



NEWS YOU CAN USE

Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc.

August 2008

Safety Committee Develops Tool to Help Address Neighborhood Concerns

By John Mynsberge

Feel out of touch or ignored when you have problems in *your* neighborhood? Does the city seem to be slow to respond to complaints of trash, noise, vacant properties, and crime? Maybe a neighborhood phone tree can help! City officials get many calls about problems and can't always address them in a timely manner, but with help from you and your near northwest neighbors we can focus their attention on persistent problems in our area.

A phone tree provides a support group of friends and neighbors willing to help in response to specific problems and situations that we all face at one time or another. Several calls from concerned neighbors can sometimes get more prompt attention — as we have often been told “the squeaky wheel gets the grease.” The phone tree is also a useful tool to keep in touch with your neighbors for other emergencies or information if needed.

For more information, visit the NNN's website at www.nearnorthwest.org, contact the NNN at 232-9182 or attend the upcoming **Safety Committee Meeting on Thursday, September 18th at 6pm at the NNN Offices (1005 Portage Ave).**

Attention Gardeners... Fall Plant Swap!

By Becky Kaiser

As the days get shorter and we gardeners get ready to put our beds to rest, it is once again time for the Fall Plant Swap at the NNN. For those of you who are new to the near northwest neighborhood, or our annual spring and fall plant swaps let us make one thing **PERFECTLY CLEAR, you don't need to bring plants to the plant swap to take something home!!** Any gardener will tell you that it breaks our heart to throw out a perfectly good plant, but sometimes they just reproduce to darn effectively for the space we have. So we want to share these little gems with you, and you, and you too.

The date is set for **Sunday, September 7, 2008 from 12:30 until 2:00 pm** or until you can get us all to stop swapping stories on which plant grew where best. So come one, come all, the more the merrier, this is a great time to get advice and plants from neighbors and friends.

Tools to Resolve Concerns with Nuisance Properties Meeting on October 1st at 6pm

By Tim Scott

My wife and I chose to live in the near northwest neighborhood 15 years ago because the neighborhood, homes and people are unique to South Bend. What is not unique to the near northwest neighborhood or South Bend is nuisance properties that can have a dramatic impact on our quality of life.

Other neighbors and I were interested in how to address the issue in a way that changes the habits of homeowners, landlords and tenants that create nuisance properties and deteriorates the quality of life for all neighbors. Toward that end, we formed the NNN Nuisance Property Committee.

What constitutes a nuisance property? Broadly defined, it includes poorly maintained homes with unkempt lawns, weeds and inordinate amount of trash; abandoned properties; homes with unusually loud residents, and of course residents involved in criminal activities.

As a committee, we needed to learn as much as we could about what was happening within the neighborhood, what people were doing to improve the situation and which city, county and state policies/services dealt with nuisance properties. Is there something that could be put in place that could help address our concerns?

After talking with neighbors, landlords, the police, a Section 8 representative, the city code enforcement department, the city attorney and city councilmen we affirmed what we all knew: the city ordinances are there, the laws are in place to tackle a majority of the issues, but the manpower to enforce at the highest level is not there.

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YEAR-AT-A-GLANCE

Fall Plant Swap

Sunday, September 7, 2008

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

NNN Offices

Housing Fair hosted by Indiana Legal Services

Saturday, September 20, 2008

10:00 am - 2:00 pm

The Grille on the campus of IUSB

General Membership Meeting

Resolving Nuisance Problems in Your Neighborhood

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

6:00 pm

NNN Offices

Arts Café

Sunday, November 2, 2008

9am - 5 pm

Cottage Grove Ave

(Between Lindsey St and Lincoln Way West)

MONTHLY NNN MEETINGS

Safety Committee Meeting

Thursday, September 18, 2008

6:00 pm

NNN Offices

Environmental Committee Meeting

Tuesday, September 23, 2008

6:00 pm

NNN Offices

THINGS AROUND TOWN

Art Beat

Thursday, September 4, 2008

4:00 - 8:30 pm

Downtown South Bend

www.artbeatsouthbend.org

Football Fridays Tent Party

Friday, September 5, 12 & 26

6:00 - 10:00 pm

Michigan Street near the College Football Hall of Fame

The Compleat Wrks of Wm Shkspr (Abr.)

September 12-14, 18-20

8:00 pm (Sundays, 3:00 pm)

South Bend Civic Theatre

For more information on things happening in Downtown South Bend go to:

www.downtownsouthbend.com/calendar.php

QUESTIONS? Call us at 232-9182

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Con't from Page 1: Tools to Resolve Concerns

We found there are more Section 8 housing units than the number of inspectors can reasonably review in a year. We learned that people selling drugs often move in and out of houses faster than police can build a case; that some absentee landlords hide behind LLC “dummy companies” to avoid personal liability for code violations or tax delinquency. This process can be drawn out for months; even years, before the city can take action to improve the situation.

But not all is bleak. In 2007, an amendment to the city’s Disorderly House ordinance expanded the City’s legal recourse with owners of properties whose residents repeatedly engage in behavior that disturbs the peace of the neighborhood. While the amendment was sought to address problem student houses, it also has been used successfully in the near northwest neighborhood to address nuisance properties.

After all the research and education, of course we went with what the NNN does best -- organizing at the grassroots level to tackle the issue head on. The Nuisance Property Committee developed three tools and the Safety Committee created one additional tool that can help neighbors resolve issues in an organized way by using the limited city services in the most efficient manner. While tackling nuisance properties is not easy and will take time, the following tools will help ease the burden and increase net results.

1. **How to be a good neighbor:** Good neighbors communicate. The more neighbors talk, the more they can understand how to get along with each other. This is crucial living in urban settings. To help start the conversation the Nuisance Property Committee developed a handout called “Our Neighborhood, Keeping it Friendly, Keeping it Clean, and Keeping it Safe.” It promotes the fundamentals of being a good neighbor and what city services are available that can help avoid neighborhood conflicts, such as when and where to set out trash or how loud and for how long music can be played.
We found many people do not know the basics of living within the city, so this sets the basic standard of how to live respectfully with each other. This is a great tool to hand out to new neighbors and start that good neighbor communication.
2. **Tackling nuisance problems:** Since some people don’t understand—or care—how to cohabit with neighbors and their behavior affects you and your neighbors’ quality of life, we devised a process that can be effective in dealing with the problem. This tool, a brochure entitled “Resolving Nuisance Problems in Your Neighborhood,” details how to handle the problem by organizing neighbors and accessing city services that can address the issue.
3. **Quick guide to city services:** The Nuisance Property Committee designed a refrigerator magnet as a quick contact list of the city services and the phone number of each.
4. **Organized communication:** The Safety Committee has developed a grassroots phone tree system that compliments the nuisance problem process. By establishing a phone tree, neighbors can organize, collect data, and report concerns with property or people to the appropriate city service when help is needed.

These tools are available on the NNN website at www.nearnorthwest.org or at the NNN Office (1007 Portage Avenue) if you want to pick them up to review and use or to hand out to your neighbors and area landlords.

With the organizing and reporting tools complete, it is now time to take this to all the streets of the near northwest neighborhood. As a grassroots process, you and your neighbors are needed to tackle nuisance properties and problems head on. If you are interested in learning more, the Nuisance Property Committee will offer an orientation of these tools at the **Resolving Nuisance Properties in Your Neighborhood NNN General Meeting on Wednesday, October 1st at 6:00pm at the NNN Offices (1005 Portage Avenue).**

Garden Walk 2008 a Great Success!
By Alesia Redding

Turns out there’s a lot more than perennials and annuals blooming in the near northwest neighborhood.

There’s plenty of enthusiasm and an indomitable spirit — the kind that won’t let a little (OK, quite a bit) of rain interfere with the NNN’s Garden Walk 2008, which took place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on July 19.

Nope, not even cloudy skies and a sometimes steady downpour could dampen the enthusiasm for the 19 gardens on display throughout the neighborhood, from Leland Avenue to Harrison Street to Blaine Avenue to the corner of Vassar and Portage avenues, home of the Triangle Garden. The gardens were beautiful (and freshly watered!) and there was something to please the senses of all gardeners and would-be gardeners: newly-established outdoor spaces, more elaborate, deeply-rooted creations and those unique gardens that fell somewhere in between.

The positive vibes generated during the weekly Garden Walk planning committee meetings (Members Roy Hruska, Ann Shuster, Jacqui Weeks, Alesia Redding and Karen Ainsley) were in full force on that overcast Saturday. That shouldn’t come as too much of a surprise, because let’s face it: Gardeners are a hearty lot and they aren’t afraid of no stinkin’ rain, as the first trickle of visitors, carrying their trusty umbrellas and soggy Garden Walk maps, proved.

Come afternoon, the skies cleared and the sun made its appearance — as did an increasing number of visitors. All told, approximately 200 people turned out for the Walk. And by the end of the day, Garden Walk 2008, with its goal of raising funds as well as awareness and appreciation for the neighborhood, was deemed a clear success — rain or shine.

Neighbors Celebrate the End of the Summer at Corn and Hog Roast
By Marilyn Gachaw

We couldn’t have asked for a better afternoon to celebrate our 2nd Annual End of the Summer Block Party. We kicked off the party with perfect weather, great food, pleasant music and fun being had by all, both young and old! Because of the wonderful volunteers, neighbors and of course the delicious menu featuring “hot buttered corn” and “pulled pork,” our community celebration certainly had all the right ingredients.

More than 350 enthusiastic neighbors attended this year’s “Corn and Hog Roast” at Grace Community Center – which was the ideal location for the event. If you didn’t have an opportunity to tour the facility you must plan a visit. Their indoor gym, which is reminiscent of my 1960’s grade school’s gym, provided ample space for the children to expend lots of energy and burn off calories while playing games and making crafts. Our committed volunteers got their workout too, hurrying around in the well-equipped kitchen. Outside, the grounds offered plenty of shady green space that made meeting and greeting new and old acquaintances an enjoyable experience. The setting was perfect!

During the event, it became easy for me to answer the question of the day, “why do you love the near northwest neighborhood?” It’s a neighborhood full of wonderful people! Thanks to each of you for supporting the community and I look forward to seeing you at next year’s 3rd Annual End of the Summer Block Party.

Housing Fair hosted by Indiana Legal Services

In an attempt to educate borrowers about mortgage issues and the services available to them in our community the Indiana Legal Services is hosting a Housing Fair at the Grille on the campus of IUSB on Saturday, September 20, 2008 from 10:00-2:00pm.

The fair will focus on first time home buyers (basic education), tips to improve your credit and budgeting, how to rehab and repair your home, understanding your escrow account, bankruptcy, and loss mitigation. The NNN is proud to partner with Indiana Legal Services as an exhibitor at this upcoming fair, offering information about the NNN and the services we offer. For more information on this event call Joseph Zielinski from Indiana Legal Services, Inc. at 234-8121.