

Gifford Park's Pride

Gifford Park Neighborhood: A Great Place to Live, Work, Learn, and Play www.giffordparkomaha.org

October 2016

A Publication of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association

IN neighborhoods, and in neighbors, we trust

By Adrian S. Petrescu

On September 30 - October 1 was the annual IN the Neighborhood Conference. IN stands for Iowa and Nebraska. Participants involved in civic activities in Omaha and Council Bluffs alike, along with the Mayor of Council Bluffs and several council members in both towns, gathered together to exchange ideas and solutions, to discuss and try to resolve pressing and medium and long term issues in the two cities. Sponsored by a wealth of community engaged businesses and organizations, among which the Peter Kiewit Foundation and First National Bank at the top of the list, and hosted by Metropolitan Community College at its South Campus, the conference was a real success. It was maybe even more so of a success for Gifford Park Neighborhood.

A diverse selection of interesting panels

Neighbors had the choice between several very interesting concurrent panels to attend. From energy affordability plans and homes winterization strategies to community organizing tools and techniques, from traffic safety to free health clinics in low-income neighborhoods, and from building partnerships for the common good to immigration issues some of our newer neighbors are facing and how these are being resolved, the choice of topics was quite broad and extremely interesting.

Leading from a vision of a future that is possible, the "guerilla way"

The GPNA was represented at the conference by

Next General Meeting Thursday, November 10th, 7:00PM

Todd Heistand NuStyle Development and Hospital Building Transition

CHI Health-Creighton University Medical Center Morrison Seminar Room

many of its members. Yet, that is not the whole story. Beyond mere participation alone, the GPNA was featured as a keynote presenter. Chris Foster, Martin Janousek, and Brent Lubbert shared with all the participants the very rich history and current goings and plans for the future in Gifford Park Neighborhood. While I was listening in I felt so very honored to live here and so very proud to just know these great passionate leaders.

Chris Foster and Martin Janousek both outlined the "guerilla" nature of doing all the things that have been done in Gifford Park over the years. By guerilla, Chris means really a "can do" attitude. A proactive, 'let's get an idea going as soon as someone has it' type of approach to strategic planning. While this may sound simply off-thecuff and may lead to thinking of going ahead with completely undeveloped (or half-baked) plans, it obviously is not. A "can do" attitude does not prevent at all the proper planning being in place, or that a medium- and long-term vision, along with perseverance, are guiding strategic development of ideas into steady growth projects once they are adopted.

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Editor's note: If you have news of interest to the Gifford Park Neighborhood, we encourage you to submit an article for the monthly newsletter. Editorials are subject to approval by the GPNA Executive Board. Please include your contact information. Articles may be submitted by email to gpnewseditor@gmail.com.

From the President...

The neighborhood market 'closed its doors' last Friday, concluding yet another great summer in our neighborhood. Aside from all the programs that were offered, and the events that took place, a lot is going on 'behind the scene', as you will read in this newsletter. It is now this time of the year when events are winding down, and when autumn covers our neighborhood, and Gifford Park in particular, with its warm colors. It is also this time of the year when we feel we have fewer opportunities to meet our neighbors.

Of course, we still have the traditional Haunted House on October 27th and our General meeting November 10th where we will have GPNA board elections. (Contact me if you would like to join our board.) Also, some neighbors came up with another project to implement before our Christmas banquet. Some hints about the event? It is new; it will be informal and indoors... and we hope to see you there! I won't tell you more now... Stay tuned! Happy Fall!

-Marie Hélène André

Playground/Park Clean-up

On behalf of the Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, a big THANK YOU to Operation Playground leader Maria Devlin and Maria's mom Patty Doyle for leading another Playground/ Park cleanup Saturday September 17, and providing a great healthy lunch for volunteers, and tremendous family support of Gifford Park! Thanks Joy Doll for helping with a GREAT show of support from all the volunteers from the Creighton Occupational Therapy Department - we appreciate so many of you coming out to help! We got a lot of work done, especially on the 33rd Street flower beds. Thanks to the City of Omaha Parks Department for dropping off a big load of mulch and hauling away the yard waste!



more clean-up photos on page 10

Adventure Playground Update

By Teal Gardner

What happens to a dream once it has been set loose in the world? I've been pondering this question since making the move to Boise, Idaho last month. Tempted by the change of scenery and challenge of new beginnings, I decided to accompany Charles (formerly of the Bike Shop) to Idaho, and to make a new home here. As I've been meeting people, volunteering, applying for jobs, and running in the hills surrounding the city, I've thought a lot about the Adventure Playground - my dream.

I know that it is a very, very special place - it is the home of ideas and action, all bound up by a devotion to supporting play in whatever form it takes. It provides a spatial structure where youth and adults can play-out, and that play is what gives the space its character. The individuals who's creative verve is enunciated there are the life of the playground- it resonates individually. It is a place where the bottomless well of human interaction is electrified through an expectation that the only goal is play. Sigh. It IS a beautiful dream, as well as reality.

To be sure, I certainly didn't bring about the Adventure Playground all by myself. I am forever grateful to the committed people of Omaha who believed in the idea of the Adventure Playground, and gave it early encouragement. I am even more grateful to those who invest their time and energy to be part of the playground in every sense, those who will continue to believe in it and who play there- youth and adults alike. And now, from a distance, I am especially excited to realize that my dream bounced. What I mean is, in setting the ball rolling, and working on the Adventure Playground for a few years, my dream has become such that others have taken it up. Now they are playing with it, changing it to be theirs, bouncing it. Something that bounces has an unpredictability to it- a trajectory that makes it fun and captivating and lively. I believe the playground will exist as long as people are willing to bounce. To play. And to support each other in doing so.

As I evaluate what I have here with me, now, as a reminder of what I have been, I remember what I have loved. The playground is at the center of that. I miss it, as I miss all of the people who make it what it is. I'm excited to know that this month there will be a pumpkin carving party and movie night for the community at the playground on Oct 22! Adventure Playground is located at 35th and Cass.

See page 8 for details. I hope you can all make it, and enjoy the playground and each other, and the opportunities to grow and bounce yourselves, offered by the very special spaces in Gifford Park.

P.S. The playground continues to be run by devoted volunteers, but of course it will always be helpful for more people to join up. THANK YOU to Monica Lehn, Jasmine Frierson, Paul Pellerito, Theresa Hospodka, Katherine Gillespie, Jenny Waltermath and Chris Foster for your energy all of this summer.



Bike Shop Update

By Adam Blowers

The temperature is dropping and the days are getting shorter, but that doesn't mean it is time to get off that bike. At the Bike Project we're always riding bikes and always excited to get people out riding regardless of the temperature. Fall is a great time to ride in Nebraska.

October is the last month of our Youth Earn-a-Bike programming before we take our year end hiatus. Classes will begin again next February. Youth Earn-a-Bike has been a huge success this year with 74 graduates so far. We expect to exceed 80 before classes end. Adult Earn-a-Bike has also expanded this year. We've been able to get several refugees new to the neighborhood on bikes and out riding. If you already have a bike and need to do some work on it, our open shop hours are a great opportunity to do so. We have all the tools and parts necessary to work on a bike and you can use them for free.

October 30th will be our Halloween Sunday Funday Ride. This will be a casual family friendly ride where everyone is encouraged to wear costumes. Last year this ride was one of our best Sunday Funday rides.

We are also gearing up for our 2nd annual Bike Build-a-Thon. This event is held from November 9th to December 10th. Teams, individuals, and other bike shops are invited to refurbish bicycles that we will donate to several other non profits before Christmas. The team and individuals who build the most bikes, measured in pounds, will be honored at an end of the event party. This a fun way to get involved and help out others in need during Christmas.

September saw some major changes at the Bike Project. Charles accepted a job at the Boise Bicycle Project and moved to Boise, Idaho. All reports are that he loves it there and he and Teal are having a blast exploring new places by bike. I'm excited to be the new Shop Manager and am looking forward to being more involved in the community. If we haven't met, feel free to swing by and introduce yourself to me. All of the Bike Project's great programs and events are supported by an amazing team of volunteers. If you would like to get involved as a volunteer, email adam@ communitybikeproject.org or complete our online volunteer application at communitybikeproject.org/ volunteer.



IN neighborhoods, and in neighbors, we trust

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There are one-hundred-and-one chickens

In truth, in his presentation about Big Muddy Urban Farm, Brent only said that there are 100 chickens in Gifford Park Neighborhood. The one-hundred-and-one is my own twist. First, since they counted to one hundred, who knows? Someone mentioned a rooster singing, even though that would be illegal, and most probably it was a joke. Maybe in the meantime there are 101 chickens. Second, maybe Omaha as a whole has one-thousand-and-one chickens—just as the stories of Scheherazade in 1001 Arabian Nights ... Those 1001 nights were in fact never ending. Who knows, maybe soon we'll have even more chickens. Maybe Gifford Park Neighborhood just started a trend.

Brent is so right. Nobody ever takes a walk to go visit an empty lot. Yet, let's face it: how many times did you too decide to just stroll across the neighborhood with the children to just go see how the chickens (living on the previously empty lot) are doing? Yes, please repeat after my dear bride: "walking is good for you." It really is. Hence, Gifford Park Neighborhood having chicken is actually supporting a healthy lifestyle, if not even weight loss, doesn't it?

Sharing with others what GPNA does

All the neighbors in Omaha and Council Bluffs learned about all the projects that Gifford Park Neighborhood has to offer, from the tennis and soccer programs to the neighborhood market, and from the community garden and its youth programs to the community bike shop project. An outline of what's next completed the presentation. Particular attention was given to the neighborhood's involvement with helping in the design and execution of the new school, to imagining and developing new programs surrounding Yates, an accent on preserving and enabling more green space, and work on the vision of a future youth sports park at Turner Park North, and all integrated in a larger big picture that incorporates the NuStyle spaces and the new OPS school projects.

Priorities we care for (where to go, how to go, what to do, whom to meet, preserve and enhance what matters)

Each Omaha District had the chance to work together with the respective councilperson on determining priorities that the neighbors have for the city. Neighbors from Omaha District 3, our district, participated in the visioning exercise with Councilman Chris Jerram in attendance. Among the core areas of interest that neighbors listed as of major importance to us all are: - Transportation Equity and Design issues. This includes walking, biking, busing and faster busing (the BRT-see last issue of the newsletter), ADA compliant street crossings being widespread, strategic placing of several neighborhood stops from the Dodge corridor when driving and turning North. Keeping our neighborhoods walkable and making them more so was seen as very important.

- Multicultural values. Everyone sees diversity and inclusion as core values in our district. We care for the youth and the elderly and for other cultures, and we seem to want to preserve and enhance the value that comes from the interactions across this multiplicity of sources of creativity.

- Preservation and maintenance of historic values. Maintaining property and niceness of the neighborhood, whether by owners or tenants, and infrastructure support from the city were high on everyone's agenda.

- Some concerns on crime were minor. In a way quite happily crime was mentioned only in passing and without much attention to the issue. This made everyone feel relieved that it has gotten resolved by comparison with earlier times. While we keep an eye on issues related to preventing crime or responding to it when it happens, we seem to be happily concerned with broader much more positive strategic issues.

Tibetan Monks Bless The Green Space: An Afternoon Of Peace And Harmony By Clarinda Karpov and Richard White

On Sunday, September 11, 2016, Gifford Park's cherished Green Space at 30th and Cass was blessed in a beautiful hour-long ceremony by Tibetan Monks of the Gaden Shartse Monastery in India. On that sunny afternoon, the Monks' maroon and gold robes were jewel-like against the bright green of the grass, and the trees, stirred by the breezes, seemed to participate in the ceremony. The deep chanting and the ringing of bells, in such beautiful surroundings, soon induced a feeling of harmony and tranquility in the 30 - 40 people who sat on the grass or on lawn chairs, some with young children or with dogs. This is the second time that Tibetan Monks have blessed the Green Space; the first time was back in 2010. The Monks blessed the Green Space and everyone present with prayers for peace, well-being, and protection. Moreover, the Monks' spokesperson and translator Geshe Lama Phuntsho explained that from now on everyone who visits the Green Space will also receive those blessings.

Before and after the ceremony, those in attendance had a chance to visit with each other. Some already knew and loved the Green Space, and for others it was their first time visiting. One Gifford Park resident was surprised to discover such an oasis in the middle of the neighborhood; being raised up on an embankment makes it an enchanted place. Many commented on the mature trees, including walnuts, maples, mulberries, hackberries, fir trees, and rare American Elms. Like many of those present, the Monks' Tour Director Lobsang Wangchuk (an American who had been a monk at Gaden Shartse for over 20 years) spoke of the Green Space as a "beautiful park," and said how important it was to preserve green spaces like this. Lobsang was impressed by how beautifully the Green Space is maintained (by the City of Omaha, which owns the strip along 30th Street; by Boys Town National Hospital, which owns the rest of the 3/4 acre green; and by neighbors who help keep it picked up and free of litter). Some, who were familiar to one another from attending the Monks' other events, were delighted to discover that they are also Gifford Park neighbors. After the blessing, neighbors visited with several GPNA board members who were present, about ways the neighborhood can support and promote the Green Space, as part of Gifford Park's long-term green initiative.

In a practice shared with many cultures around the world, we have hung colorful Tibetan prayer flags on some of the trees bordering the Green Space, inscribed with some of the same blessings bestowed by the Monks. In Tibetan culture, it is believed that when prayer flags are blown by the wind, the blessings they contain are carried throughout the Universe to bless all beings. This inspiring practice is seen throughout the Himalayas, and will be familiar to our Gifford Park neighbors from Bhutan, Nepal, India, and elsewhere.



For more than 20 years, Tibetan Monks from the Gaden Shartse Monastery in India have been coming to Omaha as part of the Sacred Arts of Tibet Tour founded by His Holiness The Dalai Lama, to spread compassion throughout the world, and to share Tibetan culture, while also raising funds to help support the Monastery and Tibetan refugees living in its vicinity. You can learn all about the tour, the Monastery, and its historic background, and read bios of each of the monks who performed the Green Space blessing, at http://www.sacredartsoftibettour.org

The Monks' tours to Omaha are sponsored by the Omaha Healing Arts Center (OM Center) and by the non-profit Compassion Omaha, Inc., which aims to inspire ways that we can bring active compassion into our daily lives. (Four board members of Compassion Omaha live and work in Gifford Park.) We are grateful to Chris Foster, who worked hard to help coordinate the Green Space Blessing.

Community Garden Update

By Chris Foster

Thanks to everyone who attended our fall potluck dinner Sunday September 18 at the community garden at 35th & Cass St. for our community gardeners, youth gardeners, Adventure Playgrounders, volunteers, neighbors and their families. We had children playing, chickens wandering, delicious food, fine weather in the 80's and great comradery. Besides our normal grilling of burgers and hot dogs by Mike Doll, our special guest Chef Wilson Calixte (chef at Le Voltaire French Restaurant) treated us to some entertaining food preparation and grilling, and offered great words of wisdom.



Thanks to Cynthia Shuck for donating \$ and planting pollinator plants in the community garden through partnering with the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and UNL Department of Entomology. These organizations are dedicated to helping gardeners create habitat for pollinators where we live, work and play through the Plants for Pollinators! Program.

As the garden season winds down we have scheduled a **fall garden cleanup Saturday October 22 starting at 10:00am**. Everyone is invited to help as we cleanup both family and youth plots. Also that day we will have pumpkin carving and painting starting at 2:00pm, and a "movie night" at the Adventure Playground around dusk. (Event details on page 8). Contact Chris Foster (402-290-8187, foster3413@cox.net) for information.

Gifford Park wins Tour De Garden Salsa Competition

By Alex Goswami

In September, community members organized Tour de Garden, an event started by former board member Ricky Green and continued with the help of Sarah Johnson of the Omaha Bicycle Company and many others. Tour de Garden is a bicycle tour of the community gardens and lovely residential gardens of Omaha that culminates in a barbeque and salsa competition. Each community garden makes a salsa entry, and this year the Switayswamish household of Asit Goswami, Veronica Switzer, Grant Taylor, Lowell Switzer, Erin English, and Gifford Park Neighborhood Association Treasurer Alex Goswami painstakingly prepared the winning salsa. The trophy was a giant hot pepper crafted out of bicycle chains by the folks at the Omaha Bicycle Company. It is meant to be a travelling trophy, but next year, we will try to keep it in Gifford Park!

<u>The standards:</u> 50% of all ingredients must come from the community garden. Gifford Park's winning salsa exceeded these standards as all ingredients except salt, cumin, and limes were sourced from the Community Garden and the Gifford Park Neighborhood Market

The ingredients: tomato, banana pepper, jalepeno, pablano, cayenne, onion, garlic, cilantro, cumin, lime, salt. The method: Fire roast all ingredients except dry spices and limes. Let the vegetables sweat and then peel skins. No need to remove the seeds. Puree half of the tomatoes, all of the onion, and all of the garlic with the cumin, cayenne, and salt. Chop the remaining tomatoes and half of the cilantro. Set the other half of the cilantro aside. Mix all blended and diced ingredients, add lime juice to taste, and refrigerate overnight to let the flavors mingle. Before serving, add the remaining freshly chopped cilantro to the salsa. Serve and enjoy!





Community Garden & Adventure Playground Fall Activities

Saturday, October 22nd

- 10 AM community garden/youth garden plots cleanup
- 2 PM Adventure Playground, pumpkin carving & painting
- 5 PM Scavanger Hunt, Potluck and movie outdoors when it gets dark

Everyone welcome to join in the activities



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Councilman Chris Jerram was happy to take in the concerns and priorities that the neighborhoods have and vouched to do his best to support and promote those in the work of the City Council. He did encourage all of us to continue to stay involved and to engage the Mayor in townhall meetings and on a regular basis through the hotline and other means.

"I am here just to give Chris and Martin [and Eliza] more work"

We liked the Save Yates campaign so much that we thought we'll keep it on going. Or so goes the rumor. Yet, that is in fact not true at all. The Save Yates campaign was just a small part of a much larger and much longer consistent effort. One that starts long time ago and one that will probably go on for a long time coming.

Gifford Park proposed to invite the participants at the IN the neighborhoods conference to a November indoor market and cities-wide gathering that Gifford Park would host at the Yates Community Center. The concept of an indoor market has been brewing in the Board meetings for a while and what better thing to do than to add the two together. There simply seemed to be consensus among participants at the IN Conference that we should meet more often than just once a year, and that we would all only benefit from exchanging ideas and solutions more often, and maybe from following up on how implementation that we may have learned from one another was working, or with guestions, inquiries, or further brainstorming about other details or "grandiose" plans. After all, there are three great reasons. First, there is power in numbers. If neighborhoods are to influence the cities, we better build up our strength through better more continuous cooperation on issues of mutual concern for all of us. Second, we have a deadline to showcase Omaha (and Council Bluffs by extension) and its great ideas and solutions to other cities in 36 other states at the

Neighborhood USA Conference that Omaha is hosting in May 2017. Thus, we have a lot to talk about in helping the city and the national organization with planning. Third, we figured one has to see first hand Yates, and maybe learn more about it. There are not, after all, many spots in Nebraska, where a Nobel Prize winner went to school, are there?

In neighbors and neighborhoods we trust

There was an opportunity to make a pitch for a small grant benefiting the community. We were so much inspired by the others pitching their very nice projects that we decided to do something on this front as well. We will be trying something that will show everyone how welcoming Gifford Park and Omaha are to diversity. The conference liked the idea so we will pursue it. We'll keep everyone posted as implementation progresses, but for now we'll keep the details a surprise for a little while.

Tentatively on November 19, between noon and 4 pm we will hold an indoors market at Yates Community Center. We invited all the neighbors from other Omaha and Council Bluffs neighborhoods. We are working on getting some information sessions and mingling opportunities organized. We had this idea about using the Yates Center in this way for a long time so the conference only provided an opportunity to see the bigger picture. We enjoyed seeing that neighbors from all across town want to meet more often than only once a year, so we figured the GPNA can host the first event inside this initiative. We just want to keep momentum of great best practices going, maybe for adoption by others, as well as our own adoption of best practices from other neighborhoods and neighbors.

We are looking forward on welcoming neighbors from across Omaha and Council Bluffs in November at Yates. Let's show everyone a true Gifford Park Neighborhood hospitality.

Clean-up at Gifford Park



Neighborhood Markets of the 2016 Season's End







Big Muddy Urban Farm and Yates ESL presents

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Friday, October 28th • 6-8 PM

Friday, October 28th • 6-8 PM

POT LUCK

DANCING
POT LUCK

POT LUCK
POT LUCK

POT LUCK
POT LUCK

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BIG MUDDY URBAN Family friendly, all-ages. Bring your dancing shoes and expect good conversation. Donations big or small are kindly encouraged to support the neighborhood based, community building work of BMUF. Questions? contact info@bigmuddyurbanfarm.org or call Brent at (402)213-9646.

Season Comes to a Close as Excitement Builds for Next By Brent Lubbert

The farm plots scattered throughout Gifford Park are transitioning in response to the change in season. In the beginning of October, we cultivated the plots and planted a cover crop mixture of annual rye grass and hairy vetch. By planting this, we are saving ourselves a very weedy spring. Amongst a host of other benefits, it also helps us put back nutrients and organic matter for next season's crop. Thankfully our area has had an amiable amount of rain this season and continues to help many seeds sprout about. We hope your garden has given you a pleasant plenty and that you take some time to give back by preparing it for the winter season (Manure, Compost, Green Cover, etc.)

October is also exciting for the farm because we are choosing residents as part of the Aspiring Farmer Residency program. The Aspiring Farmer Residency is a year-long program supporting five resident farmers with a place to live near 33rd and Burt Street. While they are in Gifford Park they learn how to develop a sustainable market farm business plan and grow crops on seven urban lots. Applications opened at our Breaking New Ground ceremony on July 21st and is coming to a close on October 14th. At the time of publishing, we have recieved 14 applications with some coming from as far as Vermont, Colorado and Kansas.

To celebrate the success of the season, Big Muddy and Yates ESL invite you to attend Harvest Festival on Friday, October 28th. Please see flyer above for more details about the event. Musicians Dan McCarthy, Anna Selmecki and Adam Sherrerd were practicing at the Farmhouse recently and it sounded outstanding! At this event, founding Big Muddy farmer Tyler Magnuson will be calling, or describing dance steps, allowing anyone and everyone to participate in the dancing fun. There is so much to celebrate: the diversity of the neighborhood, the seasons change and the start of the Aspiring Farmer Residency program. Please join us in celebrating! Donations at this event are graciously accepted in support of our growing education and community building efforts.



Gifford Park Neighborhood Association PO Box 31462 Omaha, NE 68131

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Return completed form along with check or money order to: Gifford Park Neighborhood Association, PO Box 31462, Omaha, NE 68131.