



Summit News

November 2003

What Next For Miriam?

Miriam Hospital's plan to replace two low-slung buildings on its campus with a single, towering, 72-foot building remains on hold due to a building moratorium enacted by the City Council. The six-month moratorium on building or demolition permits for Miriam introduced by Councilman Kevin Jackson took effect on June 16th. It will expire on December 16.

Then what? Well, despite a number of possible legal, bureaucratic and political battles ahead it all boils down to one of two paths: cooperation or confrontation.

SNA wants neighbors and Miriam to sit down and discuss the enduring needs of the neighborhood and the hospital and arrive at mutually beneficial plans for long-term development. We can make Summit an even better neighborhood while making Miriam an even better hospital, but only if both sides put all the cards on the table and agree to consider all the alternatives without preconditions, and before Miriam starts demolition.

Yet, despite a neighborhood public relations blitz, the hospital is not yet ready to cooperate. In September, Miriam filed its long-overdue Institutional Master Plan. The IMP shows an unchanged determination to grow to 247 beds (from 209 now) at the neighborhood's expense. It also shows that one new building will be followed by another when next they replace the old Jewish Orphanage building at Fifth and Summit. It also hints that a three-floor addition is planned

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"No New Buildings" signs have sprouted all over Summit. See page 4.

Traffic Calming Project Stalled

The Summit Neighborhood Traffic Calming project, three years in the making, encountered several potholes this year. The engineering and design contract, awarded to the firm of Fuss & O'Neill and administered at first by the Department of Planning, slipped into the limbo of the Cicilline administration's government restructuring. First, the project was handed off to the Project Management people in the Department of Planning. Then Project Management was transferred from Planning to the Department of Public Works. Then the city's project manager for our project was fired.

Overworked and with no back-ground on the project, the DPW

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Summit Avenue Historic District Approved

It's official! The Summit Avenue Historic District has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The first fruit of an effort that has spanned more than eight years, the listing helps to establish the legitimacy of twentieth-century historic districts, and we hope it will be the "foot in the door" that lets us successfully promote the historic value of other parts of our neighborhood.

The Providence Preservation Society (PPS) prepared the nomination from research and photography prepared largely by neighborhood volunteers who participated in the Summit History Project. The History Project was a cooperative effort of PPS

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Street Tree Deadline Approaches

December 1st is the next deadline for the Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (PNPP). Under the program, groups of neighbors band together to plant 5 to 20 trees in a particular area. The program provides the trees and assistance in planting and maintaining them. Neighbors agree to care for the trees throughout the year.

For an application or more information, call the Street Tree Coordinator, 351-5802, or visit the PNPP's website at www.pnpp.org and download your application!

Historic District

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and SNA to involve homeowners in historic preservation by having them lay the groundwork for a historic district nomination.

The volunteers' efforts involved determining the year in which buildings in the neighborhood were built, as well as the original owners and their occupations. A description of each home's architecture was then added along with a current photograph. This was done for more than half of 1100 homes in the survey area.

PPS enlisted a consultant to fill in and assemble the research and prepare the final nomination. The consultant, Summit resident Kathryn Cavanaugh, identified two distinct districts within the larger survey area as the most likely areas to be approved by the state review board. Two nominations were prepared, and The Elmgrove Gardens Historic District will be considered next.

The Summit Avenue district includes 158 properties and is bounded by Summit and Rochambeau Avenues, Camp Street, Memorial Road and Creston Way. The Elmgrove Gardens dis-

SNA Joins Mayor's Council

Mayor Cicilline has established a number of "policy councils" dealing with a variety of issues including health care, the arts, transportation and senior services. Each council is made up of citizens with interest or knowledge of the associated issues. SNA president John Bazik has joined the leaders of neighborhood associations across the city in the Mayor's Neighborhood Council, which seeks to identify the most pressing issues for the city's neighborhoods and to suggest solutions.

In monthly meetings, which are attended by the Mayor, council members will work with the Mayor's policy team to formulate initiatives that can be put into action to address the quality of life concerns of residents. The Mayor's Policy Councils website is <http://providenceri.com/mayorscouncil/> From time to time the SNA website (sna.providence.ri.us) will have updates on the council's work.

Rochambeau Library To Reopen

The long wait is over! The Rochambeau Branch Library will celebrate completion of renovations with an open house on November 23rd, from 1 pm to 4 pm. The official reopening ceremony will be at 3 pm.

trict includes 142 properties and is bounded by Morris, Rochambeau and Cole Avenues and Woodbury Street.

National Register listing offers several benefits. The state offers homeowners a tax credit for historically sensitive exterior improvements (i.e. paint, not vinyl siding) to properties in historic districts. Historic status also figures into the regulatory process at different levels of government and can protect a neighborhood from both public and private projects. National Register recognition is all carrot, no stick. Unlike local historic zones, there are no restrictions placed on property owners.

Thanks to PPS for seeing this process through. We look forward to working with them to establish historic district status for as much of our neighborhood as we can.

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.

Editor: John Bazik

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Web Site

<http://sna.providence.ri.us/>

Email

sna@sna.providence.ri.us

Address

Summit Neighborhood Assoc.
PO Box 41092
Providence, RI 02940

Citizen power overnight! Join SNA today.

As a member of the Summit Neighborhood Association, your concerns are heard by leaders. Every new SNA member means more respect for your quality of life, more attention to our streets and parks, and more eyes, ears and voices protecting the Summit community.

SNA - what's in it for you?

Safer streets

SNA's independent traffic studies confirmed resident concerns about excessive vehicle speeds. Next year, the city will install street modifications to slow speeding drivers.

A greener neighborhood

Thanks to SNA all sidewalk repavings, the North Main Street project, the upcoming traffic calming project and a number of private developments will include new trees and landscaping.

Appropriate development

This year, SNA helped Cumberland Farms develop a safer, better landscaped design for their parking lot and headed off a 12-foot flashing electronic sign at CVS.

We continue to oppose Lifespan's Miriam Hospital plan for a new tower on Seventh Street and we seek true community consultation on their short-term and long-term plans for the Summit Avenue complex.

Historic preservation

The joint work of SNA and the Providence Preservation Society recently led to National Park Service designation of four blocks near Summit Avenue as a National Historic District, making homeowners eligible for special tax credits.

The things you care about

As an all-volunteer organization, SNA relies on the people who care to set our agenda and do our work. If you will put in the time, SNA has the tools you need to make your dreams for Summit come true

Mail your membership using this coupon, or use your credit card to JOIN ONLINE: sna.providence.ri.us

Yes, I want more citizen power! I'm joining Summit Neighborhood Association today. My dues of \$10 for 2004 are enclosed.

Name: (please print clearly) _____

Street Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Family Membership - list other adults living in your household who wish to be members:

I can leaflet

I am concerned about: _____

Please enclose a check for \$10.00 made out to: **Summit Neighborhood Association**
and mail it to **SNA, P.O. Box 41092, Providence, RI 02940**

Lawn Signs Sway Leaders

Over a hundred "No New Buildings" lawn signs appeared throughout Summit neighborhood beginning in June of this year. The signs show widespread support for SNA's campaign to urge Miriam Hospital to rethink its proposed new building on the Summit Avenue campus.

The signs make it clear to government and hospital officials that residents of this neighborhood feel they have suffered enough from institutional growth. And those officials are listening. Councilman Jackson has made this issue his own, introducing the building moratorium ordinance and standing with the neighborhood at every turn. The Mayor's office and Department of Planning have been supportive. And the hospital, unable to ignore or dismiss neighborhood concerns, has hired a public relations firm to talk to neighbors.

The standoff has produced results. The hospital has filed its master plan. It has embarked on a long-term planning process for the main campus, hiring the respected design firm of HOK. And it has begun to talk about changes to their plans that better fit the surrounding neighborhood.

But the campaign is far from over. Lifespan has money and resources that overwhelm our tiny neighborhood group. All we have is your support, and as powerful as that has proven to be, we need more and we need it now. Right now you can do three things to help:

- **request a lawn sign** - call the number below or email signs@sna.providence.ri.us
- **sign our petition** - on our website at sna.providence.ri.us

Miriam

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above the existing main entrance on Summit Avenue.

Miriam's own architectural consultants concede that the entire facility is outdated and will need to be replaced over the next 20 years or so. Even if Miriam did not expand its patient capacity, the size of the buildings would have to increase just to meet modern standards of care. This piecemeal modernization will make ongoing major construction a permanent feature of life in Summit for the foreseeable future.

Over its 50-year history in Summit, Miriam Hospital has grown from a single building on a single block (more than half of which was open space) to a crowded campus of seven buildings and four parking lots spread

across all or part of six blocks. We think it is time for both the neighborhood

and Miriam to admit the obvious: we can expect Miriam to expand its services and grow its facilities indefinitely.

If we can agree on that, we can consider whether the site on Summit is the best launching pad for that growth. Clearly neighbors oppose this expansion. But the hospital's Board of Trustees should also consider whether building out from the

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- **become an SNA member** - use the form on page 3 or join online at sna.providence.ri.us

If you want to do more, contact Jon Howard at 331-2272 (evenings) or jhoward@sna.providence.ri.us.

center of a dense residential neighborhood is in the hospital's best interest.

The hospital's Institutional Zone essentially limits all growth to the two blocks between Fifth and Seventh. This zone is already fully occupied with buildings, meaning that for now Miriam can only grow up, not out. Once they have built upward to the maximum height, producing a 72-foot-high cube of brick and glass, how will they continue to grow?

For years, Miriam has owned and neglected the former Sears and Anderson-Little stores, upon which they

Is Miriam making a wise investment?

pay no property taxes. These properties offer an obvious site for growth, yet Miriam now plans to swap them both for a small parking lot.

The total cost of the proposed project will fall in the \$60 to \$80 million range for just one building. By comparison, George Washington University built an entirely new hospital with 380 private beds in downtown Washington DC, for \$96 million. They moved in last year. Is Miriam making a wise investment?

We ask Miriam to stop and think now. Plan before building. Look out beyond five to ten years. This neighborhood cannot thrive in the long term with Miriam Hospital continually expanding upward and eventually outward. Can the hospital thrive with strict limits on its growth? If so, great! Let's establish them now. But if not, perhaps it is time for Miriam to consider alternatives, such as relocating in whole or in part to a more appropriate location.

All we want is a real planning process that respects the needs of this neighborhood. Help us get it by keeping the pressure on! Get a lawn sign, sign the petition on our website, become a member, volunteer.

Traffic Calming

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folks pushed forward only to run up against blanket objections from the Fire Department, who have little interest in slowing traffic and every interest in the response time of their vehicles.

Those attractive median islands planned for Hope Street? Gone. Not practical we were told, because a sewer runs beneath the roadway. Traffic circles on Lorimer? Gone. The Fire Department vetoed them. Curb extensions will replace the lost features, and they are effective calming devices, but will Rochambeau get them? Not if the Fire Department has any say in the matter.

None of us wants to slow emergency vehicles. After all, it is our homes and lives that hang in the balance. But we do wonder if curb extensions really slow emergency vehicles. They narrow the road without obstructing it, and only at intersections. As this project heads toward the spring construction season, we will continue to push for effective and safe traffic calming everywhere it is needed.

Cumberland Farms

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several zoning provisions. The current structure is grandfathered under zoning since a gas station has occupied that corner for at least half a century.

Recognizing the prominent location in our neighborhood that the gas station and convenience store occupies, SNA took the opportunity to draw on the professional skills of one of its members to propose a series of improvements that go far beyond what was proposed. We engaged the city Department

*...Cumberland Farms
accepted our
recommendations...*

First it was Miller's Delicatessen, then Lad & Lassie Shoe Store closed; now a third Hope Street icon, Kaplan's Bakery, is gone. Change is inevitable, but we are always sorry to see a long-time business establishment close its doors.

And actually, a fourth fairly long-time Hope Street store, Atomic Comics, has also gone.

There are two changes at 780 Hope Street: **East Side Kitchen & Bath** has moved into the former Sarah Good Boutique space, and **Amber Moon Salon** is in the former Atomic Comics space. The proprietor at the salon is Brenda Bassett who has 12 years' experience at East Side salons, including six years at Kenneth Cote. She is delighted to be "back home" on Hope Street.

CVS

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request for the electronic sign. With landscaping in and the messageboard out, SNA reversed its stance from opposition to support.

But it was too late for the hear-

of Planning in the process and agreed to a set of recommendations that are sensitive to future traffic calming plans for Hope Street and include ideas to improve landscaping, traffic flow and parking at the site.

We were more than a little surprised when Cumberland Farms accepted our recommendations wholesale and incorporated them into their plans. So far, this big corporation has shown that they were sincere in soliciting neighborhood input and intend to "do the right thing." We look forward to good things from Cumby's.

Business Scene

At the new "mini-mall" at 783 Hope Street, **Citi Nails** recently opened.

The house at 1056 Hope Street, next to India restaurant, is now occupied by **Asthma & Allergy Physicians of Rhode Island**, Doctors John Zwetchkenbaum and Barrie Weisman.

On North Main Street, **M & M: Step-N-Style**, advertising "urban clothing and footwear in one store," has opened at 1282, next to JavaSpeed Scooters. Their target clientele is teenagers and young adults.

The **Dunkin' Donuts** on North Main Street, between Seventh and Eighth, is being remodeled, but don't despair: donuts and coffee are available at the Shell Station further south between First and Second Streets.

ing. A hornet's nest of disgruntled neighbors had been stirred, and the complaints came thick and fast before the zoning board. In the end, CVS agreed not only to include additional landscaping, but to lower the height of the corner sign, and to turn off their lights by 10pm.

Thanks to neighbors who voiced their concerns, SNA volunteers who organized the opposition, Zoning Board chair Sandra Carlson who took the neighborhood's best interest to heart, and CVS executives who chose in the end to preserve neighborhood goodwill, we can look forward to some real improvements on Hope Street.

SNA Board Meetings are Public

The SNA Board meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:15 pm. Call or email to verify meeting time and place.

CVS Yields On Sign

A huge turnout by Summit neighbors at a May 15th Zoning Board hearing led to a neighborhood-friendly ruling on variance requests by CVS for their Hope Street store. The trees just now appearing on Lauriston and Fourth Streets are the first positive changes we will see.

As we reported in the January newsletter, CVS last year approached SNA with plans for their store at 799 Hope Street that included larger signs on the building and a new free-standing sign on the corner with an "animated electronic message-board." We urged them to include landscaping in their plan and told them we would oppose a variance to allow an electronic sign.

When we received notice that the store was going ahead with their original plan, SNA volunteers canvassed the neighborhood and organized opposition. Several days before the hearing, CVS contacted SNA to say they were withdrawing the variance

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Community Police District Eight

On October 3rd, the District Eight community police substation opened at 165 Camp Street in Mount Hope Neighborhood. Providence's new chief of police, Colonel Dean Esserman, is bringing community policing to a city he has divided into nine districts. District Eight includes Mount Hope, Summit and Blackstone, and is under the command of Lieutenant Alan S. Ziegelmayr, a 30-year veteran of the force and a one-time Summit Avenue resident. We look forward to working with Lieutenant Ziegelmayr, and helping to introduce him and the officers under his command to the neighborhood.

Another Massage Parlor

SNA members attended a Building Board of Review meeting on October 24th to oppose fire and handicap access exemptions requested for a proposed "therapeutic massage parlor" at 1172-1174 North Main Street. The three story tenement building is owned by Paul Formal, who runs the Bed & Bath store next door. Some of the exemptions were granted, some were not. Nearby residents are keenly aware that North Main Street Spa, across the street, has been repeatedly raided in past years, resulting in arrests for prostitution.

North Main Street Update

The state Department of Transportation field supervisor for the North Main Street repaving project reports that work on sidewalks and driveways is nearly complete. Street repaving is next, to be finished hopefully by the end of this year. The traffic light synchronization part of the project will not be completed this winter but at least the road will not have to be ripped up again to put in new poles and controllers next spring. Soil will be installed in designated medians but all landscape items have been postponed. The paving will start in front of the Episcopal Cathedral and proceed north to the Pawtucket line.

Strip Mall Will Be The Last

The new strip mall at 783 Hope Street will be the last of its kind in the city. City officials responded to the inappropriate siting of the building, which is located at the back of the lot with parking in front,



The last of its kind

by amending the zoning ordinance's setback requirements for buildings in light commercial (C1/C2) zones. All new buildings must be built at the sidewalk, in keeping with the pedestrian-friendly urban main street character of such areas.

Cumberland Farms Plans Improvements

Last March, Cumberland Farms contacted SNA about improvements they planned for their store at 751 Hope Street, at the corner of Rochambeau. Expressing their wish to "do the right thing" for the neighborhood, they asked for our input.

Their plan called for replacing their tanks, and increasing the number of pumps from four to eight. They also planned to eliminate a parking space to make way for a wheelchair ramp. Almost any changes they make require zoning relief, as they are already nonconforming under

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