as the relationship between law and grace. We all need rules to abide by and need them enforced. But we also need grace. There is a point where relationship is more important than rules. The overall goal can sometimes be missed in the insistence on rote attention to rules.

When it comes to issues in our neighborhood, one of the major themes discussed is code enforcement. The Destination Midtown document stresses the importance of enforcing property codes to prevent degradation of property stock. This was picked up as a top issue with the new Midtown Neighborhood Association (MNA).

The devil is in the details, though. What do we want to see happen? What is our role, what is the city's role? All of these questions are filled with controversial landmines. For some, they evoke images of neighborhood "Gestapo" groups looking for ways to turn in anyone whose paint is chipped. Others worry that if code principles are not applied consistently to everyone, then someone with a chip on their shoulder can be vindictive in their application of code enforcement.

In the face of such controversy, we could either retreat or trample on anyone who stands in our way. I prefer neither. The issue is important, but let's proceed with caution and build some neighborhood guiding principles.

First, dilapidated properties create a deteriorated neighborhood. Neglect attracts crime and chases away vitality, investment, good neighbors and customers. This is something we wish to avoid. I've stated previously that the next twenty years will be a critical time for the housing stock of our neighborhood. Continued neglect of some properties will lead to vacant lots—which are not good for anyone.

Second, when property owners buy older homes, it comes with the implication that maintenance and repair are part of the whole package. I may not be happy if something needs to be fixed, but I know it's something I need to do. Some problems are more important than others, such as water issues. When the old house mechanic spoke to our neighborhood association, one of his principles was: "Water always wins." If we are concerned about the future of our housing stock, water damage is a critical issue.

Third, our primary concern is to address major code violations. Is the dilapidated structure attracting criminal behavior? Is the code violation a major safety issue or does it endanger the viability of the structure itself?

The University of Nebraska at Omaha sponsored a seminar that four Gifford Park residents attended. They are sponsoring a program to inventory neighborhoods. We tested their software loaded on hand-held PC's and went out

*continued on page 3*

## From The President . . .

*continued from page 2*

looking at a sample of properties in four Midtown neighborhoods. We have proposed an inventory of all structures in our neighborhood to create a consistent baseline of data.

What are we going to do with the information? That is the \$10 million dollar question. What if *every house* in all participating neighborhoods had a code violation? There is no way the city could respond and follow up. That is not our intent. I don't want to be a tattle-tale. We have envisioned keeping you in the loop by sending a neighborhood-wide mailing, providing you with the summary results of the survey.

Properties with serious issues would receive specific information and a listing of resources available to them. Another neighborhood, Ford Birthsite, has done this for several years. It was good to hear the positive responses they have received over the years. Even the Landlord Association president said that they appreciated receiving constructive information from the neighborhood, as opposed to just being turned into the city. He reported that some property owners are told one thing by their property managers when another thing is actually happening. It gives us an opportunity to resolve problems before the city gets involved.

By taking a complete inventory, we are able to prioritize code problems in our own neighborhood. We can ask the city to focus their enforcement efforts on the properties that devalue our neighborhood and cause the most problems. We can categorize common issues and educate residents on potential solutions. We may be able to collect our buying power to bring in reliable contractors with volume discounts to Gifford Park residents.

You see, there could be a lot of positive outcomes that arise from this project. Other neighborhoods that have completed inventories have later qualified for federal block grant money, allowing the city to invest back in the neighborhood. If we were able to accomplish that, it would be an exciting prospect!

Should we strictly apply the law? Or do we give some measure of grace? Hopefully, we can do both. My tendency is that I want the law enforced on others, but want them to cut me slack. That's just human nature. But the code rules apply to everyone, including me, because if I don't keep up my end of the bargain, it hurts the value of the entire neighborhood. Our intent with this program is not to alienate, but to educate, empower, and—when it hurts our neighborhood—enforce.

*by Ron Frey*

## Free Tax Help Available Now

The site for the annual free tax assistance is the Lay Apostolate Center at St. Cecilia's Cathedral, 40th & Webster St. Tax help will be available Mondays from 1 to 4 p.m., Wednesday's 6 to 8 p.m. and Saturdays 10 to noon though the tax season. Everyone is welcome! IRS representatives will provide free tax help for our neighborhood for the 11th year in a row. Processing of basic tax returns and electronic filing will be available. No appointment is necessary; walk-in appointments only. Please call Jackie at 551-3629 for more information.

### You will need to bring:

- A) A valid picture ID
- B) Copies of all W-2, 1099 forms, and proof of other income received by you and your spouse
- C) Social Security card or Tax ID # for you, your spouse and any others shown on the tax return.

Note: **Raquel Ayala**, has volunteered to translate for Spanish-speaking people who need help with their taxes. If you are interested or know someone who could benefit from this service, please call her at 612-3632 for more information.

## CALIFORNIA BAR

510 North 33rd St.

Come join us!

Nascar Racing Sundays

Happy Hour Weekdays

449-9138

## Charles R. Kilgore Jr.

Attorney At Law

4913 Underwood Avenue

558-5000

Personal Injury Law

Worker's Compensation

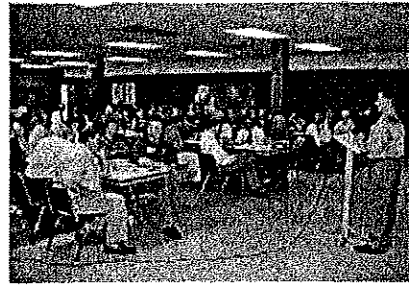
Injury

Auto Accidents

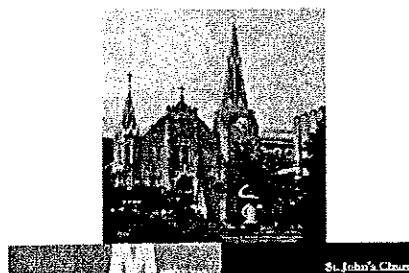
Insurance Claims

## COMMUNITY FORUMS

We want you as a Destination Midtown Ambassador. Join us for one of three community forums to learn more about how you can be involved in our Neighborhood Development, Economic Development and Transportation Development programs.



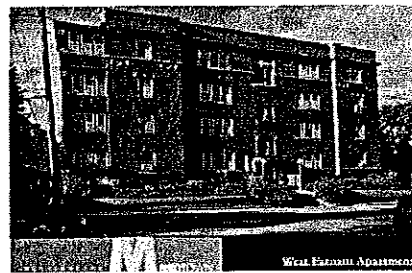
- 3/8 6:00 p.m. OPS TAC Building 3215 Cuming Street
- 3/10 6:00 p.m. Field Club 3615 Woolworth St.
- 3/12 10:00 a.m. First Central Church 421 S. 36<sup>th</sup> St.



St. John's Church



Gardner Wilder House



West Eppanelli Apartments

*The mission of Destination Midtown is to create a premier urban environment where people want to live, work, shop and play.*

*The vision of Destination Midtown is to establish a nationally-known, vibrant and distinct urban environment that:*

- *Promotes economic development opportunities*
  - *Advances neighborhood goals*
  - *Forges unique partnerships*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DESTINATION MIDTOWN  
CONTACT:**

**TAWANNA BLACK AT (402) 233-7142 OR [tblack@omahachamber.org](mailto:tblack@omahachamber.org)**

## Ways To Prevent Your Car From Being Stolen

No vehicle is 100% theft-proof. But, the more time a thief has to spend stealing your car, the greater the chance of his getting caught. By making your car a tougher target, you'll encourage the thief to move onto another car. Some valuable tips:

- Never leave your keys in your vehicle, even if you're running into a store for "just a minute". Up to 50% of the vehicles in Omaha are stolen with the keys in them. Resist the temptation to leave the car running to keep it warm while you go inside - it only takes a few seconds for someone to jump in your unattended car and drive off.
- Never hide a second set of keys in your car. Thieves know all the hiding places.
- Park in well-lit areas. Over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- When possible, park in attended lots - there is more potential for witnesses.
- Completely close car windows when parked. Don't make it easier for the thief.
- Don't leave valuables in plain view, making your car a more desirable target.
- If you have a garage, use it.
- Use some visible locking device for the steering wheel. This prevents it from being turned when the car is not running.
- Engrave expensive accessories with a personal identification number, or write down the serial numbers. If recovered by the police, you can claim them.

by Sgt. Erin Dumont

Reprinted from the OPD Community Resource Center Newsletter

## California Tacos & More

*Homemade Mexican Food*

**342-0212**

33rd & California Street

Dine In or Carry Out

### Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Closed Sunday

*California* Tacos  
&  
More



# J'N'J

## GROCERY STORE

*Fresh Meats -- Fresh Produce*

*Friendly Service*



**3301 California Street -- 422-1058**

### WE DELIVER!



**7:00 AM - 10:00 PM Monday thru Thursday**

**7:00 AM - 11:00 PM Friday thru Saturday**

**8:00 AM - 10:00 PM Sunday**

### Assisted Living Update

According to **Steve Rothenberg**, representative of **Via Christe**, the assisted living facility that will be located on Duchesne's west campus, a great deal of progress is being made in anticipation of a May 2005 opening. Steve reports that drywall and roof work has been completed, and the footings for the addition on the east side of the building are in place. The wiring and security system have been installed and interior design plans are being finalized. A model unit should be ready at the end of April or beginning of May. In anticipation of the expected opening, Steve said that plans are being made to hold "hardhat" luncheons with tours of the building sometime toward the end of April. Gifford Park Neighborhood Association members will be invited to this event.

### Community Garden Gearing Up For Spring

It won't be long until the weather is nice enough for gardening. In fact, some of the perennials already have new growth. We are preparing for the fourth full year of planting at the **Gifford Park Community Garden** located at **3416 Cass St.** **Kate O'Brien** is already making plans for this year's youth gardening program during the spring and summer. For more information on the community garden project, call **Chris 342-6006**, **Cynthia 556-2090**, or **Annemarie 342-1340**.

### Easter Egg Hunt Volunteers Needed

The GPNA can always use plenty of volunteers to help with its annual Easter Egg Hunt – from park clean-up prior to the event, to assisting the Easter Bunny with candy distribution, to "crowd control". Just come on down to **Gifford Park** around **11 a.m.** on **Saturday, March 26**. Get involved in the most fun event of the year!

### Mark Your Calendars!

The annual **GPNA Spring Cleanup** has been scheduled for **Saturday, April 16th**, in **Gifford Park**. Look for more information in the April newsletter.

The GPNA has been notified by the **City of Omaha Parks & Recreation Department** that **Gifford Park** has once again been chosen for an appearance by the **Show Wagon** this summer. The date for the Show Wagon this year will be **Tuesday evening, June 21st**. The Show Wagon program is a competition for young people to show off their talents whether it be singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, or any other talent. If you or your children are between the ages of one and eighteen, it's not too early to begin preparing an act for this competition. For more information, and/or an entry form, call **444-5164**.

### Portion Of Webster Street To Close

According to **Lennis Pederson** from **Creighton University**, the contractor for the 30th and California Street parking lot under construction will be closing Webster Street from the entrance to the Cardiac Center west to 32nd Street on **March 1, 2005**. There will be no parking along Webster Street after the closing.



#### GIFFORD PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131-0462

#### 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          |

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



**TOOL  
LENDING  
HOTLINE**

Mike 933-7506 Chris 342-6006