

# RAILROAD ISLAND COMMUNITY TASK FORCE . . .

## . . . On the Right Track for Change

Recognized by District 5, Railroad Island Task Force is a Task Force of neighbors working together to revitalize Railroad Island. We meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month from 6:30PM – 8:30PM.

### MINUTES OF MEETING Thursday, March 19, 2009

In attendance: Linda Arnesen, Mary Brauer, Chelsea DeArmond, Al Oertwig, Shirley Thompson

#### **1. Lower Payne Avenue Reconstruction and Streetscape Cmte (Mary Brauer)**

The Committee has not met since the last Task Force meeting. Mary has not received any updates from the City on Phase I. She will contact Barb Mundahl for an update on Phase 1, and set up another meeting of the committee in May.

#### **2. PED Updates**

Sheri Pemberton was unable to attend the meeting. She has been busy working on CIB requests and new mortgage money. Linda Arnesen spoke with Sheri before the meeting. Sheri reported that 738 Bradley has been demolished. Currently the property is bundled with other mortgages, so cannot be purchased until the tax auction process is completed. This could take up to five years if the property is homesteaded, three if non-homestead. The City could possibly purchase it. If they did, they would probably want to split the property. Sheri said she'd keep an eye on this for us.

Chelsea inquired about the ownership of 475 Hopkins. It is foreclosed, but Chelsea has not been able to find the owner. It was suggested that she contact Sheri for assistance with this.

#### **3. Vacant Property Updates**

Al Oertwig distributed flyers for the Payne Phalen vacant home tour, which will be held on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. The only property on Railroad Island that will be part of the tour will be 574 Payne Avenue (one of the Brownstones).

#### **4. Marketing Committee Report (Chelsea DeArmond)**

The Marketing Committee has been working on developing a map/brochure. It is almost ready to go, and should be ready for the housing tour. It will be 8-1/2 x 11", tri-fold. The purpose of the brochure is to publicize Railroad Island assets in order to attract visitors and new residents. Chelsea distributed a handout that described the content and distribution plans. District 5 has set aside \$200 for the brochure, and Chelsea has arranged for a discounted rate on the printing.

The map has also been designed in a Google Map format that is suitable for a website. However, the website is currently on hold because at this time, no one has volunteered to develop and/or maintain the website. Linda asked if funds might be available to pay someone to do this. Chelsea thought that perhaps some area businesses might contribute. The Marketing Committee will continue to pursue the establishment of a Railroad Island website.

## 5. District 5 Updates (Al Oertwig)

Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Process – The citizen task forces have completed their rankings of the projects that were submitted for funding. The next step is to go to full CIB Committee, then to the City Council and the Mayor. The upgrade of the Eileen Weida playground was ranked #1 in the Community Facilities categories. Al also updated the group on the status of other proposals in District 5. Full details can be found on the City of St. Paul website.

Al distributed a flyer listing upcoming District 5 events:

April 23	East Side Restorative Justice Kick Off Event
April 28	District 5 Annual Meeting – Al encouraged interested Railroad Island residents to consider running for a seat on the Board. There are 10 openings.
May 2	Payne Phalen Vacant Housing Tour
May 16	Spring Clean-Up

## 6. Other

- RRITF Elections (Linda) - The terms of the Chair and Co-Chair of the Railroad Island Task Force expire in June. Elections will be held at the June meeting. Linda cannot run again because of the guidelines governing the Task Force. She is encouraging people to consider volunteering for one of these positions, or contacting other who may be interested.
- Friends of Swede Hollow (FOSH) (Chelsea) – The clean-up was a success. The park looks great. A special meeting has been scheduled to discuss the proposed “boardwalk” over “Mike’s fen”. The creek has dried up because neither 3M nor the brewery is using/disposing of water any more. Water and Oil Gallery is sponsoring a big event at the end of September. They are inviting artists to paint Swede Hollow and then auction off the paintings. The funds will go to Friends of Swede Hollow.
- Problem Properties on Minnehaha and Burr (Linda) – Linda contacted the Dispute Resolution Center for assistance in setting up a meeting with the landlord of these properties. Linda, Leslie, and interested neighbors will meet with the landlord to discuss their concerns about the behavior of the residents, who are loud, with public drinking and profanity day and night. There might also be some gang activity going on. The police have not been responsive.
- Police Meeting (Andy Twedt) - Andy was unable to attend the Task Force meeting, because she was representing Railroad Island at the Restorative Justice meeting being held on the same night. However, she submitted a comprehensive written report of the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, which included information about the park watch and walking patrols established to address recent incidents of violence at Lake Phalen. Her report also contained information that crime statistics decreased in the area from the previous month, possibly owing to the arrest of a group believed to be responsible for many of the burglaries. There was also a discussion of the need for more mentoring of young children to prevent them from joining gangs.
- Police Memorial Garden – We still need funds to buy new plants for the garden.
- Railroad Island Sign – The sign at the Tedesco entrance to Railroad Island looks dilapidated. The group discussed possible solutions, such as contact the City Parks department for assistance with new signs at all entrances to Railroad Island. Mary will ask Mike Klassen whether this is something the Design Center could help us with. In the meantime, Shirley volunteered to see if the sign could just use a fresh coat of paint. She also volunteered to plant some flowers to brighten up the area.

## 7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 28, 2009 at 6:30 at the Eastside Police Precinct.