

Greensboro Neighborhood Congress (GNC)
Meeting Notes
Saturday, May 11, 2013



GNC Co-Chairperson Susan Taaffe convened the **May 2013** GNC meeting at the Central Public Library beginning with our traditional introduction of all participants and presentations by guest speakers.

Guest speakers:

Jim Westmoreland, Deputy City Manager of the City of Greensboro presented highlights of the proposed Greensboro City "Tree Ordinance" which represents 5 months of negotiation among citizens, City Council, and Duke Energy. Recommended resolutions to concerns of extreme tree trimming and tree removal include: "Stop work orders" issued by the City's Urban Forester, additional citizen appeals to a City Advisory Commission on Trees (ACT) and further to Guilford County Superior Court or to the NC Utilities Commission, utility company responsibility for removal of cut tree debris, more frequent trimming cycles, trimming reduced to vegetation at utility line levels (less significant trimming above or below utility lines), a replanting assistance plan, improved on-site supervision of tree trimming contractors, a Utility Vegetation Management Standard that would apply to the entire City instead of parts of the City, a tree inventory, and additional, repeated, advanced notice and communications of future utility company tree trimming. Once a resolution is crafted and adopted by City Council, the resolution proceeds to the NC Utilities Commission. The next City Public Hearing is Tuesday, May 21st, 5:30. If later approved by the NC Utilities Commission, it is possible this City ordinance could be considered as a state-wide model. All residents are reminded to seek advice from the City Urban Forester Mike Cousimano at 336-373-2144 <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/index.aspx?page=1779> or Duke Energy regarding future tree placements near any utility lines. For current information about this proposed "Tree Ordinance" visit <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/index.aspx?page=3947>.

Anna Fesmimre shared experiences of the **Greater Kirkwood Neighborhood Association (GKNA)** formation when they felt threatened by rezoning for a proposed drug store at the Lawndale/Cornwallis intersection. Over several years they've attempted to gain support working toward a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay (NCO) with modest success as stakeholders (neighbors, planning boards, zoning commissions, city council, etc.) and proposals have changed over time. Current requests involve lot width and front yard street setbacks. GKNA representatives present request that the GNC Issues & Bylaws Committee review and later support their NCO request to the City. There is concern that the NC Legislature may remove the ability for cities to implement NCO's in the future. Benjamin Briggs of Preservation Greensboro Inc. (PGI) also offers information about protective easements which homeowners may consider for protecting individual properties.

Brian Higgins shared experiences of the **Glenwood Community**, located immediately south of Lee Street. Recent concerns have been low owner occupancy rates, increased home vacancy, foreclosures, disrepair, and criminal activity. Over two years ago, this community greatly increased communication with the City resulting in new inspection/repair/demolition activity. Ninety days after a demolition order, the City has the right to demolish a building, although this is rarely done due to a natural tension between the desired potential to rehabilitate vs. to demolish Glenwood homes. Three current methods to effect change in substandard properties are: 1- Tennant can complain to request City building inspection. 2- City building inspectors can proactively initiate an inspection, although this is rarely done. 3- Any 5 city residents can request a City building inspection of another property of concern. Safe housing regulations are complicated and the current NC Legislature leans toward lessening, not strengthening, City housing regulations. Higgins reminds neighbors to be proactive, especially taking advantage of the third option above.

Laura Jackson shared experiences of the **Ardmore Park Community** located between Patterson and Meadowview streets near the Coliseum. They initiated a 5-year plan for neighborhood improvement of their over 350 homes of which ~56% are rental. They've found it challenging to retain neighbor's interest over time, especially among renters. A nearby church helps support neighborhood activities and offers a meeting place and shares events. Ardmore Park has profited from the federally funded Better Buildings Program, which provides financial assistance for energy efficient home improvements, and from the Pete Street Program which supports neighbor's basic training in home repairs. The Pete Street Program will be described at our June GNC meeting.

Committee Reports:

Membership - Peter Kauber reminds all participants to please **sign in** when attending GNC meetings to ensure GNC voting eligibility. The Southside Neighborhood currently is not responding to GNC membership opportunities.

Issues & Bylaws – Mike Pendergraft indicated the latest “Post-RUCO” (Rental Unit Certificate of Occupancy) updates will be discussed Tuesday, May 14 in the City building Plaza Level conference room. Keep abreast of rental housing issues via Michael Pendergraft at mrp_mlp@bellsouth.net.

Donna Newton and Marsh Praus continue efforts toward a proposed City-wide Tree Ordinance. A motion passed that the GNC Executive Committee be empowered to make Tree Ordinance recommendations to the City at a May 21 meeting.

Announcements –

- Saturday, May 18, is Glenfest, a multicultural festival in the Glenwood neighborhood.
- Tuesday, June 4, is the next City Council discussion of Renaissance Co-Op grocery plans.
- Saturday, September 14, is the Old Asheboro Neighborhood Celebration.
- City Council Candidate Forums will proceed this autumn, as usual.

Our next GNC meeting is **Thursday, June 13, 2013, 7-9 p.m. at the Central Greensboro Public Library.**

Respectfully submitted by Ann Stringfield of the Fisher Park Neighborhood, May 15, 2013.