



WARDS CORNER CIVIC LEAGUE

CROSSROADS

Serving: Colony Point, Hariton Gardens, Merridale,
Pinehurst, Restmere, Rose Gardens, Sussex of Norfolk,
Virginia Gardens and Wexford Terrace

February, 2008 Web site www.Wardscorner.com

CIVIC LEAGUE MEETING MONDAY

**February 24, 2008
6:45 PM**

NORFOLK FITNESS and WELLNESS CENTER

Agenda

**DePaul Hospital Restructuring
Representatives from Bon Secours
Health System/DePaul Hospital**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jim English jenglish@odu.edu

Dear Neighbors,

Two articles in the Virginia Pilot dated February 6, 2008 really raised my frustration level with our city and state elected leaders to the point where I almost think our government "for the people, of the people and by the people" is indeed broken. I already believe that it is broken at the federal level. Article one says that SB 162, SB 163 and HB 119 which would give localities more power to deal with blighted vacant property, is on hold this year to be studied by the Virginia Housing Commission prior to next year's general assembly session. Once again, the general assembly has clearly dodged their responsibility to give localities more tools to revitalize blighted areas showing – again - they lack the political will to represent the citizens of Virginia in lieu of yet another "study". The second article, "city to acquire 11 homes in blighted area" is about the city council's approval on February 5th to buy homes in the Berkley and Campostella neighborhoods for \$1.3 million. HELLO!! What about the blighted properties in the Greater Wards Corner Partnership area. We have 11+ houses and properties that should be acquired such as the blighted shopping center in the Northeast corner of Wards Corner!! Where are the council members representing our area? Out to lunch? Or out of town?

Where is the political will to deal with the decline of the Wards Corner area that has been going downhill for way over 15 years? I am sure that those properties in Berkley and Campostella are blighted and that area needs attention but what about our area. Is help on the way??

Well, last week Mayor Fraim delivered his State of the City address. The following are quotes from that address.

"The City Council continues to be concerned with Wards Corner, but everyone should be encouraged by recent private and public activity and investment.

For example, S. L. Nusbaum has begun site work on the SouthWind Apartments – a \$15 million development in Denby Park on property formally occupied by a trailer park - while along Newport Avenue, Collins Enterprises begins construction this quarter on an \$80 million townhouse/condominium project.

The City's Development Department is actively engaged with Wards Corner property owners on plans to redevelop their properties, and we are confident of a positive outcome.

Since 2005 the city has invested more than \$13 million dollars on the Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan - for purchase of the Fitness and Wellness Center, streetscape improvements, strategic property acquisitions, rehabilitation programming and traffic control improvements.

Police presence has been increased in Denby Park and Monticello Village, and code enforcement activities have been stepped up.

These are all signs of progress, but we know more needs to be done. The Council is determined to revitalize this important part of the city."

I am certainly pleased that Mayor Fraim has included Wards Corner in this year's State of the City address and wish to thank him for mentioning the area. I know I have asked him on several occasions to do that which he now has done. We can only hope that the announcement of the private development improvements would spawn more economic development for the entire Greater Wards Corner area. I would, however, like to follow up on his comments. The announcement of the nearly \$100 million in private development projects is not new as I/we have been talking with the developers of these projects for nearly 2 years. The trailer park has been razed and development is about to begin. The

project on Newport Ave. has also been started over the past months and will be a phased in project dependent on sales of the condominiums planned. This is a good thing but we have known about these for some time. The purchase of the former JCC and conversion into the Wellness Center is also good for the area but it came at the insistence of the Greater Wards Corner Partnership and Task Force as the best use of this property. We thank council for following through with our requests to take over this property but we should all remember that this is a Citywide facility and not just a Wards Corner facility so all of the citizens of Norfolk benefit. The police presence and code enforcement activities in the areas mentioned are also not new as we continually push for this. But we should remember that more police and more code enforcement is only a band-aid approach to correcting the crime and blight problems of the area. Improving economic development is the only way to rid this area of those problems that put negative pressure on the entire area up and down East and West Little Creek road and our associated neighborhoods. The mention of the City's Development Department being actively engaged with Wards Corner property owners on plans to redevelop their properties is also something we have been pushing for years with virtually no results. We hear how they are actively engaged in bringing in other private developers to the area, but to this point that effort has been minimal. We would hope that they would increase this effort in the immediate future. Finally the mention of "streetscape improvements, strategic property acquisitions, rehabilitation programming and traffic control improvements" has happened, but it has been minimal at best, as much more is needed as indicated in the Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan for the area. I am glad that Mayor Fraim has indicated, "The City Council continues to be concerned with Wards Corner". That is a good thing. Let us hope that we will see more action behind these words from our representatives on council to indeed put more effort into revitalizing the Wards Corner area.

Finally I would like to share with you what the effect of economic development can have on an area. I recently received a copy of the Commissioner of the Revenue's annual report. Like always, I went immediately to the sales and tax data for Southern Shopping Center and Wards Corner. That link is: <http://www.norfolk.gov/Revenue/reports/sandr07.pdf>, pages 160 - 166. What you will see is this. Comparing the data, the Southern Shopping Center for FY 2006 and FY 2007 total sales for the area went from 100.2 million dollars to 236.0 million dollars with tax revenue going from 3.0 million to 4.6 million dollars. What happened, why the big jump? The Super Wal-Mart opened at the end of January 2007 as well as several other out parcel

businesses near this store. See what redevelopment can do. So what did the data look like for Wards Corner for the FY 2 years? Well total sales for FY 2006 were 141.4 million dollars and for FY 2007 it was 146.3 million dollars or an increase of less than 5 million dollars in a year. That's less than the inflation rate! The difference in tax revenue generated between the two years was an increase of ~\$100,000.00. How sad!! Think of the sales and tax revenue that could be generated if the Wards Corner Business District was improved. Think about how much revenue the city is losing.

Wards Corner is the Gateway to downtown-it should not look blighted and an eyesore. Let us hope that our city elected officials take note of the Commissioner of the Revenue's report and begin to immediately put more effort into revitalizing the area. The citizens of Norfolk deserve it and the residents of the Greater Wards Corner Area certainly deserve better treatment for our neighborhoods.

We must all be involved in pushing for what we want the city to do for our area. The voices of us all are heard louder than the voices of the few. Get involved join the civic league and participate with your voice and vote.

Thanks and my best to you all, Jim

UPCOMING EVENTS AND REMINDERS

Don't forget-your help is needed to pickup litter at our Adopt-a-Spot area (Ruthven and W. Little Creek) on Saturday, March 29, 8:00 AM. Questions-call Ray Duron-423-4337

Another Clean-up Opportunity

2008 Great American Cleanup

***When: Saturday, March 8, 8am-11am
(rain date March 15)***

Where: Meet at North Shore Sports and Physical Therapy - 7419 Granby St.

Register: call 489-5829;

Trash bags, safety vests, gloves, and refreshments will be provided, and all volunteers will be eligible to win one of many Great American Cleanup Prizes!!!

TREASURER'S REPORT

Beginning Balance			<u>\$1503.32</u>
+ funds received	\$195.00		
-funds disbursed		\$68.25	
Ending Balance			<u>\$1630.07</u>

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Police Emergency	911
Police Non-Emergency	441-5610
Pace Officer	664-6921
Police Red Sector	664-6914
Code Enforcement	664-6532
Environmental Health	683-2712
Sewer Backup	823-1000
Waste Management (Call here for large pickups)	441-5813
Norfolk Cares Call Center (Don't know what office to call on the problem?)	664-6510

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR SECRETARY'S MINUTES

Wards Corner Civic League met in the Norfolk Fitness and Wellness Center at 6:45PM on Monday, January 28. President Jim English opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Pace Officer Curtis Jackson reported details of updated decal bicycle registry and home security tips i.e. keep record of your valuables (serial no., make and model) in case of burglary. He stated strongly DO NOT LEAVE ARTICLES IN YOUR CAR. Crime statistics include: 1 home and 1 commercial burglary (Rom Thai), 2 stolen autos, robbery 100 block of Maycox, a police chase (larceny suspect) on Burleigh, and a drug chase. City Transportation Engineer, Guzin Akan, presented a program to plan for traffic calming on Newport Avenue from Kingsley Lane to W Little Creek Road. To assist recommendations, factors are: traffic speeds average 10mph higher than 25mph posted, curb to curb is 44 ft. with a mix of asphalt and concrete, a school crossing, and the flashing lights signals. To calm traffic, speed bumps are not advised (amount of traffic/ functionality of school buses, fire department/ could encourage detouring on side residential streets). More stop signs may add to certain behavior of disregard and speeding up. Kingsley Lane is in immediate attention for a visible yield sign at Newport Ave. Implementation of this plan (mini traffic circles, signage, pavement markings, textured and landscaped medians) will be phased in due to lack of money. Requests will go in the CIP budget for '09. Other items addressed were 20 ft. no parking from street corners, angled parking, One Way and Do Not Enter signs needed on WLC/ Grantham near new town homes, speeding on Birmingham between Newport and Ruthven (will schedule traffic count), the inconvenience of the No U Turn sign at Post Office, the corner at The Ballentine Home and the Temple needs No Parking signs.

Betty Duron, Nominating Chair, announced the Slate of Officers for '08-'09. President Jim English, 1st VP. Linda Spear, 2nd VP. Martin Thomas, Jr., Treas. Ray Duron, and Sec'y. Joan Griffey. With no nominations from the floor, Jean Jones moved that the slate be closed. Connie Cathey seconded. Our newsletter chair (Barbara Ross) is appointed.

Pres. English announced an important meeting for Tuesday, Jan.29 at 7PM in the Workforce Development Center. The agenda is to pressure our elected officials to start doing something with the Greater Wards Corner Comprehensive Plan. Three items for implementation are Denby Park improvements, Police Precinct should be constructed there, purchase Alexis Apartments in Titustown (crime increase) and convert the area into green space and a parking lot for the Rec Center. Street sweeping will take place every 6 weeks. Do our neighborhoods want (1) advisory signs (2) no sign (3) no parking sign /enforced??? Advisory signs are recommended.

Pres. English spoke briefly about the City Budget. He shared a graph of Sales and Revenue Report for Wards Corner Business Area with Total Sales (only \$5 million increase) and for Southern Shopping Center area (\$136 million increase) thus proving the point that new construction and business are needed here. No new leases are being renewed at the Martone property. Respectfully Submitted, Joan S Griffey, Sec'y

February Neighborhood Get Together:

February in Hampton Roads can be very wet and cold. The wet is good as it provides us with the much needed water for the summer months. A good way to warm up and catch up with the neighbors is over a mug of soup.

Our recommended social for February is a

Souper Sunday Get Together:

Host – lots of coffee mugs and soup spoons
Bread and crackers

Host & Guests – make a crock pot of your favorite soup and a recipe card.

Folks can mingle while eating their soup from the cups. For dessert some cookies and coffee go a long way.

What to talk about: *Spring, glorious spring and all the flowers that come with it. Or, is there a neighborhood project that can be done in an hour or two if many people get together?*