



Summit News

News and Views from SNA

November 2005

North Main Revival Needs Neighborhood Push

Our October Board meeting was dedicated to stirring up some energy and action for redevelopment of North Main Street. We got together at Javaspeed Scooters, 1184 North Main Street, where we enjoyed their cool bikes and good coffee, courtesy of co-owner Patrick Engeman.

North Main merchants and area residents at our meeting agreed that a broader variety of family-friendly stores ("upscale, but not too upscale") and a feeling of safety after dark would be key measures of future health for the street. The idea of a Trader Joe's (entirely hypothetical at this point) generated a lot of enthusiasm and optimism about what North Main could be.

However, we also agreed that North Main needs a distinctly urban identity. Some worried that a conventional auto-based retail strip on North Main might create as many problems as it would solve.

Bonnie Lloyd from the city Department of Planning and Development said that a new draft zoning ordinance now at the City Council would allow six-story buildings on the west side of North Main and up to four stories on the east side, while keeping storefronts close to sidewalks by placing parking behind or beside stores. If those buildings included residential units the number of customers within walking distance of North Main would be increased, helping prevent suburban-style sprawl.

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A bump-out at Hope Street and Overhill Road.

Miriam Master Plan Deferred

The City Plan Commission, at their October 18th meeting, postponed consideration of Miriam's Institutional Master Plan (IMP) until their November 15th meeting. The IMP lays out the hospital's five-to-ten year plans for construction and renovation and includes both current and future construction projects.

SNA members were present at the October meeting to urge the commission to withhold full approval of the IMP by agreeing only to the first building, along Seventh Street. SNA is asking Miriam to engage in joint hospital/neighborhood planning and to consider adopting the "do no harm" policy endorsed by Representative Gordon Fox, Senator Rhoda Perry and

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Traffic Calming Is Here!

Summit is putting the squeeze on traffic. Traffic calming "bump-outs" began appearing this summer along some of our busiest streets. The promised result is a safer and more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.

This project is five years in the making. Speeding, traffic congestion, and parking problems have long plagued the city's neighborhoods. Five years ago, SNA saw an opportunity, following voter approval of a city bond issue, to fund a plan to address these problems.

The following year, working with Councilman Kevin Jackson and the Department of Planning and Development, SNA contracted, with city money, for a traffic study of our neighborhood. We held two

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Questions About Traffic Calming

Can fire trucks and school buses turn those corners?

Yes. The bump-outs are designed to accommodate buses and emergency vehicles. In fact, Fire Chief David Costa met with the engineers and field-tested these designs with a fire truck.

What about snow plowing?

The plows will plow around them. The Department of Public Works is responsible for both the construction of the traffic calming features and for snow plowing, so we're sure they are aware of them.

Aren't these bump-outs a road hazard?

They do not obstruct the travel lane. They are meant to have a psychological impact on driving behavior, not a physical one. There was a problem shortly after construction in which the bump-outs were difficult to see, due to a lack of reflective material and worn-away striping on the roads. Both of these problems have been remedied.

Doesn't traffic calming slow emergency vehicle response times?

Speed humps, chicanes, traffic circles and other vertical and horizontal obstacles introduce short delays in emergency response. But bump-outs, like those in Summit, do not force emergency response vehicles to brake or maneuver, and are little problem for fire-rescue vehicles.

Who decided which streets and corners got them?

It began with your neighbors who attended the public meetings that SNA held in 2001. Our traffic study focused on the streets that received the most complaints. The

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More About Traffic Calming

Traffic calming is not a new idea. It began in Europe more than 40 years ago, as angry Dutch residents sought to slow automobiles cutting through their neighborhoods by extending their yards into the street to create obstacles for motorists to maneuver around. The first traffic-calming projects in America began in the 1970's. Cities like Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon and Berkeley, California have extensive traffic-calming programs.

Google the phrase "traffic calm-

Traffic Calming

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public meetings and gathered input from residents about where the hot spots were and what ought to be done about them.

This original study and plan is available on the SNA website at

sna.providence.ri.us/projects/traffic_study/

After completion of the study, the project was taken over by the city. With continued support from Councilman Jackson, our plan has survived a change in administration, a shakeup of city agencies, two more contracts and contractors, plus negotiations with the Department of Public Works, property owners, police and fire departments.

We believe our traffic calming is among the best executed and most attractive in the city. Of course, its impact on traffic patterns is difficult to predict. For that reason this year's construction only represents one third of the original proposal for our neighborhood. Any further work will depend, in part, on our experience as pedestrians and motorists on our newly retooled streets.

ing" and you will find a plethora of information and opinions. Among the most comprehensive resources is a report of the Federal Highway Administration and the Institute of Transportation Engineers entitled Traffic Calming: State of the Practice. It is available at www.ite.org/traffic/tcstate.htm.

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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Emeritus

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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

No Meters for Summit

In our last newsletter, we reported that the city intended to install parking meters along Hope Street in Summit. We heard this from a high-ranking city official and confirmed it through the Department of Planning. A crowd of meter-hating residents and business owners showed up at our May board meeting. At that meeting, the Mayor insisted that there is no such plan for meters, and we are happy to take him at his word. Parking meters make no sense for Hope Street, and would only worsen parking on nearby residential streets.



Frog and Toad is among four new local business profiles at: sna.providence.ri.us/biz/

Business Scene

The former Texaco gas station at 761 Hope Street is now a Sunoco station, but **Bob D'Ambra** is still the owner and mechanic extraordinaire.

In the Bag - A Designer Boutique advertising "Designer Handbags, Accessories and More" will open soon at 769 Hope Street, formerly occupied by Flourishes gift shop.

Across the street, **Blaze East Side**, featuring American fusion cuisine, opened in August at 776 Hope Street, the former site of DeFusco's Bakery. Phyllis Affra is the owner and chef, and her menu includes American, especially Southern and Southwestern foods, as well as Caribbean and South American delights.

Camera Werks has moved two

doors north into the former location of Your Travel Agent at 766 Hope. (The travel agency has moved to Cumberland.) **Pizzico** will expand into the vacated Camera Werks space.

The Blue Cottage at 748 Hope Street is now serving dinner Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until 9:00pm, and offering Early Bird specials those nights from 3:00 to 5:30pm. This is in addition to breakfast and lunch every day except Tuesdays.

On North Main Street, **Ciao Bella** boutique is coming soon to 1255, next to Sandwich Hut.

The former Friendly Guys Pizza (corner of Ninth Street) is reportedly going to be replaced by a pawn shop called **Empire Loan**.

Miriam

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Councilman Kevin Jackson. SNA is also seeking ways to restore housing to the residentially zoned parking lots in our neighborhood. The demand for housing is great,

and the potential for future hospital expansion onto those parking lots will exist until they are put to better use.

Visit the SNA website, sna.providence.ri.us, for more information on how you can help.

Yes, I'm joining Summit Neighborhood Association today.

I enclose my 2006 member contribution of: \$15 \$25 \$35 \$50 Other: \$ _____

Name: (please print clearly) _____

Street Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

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

I can help leaflet attend meetings make phone calls canvas my street

I am concerned about: _____

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

Add Trees to Your Street

With renewed efficiency, the Department of Public Works has been chopping down dead trees everywhere. If your street is beginning to feel like a desert suburb, get your neighbors together and get some trees - they're free!

The Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (PNPP) makes trees available to groups of residents who apply for a tree grant and promise to take care of them once they are planted. The program (in one form or another) has been planting trees in our city for 17 years.

To apply for tree planting on your street, contact PNPP at 368-5380, or download an application at pnpp.org. The next deadline for applications is December 1st.

Questions

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engineers then made recommendations based on the results, and SNA suggested an initial list of sites to the city and to Councilman Jackson, who had the final say.

What about all the on-street parking that has been lost?

Parking is not permitted within 25 feet of a corner within the city of Providence, and most bump-outs are at corners, so very few legal spaces have been lost. Most people would agree that a bump-out is much safer for both pedestrians and motorists than a car parked near a corner.

These are great! Can we have more?

We hope so. The work done this summer is only one third of the overall plan, but we are not aware of any firm commitment to finish the project.

Friends of the Moshassuck Seeks Official Status

On October 15, 2005, the Moshassuck River was higher than it has been at any time in the last ten years. While flooding caused damage throughout New England, floods on the Moshassuck cause little damage because the river does not run through populated areas.

The Moshassuck has a long history of pollution and degradation, so even without people near its banks, it still needs restoration and preservation of abutting natural areas. For eight years Friends of the Moshassuck has been working for the benefit of the river. This year, Friends of the Moshassuck applied to the Rhode Island Rivers Council to be designated as the official Watershed Council for the Moshassuck River watershed. Currently the application is under

review, but if accepted, Friends of the Moshassuck will be empowered to speak even more forcefully for the river and look into sources of pollution and inappropriate development both along the banks and within the watershed.

Friends of the Moshassuck was started right here in the Summit Neighborhood and continues to do much of its work here, especially our forest restoration project along the banks of the river at Collyer Field. Over the years we have expanded into Pawtucket and North Providence, and with the application to be the designated Watershed Council, we are reaching out to all of the seven towns within the watershed. However, the Summit portion of the river will continue to be one of our focal points.

North Main

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Gretchen McGill of the Proccacianti Group, which now owns the abandoned Sears building, said her company was prepared to build to suit retail tenants. However, she also told us that the condition of the building itself and the fact that the parking lot behind it is retained by Miriam Hospital make it difficult and expensive to develop.

Gonzalo Cuervo of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services said North Main Street is a designated "Neighborhood Market," which means a group of merchants may be eligible to borrow money for common street improvements such as signage or plantings. SNA is willing to act as fiscal agent if requested by merchants.

Lieutenant David Schiavulli, our district police commander, described problems of prostitution at a house close to North Main Street.

The police responded with intensified patrols by car, foot, and bicycle. That group of people has now moved out, and the situation has improved. He suggested that a formal Neighborhood Watch group is unnecessary, so long as residents and merchants watch out for each other and call the police when unfamiliar or suspicious activity is spotted.

North Main was built for commercial activity and should be busy again. A number of people at the meeting agreed to do ongoing work to explore opportunities to develop North Main Street and encourage property owners to invest. SNA Board member Michelle Tuck will coordinate this project.

The first step will be a consumer survey, and you can make a big contribution just by filling it out. If you would like to do more, please provide your information at the space provided on the survey.