



# Mount Vernon Belvedere Clarion

MAY 2006

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## **Mount Vernon Children's Park**

We are getting closer to having Mount Vernon's very first playground! The fence is up, the equipment and surface go in next, and soon we will have a spectacular new playground – a gift from this community to the children and families of our neighborhood and beyond. We were pleased to be featured in yet another wonderful article in the Sun in April. Yes, the whole city is watching this project and sharing our excitement about it. Due to some technical issues with the construction, we will have an official dedication event in this summer, but the park will be opened as soon as it is ready for the children to enjoy it. We wish to thank the following outstanding neighbors, business owners and institutional representatives for joining our Children's Park Advisory Board: Laura Giantris and Vicki Schassler, Co-chairs, Susan Pippin, Eric Lowe, Jessica Walbridge, Mike Schleifer, Nathaniel Gordon-Clark and Dipti Shah. This capable, energetic and highly skilled team will manage the playground after its completion.

## **Newspaper Boxes**

Overwhelmed by too many ugly newspaper boxes in front of your property? You CAN get them removed if you are a new owner and did not agree to their placement! Write to Martha Grande, Minor Privilege Permits, 417 E. Fayette Street Room 100, Baltimore MD 21202. New boxes also have to be approved by property owners before they can be installed.

## **Use 311!**

As Lyle Nash, our Public Safety Committee Chair, noted at the last meeting, all city services are allotted based on the number of 311 requests made by a community. If you have not called 311 lately, it means police, public works employees, sanitation enforcement officers and rat abatement staff are going to another neighborhood and your tax dollars are paying for it!! Call 311 for everything related to city services: criminal activity, street lights out or missing, trash or recycling not collected, broken storm drains, apartment buildings without trash cans, street signs missing, rat infestation, housing code violations including missing or broken windows and peeling paint, construction without permits (go to [baltimorehousing.org/index/permits.asp](http://baltimorehousing.org/index/permits.asp) to check if permits have been issued). Your calls will mean a cleaner, safer and better Mount Vernon.

## **Benefits of the Holly Tour, a fundraiser for the Mt. Vernon Square**

### **New Grass**

East, West, North Parks of Square have been aerated and seeded for grass as of April 3rd. So that the turf grass can get a good start, the orange fence was up for the month of April. A thank you to Dept. of Rec and Parks for their in-kind services. Your patience is appreciated, dog lovers and friends. Think Rain!

### **New Spring Bulbs**

Daffodils were planted by Midtown, crocus by FMV volunteers and tulips by Department of Recreation and Parks. Thank you!

### **Planting with Master Gardeners/Volunteers**

Prep work for planting took place in mid-April by a local landscaper. The Baltimore Master Gardeners are committed to a second year to serve as advisors and gardeners to the square to work with FMV volunteers to plant hostas, herbs, and Rosa Knockouts, Lavendar etc.

### **New Border Fence**

This 12" high border fence will mimic the tall rod-iron-like fence. It will be installed in the West Park to protect the new bed plantings in the front between benches. This fence is funded by Friends of Mt. Vernon with the support the Baltimore Community Foundation. Installation should occur in May.

### **Irrigation**

New hoses and soaker hoses will be installed by Midtown Development to aid the new plantings. Presently, there is little source of water for plants.

### **Beautification of Mt. Vernon Square**

FMV goal is to make this landmark historic square a place for everyone to enjoy. Please respect the new plantings and grass.

### **Development**

Unless you have been spending the past year overseas, you already know that development in Mount Vernon is hot and getting hotter. We are already seeing dividends on our height-fight win with the owner of Gampy's putting that deteriorating building up for sale just days after the height issue was resolved. Numerous other developments are in the works – some good, some not so much – but the great news is there is no cooling in demand for Mount Vernon property.

Now, we have the opportunity to focus on getting the type of development we all want to see here, but there is a lot of work

ahead (can you believe it!?). The Comprehensive Master Plan (<http://www.liveearnplaylearn.com/>) that is on its way to approval calls for a focus of city capital spending on “Transitional” and “Emerging” neighborhoods, and the good news is that we are deemed “Emerging”. Next, a Neighborhood Plan is called for, and we’ll need full community participation to put together the best plan possible, as soon as possible. You are encouraged to start familiarizing yourself with the process by looking at the Upton Master Plan (<http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/planning/images/UptonFinal.PDF>) as a template of what we are working towards. Before that, you should start with the Midtown Plan (<http://www.mvba.org/midtownplan.pdf>) which has been our guiding document for years.

Finally, we are starting to put together a “wish list” of everything we want Mount Vernon to be. Below is a list of some of the ideas that have been submitted (but not yet vetted, and in no particular order) and we ask that you send more ideas to us at [development@mvba.org](mailto:development@mvba.org). Anyone who is interested in helping out on this and other development projects should contact Paul Warren at the same email.

- More green space/parks
- Dog run(s)
- New Streetscape, lighting and crossing signals
- Façade up-lighting
- Church lighting
- Eliminate cobra lights
- Brick sidewalks and crosswalks
- Hanging Planters on Charles and Read (remove concrete ones)
- Landscape large median triangles, such as at Chase and Cathedral
- Put traffic control refrigerators at street level (not on poles)
- Newspaper box corrals
- Replace parking meters with kiosks
- More street trees
- Welcome Signage
- Historic Street Signage
- Consistent treatment of tree-wells
- Public parking garages at 90? Cathedral and 10?? St Paul
- Zoning Overhaul
- More residential parking – less metered parking, less no parking.
- Read Street and Centre/Druid Hill as gateways to State Center
- Infill Charles Street vacant parcels
- MVP Conservancy, full MVP restoration and control of programming
- Better connection to Penn Station – build over JFX (greenspace?)
- More frequent, later and weekend MARC trains
- Consistent treatment and control of pole and street-banners
- Red Line subway
- Environmentally friendly busses that also are lighter
- Consolidate bus service
- Trolley
- Visitor’s Center
- Mt. Vernon interactive Kiosk at Baltimore Visitors Center
- Stronger tie to Inner Harbor tourism
- Retail: Full Grocery, Hardware, Bakery, Large Dry Cleaners, Community Health Club with pool
- Housing and CHAP enforcement and education
- Charter Elementary School
- Affordable Housing
- Extended night life provisions (later closing)
- Wi Fi
- Flex-Car Service
- Security cameras on commercial streets
- Close St Paul Ramp
- Two-way traffic
- Divert traffic to Guilford, JFX and MLK
- Stop proposal to close lower JFX unless it decreases MV traffic.
- Relocate State buildings in 700 block of N. Calvert to State Center and demolish.
- New façade for Chase & St. Paul and Horizon House
- Close Howard Street Tunnel to freight (munitions and chemicals).
- Close/relocate soup kitchen now at church on MVP
- Extend CHAP district to Mulberry
- Consistent property tax assessments between commercial and residential
- Rec and Parks maintenance of Children’s Park
- Improved CHAP guidelines for additions, renovations and signage.
- Redesign Maryland General block-long wall to better integrate with community
- Boutique Hotels
- Prohibit/limit chain stores/restaurants
- Sell/Outsource Inn at Government House
- Distinguish Mt. Vernon from “Downtown”
- Reduction of bus stops. Or, larger spaces between bus stops.
- Bicycle commuter Accommodation
- No parking, structured or otherwise, should front primary streets
- Parking tax or land value tax for Midtown

**Architectural Review committee meeting March 28, 2006**

**1) Morton Street Development** – Developer: Howard Chambers. Architect: Parameter Incorporated.

The idea behind this project is a revitalization of Morton Street with new construction ‘sliding’ behind the current carriage house type structures. The architect made his presentation. The proposed style of the building will include three simple stepped or articulated structures with lots of glass and the potential of facades on all sides (namely Morton Street, Eager Street, Deab Alley and Chase Street). Color details have not yet been decided upon but will fall within neighborhood parameters. The streetscape on Morton Street will retain the cobbles, trees are to be planted, and benches will be provided. The first floor (10,000 ft. sq.) will be used for office or retail space. The residential units are to be made up of one-bedroom dens (+/- 1400 ft. sq.), efficiencies (4 on each floor @ 650 ft. sq.), 2-bedroom apts (1,480 ft. sq and 1,344 ft. sq. respectively), and two-storey lofts (1,600 ft. sq.). The parking garage will have two entrances and one exit. Furthermore, for this project to go ahead, one building on Morton Street is targeted for demolition pending approval from CHAP, even though it is listed as a contributing structure. The intended time schedule is to break ground in June 2007, however the soaring construction costs are an issue. The general desire is to promote a multi-purpose building complex that would be a welcome asset to the neighborhood.

ARC discussion: The committee’s main concern was about the demolition of one of the original buildings on Morton Street, which is on the contributing list. The challenge is to find a way to restore and incorporate the building into the new construction rather than demolish it. Cathy McDermott raised a con-

cern about the actual design of the new buildings saying that they looked too much like tenements or projects especially on the Chase Street side. However, the committee was in agreement that the present drawings are still preliminary and would be refined closer to the time of construction. Everyone seemed to favor the modulated approach in design as opposed to the monolithic alternative. A traffic study on Deab Street Alley was also recommended. General Status: The revitalization of Morton Street with retail opportunities would be an asset to Mount Vernon—the scale and massing of the new construction is good, the height is within the guidelines, and the preservation of the existing buildings (bar one) is sensitive to the terrain. So ultimately, the committee is in favor of continuing the dialogue on this project.

**2. Brass Elephant – 924 North Charles Street**

Jack Elsby, the owner of the Brass Elephant, made a presentation for the renovation of the façade and storefront of the building. His intention is to replace the exterior color (Wedge-wood blue) with a high gloss black. He mentioned using a high-end Dutch paint from Budeke’s Paints. Furthermore, he would like the spines supporting the windows and smaller windowpanes to have an oxidized copper-look. New brass lettering will replace the existing ones. And the present canopy will be replaced with an alternating gray and black striped “sunbrella” fabric. The present fluorescent light would be replaced by incandescent light. The top cornice (which has not been touched for years) will remain the cream color that it currently is, but with repairs. The contractor is Louis Bros Incorporated. A cherry picker was suggested by some of the ARC members as opposed to scaffolding. Jack was in full agreement. All were in favor of his proposal.



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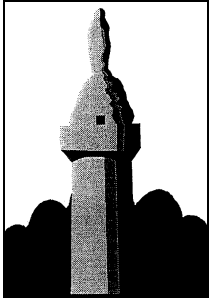
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- Property Stewardship ....Lance Humphries
- Liquor.....Steve Johnson
- Zoning.....Paul Warren
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- Mary Ann Henderson

**Historic Mt. Vernon/Belvedere**

**The next General Membership Meeting will be held on May 16th At the Belvedere Hotel, Lobby level, beginning at 7:30pm.**

