



News

January 2006

The Fulton Neighborhood's boundaries are 47th Street to 54th Street and France Avenue to Penn Avenue.

Fulton Neighborhood News is published every other month by a committee of the Fulton Neighborhood Association (FNA) with funding from the Fulton Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

FNA is a nonprofit organization created by and for the residents and businesses of the Fulton neighborhood. Its board meetings are held: **The 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at Pershing Park—all meetings are open to the public.**

Fulton NRP is an organization of FNA that implements neighborhood improvement projects. Its committee meetings are held: **the 1st Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at Pershing Park.**

Fulton Neighborhood
 At Pershing Park
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How To Start 2006 In A Neighborly Way

Easy and fun ways to tune into your community

- ✦ **Take a walk down memory lane.** Go to the Fulton website at www.fultonneighborhood.org and check out the gallery of online photos from the 2005 Fulton Festival.
- ✦ **Give us your feedback.** Take the Fulton Festival Survey and let us know your thoughts. What were your family's favorite things? What can we do better? Your input will help us plan an even better 2006 festival.
- ✦ **Mark your calendar for the 2006 Fulton Festival.** The date is set for Saturday, September 16, 2005 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Pershing Park.
- ✦ **Resolve to get involved.** Even if you've already gone off that post-holiday diet, consider making one more resolution to improve your life. Consider joining the Community Engagement Committee to help plan the festival. The first meeting will be held **Tuesday, January 24, 2006 at 7 p.m. at Pershing Park.** Volunteers are needed to plan every facet of the event – from entertainment to the silent auction.
- ✦ **Attend a Fulton Neighborhood Association Meeting or join a committee that interests you.** Go to www.fultonneighborhood.org for monthly meeting times/locations. Call 612-922-3106 for more info.

NRP Implementation – 1st Wednesday
 FNA – 2nd Wednesday
 Zoning – 2nd & 4th Wednesday
 Environment – 3rd Tuesday
 Community Engagement – 4th Tuesday
 Housing – 4th Wednesday
 Safety – Last Tuesday



Photos taken at Fulton Festival 2005 by Pete Hoban.

The Mansion Next Door

Thoughts on Zoning and Current Development Activity

By John Finlayson

Recent tear-down and infill housing projects have some neighbors concerned and others elated. Just what is happening out there and what, if anything, can you do about it? Cities go through many different stages of development: the boom of creation, stable eras with little change, stagnation and decline, and revitalization and resurgence. Minneapolis has been through all these stages and is currently in a period of resurgence. All stages have both good and bad things about them. While decline means falling property values and possibly reduced tax bills to property owners, deferred maintenance can lead to deterioration of housing quality and declining tax revenues can lead to diminished city services. The current condition of resurgence means rising property values, equity accumulation that affords remodeling, and increased quality of local retail. The down side involves affordability, increased property taxes, and more tear-downs and new construction of infill housing.

Southwest Minneapolis is popular for its amenities: parks, lakes, Minnehaha Creek, shopping nodes, and easy access to the jobs and entertainment of downtown Minneapolis. It is also full of houses that were built in an era of quality and beauty. Some years ago, developers started to purchase houses for the land and location. The first source of tear-down activity was “alley” houses, small homes at the rear of the lot that were built as temporary homes that were waiting on the construction of the "real home" that never came. Now we are seeing small single level and 1-1/2 story houses being targeted for their highly valued land. Developers know that Fulton houses sell for more per square foot than even those in Edina. This can mean a big payday for developers in our neighborhood.

The objections most Fulton residents have voiced to large infill housing projects center around design quality as compared to the original housing stock, materials used, and of course, size. Many of these new homes are of a size that would be in scale on lots twice the size of an average city lot. There are presently few restrictions to limit the mass of a new home on an existing lot.

The current zoning code has two sets of restrictions that govern new construction and variances for size and placement. The first restriction mandates setbacks and height. Setback is the distance from the house to the lot line. Height is the distance from the ground to the highest point on the house. In Minneapolis, front setback is 20 feet and the setback on both sides is 5 feet. Height is 35 feet. It is possible to get a variance to exceed these criteria, but the Zoning Board of Adjustment, in general, has not been granting variances for single family houses. The second restriction is the point system developed by the City as a recent response to infill on the north side that was creating houses devoid of ornamentation or character. You have to get 15 points for style and content or you do not get a building permit.

A comparison of the zoning requirements of St. Paul, Edina, and St. Louis Park reveals similar setback and height requirements to Minneapolis, but no point system. Height limits do vary from city to city from specification of “30 feet” to “3-story”. Edina and St. Louis Park limit the footprint of the house as a percentage of the total square footage of the lot, which current Minneapolis zoning code does not limit.

Recent increases in interest rates and talk of a housing bubble has dampened developer activity. But many smaller houses still exist in Fulton and while development has slowed, tear-downs and infill may continue at a slower pace. No one wants improvement and change to stop, but what can Fulton residents do to ensure that we maintain the quality and character of neighborhood within reasonable boundaries of change?

First of all, when a variance to zoning code is presented to you as a neighbor, get involved. All variances must be presented to the City and the City requires notification of the neighbors within 350 feet of the site. If you receive notification, ask the neighbor requesting the variance to explain his/her plan. You may want to go downtown to the public hearing at City Hall and give testimony. Recently there was a side setback variance at 52nd and Beard Avenue South. Numerous neighbors went downtown, testified, and as a result, the Zoning Board of Adjustment required the builder to move the south wall of the home he had built.

In addition to the automatic City process, the Fulton Neighborhood Association (FNA) also gets involved when projects are presented. Advance notification to FNA by calling 612-922-3106 about your plans can help facilitate a neighborhood meeting and decision by FNA whether or not the neighborhood supports the variance.

If you are a neighbor doing remodeling and seeking a variance, make sure you or your developer knows the zoning code and then follow it. If you adhere to zoning code requirements, you are within your legal rights to make whatever improvements you wish to make on your property. It is always a good idea to show your plans to your neighbors first and get their understanding and, hopefully, acceptance. It is also good practice to notify the Fulton Zoning Committee of your plans by calling the Fulton Line at 612-922-3106 or by sending an e-mail to info@fultonneighborhood.org.

Finally, if you are concerned about large infill housing, you can contact our new City Councilmember Betsy Hodges, or Mayor R. T. Rybak directly. Also feel free to come to a Fulton Neighborhood Association meeting and raise the topic for discussion or catch me after the meeting to speak informally. We meet the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. at Pershing Park, 48th and Chowen.

John Finlayson, President of the Fulton Neighborhood Association, was chair of the Fulton Zoning Committee for five years. He also chairs the Minneapolis Zoning Board of Adjustment. This organization hears all zoning variance requests that go through the city and either grants the requests or denies them, subject to appeal to the City Council.

Important Contacts

Mayor R.T. Rybak
612-673-2100
rt@minneapolis.org

City Councilmember Betsy Hodges
612-673-2213
<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/contact/email-form-hodges.asp>

Rhea Sullivan, Fulton Neighborhood Coordinator
info@fultonneighborhood.org
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New to the Neighborhood?

A Welcome Packet, full of valuable coupons & information, is waiting for you.

Call 612-922-3106 or e-mail
community@fultonneighborhood.org.

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To submit article suggestions, please contact the Fulton Neighborhood Line at 612-922-3106 or e-mail to info@fultonneighborhood.org.

Fulton Neighborhood Communication Disclaimer: FNA publishes this newsletter to enhance public access to neighborhood information. While we try to keep the information timely and accurate, we make no guarantees. Readers should be aware that information in this publication may not reflect official positions of the Fulton Neighborhood Association Board of Directors or its individual members. FNN does not print unsolicited input from readers, though it welcomes any comments or suggestions readers may wish to provide.

Southwest Community Education



Free Self-Defense Workshop for Women and Girls - Tuesday, January 17 or Thursday, January 19 from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Annual Family Sock Hop – Friday, March 24 from 7 to 9 p.m.

Spring Southwest Community “Clean-up” - Saturday, April 22

We'll have juice, coffee, and rolls at Southwest at 8:30 a.m. The clean up will run from 9 a.m. to noon.

Winter & Spring Recreation Trips:

Weekend of January 20 - 22. Cross country ski trip-National Forest Lodge, Isabella, MN.

Saturday, February 4. Cross country ski trip to Mille Lacs Kathio State Park.

Weekend of February 24 - 26. Cross country ski trip to the Grand Marais area staying at the Aspen Inn Motel in Grand Marais.

Winter quarter classes and swimming begin the week of January 23rd.

For more information on Southwest Community Education programs, events, classes and activities, call 612-668-3100 or e-mail TNeiman@mpls.k12.mn.us.

Pershing Park Happenings

Winter Classes are just starting. Check out our programs at <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org> or drop in and pick up a brochure at the park - 3523 West 48th Street, 612-370-4928.

- * **Start Smart Basketball and Sports Development classes** (3- 5 yr olds) Saturdays, January 14 - February 18 from 1:15 to 2:15 p.m.
- * **Nature Babies** – Tuesdays, January 17 - February 7 from 10 to 11 a.m.
- * **Babygarten** – Mondays, January 30 - March 13 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.
- * **Winter Indoor Play Time** – Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10:30 to noon. Bring your preschooler over and run off some of that excess energy. Free.

Plenty of room is still available in our other preschool classes. Also check out the free children's programming after school Monday through Friday.

Southwest Senior Center

Computer Lab, Exercise Classes and Treadmill Available

Southwest Senior Center now has seven computers with high speed internet access available for use by people ages 55 and over. Lab hours are from 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. Computer classes are also offered at the Center.

People 55 and over have access to a treadmill during the same hours. Strength and Flexibility classes take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

For more information, call 822-3194. The Southwest Senior Center is located at 3612 Bryant Ave. S.