



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Abell Community:

Happy New Year! I wish each of you all the best in 2008. Many events have occurred since our last newsletter and many more events are to come. First, I would like to thank Jim Anthony and Kathleen Hruska for coordinating the Christmas Carolers. Approximately 15 neighbors participated in the caroling to assist the community in getting into the Christmas spirit on December 23, 2007. Next, I would like to thank Kathleen Hruska, Jim Anthony, Susanne Riveles, and Emil Volchek and Kathleen Wilsbach for serving as hosts for our annual New Year's Eve Progressive Dinner. It was a lot of fun!!!

The General Membership meetings for 2008 have been set. Here are the dates, times, and locations:

Saturday, January 26, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. St. John's Church located at 3009 Greenmount Avenue

Wednesday, April 16, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. location TBD

Wednesday, August, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. located at Waverly Library

Saturday, November 15, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. located at Waverly Library

At the General Membership meeting on January 26, 2008 the 2008 AIA Officers will be elected. Nominations are currently being taken for the following officers: President; Vice-President; Treasurer; Recording Secretary; Corresponding Secretary; and two Members at Large. In addition, the AIA is looking for chairs and members of the following subcommittees: Housing; Newsletter; Sanitation; Parking; Membership/Welcoming; Land Use and Planning; Street Fair; and Open Space. Please contact either Kathleen Hruska, Linda Forlifer, or Miruna Patrascanu if you are interested in serving on the AIA Executive Committee.

Next, I would like to thank Morgan Kennedy for designing and constructing the kiosk located on 32nd Street near the open space. If you have not seen it yet please check it out.

I look forward to seeing each of you on the 26th!

Warmest Regards,

Robin Truiett-Theodorson

Inside:
HGTV Selects
Baltimore
—
Property Tax
Assessments
—
AIA Annual
Meeting:
Sat. Jan 26th
—
Darker Than
Blue Cafe

Recommended: Darker Than Blue Cafe

Eating Recommendation: DARKER THAN BLUE CAFÉ, 3034 Greenmount Avenue. Lunch, Dinner and Sunday Brunch. For the hours of operation call 443-872-4468. Or check the very informative website: darkerthanbluecafe.com.

Linda Forlifer and I along with another friend had a great lunch here. Steve Gewirtz reports that the Sunday Brunch is worth every penny of the \$17.95 per person. The café also has a full dinner menu but as yet no liquor license. The Baltimore Sun and Baltimore Magazine have proffered praise for the talented and upbeat owner-chef, Casey Jenkins, his "fine southern cooking" (that includes fresh greens from the Waverly Farmers Market) and his vision of and investment in a new day coming to Greenmount Avenue. Give this promising new eating spot a try and spread the word, it's exactly the kind of enterprise we need in this part of our community.

Jo Ann Robinson
Abell Avenue

Volunteers Needed - Rebuilding Together Baltimore

Hello friends and supporters of Rebuilding Together Baltimore! I have fabulous news for everyone-- Thanks to your voting efforts, Baltimore has been selected as one of the winning cities in HGTV's *Change the World - Start at Home* campaign. The five winning cities were officially announced during HGTV's coverage of the Rose Parade on New Year's Day.

Now, with the support of HGTV plus local volunteers and businesses, Rebuilding Together Baltimore will be able to complete three very important projects in our community:

- 1) The home of Ethel Gaither, a retired grandmother who is raising her grandchildren in her Pen Lucy home.
- 2) Beautification of empty lots in the Pen Lucy neighborhood.
- 3) Renovations and handicap accessibility improvements to the Community Mediation Program, a non-profit organization in the Waverly neighborhood.

Many thanks to all of you who voted and spread the word with your networks! Your support made all the difference!

We now begin the process of recruiting volunteers for the projects mentioned above. The work will occur in April 2008 and will coincide with our annual Rebuilding Day, during which we will provide repairs for up to 50 Baltimore-area low-income homeowners. We are especially in need of volunteers with plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and landscaping skills. If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering with us, please contact us at **410-889-2710** or **info@RTBaltimore.org**.

Bonnie Bessor
Executive Director, Rebuilding Together Baltimore

The Lowdown on Property Tax Reassessments

As many of you have already discovered, the City of Baltimore has recently sent out Property Tax Reassessment notices to many homeowners. In many cases, these new assessments are dramatically higher than in years past, causing some alarm. Below you'll find some information that might help make sense of these new assessments:

(from AIA Member-at-Large Steve Gewirtz)

Property tax assessments are meant to reflect the current value of your land and your house. The assessment is phased in over 3 years; one third of the increase is added to the current assessment each year. For my house and for those I looked at on Abell, the assessment roughly tripled.

If the house is the principal residence of its owner, the increase in assessment for Baltimore City tax purposes is capped at 4% per year, and for State tax purposes, it is capped at 10% per year, compounded. Because of these caps, if you do not move, the assessment will be meaningless. Your total City assessment will go up 4% each year, compounded, and your State assessment will go up 10% each year, also compounded. At that rate, it will take almost 18 years for your assessment for City tax purposes to double, and it will take a bit more than 7 years for your assessment for State tax purposes to double. On your tax bill next July, the effects of the caps will be shown as "homeowner's tax credit."

If a property changes hands, it will lose the cap for that tax year. This may make it harder to sell a house, since the buyer will have to be informed that the tax will go up substantially.

The one place that the caps will not show up is in the Charles Village Community Benefits District (CVCBD) surtax. Unless CVCBD reduces its tax rate or the City Council enacts a cap applying to the CVCBD surtax, many or most of us will see a 67% increase in the surtax bills that arrive next July. A proposed change in the CVCBD bylaws would make it much easier to keep the surtax rate the same than to reduce the surtax rate.

(from City Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke)

In Baltimore City, we impose a 4% cap on the amount of a home's increased value that can be taxed each year. The cap applies to "principal residences," that is, to owner occupied properties.

Until now, City residents and residents throughout the State automatically received the cap imposed by their local subdivision. Caps vary from county to county, but the City's is 4%. To "catch" non-owner-occupants, State legislators are now requiring that every homeowner in the State to apply to receive the cap.

Owner-occupants being reassessed in this round **MUST APPLY** to receive the previously automatic tax cap on owner-occupant homes. The Homestead Tax Credit Application should be enclosed with assessment notices. Whether protesting the reassessment or not, residents should fill in the Homestead Tax Credit Application and send it in.

(from Charles Village Civic Association President Dana Moore)

Please mark your calendars for **Wednesday, January 30, 2007 at 6:30 p.m.** The CVCA is amending the agenda for its General Membership Meeting to allow for a panel of experts to come in and talk with us about the process for assessing properties and then, appealing that assessment when and where desired. We will be joined by our sister community associations in North Baltimore. Guest speakers include a lawyer with experience in advancing appeals for real property tax assessments, the supervisor of Assessments for the State of Maryland or a designee from his office and, a Charles Village resident or business owner who has succeeded in appealing a prior assessment.

This issue has generated a lot of interest throughout the city, and in Charles Village in particular. Please forward this information to anyone you know is or should be interested in the issue.

- Bulletin Board -

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RECYCLING SCHEDULE

Remember: Baltimore has begun 'Single-Stream' Recycling. ALL recyclable materials (plastic, glass, aluminum and paper) will be collected together on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month.

Abell's dates:

W 1/9, 1/23, 2/13, 2/27

Regular trash pickup is every Tuesday and Friday morning.

AIA Annual Meeting

Saturday, January 26th

10:30AM

St. John's Church (3009 Greenmount)

Parish Hall Building

(Enter the church complex, the Parish Hall Bldg. is south of the church. Use the front door and head down the stairs.)

Agenda items include:

- Election of 2008 AIA Officers
- Annual Budget
- Vote on bylaws change (see below)
- Updates on Charles Street Trolley, 32nd St. Liquor License Hearing, and the UMH Helipad

NOTICE:

Proposal to Amend AIA Bylaws

The AIA Executive Committee has proposed an amendment to the AIA Bylaws that would create a Standing Committee devoted to the Abell Open Space. The AIA currently has 8 Standing Committees:

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|-------------------------|---------------|
| - Housing | - Newsletter |
| - Sanitation | - Parking |
| - Membership/Welcoming | - Street Fair |
| - Land Use and Planning | - Nominating |

Per the AIA bylaws, chairs of standing committees are considered members of the AIA Executive Committee and have voting rights on the Executive Committee.

This amendment will be put up to vote at the AIA Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 26th. Amendments to the AIA bylaws may be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the general membership.