



# View From the Hill

Reservoir Hill . . . A Community Blooming with Opportunity!

Reservoir Hill Improvement Council, 2001 Park Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217; Tel: (410) 225-7547; Fax: (410) 225-7455; [www.reservoirhill.net](http://www.reservoirhill.net)

## **Community Briefing December 2007**

### **Welcome Darryl Smith as New RHIC Community Organizer**

*As of 1 December 2007, Darryl Smith has stepped into the position of Community Organizer with Reservoir Hill Improvement Council. Many of you probably already know Darryl from his seven years on the Board of Directors of the Council, his frontline work on saving John Eager Howard School and working with school families, and in his former capacity as Operations Manager of Reservoir Hill Mutual Homes, among many other roles he has played in the community. You can reach Darryl at the RHIC office (410.225.7547) or through his email: [dsmith@reservoirhill.net](mailto:dsmith@reservoirhill.net)*

### **St. Francis Neighborhood Center Community Hour – Traffic Issues – 17 November**

This month's topic will be a follow-up to the November subject: Traffic Concerns and Speed Bumps. See the announcement further down in this Community Briefing, *Residents Initiate Traffic Improvement Project*. Please join the discussion. St. Francis Neighborhood Center hosts a safe place where Reservoir Hill residents can have open discussion on the challenges that they encounter. These monthly informal discussions take place every third Monday from 7pm- 8pm at the St. Francis Neighborhood Center, 2405 Linden Avenue (Corner of Linden Avenue & Whitelock Street). Residents take active roles in planning and leading community initiatives, topics and projects.

*Project Contact:* Sarah Taylor, (410) 669-2612, [staylo@mac.com](mailto:staylo@mac.com)

### **St. Francis Neighborhood Center Community Pot Luck – 19 December**

The St. Francis Community Center will host its next potluck on 19 December from 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm at 2405 Linden Avenue. Bring a dish and yourself! St. Francis Center will provide eggnog, soda, water, and all the utensils. If you would like to share your recipe please bring index cards with the recipe written out to sit next to your dish.

*Project Contact:* Sarah Taylor, (410) 669-2612, [staylo@mac.com](mailto:staylo@mac.com)

### **Next Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol Walk – 7 January 2008**

The Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol will hold its next walk on 7 January 2008 commencing at 7:00 pm from St. Francis Neighborhood Center at 2405 Linden Avenue. Come hear about the changes in the team and why the new name, and join in your neighbors as they walk. Peace Patrol members are volunteers who patrol their communities. Residents do not take enforcement action; they only observe. Peace Patrol volunteers do not carry weapons and are encouraged to avoid confrontation.

*Project Contact:* Joe Lazazzera, (410) 669-4060, [grlazazzera@verizon.net](mailto:grlazazzera@verizon.net)

### **January Community Meeting – 8 January 2008**

The January Community Meeting will not be held the first Tuesday of the month as usual as that is New Years Day. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, 8 January 2008, 7: 00 pm – 9:00 pm at the Riviera Apartments Community Room, 901 Druid Park Lake drive (enter by Linden Avenue).

*Project Contact:* Richard Gwynallen, (410) 225-7547, [rgwynallen@reservoirhill.net](mailto:rgwynallen@reservoirhill.net)

### **Next Homebuyer Workshop – 24 January 2008**

The next homebuyer workshop is scheduled for 24 January 2008 from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm at St. Francis Community Center, 2405 Linden Avenue. The workshops provide a broad overview of each step of the home buying process, from budgeting and affordability to contracts and mortgage process. The workshops are free, but pre-registration is required.

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### **Reservoir Hill Unity Day – 16 February 2008**

Come to the Reservoir Hill Unity Day Celebration, our annual Black History Month event. The celebration will be held at the John Eager Howard Recreation Center on 16 February 2008 from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm. There will be food and entertainment including a puppet show and live music. Volunteers are needed for set up, decoration, clean up and serving food. If you are willing to volunteer, please contact Darryl Smith.

*Project Contact:* Darryl Smith, (410) 225-7547, [dsmith@reservoirhill.net](mailto:dsmith@reservoirhill.net)

### **Residents Initiate Traffic Improvement Project**

At the November 2007 St. Francis Neighborhood Center Community Hour, a group of residents discussed traffic concerns in Reservoir Hill, and initiated an effort to improve traffic safety. The meeting participants developed a list of recommended changes, some of which may involve the creation of new policies or strengthening laws that are in existence. These include (1) speed humps that limit vehicle speed to 25 mph, (2) erecting four-way stop signs at Newington Avenue, Lennox Street, and Park Avenue, (3) a barrier at the Whitelock and Linden intersections that narrows the road and makes it pedestrian friendly, and (4) speed traps set on a regular basis at targeted intersections. The group is currently developing a survey to get input from the community, after which they intend to approach the Department of Transportation with proposed improvements. Traffic safety will again be the primary subject of discussion at the 17 December 2007 St. Francis Community Hour where participants will select one of the above goals to pursue.

*Project Contact:* Philip Lovett, (410) 669-2612, [pjlovett1@verizon.net](mailto:pjlovett1@verizon.net)

### **Focus Groups to Hear Developer Proposal for Druid Park Lake Drive**

During January 2008 RHIC will be facilitating a series of focus groups in different parts of the community to hear the proposal from CIMG, the selected developer for the vacant lots on Druid Park Lake Drive. Last September, in a town hall-style meeting, residents expressed strong support for a homeownership project on the lots in question. The project has become complicated due to HUD requirements for the land discovered by the City after awarding the project to CIMG. The focus groups will allow cross-sections of the community to have further input on the project.

*Project Contact:* Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, [ccleary@reservoirhill.net](mailto:ccleary@reservoirhill.net)

### **Help Stock John Eager Howard Recreation Center**

John Eager Howard Recreation Center underwent an extensive and wonderful renovation over the last year. The building offers a much improved environment for our young people and for community uses. The staff at the recreation center is creating some very important programs. However, the renovation funds did not include stocking the center with much of what it needs to make the programs fully functional. Their computers are old. Their new kitchen doesn't have enough pots. They lack athletic supplies. The recreation center can use your help in acquiring a number of items or with financial donations to help with the acquisition of the items. If you can help, please contact Center Director Carolyn Newton. If you wish to make a financial donation, the city requires donations come in the form of a money order made out to Director of Finance. The following is a list of needs:

- Ping Pong table
- Bumper pool table
- Board games - Sorry, Monopoly, Connect 4, Battle Ship, etc
- P.E. equipment - jump rope, hula hoops, etc
- Cooking Pots
- Toaster
- Can Opener
- Juice Maker
- Basketballs
- Whistles (athletic)
- Folding Chairs
- Folding Tables
- Camcorder
- DVD/VCR player
- CD/Radio/ cassette player
- Sound System
- Pool Table
- Pool cues (sticks)
- Computers

*Project Contact:* Carolyn Newton, (410) 396-7849

### **HRS Homes-Callow Avenue Update**

Two of the 14 houses being renovated on Callow Avenue by HRS Homes (2206 and 2211 Callow Avenue) have been completed. They are five-bedroom, three-bath, single family homes that are now on the multiple listings service. Funding has been established for seven more of the houses, which the developer anticipates being completed by autumn 2008. If you know of anyone interested in these houses or viewing them, please contact Carl Cleary.

*Project Contact:* Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, [ccleary@reservoirhill.net](mailto:ccleary@reservoirhill.net)

### **New House to be Built on Madison Street**

Charm City Investment Alliance has purchased the vacant lot at 2546 Madison Street for the purpose of building a four-bedroom single-family house. This lot is adjacent to the parking lot behind Andy's grocery store on Madison Street. This may be the first new construction ground-up in ten years. Plans are being reviewed by the Municipal Zoning and Appeals. The developer anticipates completion in spring 2008.

*Project Contact:* Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, [ccleary@reservoirhill.net](mailto:ccleary@reservoirhill.net)

### **Update on John Eager Howard Park and 751 Reservoir Street Park Improvements**

Chad Spangler, the Design Planner for the Department of Recreation and Parks is working on the design for *John Eager Howard Park*. The design will include replacement of the fencing, restoration of the ball field and other small enhancements which have been suggested by residents. The City is going to have a consultant do the design for the *751 Reservoir Street Park*. Originally, RHIC had anticipated a design to be ready in December 2007, but the consultant's contract has not yet been approved. After it is approved there will be another meeting set up with the community to review the design. The final product will be a complete renovation of the park making it more user friendly for community residents. Both projects are scheduled to begin construction in the summer of 2008.

*Project Contact:* Darryl Smith, (410) 225-7547, [dsmith@reservoirhill.net](mailto:dsmith@reservoirhill.net)

### **More Healthy Neighborhoods Capital Improvement Projects Underway**

Two Healthy Neighborhoods capital improvement projects are in the planning stage. Howard Fink a resident of upper Park Avenue is leading a fountain restoration project. The fountain is located on the median strip in the 2200 block of Park Avenue. This fountain will resemble and complement the beautifully restored fountain in the 2000 block of Park Avenue, a restoration which was led by residents of Park Avenue and Reservoir Street. The Newington Avenue Neighbors Association (NANA) is preparing a Healthy Neighborhoods proposal to beautify the 700, 800, and 900 blocks of Newington Avenue with iron railings for tree well and flower wells, window boxes, and Victorian porch lights.

*Project Contact:* Mike Gaffney, (410) 225-7547, [mgaffney@reservoirhill.net](mailto:mgaffney@reservoirhill.net)

### **Accessible Homes for Seniors**

Help is available for seniors who wish to remain in their homes. The State of Maryland is offering zero percent interest, deferred loans for senior homeowners. The program is specifically designed to improve the accessibility of the home – for everything from wheelchair ramps to grab bars in the bathroom. Contact the Baltimore Commission on Aging and Retirement Education (CARE) for more information, or to apply, contact Thelma Winn. Learn more at: <http://www.dhcd.state.md.us/Website/programs/ahsp/ahsp.aspx>.

*Project Contact:* Thelma Winn, (410) 396-2273, [Thelma.Winn@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Thelma.Winn@baltimorecity.gov)

### **Baltimore City Leaf Collection**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) will collect bagged leaves on your second trash collection day of the week (Thursday). These collections will continue through January 26, 2008. Residents are reminded to: (1) Place leaves in clear or labeled bags. (2) When cleaning up leaves, please do not blow leaves or place bagged leaves in the gutter or public right-of-way. (3) There will be no vacuuming or street sweeping of leaves by DPW.

*Project Contact:* Kurt L. Kocher, (410) 545-6541, [Kurt.Kocher@Baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Kurt.Kocher@Baltimorecity.gov)

## Protect Yourself Against Identity Theft & Credit Card Fraud

Consumer Credit Counseling Service of MD & DE (CCCS), a local nonprofit community service, issued a series of recommendations to help residents protect themselves against identity theft. The holidays represent a time to give and to celebrate, and for many of us that means spending. With promotional mailers and in-store and online shopping on the rise, the season also places us at a greater risk when it comes to identity theft and credit card fraud. To avoid these dangers, CCCS suggests these simple steps: **Social Security number strategies** - To identity thieves, your social security number is as good as gold. On trips to the mall, never take it with you. Keep your Social Security card locked in a secure box. **In-store ID theft** - Minimize the pieces of ID you carry, and consider leaving your debit card at home given it offers a direct link to your bank account. When handing credit cards to clerks or filling out in-store credit card applications, use your arm and hand as a shield when giving your credit card to a clerk or filling out an application. If you're asked to provide sensitive information during a transaction, write it down instead of verbally sharing it. During transactions, keep your eyes on your card at all times. Place credit receipts in a safe place in your wallet instead of leaving them in the shopping bag. **Purse and car practices** - When carrying a purse, loop the strap over your shoulder and keep the clasp side against the front of your body. Do not leave your wallet, purse, laptop, or personal mail in the trunk or jockey box of your car while it's unattended. **Online shopping safety** - Do not purchase items online at an un-secure web site. (Note: Secure site addresses begin with "https" and feature a paddle lock icon next to the address bar.) Only buy from reputable vendors. Do not respond to unsolicited email promotions and never provide your Social Security number online. **Mail protection** - If you don't already have a mailbox that locks, consider getting one. Also watch for items such as bank or SSA statements, tax or utility bills, and gifts. Mail delays are more likely this time of year, but failure to receive a bill also may indicate mail theft. **Disposing of sensitive materials** - Shred items such as credit card receipts, pre-approved credit card offers, or junk mail that includes your name, address, or personal information before throwing them away. Confetti shred documents if they contain bar codes or sensitive data. Awareness is the first step to avoid being any easy target of holiday identity theft. For more information, please visit the Federal Trade Commission website at [www.consumer.gov/idtheft](http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft) or the CCCS website at [www.cccs-inc.org](http://www.cccs-inc.org)

*Project Contact:* Linus Campbell, (410) 363-8650

## Healthy Neighborhoods – Low-Interest Loans for Remodeling Your Home

Get a low-interest loan to remodel your home! Free architectural advice and low-interest rehab loans are available through Healthy Neighborhoods. Other exceptional loan features are an ability to borrow more than the after-rehab value of the home, as well as no mortgage insurance requirement. Contact Carl Cleary to learn more, or to take the first step in applying for a Healthy Neighborhoods loan.

*Project Contact:* Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, [ccleary@reservoirhill.net](mailto:ccleary@reservoirhill.net)

## Use This Link to Make a Donation to RHIC Online! Thank You!

<http://www.reservoirhill.net/donate.htm>

*Any questions relative to the policies or programs of RHIC should be directed to Executive Director John Henry Ruffin at 410.225.7547, or by email to [jruffin@reservoirhill.net](mailto:jruffin@reservoirhill.net).*

### Mission

Reservoir Hill Improvement Council (RHIC) unites residents and organizations as a vehicle by which to define and solve problems common to the Reservoir Hill community.

### Goal

To revitalize the physical and human infrastructure of Reservoir Hill without resulting in full-scale gentrification and significant displacement, including rehabilitation of deteriorating buildings; alleviating poverty and its attendant problems, including, sanitation, public safety, education, low homeownership, and unemployment; and making the organized, informed voice of residents influential and effective.

### Strategy

As an umbrella organization, the foundation of RHIC's approach is to aggregate the power of local associations and institutions through a community-wide infrastructure for educating residents, training leaders, promoting mutual support among community associations, developing common perspectives and strategy, and implementing collective projects and campaigns. The underlying principles of this strategic approach are that organized people and economic development lead to community empowerment; empowerment achieved as a result of networking, combining talents and resources, and wielding the power of an educated, united citizenry in a program grounded in economic and social equity.