

Summit Neighborhood Association

Summit News

November 1998



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November Mini-Course Is History Project's Last

The final Summit Neighborhood History Project mini-course is scheduled for four Mondays in November. This free workshop is a chance to learn about the history of our neighborhood and historic preservation while helping to nominate Summit to the National Register of Historic Places.

Next year the project moves into a new phase, in which the work of our volunteers is assembled into its final form. But before then, there is still much work to be done.

So do something good for your neighborhood, have fun and learn

Friends of the Moshassuck Get Funding

The Moshassuck River is one of the defining characteristics of the Summit Neighborhood. To the west, Summit is bounded by the transportation corridors of I-95 and the railroad, both of which follow the valley of the Moshassuck. The river was the original highway through the area - our stretch of the Moshassuck served as the lower end of the Blackstone canal in the 1830s.

The story is a common one. The river once served us, but as

industrialization, sewage, and pollution destroyed the health of the river, the community turned away from the toxic soup. With the passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972, the worst abuses were ended, and the river started to rehabilitate itself. As the river improves, we notice, and figure out that if we help the recovery a bit, the river can be a very nice neighbor, one that makes a real contribution to the life of the

Continued on Page 3

Jewish Home Construction Begins

As many of you may have noticed, there is construction going on both inside and outside the old Jewish Home for the Aged at 99 Hillside Avenue. The property was officially purchased on 2/9/94 for just over \$5 million by Antonio Giordano & partners and renamed *Hillside Health Center*. Hillside Health Associates (HHA) was given the go-ahead by the RI Health Dept. under a restrictive cap limiting project expenditures to \$2 million annually for renovations. A federal Housing and Urban Development information sheet, dated 6/18/98, obtained from the RI

at the same time. Join us at the Rochambeau Library from 6pm to 8pm, November 2nd, 9th, 23rd and 30th. For more information, call John Bazik at 331-1644, or come to the first meeting.

Health Dept. public folders on this project, indicates that Hillside plans to offer 150 nursing home beds, plus 35 assisted living beds and 50 board and care beds. This totals 235 beds overall, no larger than the home had when it closed.

Giordano is well known in RI as a major debtor in the credit union crisis. Giordano and his wife and children are listed as owners of the Coventry Health

Continued on Page 5

In This Issue...

Moshassuck River	1
History Project	1
Jewish Home	1
Miriam Master Plan.....	2
Stormwater Runoff Study	2
Friends of Rochambeau	2
Zoning.....	4
Heritage River.....	4
Bond Issue.....	5
Membership Form	5
Community Police.....	6
Business Scene.....	6
Street Trees	6

Still No Miriam Master Plan

In spite of numerous assurances, Miriam Hospital still has not submitted a master plan. City ordinance requires all institutions to file five-year master plans, spelling out their plans for construction and expansion. The first such plans were due in 1995 for the period ending with the millennium.

All colleges and hospitals in the City have submitted their plans except for the hospitals of Lifespan, which includes Miriam. The next five-year plan is due January 1st, 2000, scarcely more than a year from now.

Institutional master plans are submitted to the Dept. of Planning and Development, which ensures that they harmonize with the City's Comprehensive Plan before they are accepted. There are no penalties for an institution

that does not comply, except that it may not receive any building permits until a master plan is accepted.

Oddly enough, Miriam Hospital received building permits for construction during the period that they were in violation of the law. It appears the City lacks the resolve to use even the minimal enforcement afforded to it in the ordinance. And Miriam, and its parent company Lifespan, appear to feel no urgency in complying.

In a public meeting in March of this year, a Lifespan spokesman said they would get started on the next plan much earlier, promising to hold a public meeting in the fall of 1999, and to submit their plan before the end of that year. We hope he was sincere. And we hope the City will get serious about enforcing the law.

Summit Chosen for Study

The Narragansett Bay Commission (NBC) has chosen Summit neighborhood for a Stormwater Attenuation Study it is conducting in association with its Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Facilities Plan. The CSO plan is designed to keep sewer overflow during rainstorms from entering Narragansett Bay untreated and polluting the water. For a price-tag of \$389 million dollars in state bonds, the plan calls for building, over 22 years, a series of underground tunnels and storage facilities for funneling and storing the excess runoff until the sewage treatment facilities can accept it.

Objections were raised to the cost of the program during public hearings, and the question of alternative solutions was posed. In response, NBC commissioned the Stormwater Attenuation Study, to investigate ways of reducing rainwater runoff at the source - homes, businesses, sidewalks and streets. The goal is to find simple ways to divert excess rainwater into the ground, by utilizing natural flood plains, reducing the amount of paved surfaces and other methods. Critics of the plan hope that by utilizing these methods, the city will reduce the need to fully implement the CSO plan, and save millions. For more information, contact the NBC at 222-6680.

Friends Of Rochambeau Make a Difference

Friends of Rochambeau is an organization of neighbors working to improve our library, and help make it the wonderful place that it is. Several years ago they gave the benches on the front lawn that are appreciated by many.

Among their projects are two booksales every year. Scores of people work hard to collect, sort and display donated books. The Friends have also donated a collection of free or discount passes to various museums in the area. These may be checked out like books, and used for family units.

Membership in the Friends of Rochambeau is just \$5. For more information, visit the library.

Thanks Leafleters!

The SNA wants to send a formal **thank you** to the many people, unsung heroes, who leaflet our newsletters and flyers. Because of their efforts, we are able to communicate with each and every household in the neighborhood, 3 or 4 times a year.

Because people are so busy and are not always available to leaflet, we are looking for more people to join our team -- either as a regular or a backup.

Each route takes about an hour to complete. We try to give our leafleters at least a week's notice, so that each can leaflet when it is personally most convenient. If you are able to donate a few hours of your time a year, please call Liz, any time, at 274-1086.

THANKS LEAFLETTERS!

Summit News is the official newsletter of the Summit Neighborhood Association. It is published three or four times a year and distributed for free to households in the Greater Summit Area.

Moshassuck

Continued from Page 1

community.

The Friends of the Moshassuck started from that seed. Recently several people from this neighborhood and others along the river established the Friends of the Moshassuck, because we saw the potential in our little stream, and decided it was time to act. Coincidentally, the US EPA decided that it wanted to encourage community participation in the rehabilitation of the ecosystems of New England. Finally the government has come to the conclusion that community leadership is the only way to make environmental progress, and it is now helping the community find resources to do the work them-

selves rather than imposing solutions.

Friends of the Moshassuck has set up a partnership with Save the Bay, and has received funding from the EPA to do a little restoration work along the Moshassuck where the river runs between Collyer Park and the Bonanza bus station, just north of the North Burial Ground. We are very excited at the prospect, and want to do a good job. Therefore we seek your participation. We believe that the only proper way to do this work is to have our actions guided as much by the community's desires as by ecological principles. We are asking that anyone with an interest in the river or the little gem of a wetland beyond Collyer Park join

with us in this endeavor. We are seeking your advice, ideas, and participation and will be holding several cleanups in the next few months as a way of getting started and welcoming people into the process.

We have enclosed a small questionnaire with this article that we would encourage you to fill out and send back, or call us. It is designed to find out what you know about the river, what you would like to know about the Moshassuck, and whether you are interested in participating in our efforts. We know that some people already use and enjoy the area by the river. We are especially interested in hearing from them and would really like to use our efforts to complement theirs.

Friends of the Moshassuck Questionnaire

Please return this questionnaire to: *Friends of the Moshassuck*
37 Sixth Street, Providence, RI 02906.

- 1. Are you aware of the Moshassuck River at the edge of the neighborhood? Yes No
- 2. Have you ever walked along the river beyond Collyer Park? Yes No
- 3. Are you aware of the Narragansett Bay Commission project to remove Combined Sewage Overflows from the Moshassuck River? Yes No
- 4. Have you done any cleaning along the river in the recent past? Yes No
- 5. Would you be interested in participating in a clean up or restoration work along the river? Yes No
- 6. If you have a Moshassuck river anecdote, or knowledge of its history, would you be willing to share it? Yes No

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Zoning: Vigilance Pays Off

One of the most important activities of the SNA is representing the neighborhood's interests at Providence Zoning Board hearings. The Association's strategy can be summed up in a single phrase, "preserve the character of the neighborhood." Summit neighborhood grew in a flurry of development in the 1920's and 30's, in a time before zoning laws. By today's standards, nearly every house is on an undersized lot. A neighborhood like Summit could not be developed today.

Despite the density, Summit is an attractive neighborhood of one and two family homes on sidewalked, tree-lined streets. Most of the area is zoned R2, which means residential one or two family homes. A number of triple deckers dot the neighborhood, all built before zoning and grandfathered in.

When a landowner requests a variance, he or she seeks to be exempted from some constraint in the zoning law. Often it is a request to add a living unit to an existing apartment building, for instance to turn a two-family home into a three-family home. Institutions and businesses most often seek relief to increase parking or put up a bigger sign or build on more of their lot than zoning permits.

Members of the SNA board

A Heritage River Runs Through It

A recurring news item this summer was the designation of the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers as American Heritage Rivers. It was a victory for the Massachusetts and Rhode Island communities, environmentalists, business people and politicians, who fought for it. The primary tangible benefit of the designation is a coordinator for finding federal grants to help develop and preserve the two river valleys.

What you probably don't know is that the Blackstone River Valley extends into the Moshassuck

River, which borders Summit neighborhood on its way downtown to join the Woonasquatucket at Waterplace Park.

In Summit, the Moshassuck River starts behind Shaw's Plaza at the Pawtucket line and runs south between North Main Street and I-95. With the Heritage River designation, there is an opportunity to obtain federal funds to develop and preserve this often unnoticed corner of the city. Some SNA members are just beginning to look into this. If you are interested in helping them, call Greg at 331-0529.

review all upcoming variance requests. They look for requests that threaten to change the residential character of the neighborhood. Since there are virtually no properties in the neighborhood that meet current zoning requirements, we nearly always speak out in opposition to requests for additional living units. We also usually oppose the expansion of institutional or commercial zones into residentially-zoned areas.

Individual landowners often feel wronged. They see little harm in their request, and often expect some economic gain from the variance. But economics have no weight under zoning law. A landowner's desire for additional income is not considered in zoning decisions. And zoning vari-

ances are forever - they are never rescinded. Once a property gains a living unit, it stays that way. Once a property zoned R2 becomes C2, it stays that way. Over time, a neighborhood can die the death of a thousand cuts, as variance after variance eats away at its residential character and transforms it into something no one wants.

The SNA has an excellent success rate before the Zoning Board. Several times each year board members testify on zoning matters, and the Zoning Board usually makes the right decision. When it does not, we provide support to neighbors who wish to appeal. Through the work of these dedicated few, Summit has gained a reputation for vigilance on zoning matters. The SNA works hard to bring positive change to our neighborhood and our city, but it is worth remembering those who work hard to defend what we've already got.

New Crosswalks Not Always Safe

We are happy to see that many crosswalks throughout the neighborhood have been repainted. Crosswalks complement stop signs; motorists seem more likely to stop when there are bold white lines across the road. Still, we've witnessed a few near misses, especially on Hope Street. Drive carefully, and remember to stop for pedestrians.

Jewish Home

Continued from Page 1

Center which has been cited twice this year, and fined the second time, by the Health Dept. for state and federal guideline violations concerning substandard patient care and safety practices.

Two years ago Hillside attorneys argued successfully before the Providence Zoning Board that a zoning variance for an enlarged parking design would be required for their planned 275-bed venture. Their experts claimed that a smaller project could not succeed financially. One of the experts who testified at that bitter zoning hearing, John Montecalvo, is reportedly a part-owner with Giordano of Hillside Health Center. Since then, however, RI Health Dept. regulators have forced Hillside to scale back their project and borrowing plans.

HHA has officially projected that at 100% occupancy, their total estimated annual income will be close to \$1 million. Projections estimate that Medicaid would be billed for 105 nursing home beds while Medicare would be billed for 4 of the same. 41 beds are projected as private pay.

During August, neighbors on Hillside and Chace Avenues received a flyer distributed by Ahlborg & Sons, Inc, General Contractors (tel.467-6300), anticipating that site construction will be completed by April, 1999. The flyer makes a cooperative pitch and pledges to uphold zoning conditions limiting work hours (and thus noise and traffic) between 7:00 a.m and 7 p.m. Thus far, they seem to have stuck to their pledge. Workers have been parking on site rather than on street, which neighbors appreciate. 24-hour security is being maintained. Meanwhile the exterior grounds around the home have been heavily bulldozed for enlarged future parking lots. A deep pit has been dug out on the front side for reasons not yet clear. Windows on all sides of the Annex are being enlarged. The interior of both buildings are being fully renovated as well.

Although we lack official confirmation, sources report that the homes on Chace Drive and the condemned and boarded triple-decker on Hillside Avenue next to the home, all owned by the Jewish Home, were not sold to HHA

Bond Issue Update

The SNA continues to work toward the goal of making the neighborhood's share of the City's \$50 million bond issue work for us long into the future. Our current effort is to establish a trust that will allocate funds annually for capital improvements and redevelopment. Long after this election year flurry of construction has ended, we'd like to see those funds fuel continual improvements in our area.

and will apparently be put on the market. This would be a benefit to the neighborhood in terms of residential housing stock.

A recent hearing took place at the Providence Building Board of Review on 9/24 at 3:00 p.m. It concerned HHA's request for relief from building regulations concerning fire resistance ratings, clearances for maneuvering wheelchairs through doorways, restrooms for the physically challenged, and energy conservations. Although Councilman Jackson submitted written objections, it has been reported by dismayed observers that the Board okayed most of the requests.

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 **1999** 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:

I can leaflet _____

Mount Hope Community Police

The following article is based on notes from a recent interview with Patrolman George Pereira.

The Mount Hope Community Police Unit has two officers, Patrolman George Pereira, who has been there for two years, and Patrolman Jeff Ferreira who has been there for about a year. The area they cover is from Olney Street to the Pawtucket Line, and North Main Street to the Seekonk River.

The duties of the Community Police are to better the quality of life for the residents in their area. They handle misdemeanors, take care of drug problems and car breaks, and work with the Police Department to deal with reports from the community.

On July 18th, they moved to a new office, the Mount Hope Learning Center on Camp Street. The Center was made possible mainly through the efforts of Lenny Long of Greater Camp Concerned Citizens and the officers. It offers a variety of programs that are open to all kids who live in the area. These include teaching computer skills, helping kids with homework, reading, and caring for a menagerie of small rodents and fish. There is a kitchen where kids learn the essentials of cooking, baking, cleaning and eating at the table with proper manners.

One of the goals of the Center is to give kids a positive feeling about the Police. The kids love it. Up to 10 or 12 kids visit the center at a time. The officers usually stay for about an hour, but they must then respond to calls and take care of police business.

Business Scene

Small Change will be moving across both Hope and Rochambeau to new digs at 727 Hope Street late in November.

Rhoda's Judaica is moving from Burlington to 775 Hope Street, formerly Valet Cleansers.

Three businesses in the Spitz Building on Hope Street have been playing musical chairs. **Richard Shein, Realtor**, moved a few doors north to 793 Hope Street; **Spitz-Weiss** Realtors moved two doors south into Shein's former address at 785 and **Gourmet House Restaurant** will expand into Spitz' former space.

Providence Cookie Company Cafe has moved into 768 Hope where Italian Deli had been for many years. They offer "Deli - Desserts - Coffee - Catering."

The Gallery Cafe is now known as **810 Hope Street Gallery & Cafe**.

Marysia's Custom Tailoring & Dry Cleaners at 832 Hope Street has expanded into the space next door formerly occupied by Atomic Comics.

Chez Pascal Restaurant has moved into 960 Hope Street (between 8th and 9th). They serve dinner every day, lunch Monday through Saturday, and Sunday brunch from noon - 6pm.

RanZan, a Japanese restaurant, will soon be moving into the former Gallery Cafe at 1084 Hope Street.

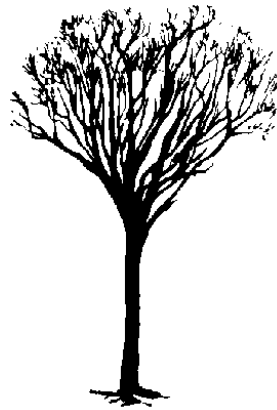
Hillside Avenue Family and Community Medicine has moved out of 749 East Avenue (corner of Hillside Avenue) and is now in the Oak Hill Plaza at 405 East Avenue., Pawtucket (the old Almacs site).

Meanwhile, down on North Main Street, **Friendly Guy's Pizza** has moved in at the corner of Ninth Street.

Spring Street Tree Deadline Approaches

The deadline for the next round of Neighborhood Planting Tree Grants is December 1st. To qualify for a grant, groups of neighbors band together to plant 5-20 street trees in close proximity. The program is competitive, and applications for 10 to 20 trees are favored over smaller requests.

For applications or more information, contact Street Tree Coordinator Leslie Uργο at 785-9450, MWF.



The Learning Center is looking for volunteers to help with the children, especially people with educational or academic resources. Donations are always welcome, too. For more information, contact Lenny Long at 274-6314.

Shop Locally

Support Your
Neighborhood Businesses