A clean sweep for Adopt-a-Block

By Karen Ainsley

On behalf of the NNN staff, Clark Glover (2013 Adopt-a-Block coordinator) and members of the Environmental Committee, a heartfelt thanks to everyone who made the event a success.

Talk about what a difference a day can make! Everyone’s efforts were greatly appreciated and the neighborhood looks so much better – just the spring cleaning we needed. Whether you were a block captain helping get things organized, a neighbor cleaning up your street, someone who just stopped in to support those hitting the streets or part of a civic group, we could not accomplish adopting over 200 blocks without the help of every one of you. That is EVERY block in the neighborhood!

This year we owe a big thanks to County Commissioner Dave Thomas who again donated all the breakfast items and water for our participants.

We also were very appreciative to share the day with Mayor Pete Buttigieg, who despite juggling a very busy schedule on Saturday, not only addressed the crowd, but rolled up his sleeves to help pick up trash. In addition, five members of the Common Council stopped by to show support: Karen White and Oliver Davis were on hand and Tim Scott, Derek Dieter and Gavin Ferlic were spotted cleaning up on Portage Avenue.

If that show of support from our city officials was not enough, we had both new Police Chief Ron Teachman and Code Enforcement Director Shubhada Kambli with members of their departments. Then last but certainly not least, Andre Price with Environmental Services and his crew hauled 20 tires, 5 tons of yard waste and 12 tons of trash out of the neighborhood. Each year that group takes better care of us, getting more efficient and making certain every Adopt-a-Block refuse site is clean before they head home around 4 p.m.

Additionally, groups from outside the neighborhood participated: Praxair, St. Joseph High School, Pete for South Bend, University of Notre Dame Students for Environmental Action, Center for the Homeless and Miller’s Veterans Center.

All in all, it was a wonderful day in the near northwest. It just shows the strength of the partnerships we share with one another as neighbors and the broader community. Great job, everyone!
In early May neighbors came together at the Quality of Life Planning Summit to build consensus for a common vision for the future of the neighborhood. A vision was created for the future of the neighborhood and six topics were identified by resident inputs that were critical to the neighborhood quality of life. The next step in the process is action planning teams, comprised of small groups of residents and leaders, that will meet to work on the six topics identified:

- Connections & Communications
- Quality Housing
- Economic Opportunity and Redevelopment
- Safety
- Infrastructure & Connectivity
- Youth & Families

Each action-planning team will work through developing SMAART (specific, measurable, aggressive yet achievable, relevant and time bound) goals and action plans for its topic. The teams will meet throughout the summer months to develop action plans. Late in the summer we will convene all of the action planning teams for a final workshop before the draft Quality of Life plan is written.

It is not too late to get involved with one of the action planning teams. Please contact Karen Ainsley at 574-232-9182 or nnndirector@sbcglobal.net. This process depends on each one of us making our contribution to build a strong, healthy, vibrant community.
Get the lead out

When most people think about lead poisoning the first thing that comes to mind is old paint. It’s important to remember that children can also be exposed to lead by simply playing outdoors. Over the years soil has been contaminated by peeling paint, factory pollution and leaded gasoline in cars. When children play outdoors, contaminated soil can get on their hands, clothes and toys. Children have a habit of putting their hands and toys in their mouths which leads to the ingestion of lead. Children can also breathe airborne soil and lead dust that becomes stirred up by the wind or playing children. Family pets can also track contaminated soil inside your home.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has defined a soil-lead hazard as 400 ppm for play areas and 1200 ppm for bare soil in the rest of the yard. Lead can bioaccumulate (reach high concentrations) in food grown in soils that contain lead. You should never garden in soil that has lead levels higher than 1000 ppm. The only way to know if your soil is contaminated is to have it professionally tested. If you have bare soil or a garden the St. Joseph County Health Department offers free soil testing as long there is a child younger than the age of 7 or a pregnant woman residing in the home.

There are several ways to reduce your exposure to contaminated soil. Remediating lead hazards on your home will prevent any further contamination within the drip line area. If you decide to scrape and paint any exterior siding, make sure you put down plastic to catch any paint chips that may fall to the ground. Contaminated bare soil and bare play areas can be covered with soil, mulch or wood chips. Gardening in a raised bed with clean topsoil will ensure that your produce is lead free. Put up fencing or plant bushes to keep children from coming in contact with contaminated areas. Lastly, practicing good hygiene is always a good way to prevent the spreading of contaminated soil and lead dust. Make sure that children wash their hands and take off their shoes when returning inside after outdoor play.

If you have any additional questions please contact the St. Joseph County Health Department at 574-235-9582.

Keep your cool at home

Air conditioning can make your family more comfortable this summer, but summer cooling costs can really make you sweat. The energy-saving tips that follow will help to reduce your utility bills while providing adequate cooling:

- Close window treatments during the day to prevent heat gain from the sun.
- Service air conditioner before cooling season begins to ensure that the system is running efficiently.
- Use exhaust fans while cooking and showering to lower the humidity inside your home.
- Plant leafy trees and shrubs on the south and west sides of your home to provide shade during the hottest hours of the day.
- Use natural ventilation.
- Change furnace air filters often; dirty air filters increase cooling costs.
- Insulate your home in accordance with recommended levels from the U.S. Department of Energy.
- Caulk or weather-strip all of your windows and doors; eliminating unwanted air infiltration significantly reduces cooling costs.
- Check ductwork in your attic or crawlspace to ensure it has not become disconnected or obstructed. Make sure attic ductwork is covered sufficiently with insulation.
- Install a programmable thermostat that will automatically raise the temperature setting at night and when you are away from home.
- Set the thermostat to the highest temperature at which your family is still comfortable. For each degree you set your thermostat below 78°F you add up to 3 percent to your air-conditioning costs.
- Consider a whole-house attic fan to circulate air through the house and move warm attic air to the outside.

If your air-conditioning system is older or frequently needs repair, consider replacing it with a new unit that is sized correctly and qualifies for ENERGY STAR certification. In some climates, air-source or geothermal heat pumps are a highly efficient option for year-round heating and cooling.
Mission Statement
The Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. is an organization of citizens dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of the neighborhood through providing affordable housing to low-moderate income households, organizing and empowering community residents and promoting the neighborhood’s interest within the neighborhood and the entire community.

Near Northwest Neighborhood
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Plan Ahead for
Garden Walk 2014

As many of you may know already, the NNN Garden Walk is a biennial event. For those who have shown their gardens on the Walk in the past, this allows for a year of rest or for some gardeners, the time needed to rearrange, improve and add that extra flower bed they have always wanted.

I know that as I drive through the neighborhood, I am surprised at the splashes of color that are popping up all over the neighborhood. A wonderful display on Cushing Street, another on California Avenue and yet even more on Diamond Avenue. I have already talked with neighbors who are anxiously anticipating who will sign up for Garden Walk 2014, hoping to get an up-close peek at a garden they have been admiring and watching grow.

So whether you are a neighbor who has just noticed a neighbor’s garden that you think the Garden Walk Committee should have on its radar, or an old pro who has showcased your little piece of heaven on the Walk before, give us a call. Contact the NNN offices at 574-232-9182 and let us know if you would be interested in participating in the NNN Garden Walk 2014. It is never too early to start planning and planting for next year’s event.