



MORNINGSIDER

The Official Newsletter of MorningSide



Violation tags will appear on blighted properties in response to the Nuisance Abatement Program by the DLBA. Image courtesy of Eric Dueweke

A Winter NAP in MorningSide

Eric Dueweke | Contributing Writer

Detroit — Residents of Courville, Three Mile Dr. and Bedford St. might have noticed several vacant houses that were tagged with large white violation notices back in November. The Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA) recently extended its Nuisance Abatement Program (NAP) to these three streets in MorningSide. Since 2014, the NAP has taken effective strides toward its goal of combating blight in several Detroit neighborhoods.

A total of 42 properties were posterred by NAP in this round:

- 24 on Courville
- 7 on Three Mile
- 11 on Bedford

Story continued on page 4...

OTHER STORIES INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- New District 4 Manager - 2
- DPD New Program - 3
- BD Boot Camp 2021 - 6
- The Hill We Climb - 7
- Give A Smile, Get A Smile - 9
- Upcoming Events - 10
- Morningside's Finest - 11
- MECCA Community Land Trust - 12





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MorningSide Welcomes New District Manager

Adrian L. Green | The Morningsider



District 4 Manager, Rodney "Rod" Liggons. Image courtesy of Rod Liggons.

The MorningSide Community Organization is pleased to welcome to the neighborhood New District 4 Manager Mr. Rodney "Rod" Liggons. Mr. Liggons succeeds Ms. Letty Azar who served District 4 with humility, honor, and professionalism. We are grateful for her service and wish her the best in her future endeavors. "Rod" was born and raised in the city of Detroit and graduated from Redford High School. Rod earned a degree in New Media/Communications from Eastern Michigan University and has spent nearly 20 years working in both radio/television newsrooms in Metro Detroit and across Michigan. Rod began his career in city government working in the office of Detroit City Councilman James Tate.

After spending more than five years as Community Liaison/Communications Officer in Councilman Tate's office, Rod was recruited to become Community Relations Manager for the Detroit Land Bank Authority (DLBA). With DLBA, he worked his way up to Deputy Director and then Director of Community Affairs, where he oversaw the community outreach, marketing, promotions, and open houses. Rod supervised nearly 60 employees and provided oversight for an annual budget of nearly \$3 million.

In November 2020, Rod was asked to be a part of Mayor Mike Duggan's administration as manager of District 4. Rod says his mission will be to communicate directly with the residents of District 4 and address our issues and concerns. Rod says that he wants to do everything he can to positively impact the delivery of city services in MorningSide and District 4.

Rod continues to make his home in Detroit and is a member of the New Mount Vernon Missionary Baptist Church. The MorningSide Community Organization is looking forward to working closely with Rod and wishes him the best as he embarks upon this new journey.

Adrian L. Green, MCO Treasurer, a community activist and proud graduate of HBCU Florida A&M University.

DPD Rolls Out New Program to Help the Mentally Ill

Susan Newell | The Morningsider

It was another stark reminder that our mental health system is broken, and that the police have been trying to pick up the pieces.

Last summer, Darrien Walker was having a psychotic episode, dressed as a ninja warrior and brandishing swords near Grand River and Meyers. Police were called, and he was eventually shot and killed after throwing a dagger at an officer, leaving a large gash just below his right eye. It was later reported that Mr. Walker was no stranger to the Detroit Police Department, having threatened a neighbor and barricaded himself in a house with weapons just a few weeks before. He had been taken to the Crisis Center at Detroit Receiving Hospital but released less than 24 hours later, according to a report in the Detroit Free Press.

Tragic encounters between the police and mentally ill have been happening around the country. People with a mental health diagnosis are 16 times more likely to be shot by the police than those who are not mentally ill. Also, an estimated 25% of those who die in an encounter with the police have a mental health diagnosis. Detroit's 911 Call Center receives more than 20 mental health-related calls a day, on average.



Protesters marching to the NYPD's 71st Precinct in Brooklyn, NY in response to the killing of Saheed Vassell. Image courtesy of Demetrius Freeman for The New York Times

Police departments around the country have been taking notice and taking action. The Detroit Police Department, under the auspices of the new Office of Internal/External Relations, is piloting a program which it hopes will lessen the load on the police and prevent encounters between the police and the mentally ill from ending in death or serious injury.

According to Capt. Tonya Leonard-Gilbert, who is part of the team overseeing the program, it has been in the works for a couple of years. The program has been rolled out in the downtown area and will soon expand into Northeast Detroit, the North End, the far Westside, and the far Northside. The "mental health co-response team" will be led by the DPD's Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) in partnership with the Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network (DWIHN). Because the problems of mental illness and homelessness often overlap – 30% of our homeless population has a mental health diagnosis - the city's Housing and Revitalization Department and the Homeless Outreach Team are also involved.

Residents will still call the 911 system, but behavioral health specialists will be embedded in the call center to recognize the warning signs of possible mental health issues. If the situation doesn't involve an obvious violent encounter or crime in progress, a certified behavioral health clinician will be dispatched to the location, along with two police officers who have received CIT training.

Nearly 60 DPD officers have received the 40-hour training, as of this month, and will be given a yearly refresher course in handling different mental health situations. The longer term goal is to train at least 20% of the patrol officers on the force. Not all people with a mental health diagnosis can be treated in the same way. An autistic person, for example, who has difficulty understanding and following commands but is unlikely to be aggressive, may need to be approached differently than a paranoid schizophrenic suffering from a psychotic outburst. And in some cases, the main problem that needs to be addressed is homelessness.

The success of the program, says Capt. Leonard-Gilbert, will be determined by whether they are able to identify the appropriate services for the individual, help them access those services, reduce hospitalizations and incarcerations, and see a reduction in crisis calls, especially repeat calls.

Continued on page 5...

Continued... A Winter NAP in MorningSide

The NAP complaint requires owners to renovate their property or risk having the house seized. Owners have three days to contact the DLBA to enter into a consent agreement to fix up their property. As of early February:

- 6 property owners have entered into agreements
- 10 properties in the negotiation process
- Land Bank tracking down legal owners for 26 properties

DLBA attorney Giuseppe Palazzolo expects to file a nuisance lawsuit in late March or April against owners who do not respond or agree to repair blighted conditions.

Once a lawsuit is filed, owners have 28 days to respond.

- Failure to respond results in DLBA seeking a Default Judgement
- Land Bank ultimately takes title to the property
- Process may take several months
- Owner may come forward and enter an agreement at any time in process

Consent agreements are the preferred method of resolution in most cases, per attorney Palazzolo. The DLBA website states that over 1600 agreements have been negotiated with NAP owners over the past five years. Some 90 of these were in the “East English Village” area, which includes Audubon and East Outer Drive.

Local property owner Travis Biziorek signed a consent agreement to fix up a house he’s already rehabbing on Courville. Biziorek, who renovated two other MorningSide houses in 2020, believes NAP is a good idea, and “would be happy” to purchase a couple of nearby properties from owners unable to comply with the NAP requirements.

While some may believe that most vacant houses are already owned by the Land Bank, the MorningSide Vacant Property Task Force found that of the 460+ vacant houses identified in October 2020, fewer than 80 might be DLBA-owned.

The Nuisance Abatement Program provides a promising method for convincing private owners to return their properties to productive use. When asked whether NAP might be extended to other streets in MorningSide, Mr. Palazzolo replied “maybe in future years.”

Requests to add any additional vacant and blighted houses on Courville/Three Mile/Bedford to the current NAP list can be emailed to napdlba@detroitlandbank.org or routed through District 4 Manager Rod Liggons.

Eric Dueweke, Lecturer in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Michigan’s Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning.



NAP will tackle such properties as this one at 3984 Courville Street. Image courtesy of Eric Dueweke

Continued...DPD Rolls Out New Program to Help the Mentally Ill

Coincidentally, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department is also starting out a new program to address mental illness, but this one uses a very different model - one that is the first of its kind in the country. Rather than giving police officers training in mental health, Oakland County will recruit mental health professionals and give them police training, in partnership with the DPD and Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network. Although the demographics of Oakland County look very different from Detroit's, it will be interesting to follow the progress of the Oakland County program in a city like Pontiac, which is very similar to Detroit in its racial and economic makeup. For more information about the Oakland County program, follow this link:

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/oakland/2021/01/29/oakland-county-sherriffs-office-trains-clinicians-deputies/4055946001/>

The best trained police officers and mental health professionals, however, cannot make up for the larger failures of our state and nation's mental health system. Gov. John Engler began dismantling that system in Michigan in the 1990's, closing down facilities like Lafayette Clinic while promising resources for a community-based system that never materialized. For decades this problem has been hiding in plain sight, and has only gotten widespread public attention as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement.

All those with a stake in rebuilding a ruined mental health system – the mentally ill and their families, mental health professionals, city governments, police departments, and the unions that represent police officers – will need to lobby for more funding for mental health services, so that the mentally ill will have somewhere to receive adequate treatment after the police encounter. If we don't, we will be seeing more Darrien Walkers

Susan Newell, Associate Editor of The Morningsider, a retired nurse, and her photographer husband Jim West have lived in MorningSide since 1984.



The Oakland County Sheriff's office, along with Clinical Psychologist, Dr. LaMaurice Gardner is working to implement a new program for health professionals to undergo police training as reserve deputies who respond to emotional distress calls. Image courtesy of Kimberly P. Mitchell, Detroit Free Press



Demonstrators gather during a rally in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Park in Rochester, N.Y., Friday, Sept. 4 to protest the death of Daniel Prude. Image courtesy of Adrian Kraus/AP.

Brilliant Detroit Boot Camp Translation 2021

Rakisha Odom | Contributing Writer

The Morningside HealthLink Action Council was convened to lead community efforts to address childhood obesity in our neighborhood. Our first project is developing and running a campaign in our neighborhood that will help our community take action against obesity. We are partnering with Wayne State University on this project and will be using a method called Boot Camp Translation to help us with our campaign.

What is Boot Camp Translation?

- A process where community members put medical information and guidelines into their own words and then share this information with their neighbors in a health campaign.
- This method was actually developed by community members in Colorado!
- Campaigns using this method have made a big difference in improving community health in areas like getting screened for colon cancer, seeking treatment for depression, and increasing communication between families and doctors about asthma in kids.

What will I be asked to do?

- Attend meetings by Zoom
- Learn about childhood obesity and current guidelines to treat it (it's okay if you don't know much right now!)
- Determine what the Morningside community needs to know and what we want people to do about childhood obesity in our neighborhood
- Create a health campaign and action plan to get these messages out to our neighbors so they can take action and improve the health of our kids and our community

When and how long are the meetings?

- The group determines all meeting days/times
- The exact number of meetings depends on how much time we need to develop the health campaign
- Some meetings will be longer (1.5-2 hours) and others will be shorter (30-45 minutes)

What are the meetings going to be like?

- They will be co-led by staff from Brilliant Detroit and Wayne State University
- Staff will lead activities to help the group develop messages, design products or resources that include those messages, and figure out how to get campaign materials to the neighborhood
- Staff are there to help guide community members-community members will do most of the talking!

How much time is involved?

- About 15 hours between now and the end of June

For more information on the Boot Camp Translation, visit the MorningSide Brilliant Detroit Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/BD-Morningside-102755804914207/>

Rakisha Odom, Community Outreach Manager for Brilliant Detroit, advocate for the youth in the city of Detroit.

Youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem



Youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman reads "The Hill We Climb" at the Biden-Harris inauguration. (Patrick Semansky / Getty Images)

Amanda Gorman, the nation's first-ever youth poet laureate, read the following poem, *The Hill We Climb*, during the inauguration of President Joe Biden on January 20:

*When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry,
a sea we must wade
We've braved the belly of the beast
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace
And the norms and notions
of what just is
Isn't always just-ice
And yet the dawn is ours
before we knew it
Somehow we do it
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken
but simply unfinished
We the successors of a country and a time
Where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president
only to find herself reciting for one
And yes we are far from polished
far from pristine
but that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect
We are striving to forge a union with purpose
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and
conditions of man
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us
but what stands before us
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside
We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms
to one another
We seek harm to none and harmony for all
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried
That we'll forever be tied together, victorious
Not because we will never again know defeat*

Continues on page 8...

Continued...Youth poet laureate Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem

but because we will never again sow division
 Scripture tells us to envision
 that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
 And no one shall make them afraid
 If we're to live up to our own time
 Then victory won't lie in the blade
 But in all the bridges we've made
 That is the promise to glade
 The hill we climb
 If only we dare
 It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
 it's the past we step into
 and how we repair it
 We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
 rather than share it
 Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy
 And this effort very nearly succeeded
 But while democracy can be periodically delayed
 it can never be permanently defeated
 In this truth
 in this faith we trust
 For while we have our eyes on the future
 history has its eyes on us
 This is the era of just redemption
 We feared at its inception
 We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
 of such a terrifying hour
 but within it we found the power
 to author a new chapter
 To offer hope and laughter to ourselves
 So while once we asked,
 how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
 Now we assert
 How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
 We will not march back to what was
 but move to what shall be
 A country that is bruised but whole,
 benevolent but bold,
 fierce and free
 We will not be turned around
 or interrupted by intimidation
 because we know our inaction and inertia
 will be the inheritance of the next generation
Our blunders become their burdens
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy
and change our children's birthright
So let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with
Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one
We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west,
we will rise from the windswept northeast
where our forefathers first realized revolution
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states,
we will rise from the sunbaked south
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
and every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful
When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid
The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
If only we're brave enough to be it



Amanda Gorman. Image courtesy of REUTERS/Patrick Semansky

Give A Smile, Get A Smile

The purpose of *Give A Smile, Get A Smile*, is to brighten your day some as we currently navigate through these trying times we all are experiencing.

Whether it's a motivational quote, a funny video clip, or even a few words of encouragement, Give A Smile, Get A Smile will do just that!

This month's *Give A Smile, Get A Smile* comes from The Morningsider's own, Susan Newell.

February, the shortest month of the year, usually feels like the longest. But not everyone takes winter seriously!

Check this out:

<https://youtu.be/rA-OMKyNo9c>

Continue with your submissions everyone. Who knows, yours could very well be featured in next month's issue of The Morningsider!



Polar bear playing in the snow. Image courtesy of Steven Koch

TALK TO US!

Letter to the Editor

"Great job people. I'm blown away with this publication. Makes me proud to still be here. I've been here since 2000."

- San Williams

Awesome! Thanks for sharing!

- Ryan Lally

"I love this."

- Cynthia Turner

Send your comments to morningsidecommunity2@gmail.com. Letters, edited as necessary for space and clarity, will be published each month.

Upcoming Events

MorningSide General Community Meeting

Second Tuesday of every month via Zoom. Our next meeting will be held **February 9th at 6:30 p.m.** To dial in with your phone, use the following info: Dial number: (301) 715-8592 / Meeting ID: 876 5627 5944 / Password: 824390. To access the meeting via computer, please visit either morningsidedetroit.org or the Morningside Facebook page the day of the meeting.

East Warren/Cadieux Neighborhood Framework Plan Virtual Office Hours

This will restart in February or March of 2021. To get updates, check here: <https://www.ewcplan.com/>

5th Precinct Command/Community Update

The Zoom link for the 5th Precinct meeting is scheduled twice a month. For anyone who is interested in attending, please email MCO at morningsidecommunity2@gmail.com as we will provide you with the access link once we receive it.

2021 Detroit Police Department Virtual Community CompStat Meetings

The Detroit Police Department Virtual Community CompStat Meetings will be held monthly on the **4th Wednesday (February 24th)**, beginning at 4 p.m. The meetings are open to the public. Use the following link to join the Community CompStat meeting: <https://cityofdetroit.zoom.us/j/82793057842>

Detroit Board of Police Commissioners Each Thursday at 3 p.m.

By computer: Use the following link and follow prompts: <https://cityofdetroit.zoom.us/j/397380647?pwd=S1kzVzU4RURFb2NBRGJlb1kwWVNjdz09>

By phone: Call one of the these numbers: 1 (929) 436-2866, 1 (312) 626-6799

1 (346) 248-7799, 1 (301) 715-8592

Meeting ID: 397380647 and press ##

The virtual meeting will use a form for public comments:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/d26fa38cc5e94a018836d065000714ce>

MECCA Development Corporation is partnering with Dolly Parton's

Imagination Library to deliver books every month to children under the age of 5. To sign up your child, go to: <https://www.meccadc.org/imagination-library>

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy

Winter programming for all ages. Valade Park (next door to The Aretha Franklin Amphitheater/Chene Park) will host carriage rides and Valentine's day fun the weekend of February 12-14. For details: <https://detroitriverfront.org/winteratvalade>

Brilliant Detroit Presents: MorningSide Babyshower

Open only to MorningSide Community residents and families in 48224. Attendee must be pregnant or have a child under 12 months. Each attendee will receive: Babyshower gifts, prizes, and a new Pack & Play from the Safe Sleep Program **FOR CHILDREN UNDER 1 ONLY.**

Gleaner's Food Distribution

This is held on the **2nd and 4th Monday** of the month at **11 a.m.** until the food is gone. This month's distributions are on **February 8th and February 22nd** in the rear parking lot of **The Craft Cafe, 15641 E. Warren Ave.**

MorningSide's Finest

Donyelle Pressley

Donyelle Pressley strongly believes in the mantra of “Love your neighbor, as you would love yourself.” It is a principle that has guided Pressley throughout her journey of living on Lakepointe street since June 2009. It’s all about uplifting those around you and being there for your neighbor in a time of need, says Pressley.

Donyelle grew up in the neighborhood as she’s a proud DPS alum (Finney H.S., Class of 1985), but at the time it was through the recruitment of Family Services Director, Traci Odom of Habitat for Humanity to participate in the organization’s home ownership program that her dream of becoming a homeowner would come to fruition. “It was always my dream to live in a new house by the lake. We didn’t get the actual lake part of my dream, but to live on a street named Lakepointe, I guess that makes up for that portion of my dream,” says Pressley.

“What I love most about living here is the family-like atmosphere among my neighbors, we all look out for one another,” she says. Last September, Donyelle noticed that she had not seen her neighbor, Frank Holmes who lives directly across the street in a few days. “I made a call to the police to do a welfare check because I hadn’t seen him conduct his daily routine in quite some time. Unfortunately, by the time the police arrived, Mr. Holmes had passed away,” says Pressley. Mr. Holmes was a certified electrician who lived on Lakepointe for 30 years. “We as neighbors, we all believe in looking out for each other. When anything is out of the ordinary, we all are genuinely concern and we want to make sure everyone is well,” says Pressley.

Donyelle is now furthering her community efforts by serving as a block captain for Lakepointe. “I want a better quality of life not only for my family, but my neighbors as well. MorningSide has many active members making a difference for our community and I want to contribute positively,” says Pressley.

There’s no question Donyelle has made a positive impact on her neighbors and our community. Gestures such as requesting for a welfare check on your neighbor or serving as a block captain to assure everyone is safe and can enjoy the same quality of life says it all. Thank you for your commitment to MorningSide Donyelle and congratulations on being MorningSide's Finest!



Donyelle Pressley. Image courtesy of Donyelle Pressley

Let's Talk Trash!

Here are your next three bulk trash pickup days:

- February 18th
- March 4th
- March 18th

Advertise in The Morningsider!

For those who want to place ads in our newsletter, please contact Jackie Grant at (313) 720-3904. Below are the rates for advertisements:

6 - Month Run

\$825 Full Page

\$400 Half Page

\$275 Quarter Page

MECCA - Community Land Trust

With property values increasing in our area, is there room for low-income families? We believe it's important to have socio-economic diversity within the community and a Community Land Trust (CLT) can help with that. One of the biggest benefits and the main goal of a CLT is affordable home ownership.

To learn more about CLT's, join us at our next Residential Committee meeting via Zoom by emailing your interest to info@meccadc.org. If you're interested in spreading the word about land trusts, we're distributing door knockers on Saturday, February 20th from 10am - 2pm. Meet us at 5901 Cadieux Rd.



For the latest news taking place in MorningSide, please follow us on:



@morningsidedet

MorningSide is a corporation organized and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes outlined in section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Contact The Morningside Community Organization at:

(313) 355-2468 or via email

morningsidecommunity2@gmail.com

Also checkout our new website!

www.morningsidedetroit.org

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