

Around Midtown

The Quarterly Publication of the Midtown Community Benefits District and the Midtown Development Corporation

The First Lady of Calvert Street

An afternoon in the company of Margaret Vogel Perin



On a balmy Baltimore summer afternoon, Midtown had the pleasure to sit and chat with the always charming Margaret Perin. The time was spent not only reminiscing, but also discussing the many changes that have taken place in Midtown. Mrs. Perin, a Midtown resident for over 50 years, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday, was eager to share her thoughts and memories of her time in Midtown. We hope you will find our interview as enjoyable as our time shared seated in the Tiffany bay window overlooking Mrs. Perin's wonderfully kept garden. This interview was conducted by Harold McCray and edited by Linda C. Richardson.

School was located in the 1700 block of Park Avenue, Bryn Mawr was also on Park Avenue and Boys Latin was in the same area. You see, these were all good schools that were clustered in that area, and of course, there was Peabody. I am happy to



share with you that I have always been interested in music. I sang in the Glee Club at Friends School and won a prize for singing in the Pirates of Penzance. As a result, I went to Peabody on a scholarship to study voice, which was very nice.

MCBD: What occupations have you had?

MVP: Oh my dear! My most favorite was teaching swimming. I was famous for it. I also worked as a model in the French room at the original Hutzler Brothers department store at the corner of Howard and Saratoga.

MCBD: How many children do you have?

MVP: There are four children. I have six grandchildren and five great grandchildren. As you know I recently had a birthday. The entire family was here to celebrate, it was a wonderful party.

MCBD: How long have you lived in this house?

MVP: Fifty years.

MCBD: What attracted you to this house?

MVP: I had been invited to this particular block, and I thought I would find something to my liking. After three years of looking I found this house. One of the things that drew me to the house was the beautiful front door. Surely the most beautiful doorway in Baltimore.

MCBD: What are some of your fondest memories of living in Midtown?

MVP: I remember how perfectly lovely Charles Street used to be. I have always enjoyed the gardens in Mount Vernon. I was brought up

thinking that they were very nice places and should be kept that way.

MCBD: What positive changes have you seen?

MVP: Recently? It would have to be recent. I have noticed that people are doing more with their property. When people buy these beautiful big houses, I don't think they understand how much work it takes. Now, the Higgins on St. Paul Street have made their home more beautiful, but you have to care, you have to really want it, and of course it does take a lot of money.

MCBD: What are the negative changes?

MVP: I don't go out very often anymore, but the traffic is perfectly dreadful. There really ought to be less buses and automobiles and more pedestrians.

MCBD: What other changes have you noticed?

MVP: You know when we first moved to this house there were lovely gardens all the way down the

block. I love my garden, and I am rather proud of it. I would love to see more gardens and less automobile.

MCBD: Thank you Mrs. Perin.

MVP: My pleasure.



MCBD: Where did you go to school?

MVP: Not far from here. I went to Friends School on Park Avenue. I loved that school. At that time Friends



COMMUNITY NEWS

The Friends of Mount Vernon Place (FMVP), a membership organization, is dedicated to the revitalization and conservation of the Mount Vernon Place parks. The group sponsored consultants Project for Public Spaces, an international community development organization, to complete a study that resulted in the following recommendations:



Improve landscaping as an attraction to the parks and the area. Manage the parks more effectively. Encourage more use of the parks and surrounding streets. Preserve Mount Vernon Place as an historic cultural district. Integrate cultural institutions into the community. Slow down traffic to create a pedestrian community. With these recommendations as guidelines, FMVP has begun the revitalization of the squares: adding moveable chairs in the West Park to encourage socialization; acquiring a donation of thousands of bulbs, which bloomed in early spring, 2003; collaborating with the Mount Vernon Cultural District to institute weekly public programs during the warm months; inaugurating the annual Holly Tour in early December; planting trees and flowers in the South Park through a generous donor; providing a park steward to maintain the four squares beyond the work of Baltimore City; developing a formal partnership with the Department of Recreation and Parks. Members of FMVP realize that basic infrastructure needs must be addressed therefore, they are planning to install an irrigation system for all four squares to eliminate costly hand watering. The group is engaged in research to publish a booklet on the history of Mount Vernon Place and the surrounding area for distribution to visitors. FMVP helped to sponsor Baltimore's Book, an annual event in the spring sponsored by the Enoch Pratt Free Library to encourage literary pursuits.

In three years FMVP has made a good start, thanks to 165+ dedicated members. And this is just the beginning!

MIDTOWN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

100 Renovations, \$ 21 Million

By Charlie Duff

Imagine that you want to make a product, and I want to buy it. So far so good. But now, imagine that it costs you a dollar to make it, but I'm only willing to pay fifty cents for it. Do you think you're going to make it? Most of the buildings in Midtown have been caught in a situation like that for decades. You could renovate your house, but it would cost you twice as much as someone would pay to buy it from you. By 1998, when we did the research for the Midtown Plan, it cost more than \$150,000 to renovate the average house in Mt. Vernon, but no one was willing to pay more than about \$80,000 for an average Mt. Vernon house in renovated condition. Houses need to be worth what they cost. If they are, people will build them and renovate them. If they aren't, people will just let them wither away, as so many houses in Midtown have been withering away for decades. It is now two full years since Midtown Development opened its doors with a mission to create an environment in which good Midtown houses are worth what they cost. To put it briefly: so far so good. We are at work on approximately 100 renovations in the four Midtown neighborhoods. Although many of these are new, and don't even have budgets yet, the ones that do have budgets add up to more than \$21 million. You can see our banner up and down Calvert Street, where we are buying and developing houses. But almost every Midtown block now has at least one property owner who is renovating with help from Midtown Development. Houses are beginning to be worth what they cost. Bolton Hill is the leader here, with several recent sales in the neighborhood of \$600,000. Remember the days (c.1998) when Bolton Hill houses sat on the market for years? Now they sell in hours. And Mt. Vernon is zipping along like the thoroughbred it is. It is now common for people to invest \$400,000 in buying and restoring houses in Mt. Vernon. And there is encouraging news from Charles North, where a house in the 1600 block of Calvert Street just sold for \$167,500. That would have been a Bolton Hill price just two years ago. Midtown is on the move. So far so good.

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Daniel Gilbert

As the hazy days of summer set in upon Midtown our days are anything but lazy. The reopening of the Charles Street Bridge was celebrated with a smashing block party on Thursday night and a ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday afternoon. Kudos to Midtown's own Linda Richardson for her efforts in organizing these great events. The great press coverage we received is priceless, and visits from Mayor O'Malley and Congressman Cummings have put Midtown's issues front and center.

The Midtown/Reservoir Hill/Seton Hill SNAP committees have also been toiling away. The well attended public forum on July 16, brought new people to the table and generated a raft of new ideas. The committees will continue to meet through the summer and I encourage any and all interested parties to participate.

I would also like to thank Midtown Boardmember Councilwoman Agnes Welch for her able assistance in shepherding our reauthorization legislation through to approval. The Council's unanimous vote in favor is both an honor and humbling. As you are probably aware, due to discrepancies between state and city legislation this vote will take us up to the fall of this year when we will seek reauthorization for the next 4 years.

Additionally, on behalf of our Board of Directors, I invite all residents of Midtown to join us as we offer our congratulations to Charles Smith on his selection as Midtown's new Executive Director. We are confident that Charles' single minded commitment to Midtown, his attention to detail and his love for all things urban will serve us all well.

Charles North

North Avenue Streetscaping

By Rev. Dale Dusman

Waiting takes up much of our time and some of us are more patient at it than others. Nevertheless, we often find that effecting changes, or waiting for projects those completed, demands patient or impatient waiting. After what seemed an intolerable amount of time, the Charles Street Bridge has reopened, and once again lots of vehicular traffic has returned to our community. Even though the bridge construction caused inconveniences for some, others did enjoy the rather unexpected quiet along the 1700 and 1800 blocks of North Charles Street. About twenty years ago, an attempt was made to make North Avenue (from Howard Street to St. Paul Street) more inviting. New street lights were erected, sidewalks improved, and planting was done in the median. Once again, after years of waiting for a still more improved street scape, North Avenue is being resurfaced, more traditional street lights have been installed, sidewalks are being repaired, and newplanting is taking place...and yet, we are still waiting for more to happen. Thanks to the intervention of the Baltimore Development Corporation, an initiative has begun to alleviate years of patient or impatient waiting for redevelopment of abandoned and underutilized sites. Nineteen properties have been identified and are so named in a proposed amendment to the Charles North Urban Renewal Plan. This plan would allow Baltimore City to proceed with acts of condemnation and acquisition. Redevelopment of these properties will not solve all the socio-economic woes of the Charles North Community. There are still more opportunity sites available. Yet there is hope that the BDC proposal will spark others to improve or redevelop existing properties. There are many people who remember North Avenue as a once thriving and inviting street with varied businesses and entertainment venues. While the past cannot be recreated, we can hope-and wait-for an improved North Avenue,

(See Charles North, 3)

THE MIDTOWN TATTLER STRIKES AGAIN...

The Tattler was there on June 21, when Midtown met Williamsburg! What's this you say? On that day Bolton Hill resident Young Mi Song and Mt. Vernon resident Chris Organ married at the Williamsburg Presbyterian Church. Both Young Mi and Chris are recent graduates of the Maryland Institute College of Art Master of Fine Arts program. The wedding was officiated by Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church Interim Pastor Fred Lyon. The wedding was held in Williamsburg as the groom's mother lives there. But most of the congregants witnessing the nuptials were friends from MICA. It was a beautiful wedding and while it was raining hard in Baltimore (again) the sky was sunny and blue for these two wonderful people's special day. The sad news is that they are soon moving to Northern Virginia despite the Tattler's every attempt to keep them here in Midtown. The June 26, party celebrating the re-opening of the Charles Street Bridge was a spectacular event despite the hot weather! The Tattler saw so many people there having a really great time. Midtown District Board Member and Live Baltimore Staffer Rusty Carbaugh was there selling drinks to keep us all cool. Kristin Speaker of the Charles Street Development Corporation was there handing out really cool new brochures highlighting the landmarks of note along Charles Street. The Mayor even came for about an hour and seemed to get in the mood of things. New Calvert Street residents Tim and Lisa Clark had a wonderful time enjoying the music and commenting how the heat reminded them of Miami. The Clarks moved to Midtown from Miami last winter. Sadly the Tattler was out of town for the fourth of July and missed Don Davis and Troy Caperton's annual celebration at their place on St. Paul Street. The Tattler also missed a smaller party on the roof of Brant Petrasek's place on Calvert Street. I hear that both parties were fantastic and the views of the inner harbor fireworks from both were the best in town. The Tattler also hears that The Inn at 4 E. Madison is almost ready to open. The owners of this new Midtown Bed and Breakfast have completed a fabulous renovation of their building and grounds and it is worth a look. They had their first event there on July 3. It was a wedding and the Tattler hears that everyone attending had a really wonderful time. And speaking of wonderful times, the Tattler encourages all of Midtown to stop by B Restaurant in Bolton Hill. The food and atmosphere are excellent and you will most likely run into at least three people that you know there. Until next time....

(Charles North, from page 2)

as well as other areas which will enhance the lives of Baltimoreans. We are indeed grateful for the initial support of the Mayor's Office, the Baltimore Development Corporation, the Departments of Transportation and Planning, the Charles Street Development Corporation, the Arts and Entertainment District, and the Midtown Community Benefits District for the work along North Avenue as well as ongoing projects in the Charles North Community.

Jones Falls Bike Trail

Many people are asking the same question, "Why has work stopped on the Jones Falls Bike Trail?" The response from the Parks Department is that the work has not really stopped, simply that the contractor has not been on the job these last couple of weeks. OK. The Parks Department says that the work should hopefully be done by October of this year. The Jones Falls Bike Trail, when (if) completed, will connect Stony Run Trail (that runs to the Johns Hopkins University) to Druid Hill Park and then connect Druid Hill Park to Penn Station. The City's Planning Department is working on finding a route to take the Trail from Penn Station to the Inner Harbor. The Trail has a long history of planning. Midtown, working with the City and other community groups, as well as Congressmen Cummings and Cardin, started planning the Trail in 1997. The Neighborhood Design Center of Baltimore, and Brenton & Associates, Inc. of Glen Burnie, volunteered to work with Midtown. This combined effort provided a schematic plan that showed a Jones Falls Trail running from President Street at the Inner Harbor, up to Lake Roland at the City County line. The Trail, if built would connect many communities (Downtown, Midtown, Hampden, Mount Washington, Cross Keys) just to name a few, as well as three of the City's largest parks (Druid Hill, Cylburn, and Robert E. Lee). It would also allow bikers a way of commuting downtown without having to ride alongside less than polite vehicular traffic.



Photo credits:
Harold E. McCray



Save the date!
Tuesday, October 28, 2003
Midtown Annual Fall Meeting



**Midtown Community Benefits District
Midtown Development Corporation
1221 N. Calvert St.
Baltimore, MD 21202**

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CONTACT US!

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www.midtowncommunity.org

Subtot	11103	498	60	853	9	28
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MV	Clean		Safe			
2003	Bags	Bulk	Complaint	CA	Escorts	Panhan
Jan	3209	192	46	534	4	67
Feb	6867	455	44	810	4	67
Mar	5438	88	102	569	18	50
1st Qut	15514	735	192	1913	26	184
Apr	6634	362	53	3063	45	131
May	4923	258	74	3082	7	366
Jun	4195	248	48	1699	11	46
2nd Qut	15752	868	175	7844	63	543
Jul						
Aug						
Sept						
3rd Qut	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct						
Nov						
Dec						
4th Qut	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subtot	31266	1603	367	9757	89	727

Midtown Totals	79129	4053	765	15512	147	848
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