



TATTLER

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD CHRONICLE OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY 2009

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SPECIAL MEETING OF ALL RESIDENTS TO BE HELD ON MARCH 19 TO DISCUSS VACANT HOMES AND NEIGHBORHOOD SECURITY

On **Thursday, March 19, at 7:30 p.m.**, Sherwood Forest residents will hold a community meeting at the Western District Precinct on W. Seven Mile Road to discuss two issues that are important to every resident: vacant homes and security. We want to report to the neighborhood about some of the things our Association is doing to combat these related problems. We want to hear from the neighborhood about better ways of attacking these problems. We want to enlist every neighbor to participate fully in formulating and implementing new strategies.

With these goals in mind, we ask you to read the "Strategic Action Plan for Unoccupied Homes in Sherwood Forest," printed below, and bring it with you to the meeting on **March 19**. Your Board of Directors has been working to put in place some workable procedures for dealing with the vacant home problem on a neighborhood-wide basis. We have consulted with the Indian Village, Boston-Edison and Palmer Woods communities to learn what is working for them in dealing with their own vacant homes. The plan below is a compilation of many hours of discussion with individuals and organizations dedicated to trying to find solutions to this nation-wide problem. Now we need to hear from YOU.

Please come ready to share your thoughts about what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. Be aware that there are not nearly enough volunteers on our small Sherwood Forest Association Board of Directors to do all the jobs that need to be done. Those jobs include setting up a more formalized system than we now have for monitoring vacant homes; finding the means, including funding, to maintain the exteriors of the homes; keeping an up-to-date listing of each vacant home, the owner, the realtor and the status of the home; and enlisting the assistance of owners, realtors and city agencies to help us maintain each home. In addition, we need to work harder to assist banks and realtors to market our homes to potential buyers who will be able to move in and maintain the high standard of care and historic integrity for which Sherwood Forest has always been known. It will require the efforts of each of us to accomplish so much! We want this to be a working meeting with representation from every Sherwood Forest household. Please save the date of **March 19**.

Kim Tandy
President, Sherwood Forest Association

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR UNOCCUPIED HOMES IN SHERWOOD FOREST

The primary goal of this plan is to attract new homeowners to Sherwood Forest, but a related goal is to protect and maintain our unoccupied homes so they will be attractive to potential home buyers. This strategic

action plan requires the active involvement of all residents to achieve these two goals.

A PLAN TO PROTECT VACANT PROPERTIES

- I. Maintain a continuously updated database of unoccupied homes.
 - A. Determine the name of the owner of the property for inclusion in the database. Use websites, title searches, local realtors and neighbors to obtain and verify this information.
 - B. When a home is represented by a realtor, determine the name of the realtor for inclusion in the database.
- II. Build relationships with city and county official who can help us.
 - A. Department of Buildings and Safety Engineering: Amru Meah, Director; Michael Taylor and Steven Leggat, Chiefs of Enforcement.
 - B. Department of Administrative Hearings.
 - C. Wayne County Nuisance Abatement Program: Michael Russell, Director. For investigation of blighted properties. Under this program, a court awards title to Wayne County as last resort if owner does not maintain property.
 - D. Community Relations officers at Western District Police Precinct.
- III. Engage contractors to mow lawns, rake leaves, shovel snow and clean up around vacant properties.
 - A. We have applied for a grant from Community Legal Resources, Community and Property Preservation Program (CAPPP), to pay for these services.
- B. If we do not get the grant, authorize expenditure from Sherwood Forest Association (SFA) budget or seek neighborhood volunteers.
- C. Designate a resident to secure, oversee and pay contractors.
- IV. Keep homes secure and up to code. If absent owners and/or realtors have been contacted but are refusing to care for properties, we should:
 - A. Report properties to B&SE to investigate for building code violations and to issue correction orders and tickets. Where homes are open to trespass, contact Susan McBride of Detroit Historic District Commission. She will contact B&SE directly to have these homes boarded up. A lien will be placed on the property for the cost of boarding up. A resident must be designated to track status of such complaints.
 - B. Report uncut grass and other environmental problems to Western District Community Relations officers for ticketing. Again, someone must track status of complaints.
 - C. Report homes that are open and dangerous to the Wayne County Nuisance Abatement Program for investigation and possible seizure. Track status of complaints.
 - D. Consider boarding up or replacing windows or installing locks at neighborhood expense.
- V. Develop a system of home monitors and designate one person to act as chief monitor.
 - A. A home monitor is a neighbor who is assigned a vacant home near his or her own home. He or she agrees to be the person who cuts and rakes the lawn, shovels the snow, picks up papers and debris and otherwise works to make the house look occupied **in the event that**

we are unable to hire a contractor to do this work. If a contractor is doing the work, the monitor makes sure that the work is being done in a timely manner.

- B. The home monitor reports to the chief monitor any changes in the condition of the vacant home. This includes deterioration, break-ins, thefts and reoccupations (both legal and illegal).
- C. The home monitor reports to the chief monitor any new vacancies that occur on the block.
- D. The chief monitor designs a procedure whereby **all** residents are encouraged to report to her/him any new vacancies or changes in the status of vacant properties.

NOTE: We recognize that many of our residents already have assumed informally the role of home monitor. We must formalize the process to make sure that every home is covered and that the SFA is getting up-to-date information on the status of our vacant homes.

- VI. Use our private patrol service to assist us in monitoring vacant homes.
 - A. Make sure the drivers have a current list of vacant homes and give priority attention to those homes as they make their rounds.
 - B. Ask drivers to report to the police and the chief monitor any suspicious activities at vacant homes and report to the chief monitor any change in status at vacant homes.

A PLAN TO ATTRACT NEW HOMEOWNERS TO SHERWOOD FOREST

- I. Work with area realtors to market the neighborhood effectively, and make realtors aware of our property restrictions and historic district requirements.
- II. Distribute our Sherwood Forest brochure to realtors, social media outlets, such as Model D, and other organizations that promote Detroit living.
- III. Use our website, www.sherwoodforestdetroit.org, to promote our community. Consider creating a special section on the website featuring homes for sale and explaining the tax advantages of living in a NEZ.
- IV. Seek earned media stories (as with January 2009 feature in *Model D*).
- V. Promote our community through paid advertising.
- VI. Participate in home tours with other neighborhoods and sponsoring organizations (as with *Crain's* annual "Living in the D" and the 2008 LGBT Friends Home Tour).
- VII. Enlist every resident to be an ambassador for Sherwood Forest.

A NEW WAY TO REPORT VACANT HOMES ON YOUR BLOCK

Like many parts of our nation, state, and city, Sherwood Forest is experiencing foreclosures and the problems that come with vacant homes. Vacant homes are an easy target for thieves, copper strippers and vagrants. Recently, Shrewsbury residents woke up to find that overnight a woman and her several children had taken up residence in a vacant home. It took the coordinated efforts of the real estate company, the community and the police to remove this trespasser from the home.

It was an isolated incident, but such incidents are not unheard of in these difficult times. That is why we are

urging all residents to watch any vacant homes on their block and to report any unusual occurrences, especially the appearance of people who may not belong in the homes. We have created a new email address, vacanhouse@sherwoodforestdetroit.org, to make it easy to report: 1) a newly vacant home; 2) a new occupancy of a formerly vacant home, particularly if there is any reason to suspect that the occupancy may be illegal; 3) a vacant home that has become open to trespass; 4) a vacant home that has been vandalized or for any other reason needs immediate attention (for actual emergencies, call 911 and then notify our Gallagher Patrol Service).

Our historic homes must be protected and preserved during this stressful period in our economic history. No one will take care of our homes – not just the homes we live in, but the homes we live next to -- if we don't. That is why the Sherwood Forest Association urges every resident to pay close attention to any vacant home on his or her block and to report anything unusual to vacanhouse@sherwoodforestdetroit.org.

WELCOME TO NEW NEIGHBORS

Sherwood Forest welcomes new neighbors Michelle and Steven Howie, who have purchased a home on Stratford Road, and Dexter Fields, who has purchased a home on Roslyn. We are so glad to have you as members of our beautiful community.

SHERWOOD FOREST FEATURED IN *MODEL D*

In case you missed it, we are providing a link to the very positive video about Sherwood Forest that appeared in the January 27, 2009 edition of *Model D*, the popular online weekly devoted to telling the story of Detroit, its businesses and its neighborhoods. The video is narrated by Shewsbury resident John Corvino. Go to: <http://www.modeldmedia.com/features/mdtv.aspx>

DETROIT MAYORAL ELECTIONS

The City of Detroit will hold a special primary election on **February 24** to elect a mayor for the remainder of the term that ends on December 31, 2009. The two highest vote getters in the **February 24** election will be on the ballot for the **May 5** special general election.

Municipal millage renewal proposals will also be on **February 24** ballot.

The regular primary election will be held on **August 4**. The two top vote getters in that election will move on to the regular general election on **November 3**. The winner of that election will become mayor on January 1, 2010. The mayoral term is four years.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE SUCCESSES

The Sherwood Forest Property Maintenance Committee is working hard on behalf of our neighborhood. It is responsible for the new street sign that was installed at Canterbury and Cambridge (after the old one was knocked down by a car) and for the removal of an abandoned car on Shrewsbury. Our thanks to Gary Brown for his fine work as chair of this committee.

CALL THIS NUMBER TO REPORT STREET LIGHTS OUT

The Department of Public Lighting (DPL) requests that you call 313-267-8159 to report street light that are not working. This is an internal DPL number. You will be given a work order number to use in tracking your complaint. When you call this number, be ready to give the address of the house closest to the street light that is not working, as well as the nearest cross street.

If the problem is not corrected, contact Helen Boughton, our community manager for the Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative. She helps neighbors with lighting issues. You can reach Helen Boughton at BoughtH@detroitmi.gov or 313-394-1034.

BULK COLLECTION DATES

Every resident received a postcard from the Department of Public Works last December listing Sherwood Forest's bulk collection dates for 2009. Our remaining 2009 dates are: **April 1, July 1 and October 1**. Up to one cubic yard of bulk will be collected from your curb and must not include construction debris. For more information on bulk collection rules, go to our webpage at www.sherwoodforestdetroit.org.

STREET SNOW REMOVAL

Remember that your Sherwood Forest Association annual dues pay for street snow removal by a private contractor whenever there is a snowfall exceeding four inches. We try to send out an email in advance letting you know approximately when plowing will occur and urging you to make sure no vehicles are parked on the street. Vehicles on the street seriously hamper the work of the snow removal crew. Every time we have snow removal, we hear from a few residents complaining that the resulting band of snow was not removed from the bottoms of their driveways. We always give the same answer, and we repeat it here: It would be wonderful if the driver, after plowing our streets, returned and removed the snow from the bottoms of our 400-plus driveways, but we are operating with a small budget, and such a service is financially prohibitive. Each homeowner must be responsible for his or her driveway.

GOOD NEIGHBORS

I have written before about the Pasteur Elementary School Alumni Foundation, whose members, not all of whom are Pasteur alumni, are devoted to supporting the students and staff of Pasteur Elementary School at Stoepel and Pembroke.

On Inauguration Day in January, I was lucky enough to join Pasteur students, teachers and friends at New Prospect Baptist Church, just across the street from the school, to watch the presidential inauguration. The pastor of the church, Dr. Wilma R. Johnson, had graciously invited all the Pasteur students and teachers to watch the inauguration on the church's large-screen televisions. The children were both attentive and exuberant on this historic day, and I was reminded how important this church and this school are to our Sherwood Forest community.

Like many of our public schools, Pasteur needs a support system in the community in order to do all the wonderful things it wants to do for its students. It has found support in the Pasteur Elementary School Alumni Foundation. The foundation is looking for volunteers right now who will come to the school and read to the children on a regular basis, tutor students who have fallen behind academically and help with special projects. One of our talented Sherwood Forest residents

is already making a big difference at the school by serving as a volunteer music teacher.

One of Barack Obama's messages on January 20 was that each of us has a critical role to play in making our communities the very best places they can be. Whether at Pasteur or some other institution of your choice, please consider answering President Obama's call. You can visit the Pasteur Elementary School Alumni Foundation website at www.pasteuralumni.org or you can become a school volunteer by calling Marcy Feldman at www.feldman248@comcast.net.

Gail Rodwan

NEW SCHOOL TO OPEN

Sherwood Forest parents may be interested in a new school that is slated to open for the 2009-2010 school year in the historic Argonaut Building in the New Center area. The school is a joint venture of The Henry Ford Learning Institute and the College for Creative Studies, and it will be called Henry Ford Academy: School for Creative Studies. It will begin as a school for grades 6-9, but has plans to expand to include a full high school program. For information go to: info@schoolforcreativestudies.org or 313-664-7920.

THINK SPRING: A SHERWOOD FOREST GARDEN



SHERWOOD FOREST ASSOCIATION
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
January 12, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kim Tandy, John Corvino, Dan Clarkson, Sue McMillan, Valerie Leigh, Scott Wilson, Gail Rodwan and Marcia Baum
Guest: Martin Baum

Call to Order at 7:45 p.m. by President Kim Tandy at the home of Marcia Baum.

- II. Reading / Distribution of the Minutes of December 8, 2008. It was moved by Gail Rodwan and supported by John Corvino that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed.
- III. Treasurer's Report. Sue McMillan presented the Treasurer's Report. It was moved by Gail Rodwan and supported by John Corvino that the Treasurer's report be approved as presented. Motion passed.
- IV. President's Report / Communications
- A. Report.
- President Tandy reported that there will be 4 vacancies on the board. Members discussed board standing committees that are in need of board member participation and/or leadership. Those committees include: Social/Cultural, Historic Preservation, and Property Maintenance. In addition, to current standing committees, the board discussed the creation of a new Vacant Property Committee. All board members were asked to seek out prospects and send their names to Kim Tandy.
- B. Correspondence.
- President Tandy reported that a new collaborative called Detroit Vacant Property Campaign (DVPC) was created to help neighborhoods deal with negative effects of vacant homes including related property maintenance problems. Community Legal Services, a non-profit legal service provider, will oversee the grant making process funded by the Kresge Foundation. Sherwood Forest has been invited to submit a proposal.
 - A letter was sent to Mayor Cockrel from SFA President Kim Tandy informing the Mayor of the superb service provided by the Western District Police Department, specifically their help with illegal home occupancy.
- V. Committee Reports:
- A. Block Captains Kim Tandy reported that a meeting is scheduled for January 22.
- B. Real Estate Valerie Leigh presented the January 2009 Listing of Active, Pending Sales and Sold Residential Properties from the Multi-Listing. The report does not include for sale-by-owner properties.
- C. Snow Removal Marcia Baum reported that there was one street snow removal on December 28, 2008.
- VI. New Business: Vacant Homes
- The Board spent the major part of this meeting focusing on the problems directly related to vacant home property. Former board member Walter Shapero submitted a report outlining a discussion that he had with a representative from the Indian Village Association. The report summarized their vacant home issues and activities and included contact information for both Indian Village and Boston Edison Associations. Gail Rodwan and Marcia Baum will follow up and report at the next Board

meeting. Kim Tandy will contact neighboring associations to learn about their strategies and activities in dealing with the vacant home problem.

- The board agreed that a Vacant Home Committee, comprised of both board and non-board members, be created to address the significant problems related to this real estate crises. It was also suggested that a single focus legal committee be established to work with the Vacant Home Committee as needed.
- A meeting for all SFA homeowners is planned to discuss issues of security as well as vacant homes. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to solicit neighbors to volunteer to join our new vacant homes committee.

There being no further business, it was moved by Sue McMillan and supported by John Corvino that the meeting be adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia Baum, Secretary

**PLEASE ATTEND THE MEETING ON MARCH 19 AT THE
WESTERN DISTRICT PRECINCT**