

Mount Vernon Belvedere Clarion

November 2008

Volume 23, Number 11

The next general membership meeting will be held on November 18 at the Belvedere Hotel, lobby level. Meetings start promptly at 7:30pm. Members and non-members are welcome to attend.

This month's topic of discussion will be the proposed homeless shelter to be located on Fallsway and its impact to the community.

Neighborhood Nuisance Abated

The MVBA is pleased to announce the closing of the Rock Star Show Room in the 500 block of Cathedral Street. This storefront "gallery" was the site of many loud, late night parties and various building permit and liquor code violations. We thank the immediate neighbors, our Liquor Chair Steve Johnson and City Council Representative Bill Cole for helping to make this happen.

Halloween Fun for Families

More than 25 Mount Vernon ghosts and goblins (and their parents and several grandparents) celebrated Halloween on October 31 with a celebration at the Children's Park before heading out for trick-or-treating around the neighborhood. Trick-or-treating was restarted in Mount Vernon five years ago after a 20+ year absence. With only 5 children in that first group, the number of children has grown every year, and judging by the number of expectant parents, will take a big jump up again next year. Families are indeed back in Mount Vernon!

Great Neighbor News

We have lots of great neighbors in Mount Vernon, but special thanks go this month to the **Maryland Club** and **Grand Central** for requesting and funding the extension of the new street scaping work to extend next to their properties on Eager Street. This extra investment in public space by the Maryland Club and Grand Central – at a cost of over \$ 10,000 each -- will "wrap" the new brick sidewalks around the corners of these two very visible properties.

Kudos also go to **Neals Hair Salon and Studio** at 856 Park Avenue for the amazing façade renovation on their business. And, because of the unique location of Neals and the fact that they have TWO storefronts (one facing Park Ave and one facing Read Street), they had to do double the work of many businesses to complete this project. Check out the new rich copper roofing and fresh pale mint paint color. It's incredible.

Mount Vernon Market at 815 N. Charles has just signed a contract for complete façade restoration starting this month. This will be a major improvement to that block and was made possible by the hard work of the MVBA ARC and a "seed grant" from the Association.



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2008 Mount Vernon Business Roundtable

Once again, we had a room packed to capacity with strong representation from the majority of our 150 business, cultural and non-profit members at October 29th's Mount Vernon Business Roundtable. The topics of discussion included:

The **proposed homeless shelter** at I-83 and Centre Street, a project that is under careful review by an Ad Hoc committee of the MVBA. MVBA Member Shawn Terrell, with a strong background in homeless issues, has been leading MVBA's efforts to negotiate the size of the facility, and how its operations will be structured and mitigation strategies. The city has begun to push the shelter proposal through city approval channels, drawing concern from the MVBA. The shelter was on the agenda of a recent Planning Commission meeting until the MVBA noticed it and requested it be postponed, which was done.

Deputy Mayor for Economic and Community Andrew Frank informed the meeting that the city would ensure community participation and review. He also announced that the city had approved the creation of a public/private conservancy for the Mount Vernon Place Parks – an effort that will attract \$ 8 million to complete all of the work required to fully restore the parks by 2015. Mayor Dixon will be making a formal announcement of the Mount Vernon Place Conservancy on November 20. (See Conservancy article in this issue for more information)

The Free Circulator service is set to begin in July 2009 linking the Inner Harbor with Penn Station. MVBA has requested routing that would bring these hybrid bus vehicles down Maryland Avenue/Cathedral Street instead of Saint Paul Street as currently proposed. The MVBA believes that the Maryland/Cathedral route is more in alignment with the "cultural spine" of Mount Vernon including the Lyric, the Meyerhoff, the Theatre Project, School for the Arts, the Contemporary, the Walters, the Historical Society, the Enoch Pratt Library and the Basilica.

Streetscaping. Project manager Frank Cullotta stated that completion of the Charles Street streetscaping will be in August 2009.

101 W. Read Street (Medical Arts Building) is one of only two major residential projects now underway in the city. It is scheduled to open in January 2009. The building will be called the Professional Arts Building and will have 90 market rate rental units. The developers, Jim Campbell and Nancy Hoof of Somerset Development were in attendance at the roundtable. They have also secured 30 parking spaces at a nearby lot as negotiated by MVBA. These spaces can be leased by their new tenants.

11 E. Chase Street was noted as a site for future development. Currently vacant, the property is owned by an investor in London and has been vacant for many years. Some of the windows and upper doors of the building are open to the elements. The MVBA is working with the Housing Authority to issue fines to the owner until the building is secured and to perhaps encourage the owner to move the building into development.

MVBA is developing a network of regional and national travel editors and writers to promote coverage of Mount Vernon as an affordable and exciting travel destination, particularly for weekend visitors. Under the tag line of "Europe Without the Airfare" the campaign has received positive, encouraging – and pleasantly surprised – responses from writers and editors contacted. New promotions are planned in early 2009 with updated information on Mount Vernon happenings and special offers.

The first comprehensive, user-friendly visitors map for all of Mount Vernon was noted to attendees, along with the fact that 100,000 Mount Vernon Maps are already in circulation. This information received a huge round of applause from the crowd.

Public safety updates included a quote from Major Bailey who oversees the central Police District that Mount Vernon enjoys one of the lowest crime rates in the city, despite several crime stories that made it into the press recently.

A good deal of discussion on public safety centered around **the bottle club** in the basement of the Belvedere. The Liquor Board has authority over these clubs thanks to June 2008 legislation. A hearing before the Liquor Board about the problems at the bottle club is now scheduled for November 13 at 1pm. Attendance at such hearings is heavily weighed by the Liquor Board. Businesses and residents are asked to be there for this important hearing. Individuals and businesses that can't attend the hearing are encouraged to write letters supporting the shut down of the business to jane.schroeder@baltimorecity.gov.

An appeal was made by our City Council Representative Bill Cole for Mount Vernon businesses to decline any offers from event promoters wishing to rent large facilities for their own operations. These events have caused many public safety problems and late night nuisances for residents.

MVBA's Architectural Review Committee (ARC) Chairman Steve Shen introduced the work of the committee to the attendees. Reviewing exterior work on buildings and reviewing all major development projects in the community now requires almost daily attention by the architects and designers of the ARC.

New MVBA Development Committee member, Drew Rieger, was introduced and will be lobbying the city for the development of a much-needed Area Master Plan to guide the future development of Mount Vernon.

Historic District signage for Mount Vernon was intro-

The Thirteenth Annual Baltimore Book Festival – 2008

Rain, rain, rain...we did not have good weather till Sunday of that weekend, and as good luck would have it, people did come out. We had many books from previous years to sell. We also had a new supply of used books donated by Jean Gartlan, Mary Ann Henderson, Michael Hyman, Rebecca Leamon, Michael Milligan, Regina Minniss, Julia Moed, Ken Ringlein, and John Shields. MVBA's booth only made \$147.50, not much, but not bad considering the weather. Hanging around and helping out with the booth were Cheryl Casciani, Mary Ann Henderson, Micheal Hyman, Steve Johnson, and Susan Warren. Rebecca Leamon helped to set up, and Michael Hyman helped to break down. I am very grateful to all of you who gave books and helped with the booth! Please remember to save your books for next year. —Regina Minniss

duced at the meeting. MVBA is working with CHAP and the Transportation Department to tie up final approvals as well as logistics on production and installation.

Charles Street Trolley Proposal. The Charles Street Development Corporation announced that it had received funding from the city and state to do more detailed engineering studies on the project. MVBA Vice President Paul Warren noted that the Association has not taken an official position on the proposal. A survey of members (half of which were responses from business members) found that the majority of members felt they needed more information to make a decision on the proposal.

MVBA thanks the Engineers Club for their generosity in again hosting the Business Roundtable meeting. We're pretty sure the club's grand ballroom will be needed for this popular and growing MVBA annual event in 2009!

Tree Planting Update

MVBA representatives met with the Forestry Department recently to review Mount Vernon's tree removal and planting requirements. The forestry folks will be removing as many dead trees and stumps as possible given their poor resources to do so. The city has only two stump removers and one has been in various states of disrepair most of the summer. They are not optimistic about the performance of the stump grinders in general. Large trees and very large stumps will be ground out as much as possible and then covered for a year to allow more of the older root systems to decay for one year. These sites will be planted in Fall 2009. Small and medium sized trees and stumps will be planted in November and December to the extent that forestry has trees available to meet our request for trees in within blocks to be the same species. If the correct species is not available this Fall, it will be requested for Fall 2009.

Gunther Hardware Building Update

The long-planned demolition of the University of Baltimore Foundation's derelict buildings at the northeast corner of Maryland and Biddle was approved by CHAP

this month in conjunction with a UB/MVBA agreement for future use of the parcel. The agreement calls for demolition this Fall and temporary surface parking for up to 18 months to help offset the current Bolton-Yards project followed by sod/green space use until the development plans are finalized for the proposed final use as student housing.

Inn at Government House

The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) has released a Request for Proposal for the operation, lease, or purchase of the Inn at Government House at 1125 Calvert Street. The MVBA Development Committee Chair met with BDC to request several amendments to the solicitation.

A Few Cultural Highlights for the Month

Beadazzled At the Walters. This exhibition features more than 200 highlights from the Walters' collection-- many of them never displayed before. Adults: \$8, Seniors: \$6. Runs until January.

Collision: People and Events that shaped the Vietnam Era in Maryland - Another great exhibit from the MdHS, this one is on display until January 4, 2009 at The Maryland Historical Society.

New Business/Institutional Members

Welcome on Board to these new business members:

Kyro Pizza (the former Al Pacino's) at the corner of Cathedral and Read fresh pizza from a real wood-burning oven, Middle Eastern specialties (including the best hummus this side of Lebanon) and they deliver too! **Night of the Cookers** in the 800 block of Howard is still making waves in dining circles with great Southern cooking for dinner and a Sunday brunch that brings folks back every week. This restaurant is every bit as good as you've heard. Also joining MVBA this month is the **First and Franklin Presbyterian Church** at Park Avenue and Madison Streets led by the Rev. Alison Halsey. If you have not yet checked out their memorial to those who have fought in the Iraq war on the Park Avenue side of their building, it is something not to be missed.

2008 Holly Tour Showcases Homes on Biddle Street “The Street of the Duchess of Windsor” And Includes the First Annual Window Walk a Festive Display of Decorated Store Fronts

Baltimore –Friends of Mount Vernon Place organizers of the Holly Tour, the neighborhood’s self- guided holiday house tour are expanding the event to include the First Annual Window Walk during which local merchants will compete for the best decorated window display. Merchants, retailers and restaurateurs from Mt . Vernon, historic Charles Street and Midtown will unveil their windows on November 29 to officially kick off the downtown holiday season. Judging for several categories including most creative window will occur during the House Tour Sunday, December 7.

Retailers interested in decorating their windows can download the application from the Friends of Mt Vernon website – www.FriendsofMountvernonplace.org , or call Window Walk Chair David Wiesand at 410-539-4440.

The 2008 Holly Tour features 13 unique homes and the Monumental Life Insurance Building in the north part of the Mount Vernon neighborhood. Highlights include empire style residences built in the 1800’s one of which houses a collection of replica jewelry worn by the Duchess of Windsor in the 1930’s. The Duchess, formerly the Baltimorean Wallace Warfield Simpson, lived on Biddle Street for several years during her romance with the Prince of Whales.

Tickets are \$50 for the Grand Tour Package offering convenient, free parking at registration, a tour of the 14 locations plus a visit to Monumental Life’s 70 year old underground treasury vault, and a festive Holly Tour cocktail reception or \$25 for the tour of the 14 outstanding properties. Order tickets online at www.hollytour.com or send a SASE with check to Friends of Mt Vernon Place, 1221 North Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202. Monumental Life sponsors this year’s Tour in honor of the company’s 150 anniversary in Baltimore.

The Holly Tour and Window Walk is the annual fundraiser for the Friends of Mount Vernon Place the all volunteer group dedicated to the maintenance of the historic Mt Vernon Place Parks. For more information visit www.Friendsofmountvernonplace.org

Mount Vernon in the News

Mount Vernon continues to attract attention in the national and local press. Hats off to the Walters, Sotto Sopra and Beadazzled for being highlights in an August article in *Southern Living* Magazine about places of interest to Baltimore visitors. Congratulations also to the Inn at 4 East Madison for the beautiful photograph of their blue jewel box of a parlor and the raves by *Elle* magazine for both the accommodations and the banana pancakes. And the August issue of *Esquire* Magazine named the Prime Rib’s prime rib one of the “20 Best Steaks in America.” BRAVO TV’s American’s Next Top Chef program has selected Red Maple’s Executive Chef Jill Snyder for its next season. The premier is November 12. September’s *Baltimore* magazine included a full page feature on MVBA member Jay Jenkins of the terrific interior design firm Jenkins Baer on West Chase Street. And one of our best retailers, Drusilla Jones, and her charming shop Drusilla’s Books on Howard Street has been discovered by the *Washington Post* which featured Drusilla’s Books in one of the first editions of its new on-line daily newspaper. And, in one of the best restaurant reviews to come from the *Sun* in ages, Soup’s On at 11 W. Preston received 3 ½ stars (our of 4) for food! Their eight daily homemade soups are true treasures. Try this new Mount Vernon foodie favorite. They are open Monday-Saturday 11 – 8 and Sunday 12-6.

And the **Mount Vernon Place United Methodist Church** found itself on page A3 of the *Sun* for hosting the first ordination of an openly gay minister in a United Methodist Church on October 19. The national church organization is opposed such ordinations, but the Mount Vernon Place Church and its small congregation voted to support the ordination despite potential repercussions within their denomination.

More Great Restaurant Specials

Welcome to Maria Louise Bistro – now open at 904 N. Charles!

Last week’s list of dining bargains was such a hit, here are more dining deals to check out in the neighborhood:

Midtown Yacht Club Hearty Sunday brunch buffet – with meats, soups and more.\$13.95, 11a.m. -3 p.m. and \$3 pitchers of mimosas.

Prime Rib More Special Offerings from this top destination: 1/2 Price Wine List Every Sunday, "Take Off Your Tie" night every Thursday night with special Lite-fare menu all items under \$20 and 10 Wines under \$30.

Red Maple has a bargain pre-theatre dinner on Friday and Saturday nights for \$ 20 per person enjoy appetizer, two tapas and dessert. Party must be seated by 6:30 p.m. and reservations are recommended.

Restaurateurs: if we’ve missed your restaurant’s specials, please send information to membership@mvba.org and we will include you in the next newsletter.

SAVE THE DATE—December 9, 2008 at 6:30pm for MVBA’s Annual Holiday Party. Meet your neighbors, enjoy some casual food and drink, see who wins this year’s series of awards, and have some fun. The location is yet to be determined, but invitations will be mailed out soon with all the details.

Door Contest

Doors of Ireland. Doors of the Netherlands. And now, the fabulous doors of Mount Vernon! If you have or plan to have completed the refurbishment of your front door in either paint or a natural finish, between September 1, 2008 and September 1, 2009 and you are an MVBA member, you could win a cash prize of \$ 350 for your efforts!

Simply submit a before photo and an after photo to the architectural review committee c/o Steven Shen at 1221 N. Calvert on or before September 1, 2009. Remember that all exterior work requires an application for notice to proceed along with your color choice be sent to the architectural review committee before work begins. The winners will be announced at the September 2009 MVBA meeting. If your door needs work anyway, why not do it now and perhaps be a WINNER!

To accomplish the right old world look, we encourage entrants to contact Fine Paints of Europe at 1-800-332-1556 ask for Emmett and identify yourself as an MVBA member in Baltimore. They carry all the formulas of paint companies to make both alkyd and acrylic paint and they can deliver it to your front door. Show the beauty of your home from the outside in -- PAINT YOUR DOOR and win! Thank you to Louie and Maureen Van Dyck for providing the prize money for this contest. The MVBA is proud to also be a sponsor and financial supporter of the Mount Vernon door contest.

Future of Midtown Conference

Mount Vernon was represented by a significant group of Board Members, business owners, and residents at a September 26 forum at the University of Baltimore to discuss the future on the Midtown area. The audience was largely made up of commercial real estate brokers and developers.

Nominations for MVBA fall election—

At the October general membership meeting, a call for nominations from the floor was made in case there were other interested individuals seeking one of the two seats available this year. Because there were none, the slate of two candidates currently sitting on the MVBA Board, Barbara Jean Gilbert and Petula Nash, will be formally accepted by a vote of affirmation.

City Paper “Best of” Bestows Honors all Over Mount Vernon

And here is who made Mount Vernon a stand out once again in City Paper’s Best of Baltimore list: The Helmand (Best Middle Eastern Restaurant), Comprehensive Car Care (Best Auto Repair), Brewer’s Art (Best Local Beer and Rosemary Fries), The Hippo and Grand Central (Best Gay Bar), Sappho’s (Best Lesbian Bar), Center Stage (Best Local Theater Company), Gian Marco Menswear at 517 N. Charles (Best Men’s Clothing Store), Beatnik Barbershop (Best Men’s Haircut), Downtown Baltimore Child Care at 806 Park Ave (Best Child Care), Charm City Yoga at 107 E. Preston (Best Yoga Studio), Enoch Pratt Library (Best Places to Rent Movies for Free), Baltimore Hostel at 17 W. Mulberry (Best Hostel), Minato (Best Place to Eat Alone), The Prime Rib (Best Restaurant Service), Dukem (Best Ethiopian), Akbar (Best Indian), Jay’s on Read Street (Best Upscale Bar), Midtown Yacht Club (Best Pit-Stop Drink), The Contemporary (Best Art Museum), Paperwork Gallery at 107 E. Preston (Best Place to Buy Art). And with that list, we all have good reason to eat, drink, shop and enjoy the cultural offerings right outside our front doors. We are very pleased and proud that all of these winners are MVBA members. We thank them for their support and for doing such great work every day.

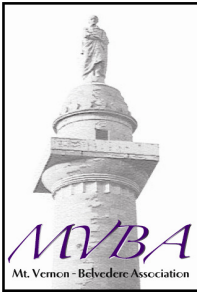
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Historic Mt. Vernon/Belvedere

**First Thursdays celebrates the annual
Lighting of the Monument
on December 4th.**

**Interested in news from the Midtown
Community Benefits District? Use the
following link to subscribe to the MCB
e-mail newsletter.**

www.midtowncommunity.org/home.html

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