

# MorningSide

"A COMMUNITY ON THE RISE!"



15820 East Warren Avenue, Detroit, MI 48224 Tel. 881-4704

## NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR NEIGHBORHOOD SUPPORT

MorningSide has an exciting opportunity on the horizon for 2008. A partnership that includes the MorningSide Neighborhood Organization, U-SNAP-BAC and Habitat for Humanity Detroit is working with Thrivent Builds Neighborhoods (TBN) to apply for up to \$1 million in grants and loans to help implement a neighborhood improvement plan over the next three-five years.

TBN is a program of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a national faith-based organization that works with families and communities to focus on financial security, wellness and caring for others. Earlier this year, a preliminary application submitted by Habitat

Detroit and U-SNAP-BAC was named a finalist, along with neighborhoods in four other cities, for TBN funding to be announced later this year.

Many MorningSide residents participated in meetings held in April and May that provided essential input for a more detailed plan which will be completed by late August.

One idea that got strong support was the establishment of a community center that would host learning activities and services for both children and adults. A planning consultant is working over the summer to complete the plan and obtain commitments for the necessary matching funds. Several

MorningSide residents are working with the consultants on a final plan.

An important opportunity to show community support for this partnership is coming up July 19. Also, August 4 is the kickoff date for Habitat for Humanity's 2007 Blitz Build week. For details, or more information about the TBN process, call Shawta Polk at U-SNAP-BAC, 313-640-1100.

Saturday, September 22 will be "Thrivent Night" at the Detroit Tigers game at Comerica Park. A very limited number of free tickets will be available to MorningSide residents, as well as discount tickets for two special seating areas. To get ticket information, please visit [www.steputotheplate.us](http://www.steputotheplate.us).

## Taking back your block

### One resident's story of revitalization

A few weeks ago, I noticed that the house on one corner of my block on Three Mile Drive, which had been vacant for over a year, had its front door partially removed. Upon closer inspection with two neighbors, we realized that the house was being systematically stripped of crown molding, closet doors and just about anything else in that had any resale value. This was clearly a process that had gone on for quite a while. I felt sad and very angry at this violation of the integrity and safety of our block, and resolved to do something.



(Susan Newell)

My family has lived in Morningside since 1984, I hadn't been active with the neighborhood association for years. But it became clear that I no longer have the luxury of ignoring

After many frustrating phone calls it became clear the owner of the house (Countrywide Mortgage) didn't care, nor did the police or the city's Department of Buildings and Safety Engineering.

Continued on page 4

- Eric Dueweke

**MorningSide neighbors meet the second Tuesday of each month. See details on page 3.**

## Resident spurs drive to save her block

Jackie Burgess, a new member of the Morningside Board, has lived on Beaconsfield for about 15 years.

When she first moved in, she says, all the houses on the block were occupied, and there were quite a few children on the block. Most of the neighbors kept their property up. "That's part of what attracted me to the neighborhood," she says.

Over the past four or five years, though, she began to notice more houses becoming vacant. More recently, she started seeing people stripping houses. "I'd call the police to report it, but didn't get any response," she said. "Sometimes they'd say it wasn't really a priority."

Grass and weeds grew up in front of the 12 vacant houses on her block. About a month ago, Jackie realized that she was really tired of looking at all those houses being neglected.

"I'd been sitting around waiting for a solution, then I asked myself, Why not start with myself, and take care of what's right around me?" She realized that even if she kept her property in good shape, all those unkempt houses dragged down her property value.

So she hired a young man from the neighborhood to cut the grass in front of some of the vacant houses. "At first people were asking me why I was taking care of someone else's property, but next thing I know, other people started taking care of some of the vacant property around them too."

"My block looks 100% better now. When family members come to visit me, they talk about how much better the block looks."

Jackie knows they still have a long way to go, and she's thinking seriously about starting a block club. "Most of the people on my block are

homeowners who've been here longer than I have, and they have reason to want to keep things in good shape."

Although Jackie gets discouraged at times about the problems in the neighborhood, she also feels hopeful about recent efforts and says she has no plans to move. "Why should I have to move? Why shouldn't we have nice things in our community? Why shouldn't we make this a desirable place for people to live?"

## Clarke battles trash fee

State Senator Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit), in floor statements June 28, announced his strong opposition to the proposed incorporation of Detroit's Trash Fee into the property taxes residents already pay. The addition of \$300 (\$150 for those 65 and over) to the already high taxes in Detroit could put many residents in danger of going into tax foreclosure.

Continued on page 4

## Dealing with blight where you live

The recent dramatic rise in mortgage foreclosures has had a big impact on cities everywhere, especially Detroit. Drive down just about any street in Morningside and you'll see at least one vacant house on every block. Many of these houses are not being maintained and have become a blight on our community.

Sometimes even occupied homes appear to be vacant because the residents don't cut the grass, allow debris to pile up on their property or leave dumpsters sitting in front of their houses for days.

What should you do if conditions like these exist on your block? Since numbers to city departments often

change, and it's sometimes difficult to determine who is responsible for what problem, the best place to start is by calling 311, the city's general non-emergency help line. Be sure you have the address of the property in question. They are supposed to send an inspector from the Department of Environmental Affairs to look at the property and have the problem dealt with by issuing a citation against the owner.

Property owners can receive fines for such things as having grass taller than 12 inches, leaving debris on the street, or leaving dumpsters out for more than 24 hours after garbage pickup.

If you don't get a response to the complaint in a timely fashion, you can call or visit the Neighborhood City Hall for the Northeastern District, located in the Butzel Center at 7737 E. Kercheval. Marloshawn Franklin is the manager of the Neighborhood City Hall. His job includes serving as a link between the neighborhoods and city departments. You can reach him Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at 313-628-2170.

The Morningside Board would also like to hear about your experiences -- both positive and negative - in dealing with the city on these problems. One of the functions of a neighborhood association like the Morningside



The MorningSide Neighborhood Organization recently welcomed a new board president and board members. Pictured in front row (l-r) Marcelus Brice, president, Yvonne Ray, Lorraine Black and Janet Boyington. Members in the back row (l-r) include Paul Phillips, Rodd Monts, Susan Newell, Eric Dueweke, Vernita Glenn and Jacqueline Burgess.

## Important Community Contact Information



### General Meeting Schedule

*MorningSide residents meet the second Tuesday of the month, 7 p.m., at Christ United Methodist Church (E. Warren at Buckingham).*

The Executive Board meets the third Thursday of the month, 7 p.m., at the MorningSide office, 15820 E. Warren Ave., 313.881.4704.

### Mayor's Office

Honorable Kwame M. Kilpatrick, Mayor  
 2 Woodward Avenue  
 1126 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center  
 Detroit, MI 48226  
 Phone: 313.224.3400

### Neighborhood City Hall

Eastern District  
 7737 Kercheval, 48214  
 Office: 313-628-2170  
 Fax: 313-579-7135

### Detroit City Council

1340 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center  
 2 Woodward Avenue  
 Detroit, MI 48226  
 313.224.4505

## Taking back your block

*Continued from page 1*

what is happening to my block because it is in danger of crumbling around me.

I sent a letter to all the neighbors on our block calling for a meeting to reactivate the block club that had died quite a few years ago and deal with the immediate problem. I was worried that perhaps no one would show up, but to my surprise and delight, most of the households on our block were represented. People were just as concerned as my husband and I were.

One thing we accomplished fairly quickly was to get the open abandoned house boarded up, with about \$40 worth of plywood and a few hours of labor. We also picked up the trash on the property and mowed the lawn. It was amazing to see what a big difference it made just to have the area around the house looking neat and clean again.

I've since noticed a new level of pride in our block. Neighbors have continued to mow lawns in front of the vacant houses and even planted new grass in front of a couple. We also know each other better now than we have in a very long time.

Recently a prospective buyer came to look at one of the other vacant houses, and I introduced myself to her and the realtor. She seemed impressed about our block club and commented on how nice the block looked.

Does that mean that our problems are solved? Of course not. Ulti-

mately we can't solve the big problems we're facing without holding the various city departments accountable for doing their jobs. But we're in a much better position to demand accountability from the city when we approach them as an organized force.

If a few residents on each block of Morningside would "adopt" their vacant houses and keep them presentable, it would be an important first step in turning our community back into the lovely neighborhood it can still be.

*-- Susan Newell*



Volunteers cut plywood to board up a vacant home.

## Dealing with blight where you live

*Continued from page 1*

identify helpful resources as well as roadblocks in the city administration and to be a collective voice. In other words, we can be a larger "squeaky wheel" than an individual resident, but only if we get feedback from you! Call Morningside anytime to leave a message at 313.881.4704 and a Morningside Board member will get back to you.

*- Susan Newell*

## Trash fee

*Continued from page 2*

The current fee is levied by the city of Detroit separate of any other taxes. Legislation proposed in the Senate would amend the property tax act to treat those fees as taxes. Therefore, people's property taxes could go up almost \$300 per year.

## Beautification Volunteers Needed

After a summer spent laboring in their yards, many residents will be recognized for the effort they made to make their homes more beautiful, and enhance the look of the neighborhood overall.

It is time once again for the MorningSide Beautification Awards. These annual awards celebrate residents who show pride in their homes by planting flowers, trees, shrubs, painting and otherwise making their properties more appealing. A banquet in their honor will be held in August. Judging will take place in the weeks leading up to the event.

In the meantime, volunteer judges are being sought. Volunteer judges are recognized for taking the time to drive through the neighborhood and critique various homes. Each volunteer agrees to judge homes on one street, selecting one home on each block. It only takes a few hours, and means so much to the community. Consider signing up today!

Last year, more than 90 MorningSide area residents gathered to enjoy fellowship and a terrific meal at St. Maron's Church banquet hall. The banquet was supported by U-SNAP-BAC, which has been developing new housing on Alter Road and east of the thoroughfare.

Local artist and MorningSide resident Paul Phillips designs the award certificates.

**To volunteer, call the MorningSide office at 313.881.4704.**