

# Belmont-Hillsboro News

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## Standing committees need volunteers


Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors' Steering Committee organized ten standing committees in January. We are seeking volunteers to help staff the committees, each of which will work on various neighborhood issues and projects.

Each committee already has members and chairs, but all committees need more help. If you are interested in joining the activities of one or more committee, please call our InfoLine (386-3711) or send an e-mail message ([info@belmont-hillsboro.org](mailto:info@belmont-hillsboro.org)).

The committees are

- Home Tour
- Community/Social Activity
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Beautification
- Zoning
- Conservation Zoning
- Web Site
- Crime Watch
- Traffic/Sidewalks/Transit

### *Special Issue About Zoning*



*Urban zoning is a complex issue, but it is one of the most effective tools neighborhood groups have in the work of preserving historic integrity. On the inside pages of this issue, BHN's Gene TeSelle shows that preservation efforts must look in all directions at once to succeed.*

## BHN activities spring to life in April

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, Inc. welcomes spring with activities for fun and work.

What: Spring Cleanup

When: Saturday, April 19, 9-12 a.m.

Why: To clean up the neighborhood streets, sidewalks, alleys. We'll have a couple of dumpsters available for neighbors who bring trash. Last year we picked up more than 17 tons!

Where: Headquarters at Helios Artglassworks and Bi-Rite Grocery

What: Potluck Breakfast to cheer on the Music City Marathoners

When: Saturday, April 26, 7 to 8:30 a.m.

Why: To eat sweetrolls while watching people exercise;

bring your favorite breakfast goody and share with others; invite friends from other neighborhoods to watch the event with us.

Where: 2509 Belmont Boulevard

### **In the planning stage**

Hoping to win new friends and volunteers, we are planning to transform BHN's annual membership meeting into two semi-annual membership meetings. Please join us to see what BHN is all about, and to help us keep on getting better.

What: Semi-Annual BHN Meeting; open to everybody in the neighborhood

When: to be announced

Why: To hear about projects, meet neighbors, share ideas, sign up for standing committees.

Where: to be announced

# BHN ARCHIVE

**1973**

Dorothy Whitcomb suggests a neighborhood directory, for mutual use of those who send information about children, hobbies, pets, etc. It was typed by Anne Bowman and laid out by Bill Myers; there were at least two later editions.

**1973**

Neighbors attend the auction of a property with many codes violations and distribute leaflets warning about codes enforcement.

**1978**

At the height of the "second energy crisis" of the Seventies, neighbor Debby Gould organizes a homeowner workshop on energy conservation at Christ the King School, sponsored by the Tennessee Energy Extension Service.

**1988**

Councilman Stewart Clifton negotiates a plan satisfactory to nearby residents for

Vanderbilt to build on a vacant site on the Peabody campus. This project became The Village at Vanderbilt.

**1993**

A Metro ordinance permitting and regulating bed and breakfast facilities in historic homes is enacted; BHN has two of the first three.

**1993**

A breakaway business group (large chains, with small businesses as a front) sabotage a sign ordinance that took years to negotiate and was agreed upon between the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and the Nashville Neighborhood Alliance.

**1998**

The first of many public meetings is held to address the future of the Forrest Hills Apartments, 2600 Hillsboro Road. Its future is still uncertain!

*Gene TeSelle: Zoning 101*

## Woodmont story reveals options

Alan McCracken and his wife have owned and operated the Children's Learning Center in the Tudor house at 3420 Belmont Boulevard since the early 1970s; they ceased operations last summer. Mr. McCracken was looking for ways to rent the property, and a proposal came from Dr. Jon Butler. He wants to set up a family practice that would be personal and caring, including counseling and educational services. This, however, would be a new land use, requiring rezoning from residential to light office (OL).

The proposal was disapproved by the Planning Commission on the grounds that it was contrary to the Subarea 10 plan and would be a spot zoning for the convenience of one property, making it a precedent for other requests to rezone similar properties. Affected neighbors were also disturbed when they read the list of uses permitted in the OL

District, and they collected well over a hundred signatures in opposition. They were prepared to speak out at the public hearing before the Council on January 7.

The property is in Councilman Ronnie Greer's district, but it affects the districts of two other Council representatives, Jim Shulman and Ginger Hausser. They jointly called a community meeting on December 14. Mr. McCracken presented his plans, including a draft agreement to use the property only for the medical facility. Former Councilman David Kleinfelter, now with the Planning Department, reviewed the legal issues, and the Council representatives reflected on similar issues they had dealt with in the past.

After extensive discussion, Greer declared OL zoning to be dead, promising to withdraw the bill at the January 7 meeting of the Council. But



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### Woodmont story, continued

that's not the end of the matter. Mr. McCracken pointed out that the "conditional use" for a day care center is still valid. He could either rent or sell the house to a day care chain (KinderCare was mentioned as a well-known example), since the conditional use "runs with the land." In fact the house could be torn down and replaced with a new structure. Or the lot could be subdivided into three lots, with a duplex on each lot.

### Gene TeSelle: Zoning 201

## "Teardowns" threaten neighborhoods

There is an assault on older communities, especially in the older suburbs of Chicago and Boston: tearing down historic homes and building huge "McMansions" that are out of scale and ignore the character of existing structures. The result? A hodgepodge of huge new mansions, dominated by driveways and four-car garages, in the midst of forlorn-looking older homes.

It's good to see that people are finally appreciating the accessibility of older neighborhoods. But these new residents bring suburban-style housing preferences with them.

### Gene TeSelle: Zoning 202

## Design Standards must be flexible

A neighborhood's conservation zoning design standards should be like a good mattress: firm yet flexible.

Owners and architects in some Nashville neighborhoods with conservation zoning have learned that lesson too late. If the guidelines are too restrictive, problems getting approval for designs from the Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission can arise. And even if approved, designs for neighborhoods with overly restrictive

### Gene TeSelle: Zoning 301

## Formula businesses invite regulation

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance in Minneapolis has coordinated a nationwide effort to "defend Main Street against chain stores."

There are really two kinds of problems. One is

All of this made the neighbors receptive to two other possibilities. They might seek Neighborhood Conservation zoning, which would require design review before any demolition or new construction. Or they might support a Neighborhood Landmark Overlay to preserve the house and permit only the specific use proposed by Dr. Butler. This will be explored with the staff of the Planning Department, and the neighbors will have another opportunity to review it at a public meeting. ■■

What's the remedy? The simplest alternative is to encourage sensitive additions to existing properties. We've seen several recent examples on Belmont Boulevard, and if you've driven down Blair Boulevard you have seen no fewer than three enlargements under construction.

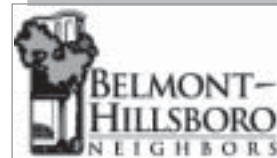
And it's always worth trying to educate developers and real estate agents. But the only sure solution is to strengthen zoning regulations with "neighborhood conservation" or "urban overlay" districts, which typically require design review before there is any demolition or construction. ■■

guidelines may be more narrowly applied by the Commission than owners and architects intend.

While the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines, based on the 1966 historic Preservation Act, say "preferred," the Commission sometimes interprets them to mean "required." Guidelines often do not permit changing the roof pitch to add attic space, or adding dormers or windows visible from the street. In other words, a good design review ensures firmness and flexibility! ■■

the "big box" stores like Wal-Mart and Home Depot that threaten many locally owned businesses. Localities can use zoning laws to limit

continued on page 4



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### Formula businesses, continued

their size and require study of their impacts on traffic, environment, and the local economy.

The other is "formula businesses," restaurants, overnight accommodations, retail stores, and other establishments that are required by contract to adopt standardized exterior design, signage, interior decor, and methods of operation so that they are virtually identical with businesses located in other communities.

A number of towns and cities have regulated formula businesses. They cannot prohibit chain stores outright. But they can require that the store not look or operate like all the other branches in the country. Certain kinds of formula businesses may be banned outright.

Others are required to go through a permitting process that allows time for citizen input and review of impacts on the community.

There are several legitimate "public purposes" behind these ordinances: to preserve the character of historic commercial and waterfront districts; to encourage locally-owned businesses that will recirculate dollars in the local community; and to prevent "cannibalization" of local businesses by deep-pocketed chain stores which can offer large rents to take prime locations and accept temporary losses in order to drive out competition and gain later profits through their monopoly position. ■■

## How to participate in planning

The Nashville Civic Design Center is preparing an ambitious *Plan of Nashville*, a comprehensive set of suggestions for the central business district and surrounding areas. Work on the 18-month project began in May, 2002, and is the first long-range plan that considers the city's core in its entirety.

The final product will be a book, modeled on the *Plan of Chicago* from 1909, which still serves Chicago as a guideline.

The Civic Design Center will be holding a series of open meetings in "front-line" or "inner tier" neighborhoods. A meeting on our sector and the ones adjacent—Edgehill, the Midtown and Hillsboro Village areas, and over to Charlotte—will be held on Saturday, February 22, from 9 a.m. till noon, at the Adventure Science Museum (the Cumberland Science Museum).

For more information call 248-4280 or visit [www.planofnashville.com](http://www.planofnashville.com).

### Members to be surveyed for directory information

The BHN steering committee is considering printing a directory of members' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. We recognize, however,

that some people may want to keep these confidential. We'll be surveying members for permission to solicit and distribute this information to members only. ■■

### Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors Membership

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, a tax exempt, nonprofit corporation, is composed of residents (both renters and owners) working to make our neighborhood a good place for everyone, encourage good relations, preserve its residential quality, and maintain neighborhood diversity.

#### How to Join BHN

If you agree with the aims of Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors and would like to

join (or renew your membership), please send your name, address, telephone number, email address, and \$10 dues (\$15 for a household) to

Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, Inc.  
P.O. Box 120712  
Nashville, TN 37212

To find out more about Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, e-mail questions to [info@belmont-hillsboro.org](mailto:info@belmont-hillsboro.org) or call the hotline at 386-3711.

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