



# 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 March 2008**

### **Next Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol Walk – 10 March**

The Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol will hold its next walk on 10 March 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)

### **Volunteer Management Workshop – 11 March**

The Parks & People Foundation will sponsor a workshop on managing volunteers on Tuesday, 11 March, 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Presenters will include Barbara Reynolds, Volunteer Maryland Director; Richard Williams, Volunteer Maryland Regional Coordinator, and Erin Shutt, Parks & People Foundation Volunteer Coordinator. The topics will include • Planning volunteer events • Volunteer recruitment • Volunteer management and record-keeping • How to keep volunteers coming back • How to thank volunteers effectively. The workshop will be held at the Parks & People Foundation office in the Stieff Silver Building, 800 Wyman Park Drive, Suite 010, Baltimore, MD 21211. Light Refreshments will be served. Please RSVP by 10 March to Erin Shutt.

*Project Contact:* Erin Shutt, (410) 448-5663, ext. 126, [erin.shutt@parksandpeople.org](mailto:erin.shutt@parksandpeople.org)

### **RHIC Education Team – 12 March**

Last month, a small group of residents met with the Education Reform Project of the ACLU, The Algebra Project, and Advocates for Children and Youth to discuss the need for better school funding and youth opportunities. Since then, several people have started working with RHIC staff on education issues. We now want to create a working body out of the Education Team. To that end, a meeting of the Team will be held on 12 March at 7:00 pm. If you would like to work on getting more funding for our schools, a better education for our children, and more opportunities for young people, please join us. To attend the meeting, please RSVP to Richard Gwynallen.

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

### **Spring Flower Show – 15-30 March**

The Spring Flower Show at the Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens of Baltimore runs from 15-30 March, Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm. Spring into Wonderland with beautiful blooms, delightful fragrances and a kaleidoscope of color featuring hundreds of tulips, hyacinths, daffodils and lilies. Easter lilies will be available for sale. This event is free and open to the public. An Open House will be held on 15 March from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm. Enjoy tours and children's crafts. Purchase Easter Lilies for friends, family or co-workers. The Howard Peters Rawlings Conservatory and Botanic Gardens of Baltimore is located in Historic Druid Hill Park at Gwynns Falls Parkway and McCullough Street, Baltimore, MD 21217. For more information, please call (410) 396-0008, or visit on the Web at: [www.baltimorecity.gov/recnparks](http://www.baltimorecity.gov/recnparks).

*Project Contact:* Betsy Nettelbeck, (410) 396-0008, [Betsy.Nettelbeck@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Betsy.Nettelbeck@baltimorecity.gov)

### **St. Francis Neighborhood Center Community Hour –17 March**

St. Francis Neighborhood Center hosts a safe place where Reservoir Hill residents can have open discussion on the challenges that they encounter. This session continues work on the survey of traffic needs initiated at a previous Community Hour. 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)

### **"Asthma, Lead Poisoning and Healthy Homes" – Free Workshop – 18 March**

Coppin State University and the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning are offering a free information workshop., "Asthma, Lead Poisoning and Healthy Homes, " on 18 March 2008 at 6:00 pm at Calverton Middle School (Community Room), 1100 Whitmore Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21216. Learn how the smallest things in your home may be making your child sick and what you can do to prevent lead poisoning and asthma attacks. Learn what you can do about it. Light refreshments will be provided. All participants receive a \$10 Shoppers Food & Pharmacy gift card. To register, contact the number below.

*Project Contact:* Jordan Horner, (443) 463-6135, [jhorner00@student.coppin.edu](mailto:jhorner00@student.coppin.edu)

### **The Civil Rights Movement – A Panel at Historic Union Baptist – 29 March**

On Saturday, 29 March, Union Baptist Church, located at 1219 Druid Hill Avenue, will host a Civil Rights Panel Discussion, including Pulitzer Prize winning author, Taylor Branch, from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm. The event is sponsored by the Cultural Arts Committee of Union Baptist Church, and is free of charge.

*Project Contact:* (410) 523-6880

### **Songs of the Civil Rights Movement – 30 March**

On Sunday, 30 March, the Cultural Arts Committee of Union Baptist Church presents a free concert by A National Treasure. The concert is at 5:00 pm at Union Baptist Church at 1219 Druid Hill Avenue.

*Project Contact:* (410) 523-6880

### **Spring Clean Up – 19 April**

RHIC is beginning to organize for this year's Mayor's Spring Clean Up. The clean up is scheduled for 19 April 2008. We are trying to make sure that the entire community is covered. In recent years each block club has assumed responsibility for their area, and we are asking each organization to step up to the plate again. Please begin to line up your volunteers. RHIC will coordinate with the Mayor's office to ensure that everyone gets the tools and bags that they need for the clean up. As you gather your volunteers, please contact me to let me know what area you will cover and what tools you will need. RHIC plans to host a cook out after the clean up for those clubs that participate in the clean up.

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

### **Sounds of Hope and Change – A Multi-Cultural Celebration – 4 May**

Kids on the Hill is sponsoring a multi-cultural celebration of diversity through music on Sunday 4 May 2008. Come hear the fabulous sounds of the soulful Lea Gilmore, croon to Charm City Klezmer, jam to Korean drumming and experience the flow and funk of beat box performer Shodekeh. The show will also feature the charismatic Joyce J. Scott as our queen of inspiration and mistress of ceremonies. The Celebration concert starts at 2:00 pm at Beth Am Synagogue, 2501 Eutaw Place. The cost is \$25 for adults \$10 for students \$5 for children under 14. Why not make a day of it and join us for a Fundraiser Brunch before the concert? The brunch is 11:00 am – 1:30 pm at 2412 Madison Ave. (2 blocks from Beth Am). The cost of the brunch and priority seating at the concert is \$100. To register, send checks to Kids on the Hill, 2117 Brookfield Ave. Baltimore MD 21217. For more information call (410) 383-7200, ext. 1.

*Project Contact:* Rebecca Yenawine, (410) 383-7200, [rebeccayenawine@kidsonthehill.org](mailto:rebeccayenawine@kidsonthehill.org)

### **RHIC Endorses Peer-To-Peer Youth Enterprise Program**

RHIC has endorsed a proposal before the City Council to establish a \$3 million line item in the budget to fund Peer-To-Peer Enterprises. The proposal is designed to re-align youth employment spending on higher level skill building. The Peer to Peer youth enterprise program is designed to train teens with higher level skills, and pay them to teach those skills to younger young people. This model not only empowers and gives teens a way to become employable and productive but it also helps those they teach to aspire. This model has been working in at least a dozen programs throughout Baltimore including the Algebra Project, which fills the gap in math teachers by having young people tutor other young people. Other programs include Kids on the Hill, Wide Angle Youth Media, Unchained Talent, Liberty Learning Center, Chesapeake Center for Youth development and several others. While each program has a slightly different model and focus, the elements are the same: Young people are paid to transfer knowledge and skills to other peers; they use their knowledge to help peers reach their goals; paid peers learn time management, responsibility, problem solving, leadership and more about the knowledge they impart to other youth.

*Project Contact:* Jay Gillan, (410) 338-0679, [jgillan@stadiumschool.com](mailto:jgillan@stadiumschool.com)

### **RHIC Endorses Petition to Deny Renewal of the Linden Liquors Liquor License**

RHIC is supporting the effort led by Linden Avenue Block Club to address the persistent problems of drug selling and related crimes at the corner of Linden & North avenues by petitioning the liquor board to revoke or transfer the liquor license under which Linden Liquors operates. During March 2008 The Linden Avenue Block Club will be gathering signatures and impact statements from community members affected by Linden Liquors at the corner of North and Linden Avenues. Members of the Linden Avenue community have overwhelmingly endorsed the filing of an official protest that could deny the renewal of the establishment's liquor license. Please get in touch with the club immediately if you wish to sign the protest petition, attend the hearing in April, or help with this process in any way. All Reservoir Hill residents are eligible to sign the petition.

*Project Contact:* Adam Meister, (410) 225-9128, [adam@ContactMeister.com](mailto:adam@ContactMeister.com)

### **BAGUP**

RHIC personnel have been participating in the Baltimore Alliance for Great Urban Parks (BAGUP). Hosted at the Parks and Peoples Foundation, the meetings have explored topics such as The Park Ranger Program, Druid Hill Park as the center piece of the Mayor's Greener Baltimore, advocating for the elimination of the 7,000 pending service requests for street tree maintenance, routine maintenance of playgrounds, park maintenance, and advocating for well-equipped and maintained Recreation Centers. Darryl Smith is chair of the committee dealing with recreation center equipment and maintenance.

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

### **Funding Our Recreation Centers Better**

RHIC is working with Greater Homewood Community Corporation to explore ways of better and more equitably funding recreation centers. To that end, RHIC and GHCC are sponsoring a meeting, hosting by GBCC on 18 March at 8:30 am. Coffee and breakfast foods will be available. We want to exchange stories about our recreation centers, identify common problems, and craft some action steps we can take together. Recreation Center advocates, personnel, and community association reps interested in the subject are welcome to attend. Please contact Richard Gwynallen.

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

### **Next Level Boxing Fighter Makes History**

At the age of 16, Tavon Sol became the youngest person to win the Maryland State and Regional championships in open (adult) competition. Tavon is now competing for a place on the 2012 U. S. Olympic team. This was a big step for Next Level Boxing as well. Tavon is the first fighter that Next Level has placed in the open, or adult, competition level.

*Project Contact:* Tyrone Sol, (4443) 506-7902, [tsnextlevel@comcast.net](mailto:tsnextlevel@comcast.net)

### **What's Happening on Callow? HRS Homes/Callow Avenue Properties**

The Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) for these properties requires the developer to totally rehab the single family homes and offer them for sale to four distinct groups; less than 80 to 100% of Area Median Income (4), 80 to 100 % of Area Median Income (4), 100 to 120% of Area Median Income (4), and 120% or greater than Area Median Income (4). HRS has completed two of the four <120% of AMI and they are soon to complete another two. The completed properties are being marketed at \$365,000. HRS does not seem to have the market support to justify the prices it needs to ask for its completed houses. They are not likely to be able to rehab and sell their remaining inventory at the price points that they had originally envisioned. They too require deep buyer subsidies to achieve any measure of success at reaching affordability levels compatible to either of their lower income buyer groups. RHIC has a proposal before Baltimore City's Department of Housing and Community Development to amend HRS's Land Disposition Agreement. We are requesting that HRS be allowed to sell four of its properties in an as-is state to prospective buyers that are interested in using the Healthy Neighborhood loan product. This partnership with RHIC would permit buyers to use the one percent below market loan to complete the houses. This would also open up the possibility of owner occupied live-in landlord properties that are made affordable by the income producing accessory units.

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

### **What's Happening on Callow? Pennrose Development**

This project consisted of the rehab of forty-three properties formerly operated by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City. Phase One of the project consisted of building out thirty one properties into sixty four rental units scattered throughout the community. Forty of these units were to be subsidized units with the tenants coming from public housing and twenty four were to be priced at market rates. Phase Two of the project consisted of building out twelve properties into single family homeownership opportunities. Four of the units were to be set aside for affordable homeownership opportunities (approx \$90,000) and the remaining eight were to be market ranges (\$261,000 to \$325,000). Pennrose has completed most of the construction on the rental part of its LDA agreement. Their management component reports that they have about a ninety to ninety-two percent occupancy rate. The renovation of the units meets or exceeds trade standards. Tenants are for the most part, are pleased with their apartments. The units that are vacant (market rate) are being marketed aggressively and the slowing down of the housing market is evident in their difficulty to find tenants.

The homeownership part of the LDA is stalled. RHIC met with representatives of Pennrose Development in the fall of 2007 and we were told that they were having trouble making the homeownership numbers work. By this they meant that they would not start the homeowner phase until there was some certainty in the resale of the units. Preliminary workups indicate the average selling price of the properties to be around \$450,000 - \$560,000; prices that the current market will not accommodate. They certainly can not meet their affordability targets without deep subsidies and buyer assistance programs affording that level of subsidy do not exist. RHIC has scheduled meetings with Pennrose management to attempt to resolve the stalemate on the yet to be developed properties as well as a number of Landlord/Tenant issues.

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### **RHIC Testifies in Annapolis to Support Expanding Renter Opportunities**

RHIC staff joined the Community Law Center, Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc., and the Public Justice Center to support passage of Senate Bill 512 that would reform Maryland's retaliatory evictions laws. At present, the burden of proof that an eviction is retaliatory for a tenant exercising civil rights rests upon the tenant, and the bar is so high that the tenant must prove that the sole reason for the eviction was that legitimate complaint. The effect is to create a chilling atmosphere in which many tenants do not actively participate in seeking improvements to buildings in deplorable condition. The new law defines special protected actions that would be considered retaliatory. Such protected actions include making a good faith complaint to the landlord; contacting a government agency, lawyer, media, or other entity to make good faith complaint about an issue of tenancy; and organizing or participating in a tenant association. Protected actions do not cover a breach of contract, a violation of law, non-payment of rent, or other similar problems with the tenancy. The intention of the reforms are to create an environment in which renters can be full community partners in the improvement of their communities. To read the law: <http://mlis.state.md.us/2008rs/bills/sb/sb0512f.pdf>

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

## Update on School Construction Funding

As reported in the February Community Briefing, Reservoir Hill residents testified before the Health, Education & Human Resources Subcommittee of the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee in favor of full funding of the Aging Schools Program and restoration of funding to the Public Schools Construction Program. The sub-committee members heeded the testimony and have opposed the Department of Legislative Services recommendation of cutting aging schools funding. Typically, the committees to which those subcommittees on education belong take the recommendation of the subcommittee. So, we are at this point cautiously optimistic. As most readers know, The Special Session of the General Assembly resulted in a reduction \$150 million to mandated state education funding. The ACLU was able to negotiate a change to the education cut to ensure that no school system would receive less in fiscal year 2009 than it had in 2008. In the current legislative session, some leaders believe further cuts of up to \$300 million are necessary. RHIC has been working with allies to prevent any additional cuts, and to protect funding for the statewide Aging Schools Program.. The state has allocated \$333 million for school construction and renovation statewide. RHIC has joined the ACLU and others in support of support of the \$333 million, and in requesting that when allocating the money that the state examine equitable distribution of the funds.

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

## 4 ½% Loans for Remodeling Your Home! Lowest Rate in 4 Years

Get a low-interest Healthy Neighborhoods 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.

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## Four Healthy Neighborhoods Capital Improvement Proposals Submitted to RHIC

RHIC staff members Darryl Smith and Mike Gaffney are assisting neighborhood leaders in preparing proposals for capital improvement projects to be funded this spring through Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc. (HNI). Four proposals have been received and approved by the RHIC Board of Directors for submission to HNI. Proposals have been received from Upper Park Avenue residents, the Newington Avenue Neighbors Association, the Linden Avenue Block Club, and a joint proposal from Families of 2200 Brookfield and Brookfield, Newington, Callow Neighborhoods Block Club. The Newington Avenue proposal seeks to incorporate decorative porch lights, window boxes, and tree pits along the 700 Block of Newington. A grant to Upper Park Avenue would restore the old water fountain on the 2200 Block of Park to its former glory. The Brookfield Avenue proposal would create a small park out of a vacant lot at the corner of Brookfield and Newington. Linden Avenue residents want to create a dog park on Whitelock Street. If selected, these projects will have a lasting aesthetic and social impact on their respective blocks and we are hopeful the HNI selection committee will see the value of both projects. Regardless of the committee's decision, the RHIC staff would like to acknowledge the great amount of time and energy that Geri Okwesa, Howard Fink, Doris Brown, Remington Stone, Brian Morrison, and other residents have so generously devoted to their proposals.

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