

• **Trader Joe's** long-awaited expansion is underway; shelves are being reorganized daily.

One of the nice things about this neighborhood is its mix of neighborhood-friendly businesses we can walk to. We have several very nice restaurants, cozy coffee and sandwich shops, banks, dry cleaners, a clothing store, fitness facilities, and even a real theater.

PARTNERSHIP NEWS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN MONTGOMERY PARK

The Old Town North Community Partnership created the Taste of Old Town North six years ago as a fundraising event to allow us to fulfill our part of an agreement with the City of Alexandria for improvements to Montgomery Park. As a result of this partnership with the City, we have been able to redesign the park to be more useful to the community, including taking down many yards of chain link fence, constructing the

gazebo shelter, installing a community sign box, building a new path north of the tennis courts, and improving landscaping; our donations to the park have included new trashcans, park benches, and this year, a picnic table. We also clean the park (with frequent trash pickups) and have committed to watering trees if the city can install watering stations or sprinklers. The final phase of the improvements will focus on the dog run. Last winter we administered a survey of dog run users and those results will be used to determine the new configuration, materials, and amenities of the dog run.

save THE DATE: THE FOURTH ANNUAL TASTE OF OLD TOWN NORTH – MAY 28TH 5:30PM-7:30PM

This Spring's Taste of the Charms of Old Town North will once again showcase our wonderful restaurants and small businesses with tasty selections of food, drink and goodies.

Great live music, dance performances, yoga, karate and fitness demonstrations all under the gazebo and all to benefit the Montgomery Park Improvement Project. Come out and Play!

Please call OTNCP at 703-836-8066 for information or to volunteer. Or contact event chair Margaret Townsend 571-218-2161
Email riversedgecenter@yahoo.com

THE WATERFRONT FESTIVAL IS 28!

This year's Red Cross Waterfront Festival will take place in Oronoco Bay Park on June 20 and 21. The event features food and craft vendors, a children's tent, amusement rides and musical performances. On Saturday evening, headline bands include Virginia Coalition, Stephen Kellogg and the Sixers, and the Pat McGee Band. There is an admission charge for the festival, which benefits the Alexandria Red Cross.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

City Council elections, May 5

Paws for the Park, October

MetroStage's newest production

will open April 23 and run through May 24. Heroes, a play by Gerald Sibleyras, was translated from the French by noted playwright Tom Stoppard. A hit in Paris under the original title "Le Vent des Peupliers," it was produced in English in London, where it won the 2006 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. For tickets, call 1-800-494-8497. For group ticket sales or more information, call 703-548-9044 or go to www.metrostage.org

The play runs Thursdays and Fridays at 8, Saturdays at 5 and 8:30, and Sundays at 3 and 7 p.m. MetroStage is at 1201 N. Royal Street.



Contact the Old Town North Community Partnership
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OLD TOWN NORTH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

APRIL 2009

FREE AND OPEN TO ALL:

MAY 6: ANNUAL MEETING
7 TO 9 PM, HOLIDAY INN
FIRST STREET

MAY 28: TASTE OF OLD TOWN NORTH
5 TO 7 PM
IN MONTGOMERY PARK

MAY 6 ANNUAL MEETING COVERS WATERFRONT

Make plans to attend the Old Town North Community Partnership's Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 6 from 7 to 9 at the sparkling Holiday Inn on First Street. Our host, General Manager Hubert Herre, has prepared a lovely setting and some nice nibbles for us. Hubert and his team are renowned for hospitality and community spirit.

City Council Member Rob Krupicka will be one of our speakers, addressing provisions in the recently adopted City budget that may affect Old Town North, as well as questions of citywide

interest. Stephanie Landrum, Vice President of the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership, will update us on the status of development sites in our neighborhood, including the WMATA Bus Barn and the ABC property. She can also fill us in on the health of local retailers and on the possibilities for new businesses in our area. Finally, we hope to have a speaker address the ongoing Waterfront Plan effort recently launched.

This is a good time to renew your membership, or join the Old Town North Community Partnership. Membership is Free!

Whether or not you are a member, you are welcome to come to the Annual Meeting on May 6.

CITY INITIATES NEW WATERFRONT PLAN

Alexandria's waterfront was the reason for its initial founding in 1749; we were then and for 200 years after, primarily a city based on commerce – first on the river, then on canals, and finally by railroad. The remnants of the old canal are right in our neighborhood, at... Canal Center!

Over time, the waterfront was dominated by commercial and later industrial uses that obscured its potential beauty. It was largely inaccessible to pedestrian and recreational use, with parts of it even closed off behind chain-link fence.

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ing. By the early 1970s, our neighborhood was home to a rendering plant (where Rivergate townhouses now sit), a Texaco tank farm, the remnants of the Atlantic Research rocket testing facility, the Bogle arsenic factory, and parts of cement and concrete plants...not to mention the then-Pepco power plant still gracing our shores and our still-active rail line.

On the City's 225th birthday, July 13, 1974, some three thousand people celebrated the opening of the newly founded Torpedo Factory Art Center, one of the first steps toward the revitalization of the Alexandria Waterfront. In 1981-82, the City undertook settling a Title Suit with the Federal Government to establish Alexandria's eastern boundary. This led to the publication of a Waterfront Plan that encouraged public access and allowed redevelopment of formerly industrial properties. Waterfront Park, Oronoco Bay Park, and other patches of open space were established, and vistas granting access to pedestrians and bicyclists were opened. Several new buildings, both residential and commercial, were built in vicinity of the waterfront (Harborside and Ford Plant townhouse complexes in the south; a marina and boat-building school behind the Torpedo Factory building complex; and Rivergate, the Crew Boathouse and the Canal Center office project in the north).

It is now time to revisit our waterfront plan. Owners of a few of the remaining industrial properties are interested in redevelopment, opening new possibilities. Much remains to be done to make our waterfront attractive from the water. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are adequate, but could be much safer and more pleasant to use. We could use a public access point for small private vessels such as kayaks.

The City has hired the prominent landscape architecture firm EDAW as its waterfront planner. Three public meetings are scheduled, April 23 (6:30 to 9 pm at City Hall), April 30 (6:30 to 9 pm at The Lyceum), and June 27 (10 am to 3 pm). Planning is beginning in earnest for the area spanning the entire waterfront (including the Mirant Plant in the north, all the way to the Wilson Bridge in the south).

Already on the table for discussion are ten draft waterfront goals:

- **Creative: bold, visionary and realistic**
- **Inclusive: the waterfront is a Citywide resource enjoyed by all Alexandrians**
- **Dynamic: a destination that attracts all Alexandrians as well as visitors**
- **Connected: pedestrian access should be increased and improved; continuous**
- **Authentic: grounded in the City's historic authenticity**
- **Variety: variety of themes, activities, and experiences**
- **Manageable: vehicular and pedestrian circulation and parking to be improved**
- **Sustainable: economically and environmentally sustainable**
- **Compatible: respect existing residential neighborhoods**
- **Permeable: vistas of the water and from the water should be enhanced.**

The Old Town North Community Partnership presented its views on the Waterfront Plan process to a forum held at the Old Town Civic Association earlier this year. We will continue to participate actively in the planning of this critical resource.

WILL THE BUS BARN EVER LEAVE?

Some people actually like the smell of diesel exhaust – yes, it is true. But for most of us, it is a smell we would rather do without. The Royal Street Bus Barn has operated in our neighborhood for many years, and the neighborhood has slowly changed around it. When adjacent sites were a roller skating rink, vacant lots, printing plants, and the like, the bus barn was not such an obvious nuisance. Now, it seems odd, surrounded by million dollar townhouses and half million-dollar condominiums.

A few years ago, a developer proposed to build residential units on the site, but the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (affectionately known as WMATA), quite

responsibly wanted to make sure another site was available for the nightly sleepovers of the big commuter buses. A suitable site at a suitable price did not materialize, and the bus barn lived on.

Recently, WMATA received an unsolicited proposal to redevelop the site that may alleviate the agency's concerns. A recent WMATA Board agenda carried an intriguing item: Action Item April 9, 2009 Award Contract to Replace Royal Bus Garage. An advance agenda for June 11 lists Approval to Hold a Public Hearing for Royal Street Bus Garage. And finally, on tap for October 8, 2009, Approval of the Public Hearing Staff Report for Royal Street Bus Garage.

We will follow this project and keep our members and neighbors informed.

IS OLD TOWN NORTH KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES?

Existing residential property citywide decreased in value by 4.7% between the January 1, 2008 assessments and the January 1, 2009 assessments. The average assessed value for an existing home (both single-family/townhouse and condominium) citywide decreased from \$500,234 in 2008 to \$476,490 in 2009. The average house is valued at \$637,154, and the average condominium at \$301,718.

Old Town North residential property decreased less than the citywide average – very good news for us. While citywide, single family homes were down 3.46%, Old Town North houses lost only 2.4% of their value. Condominiums lost only 2.4%, compared to 7.57% citywide.

It's not quite 2005, when our houses gained 18.3% and condominiums gained 20.5%, but "everything's relative". And in these tough times, we are happy to be holding steady. Our businesses seem to have been hit less hard also; there are spotty retail vacancies but generally speaking we are maintaining our restaurant, hotel, and service businesses.

THE MOTORCOACH TASK FORCE, ALSO KNOWN AS:

What streets should those huge buses use and where should they park?

After lengthy study, the second Motorcoach Task Force has made a series of recommendations aimed at more effective management of motorcoach operations in Alexandria. Motorcoaches are those fairly large buses full of visitors from other cities and countries, often spotted in the spring trying

to make tight turns onto Queen Street or other historic narrow streets. Many of them bring economic benefits, in that the people they carry are let out to have lunch, shop, or stay in local hotels. Others are just passing through to let passengers see "George Washington's home town". The challenge, as always in Alexandria, is to strike a balance between our need to encourage tourism, and the rights of residents to be (relatively) undisturbed.

For this year, the Task Force has recommended stronger enforcement on the part of the Alexandria Police:

- **Idling longer than 15 minutes is prohibited**
- **Double parking or unloading passengers in the traveled portion of any street are prohibited and subject to a \$200 fine.**
- **Tour and sightseeing buses must use designated parking spaces.**

The City is also looking into options for increased regulatory powers, but those must be approved by the General Assembly. Another stumbling block is the lack of suitable parking spaces for motorcoaches after they have disgorged their passengers and are waiting to pick them up. The Task Force is actively looking for suitable locations. In the meantime, our neighborhood has long hosted a few choice parking spots for the buses: between the AFBA building and the Giant store; and along the south side of Oronoco Bay Park and by the Robinson Terminal North. There have been other efforts to identify parking in our neighborhood rather than Old Town proper; we are willing to accept our fair share, as always, but prefer the distributed approach to both parking and routing than to having most parking and most routes comes through Old Town North.

The Task Force has an opening for a member from Old Town North. Please call OTNCP at 703-836-8066 for more information if you are interested.

NEW ARRIVALS TO OLD TOWN NORTH are WELCOMED!

A hearty Welcome to the Neighborhood to all the fine people who have moved into Abingdon Row (north of Montgomery Park) in the past few months. We hope you are enjoying your new home, and that you will join the Old Town North Community Partnership.

We also welcome some new businesses:

- Fitness and wellness centers seem to be thriving in Old Town North attracting our neighbors in Old Town, the Inner City and the Braddock Road communities.

Two new offerings to the Be Well menu are **River's Edge Yoga** and **Cross Fit Elite Training**.

Both are located within easing walking distance to the Metro in the Montgomery Center.

- **Pizza Pan**, at 610 Montgomery Street, offers **two free pizzas for every one picked up**. Is this for real? Seems it is.

- Kwik Kopy, formerly in Canal Center proper, has morphed into **Alphagraphics** a block closer to Fairfax Street. Jay Thomas continues as the owner of the business.

- **St. Anthony's Day School** is about to begin construction of an addition over its existing playground so that it may serve more children of people who live and work in our neighborhood.

- **Wendy's** has served its last burger; the building will receive a major facelift and a new life as PNC Bank.

- **Au Domain**, a wine store recently opened on North Fairfax Street. In addition to a fine selection of wines Au Domain offers fresh flowers and lovely nibbles.

- **Perks Coffee Shop** is expanding, and will have more outdoor seating.