

# Summit Neighborhood Association

## Summit News

January 1996



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twentieth century suburban (yes, suburban) middle class development. What was inaccessible farmland in the late nineteenth century blossomed overnight into a satellite community of a booming Providence.

That and other insights into this place are the stuff of the Summit Neighborhood History Project. A collaborative effort of the PPS and SNA, the Project's goal is to collect the history and descriptions of each house and street in the Summit area. This information will be collected and published (not for profit). It will also form the basis of an application for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

What exactly do History Project volunteers do? There are three aspects of the Project: research, architectural descriptions and photography.

Researchers consider the neighborhood a street at a time. For each house on a street, they identify construction dates, builders, original owners and any other available information. They also note interesting information about the streets themselves, relationships among houses (same builder, related owners, etc.). Their sources are old maps and city directories conveniently located at the Rochambeau Library.

To capture the character of our neighborhood, the architectural type and details of each house are noted along with the historic infor-

mation. Our volunteers are learning to render these descriptions with instruction from the Providence Preservation Society.

Each house is photographed as a permanent record of how our neighborhood looks today. The pictures also provide the sources for the architectural descriptions.

When these three components are brought together, each house produces a 3 to 5 sentence history and description along with one or two photographs. That may not seem like alot, until you consider that there are 1100 houses in our neighborhood!

The Project currently counts ten active volunteers, who, working as their free time allows, have managed to complete about 20% of the research in about nine months time. Of course, the work goes faster as they gain experience. Still, there is clearly room for more volunteers.

PPS Executive Director Arnold Robinson has noted that it was a volunteer project such as this that first interested him in preservation. Whether it becomes for you a brief diversion, a hobby or a new career, preservation work is undeniably interesting. And it is doubly so

Edited by

The SNA Editorial Board

### What Is The History Project All About?

Summit Neighborhood is a pretty special place. The Providence Preservation Society agrees, though their reasons have as much to do with what it was as what it is. It was a prime example of early

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when the subject is your own community, street and house.

There will be a presentation about the Project at SNA's annual meeting at the Rochambeau Library on January 23rd (see the announcement elsewhere in this newsletter for details). Members of the Project meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month at the Rochambeau Library at 6pm. If you are interested in joining, or for more information, come to one of those meetings or call John Bazik at 331-1644.

**Block Grant Aims to Revitalize North Main Street**

Councilman Kevin Jackson has initiated a move by the Urban Renewal and Development Commission to study the potential for improvements on North Main Street. This study would serve as the basis for the filing of a Block Grant application for \$100,000 in funds over five years to improve the business environment.

An initial feature of the study is the development of a Business Association. Members will help identify buildings or blocks which need upgrading. Merchants have expressed enthusiasm for improve-

ments which they feel are long overdue especially given the increasing value of property and potential for growth along North Main Street.

A major part of the study hinges on the Master Plan developed by Miriam Hospital to describe use and expansion of its facilities. This plan has not yet been submitted to the Commission although it is expected in the near future.

Improvements designed to enhance property values include the repair and replacement of sidewalks and the repair and purchase of marketable real estate. The plan will focus attention on bringing businesses into rehabilitated buildings.

Completion of the study is expected by March at which time recommendations for the grant will be presented to the Planning and Development Department.

**Snow**

Few of us relish the thought of shoveling away a blanket of snow from the sidewalk each time a Nor' Easter sweeps through the area. And if what we have seen of this winter so far is any guide, we will all face alot more of the wet white

stuff this year. It is backbreaking work. Plows bury our neat pathways, rain ices them and frigid temperatures harden fluffy powder into impenetrable rock. If all you need is a path to your car, why bother with the rest?

Even if you don't use your sidewalk, others do. Your pedestrian neighbors, especially the elderly, appreciate a clear walkway. It is safer for them and for motorists. And though the city built your sidewalk, city ordinance makes property owners responsible for keeping them clear. It's the right thing to do, and it is appreciated.

**Crime Notes**

Last year at this time our neighbor Chris Baxter, his wife and a few of their friends approached their neighbors and asked that they watch each others property. It was a good idea then and is a good idea today. They recommended that when reporting suspicious activities:

- Remain calm, write down details
- Give exact address to police of where suspicious activity is taking place
- After calling police, notify 2 or

**Join The Summit Neighborhood Association**

Complete this form and mail it to *Summit Neighborhood Association, Box 41092, Providence, RI 02940.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is \$5.00 for an  Individual  Family Membership (Make checks payable to *Summit Neighborhood Association*).

I am concerned and would like to help with SNA activities. I am particularly interested in working on the following:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 of your neighbors and ask them to do the same.

Introduce yourself to your neighbors so they will know who belongs. Police confirm that among the best crime deterrents are watchful neighbors.

When reporting suspicious activity to the police, call 272-1111.

### **Welcome to Summit**

Several businesses have set up shop in our neighborhood since we last checked our commercial districts. Bits & pc's has moved into 735 Hope Street (at the corner of Rochambeau) where ABC TV & VCR used to be. Across the street, Oriental Rug Gallery has expanded into the space formerly occupied by Pre Amble.

Less than a block north on Hope, three new restaurants have recently joined us: East Side Joe's at 748, India Cafe and Grill at 758 and a walk-in Dunkin' Donuts at 771.

Blooming Blossoms, a floral boutique and gift shop, has come to the corner of Hope and Fourth Streets (where Ray's Home Video used to be).

Down the hill on North Main Street, Eastern Tool Company has located at 1185 (at the corner of Fifth Street) below the studios of WALE 990 AM.

We wish them all a long and prosperous stay in our neighborhood.

### **Jewish Home Update**

Last June, the owners of the former Jewish Home for the Aged on Hillside Avenue, which has been empty for more than two years, filed a petition for a zoning variance that would allow them to expand the facility in anticipation of its sale to Hillside Health Asso-

ciates.

The expansion would increase occupancy at the facility overall from 254 to 275. The number of nursing home beds would actually be reduced slightly and 39 assisted living units would be created in the annex building. The petition also seeks relief landscaping requirements, so that additional parking spaces can be added to the lot.

Hillside Health Associates, led by developer Antonio L. Giordano, argue that the changes are necessary to make the home cost effective to run.

When Hillside and Chace Avenue residents showed up in numbers at the zoning board hearing in June, they expressed concern both about the plan and about the fact that they had received no advance notice. Councilman Jackson was not notified either.

The zoning board continued the hearing until the developer had met with neighbors to explain the plan, walk them through the facility and hear their concerns.

Representatives of Hillside Health Associates met with SNA board members and some Hillside area residents at the Association's September board meeting at which a useful exchange of information took place, but nothing more.

Each month since June the followup zoning board petition has been postponed until the following month. To this day, no community meeting with the developers and the architect has been scheduled.

We await further developments.

### **Dues on the Rise**

At the November board meeting, the SNA board voted to raise our annual dues from \$5 to \$10 per individual or family. This was the

first increase ever, and represents the increased activity of the organization in recent years. In short, we found our budget did not support the activities we would like to do, especially newsletters like this one, which are expensive to have printed.

Prior to the vote, we polled neighboring associations and found that we were the only association whose members pay less than \$10 annually. We hope you will agree that our efforts in the neighborhood's behalf are worth a few extra membership dollars each year.

### **Important Phone Numbers**

Councilman Kevin Jackson  
Representative Gordon Fox  
Senator Rhoda Perry  
Community Policy Unit

Come to the  
Summit Neighborhood Association's

# Annual Meeting

6pm

Tuesday

January 23rd

Rochambeau Library

Speakers will include:

Councilman Kevin Jackson

Representative Gordon Fox

Senator Rhoda Perry

Community Police Officer Joe Almeida

Providence Preservation Society

Election of Officers for 1996

Refreshments

Free and open to all

Members please bring \$10 dues for 1996