



# West Norwood Update



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Norwood City Council

February 2005

## **Town Meeting** **Saturday March 5**

**10:00 a.m.**

Community/Senior Center  
Corner of Carter and Courtland

### **NEIGHBORHOODS OF CHOICE PROGRAM IN WEST NORWOOD**

The West Norwood Neighborhood Association (WNNA) partnered with the Community Building Institute of Xavier University to make West Norwood a neighborhood of choice. The program is based on the steps that Battlecreek Michigan took to revitalize its residential neighborhoods. The program is aimed at empowering residents, raising the standards we all expect of property owners, and raising awareness of the benefits of our neighborhood among the kinds of potential home-buyers that we want as neighbors. The Federal government also awarded a grant to Xavier recently for improving neighborhoods around Xavier.

This is an exciting opportunity. Over the last few years, the City has really focused attention over here, enforcing building and health codes and aggressively pursuing criminal activity. Neighborhoods of Choice, though, is the other side of the equation - building the positive aspects instead of just punishing the negative.

The key to the success of the Neighborhoods of Choice program is the involvement of the neighborhood. Luckily, we have a large number of residents who really care. If you want to find out more, or to get involved, please call Joe or Keith or come to the next WNNA meeting, in the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Community Center.

### **SUBSTATION TO CLOSE**

Facing with a shortage of funds, the West Norwood Substation is closing. Police Chief Schlie  
In response to complaints from residents all over

has determined that are more urgent needs for the limited funds at his disposal. WNNA and the City are looking into moving the substation program to the Community Center.

It's hard to lose this symbol of the city's dedication to the west Norwood neighborhood. But it was only one facet of the effort to improve the area - improved code enforcement, stepped-up police activity, rezoning to stop the break-up of single family homes, the Home Improvement Loan Program, and the Disorderly House Ordinance have all played a part.

The most important ingredient for a great neighborhood, though, is neighbors who care. That's why we see great things in our future.

### **ELM AVENUE SEWER PROJECT CALLED OFF**

Despite several years of work by City officials, especially Joe Geers, Norwood had to pass on the Elm Avenue sewer project. Several years ago, Joe Hochbein announced a grant that would pay for the city to expand the storm sewer from a 24-inch line to 48 inches. Once real engineering work began, however, we discovered that the plans submitted by the Hochbein administration missed the fact that the 48-inch line would be running into a 36-inch line at the Cincinnati border. The Hochbein administration had new engineering work done, which predicted a \$2 million total cost, including a retention tank to hold the difference. The City found grants and loans to make up the difference. Once the bids came in, it became clear that the last administration's engineers underestimated the cost by \$500,000. The City doesn't have \$500,000, so we had to turn down the various grants and loans that had already been awarded. Armed with a solid cost figure, we begin the search for grants and loans again.

### **MSD RESPONDING TO FLOODED BASEMENTS**

Hamilton County, including Norwood, Metropolitan

Sewer District (MSD) is offering assistance. If your basement floods due to a sewer line backup, call MSD within 24 hours at 352-4900.

We are pleased to report that they are responding quickly to resident calls. They are cleaning out lines and offering help with cleaning up the mess.

### **CITY IN FISCAL WATCH**

The State of Ohio declared Norwood to be in a state of Fiscal Watch, which means that our deficit for 2004 was more than 1/12 of the total General Fund budget. Fiscal Watch means the state will provide technical assistance, but no extra funds or ability to adjust contracts or authority to borrow money.

We ended 2004 with a \$1.2 million shortfall. The bulk of that was hundreds of thousands in unpaid police and fire pension payments and over \$200,000 that we didn't pay Rumpke. We did manage to make payroll in a timely manner, but nearly every vendor has been paid 60-90 days late, whether Cinergy or Cincinnati Bell or auto parts stores. There were also hundreds of thousands of dollars in normal, necessary expenses that department heads simply didn't make. And there have been a host of cost-saving measures instituted by the administration and department heads.

The City also refinanced its debt (again), which put off several hundred thousand dollars in debt payments that would have been due in 2004.

Ironically, if the City had spent money on basic things like police cruisers and ambulances and building repairs and computers and supplies and street repair that we had no way to pay for, we would have qualified for Fiscal Emergency, which would have given us more tools for borrowing and imposing a fiscal plan.

The state has begun a performance review, which will provide a comprehensive analysis of everything the City does. The state will provide suggestions on how to increase efficiency and cut costs, but the review will take five or six months.

In 2005, we foresee a shortfall of \$1.3 million, in addition to the \$1.2 million in unpaid bills from 2004.

There are, quite simply, no good choices left. The city's major expenses are police and fire protection. We could not lay off police officers or fire fighters or

cut their pay or benefits even if we wanted to, because we are bound by union contracts. We cannot cut health insurance costs by changing coverage or increasing deductibles or requiring employee contributions, because the coverage is mandated by union contracts for almost all City employees. We are submitting cost-saving measures to the bargaining units, but only time will tell.

As far as cuts that we are legally allowed to make, we could legally eliminate the Health Department or Recreation, but it makes no sense to dismantle such valuable assets in order to pay for one year's raise for another department or this year's increase in health insurance premiums. We could sell City property like Firehouse #2 or some parks, but once that property is gone, it's gone for good, and we face the same problems next year.

### **COUNCIL TO SHRINK IN 2006**

Effective January 1, 2006, City Council will shrink from 9 members (6 wards, 3 at-large) to 7 members (4 wards, 3 at-large). The current Ward One will be divided along Montgomery Road under the new plan.

The New Ward One will encompass everything south of Maple and west of Montgomery. The New Ward Two is on the east side of Montgomery. The northern boundary starts at Smith and Montgomery, runs east on Smith to Ashland, then south to Madison over to Forest, where it runs north to Grove, follows Grove to Williams, and then to Edwards.

**Questions? Concerns?  
Town Meeting!  
Saturday March 5, 10:00 a.m.**

**WNA Meeting  
Third Wednesday of Every Month  
7:30 at the Community Center**

### **NUMBERS TO CALL**

Mayor Tom Williams - 458-4501  
Safety/Serv. Dir. Joe Geers - 458-4503  
Council - 458-4594  
Emergency - 911  
Police/Fire Non-Emergency - 458-4520  
Building Department - 458-4510  
Health Department - 458-4600  
Public Works (Pot holes, parks) - 458-4615  
Recreation - 531-9798