



WUNA Newsletter

West University Neighborhood Association

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May 2008

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Editor Carolyn Niethammer

Guest Editor Jenn O'Connor

Layout Cheri Wiens

Board Meetings

are held the first

Thursday of each month

at 6:30 p.m.

Trinity Presbyterian Church
400 E. University Blvd.

From the President: Change is Coming, Be Prepared

By Lori Boston

Change is coming to West University as the downtown development plans move ahead. This special issue of the newsletter discusses many of the issues that will be impacting us. Jenn O'Connor served as Guest Editor, pulling together articles to keep everyone updated.

In other WUNA news, the Spring Egg Hunt was a success! It was a beautiful morning in the park. Over 50 kids had the entire park available to find hundreds of eggs. A big thanks to everyone who helped pull the event together. In addition to our neighborhood volunteers, the Fourth Avenue Merchants Association (FAMA) provided tables, shade canopies and eggs and helped with set up and cleanup. The Community Food Bank provided donuts and juices.

Ideas have been floating around for

other social events this summer. If you are interested in participating please let me know. More information will follow as the ideas develop:

- Ready for another game of softball? We had such a fun time with our softball game against Dunbar Spring last year, many of us are ready to have another game. No skill level required and all ages are welcome! Our "well seasoned" West University team kept up with a much younger Dunbar Spring team and we managed to score 22 runs to their 24!

- Ice Cream Social in June

- Barbeque and outdoor movie in July

- August potluck in Catalina Park for National Night Out

Our website is currently being renovated. Thanks for your patience. We hope to have the revisions finished soon.

Design Workshops Help Guide Development

By Teresa Bommarito

With the coming of the modern streetcar, West University will be facing considerable development pressure, especially along our major corridors. This has the potential to impact the character of our neighborhood. The best way to be ready for this is to be proactive and prepared to discuss with developers our vision for our future. Over the winter, West University residents participated in two design workshops intended to guide our thinking as we face the development process.

During the first, held in December, 25 residents discussed neighborhood values and identified opportunities and constraints for potential infill sites with four volunteer architects.

At the second workshop in January, architects Bob Vint and Gal Witmer discussed a potential mixed-use site along Sixth Avenue, while Johnny Birkinbine and Luis Ibarra combined efforts for their single-family home site along University Blvd. All of the proposals exhibited respect for the neighborhood's existing

character while exploring new design concepts to show how past and present can work together. The architects' presentations are available on the WUNA webpage at www.wunaonline.org.

Following the architects' presentations, attendees generated questions to present to City officials and developers. The questions are intended to facilitate productive conversations regarding the design of future projects. For example: Have you developed in an historic neighborhood before? What is your design philosophy? How will you involve the neighborhood? What impacts do you see your development having on the immediate neighbors? Discussion also focused on the inherent challenges of developing in a historic neighborhood. Architects explained the need to maintain a cohesive feel, but encouraged residents to broaden their interpretations of historic compatibility.

Ultimately, ideas and values generated during the workshops and from the neighborhood-wide survey will guide revisions to the current neighborhood plan.

Tucson's Modern Street Car Line

By Jim Glock, Director
City of Tucson Department of Transportation

The City is planning, designing, and building a Modern Streetcar line between downtown and the UA to serve the Fourth Avenue business district and University Boulevard.

The Modern Streetcar line will be four miles long with 19 stations. The line will run from Campbell Avenue at Helen Street, through the UA, and down Fourth Avenue, then will split at Congress Street and Broadway and terminate west of the freeway at Avenida de Convento and Congress Street. Seven streetcars will be purchased to operate the system with a planned frequency of 10 minutes in daytime and 20 minutes in the evening. The ridership estimate is 4,000 passengers per weekday, while the capital cost is about \$144 million. It is set for completion in 2011.

Why a Modern Streetcar line in Tucson? Modern streetcars provide the best opportunity to connect major activity centers in central Tucson. The



Artist's representation of Modern Streetcar

alignment serves the area of Tucson with the highest population and employment density. It is estimated that 10 percent of the region's population lives or works within walking distance of the line, and many of the area's trips could be taken on the modern streetcar.

The philosophy is to keep it as simple and inexpensive as possible. The project is planned to blend with urban environments

and neighborhoods, while minimizing street impacts and avoiding utilities. The alignment is almost entirely within existing street right-of-way, and is also being designed for ease of construction.

For more information, go to the City of Tucson's transit website www.tucsontransitstudy.com.

Updating our Neighborhood Plan after 25 years

By Jenn O'Connor, Jill Bielawski, and Chris Gans

Over the past year, a dedicated group of neighbors has been working hard to determine the best way to prepare our neighborhood for future development pressures. After many discussions with City of Tucson planning staff, and two design workshops, one in December 2007 and one in January 2008 (see article page one), and we are now updating our neighborhood plan.

What is our neighborhood plan?

The plan compiled by the residents and approved by the City of Tucson defines who we are as a community and expresses our vision for the future. The plan offers guidance to developers and the City to ensure that the neighborhood maintains its unique identity.

Why revise the old neighborhood plan?

It was written more than 25 years ago. We are revising the neighborhood plan as preparation for future development in our neighborhood, including the Modern Street Car, the Downtown Links road project, and housing needs

for an expanding UA student population. The plan defines what we wish for our neighborhood in terms of character, population, diversity, building, resources/businesses, recreation, and streetscapes. The West University Neighborhood Plan indicates to the City of Tucson, developers, architects and community that we are a united, forward-thinking neighborhood, and while we may have differing opinions and ideas, we look forward to sitting at the same table and working them through.

What is the limitation of our neighborhood plan?

Although the plan makes a strong statement that reflects our desires and goals for our neighborhood, it is not a legal document. So why spend the energy? It sends a solid message that we have defined what we want for our neighborhood and also creates and defines the unity within ourselves — the neighborhood. That demonstrates a credible voice to those outside the neighborhood and establishes a positive,

working connection with them.

When will the updated neighborhood plan be ready?

The process of updating the neighborhood plan will probably take another year. This month we will distribute a survey to residents and businesses to better understand what you value about our neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Plan Update Committee has defined its activities for each month between now and March 2009. These activities include collecting and analyzing data about neighborhood characteristics and resources; a workshop with neighbors to identify what you would like the neighborhood to look like in 20 years; drafting goals, objectives, and specific strategies for the implementing the plan; and hosting a final workshop for neighbors to review the updated neighborhood plan.

If you're interested in joining the efforts to update our neighborhood plan, your participation would be greatly appreciated. Please contact Jenn O'Connor at jennconnor@gmail.com.

Downtown Links Roadway Project

By Andrew Singelakis

Deputy Director City of Tucson Department of Transportation

Downtown Links is a design project initiated by TDOT to provide a four-lane roadway north of the tracks between Barraza-Aviation Parkway and Interstate 10, Broadway Boulevard and the Fourth Avenue shopping district, and Downtown and the neighborhoods to its north. This project includes enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access routes, drainage improvements, a new and safer railroad underpass, railroad crossings, landscaping, and art elements.

Downtown Links is part of the

Dunbar Spring Concerns About Downtown Links

The Dunbar Spring neighborhood has been closely following the Downtown Links project and has concerns about the most recent proposed realignment because the roadway will pass through that neighborhood.

The current alignment would cut north through West University and Dunbar Spring neighborhoods at Sixth Street/Stone which would require the removal of Mat Bevel, Lucky St. Studios, and Originate. The design options also include widening the road from the current 80 feet to 120 feet and construction of pedestrian and bikeways. While Dunbar Spring neighborhood is pleased with the pedestrian and bikeways, they are concerned about separating part of their neighborhood from the downtown, visually and physically, even with the inclusion of the pedestrian and bike access.

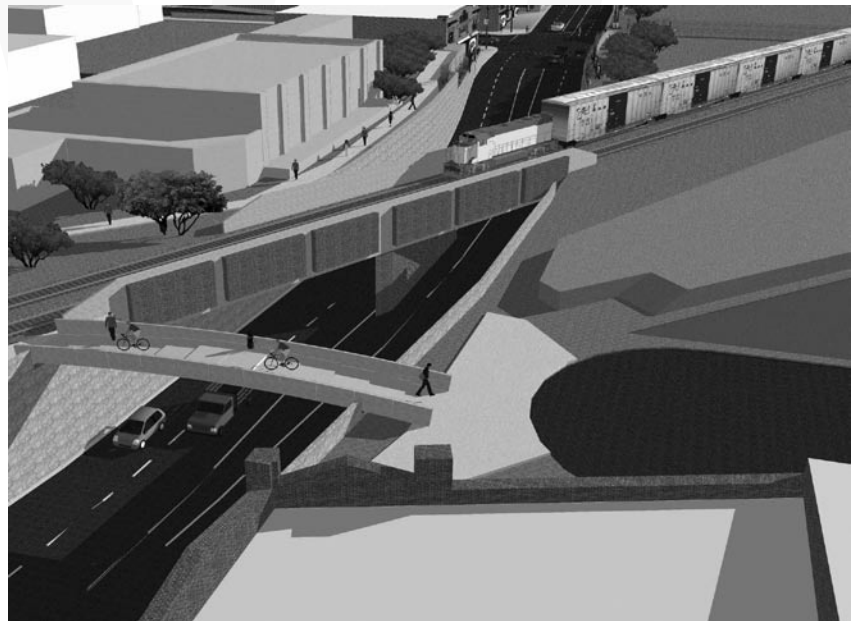
Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) plan approved by voters in May 2006. It will be funded by the half-cent transportation sales tax that took effect July 1, 2006. Construction is expected to begin in 2011.

The goal is to create a new Downtown avenue that's pedestrian-friendly while letting traffic bypass Downtown.

The Citizen Advisory Committee has been formed to provide a community perspective on the Downtown Links

project and make recommendations to the Mayor and Council regarding the roadway alignment to connect the current Barraza-Aviation Parkway at the Broadway Traffic Interchange with Sixth Street and St. Mary's Road.

Specifically, the CAC has been tasked with addressing an alternate alignment north of the Railroad tracks that is compatible with the proposed Warehouse Arts District.



Artist's rendition of railroad overpass at 6th Street train crossing

The Backyard Fence

By Carolyn Niethammer

Living in West University is a **global experience** – at least in a culinary sense. With the opening of some new eateries near the Main Gate along with our old favorites there and on Fourth Avenue, we can walk to restaurants featuring Mexican, Chinese, Thai, East Indian, Afghan, Greek, Italian, Middle Eastern, Irish, and French food. A Vietnamese restaurant is in the works. Add to that our wonderful pizza outlets, ice cream shops galore, enough soup, sandwich and burger places to spin your head and enough coffee shops to keep you thoroughly caffeinated. We urge you to patronize your local establishments, save gas, and work off some of the calories by walking there and back.

Thanks to **Margaret Bly** for pulling together the pieces for the Spring Egg Hunt. Both the WUNA kids and the children from Casa de los Ninos enjoyed scurrying around and looking for candy and eggs. Thanks also to the Easter Bunny (who must remain anonymous just like Santa).

Herb Stratford, who lives with his family on the southeast corner of Second St. and Fifth Ave. (the “Dusenberry House”) has resigned as executive director of the Fox Tucson Theatre Foundation. For a decade Stratford has labored to restore the Fox to its former glory. It is now a centerpiece to the Downtown revitalization. Thanks, Herb!





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West University Neighborhood

Dated Material

Catalina Park Improvements Officially Approved

By Judy Sensibar

(WUNA resident Judy Sensibar has been working for three years to obtain a grant for improvements to Catalina Park. Fighting the bureaucracy was frustrating, but she kept on with dogged patience.)

We were all very relieved when The County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to officially approve the grant for Catalina Park. The money includes \$476,190 from the Neighborhood Reinvestment Oversight Committee (NROC) in addition to \$25,000 of matching funds from the Mayor and Council's office, orchestrated by Nina Trasoff, our City Council Representative. The park improvements will be an incredible upgrade, complete with new playground equipment with a shade structure, additional shaded seating, a BBQ grill, secure concrete trash cans, new fencing around the wading pool, a splash pad, updated landscaping, and handicapped access to all the additions via diagonal, wheelchair accessible pathways bisecting in the middle of the park.

Thanks go to all the WUNA residents who wrote letters and to the students

from the charter schools who came to the hearings.

Our grant request set a new precedent, and a potentially better relationship between city and county departments. The city, specifically Parks and Recreation in this case, is now required to pay their own design fees, or soft costs, which previously have been covered by the granting committee, or NROC.

I didn't realize when I began writing the Catalina Park grant proposal, the subtle ins and outs of the county/city "partnership." As it has been explained to me, it is county money we were asking for even though the jurisdiction, or responsibility for the park lies, within the city. Therefore, the city was really getting "something for nothing" as some on the county committee saw it. So, the two entities have reached an agreement, and the city is supplying some of the budget for the project. It was partly because much of

surrounding Pima County can and does use "our" park that the county grant was finally approved.

There is no set date for the city to begin the project. We will have to keep after our government officials to not let this project languish.



Sensibar brothers play in Catalina Park