

November, 2009



## **Letter from the President**

**Hospital.** The neighborhood continues to await the outcome of the protracted negotiations between the hospital and the Crosland/Celebration development partnership. Members of the hospital liaison committee have been meeting periodically with the hospital for updates; the latest meeting was in mid-November and included Joe Barnes from Celebration Associates' local office. The recession has complicated prospects for commercial and residential real estate and the hospital acknowledges it has had to adjust its sights accordingly. Barnes laid out a multi-step public consultation process that the developers would launch after the contract is agreed.

**Meetings.** MJNA's block meetings – which are about 2/3's completed – will help the neighborhood prepare for that consultation process, especially in educating ourselves about basics such as zoning, master planning and the design review process, as well as gauging areas of particular concerns such as traffic patterns and preservation of our historic character. We hope to complete the block meetings in the next couple of weeks. A Martha Jefferson neighborhood resident, architect Marthe Rowen, has offered to conduct a follow-up seminar, open to all, which will delve deeper into design concepts and zoning issues. This seminar will even better prepare us for a proactive, well-informed collaboration with the developer and the city on redevelopment of the MJH site. Stay tuned for when Marty's seminar will be held.

**Crime.** Incidents of crime seemed to have lessened a bit in recent weeks, although nearby neighborhoods such as Woolen Mills are having an upsurge in vandalism and theft, especially from vehicles. So remain vigilant, especially as the holiday season approaches and thieves look for easy money. I met with the Police Department's Ops Commander, Capt. Allen Kirby, and discussed some law enforcement issues. He reports that the Commonwealth's Attorney has now cleared the way for banishment from parks, including cemeteries, for repeat offenders, and stepped up enforcement – and hopefully a more safe and secure Maplewood Cemetery – can be expected shortly. We also discussed loud music from vehicles, especially in the warm months, and are developing a strategy, probably including new enforcement tools (digital sound meters) and public service announcements.

**Traffic.** City traffic engineer Jeanie Alexander is actively studying options for traffic calming in the neighborhood. Initially, these may focus on inexpensive initiatives such as better lane marking on Locust Avenue to induce drivers to slow down. Safer crosswalks may take a bit longer since curb cuts will be necessary in some places. Stop signs and speed bumps are more problematic, but the city is analyzing whether statistics support these features, for example in the Hazel/St. Clair area. We will also be cooperating with the city in identifying critical gaps in sidewalks in the neighborhood, especially on the routes our children walk to and from Burnley-Moran School. So far, the engagement with the city has been positive, but we will have to stay on this.

**Web.** We are getting good feedback on our new website. We hope to add a “community bulletin board” soon, probably early in 2010, where items of relevant interest to the neighborhood (e.g. items for sale, babysitting services, events, and so on) can be posted by residents. We also will be issuing a new, hard-copy neighborhood directory soon. If you haven't already done so, be sure to pass on any

new or changed directory information for your household to Treasurer Mary Odell at [the5odells@comcast.net](mailto:the5odells@comcast.net) or through [info@mjna.org](mailto:info@mjna.org).

**Loan.** MJNA's special appeal to repay the loan for the state and Federal historic district designation analysis done by UVA architectural historian Lydia Brandt had a good response but there is still a balance outstanding. Contributions are still welcome and needed for this special expense and can be sent to MJNA c/o Treasurer Mary Odell, 878 Locust Avenue. It's tax deductible, too!

**Party.** Our next community get-together is the Winter Solstice Party on Sunday, December 20, once again generously hosted by Kate Berman. Last year's party was filled with singing and good cheer. We have some liquid leftovers from our fall picnic, but BYOB if you have a favorite and also a plate of cookies to share, if you can. The festivities start at 7 pm at 508 Lexington Avenue. Put it on your calendar now! And thanks again to Gail and Downing Smith for hosting the fall picnic at their beautiful home.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and a happy start to the holiday season!

Bruce Odell