

Summit News

November 1999



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Bond Money Paves Third Ward

Two years ago, Providence borrowed 50 million dollars in bonds for "capital improvements and redevelopment" downtown and in each of the City's wards. Each City Council member decides how more than 2 million of those dollars are spent.

In our ward, as in all the others, most of that money has been spent repaving roads and sidewalks. Councilman Jackson also matched \$50,000 in Federal block grant money with \$50,000 of bond money for the North Main Street Redevelopment

Project. He used bond money to fund the Mount Hope Land Trust and for improvements to Billy Taylor Park, Collyer Field and Lippitt Park.

Elsewhere in the City, bond money has paid for improvements to parks and community centers, a traffic study, street trees, acquisition of properties, elimination of blight, dredging a pond, fixing a fountain and funding a variety of non-profit organizations and revolving loan programs.

Continued on Page 2

Sidewalk Policy Needed

As a program of sidewalk repaving came to our ward this summer, residents became concerned with the progress of the work. Though the addresses were drawn from a list of property owner requests for sidewalk repair, the sidewalks have all been completely replaced. Funding for this work comes from our ward's share of the \$50 million bond issue.

As the first sidewalks were poured, residents noticed with alarm that contractors were pouring concrete to the curb, in many cases eliminating the grassy strip that separates the sidewalk from the curb throughout most of our



Two sections of sidewalk along Hope Street. The new one is on the right.

neighborhood.

We learned that the City has no policy on the way sidewalks are reconstructed. The Department of Public Works oversees the repaving work.

Grassy strips beautify the neighborhood. They enhance property values, provide a place to plant street trees and reduce the rainwater runoff that overwhelms our sewer system. They

improve our quality of life.

After residents complained,
Continued on Page 3

In This Issue...

Bond Money Paves Ward	1
Sidewalk Policy Needed	1
Councilman Jackson Vetos Fund	2
Business Scene	3
Membership Form	3
Moshassuck Gets Trees	4
Library To Expand	4
Street Tree Deadline	4
Miriam Debuts Master Plan	4
Bowling Alley Cleans Up.....	4

Bond Money

Continued from Page 1

Several hundred thousand dollars remain in our Ward's allocation. The SNA believes there are better uses for this money than paving more streets or sidewalks. In the Summit area, here are some suggestions:

Spruce up Hope Street. The Hope Street commercial district is the vital center of our neighborhood. A modest investment in landscaping, traffic calming, benches, street lamps and trash bins could make a dramatic improvement.

Contribute to the Rochambeau Library. Located right in the heart of the neighborhood, the library provides a wide range of services to the community.

Help fund a traffic study in Summit. The SNA has sought a traffic study for Summit neighborhood for years, to get some hard numbers on the various parking and traffic issues throughout our neighborhood.

Turn on the fountain in Lippitt Park. The fountain at the north end of Lippitt park has been dry for two decades.

Help fund enhanced educational opportunities at neighborhood public schools. Without supplanting government funding for basic education, we can help send kids on field trips and other extra activities.

Provide extra street sweepings. In the fall for leaves and in the spring for sand and salt.

Do you have ideas for ways the bond money could improve our neighborhood? Do you support some of our ideas? Call Councilman Jackson (273-5478) and tell him. Tell us your ideas, too.

Councilman Jackson Vetoes Neighborhood Fund

When Councilman Jackson first considered how to spend our share of the \$50 million bond issue, he pledged to take input from his constituents, and in particular, from the three neighborhood associations in our ward.

The Summit Neighborhood Association held several public meetings that year (1997) to discuss how best to use the money, and to encourage ideas and opinions from residents. During this process we began to wonder why we should spend the 2 million dollars all at once, money we would be paying back with interest for 25 years. We could not think of 2 million dollars worth of improvements that could not wait. There are always potholed streets and cracked sidewalks, but these types of repairs are supposed to be made every year, not every 25 years.

Why not invest our portion of the money in a neighborhood trust fund and use the proceeds, annually, to pay for streets or sidewalks or whatever is needed? If the city will not budget capital improvements, we could do it for ourselves! Initially, Councilman Jackson supported the idea. But was it legally possible? Could we invest borrowed money?

Kelly Sheridan, counsel to the city council, met with the SNA and told us that although it was not necessarily the intent of the bond issue, such a use was not prohibited. He cautioned that the money must come from taxable bonds. But 11 of the 50 million dollars were issued as taxable bonds, much of it not yet allocated, so the way seemed clear.

SNA board members began researching fund alternatives and enlisted pro bono legal help in drafting a trust agreement dubbed the **Summit Community Fund**. The trustees of the fund, elected by the neighborhood, would accept proposals each year from the community and neighborhood groups, and select the best ones. Nine trustees from the community would serve staggered 3 year terms, and one permanent seat would be reserved for the current councilperson.

And that is as far as it went. After a year of work on our Summit Community Fund proposal, Councilman Jackson changed his mind. He would not put the proposal before the council, as we hoped, for a variety of reasons: the fund required an initial investment larger than he was willing to allocate to it; it would be unlike proposals made by other wards; he would lose control of the money.

Was the Summit Community Fund out of the ordinary? Certainly. Was it worth trying? We think so. While all city residents will be paying off this debt for 25 years to come through their taxes, Ward 3 missed a chance for an annual capital improvement budget that would have grown year by year, funding our neighborhood's needs forever.

Summit News is the official newsletter of the Summit Neighborhood Association. It is published three or four times a year and distributed free to households and businesses in the Greater Summit Area.

How Much Grass?

In Summit, grassy strips range from 2 to more than 4 feet wide. Cement widths range from 2-1/2 to 5 feet.

Sidewalk Policy

Continued from Page 1

Councilman Jackson directed the DPW and the contractor to preserve grassy strips, and create new ones if requested by property owners. Since few property owners knew of this, SNA members went door to door collecting requests and passing them along to the City. In many cases these requests were ignored, and several property owners who requested grass got cement.

Councilman Jackson recently amended his policy. All new sidewalks get grassy strips unless a property owner requests *not* to have one. This is better, but why not go further? Sidewalks are not for property owners, they're for everyone. Property owners are not paying for their sidewalks, we all are. It should be city policy to have grassy strips everywhere, just as it was when our neighborhood streets were first laid out.

Business Scene

Trent Ferrara, a neighborhood resident and former bistro chef at 729 Hope Street, has opened **Trent.** at 748 Hope Street, in the space formerly occupied by Zia Elena.

The fire-damaged block at the corner of Burlington and Hope has been completely repaired. **Blooming Blossoms** moved down the street to the south end of the building where the restaurant was.

Artiques, an art and antiques shop, recently moved into the next space at 778 Hope.

Flying Shuttles' space was least damaged by the fire and they are still there. That leaves the space formerly occupied by East Side Resale still empty.

Frank Paul Salon has moved back into his old space around the corner on Burlington Street.

Hope Street Pizza has been open for a few months at 770-772 in Small Change's old space.

Around the corner on Mutual Place, we understand a group of lawyers has bought **Providence Mutual's** attractive Georgian-style building, and renovations are underway.

A **tattoo parlor** is renovating

the space at 77 Burlington Street, formerly occupied by Rhoda's Judaica.

At the Pawtucket border, **Jerry's Service Station** at 1101 Hope Street (formerly a Sunoco) has reopened for auto repairs.

Herbalicious has moved into the space at 1074 Hope, formerly occupied by a liquor store. It will sell herbal supplements, vitamins and homeopathic remedies.

Meanwhile, down on North Main Street, a **Shell Station** is rising on the site of the former Beau James' Restaurant between 1st and 2nd Streets.

The liquor store formerly at 1173 North Main Street at the corner of 5th has closed.

Tiny Tots Too Daycare Center which occupied the upper half of a Miriam-owned building at 1125 North Main Street, between 3rd and 4th Streets is now being run by the Greater Providence YWCA.

Chez Pascal is expanding into the space next door at 962 Hope, formerly Sassafras hair salon.

Rhody Jewelry at 1160 North Main Street will move by November 1st to Power Road in Pawtucket.

Join The Summit Neighborhood Association

Complete this form and mail it to: *Summit Neighborhood Association
Box 41092, Providence, RI 02940.*

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Enclosed is \$10.00 for **2000** Individual Family Membership

(Make checks payable to *Summit Neighborhood Association*).

I can leaflet

I am concerned and would like to help with SNA activities. I am particularly interested in working on the following: _____

Neighbors Plant Trees Along Moshassuck River

On Saturday Sept. 18 approximately 35 people, primarily from the Summit neighborhood, turned out at Collyer Field to plant trees on a gloriously sunny day following our visit from Hurricane Floyd. The volunteer spirit shined as brightly as the morning. Friends of the Moshassuck (FOTM), in conjunction with Save The Bay, has been engaged in a slowly evolving ecological restoration along the Moshassuck River at Collyer Field and this was our first of what will hopefully be many tree plantings.

Twelve 10 ft. tall trees of four native species, Red Maple, White Ash, Black Gum, and Sweet Gum were planted to provide the wild-life habitat that would normally be found along the river if the environment was not so severely impacted by the invasive alien weed, Japanese Knotweed. Funds to buy the trees were provided by the Rhode Island Tree Council.

Can native trees, if given a headstart, compete with the Knotweed, and grow large enough to shade it out? Casual observations suggest that in the riverine environment, Knotweed

does not thrive under larger trees, but it suppresses the growth of seedlings, so we planted trees that were already taller than the Knotweed. FOTM seeks to suppress Japanese Knotweed without the use of toxic chemicals, and at the same time improve the wild-life habitat. Having more trees is part of what it will take to restore the forest along the river, so it is a good place to start, and perhaps in 20 years we will know if tree planting can also suppress Knotweed.

FOTM started about a year ago and has now grown to about 40 members. We are conducting an ecological restoration along the river at Collyer Field, seeking information about the health of the Moshassuck River, and conducting preliminary surveys for a potential string of pearls Moshassuck Greenway. We expect to convene a Moshassuck River Greenway conference in the next year. A newsletter comes out several times a year. If you would like to help, or for more information, get in touch with Friends of the Moshassuck at 331-0529 or via email, gerritt@edgenet.net.

Miriam Debuts Master Plan At Public Meeting

**Tuesday
November 16th, 6-7pm
Sopkin Auditorium
Miriam Hospital**

Sopkin Auditorium is in the main hospital building.

Plans for the Sears building and other Miriam properties will be among the topics discussed.

Library To Expand

The Providence Public Library has purchased and razed the house which was just to the north of the Rochambeau Branch. An architect has not yet been engaged and there is no timetable for construction. The land will temporarily be left as open space. Funding for the addition will come from State and private sources.

In the meantime the branch would be happy to hear your ideas for the addition.

Street Tree Deadline Nears

December 1st is the next deadline for completed applications for the Providence Neighborhood Planting Program. Two Summit sites received trees this fall: Top and 12th Streets, and Memorial Road and Camp Street.

Neighbors apply as a group to plant 5 to 20 trees. To apply, call Leslie Uργο, 351-5802 (MWF).

Shop Locally

Support Your
Neighborhood Businesses

Bowling Alley Cleans Up

The bowling alley which has for nearly 50 years been located on North Main Street opposite Hillside Avenue has new owners: David Aidala and Karen Levasseur. Renamed **Down Under Duckpin Bowl**, they host bowling leagues and children's birthday parties, and they're especially interested in attracting families.

The new owners caught the attention of neighbors by cleaning all around the the outside of the building. They have cut the tall grass and weeds on the side of the property along Ann Mary Drive (the entrance to Shaw's Plaza off North Main) and at the lower level in the back. Also in the back, they got rid of accumulated junk left there by passers-by and repainted the wall, covering over a lot of old graffiti. The owners say there's still more clean-up to be done.