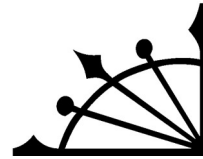


Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc.
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The Art of Neighboring

by Dré Northern, NNN Community Organizer

As we look ahead towards the coming of a New Year there is always a natural inclination for reflection over the year we are leaving behind. Of all the words that come to mind to describe the year 2020, one in particular stands out the most in my thoughts; unique. Unique in terms of challenges, unique in terms of pain, unique in terms of unity and most of all unique in terms of hope. One may ask in a year filled with so much frustration, division, sickness and death how can anyone see hope, of all things? The answer isn't complicated yet it's anything but simple.

What gives me hope is from all these things I also see courage, empathy and resilience. I had many conversations this year with many NNN neighbors who found that they desired now more than ever a greater need to understand the lives, trials and tribulations of their neighbors of different races. I saw their compassion and empathy and heard overwhelmingly from almost all of them the same question at some point in the conversation: "So what can I do?" It made me think that this question must be on the minds of many White Americans across the country. And while this question gave me hope, as arguably the worst aspect about suffering from racism in this country is the feeling of dread in knowing that suffering is unacknowledged by so many, it also put me in a position I rarely find myself in: at a loss for words.

To be honest as an African American man who's been an adult for a while now, it became apparent to me that it was a question I had never been asked before. It was a question that meant I would have to think deeper than I ever had before about the experience of Americans on the other side of the social phenomena that is home-grown American systematic racism. The cynical thoughts of my past like "White people, Black people, all people see it, everyone does. White people just don't care because it isn't their problem." wasn't going to cut it as many disqualified that through our conversations. Many told me of their first experiences of seeing racism for themselves and the awkwardness of this awakening that followed. How they felt compelled to do or say something but didn't know what that would consist of. Even deeper than this, many told me how, from these experiences, they were forced to confront the racism they believed lie within themselves. These were accounts that for some were preceded or convened with tears. I watched with wonderment, as I told them accounts of experiencing racism from my own life, many cried or could barely contain their anger as if it were stories from their own lives. Often in these conversations after I told them ugly excerpts from my life the original question that they asked would be asked again empathically; "So what can I do?"

It wasn't until I was in the third or fourth conversation of this nature that I had even the slightest inkling of a clear response. I said to this particular individual "This is the beginning, you're already doing it." I recognized for a person to truly look outside of themselves to recognize the suffering of people of color, to acknowledge that their lives have been granted advantages that stem in part from the marginalization of those people or at the very least that being White in America insulates them from certain problems that I and other people of color have and will experience is an extraordinary beginning. I ended this conversation by encouraging this individual to continue to seek out these conversations with NNN neighbors of color, to persevere through anxiety and reluctance to continue to feed their need to grow. After all it is this need that I saw in them that gives me hope. That so many don't see this as just my problem. They are beginning to see that this is our problem.

Would you like to be on the NNN ListServ and be in contact with your neighbors about Community information and announcements? Please email or call us with your name and email address to nnnassistant@nearnorthwest.org or 232-9182.

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THE COMMON GROUND

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NEWS YOU CAN USE

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JANUARY 2021

Ward Bakery Redevelopment Moving Forward

In October, local residents and interested community members participated in an online meeting to discuss the redevelopment of the former Ward Bakery / Ford Distributing building at 906 Portage Avenue. A group of local investors, led by longtime NNN resident Mike Keen, have created The Bakery Group LLC to acquire the building and bring it back to life.

After completing environmental cleanup and stabilizing the building, they plan to turn it into a neighborhood center for small retail, office, culture and arts, and maker space.

Participants in the virtual meeting suggested ideas including a bakery, restaurant, commercial kitchen, co-working office space, maker space, tool lending library, indoor farmer's market and more. The City of South Bend and the NNN also provided an update on the 2020 Near Northwest Neighborhood Plan.



Ward Bakery Building, above Right and Project Word Cloud, below



Access a video recording or slides from the meeting at www.macog.com/brownfields.html. If you have ideas or questions, contact information is in the slides or contact MACOG at LThill@macog.com. The NNN Plan is now uploaded under Plans & Studies at <https://southbendin.gov/departments/community-investment/planning-community-resources/>.

Anyone who is interested in leasing space in the building should contact Mike Keen at 574-514-2096.

Chapin Unity Garden Grant

By Molly Moon

Micah Niespodziany, Molly Moon and Lisa Bell are happy to announce some good news for the Chapin Park Unity Garden at the corner of Portage, Lindsey and Lamonte Terrace. Farm Credit Mid-America has awarded a generous grant to go toward garden improvements in 2021!

Plans are to remove the soil full of invasive species roots, lay down landscape cloth, build new and more garden boxes, fence the perimeter with self-closing but unlocked gates at every walkway, include bilingual signage and a medicine wheel herb garden with a birdbath at its center.

Of course, many volunteers will be needed for this exciting rebuild! A bobcat will load out the compromised soil, but the rest of the work involves hand work with shovels and wire cutters and drills and saws and wheelbarrows and doesn't it just sound grand?

This work of continuing garden transformation will begin when the ground thaws in the spring. The team will share plans and volunteering information this winter via the NNN listserv and FB page. Thanks to everybody who has worked on and in the garden since its inception. Thank you to all who stopped by in 2020 to harvest, pull weeds or just chat. The garden is an ongoing asset to our neighborhood, as it has been for years and will be for years to come.

Contact Molly B Moon at mollmoon@gmail.com, 574-234-5672 or on Facebook Messenger



Hazards of Lead Poisoning

According to the Center for Disease Control lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust are the most widespread and hazardous sources of lead exposure for young children in the U.S. Even though lead paints were banned in 1978, many homes built before that time are likely to have some paint left inside. Children less than six years old are at a higher risk of lead exposure because their bodies are still developing. They can be poisoned if they chew on windowsills, door frames, kitchen and bathroom cabinets, or if they eat flaking paint, or breathe in dust that contains lead.

Though lead can affect people of any age; pregnant women unborn babies, and children are at a greater risk for lead exposure. Children who live in households at or below the federal poverty level and those who live in housing built before 1978 are at the greatest risk of lead exposure. Communities of color are also at a higher risk of lead exposure due to racial inequity. In addition – specific job industries are at higher risk of hazardous lead exposure. Workers such as artists, mechanics, painters, police officers, welders, and construction workers are at high risk. People renovating their homes, or even doing light repairs may also be at risk. If old paint, lead dust, and paint chips are not handled properly their contaminants can remain even after work is completed.

Some effects of lead poisoning are brain damage, slowed growth and development, learning and behavior problems, and hearing and speech problems. These effects can lead to lower IQ and underperformance in school.

If you think that your child has been exposed to lead you should contact your child's health provider to take a blood lead test. You may also contact the Saint Joseph County Department of Health at 574-245-6656.

To find out if your home has lead you may request a free lead screening kit provided by the University of Notre Lead Innovation Team. To get a kit email lead@nd.edu. If you'd like more information on the risks of lead exposure or information on lead protection grant opportunities contact us at 574.232.9182.

NNN Community Dates

The NNN Community Spaces remain closed due to Covid 19. Please call the office with questions.

2021 NNN events are not yet planned, because of continuing issues with the Pandemic. We do hope to see you in 2021 and will resume programming when it is safe to gather together as a community.

The Local Cup has reopened for carry out. They are open Saturday, 9-1 and Sunday, 1-5. Their new website is thelocalcupsb.com.

South Bend Bike Garage will be available by appointment at 909 Portage Ave. throughout the winter. If you want to volunteer or have a bike that needs repair or bikes you want to donate please, contact us via phone (574-286-6508) or email (info@sbbikegarage.com) or through sbbikegarage.com. We thank you for your support this past year and look forward to riding with you in the Spring!

Lead Grants Available

Funding is still available through the City of South Bend for grants to income-qualified homeowners for lead abatement or interim controls that make your housing safer. Additionally, property owners and landlords that rent to income-qualified tenants may qualify for grants.

Who is eligible? Renters and homeowners who earn less than 80% of median income (\$56,650 for a family of 4).

Call 311 for more information or more information is online at: <https://311.southbendin.gov/knowledgecenter/article/?id=KA-01818> or call the NNN Community Outreach Team (COT) at (574) 850-1296.

Rebuilding Together 2021

St Joseph County has announced its program boundaries for 2021 and Census Tract 6 in the NNN is included.

It's a program to help with home repairs for income qualified, homeowners (especially aged 60 plus) living in their own homes. You can also volunteer to work in the program or donate to it. Details and the application are at <https://rebuildingtogethersjc.org/>.

Continued at bottom of next column

COT Staff Change

Laura Yahya has replaced Emily Dean as our Community Outreach Team Leader. She has spent most of her life in South Bend and was raised in the NNN neighborhood. Laura has over twenty years' experience in non-profits. She's worked for such organizations including the National Kidney Foundation, the Urban League, WNIT, DTSB, and the Girl Scouts.



She's assisted with or spearheaded community projects and programs such as art festivals, poetry readings, food drives, youth development events, fundraisers, annual meetings, workshops, and membership drives. Laura is excited to be working with the NNN neighbors. She can be reached at 574-850-1296 or laura@nearnorthwestneighborhood.org.

Rebuilding Together Continued from previous column...

If you live in CT 6, feel free to complete and submit your application to Rebuilding Together ASAP. The NNN also has copies.