

Union Square News

February 2004

From the President

Dear Neighbors:

I am very excited to have been elected as the new president of the Union Square Association. I have been in this neighborhood for 3½ years. I came here because of the beautiful homes and the park which were located close to University of Maryland, where I was in graduate school.

This is a good time for our neighborhood due to a number of factors. Here are some of the assets I see: Real estate values are rising, in part because of purchasers from the DC market who recognize the good housing value our area offers. People are moving in and fixing up houses, bringing us new neighbors, new friends and new playmates for our children. The University of Maryland is building a biotech facility on Baltimore Street, just west of Martin Luther King Boulevard, which will lead to improvements in that immediate area, creating a demand for restaurants and better housing. Bon Secours foundation, to our west, is working busily to develop youth skills and employment, to support par-

ents and children, and renovating buildings to provide good affordable housing.

Union Square has just held our 18th annual cookie tour. We are halfway through major planting improvements to the square; and we just saved a building from demolition at 4 S. Gilmor Street by our advocacy efforts to the city.

The association's goals for the next year include using our housing committee to address vacant houses and force the city and absentee owners to either renovate or sell the houses to someone who will do so. We will also complete new planting work on the square; update our bylaws; and seek grants to renovate our gazebo, one of only two in the city! If interest warrants, we may even revive the Garden Tour.

There are other worthwhile projects we want to support, and we want your thoughts and suggestions about what your block wants to do... so, I hope to see you at our next general meeting, which is usually the first Wednesday of the month, at 1401 Hollins Street.

Greg Grass



2004 Officers and Board

President
Greg Grass
Vice President
Tonya Osborne
Treasurer
Phyllis VanMeerhaeghe
Recording Secretary
Barbara Heckman-Sauer
Corresponding Secretary
Chris Everett
Director of Historic Preservation
Richard Pickens
At-Large Director
Cynthia Pointdexter
At-Large Director
B.J. Schaeen-Cazer

Union Square Association General Meeting

Wednesday, February 4, 7:00 pm
1401 Hollins Street

Agenda Topics:

- Annual Progressive Dinner
- Call for participation on committees
- Suggestions on speakers/topics for future meetings
- Discussion about Garden tour in June
- Updates on several ongoing neighborhood projects and issues

2004 Garden Tour?

Longtime residents may remember a summer event called "The Secret Gardens of Union Square." For our new residents, this was a neighborhood garden tour held in June.

Due to a variety of issues, the tour has been on hiatus for the past few years. In 2003, the revival of this event became a topic of discussion.

What's the point?

Compared to much of the city, a number of homes in our neighborhood have wonderful backyards and gardens. Many commuters and potential homebuyers rush by and only see our historic housefronts. The tour revealed our "secret gardens" – some with fountains, little ponds, sculptures, terraced flowerbeds, multilevel decks, whirligigs, gazebos, exotic plants, patios and entertainment spaces.

Within the community, the event provided an incentive to beautify the neighborhood and it brought residents together in a common effort.

For visitors, the event also promoted Union Square and its many features. The garden

of the Mencken house was open, there were activities in the park, the fountain was on, and artists and galleries had displays. Realtors scheduled open houses. It was like a summer version of the Cookie Tour... without the slush.

Can we do it?

It's up to you. In order to succeed, the event needs a commitment of a dozen gardens.

It may be bitter cold right now, but Spring is around the corner. It won't be long before we'll be enjoying our gardens. Many of us will put in our usual beds of annuals – and a few of us will finally add some new feature we've put off for years. It might be an arbor, a water feature, a deck, a topiary, or some artwork.

If you feel up to the challenge, come to the meeting (or contact a board member) for more information. The tour is better if adjoining gardens are included so, if you can enlist a neighbor, all the better.

And if we can't organize the tour, we can still look forward to Spring when we stop to smell the roses. •

Real Estate Listings

~~\$650,000~~ 1420 W. Baltimore
Commercial SOLD

\$450,000 1518 W. Baltimore
Commercial #BA4705650

\$250,000 1409 Hollins
5BR/2BA #BA4698303

~~\$179,900~~ 1518 Hollins
3BR/3BA SOLD

\$175,900 1236 W. Pratt
Commercial #BA4344076

\$165,000 35 S. Carlton
3BR/2BA #BA4624108

\$150,000 1120 W. Lombard
Commercial #BA4552253

\$150,000 1046 W. Lombard
Commercial #BA4633048

\$139,900 1322 Hollins
4BR/3BA #BA4662354

\$121,900 1138 W. Lombard
4BR/2BA #BA4633048

\$ 99,900 1308 W. Lombard
Commercial #BA4684690

\$ 94,999 1709 W. Lombard
4BR/4BA #BA4650030

\$ 85,000 1419 W. Baltimore
Commercial #BA4637967

\$ 80,000 7 S. Stricker
4BR/1BA #BA4662980

~~\$ 75,000~~ 1316 W. Baltimore
3BR/1BA SOLD

\$ 65,000 1128 W. Pratt
2BR/1BA #BA4591821

\$ 54,000 1007 Hollins
2BR/1BA #BA4451430

\$ 49,900 1226 Hollins
Shell #BA4627816

~~\$ 31,900~~ 123 Schroeder
3BR/1BA SOLD

\$ 22,500 1412 W. Pratt
3BR/1BA #BA4260903

\$ 15,000 1228 W. Pratt
1BR/1BA #BA4279947

Trash Schedule

The 2004 Trash Schedule for Union Square (including a print-ready version) is now at: www.union-square.us. Hard copy versions can be picked up at the monthly meeting, or can be delivered to your home if you call and leave a message at 410.428.7549.

There will be no trash pickup on Thursday, February 12th (Lincoln's Birthday) and no pickup on Monday, February 16th (Presidents' Day). **NOTE: This means there will be two consecutive trash days with no pickup – please plan accordingly.** Otherwise, there will be the usual Monday and Thursday collections: Mondays, February 2nd, 9th, and 23rd; Thursdays, February 5th, 19th, and 26th.

February Calendar

Black History Month

Monday February 2nd
Groundhog Day
Wednesday February 4th
Union Square Association
General Meeting 7 PM
1401 Hollins Street
Saturday February 7th
The Great Baltimore Fire
(1904)
Thursday February 12th
President Abraham
Lincoln's Birthday
Saturday February 14th
Valentine's Day
Monday February 16th
Presidents' Day
Sunday February 22nd
President George
Washington's Birthday;
Islamic New Year
Tuesday February 24th
Mardi Gras
Wednesday February 25th
Ash Wednesday

New Beginnings 2004

The Union Square Association enters the new year with a new Board and ambitious plans to continue the history of neighborhood improvements. What actually gets accomplished depends entirely on what each of us is willing to do.

Among the association officers, **Tonya M. Osborne, Esq.** is our new Vice President and is also relatively new to the neighborhood – she just moved here last February. Tonya's comments:

"I grew up in the suburbs and briefly lived in another historic city neighborhood prior to moving to Union Square. To me, Union Square offers urban living at its finest. The Square, including its lovely gazebo, generously-proportioned housing, convenient location, and diversity are nearly unparalleled. I look forward to working with the board and our residents to preserve and enhance this extraordinary community."

Like all the other officers and board members (see the listing on the previous page), Tonya is a volunteer who wants to make a difference. There are many additional opportunities for other residents to volunteer our talents in this common effort. The association committees are now forming and seeking participants. Even the number and type of committees is open to input – again, dependent on *our* interest and involvement.

Existing activities include the Christmas Cookie Tour, Progressive Dinner, Easter Egg Hunt, Sowebohemian Arts Festival, Historic Preservation, Fundraising, Sanitation, Zoning and Code enforcement, Neighborhood Watch, Public Relations and Marketing, Beautification, the Union Square Online website, and this newsletter. All these efforts are seeking interested volunteers.

Proposed activities include updating the by-laws to meet non-profit requirements and improve functionality, seeking grants for community purposes including renovation of the park pavilion, and the possible return of Citizens on Patrol and the "Secret Gardens of Union Square" Garden Tour.

Additional initiatives are encouraged if we are willing to participate and do the work.

Improvement begins with individual effort. We all need to be good citizens and good neighbors. Are you doing your part? Have you ever called 311 to initiate a city service?

The next level begins with each block identifying and working on their own issues. Does your block have a block captain?

Consider your personal contribution to our shared quality of life – then come to a meeting and join the efforts of your neighbors. We'd love to see you!

Support our Market!

HOLLINS MARKET

Stop in at Hollins Market. You'll be surprised at what you've been missing.

This newsletter produced by volunteers and is contributed as a service to the Union Square Association (USA).

To contribute an article, idea, or suggestion, please e-mail news@union-square.us – or visit Union Square Online (www.union-square.us), go to the message board and post a note in the Newsletter Forum. All comments (positive or critical) are welcome!