

Summit News

May 1996



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Who's Tearing Up The Streets?

You probably, by now, have noticed work crews digging trenches in our streets, stringing new cable along our utility poles and leaving large concrete structures parked in precarious places. Spurred by the telecommunications bill signed into law by President Clinton earlier this year, two companies are racing to lay fiberoptic backbones across the East Side and in communities around the state.

Cox Cable Communications, our local cable television company, and Brooks Fiber Communications, an alternative

telephone service provider, have both had work crews stringing fiberoptic cables across our neighborhood in recent weeks. The Cox crews have been hanging the cables from utility poles; the workers from Brooks have been laying them underground.

Fiberoptic cables consist of strands of glass that carry voice, video or data signals as pulses of light. They can carry much more information than traditional copper wires, and are widely viewed as an essential part of the National Information Infrastructure.

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Jewish Home Update

On April 22nd, the Zoning Board of Review heard testimony on the Jewish Home for the Aged, 10 months after the issue first came before them. Hillside Health Associate's petition would extend the grandfathered nonconforming use, a nursing home in a single-family residential zone, from 254 to 275 beds. That increase in residency also requires additional parking which, in turn, decreases the required landscaping.

Last June, when testimony was first heard on the issue, opposition from neighbors prompted the board to postpone the hearing until the developer and area residents met to resolve, or at least air their differences. The hearing in April found the parties still in

opposition, though some progress had been made; Hillside Health Associates attached operating restrictions to their zoning variance to reassure neighbors that they will do a better job of running the home than the previous owners. Before the Jewish Home closed several years ago, neighbors complained of traffic and parking congestion, noise, litter-

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History Project Begins Second Year

The Summit Neighborhood History Project enters its second year with a solid body of work completed, a core of seasoned volunteers, and a group of new ones. Despite the progress, much is still left to do, and new volunteers are always welcome.

For each house in the neighbor-

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Lippitt Park

Lippitt Park is a grass and tree covered area at the intersection of Hope Street and Blackstone Boulevard. Originally part of Swan Point Cemetery, the land was donated to the city as a park in 1933. There was once a marker to tell us that the park was developed in 1938-40 and named in honor of World War I casualty Alexander Farnum Lippitt. The park was meant to be so much nicer but it has been neglected.

The north portion was designed with all paths converging at a now inoperable fountain. The fountain was erected in 1940 in honor of U.S. Senator Henry B. Anthony. It must have been a pleasure to sit and watch the cascading water. It seems a small matter to repair the pump and fill it with water. This fountain should be restored to its former beauty and a plaque installed to remind us of our history.

History Project

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hood, project volunteers research and document its history, describe its architecture, and photograph it. Some volunteers take on all three tasks, working their way through the neighborhood street by street. Others concentrate on historical research, architectural description or photography only, as their interests dictate. Either way, with about 1200 houses in the district, there is plenty for everyone to do.

The Project is a collaborative effort of the SNA and the Providence Preservation Society. The goal is to nominate Summit to the National Register of Historic Places. Register districts offer benefits for residents, such as tax credits, without restricting what homeowners may do with their properties. All nominations are subject to approval.

It seems a shame to take all this work, send it off to some federal agency to just sit in a file somewhere. So we plan to publish our research in a compact volume for local historians, preservationists and interested residents.

That volume would be greatly enhanced by historic photographs of the neighborhood. There exist surprisingly few pictures of the Summit area before 1940 (or after 1940, for that matter) in local archives. The reason seems to be that these pictures, if they exist, are in the attics of local residents or business owners - packed away and forgotten.

If you know of any such photos, especially street scenes from before 1940, consider loaning them to the History Project. We will copy and return them, and credit you anytime they are used. The History Project is a strictly non-profit effort.

The History Project meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6pm at the Rochambeau Library. New volunteers are always welcome at these meetings. For more information, contact John Bazik at 331-1644.

Work Crews

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ture or "Information Superhighway," which will bring us hundreds of channels of television, high speed connections to the Internet and more.

The new telecommunications law allows telephone, cable television and other communication companies to compete with one another to deliver telephone, television, and other communication services to customers in their service areas.

Brooks, which competes with telephone companies in 25 markets around the country, began offering phone service in Providence only last year. Their customers are primarily businesses, but the location of their cabling efforts makes it clear they intend to expand into the residential market.

According to a representative of Cox Cable, their new cables will bring East Siders an additional 15 TV channels by year's end, including ESPN2, The History Channel, Turner Movie Channel, The Travel Channel, and the Cartoon Network. Looking ahead, they plan to offer more channels, interactive TV, Internet connections and residential telephone service.

It looks like East Siders will soon see some of the competition that Congress and the President had in mind.

Festival Planned for July

The annual Summit Neighborhood Festival will be Sunday afternoon, July 14th at Lippitt Park. Usually held in June, the Festival has seen more rain than sun, so the SNA Board decided to try a sunnier month.

As in previous years, there will be live music, food and plenty of family fun. Look for more detailed announcements as the date approaches.

Jewish Home

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ing and other problems.

The operating restrictions will allow residents to address their concerns to the building inspector's office, which is responsible for enforcement. Without restrictions, the only remedy would be through the courts, which is difficult and costly.

At the April zoning board hearing, neighbors turned out in force to oppose the developer's petition. They questioned the developer's claim of financial hardship. Representatives of Hillside Health Associates say the home cannot be profitably run without increasing the number of beds. Neighbors pointed out that the hardship is based, in part, on the purchase price, which was negotiated by the developer. They argued that the home should be able to turn a profit at its current size if it is sold at a lower price. The city does not recognize a hardship that is brought on by the property owner.

Councilman Jackson, Senator Perry and Representative Fox oppose the zoning variance. But Hillside got support from City

A Tree Falls on Hope Street

Many area residents and business owners noticed the untimely demise of the street tree that once stood in front of the new Dunkin' Donuts at 771 Hope Street. The tree was illegally felled during construction on the storefront last year.

The Providence City Tree Ordinance requires an individual or business preparing to plant, spray, prune, cut above-ground, remove or otherwise disturb a public tree on a street, in a park or at any public site to first obtain a permit from the City Forester.

City Forester John Campanini, alerted to the sidewalk deforesta-

tion, tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to contact the franchise owner.

Mr. Campanini then tried to reach the owner through the Dunkin' Donuts Corporation. After the situation was explained, the company apparently saw the potential for bad publicity for the Dunkin' Donuts name, and wrote the city a check for \$250 to replace the tree.

Don't look for the tree to reappear at its old location, though. Mr. Campanini decided the donut shop location was not good for a young tree and said a new tree will be planted near Lippitt park.

Fall Street Tree Deadline Nears

The application deadline for the Mary E. Sharpe Street Tree Fund, for fall planting, is May 31st. Groups of at least five neighbors can apply for the trees, which are free. The program, however, is quite competitive, and requests for large numbers of trees tend to be chosen ahead of smaller ones.

For more information about the program, call Leslie Uργο at 785-9450.

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 \$10.00 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:

Announcing
The Summit Neighborhood Association's
Fifth Annual

Yard Sale

9am to 3pm

Saturday

May 11th

Church of the Redeemer
655 Hope Street

SNA Needs Donations:

Household Goods
Furniture

Working Appliances
Toys

Clothes
White Elephants

SNA Needs Volunteers:

Pickup
Setup

Day of Sale
Trucks / Vans

Sorting
Cleanup

Dropoff Dates:

Thursday May 9th and Friday May 10th
6pm to 8pm

Please bring items to the front door of the church. It is especially helpful if you can estimate the price of each item, and even more helpful if they are already tagged.

Thanks to lots of neighbors who contributed their no-longer-needed treasures, the SNA has had several successful yard sales in recent years. The money helps pay for our newsletters, festival, candidates' nights and other Association activities.

For more information, call Monique at 274-6061 or Judy at 861-8980

Rain Date - Saturday, May 18th