

# **Gifford Park's Pride**

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play www.giffordparkomaha.org

#### March 2014

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

#### **Restore Omaha Conference 2014**

More than 250 people gathered at the Durham Museum on Friday, February 28 for the opening reception of the ninth annual Restore Omaha Conference. The conference, which teaches and motivates people to preserve, restore and fix-up older homes and buildings, is produced by Restoration Exchange Omaha with support from Metropolitan Community College. While attendees enjoyed the grandeur of the former Union Station, many were focused on another railroad building just across the tracks: the Burlington Station, designed by Omaha architect Thomas Kimball and constructed in 1898. Television station KETV and owner Hearst Corporation recently announced plans to restore the building, which has sat dormant for some 40 years.

The Saturday conference at Metropolitan Community College South Campus was attended by over 200 people and brought together craftspeople, businesses, neighborhood associations, and government entities to provide a "one stop shop" for attendees to gather ideas, products, contacts and solutions for their older property needs.

Saturday's conference included a keynote lecture by nationally recognized Gordon Bock, editor of Old-House Journal. Attendees chose from three educational sessions, live demonstrations, and a host of exhibitors. Fifteen breakout sessions included historic paint colors, recreating historic landscapes, remodeling kitchens in historic homes, window repair, history of the Minne Lusa neighborhood, and the restorations of the Rose Theater, Omaha Federal Building, and Burlington Station.



The GPNA hosted a booth at the conference promoting the good qualities of our neighborhood - thanks to GPNA volunteers Martin Janousek, Luther & Deb Larson, and Chris & Sallie Foster. Gifford Park residents Adrian & Marie Hélène Petrescu and Luther & Deb Larson presented their own 'old home' restoration/fix-up projects at the Restore Jam, where attendees were invited to share before-and-after photos of their own projects. Special thanks to Brent Lubbert and Matt Cronin of Big Muddy Urban Farm for recording video/audio duties of both the reception and conference. And finally a big thanks to the entire Restore Omaha committee for organizing another great event! For more information, visit www.restoreomaha.org or call (402) 679-5854.



#### **2014 GPNA OFFICERS**

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**TREASURER** Luther Larson 402-616-9350

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Editor's note: If you have news of interest to the Gifford Park Neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for the monthly newsletter. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board. Please include your contact information. Articles may be submitted by email to jill.lynn.westfall@gmail.com.

## From the President

By Eric Purcell

Are you ready for Spring yet? It's been a long, cold hibernation this winter. Though I'm getting a bit antsy for higher temperatures, gardens, sports in the park and all of the activities that go along with warm weather in Gifford Park, I also really cherish the hibernation months. There is something nourishing about stepping back from the flurry of activity and social engagements. Maybe it's just me and my introverted self, but I really do think the slowing down is good. It gives us some time to rest. It allows for some space to reflect on what we've seen and done so that we can learn from our experiences. It makes room for fresh ideas and new growth. In just a few short weeks we're all going to be watching a lot of that new growth happen in every direction we look.

Over the last several cold months the GPNA board has been doing some reflecting as well. One area we have been feeling a growing tension is with our monthly GPNA general meetings. With all of the positive activities going on in Gifford Park, we continually find ourselves on the panic side of planning a meeting and organizing speakers, often to be disappointed by low turnout. Twenty-five years ago when the neighborhood association was first started, it was a different world. Social media and technology were nowhere near what they are today. There were no community garden or potlucks. There were no tennis or soccer program. There wasn't an Easter Egg hunt. There wasn't a weekly Friday night market from June to September. For many years the general meeting served as the main social connection for the neighborhood, the place to learn about activities in the neighborhood, as well as the place that neighborhood business was done. Today, much of what the monthly meeting provided is provided elsewhere. So, after much reflection and an open discussion at the February general meeting, we

have decided to experiment this year with reducing our number of general meetings to four: February, May, August and November. We will still have our annual Holiday Banquet in December.

Each of these meetings will include space for neighbors to interact and get to know each other better, space to voice concerns or ideas for the neighborhood, announcements of upcoming events and a special speaker. There will also be some kind of light snack (last month Chad Lebo of Cure provide us with some delicious cured bacon, cheese and fresh baked bread)! We are also considering hosting the meeting in a couple of different locations and other options that might help people make it out, such as child care.

Our goal with this is not to limit the amount of interaction happing in the neighborhood! Instead, we are trying to steward the time that we do have together as well as the time of our board and many volunteers. In fact, during the colder months, we want to continue to host occasional "social hours" at local businesses to help us stay connected during the hibernation months! Our first one will be on Thursday, March 20 at 6:30 pm at Marrakech Gourmet. Appetizers will be provided, but come for supper too!

See you in the Neighborhood!

Eric

# You're invited! GPNA Social Hour

Thurs., March 20 6:30-8:00pm

Marrakech Gourmet (33rd & Cass)

Get out of the cold, share some appetizers, eat dinner and reconnect with your neighbors!

(As a courtesy to Marrakech Gourmet, if you think you'll join us, please send an email to: info@giffordparkomaha. org)

#### **Cure for Cabin Fever**

At our February General Meeting we had everyone share ideas of some of their favorite things to "Cure Cabin Fever." Even though Spring and warmer weather is right around the corner, you might still



find some of these ideas helpful to cure the winter blues.

- Board Game Marathon
- Making Cookies
- Clean the Basement
- Make Root Beer Floats
- Go for a walk-even if it's snowing
- Sharing a meal with friends
- Planning a tropical vacation
- Watching the Olympics
- Take and hike and let the dog chase deer and squirrels.
- Work out
- Take a vacation to a warm place
- Build an indoor "beach" using a full spectrum light, play sand and a space heater 77 Degrees :)
- Make blanket forts with your kids and camp out in the living room
- Hula-hoop
- Go to a GPNA meeting
- Watch squirrels play in the snow and dig for the nuts they hid before winter-take pictures
- Walk in the neighborhood and meet the neighbors
- Watch the wildlife and birds and take pictures
- Snow battles
- Go eat out at Marrakech (And watch Chris Foster run around the neighborhood)
- Experiment with new recipes
- Dream and plan about what to plant in the garden in the spring
- A brisk walk to Midtown Crossing to meet friends
- Play bluegrass music--start a bluegrass band/ jam group

#### **Gifford Park Neighborhood Market**

#### By Martin Janousek

Planning for this summer's Gifford Park Neighborhood Market has begun. Now in our 7th summer, this small grassroots market has the makings of being the best one yet! Last year we had vendors selling all types of vegetables and fruits, jellies, canned goods, handmade items, vintage clothing, honey, cheeses, smoked meats, bicycles—and the list goes on! We had musicians and kid's activities as well. The best part of the market is the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association purchases the Vendors Permit from the city of Omaha every year and the cost for vendors to have a stall is ZERO. Yes, you heard that right. All proceeds go right back into the pocket of the vendor. However, vendors must remember, with this no-cost fee to be a vendor all marketing and advertising is up to each vendor. What the neighborhood hopes to encourage is the cultivation of an entrepreneurial spirit and the building of community.

For more information keep reading the newsletter over the next few months, follow us and "Like Us" on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/ GiffordParkNeighborhoodMarket.

#### **Community Garden/Youth Garden**

This is the time of year folks start thinking about gardening. We are starting to plan for community garden projects and the youth garden program. Stay tuned for more updates in our April newsletter as spring approaches. If you have any questions or are interested in becoming involved with either the community garden or youth garden program, contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187 or foster3413@cox.net), or Mike Caban (402-341-4722 or caban3321@cox.net).

#### **Community Bicycle Project Updates**

By Charles Mitchell, Shop Manager

The season for bicycling is nigh, and the Community Bike Project is excited to be launching new initiatives to meet the needs that the warm weather brings.

In the spring, we'll be expanding our Youth Earna-Bike program. Our new Kids' Bike Club will give 6-9 year olds the opportunity to earn bikes by attending 4 one-hour classes. Classes will focus on bike riding and community service. The ABC's of bike maintenance will also be introduced. For kids who can't attend, the Bike Project also sells used kids' bikes (18" wheels and under) for \$5-\$10.

This month we began hosting monthly Youth Board meetings. These meetings give youth an opportunity to help shape the vision of the Bike Project, provide input on shop operations, and develop new programming. Youth participation has always been a vital element of the Bike Project, and the leadership, maturity, and work ethic that our local youth display while taking classes or volunteering is inspiring. Youth Board will provide interested adolescents a way to further develop these qualities and help grow the Bike Project with their unique skills and perspectives. To ensure that we can provide support and access to bicycles for everyone, we rely on community support. Bike donations are always a huge help, and we're particularly looking for 20" kids bikes. We also need volunteers to help mentor youth during Youth Earn-a-Bike and Kids' Bike Club. Volunteers are also invaluable during Open Shop. If you're interested in volunteering, send me an email at charles@ communitybikeproject.org. Volunteering is a great way to meet and interact with your neighbors, learn about bikes, and get more involved with the Gifford Park community!

We've also got some events coming up that should be a fun way to financially support the Bike Project. We'll be having a beer tasting at the Pizza Shoppe Collective on Thursday, April 4. Support the Bike Project and learn more about the organization while enjoying New Belgium beer and Pizza Shoppe pizza! For more information and to buy tickets go to www. communitybikeproject.org/news. Registration for our Lids for Kids fundraiser ride is also now open! Register at www.communitybikeproject. org/lids4kids for an invigorating 15, 30, or 45 mile ride around Omaha that will support our Youth Earn-a-Bike programs.



# Gifford Park Neighborhood School Effort

By Chris Foster

Here's a recap on the effort by the Gifford Park and surrounding neighborhoods to bring back a neighborhood school to the Gifford Park Community. With new OPS Board members and new Superintendent Mark Evans developing a strategic plan for the first time in years, there is a great opportunity for OPS leadership to look at several options for making this happen. As many of you know, in 1999 our neighborhood school Yates Elementary at 32nd & Davenport Street was closed by OPS because the building was too small to handle the number of children in our neighborhood. Currently of the 353 Yates attendance area children in grades K-6, 165 are assigned to Kellom School, and 188 of our children are bused to 39 different schools in the district

Letters of support to bring back a neighborhood school have been sent to OPS from the Gifford Park NA, Joslyn Castle NA, Dundee Memorial Park NA, Bemis Park NA, Leavenworth NA, Midtown Neighborhood Alliance, Councilman Chris Jerram, First Presbyterian Church, and residents. On October 30, the Omaha World-Herald ran two articles on the issue: "Gifford Park: Neighborhood keeps school spirit alive" and "School backers want continued role for community center, too." We recently met with OPS Superintendent Mark Evans and OPS Board members to educate them about our effort and the neighborhood. We also appreciate everyone who participated in the OPS Community Forums in late October, we had a good showing!

Next steps for our effort are to continue talking with OPS Board members, OPS administration and the community to discuss the challenges and opportunities for returning a quality neighborhood school to the Gifford Park neighborhood. We plan to organize a community meeting in the near future to more thoroughly educate and update people on this effort, and have open discussion and feedback – we will keep everyone posted on this. We also plan to speak and present information at future OPS Board meeting(s). Thanks for everyone's support so far, stay tuned!

For more information on this effort, please contact:

Chris Foster (GPNA Board member): 402-290-8187, foster3413@cox.net Marque Snow (OPS Board member): 605-675-9251,marque.snow@ops.org Sara Howard (Nebraska State Senator): 402-699- 5514; saraehoward@gmail.com

#### **Upcoming Events**

Spring is almost upon us! Mark your calendars for these annual GPNA events.

April 12 – 9am-2pm - Spring Cleanup (Gifford Park)

April 19 – 12:00 noon sharp -Easter Egg Hunt (Gifford Park)



April 19 – 10:30am-2pm -Cultural Event (Yates Community Center)

May 10 – 10am-12noon - Community Garden Season Opening (Community Garden)

May 17 – 10am-11:30am - Youth Garden Program (each Saturday morning 10-11:30am, May 17 through August 30)

May 21 – 6-7:30 pm Youth Tennis Block Party (Gifford Park Tennis Courts)

## **LOCAL Updates**

As spokespersons for LOCAL (Let Omaha Control its Alcohol Landscape), we urge all neighborhood groups and associations to be proactive in dealing with liquor-related problems in your community and to share what LOCAL has been working on this past year.

With your support, the Omaha City Council passed the Good Neighbor Ordinance in October of 2012. The ordinance authorizes the city to regulate businesses with retail liquor licenses so problem liquor licensees do not continue to be a nuisance in your neighborhood. The ordinance functions by using the city's land use powers to set conditions of operation on alcoholsales businesses that reflect the community standards of a good business neighbor. This locallyoriented, proactive approach is a unique tool the city has to address problem businesses before their operations get out of hand and wreak havoc on neighborhood health, safety, and quality of life. The ordinance provides the city's planning department the authority to take action against an alcohol-sales business's certificate of occupancy if nuisances are not addressed in a timely manner.

As you may know, the passage of the ordinance is just the first step: implementation and enforcement are the critical next steps. To this end, LOCAL has been working with city leadership to ensure that those next steps are done in a way that is both effective and efficient. Since the passage of the ordinance, LO-CAL's focus has been on ensuring that the reporting process allows residents to quickly and easily lodge complaints regarding alcohol sales establishments whose operations are disrupting public health, safety and/or quality of life across the city and that they are appropriately handled by the city.

LOCAL has also been focusing on streamlining the process to address problem alcohol-sales establishments. We have worked with the city to simplify the reporting process using the Mayor's Hotline (444-5555), met with each police precinct captain, and visited neighborhood groups to bring awareness about the ordinance. Additionally, LOCAL created a complaint form residents are using to keep track of any complaint calls to the city or the police to help us track issues and ensure problems are being addressed.

We realize that there is still much to be done, but the small steps we have made to improve communication and to ease reporting have already made a difference. Neighbors should report problems through the Mayor's Hotline when problems arise pertaining to a liquor-selling business in their area and let us know by using the complaint form so we can assist you in tracking the problem.

Please contact us if you wish for a LOCAL member to attend your neighborhood meeting, if you need help with a problem liquor business in your neighborhood, or if you have any other questions. You can reach us by sending an email to thelocalcampaign@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Margie Magnuson 402-554-0775 magnuson1@cox.net

Chris Foster 402-290-8187 foster3413@cox.net



#### How to Report a Problem or Make a Complaint:

1. Call the Omaha Mayor's Hotline at (402) 444-5555 or submit a complaint by email through hotline@ci.omaha.ne.us.

2. Be as specific as possible in your complaint. Document date/time, location (address and business name, if possible), number of people involved, nuisance behaviors, graffiti, or others. Let the staff with the Mayor's Hotline know if you've called previously with a complaint against the establishment or if you've called 911 regarding criminal activity, disturbances, noise, etc. Ask specifically that the complaint be forwarded to the city's planning department for enforcement through use of the Good Neighbor or alcohol ordinance.

3. Document your complaint, the date and time of your call or email to the hotline, and the person with whom you spoke. Share it with LOCAL by filling out the LOCAL Alcohol Outlet Complaint Form on our website (www.thelocalcampaign.com) or send it in an email to thelocalcampaign@gmail.com.



#### **Parking Enforcement**

By Jim Wilwerding

As warm weather approaches (or is at least promised) perhaps it is a good time to remind neighbors that vehicles should not be parked on sidewalks. It is, of course, illegal. In addition it is inconsiderate to pedestrians. As a neighborhood, we try to be pedestrian friendly. On one recent mid-morning drive through the neighborhood, I saw 18 vehicles parked on sidewalks. In most cases, legal on-street parking was available immediately adjacent. In a few cases, as in that shown, there was sufficient room to pull forward off the sidewalk and onto the driveway. Obviously, enforcement is lacking. So we would appeal to drivers to please make the effort to keep sidewalks clear.



The Clarinda and Page Apartments were constructed in 1909 and 1914 and are a simple and graceful example of Georgian Revival style of architecture with red brick contrasting with light limestone quoins, sills and lintels. Located at the corner of Turner Boulevard and Farnam Street, they anchor the southeast corner of Turner Park. According to a Jan. 27 Omaha World-Herald article, Mutual of Omaha is purchasing the Clarinda-Page Apartments with the intent of demolishing the buildings to make way for a future office building.

The buildings are a classic representative of Omaha's early luxury apartment buildings which developed along the City's picturesque parks and boulevard system after the turn of the 20th century. The Clarinda



is an iconic portal to the Leavenworth neighborhood to the south, and a historical companion to the Colonial Revival First Unitarian Church across the street to the west. They are a part of Omaha's history.

Destination Midtown has long promoted the area as a mixed-use environment, and the Clarinda/Page contributes notably in providing affordable residential units in a historically significant setting with high visibility reflecting the heritage of the neighborhood. The Clarinda and Page contribute diverse architectural qualities to the public urban public space at Midtown Crossing and Turner Park. Its scale, materials, and historic detailing are a relieving complement to the newer, more predominately large buildings that encompass the Mutual of Omaha campus.

The Clarinda-Page Apartments are currently protected as an Omaha Local Landmark, a creation of Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission. The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association sent a letter of support for maintaining he Clarinda-Page buildings landmark desgination and saving them from demolition. From our letter:

"The Gifford Park Neighborhood Association would like to ask that the Landmark Designation for the Clarinda-Page buildings not be rescinded. We also ask that the Omaha Planning Board and Omaha City Council not to vote to rescind the nomination or approve the demolition of these buildings.

Gifford Park Neighborhood Association has been an active and stabilizing force in the area long before there was a Midtown designation. Gifford Park Neighborhood Association was a participating stakeholder and Steering Committee Member when the Destination Midtown Study was created. Our neighborhood leadership spent an unbelievable amount of their own time to be involved and take serious the task to develop a long range plan for the neighborhoods we love. We endorsed and supported the study then, as well as other committee members such as Mutual of Omaha, Omaha Planning, and Omaha City Council. We continue to support that plan which included the historical Clarinda-Page buildings. In that study it was shown that Historical Buildings was the number one thing that made Midtown special and was the most loved aspect of Midtown as voted by the hundreds of Omaha's participated and followed this amazing Destination Midtown Study. We need to remember this and not let poor judgment and short sightedness ruin what little we have of Midtowns historical buildings. We need to remember there will only be one Midtown and there's no recreating after it's gone."

# **2013 MNA Accomplishments**

The Midtown Neighborhood Alliance (MNA), an organization of neighborhood groups from throughout the Midtown, Omaha area, had a busy year in 2013. Here are a few highlighted accomplishments.



- Joined Restoration Exchange as a member and participated as a vendor at the Restore Omaha Conference.
- Held a Midtown Garden Walk which included 21 gardens throughout midtown and raised \$1,300.
- Held a Midtown Reads The Great Gatsby event at Marcus Theater at Midtown Crossing.
- Provided a Mini-Neighborhood Grant to members of MNA dispersing \$3,500 among five neighborhoods.
- Working to secure ongoing funding for the Mini-Neighborhood Grant program.
- One of six members of United Neighborhood Alliance of Omaha which formed to determine next steps after closing of the Neighborhood Center. Working to secure a new position funded by the Mayor's Office, private funders and foundations.
- Involved in six month Neighborhood Needs Assessment Study, Focus Groups, Surveys and Neighborhood Forums/partnership with UNO Consortium for Research and Evaluation. Report issued.
- Involved in NUSA National USA Conference and part of the core group to bring Omaha NUSA 2014 and NUSA 2017 Conference to Omaha.
- Signed a 3-year contract to partner with Dan Williams of Wild Willy's to raise funds for 2014 projects.
- Submitted several letters of support: one to support Joslyn Castle's liquor license, one to OPS to support Gifford Park's effort to open a neighborhood school.
- Hosted Community Wish List for Development of Crossroads Mall/partnership with Douglas County Health Department. A Health Impact Assessment report issued.
- Received Bank of the West Neighborhood Initiative grant in the amount of \$2,500 and awarded to Blackstone Business District for the purchase of street banners supporting efforts of local BID.
- Midtown Re-Tree Program planted 110 + trees throughout MNA boundaries. We spent approximately \$26,000 in grant funding from Papio NRD, Mutual of Omaha, Mayor's Grant, HDR and Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. We contributed \$4,000 from our general funds raised through the fireworks stand. Volunteers from the United Way of the Midlands, HDR, Eagle Scouts, Duschene Academy, Lamsom Dugan & Murray Law Firm, and neighborhood residents.
- Established relationship to ensure usage of the UNO's new Engagement Center for future MNA events and partnerships.
- Partnering with Panera Bread on Saddle Creek to drop off day-old bread donations to Liberty Elementary each week and Completely Kids during the summer months.
- Attend and represent MNA at the Midtown Business Association meetings and Downtown Business Association meetings.

For any inquiries or how to get involved, contact MNA President, Diana Failla at (402) 651-5779 or GPNA Representative Cynthia Schuck at (402) 980-4190.

## **City Service Phone Numbers**

Have a problem with city services and need to find who to call? Here's a handly list of common phone numbers.

Animal Bites 444-7578 Barking Dogs (sick, injured, stray animals) 444-7800 Cars (abandoned or junked) 444-5782 Cars/Trailers parked on front lawn 444-5350 Crime or Vandalism 444-5600 Empty buildings, Houses (vacant or dilapidated) 444-5371 Gang Hotline (Youth intervention) 444-6920 Garbage not picked up 444-5238 Garbage/Litter violations 444-5910



# Gifford Park is getting another mural

The south facing wall on the northwest corner of 33rd and Cass St. will be painted by youth volunteers during UNO's Seven Days of Service, March 22 & 24-29.

The mural project has been led and coordinated by UNO art student, Maggie Weber. The artist has incorporated space in the mural for Gifford Park neighbors to personalize and put their mark on the artwork.

For a \$10 donation, a brick will be personalized with your family's name(s). 100% of your donation will help offset costs for the project materials. Please make your \$10 donation payable to the Gifford Park



Neighborhood Association and submit it along with the name(s) you would like listed on the wall. Mail your contribution to GPNA, P.O. Box 31462, Omaha, NE 68131.

Your support will make an impact on the Gifford Park neighborhood and serve as a marker for your place in the neighborhood's history.

For more information, contact Eric Purcell at 402-719-5108.

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Membership Application Gifford Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) The GPNA Membership Year runs from January 1 through December 31			
Type of Membership:	□ Single (\$10)	□ Family (\$15)	□Business (\$25)
Today's Date:			
Business Name (if applicable):			
Business Phone (if applicable):			
Name (1): Name (2): Name (3): Name (4): Name (5):	Phone: Phone: Phone: Phone: Phone: Phone:	Email: Email: Email: Email: Email:	
Address:			
City: State: Zip: Volunteer Opportunitites! I'm interested in helping with			
□Call Committee □Cleanup/Beautification □Community Garden □Easter Egg Hunt □History	☐ Holiday Banquet ☐ Landlord/Tenant Issues ☐ Memberships ☐ Neighborhood Walks ☐ Neighborhood Watch	□ Newsletter Distr	
Mail check or money order with this completed Membership Application Form to:			
	Gifford Park Neighborh P.O. Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131	hood Association	
For additional information about GPNA, please visit www.giffordparkomaha.org			



Gifford Park Neighborhood Association PO Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131 Place Stamp Here

#### Spring Clean Up April 12 9:00-2:00 pm in Gifford Park



Each Spring the City of Omaha and Keep Omaha Beautiful host neighborhood Spring Clean Up events all over the city. Its a chance for neighborhoods to clean up their allies and streets, garages, yards, parks and playgrounds and make their neighborhoods more beautiful places to be. Several trash compactors and a metals recycler will be in the Gifford Park parking lot on 34th and Davenport. Bring your trash and clean out the corners of your property. And while you're on your way, pick up some trash on the sidewalk!

#### 25th Annual Gifford Park Easter Egg Hunt



#### April 19 - 12 noon sharp! in Gifford Park

(Join us afterward for the 3rd annual Cultural Event at Yates Community Center 10:30 am-2:00 pm)