



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

Community Briefing September 2008

With this Community Briefing we changed the format a bit. Given the length of the Briefing and the diversity of the material in it, we grouped the items by subject, and moved the Calendar of Events to a position after these categories. We hope the changes make the Briefing even more readable and useful. Please feel free to comment on the changes or make other suggestions.

What does RHIC Do? In the words of some of our neighbors:

Due to the work of RHIC the community has improved greatly. RHIC has always been there for me, keeping me informed, encouraging me to stay engaged as a block captain, and helping me resolve community concerns.

- Paulette Jennings, 30 year resident on Linden Avenue

RHIC was always available to guide me in the renovation process. They provided information on resources such as grants, helped me understand the city processes from start to finish, and was able to intervene on my behalf with the city when I had a problem because they know what is going on in community.

- Omar Davis, 7 year resident on Madison Avenue

I don't know what you do but you helped me.

- Charles Meyers, 50 year resident on Callow Avenue

The reason I bought into this neighborhood is because RHIC is a continuous squeaky wheel and very active in upgrading the neighborhood and gets things done.

- Denys Davidson, Chauncey Avenue resident

Greening Reservoir Hill

A Roving Green Volunteer Team

In some areas of the community where green projects have been implemented the residents are not able to maintain the areas as they once did. These green projects have thrived, but now some residents need more help. RHIC is forming a team of green volunteers who would be willing to help their neighbors out when necessary. RHIC's tool closet will supply all the tools, and RHIC will provide the coordination needed for each project. If you are interested in taking part in this team, contact Chistiana Usenza.

Project Contact: Chistiana Usenza, (410) 225-7547, cusenza@reservoirhill.net

Sanitation Update

A group of residents and RHIC staff met and identified the areas where trash is centrally collected for pick-up as a main sanitation issue in Reservoir Hill. Resident volunteers conducted a survey of the sites in August, involving Department of Public Works personnel in some of the tours. Aggravating the problem of locating trash in "centralized collection points" throughout the community is leaving trash for pick up in plastic garbage bags. The City of Baltimore regards both of these activities as housing code violations. The centralized collection points have their origin in the narrow alleys in the close proximity to these pick up points, which inhibit the garbage collection trucks from gaining easy access to the rear of the properties along these alleys. However, the trash collectors are supposed to go down the narrow alleys on foot to collect trash. Volunteers will be working on a combination of educational outreach to get people to stop taking trash to these central collection points, and code enforcement for persistent problems.

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

i-Tree Survey Next Steps

RHIC and a core group of volunteers have surveyed the trees in Reservoir Hill. We discovered that we have 1,149 tree wells. 29 of the tree wells have dead trees. 66 tree wells are currently empty. And 69 wells have tree stumps waiting to be removed by the city. That is 164 tree wells that could have new trees, which would be a 17% increase in trees in the neighborhood. The project has created a map of this information that we will be shared at an upcoming meeting, than posted to the RHIC website. We have a plan over the next two years to plant new trees and get rid of stumps and dead trees. But we need your help in planning, applying for new trees and planting the trees. All interested are invited to come to a meeting on 16 September at 6:30 pm at the RHIC office (2001 Park Avenue).

Project Contact: Christiana Usenza, (410) 225-7547, cusenza@reservoirhill.net

Update on Reservoir Street Park and John Eager Howard Park Renovations

The design for the Reservoir Street Park has been completed. RHIC is in September reconvening the neighborhood committee that had worked on the re-design of the Reservoir Street Park in order to discuss the final renderings. The design process pertaining to John Eager Howard Park should be completed by the middle or end of September at which time this design can be presented to the community for discussion.

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

RHIC Tool Shed

Just a reminder to all that RHIC's Tool Shed has a range of tools for outdoor work. Residents may have the use of our tools to check out for temporary periods of time when you have outdoors projects going. Available tools include: hoes, rakes, metal rakes, brooms, shovels, pick axes, trowels, cultivators. Large lawn & leaf bags are also available. You may check out the tools you need for a specific period of time of no more than two weeks. The tools can be signed out and picked up at the RHIC office on the "Hill" at 2001 Park Avenue from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. It's best to call ahead. You will be responsible for returning the tools to the office in good condition when you are finished so other people can use them too. Best wishes on all your projects.

Project Contact: Christiana Usenza, (410) 225-7547, cusenza@reservoirhill.net

Housing

Housing Work Group

The RHIC Housing Work Group is being revamped to better address housing issues and topics related to community development within Reservoir Hill. The group is currently seeking volunteers to assist its work in areas of project planning, policy development, community review processes and advocacy. Anyone interested in serving on the work group should contact Carl Cleary.

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

Pennrose/ Renaissance at Reservoir Hill Update

The Pennrose Management Company has hired Ms. Lisa Harvey as property manager for its Renaissance at Reservoir Hill site. Ms. Harvey brings a considerable amount of experience to this position and looks forward to continuing her hands on approach to comprehensive property management.

Phase II of the Renaissance at Reservoir Hill project was slated to be a homeownership component that among other things targeted low to moderate income homebuyers. The twelve houses that were originally included in the development proposal have reverted back to City of Baltimore (HCD and HABC) control. RHIC has learned that Pennrose Development Company has allowed its right to develop the twelve houses to lapse. City authorities are now considering appropriate development alternatives that still provide for single family homeownership. RHIC will provide further updates as negotiations unfold.

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

Callow Estates Update

RHIC continues to monitor the progress being made on Callow Avenue by HRS Homes. We have learned that there are eight single family houses now completed and available for sale along with four others that have been recently started. Following up on its commitment to actively market the properties, HRS Homes had the completed houses appraised and reduced selling prices 11% on average. The houses are now selling from \$320,000 - \$325,000. The original asking price was \$365,000. HRS is negotiating with another sales agent for its properties and they are expected to announce their selection shortly. To date the suggestion made by RHIC to enhance the curb appeal of Callow Avenue (decorative window treatments, removal of plywood from the front doors, removal of construction debris, etc.) has not been acted on but we understand that HRS is moving to comply.

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

A Study of the Reservoir Hill Housing Market

A recently concluded study of Reservoir Hill's slowing housing market is being reviewed by City and community leaders. The report authored by Joanne Copes and Julius Colvin was commissioned by Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc. to assist in the continued development of the Reservoir Hill community. The soon to be released findings pay particular attention to market forces, housing trends, and competing interests that are shaping both the problems and solutions for our community. RHIC will continue to work with and assist community leadership in analyzing the report.

Project Contact: John Ruffin, (410) 225-7547, jruffin@reservoirhill.net

Update on Whitelock Planning

The second Leadership Assembly meeting on the redevelopment of the Whitelock Corridor was held on 4 September. Building on information gathered from a previously distributed survey, attendees offered the presenters additional comment and suggestion on the preliminary designs as related to the project's parameter, land use, past use, visions, and doubts. Prior to the much anticipated roll out of the project's final plans scheduled for a town hall meeting in late fall, there will be another Leadership Assembly session in late September. The purpose of that meeting is to afford the project's principal contractors with the opportunity to present revised preliminary designs and get further comments from the leadership group.

Project Contact: John Ruffin, (410) 225-7547, jruffin@reservoirhill.net

Spring '09 Housing Tour – Committee Members Needed

RHIC is seeking volunteers to assist with the marketing and promotion of an upcoming housing tour. The event is planned for early spring 2009 and will require a lot of work to make it successful. Reservoir Hill has a great reputation for well conducted tours and this event is expected to be more of the same. We are asking residents, realtors, contractors and others to be involved, so why not you too.

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

Around the Community

Residents Helped Make Summer Camp 2008 Successful – Thank You All

Community residents and friends, as individuals and through their associations, made it possible for 30 children to attend the summer camp at John Eager Howard Recreation Center this year. Those sponsoring children by donating to the scholarships include Druid Community Association, John Eager Howard Recreation Center, Thomas and Rhonda Jones, Joyce Keating, Linden Lounge, Lakeside Neighbors Coalition, Michelle Fuller, Newington Avenue Neighbors Association, Reservoir Hill Improvement Council, Jericka Robinson, Rayna Thomas and Friends, and Frederick Trusty. In addition four individuals wished to remain anonymous. Last year residents and friends sponsored 20 young people. This year, the director Carolyn (Cookie) Newton, was able to use the scholarship donations to leverage contributions from some families of summer camp youth.

Project Contact: Carolyn Newton, 410.396.7849, carolyn.newton@baltimorecity.gov

Update on Reservoir Hill Boy Scout Branch

The RHIC office has submitted the applications for the members of the Steering Committee for the proposed Boy Scout troop and Cub Scout troop in the area. The applications are being reviewed and processed. Darryl Smith attended a District meeting for the Boy Scouts in Baltimore City in order to gather more information about Scouting. The Steering committee currently consists of six members and will meet again soon to further discuss planning for the scout troops. Anyone interested in participating in this scout troop should contact Darryl Smith.

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

News From Lakeside Neighbors Coalition

Lakeside Neighbors Coalition (LNC) recently received its 501(c)(3) status from the IRS making it eligible to receive tax-deductible donations. The coalition has been very active this summer. LNC received a grant to install gates for the breezeways between houses on Chauncey, which were erected to improve safety in the area by deterring people from running between the houses. The gates are up and they look great. In addition, LNC is working on a city-wide health fair for Spring or Summer of 2009. Lastly, the Coalition is working to enroll a vacant lot into the City's Adopt-A-Lot program.

Project Contact: Juanita Garrison, (410) 523-5858, juanita_inc@hotmail.com

Changes Coming to the Lennox Street Community Garden

Bolton Park Neighbors has been awarded a \$1,000 grant from the Parks & People Foundation to redo the pathways in the garden to and get rid of the stone. BPN is also working with the owner of Madison Park North to get a 6'-8' fence around the garden to help further minimize vandalism.

Project Contact: Elizabeth Schaaf, (410) 523-8889, elizabethschaaf@verizon.net

News from Newington Avenue Neighbors Association

Newington Avenue Neighbors Association (NANA) was recently awarded a Healthy Neighborhoods, Inc. block project grant to install front porch lights on the houses of 18 homeowners on the 700, 800, and 900 blocks of Newington Avenue. The new lighting will go a long way toward the continued improvement of Newington Avenue and to increasing safety on the blocks. NANA is now raising the remaining funds necessary to implement the project from its members and supporters.

Project Contact: Gerrie Okwesa, (410) 225-7704, gokwesa@verizon.net

Reservoir Hill Outreach Team Starting

In order to reach a larger segment of the community with information, understand people's needs, and get more people active, RHIC is organizing a canvass team to go out in the community September – November. We'll be inviting people to events, inquiring about opinions, and getting people involved. Over these next months there are a lot of opportunities for people to be involved in the community, and there is simply a need to be meeting and talking to more people so everyone has the opportunity to be part of the community and have a voice. RHIC will train the canvassers and coordinate the operation. Anyone interested in taking part should contact Rick Gwynallen.

Project Contact: Rick Gwynallen, (410) 225-7547, rgwynallen@reservoirhill.net

News From St. Francis Neighborhood Center

The classrooms at St. Francis Neighborhood Center recently received a spruce-up. Both were painted by 12 Johns Hopkins University students from the INVOLVED volunteer program. St. Francis is also starting a new class in October on controlling personal finances.

Project Contact: Father Tom Composto, (410) 669-2612, composto@verizon.net

Street Resurfacing and Capital Improvements

In 2006 RHIC submitted a list of road and sidewalk improvements to the Department of Transportation. Some of these needed repairs have languished for a long time, but progress is starting to happen. The new look of Madison Avenue and Lakeview Avenue is attributable to Mayor Dixon's citywide Operation Orange Cone. The resurfacing completed on the two streets this summer was part of a group of 158 sites selected by Department of Public Works to get a new look. The remainder of work left to be completed in Reservoir Hill is sidewalks, curb and gutters, and alleys. To check on planned projects go to: <http://www.baltimorecity.gov/orangecone/>

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

Resources

Healthy Neighborhoods Loans - Remodel Your Home at the 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.

Project Contact: Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, cclarey@reservoirhill.net

Looking for Carpenters, Electricians, Painters, etc.?

The Mount Royal Improvement Association maintains a very good directory of contractors and other workers recommended by Bolton Hill residents. You can view the directory at http://www.boltonhill.org/resources/r_hird_listings.html

Project Contact: Carl Cleary, (410) 225-7547, cclarey@reservoirhill.net

New Free Not-for-Profit Financial Counseling Hotline

A new, free, not-for-profit, financial counseling hotline, 877-254-1097, has been launched by Baltimore CASH and Maryland CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Campaigns and Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc. (CCCS). It is the only free, not-for-profit statewide service provided by certified, nonprofit financial counselors that is available to anyone regardless of financial status. People are urged to call the financial advice Hotline *before* they run into trouble but regardless of one's circumstances, the Hotline's certified counselors will provide help and guidance. Whether one seeks budgeting direction or debt management, if someone is in crisis or just looking for guidance, the certified counselors at 877-254-1097 will help consumers determine the level of service required and what they need to manage their finances. If necessary, follow-up meetings may also be arranged with trained counselors at various CCCS locations statewide. The Hotline counselors are all from CCCS, the largest Maryland-headquartered member of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC). CCCS is independently accredited by the Council on Accreditation and all of its counselors and all been certified after rigorous testing through the NFCC.

Project Contact: Consumer Credit Counseling Service, 1 (800) 642-2227, www.cccs-inc.org

Community Law Center Workshops

The Community Law Center offers a range of workshops that assist neighborhood associations to form and to enact effective projects. For more information visit the CLC website at http://www.communitylaw.org/Upcoming%20workshops%20and%20events.htm#Battling_Bad_Bars_in_Your_Community

Project Contact: Kelly Pheiffer; (410) 366-0922

The Learning Cooperative

The Learning Cooperative is an innovative dropout prevention program serving Baltimore City students who are 14 – 17 years of age, and who have been out of school or not attending regularly. This is an extended day academic and life skills program that incorporates with academic preparation activities that include job skills training, financial literacy, and more.

Project Contact: Melissa Shaull-Thompson, (410) 662-8049, learning.inc@verizon.net

Calendar of Events

Next Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol Walk – 15 September

The Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol will hold its next walk on 15 September 2008 commencing at 7:00 pm from St. Francis Neighborhood Center at 2405 Linden Avenue. 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 Lazizzera, (410) 669-4060, grlazizzera@verizon.net

National Healthy Homes Festival – 12-14 September

The National Healthy Homes Festival will be held at Druid Hill Park 12-14 September. The festival will bring together national and local community partners; lead and asthma prevention programs; Healthy Homes organizations, health, housing, and environmental agencies; local universities; federal, state, and city agencies; and the citizens of Baltimore in an effort to promote the benefits of Healthy Homes. The purpose of the festival is to inform and educate the public about what actions to take in their homes to prevent harmful diseases and illnesses caused by toxins such as lead, mold and other home base environmental hazards while reinforcing Mayor Dixon's "Cleaner Greener Baltimore" initiative.

Project Contact: Michelle LeDonne, (410) 534-6447, mledonne@leadsafe.org

Greening Reservoir Hill: i-Tree Survey Next Steps – 16 September

RHIC and a core group of volunteers have surveyed the trees in Reservoir Hill. The project has created a map of this information that we will be shared at an upcoming meeting, then posted to the RHIC website. We have a plan over the next two years to plant new trees and get rid of stumps and dead trees. But we need your help in planning, applying for new trees and planting the trees. All interested are invited to come to a meeting on 16 September at 6:30 pm at the RHIC office (2001 Park Avenue).

Project Contact: Christiana Usenza, (410) 225-7547, cusenza@reservoirhill.net

Realtor Breakfast – 17 September

RHIC in partnership with Healthy Neighborhoods is convening a meet and greet breakfast for Greater Board of Baltimore Realtor member realtors on Wednesday, 17 September. The gathering is intended to reacquaint sales professionals with the opportunities and housing values available in the Reservoir Hill Neighborhood and to inform realtors of upcoming organizing and marketing initiatives undertaken by RHIC to promote the neighborhood. Emphasis will be placed on current marketing approaches, sales figures, loan products, special initiatives being offered and the upcoming Spring 09 housing tour.

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

Civil Rights Then and Now – 18 September

NAACP chair and noted civil rights activist Julian Bond will speak on "Civil Rights Then and Now" on Thursday, 18 September at the University of Baltimore School of Law as part of its ongoing Speaker Series. Bond's talk, free and open to the public (due to limited space registration is encouraged), will take place at 5:00 pm in the Langsdale Library Auditorium, 1420 Maryland Avenue.

For more info: <http://www.ubalt.edu/news/?id=818>

St. Francis's Reservoir Hill Resource Fair - 20 September

St. Francis Neighborhood Center will hold its Reservoir Hill Resources Fair on Saturday, 20 September from 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm at 2405 Linden Avenue near the corner of Whitelock Street. At present, participants include nine health care agencies, seven social service agencies, an employment service agency, and Baltimore city Community college. The fair will include children's storytelling throughout, food, a basketball game in German Park, prizes, free give aways, and other activities. St. Francis created a workgroup to organize the fair that consisted of people from Kids on the Hill, Reservoir Hill Improvement Council, Dru Mondawmin, and the University of Maryland Baltimore School of Medicine as well as individual residents.

Project Contact: Phillip Lovett, (410) 624-6648, pjlovett1@verizon.net

"Agent of Positive Change" Awards Luncheon & Silent Auction – 20 September

Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC) recognizes individuals and organizations for their work to bring about positive social and economic change in Baltimore City and their work on behalf of the Greater Coppin Heights/Rosemont Community. CHCDC presents the "Agent of Positive Change" Awards at an annual luncheon and silent auction event as a salute to those exemplifying leadership in positive change. The event will be held on Saturday, 20 September 2008, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm at Coppin State University, 2500 West North Avenue, in the Dining & Meeting Hall. Costs: Members \$20 | Future Members \$25 | Students \$15. All proceeds from this event will benefit CHCDC's neighborhood improvement and youth development initiatives.

Project Contact: Michelle Nusum McEachern, (410) 951-3622, chcdc@coppin.edu

Open House at John Eager Howard Recreation Center – 1 October

Everyone is invited to the John E. Howard Recreation Open House on 1 October from 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm. The center is at 2100 Brookfield Avenue at the corner of Brookfield Avenue and Lennox Street. Come out see the center, meet the staff, and see what the center offers Reservoir Hill children.

Project Contact: Carolyn Newton, 410.396.7849, carolyn.newton@baltimorecity.gov

SONAR New Music Concert – 5 October

Mozart Modern," presented by the SONAR New Music ensemble on Sunday, 5 October 2008, 1:30 PM at First Unitarian Church of Baltimore, corner of Charles and Franklin Streets. A concert of Mozart-inspired compositions by celebrated new composers, performed by Peabody Conservatory alumni and students. Free with a suggested donation of \$10-\$20; all proceeds to benefit the Historic Niemann Organ Restoration Fund of the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore.

Project Contact: Office@FirstUnitarian.net

Take Control of Your Personal Finances – 22 & 29 October

St. Francis Neighborhood Center is sponsoring a new free class called Money Talks, Start Listening: Take Control of Your Personal Finances. The two-day seminar will include budgeting month-to-month, understanding interest, the risks of credit debt, the importance of ones credit report, managing investments, and more. The seminar will be held at the Center, 2405 Linden Avenue on 22 and 29 October at 6:30 pm. RSVPs are requested.

Project Contact: Father Tom Composto, (410) 669-2612, composto@verizon.net

Next Homebuyer Workshop – 23 October

The next homebuyer workshop is scheduled for 23 October 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, including budgeting and affordability, working with realtors, purchase and sale agreements, credit and credit reports, mortgages and the mortgage process, home inspections, settlement and closing costs, and post purchase counseling. The workshops are free, but pre-registration is required.

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

RHIC Annual Meeting – 28 October

Once again, RHIC will hold its Annual Meeting at the Mansion House in Druid Hill Park. The event is scheduled for 28 October 2008 with doors opening at 6:30 pm. Each year, the hall is filled with literature tables from groups around the city, live music, great food, and notable speakers. A wide range of residents and supporters attend to vote in new Board Members, honor volunteers of the past year, and get ready for a new year of work and celebrations. Please join us.

Project Contact: John Ruffin, (410) 225-7547, jruffin@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.

Mission

RHIC unites, empowers, and mobilizes residents and organizations as a vehicle by which to define and take action on issues 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.

Reservoir Hill is a



Community