



Summit News

January 2004

Miriam Considers Alternatives

An architectural consultant for Miriam Hospital and Lifespan presented a series of alternative designs that reduce the height of a proposed new Miriam Hospital building on Seventh Street at a special City Hall meeting called and hosted by Councilman Kevin Jackson on December 22.

Hospital leaders apparently hoped a lower building would defuse neighborhood opposition to their building plans and clear the way to construction this spring. Yet, the presentation and discussion only made it clearer than ever that the hospital intends to continue expansion in both size and patient volume at the Summit Avenue site for the foreseeable future.

Any space saved on Seventh Street will only crop up in additional construction elsewhere in Miriam's building complex. The most radical alternative would shave between 10 and 15 feet off the original design, but only by adding a second major new building on the other side of the complex.

The December session, along with city and state filings by Miriam, show that the hospital intends to expand inpatient volume by 20% (from 209 to 247 beds). Lifespan representatives don't deny that nearly all of their aging buildings will need to be replaced in the next 10 to 20 years, nor that each replacement building will need to be larger than the original, just to meet modern medical standards. Their own most recent Master

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Rochambeau Avenue will get traffic calming measures this Spring.

Signs: How Big is Big Enough?

Over the past year, SNA has opposed sign variances requested for properties along Hope Street. The most visible of these, of course, was the CVS sign at their store at 799 Hope. In that case, SNA focused its objection on the proposed "animated" electronic sign that was to hang below the main "CVS" sign above. Such a sign would have been truly offensive and out of place, and CVS wisely withdrew the request in the face of mounting community outrage.

Yet now, many of those same neighbors remain outraged at CVS's shockingly large, backlit "message board" sign. How could that happen, we've been asked? In their original zoning

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Traffic Calming Update

The Summit Neighborhood Traffic Calming project has taken its final form, according to Councilman Kevin Jackson. As reported in the last newsletter, gone are the median islands on Hope Street and gone are the traffic circles on Lorimer, both replaced by curb extensions. But Rochambeau Avenue will be calmed as originally planned, and all other aspects of the design are apparently intact, though SNA has not yet seen the final plans.

Councilman Jackson, who was involved in the final negotiations with the public works and public safety people, said he overruled Fire Department objections to calming features proposed for Rochambeau because it is one of the streets that is most in need.

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How Tall Is It?

According to plans provided by Miriam's consultant, their proposed building stacks up as follows. First, the lower level rises about four feet above grade, since it is partly underground. Next, the first floor is 12 feet 10 inches high. The second floor, which would have the operating rooms, is 22 feet 7 inches high (including an "interstitial space" for ventilation equipment above the ceiling). On one end of the building is a "mechanical penthouse" that rises another 14

feet.

Stop here. That is the building that has already been approved by the city and the state and that Miriam intends to build no matter what. The roof is about 40 feet above grade, with the "penthouse" rising to 54 feet. Those are just the first two floors.

Now add two patient floors at 13 feet each. That gets us up to between 66 and 68 feet. And there is an additional mechanical penthouse that rises up to 76 feet 5 inches.

Miriam

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Plan filings show a previously unrevealed intention to create a major new cancer treatment center in the Fain Building.

As one neighbor at the December session asked, "Where will it all end? Where is the cap?"

Miriam is the only Providence hospital surrounded by a low-density residential area, the only hospital not accessible by a major street, the only one that isn't in a commercially zoned area. Lifespan and Miriam have repeatedly rejected feasible alternatives to continued investment in the Summit site, most recently by selling off its long-neglected properties on North Main Street, the former Sears and Anderson Little stores.

Having made those investment choices without consulting city planners or neighbors, Lifespan now has a special obligation to do no harm to the surrounding neighborhood. Indeed, Miriam must remedy existing negative impacts whenever possible.

SNA advocates determining the **right size** for Miriam within its present setting and establishing a binding limit to growth within the Summit Avenue site. That means working with neighbors to

establish clear benchmarks and standards for quality-of-life impacts in the neighborhood and a long term commitment to maintain those standards. We have asked our elected officials to endorse our **right size** proposal and to help us persuade Lifespan and Miriam to do the right thing in Summit.

For now, Lifespan's actions are a long way from that standard. More than one hundred fifty Summit neighbors signed a petition opposing the project and over a hundred put up "No New Buildings" lawn signs to demonstrate their concern. Councilman Jackson introduced a building moratorium resolution

Where will it all end?

Where is the cap?

which was adopted by the City Council last June that, until last month, prevented the hospital from getting the permits it needs to begin work. Mayor David Cicilline, Senator Rhoda Perry and Representative Gordon Fox have all urged Miriam and Lifespan officials to respond to neighborhood concerns.

Lifespan and Miriam have not yet made any concessions or commitments. At our most recent meeting, they told us they have every intention of pressing ahead with construction this spring regardless of community objections. Meanwhile,

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Lifespan's spokesperson has backed away from earlier statements that the alternative plans would be brought forward to the entire Summit community at a public session this month.

While lowering the height of this proposed new building is very important, and a nicer looking building with better landscaping may make the project more palatable to the neighborhood, we are still left with a big unanswered question: **what about the future?**

Yard Sale in May

The success of our annual Yard Sale depends on contributions from neighbors. Please consider donating old furniture, appliances, clothing, books, CDs and other items gathering dust in your attic or destined for the trash. Look for an announcement in our May newsletter.

Traffic Calming

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Curb extensions are places where the sidewalk smoothly protrudes into the road, effectively narrowing the roadway. Usually located at intersections, the road-narrowing effect causes motorists to slow, and the raised spit of sidewalk protects pedestrians and shortens the distance they must cross. Because curb extensions are located within 25 feet of corners, they do not displace any legal on-street parking spots.

If the project stays on track, construction will begin this Spring.

Become a Member!

Use the form below, come to the annual meeting, or do it online: sna.providence.ri.us.

Business Scene

There's no excuse now for the dirty laundry piling up! Providence **Super Wash Center** has opened at 929-935 North Main Street, at the old Vartian Oil location between Woodbine and Lancaster. And in the mini-mall at 783 Hope Street, **The Cleaning Spot** laundromat appears to be opening by February 1st.

Fountain Apothecaries - A Store for the Senses has moved into the former Kaplan's Bakery site at 756 Hope Street. Their awning advertises "Skin - Bath & Body - Anti-Aging - Cosmetics" for men and women.

Kay's New York Deli at 774

Hope Street has moved to North Providence.

Petals & Stems flower shop at 815 Hope Street has closed.

Back down on North Main Street, the former Jazzmasters nightclub is now **Jade**.

The new building just south of Jade, at 1052 North Main is the office of **Attorney Thomas E. Badway**.

Regal Reptiles at 891 North Main has closed.

Ahahata Yoga School at 191 Nashua Street off North Main Street is under new ownership and plans expanded classes.

Neighborhood Council Tackles Rats and More

The Mayor's Neighborhood Council, a policy advisory group composed of representatives from neighborhood organizations across the city, will focus on three areas in its first report. The first three issues to attract the council's attention are rats and garbage, building code enforcement, and licensing.

In recent monthly meetings, the council has discussed these problems and the frustrations of neighbors, working through the city, to solve them. Lack of enforcement of existing ordi-

nances has been a recurring theme throughout the discussions.

Though Summit has not escaped reports of rats, problems of absentee landlords and unhappy results from the licensing board, these are acute problems in other parts of the city.

In future council meetings, the focus will shift to parks and infrastructure, zoning and institutional growth, among other issues. The Mayor's Council website is <http://providence.ri.com/mayorcouncil/>.

Yes, 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**

Signs

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variance request, CVS asked to increase the area of their free-standing sign from 60 sq. ft. to 114 sq. ft. (that's total sign area per side). The request was approved.

Mount Hope Community Baptist Church, at the corner of Hope and Rochambeau, has a sign that measures 3 feet 8 inches wide by 4 feet high. Reverend Bala requested a variance to increase the width to 9 feet - more than doubling the area. Abutting neighbors and SNA opposed the request but the zoning board approved it. Rev. Bala recently said he would reduce the sign's width to 6 feet, and we thank him for that.

Most recently, our beloved Rochambeau library requested a variance for a 13-foot high, inter-



The CVS sign, before and after.

nally lit sign. SNA did not oppose it, though some on the Board thought we should.

Note that all three of these variance requests came from local landmarks, buildings so prominent and well-known they require no sign at all. We don't know what's driving this urge for excess self-promotion, but we

fear it will escalate, and we want to see it stop. How big is big enough? The size allowed by zoning, and no more.

You can help put an end to this trend and preserve the character of our "urban main street." When a property owner requests a zoning variance for a bigger sign, join SNA in opposing it.

Summit Neighborhood Association

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, February 11th, 2004

7pm - 9pm

Hillside Health Center, 99 Hillside Avenue

Agenda

- 6:30 Refreshments
- 7:00 Welcome and Summary of Activities
- 7:10 Election of Officers and Board for 2004
- 7:20 Q & A with City and State Representatives
- 8:30 Q & A with Police Officers
- 9:00 Adjourn

Free and open to all

Memberships and SNA T-shirts available at the door

Members please bring \$10 dues for 2004

Free parking