



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 January 2009

Special Opportunity for Neighborhood Associations

The Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) is planning a special workshop in design principles for community associations, non-profits, and faith-based groups located in or serving the Healthy Neighborhoods. The workshop will be in February and will help clients better understand the NDC application process, the types of projects we can assist with, services offered, and what makes for successful projects. If your association is interested in participating, contact the RHIC office. Please note that this is a workshop for neighborhood associations and block clubs.

Project Contact: Rick Gwynallen, (410) 233-9686 x 105, rgwynallen@reservoirhill.net

Greening Reservoir Hill

Changes in Baltimore Recycling - Effective January 2009

Acceptable Recycling Material:

- Clean paper - all colors and types. - This includes catalogs, magazines, junk mail, newspapers and non-metallic wrapping paper
- Cardboard and paperboard boxes (including cereal boxes without liners and frozen food packaging) Books (including paperbacks, textbooks and hardbacks)
- Aerosol Cans (empty)
- Glass containers such as jars and bottles
- Metal food and beverage containers
- Narrow-neck plastic containers (other than for motor oil) which carry codes 1 through 7 on the bottom.

NEW (to be included in your curbside single stream recycling bin—January 2009):

- Wide-mouth plastic containers used for margarine, yogurt, cottage cheese, mayonnaise and sour cream. Empty prescription bottles (lids and caps **do not** need to be removed) and plastic drinking cups
- Aluminum foil and aluminum pie pans
- Clean milk and juice cartons

NEW (to be taken to the citizen drop-off center and placed in container marked "rigid plastics"—January 2009)

Rigid plastics which include milk/soda crates, buckets, laundry baskets, lawn furniture, totes, plastic drums, coolers, flower pots, water bottles, pallets, pet carriers, shelving, closet organizers, empty garbage/recycling bins.

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



Reservoir Hill is a Healthy Neighborhoods community

Baltimore City Leaf Collection

DPW is collecting bagged leaves from city residents. Leaves will be collected on the second trash collection day each week, which falls on either Thursday, Friday, or Saturday. Leaf collection season will continue through 31 January 2009. DPW will collect an unlimited number of bags during leaf collection season. Please do not place bagged leaves in the gutter or public right-of-way. For additional information, please call 311.

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

Sanitation Update: *Pride in Reservoir Hill is Picking Up!*

As reported in the December 2008 briefing, the following areas are problem areas currently targeted for code enforcement inspection: the 700 and 800 (odd side) blocks of Newington, 800 (even side) block of Whitelock, 2200 and 2300 (odd side) blocks of Callow, and the 2400 (odd side) block of Lakeview. Inspector Neal is performing a weekly zoning inspection. Properties that are in the Reservoir Hill area in violation are getting citations and notices.

While these are targeted areas, the entire community is being examined by the Inspector, and other problems spots that are reported are being added to the list of priorities. Over November and December 2008 31 citations have been issued. To date, no one has had to be cited twice. Twelve properties formerly unoccupied but not listed as vacant have been boarded and vacant building notices issued.

Sanitation workers will continue the practice of picking up all bags left, even if they exceed the allowable number in order to allow workers on follow-up inspections to correctly identify bags dumped on non-pick-up days.

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

Tree Canopy Project Update – Toward 150 New Trees in 2009!

RHIC's Tree Canopy Project is first goal is to fill all 66 empty tree wells in the spring of 2009, including removing all stumps and dead trees from tree wells. Green Team members will be working throughout Reservoir Hill during January to get agreements from residents who have an empty tree well or a tree well containing a stump or dead tree to care for the tree to be planted. If you would like and are willing to maintain a tree in front of your house, or if you are willing to find people on your block to help maintain trees please get in touch with Christiana Usenza. Residents will receive training on tree planting and tree care, including amending soil in the wells, planting trees, and watering trees with 20 gallons a week. RHIC will provide the means to make maintenance easier depending on what works for each block. It could be a hose bib in front of a house, a key to the fire hydrant, a rain barrel, or gator bags. We will be offering a workshop on construction and use of rain barrels. We expect trees to be planted in the spring. In the autumn the team will begin on cutting new tree wells.

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

RHIC Tool Shed

Available tools include: hoes, rakes, metal rakes, brooms, shovels, pick axes, trowels, cultivators. Large lawn & leaf bags are also available. Residents may check out tools for no more than two weeks at a time. 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

Get the word out on Recycling!

Please help RHIC get the word out on recycling. We need people to bring fliers to their neighbors houses with information about recycling in Reservoir Hill, when to recycle, what to recycle, where to recycle and how to order a recycling bin. This is part of RHIC's effort to reduce waste and trash build up in Reservoir Hill and to help the environment. RHIC has been conducting a street-by-street drive to increase recycling. If you are willing to do door-to-door to drop off flyers to your neighbors, please let us know. The RHIC office will provide the fliers and work with you with any questions you may have.

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

Order Recycling Bins through RHIC

You can order city recycling bins through RHIC. \$5 for 18-gallon, \$12 for 25-gallon bin. All recyclable items go in same bin. Pick up is every other Wednesday (2nd and 4th). Call RHIC office to order one!

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

Help Reduce Waste - Please Recycle on a Regular Basis

Reservoir Hill is in Zone 2, and recycling pick-up is every second and fourth Wednesday of the month. Information on acceptable items for recycling is available at the RHIC office. For a recycling calendar go to the RHIC website: http://www.reservoirhill.net/trash_recycle_calendar_2008.pdf

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

Become a Member of the Community Greening Resource Network (CGRN)

Join Baltimore's Greening Network--Become a member! CGRN supports Baltimore City community gardeners. Baltimore City has many community gardens, and the volunteers who manage these gardens often depend on unreliable sources of funding and donations. Many organizations work to support community greeners. CGRN seeks to coordinate these resources to create a comprehensive and consistent network. There will be four CGRN sites around the city and RHIC is one of them! At these sites, CGRN hosts for its members: (1) Four annual Give-away Days (providing seeds, compost, vegetable seedlings, bulbs, perennial flowers). (2) Tool Banks with hand tools to borrow. (3) Workshops held by gardeners and other Baltimore City greening organizations on gardening and access to community gardens. (4) A 20% discount on renting equipment. CGRN also provides to its members a "See Green" Newsletter (with calendar of events, articles and more), networking opportunities, and annual celebrations. CGRN is accepting applications for 2009! It is \$10 for a year for a Community Garden Membership, and \$5 for an individual membership. You can get an application and more info at the RHIC office, or contact Sarah Kroner at Parks & People Foundation at 410-448-5663 x 114, sarah.kroner@paraksandpeople.org. Link to application: http://www.parksandpeople.org/publications/Guides/CGRN_Brochure.pdf. CGRN is an initiative of Parks & People Foundation and Maryland Cooperative Extension, Community Greening Resource

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

Housing

Reservoir Hill Vacant Housing Facts

The city has released the year end count for Reservoir Hill of vacant building and Use and Occupancy permits issued. There are 183 buildings in Reservoir Hill that have active Vacant Building Notices. There are an additional 42 vacant buildings in Reservoir Hill that are City of Baltimore or HABC owned. We have also learned that there were 30 Use and Occupancy permits issued for Reservoir Hill properties in 2008. A brief snapshot of the Reservoir Hill real estate market reveals that there are;

- 117 properties for sale priced from \$ 595,000.00 to \$ 35,000.00 with an average selling price of \$ 190,000.00 and listing are averaging 231 days on market.
- There are 14 MLS listed rentals in Reservoir Hill ranging from \$ 2750.00 per month to \$750.00 with an average rent of \$ 1050.00.

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

Healthy Neighborhoods Loan Rate at 4.27%

The current rate for the Healthy Neighborhood Acquisition/Rehab and Refinance and Rehab loan is 4.27 percent. Reservoir Hill homeowners interested in completing \$ 5K to 40K in home repairs should take advantage of an all time low rate of 2.25 percent.

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

Whitelock Corridor Update

RHIC staff is currently compiling the information gained from the November and December small group meetings as reported in the last Briefing. Based on this information, the contractors will create a new set of renderings that will become the foundation of a public meeting discussion in February.

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

Homebuyer Tax Relief

The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 includes a number of provisions that will help prevent foreclosures, reinvigorate the housing market and strengthen the nation's economy. These provisions include a \$7,500.00 tax credit and property tax relief for some homeowners.

Opportunity of a Lifetime for First-Time Buyers

For aspiring home owners who find their goal stubbornly elusive, newly enacted legislation providing a tax credit of as much as \$7,500 for first-time home buyers might just be the opportunity of a lifetime. Time is of the essence for buyers who want to take advantage of this outstanding opportunity. Only homes purchased on or after 9 April 2008 and before 1 July 2009 are eligible.

First-Time Home Buyer Tax Credit at a Glance

- ∞The tax credit is available for first-time home buyers only.
- ∞The maximum credit amount is \$7,500.
- ∞The credit is available for homes purchased on or after April 9, 2008 and before July 1, 2009.
- ∞Single taxpayers with incomes up to \$75,000 and married couples with incomes up to \$150,000 qualify for the full tax credit.

The tax credit works like an interest-free loan and must be repaid over a 15-year period

Property Taxes

The legislation will provide temporary tax relief for home owners who do not itemize their deductions. For tax year 2008, taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions but pay property taxes will receive a \$500 additional standard deduction (\$1,000 for married couples). This provision will particularly benefit home owners who have paid off their mortgages. Use the links below to learn more about the tax credit. <http://www.federalhousingtaxcredit.com/>

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

American Dream Downpayment

Baltimore City has announced funding for BALTIMORE CITY "ADDI" a homebuyer assistance grant being made available for Baltimore city residents to help reduce the upfront money obstacle that prevents many would be first time homebuyers from buying. The maximum \$10,000 grants have homebuyer education requirements and can be used with other buyer assistance programs.

Project Contact: Baltimore City - Office of Homeownership, (410) 396-3124

"Hope for Homeowners" Program to Help Struggling Families Keep Their Homes

The *HOPE for Homeowners* program will refinance mortgages for borrowers who are having difficulty making their payments, but can afford a new loan insured by HUD's Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The program is available only to owner occupants and will offer 30-year fixed rate mortgages. The *HOPE for Homeowners* program began 1 October 2008 and ends 30 September 2011.

For more information, go online to: <http://www.hud.gov/hopeforhomeowners/>

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

Around the Community

St. Francis Center Call for Volunteers

St. Francis is starting a new program in the Spring of 2009 called R.O.C.K. (Reach. Opportunity. Creativity. Knowledge). It is a youth development program that is comprised of three components: education (academic achievement), the arts (art, music, and dance), and mentoring. The program would run in the evenings Monday-Thursday. We are seeking volunteers to fill the following positions:

- Tutors
 - Mentors
 - Chief Academic Instructor
 - Chief Art Instructor
 - Chief Dance Instructor
 - Chief Music Instructor
 - art, music, and dance aids
- If you are interested, contact Sarah Tarighi.

Project Contact: Sarah Tarighi, (410) 669-2612, sarah.tarighi@stfranciscenter.org

Call for Submissions for Spring Newsletter

RHIC's newsletter is returning in the Spring, and we are planning a new feature. The spring issue of the newsletter will initiate a community comment section that will print comments from people on a targeted subject. Last spring, RHIC's sanitation survey indicated that most respondents saw significant improvement in sanitation conditions over the years. A new sanitation initiative has been underway the past few months, and there has been a marked increase in comments received regarding those conditions continuing to improve. So, we thought to ask broadly what people think. Therefore, the spring question is "How much improvement have you observed in the Reservoir Hill sanitation condition?" Please submit a comment of 50 words or less to Rick Gwynallen, rgwynallen@reservoirhill.net, no later than 1 March 2008. Also, please make any suggestions for how this campaign can continue to improve Reservoir Hill sanitation. The issue will be published in late March.

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

Join Bookworms – Help Kids in our Neighborhood!

Broaden the horizon and smile of a child simply by reading to him or her once per month. Bookworms is a program offered by the Beth Am Social Action Committee and John Eager Howard Elementary. We're looking for a few great Reservoir Hill readers to join this exciting program. You provide your love of reading, a book of your choice, and one hour of your time per month. We provide 3-4 children eager to learn and a program chair grateful for your participation! To learn more about this exciting opportunity, contact Octavia Shulman.

Project Contact: Octavia Shulman, (410) 523-5641, Octavia.shulman@gmail.com.

Coppin Heights CDC Office Moving

The offices of the Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation will be relocating to 2551-2553 W. North Avenue (old CSU Nursing Center building). Our offices will be closed for the move on Thursday, January 29th and Friday, January 30th. We will reopen for business at our new location on Monday, February 2nd. As of Monday, February 2nd, our general contact information will be as follows:

Coppin Heights Community Development Corporation
2551-2553 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21216
Phone: 410-951-3622
Fax: To be determined
Email: chcdc@coppin.edu

Project Contact: Michelle Nusum McEachern, (443) 984-3766, chcdc@coppin.edu

Reservoir Hill Scouts Recruiting

The newly established Boy Scouts of Reservoir Hill is actively recruiting for the Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops, which we hope to have operating in January 2009. The ages for cub scouts is 6 – 14, and the ages for boy scouts is 15 – 18. Parents, if you want to involve your sons in the healthy activities of scouting, please contact Darryl.

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, ccleary@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, ccleary@reservoirhill.net

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

New Free Not-for-Profit Financial Counseling Hotline – (877) 254-1097

Baltimore CASH and Maryland CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) Campaigns and Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc. (CCCS) operate a free, not-for-profit, financial counseling hotline. 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 counselors will help consumers determine the level of service required and what they need to manage their finances. Follow-up meetings may also be arranged with trained counselors at various CCCS locations statewide. 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

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 Shaul-Thompson, (410) 662-8049, learning.inc@verizon.net

Calendar of Events

Greening Reservoir Hill in 2009 Calendar of Events

- ∞ 1/15 CGRN: "Fundraising Strategies for a Garden" presented by Community Greens at St. Francis 6:30 pm
- ∞ 2/2 Deadline for Street Tree Agreements/Requests for Spring Planting, between 9-5 pm RHIC office*
- ∞ 2/10 Composting Workshop at St. Francis 7 pm RSVP to Christiana Usenza
- ∞ 2/12 CGRN "Community Organizing for Block Projects" presented by Community Greens at St. Francis at 6:30pm
- ∞ March-- Rain Barrel Workshop for community TBA
- ∞ 3/12 CGRN: "Transforming Blighted Community Spaces" presented by Community Greens at St. Francis 6:30 pm
- ∞ 3/28 Whitelock Community Garden-- Clean up Volunteer day 12-3pm*
- ∞ 4/18 Gardening Design Workshop at the Sculpture Garden on Madinson Avenue taught by Erin Reilly 12-3pm
- ∞ 4/22 Earth Day Tree Planting at John Eager Howard School with RHIC and Jones alls Watershed, We Need volunteers*
- ∞ 5/3 Green Fair 10-2, Let Christiana know if you have a project you want to lead and we will provide volunteers*
- ∞ 6/27 Lennox Street Garden --Volunteer Clean Up day 12-3*

* we need volunteers!

Next Homebuyer Workshop – 28 January 2009

The next homebuyer workshop is scheduled for 28 January 2009 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

Next Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol Walk – 9 February

The Reservoir Hill Peace Patrol will hold its next walk on 9 February 2009 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 Lazazzera, (410) 669-4060, grlazazzera@verizon.net

Composting Workshop – 10 February

Learn how to reduce your waste, create healthy soil and help the environment by using vermiculture (worm composting). On 10 February, Mike Gaffney from Chesapeake Bay Trust (formerly from RHIC) will lead you in a Composting Workshop at St. Francis 7:00 pm. Teens from Kids on the Hill have been experimenting and have now become expert composters and a few will help lead the workshop. It is FREE. RSVP to Christiana Usenza.

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

Largely Ludwig Chamber Ensemble – 15 February

The Largely Ludwig Chamber Ensemble, will appear Sunday, 15 February at 1:30 pm at the First Unitarian Church of Baltimore (Charles and Franklin Streets). In honor of Valentine's Day, this is a concert of Romantic works by Beethoven, Schumann, and Chopin. The Chamber Ensemble includes current and former Peabody Conservatory faculty. The concert is part of First Unitarian's 2008-2009 Cultural Series. Free and open to the public; free will contributions gratefully accepted. For more information: <http://www.firstunitarian.net/calendar.asp>,

Project Contact: (410) 685-2330, office@firstunitarian.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